THE LORD’S OWN SALVATION

NO. 2057

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, DECEMBER 16, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen”  
Hosea 1:7.**

GOD is very considerate towards the messengers by whom He delivers His Word to men. They are bound to deliver His Word faithfully, whatever the tidings may be. Sometimes the burden of the Lord is very heavy. The Prophets have to denounce woe upon woe, with terrible monotony of threat. And then it is that God hastens to relieve them by giving them a gracious Word, so that they may refresh their hearts and not be altogether crushed beneath their load. We have an instance here of the Lord’s care for His heralds. Hosea was bound to say, in the name of the Lord, “I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will utterly take them away.”

But when he had said that, with heavy heart and tearful eye, he was allowed to add, “But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.” The Lord will not let our spirit fail beneath a burden which is all of grief. But He will grant us the high privilege of proclaiming Divine Grace, as well as publishing judgment. Dear Brethren in Christ, if you have to preach God’s Word, preach it faithfully and abate no syllable of its stern threats. Woe unto him who is afraid to preach the terrors of the Lord! Woe unto the man who refuses to put his hand into the bitter box and take out the wormwood and gall which make such salutary medicine for the souls of men!

We must at times speak lightning and prove ourselves sons of thunder. We must bring on the storm and tempest in the heart of man if fair summer-tide discoursing will not touch them. For the most of men there is no going to Heaven except by the Weeping Cross. And we must drive them that way with God’s thundering sentences of judgment. Let us lead them by the path of sorrow to the Man of Sorrows, sorrowing ourselves because it is so hard to bring them to a godly sorrow. It is at our soul’s peril that we allow a warning to lie silent. “If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish. But their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands.”

Let us think of that and give ourselves up to our Master’s work, even when it is heaviest, cheered by the fact that we have to speak of such glorious Truths, such precious promises, such a gracious Christ, such a free salvation, such full pardon for the very chief of sinners, such abundant help for those that have no strength, such fatherly compassion to those that are out of the way. Our themes of joy by far outweigh our topics of

grief and we find the Lord’s service a happy one.

The connection of our text suggests the thought that there is a limit to the long-suffering of God. He bade Hosea say, “I will no more have mercy upon Israel.” He had borne with that guilty people very long and overlooked their daring crimes. But He would do so no longer—He would give them over to the enemy who would carry them far away so that Israel as a distinct monarchy should cease to be. O my Hearers, God is very gracious but His Spirit shall not always strive with you. A little more sin and you may be over the boundary and God may give you up. Stop, I pray you! Do not further provoke. Repent and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

Having made that observation, I would make another, namely, that the Lord makes distinctions among guilty men according to the Sovereignty of His Grace. “I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah.” Had not Judah sinned too? Might not the Lord have given up Judah, also? Indeed He might justly have done so, but He delights in mercy. Many sin and righteously bring upon themselves the punishment due to sin—they believe not in Christ and die in their sins. But God has mercy, according to the greatness of His heart, upon multitudes who could not be saved on any other footing but that of undeserved mercy. Claiming His royal right He says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.”

The prerogative of mercy is vested in the Sovereignty of God—that prerogative He exercises. He gives where He pleases and He has a right to do so, since none have any claim upon Him. We are all under His rule and by that rule we are under condemnation. And if He should leave us there, it would be strictly just. But if any are saved it is an act of pure, undeserved Grace for which He is to have all the praise. Note, too, that even in the dark times, when whole nations go astray from Him, He still reserves unto Himself a people. “I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them.”

God will have a people even when those who are called His people prove unworthy of the name. There never was a night so dark but that God had a star shining through its blackness. There never was a desert so dreary but God could lead a people through it and make the wilderness rejoice. There never shall be a time in which Christ will not have a remnant according to the election of Divine Grace who will maintain His Truth and the honor of His name. Let us be comforted by this and look for brighter and better times, however dark the days may seem to be just now. God will save His own and by His own will keep His Glory bright among men.

But now the text brings us to consider this fact, that God will save His own people in His own way. He tells us positively how He will save the house of Judah and negatively how He will not save them. “I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.” God displays His Sovereignty not only in the persons saved but in the ways whereby that salvation is worked out.

The point which we shall consider is God’s way of saving His people, as instanced in the text. And we remark, first, that oftentimes God puts visible means aside in dealing with His people—“Not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.” Secondly, He has good reasons for doing this—He acts with infinite wisdom. Thirdly, there is a Gospel in this, a Gospel which has special relation to us. Oh, for a blessing from the Spirit of the Lord!

I. First, then, GOD IS PLEASED VERY OFTEN IN WORKING SALVATION, TO PUT MEANS ASIDE. He said of Israel, “I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezebel.” He thus struck out of the hands of His people their only defense. They had trusted in their bow and the Lord destroyed it.

First, the Lord does this in the work of salvation by Divine Grace. Salvation is of the Lord alone. Salvation is not of human merit, for there is no such thing. Plenty of demerit you can find anywhere and everywhere but of merit there is none. “When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants: we have done no more than it was our duty to have done.” But we have not done all. Alas, on the contrary, we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And we have left undone the things which we ought to have done and there is no health in us. In ourselves we have neither health, help, nor hope. We are not, we cannot be saved by our works. We dismiss the idea with an honest indignation, each one of us for himself.

Neither are we saved by any good dispositions which lie dormant and latent within us, for there are no such things. There is none good, no not one. The heart is, in every case, deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. If our salvation depended upon our hearts going after God of themselves and the motions of our nature ascending towards the Most High of themselves, it would be a hopeless case. But Divine Grace waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

“You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins.” The first movement is from God to us, not from us to God. As soon expect the darkness to create the day as expect the sinner to turn his own heart to the Lord. We are saved by the Lord’s Grace, not by our works. Nor by our feelings, nor by our desires, nor even by our sense of need. I believe it is one object of God’s infinite wisdom in each individual case to make this doctrine clear to the understanding and the heart. Certainly it is one object of every faithful ministry. We preach down the creature and preach up the Savior. Yet, preach as we may, self-righteousness is so natural to man, self-trust is so congenial to our proud imbecility, that we cannot get it out of men till the Holy Spirit comes.

Every man his own Savior is the kind of doctrine which is popular. But to set aside our own doings is to offend many. I see before me a picture which was once before the mind of Isaiah. Our nature seems like a rainbow-colored field of grass in the early days of summer. The golden kingcups are intermingled with flowers of every hue. What a luxuriant garden!

Wait a moment! A wind comes—a hot sirocco burns its deadly way. “The grass withers, the flower fades: because the spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people are grass.” So have we seen men glorious in their own self-righteousness, boastful of their moral purity and we have half thought, surely there is something in all this!

We walk over the same field after the withering work of the Holy Spirit has been there and men have been convicted of sin and we see nothing but disappointment and hear nothing but confession of failure. We see no flowers but dead, withered grass. How soon has the glory departed! The comeliness of the field is passed away as in the twinkling of an eye! You cannot have forgotten, some of you, when this terrible self-withering happened to you. When God’s rebukes corrected you, your beauty passed away as the moth. Before I was instructed as to myself, I thought myself as good a fellow as could be found within fifty miles. But when the Spirit of God had revealed me to myself, I thought myself the basest creature within five hundred miles. Or, for that matter, even outside or inside of Hell itself.

You may, perhaps, have seen a picture drawn by a cunning artist. It represents a lady, very fair and beautiful to look upon. But the picture is so contrived that you discover underneath it the form of death. That which appeared outwardly so lovely is only a veiled skeleton. Just that kind of change the Spirit of God makes upon our moral beauty—He turns it into corruption by making us see what we really are. The bones of the skeleton of depraved nature stand out through the proud flesh of our selfrighteous pride. Then we cry to God for mercy. Then we give up all idea of saving ourselves. Neither bow, nor sword, nor horse, nor horsemen are any longer our confidence. The weapons of our self-help are looked upon by us as weapons of rebellion—and they really are so.

And by God’s Grace we throw them away and will have nothing further to do with them. The man upon whom there is found a bad coin is very earnest in declaring that it is none of his—somebody must have slipped it into his pocket. He will not own it. A little while ago he thought to himself, “What a splendid imitation it is! How well I have cheated the Queen!” Selfrighteousness is nothing but a piece of counterfeit coin. And when all goes well with us, we say, “How well I have done it! How splendid is my righteousness!” But when the Spirit of God arrests us, then we are anxious to get rid of the very thing wherein we gloried. What was our righteousness we reckon to be as filthy rags—and we reckon according to the Truth of God.

Thus God saves us, not by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen but by His Grace, which comes to us freely when Jesus is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

It is so in the actual salvation of men and it is often so in their calling to this salvation. Was any man ever converted in the way in which he expected to be? I hardly think so. I know what you thought would happen— at least I know what many expect. They look for an interesting incident. They suppose, perhaps, that they will have a very wonderful dream. Or that, going to hear a minister, there will be something very striking in the sermon which will alarm or depress them, so that they will be tempted to commit suicide, or do some other outrageous thing. Possibly, on the other hand, they half expect that there will happen a sudden death in the family, or sickness upon many and that so they will be impressed. Or, possibly, like Martin Luther with his friend Alexis, they may be walking out in a thunderstorm and Alexis will be killed and they will be aroused in that way.

I, myself, always looked for something very remarkable but it did not come to me. And yet something happened which was more remarkable than the most remarkable thing would have been—I simply heard the Gospel command, “Look unto Me and be you saved.” I looked and I lived! And that is all the story I have to tell you. Dear Hearer, that is all the story, very likely, you will ever have to tell. You have come in here tonight and perhaps you have even desired that something very wonderful may take place. Nothing of the sort may happen and yet the infinite mercy of God may visit your heart and sweetly melt it. Before you are even aware, you may say to yourself—

*“I do believe, I will believe,*

*That Jesus died for me”*  
and on a sudden, that change will come over you of which you have so often heard—by no means the physical change which you have looked for, the extravagant delirium of sorrow struggling with delight.

You will simply drop into the arms of Christ and rest in His great sacrifice and find peace. That will be all. You will not be saved by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, nor by horses, nor by horsemen but by a simple trust in the Lord alone. What more do you want? What more can you hope to receive? I feel very grateful to God whenever a person attributes his conversion to me. I feel both honored and humbled. But if you are brought to the Lord Jesus and no word of mine shall be used but only that still small voice which speaks in solemn silence to the heart, I shall be equally pleased, so long as you are saved.

If hungry souls receive the bread of Heaven, I will not fret because they took it from some other hand than mine, Oh, that even now the Lord Himself might come like the dew which falls in its own special way and may He refresh your hearts unto eternal life and fulfill this word—“I will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.”

In the next place, the same thing is true with regard to the progress of religion and the work of revivals. Let every man work as he feels called to do, provided he follows the rules of his Lord. But we have seen revivals of which it was said at the first, “We will get up a revival.” Revivals can be got up but are they worth the trouble? What has been the end of them all? A few years after, the result, where is it? I hear an echo say, “Where is it?” I cannot tell you what has become of it. In many cases I fear that the disappointed Church has become more hard to stir than it was before.

Brethren, I hopefully believe that there will soon come a deep, widespread, lasting revival of religion and it may be it will come just as it used to in Apostolic times. How did they act in Jerusalem? What did they do

throughout Asia Minor? What was the Apostles’ plan? I cannot find, for the life of me, that they did anything else but preach the Gospel, while at the same time they went from house to house and held meetings for prayer—and thus the kingdom of Christ came. They did not work up a revival but they prayed it down. They simply waited upon the Lord in supplication and service. They might have tried other plans had they been so unwise as to think of them.

They would never have tolerated the dodges of the present period, the adaptations of the Gospel and the degrading of it by secular lectures, entertainments and so forth. They never dreamed of keeping abreast of the times with liberal philosophical teaching. But I recollect that Paul was so resolutely ignorant as to say, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Standing all together the chosen preachers of the first days could say—“We preach Christ crucified.” They could all say that and say it emphatically. All the men of the College of the Apostles stuck to that theme. And see the effect!—

*“Nations, the learned and the rude,  
Were by these heavenly arms subdued,  
While Satan raging at his loss,  
Abhorred the doctrine of the Cross.”*

I wish all the Churches would try this old way again, for it seems to me that the world will never be subdued to Christ by the wooden sword of reason, but only by the true Jerusalem blade of a Gospel revealed from Heaven. Until we take up such methods as our Lord has ordained and make our sole confidence to be in the Lord our God, who “will not save by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen,” we shall never see great results. Grand preaching, fine preaching, eloquent preaching! Yes—but the Apostle was afraid of it, lest the faith of his converts should stand in the wisdom of men. Though he could have spoken with the tongue of an orator, he did not use the wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be of no effect.

“But, surely,” cries one, “we must have some advancement in theology. We ought to know more than our old fathers did.” This is the pride of our hearts. Would you advance beyond the Apostles? Into what can you advance but into the ditch of error? They did not crave for an advance in the Apostolic times. But they were satisfied to speak over again, “all the Words of this life.” They remained true to the “faith once and for all delivered to the saints,” and they found salvation in this primitive Revelation. Why should we go gadding elsewhere? Depend upon it—God will not save men by advanced thought, nor by eloquent discourses, nor by literary beauties—He “will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.”

I believe that the same great Truth will be made apparent as to the establishment of the Truth of God in this land. How my soul has been burdened with the many that have turned aside and the few that remain faithful to the Covenant God of Israel! These last are not so very few as some would make them out to be but yet they are sadly scant in number. God has reserved unto Himself seven thousand that have not bowed their knee to Baal. Oh, that there were a thousand times as many! But we have striven with all our might to bear our outspoken testimony for the old faith and we have hopefully thought that many would rally to the cry.

But it is not so, nor, perhaps, is it God’s mind that it should be. Men of eminence have held their tongues and Brethren once ardent for the Gospel have practically gone over to the enemy. I am sure that the Lord will confound the adversary and bring forth His Truth as the noonday. But it may not be as we would suggest. He has His own way. Let us watch for Him to make bare His arm. Perhaps those who are faithful must stand alone, must bear their witness in solitary places and be the objects of general derision. Perhaps for many a year the heavenly fire will only smolder amidst the ashes. But it is all right—Truth shall hold the crown of the causeway, yet, and Christ’s own Word shall lift its head from the waves that have washed over it and be the fairer for the washing.

The Truth has God’s might with it and it must prevail. He “will save them by the Lord their God and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.” We must be content to subside. To be nothing. To be never heard of. To die. So be it, if the Truth shall live. This will be better than if we formed a numerous band and carried everything by majorities and set up a strong party and won the day— for then man might be great and God be forgotten—but now He shall be All in All. When you have seen how I fail and those that are with me and how plans and efforts are futile, you will all the more clearly see what the Lord can do.

Dear Friends, I would make one other application of these words and I trust it may be profitable to you. The text has a voice to God’s people in the day of trouble. I may be addressing godly people who are in most terrible distress. You have faith in God that He will bring you out of your affliction. Maintain that faith. And if for a long time no deliverance should come, still maintain it. Perhaps you have hopes from a certain quarter. Those hopes may come to nothing—that cistern will leak. You have another friend to whom you can apply. Yes, you can apply. That is all that will happen, for that tank also holds no water. When you have tried all the cisterns, be wise enough to recollect the Fountain.

It may be that there will come a day when every door will be fast closed and you will see no way of relief whatever. But you will then think that there will remain the one Way, which you should have followed at the first. In such an hour let my text speak with you—“He will save them by the Lord their God and He will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.” What a glorious vision is that of Jehovah alone with His own right hand getting to Himself the victory! When Israel came out of Egypt, what armies vanquished Pharaoh? Who fought on Israel’s side to bring them out of Egypt? Nobody.

Then there was no human victor to extol, no human warrior to praise. But clear and plain the hymn rang out—“Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” If there had been an ally with God the glory might have been divided. But as it was, the Lord, alone, was exalted in that day. When Israel fought with Amole it is evident that the battle never depended upon their fighting, for—

*“While Moses stood with arms spread wide, Success was found on Israel’s side;  
But when through weariness they failed,  
That moment Amole prevailed!”*

So that the real fighting was done by those uplifted hands that brought down the Divine success and made Joshua mighty in the battle.

When Israel crossed the Jordan and came into the promised land to fight the Canaanites, the very first conquest was that of Jericho. Did they bring battering-rams to the walls? Did they gradually throw down the structure with their axes and picks? Oh, no! They compassed the city seven days and God made the walls to fall when the people gave a shout. In the memorable deliverances of God’s people, God has said to the second cause, “Stand back. Let My glory come to the front.” The bow, the sword, the battle, the horses and the horsemen—He has sent them all about their business. And then the Lord their God has led the van and His enemies have been scattered like the dust of the threshing floor.

When He takes up the quarrel of His Covenant He makes short work of it, for “the Lord is a man of war; Jehovah is His name.” And when He lays bare His arm to defend the cause of His people, He wants no helpers. Now can you lean on the Lord? Can you grasp the Invisible? Can you lean alone on God and forego all helpers? Can you grasp His bared arm and let all other things go? O man of God, if you can, you shall glorify God and you shall surely be delivered! If you must have your bow and your sword, or else give up hope, then the battle rests with yourself. How can you plead the promise of God?

But when you put the bow aside and the sword is hung on the wall, then can you go to Him who is better to you than bow and sword and rest in Him and He will work gloriously, so that His own name shall be magnified and you shall be blessed. I pray the Holy Spirit to apply that Truth to any heart here that is heavy by reason of sore conflict at this time. Oh, for Divine Grace to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, for in His own time and way He will work and none shall hinder Him.

So much upon our first point, that oftentimes God puts the means aside in dealing with His people.  
II. But now, secondly, God has GOOD REASONS FOR THIS. I shall very briefly touch upon this theme. The Lord is full of wisdom and His doings are ever prudent. He always has good reasons for everything but one of the things we should never do is to ask why. It is an unreasonable thing to ask God to give reasons for what He does. His answer to arrogant questioners is—“May I not do as I will with My own?” Oh for Divine Grace to be silent where God is silent! Is He not God and we worms of the dust? Who shall presume to ask Him why or what He does? Better far to say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good.” If He never gave us a reason for what He did, we ought to be well content to leave all with Him, knowing that He must do that which is best and wisest.  
But, so far as in humility we may dare to look, we have looked and we believe that the Lord’s ways are intended, first, to prevent all boasting. How prone we are to self-esteem! How wickedly we rob God to honor ourselves! If God uses us—if God uses any sort of means—yet there is no credit to the means which He uses but to Himself only. I read the other day of a certain writer who says, “I wrote the four hundred pages of this book with one pen.” Where is that pen? Does anybody want it? If it were advertised as an exhibition, I should not go to see it. I care a deal more for the hand that wrote and for what was written, than for the pen with which it was written.  
A common goose-quill it was in the case referred to and no more. Ah, how plainly can we see where the quill came from! God uses men for a certain purpose, as we use a hammer, or a saw, or an awl. Suppose that when we had done with such tools and put them back into the box, they all began to cry, “See what we have done! What a sharp saw I was! What a heavy hammer I was! Did I not hit the nail on the head?” Such boastings would be foolishness. Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews? We do not judge that the instrument ought to take credit to itself. But it does so in our case whenever it can and this is a great injury to us.  
Some of us might have enjoyed a much larger blessing if we had not grown top-heavy with the blessing we already enjoyed. God saved a soul or two by you, my dear Friend, and you began to rub your hands and think that you were something better than an angel. You were running away with God’s glory and thus ending your own influence. Often this is the cause of the drying up of hopeful usefulness. The instrument began to exalt itself and so the Lord put up the bow, the sword, the horses and the horsemen and then all men saw what powerless things these were. Oh, that the Lord may never feel compelled to leave you and me to ourselves! Oh, that He may deign to honor us by using us to His Glory. I had far rather die than stand a withered tree in the vineyard of the Lord and yet, what better should I be if He withdrew the dew of His Grace from me?  
Next, He does this to take us off from all reliance upon second causes and outward means. You people of God—the process of weaning is, with you, often a long and tedious one. But if ever it is accomplished, your faith will rejoice, even as Abraham made a great feast at Isaac’s weaning. My dear Hearers, some of you are not saved yet and I will tell you what happens with many of you. You come here on Sabbaths, and to Monday Prayer Meetings, and Thursday services and I am glad to see you. You also read your Bibles. I am glad of that. You say a thing you call a prayer—I do not know whether I am glad about that. But I will tell you what you are doing. You are making yourselves quite comfortable, as if, by some singular process, salvation would insensibly penetrate you by your being found in good company, hearing the Word, and so on.  
Let me remind you that these things were never prescribed as the way of salvation. I do not want you to run away from hearing the Word, or from the use of the means. But I do want to assure you that, if you trust in these means, you will be disappointed in the result. These are mere pitchers but they will not quench your thirst if there is no water in them. Look to God, not to your minister. Get to Jesus Himself rather than to the sacred Book. Remember how the Savior puts it—for this is not a wrested reading—“You search the Scriptures. For in them you think you have eternal life: but you will not come to Me that you might have life.” Pass beyond the Scriptures to the Christ whom the Scriptures reveal. Do not stay in the porch of the Word but enter the house of the Truth itself, which is Christ Jesus.  
It is not singing hymns and saying prayers. It is getting to the Lord in praise and really coming to Christ in prayer. I wish you not to stay away from any of the services. I wish you to be where the means may be blessed to you. But the means, themselves, cannot save you. There is nothing in preaching—there is nothing in public service that can mechanically bring salvation to you. And do not expect it. “You must be born again!” You must distinctly go to Christ for yourselves. The Lord saves men by the Lord Jesus Christ and He will not save them by books and Prayer Meetings and sermons any more than He would save Judah by the bow, the sword, the battle, the horses and the horsemen.  
The Lord set aside horse and horsemen to bring the people to Himself. And often He lays people up so that they cannot get out to hear the minister, or He drafts them away to some portion of the country where they get no sermon, that then they may go to the God of all true sermons and may find salvation in Jesus Christ Himself.  
Again, Beloved, the Lord blesses His people, Himself, that He may endear Himself to them. He reveals Himself to them apart from other things that they may see Him and know what He can do. You do not know to the full what God can do so long as He keeps within the bounds of the ordinary means, or you feel that you are well provided for by ordinary methods. You are apt to forget that God provides for you because your quarterly allowance is received so regularly. Now, suppose that your business fails. Ah, then God must provide for you—then you will see what God is doing. Suppose that, instead of being in one place, you should be kicked about like a football and still the Lord should give you rest in Himself— then you will see what He can do.  
When we are in fine feather and everybody is kind to us, we hardly know the loving kindness of the Lord, it is so smothered up by secondary agencies. When we get quite alone and nobody is kind to us and we approach to the Lord in solitary trust and prove His power to comfort us, then we know more of what He is in Himself to His people. The night reveals the stars and sorrow and loneliness manifest the Lord’s presence. But, Beloved, God does this to endear Himself to us, that seeing more of Him we may love Him more and may say to ourselves, “What a gracious God He is to take notice of me, to interpose for me, to come, and by His own mighty power, do for me what the ordinary ways and means fail to do!” In this way, also, the Lord often gives a double blessing—a blessing in the gift, and a blessing in the way of giving.  
Now look at Hezekiah’s case. Supposing Hezekiah had gone out to fight Sennacherib and had defeated him—a certain number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been killed in the battle. But when the Lord delivered Hezekiah without a battle, then there were no funerals in Jerusalem. Nobody was wounded. Nobody was slain. So frequently God not only blesses us by the favor given but by the way in which the gift is sent—He saves us from pains which any other method would have involved. The Lord often spares us the humiliation of being dependent upon a person who would have made his patronage bitter to us.  
If we had received the blessing through some great one, he might have crowed over us all the rest of his life. I like that bit in Abraham’s life when the king of Sodom offered him the property which he had captured. Abraham had a right to it, for he had taken it in war. But he said, “I will not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.” No, no. The servant of the Lord would not have a king talk as if he had been the maker of the Lord’s own servant. God Himself will so help you, so bless you, so carry you through, that you shall not have to take off your hat to any king of Sodom. Neither shall he be able to go up and down the city and say, “I have made Abram rich.” God will put the king of Sodom away with the horses and the horsemen and double the mercy to you by handing it out with His own hand after His own way.  
I think that the Lord does this also to encourage you in all future troubles—He has rescued you in a way beyond means, without means and even against means! Therefore you cannot be in a condition from which He will be unable to rescue you. If you should come to be more friendless and more feeble than you now are—what then? Are your resources within yourself or dependent upon friends? If so, you are in an evil case. But if all your supplies are in the Lord, you are no worse off than you used to be. When the Lord strips you bare of your own garments then you can go to His wardrobe and put on the raiment which He has provided. You cannot wear God’s clothes while you glory that you are wearing your own. When want has swept your table, then all the bread on it will come from your God.  
When the Lord has brought you down to the bare rock, then you can go no lower and there is a chance to build a house which will stand against flood and wind. Be reliant upon Him who can work by means but can equally well work without means whenever it seems good in His sight! In such confidence you will find security against all ill weathers. The Lord changes not, and therefore you shall not be consumed.  
III. My time is done, or else I was going to say, thirdly, THERE IS A GOSPEL IN THIS TEXT for those here present. I can only hint at this in a few words.  
The first Gospel is that salvation is possible in every case. Notice, “I will save them.” What can stand against a Divine “I will”? With God nothing is impossible. If there is nothing to help Him, what does it matter? He does not need help. He expressly abjures the aid of a creature when He says, “I will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.” My dear Hearer, whoever you may be, there is hope in your case—if God saves, then you can be saved. If you had to save yourself, you would not be saved. But as there is nothing wanted of you—God works salvation with His own right hand—your case is hopeful. How clear is this! And how bright with comfort!  
Next, salvation is to be sought of God alone. Do not go wandering about to the second cause. Go straight to the Lord, Himself, and go at once. Straightforward is the best running in the world. Go straightforward to your God, your Savior. Let there be no waiting for tears, feelings, repentance, sanctification, or anything else. But arise at once and go to your God, and for Christ’s sake, plead with Him to have mercy upon you at this moment. As salvation does not necessarily come through the outward means, if I address any here who have neglected the outward means, let them come away to God at once, though they have neglected His courts, profaned His day and despised His ministers.  
You came in here with no idea of worshipping God but only just to see the place and what the preacher is like. Never mind, look to the Lord Jesus Christ straight away! With those eyes that are so blinded, look! If you cannot see, it may be that in your obedient attempt to look, the Lord will give you sight. He does not command you to see but He does command you to look to Him and be saved—so that, if you turn your eyes towards Jesus, though they be sightless eyeballs—He will make them see. If you will trust in Christ you may cast your guilty soul on Him at this moment. Why should you not do so? Then for you the rain will be over and gone and you will see the bright light in the clouds. Instead of the dark and dismal winter of doubt, you shall have a summertime of hope and comfort. These dreary weeks of cold despair shall give place to a season in which Heaven and earth shall blend in your experience in a joy unspeakable. The Lord grant it, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON  
DEAR FRIENDS—I am still somewhat like Mephibosheth, who “did eat continually at the king’s table and was lame on both his feet.” But the fine summer weather of this place and the complete rest are rapidly restoring me. I ask prayer that strength may return in such a way as to remain with me, that I may, for a long period afterwards, abide in my work. As also that the Divine blessing may rest on the preaching of the Word.

I have great cause for gratitude because of the continual items of news which I receive concerning the influence of the sermons. This is a rare restorative. May my readers still find in these simple discourses food for their souls and comfort for their hearts. When they distribute them among the unsaved, may the Spirit of God make them to minister life to the spiritually dead.

I am most happy in being remembered in the prayers of many saints— and I would beg for more intercession—not for myself only, but for all who truly preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.  
Yours ever heartily,  
*C. H. SPURGEON*  
Mentone, Dec. 8th, 1888

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STRANGE WAYS OF LOVE

NO. 2564

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, ARPIL 3, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 8, 1883.

**“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.”  
Hosea 2:14.**

The first part of this chapter is very dark, but the second part is clear daylight. As we read the first verses, we tremble, for we seem to stand at the foot of Sinai when it is altogether on a smoke. But when we reach the second half of the chapter, we can say that, “we have come unto Mount Zion.” We hear no sound of trumpet, but the voice of that blood “which speaks better things than that of Abel.” The reason for this is not that God has changed, nor that the person who is here spoken of has changed—up to this point there is no change indicated in the person—it is the same unchaste, unholy, obstinate, rebellious, ungrateful creature. Yet there is a wonderful change in the words spoken and the reason is because there is a change of dispensation—the sinner is brought from under Law to come under Grace! God no longer convinces of sin by the terrors of the Law, but He comes to deal with the poor guilty soul on terms of love and mercy! This is the great wonder of wonders that ever it should be truly said that, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” and that he is saved who believes on Him that justifies the ungodly! Christ died for us, not as saints, not as godly persons, but as the ungodly! Our subject is all about the dealings of Divine Love with guilty sinners, by which God brings them unto Himself. I shall speak of four things.

I. The first is that in our text, FOR GOD’S DEEDS OF LOVE, THERE IS A REASON BEYOND ALL REASON.  
The text begins with, “therefore.” God is very fond of that word, for He never acts illogically. There is always a good reason for all that He does. But His ways are not our ways, neither are His thoughts our thoughts and, sometimes, our logic is altogether baffled and our reasoning faculties seem as if they could not in any way follow the working of the mind of God, if such an expression may be used concerning His wondrous thoughts.  
Here, then, is a, “therefore,” but what is the argument of which this is the conclusion? Two of the most eminent writers on Hosea who wrote in Latin in the olden time—and were both Romanists—think that the word, “therefore,” ought to be expunged, for they cannot see any reason for its being here. Neither, according to Romanist teaching, is there any reason for it. It is a Scripture nut which is too hard to be cracked if salvation is by human merit and by human works. “Therefore” is a manifest non sequitur in such a place as this if that is the theory. But he who understands that salvation is not of works, nor in any degree of human merit, but entirely an act of the free and Sovereign Grace of God—that it is not of man, nor by man—he has spied out a method of reasoning, here, which the workaholic will never be able to discover! There is a reason, though it is beyond all reason.  
Note, then, first, that when God is about to save a man, He finds a reason for Grace where there is none. Where there is no reason in the man, God, nevertheless, finds one. There never can be any reason in a man’s sin why God should pardon it—at least we cannot see how it can be so—yet David did when he prayed, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great,” as if the very greatness of it was turned into a reason why it should be forgiven! This is a singular argument. When a man has rebelled against the Lord, is that a reason why God should publish an act of amnesty and oblivion? When man refuses to accept forgiveness, is that any reason why the Lord should go out of His way to change that sinner’s obstinacy so as not to let him destroy his own soul? I fail to see any reason for it, but God finds a reason, “for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” “He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”  
We think it always wise to enquire whether a person who applies for alms is a worthy person, for we like to give to deserving people. But God likes to give to the unworthy and undeserving—and He has a reason for it, for how could Mercy be so honored as in the forgiveness of the guilty— and how could Divine Grace get to itself so complete a victory as in reclaiming those who are utterly lost? God finds a reason where to us, at any rate, there seems to be none whatever. If, dear Friend, you are selfcondemned and can see no reason why the Lord should have mercy upon you, yet He spies a reason in the very fact of your being unable to see any! He finds, in that very brokenness, misery and helplessness of yours, a reason why His own sweet love and mercy should come and deal with you, even with you.  
Further, God not only finds a reason where we cannot see any, but He makes a reason which overrides all other reasons. There was a reason why He should have put Israel away altogether. She had been, as it were, espoused to Him—that is the parallel that is given to us—and if it seems, in your judgment, wrong that I should use the parallel, I cannot help it— it is in the Bible and I am going to follow it. God compares Israel to a wife who has left her husband, broken her marriage vow and become unchaste, filthy and polluted. In such a case as that, there are a thousand reasons why a man says, “I cannot have her as my wife any longer. How can I dishonor myself by receiving her, again, to my house and to my heart?” Yes, just so. But God finds a reason for receiving His banished and guilty ones over and above all reasons why He should put them away. He looks over the head of the argument for their destruction and finds grounds for their salvation! These people had given themselves up to the worship of that abominable idol-god called Baal, whose very worship was full of filthiness—and you can conceive the grief of the holy God when He saw them bowing down before such an obscene deity as this! That was a reason why He should put them away and have no more to do with them. But He had in His heart a reason that was stronger than any reason in their guilt and in their crime! He had also chastened them. He had brought them very low with famine and fever, yet they had gone on in sin worse than ever! And if they seemed to return for a little while, they were soon off, again, on their wanderings. These provocations of theirs cried aloud, “Put them away! Destroy them! Have no mercy upon them!” Yet God, whose mercy endures forever, still found a reason for looking favorably on poor Israel. And He said, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.” In like manner, though you, poor conscience-stricken Sinner, may see ten thousand reasons why you should be lost, God sees a reason which is stronger than all those and which, with a louder voice, cries over their heads, “Let them live! Let them find mercy at Your hands, O God!” Thus He finds a reason that overrides every other reason.  
Yes, and I go further and say that God turns reasons against us into reasons for us. Every sin is a reason why a sinner should perish. Every willful transgression is a reason why a man should be given over to continue in his stubbornness, but God does not reason so. In His infinite mercy, He treats our sin as though it were a necessity rather than a crime! You know how you deal with persons who are in great need. Did you ever hear a beggar who came to your door say, “Sir, I am not very badly off. I have a nice little income, but I need some relief.” How much will he get out of you? He goes the wrong way to work! But here comes a man in a most dilapidated state. His garments are all in rags, his feet are on the ground, his body is emaciated, he tells you that he has not tasted food for the last two days, that he has to walk the streets at night and has nowhere to lay his head. And the worse his story is, the more he prevails with you. Now, the Lord, in His infinite mercy, taking that tender view of sinning, as if it had bred a necessity in men, loves to hear them speak with Him—not thus, “God, I thank You I am not as other men are.” You know the rest of it, but the man who said that was not accepted of God! But the Lord loves to hear a man say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” That cry touches His heart. It is the greatness of men’s sin which He interprets to be the greatness of their necessity and, therefore, He deals with them in mercy.  
He also does this when He treats sin as if it were a disease. If a man were taken into a hospital, or if he were picked up on a battlefield and carried to the surgeon who has a large number of patients to wait upon, does the man who is suffering say, “Oh, it is a very slight affair, just a mere grazing of the skin, that is all”? He knows that if he talked so, the surgeon would pass him by to attend to the man whose wound will prove mortal if it is not stanched within a few minutes. The man who has the attention of the humane surgeon is the one who can truly say, “Sir, there is not a more severely wounded person in all this throng. My voice is failing, I am almost choked, I shall die if you do not relieve me at once.” The surgeon says to the other patients, “My good fellows, you must all wait awhile. I must see to that poor man.” Now, God looks at your sin as if it were a deadly disease working in you—and the greatness of your malady becomes a plea with Him. Oh, how strange it is that the very thing which, as a matter of justice, is really against us, turns out to be for us when it comes to be a matter of pure Grace!  
I want you all to put it upon that footing. You know what the woman said to the great Napoleon when she wanted him to save the life of her father. Napoleon said to her, “Woman, I have pardoned this man two or three times before.” But she said, “Sir, I pray you pardon him again.” The emperor answered, “I see no reason in justice why I should do so.” “No, Sir,” she replied, “and there is not any. But I am appealing to your mercy. It is a fine opportunity for you to show mercy, for he does not deserve it.” The great man said, “That is well put. Let him live.” And God will let you live when you plead on the ground of pure mercy! If you talk of justice, you are doomed, for there is nothing in the justice of God but a sharp, two-edged sword, the very touch of which will slay you! God’s Throne of Justice is a place of fiery wrath which shoots devouring flames! But if you approach it by the door that is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ, and cry to God for mercy, you shall be received with the kiss of forgiveness! Go, then, to that mercy of God which, in the very sins of men, spells out arguments for displaying itself! God does not want your fullness—He wants your emptiness—that He may fill it with His fullness. He does not want your good works, you poor sinners—He wants your bad works—that He may wash them all away. Paul says that Christ “gave Himself for our sins,” and Luther’s comment on that is, “He never gave Himself for our righteousness. That would not have been worth His having, but He gave himself for our sins.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” This is the footing on which we must go to God!  
They tell us that this preaching of mercy to sinners is against morality. Well, morality can take care of itself, God will take care of it. But we know that there is nothing which promotes morality like this wonderful pardoning love of God. Those who never will be reached by being told what they ought to do, for they cannot do it, and will not do it, are reached by being told what God will do for them and what Christ has done for them! And when they come and believe that, then they set about doing what is right—and good works are produced to the glory of God! But on the other theory, no man living under Heaven will ever come.  
II. Now turn to the second point. In our text, notice that there is A METHOD OF POWER BEYOND ALL POWER—“I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.”  
This is a singular kind of power. “I will allure her.” Not, “I will drive her.” Not even, “I will draw her.” Or, “I will drag her.” Or, “I will force her.” No—“I will allure her.” It is a very remarkable word and it teaches us that the allurement of love surpasses in power all other forces. That is how the devil ruins us—he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like. And the Lord in mercy determines that in all truthfulness, He will outbid the devil and He will win us to Himself by fascinations, enticements and allurements which shall be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer! This is a wonderfully precious word—“I will allure her.” I hardly know how to explain it except by reminding you of how bird catchers entice the feathered creatures with the allurements of decoys that sing them into the net, or how a mother allures her little child who is just beginning to walk. You have seen her hold out an orange, or an apple, or a sweet, that the little one may leave the chair against which it is leaning and come to her arms. That is the meaning of the word, “I will allure her.” God is trying this plan with guilty men and so tries it as to succeed, for there is in it a power beyond all other power!  
Other forms of power had been tried upon Israel. She had been afflicted—God declared that He would strip her even to nakedness! And He had done so, yet she did not turn to Him. He said to her, “I will hedge up your way with thorns,” but she went on right over the thorns. Then He said, “I will make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.” But she broke through the wall. Affliction of itself cannot bring a man to Christ—you may flog him till he gets more wicked. He may be chastened, as Ahaz was, and yet, like he, go further astray, the more he is afflicted, No dear Friends, the power of God’s Grace—the power of His infinite allurements—will be found to be much stronger than the power of affliction!  
Moreover, the Lord had tried upon Israel the effect of instruction. He says, “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil.” So He told her, but instruction did not help her. She sinned in the Light of God as badly as she had done in the darkness! Then He tried what could be done by exposure. He said—and it is a strong word—“I will declare her lewdness in the sight of her lovers.” There are some people who are made to be thoroughly ashamed—they are caught in some secret sin. They are convicted of something which, even in the eyes of sinners like themselves, is mean and dirty—and they cannot deny it—yet they do not turn from sin. They still cling to it.  
In addition to all this, the Lord had tried the power of sorrow upon sorrow, for it is written, “I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, her Sabbaths and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees.” Though she found no mirth in sin and the way of her transgression was hard, yet Israel would not turn to God! But the sweet allurement of tenderness would succeed where all else had failed.  
This was a power which was greater than those other forms of power because the allurement of love overcomes the will to resist. Israel could resist everything else, but she could not resist the allurements of God’s Grace—they won her where nothing else could. If Christ does but touch the blind man’s eyes, so that out of the corners of them he only gets one glimpse of the Savior’s beauty, he must infallibly be so enamored of the Christ that he will love Him beyond all others! There are amazing beauties about the Person of Jesus, yet, by their own unaided power, men cannot see them. But if once Christ enables them to see Him as He is and they realize the power of His eternal love, then their hearts are captured and they no longer resist Him. In fetters of Grace they are led as willing captives to Christ!  
Let me tell you one or two things about the Savior that I think one can never resist. There is, first, His self-denying love—that He loved His enemies—that He loved such poor creatures as we are, who could do Him no good. He was infinitely glorious and we were insignificant and, what was worse, we were opposed to Him! Yet each Believer can say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” Out of pure, disinterested affection, He came to earth to dwell in a stable, to hang upon a woman’s breast, a babe as feeble as any other babe, and then, marvel of marvels, His life on earth ended on the Cross—the cruel gallows of utmost scorn! There the Faultless One bears all our fault and because of our transgression, He is nailed to the tree, His back having first been scourged, His hands and feet pierced. Yes, and God Himself forsakes Him—not for any evil that He has done, but because He has been guilty of excess of love and has dared to put Himself in the poor sinner’s place to bear the wrath of Heaven! Look at Him—can you help loving Him with His face disdained with spit and His back all gory from the cruel lash? Is He not more lovely, there, than even up yonder amidst eternal thrones? O Love, bleeding Love, dying Love! If this does not allure men, what will? But that is how God allures the sinner to Himself. He says, “I did all this for you. I lived for you. I died for you.” And this wins the sinner’s affections, even though he feels himself the guiltiest of the guilty.  
Then our blessed Master, having risen from the dead, now charms us by the fact that amidst all His glories He is faithful to His first love. He has not forgotten you and me, though cherubim and seraphim have been singing His praises all these years, day without night. See what He is doing. He makes intercession for the transgressors and he bears upon His breastplate the names of guilty ones for whom His cry goes up that they may be forgiven and find mercy through His wondrous merit! I will not say that you ought to love Him, for love does not act that way. But I will say this—if you truly know Him, you cannot help loving Him—you must love Him. Thus does He allure men to Himself by His own personal charms.  
The Lord draws men to Himself in different ways. I was allured to Christ very much by the hope of eternal safety. I was but a lad and I saw young men, a little older than myself, who had been very promising youths, go off into drunkenness and into vice of different kinds. And I thought that I might do the same. But when I read those words of the Apostle, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day,” I was charmed with Christ as a sort of Preserver of character—an Insurer of my soul unto eternal bliss! And I came to Him for that reason. I have known others who have seen the happiness of Christians—their peace in the midst of turmoil, their joy in times of sorrow, their contentment in poverty, their calmness in prospect of death—and they have said, “If all this happiness can be had in Christ, I will come to Him for it.” And in that way He has allured them. Perhaps some of you have never had any great terrors of conscience, or distress of soul—do not fret on that account! If you come by allurements, it is a Covenant way of coming. If you are fascinated by the charms of Christ, it is the very way that God declares He will draw His erring and His guilty people. Oh, that you would yield to the fascination! I pray that you may feel the allurement and say— *“I yield—by mighty love subdued!  
Who can resist its charms?  
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,  
Into my Savior’s arms.”*

Do any of you feel some soft drawing? Is there a pierced hand touching you and a loving voice saying, “Seek the Lord”? Have you been very hard, up till now, but does an unusual gentleness steal over your spirit as you are sitting in this House of Prayer? Give yourself up to it—it may be that the time of Divine Grace is now upon you. I hope that it is so, that your birth-night has come and that you are passing from death unto life! We have prayed about you. We met for an hour before service and there was hard pleading for you. And God has given us the desire of our spirit and you are to come to Christ tonight! Blessed Lord, if it is so, there will be work for angels in Heaven to sing Your praises concerning a sinner that repents!

III. But now, thirdly, and with brevity, here is A CONDITION OF COMPANY BEYOND ALL COMPANY. Kindly read the text again. “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.”

If you have ever heard a sermon from this text, you have probably had it translated to you to mean that God will bring His people in trouble, but it does not mean that. It means that God would cause Israel to be alone with Him. It was usual, after the nuptial ceremony, for the husband to take his wife away into some lone spot for a while. The same thing constantly happens among us—when a man is married, away he goes to the seaside for a time—and he takes his spouse away to be with him alone. That is the idea in the text, the Lord says of Israel, “I will allure her to Myself” and then, “I will take her into the wilderness. She shall be in My company and in nobody else’s company.” That is just what the Grace of God does—the soul had forgotten Him, before, but now it thinks only of Him. His sweet love has so won it that it is now full of God! Instead of not thinking of Him at all, He is in his first thoughts in the morning, and in his thoughts all day long—and the last thing at night, till friends who do not sympathize say, “Why, you are going out of your mind! You are going religiously mad!” I wish that you would stay in that blessed state into which you were brought when the Lord’s love was revealed to you and His allurements drew your soul to Him.

The soul in the wilderness, alone with God, does not think of anybody else, and does not trust in anything else. It used to trust in good works, but it feels as if it has not any, now, though really its first good works are just being produced. Oh, what a clearance of our finery the love of God makes when it comes into the soul! We are the most respectable people who ever lived until we know God—and then we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes!

Now it comes to pass that God is our only joy. Once we had joy in the theater, or joy in the ballroom, or joy in other worldly things, but now we find true joy in God! And all other rejoicing seems only the mirth of fools and idiots. When we have once sat at the feast in our Father’s House, we cannot go back to eat the husks that satisfy swine. We have something better than that—our Lord has brought us where everything but Himself is a wilderness and our cry is, “O God, You are my God! Early will I seek You: my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” Joy in God eats up all other joy, as Aaron’s rod swallowed up the rods of the impostors! Now we can say of the Lord, “He is all my salvation and all my desire.” Oh, to be wholly His and to enjoy all that we can enjoy of Him! This is what He means by bringing us into the wilderness. That is, into the solitary place alone with Him.

It may also be understood—and the connection requires it—that God brings His people into the same condition into which He brought the Israelite nation of old. It was not to afflict them that He brought them into the wilderness—it was to take them out of affliction that He led them there— and that is the meaning of our text. When the Lord allures His people, He takes them away from the old Egyptian bondage. He leads them through the Red Sea. He makes it roll between them and their old life and then He treats them just as He treated His people in the wilderness. That is, He provides their food. They live on manna—no longer have they their kneading troughs which they brought out of Egypt. I wonder what they did with those kneading troughs? They never needed them in the wilderness, certainly, for the manna was all ready for them when it fell.

Then, next, the Lord becomes the Guard of His people—a wall of fire round about them. He protects them by a fiery pillar at night and He is the only Guide and Leader of His people—by cloud or by fire He leads them both by night and by day. He becomes the healing of His people, for, in the wilderness, when Israel had sinned and the fiery serpent had bitten them, they looked to the bronze serpent and they lived. The Lord was the Champion and Defender of His people. Sihon, king of the Amorites, did He smite, “for His mercy endures forever; and Og, the king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever.” In the wilderness Israel had nothing but God—did they need anything else? They carried on no commerce. They had no railways. They kept no shops. Well, really, if you could go out every morning and gather your bread and if, when you needed meat, the quails came in any quantity for you to feed upon. And if your clothes never waxed old, neither did your feet swell—that would be a grand life to lead!

The Lord bring you and me under the wings of His eternal Providence and if the world should seem a wilderness to us, yet if God continues to scatter the manna and faith has but hands with which to gather it, and a joyful mouth with which to feed upon it, then, blessed be God, the wilderness is better than anywhere else! “I will allure her and bring her into the separated place where she shall walk by faith. And I will dwell with her, and walk with her. And I will be her God and she shall be Mine forever.” That is the meaning of the promise—a condition of company beyond all company!

IV. Now, fourthly, we have, in our text, A VOICE OF COMFORT BEYOND ALL COMFORT. “I will speak comfortably unto her.” The Hebrew is, “I will speak to her heart”—a style of speech that can only be adopted by God who made the heart, searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.

When the Lord gets His people all alone, what words of comfort He has with them! What words they are when He assures them of their full forgiveness, when they see all the sins of their former perverse life gone forever and hear the Lord say, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” These are, indeed, comfortable words when they are spoken home to the heart! And so they are when the Lord not only tells His people that all evil is removed, but that all good is theirs—when such words as these come home to them— “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” And, “It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” And, “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” And, “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Those are comfortable words when the Lord goes on to tell us of our everlasting safety—“They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.” And when in prayer He foretells our coming glory—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.”

I like even better that rendering, “I will speak to her heart.” I heard of one who died many years ago and an old divine, who stood by his bedside, reported what he said. He had been a great professor, but he had become an apostate and turned aside. But he used to comfort himself with the universal mercy of God. And when he lay a-dying, he said to the minister, “Sir, I have made a plaster for my wound, but it will not stick.” He turned over in the bed and said, “It will not stick! It will not stick!” And so he died. Ah, and unless God speaks the Gospel to the heart, it will not stick. You cannot get it to stick to the wound. It seems pretty enough and you fancy that it will heal—it is a “royal court plaster”—but, for all that, it will not stick! But when the Lord speaks His Truth home to the heart and conscience, by the Holy Spirit, and the poor trembling sinner grips it as for dear life and says, “That is mine—I will venture my soul on it! Christ has died for sinners—I am a sinner and I take Christ to be my Savior!” Then that plaster will stick! What a mercy it is, when God makes it to be so! I can speak to your ears, but I cannot speak to your hearts and, what is more, even this blessed Book of Inspiration could only appeal to the ears! Apart from the Spirit of God, it could not reach your heart. But if the Lord Himself takes His Truth, oh, how blessedly it goes home!

I tell you, you desponding and despairing ones, you may come out of the iron cage tonight! You may, this very hour, enter into joyous peace and liberty if the Spirit of God will but speak home a single text—a solitary Word—a New-Covenant Word to your spirit! Be of good cheer, then— things impossible with men are possible with God—and you may yet be singing instead of sighing, and shouting instead of groaning! Look to Jesus! All our hope lies in Him. May He save you—yes, may the Lord allure you even now! I am afraid I have not spoken gently enough to some of you poor wounded ones. It is very hard for the preacher to always pick his words to suit all His hearers and, perhaps, someone will come to me, after the service, and say, “Oh, there was something you said that tried me so very much.” And, usually, the very people who are most tried by the Word are the very ones that we most want to comfort! Sometimes, a dear soul comes to me and says, “Oh, Sir, I am afraid I am a hypocrite!” I answer, “I never met a hypocrite who was afraid that he was a hypocrite.” That could not be, for hypocrites are quite certain that they are not hypocrites! And he that is so timid and trembling that he is afraid he may not take these things of which I have been speaking, is the very person whom we must encourage to lay hold of every sweet and precious promise that falls from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ!

May God make this promise true to everyone here who does not yet know Him, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her”! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HOSEA 2:6-23.**

Verse 6. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. God will cause sin to be painful. He will make the way of it difficult. He will do everything to prevent the sinner running in it—“She shall not find her paths.”

7 *.*And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. They cannot find satisfaction in sinful pleasure. That which once they easily obtained, they shall no longer be able to procure.

7 *.*And she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. Am I addressing a backslider? Has God hedged up your way? Is there a whisper in your heart which reminds you of better days and happier times? Oh, stifle not that whisper! Let it be heard within your spirit—if it is but a gentle voice, listen to it till it increases in force and sounds like the very voice of God in your soul! It will be for your present and eternal good if you do so.

8 *.*For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. It is a sad sin when we take God’s mercies and use them in rebellion against Him. Just think of it—the very gifts which Jehovah gave to these people, they presented in sacrifice to Baal! And there are men who are in comfortable circumstances, who spend their wealth for sin. They have health and strength, and they use them in the service of their own evil passions. The very gifts with which God has enriched them become weights to sink them deeper and deeper in the gulf of transgression. Ah, this is terrible! God has often brought men down to poverty, to sickness, to death’s door, in order that they might be weaned from their sin. He saw that they were going to Hell full-handed and He judged it better that they should go to Heaven empty-handed! He knew that if they had health, they would misuse it, so He stretched them on the bed of sickness, that they might turn to Him. God has severe remedies for desperate cases—He will do all that mercy and wisdom can suggest to prevent men from being their own destroyers.

9-11. Therefore will I return and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of My hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. There is no more merriment—the old songs have lost their sweetness and the old games have lost their charm.

12. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me. So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. So that the joys of sin shall become miseries, as if vineyards were suddenly trained into dense forests wherein lions and wolves might make their lairs. There are some people who can understand this in a spiritual sense. Some, perhaps, who have been made to realize it in their own experience.

13. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, says the LORD. It is terrible when God comes to visit upon men the days of their sin—when for every night of sin they shall have a night of anguish—when for every pleasure that they took in sin they shall feel the scourge of conscience till they have measured out the weary round. “She went after her lovers, and forgot Me, said the Lord.” This was said by Him who never forgot her, by Him whose love was true and faithful to her when she thus went away from Him and defiled herself and dishonored His holy name!

Now read the next verse and be astonished—  
14. Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. You might have thought the Lord was going to say, “Therefore, behold, I will destroy her!” Nothing of the kind. “l will fascinate her to myself, I will draw her away from all her idol lovers and I will speak comfortably unto her.”  
15. And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. “I will pluck this Israel of Mine out of all her sin. I will give her back the purity and the happiness of her early days. ‘She shall sing, there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.’” You must have noticed how often God speaks of that coming out of Egypt. He says, in another place, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” Here the Lord promises to give back to Israel the joy she had when she was young and espoused herself to her God.  
16. And it shall be at that day, said the LORD, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call Me no more Baali. “You shall call me, my Man, my Husband”—a name of sweet endearment. “and shall call me no more, Baali,” that is, “my Lord, my lordly Husband,” for the Lord’s love shall not be galling to you, but it shall sweetly and gently rule you. Oh, what a sweet change this is, when we no longer tremble before God with slavish fear, but love Him with intense affection and see in Him our soul’s Husband in whom is all our delight!  
17*.*For I will take away the names of Balaam out of her mouth and they shall no more be remembered by their name. The word, Baalim, had been profaned—they had applied it to other lords—and when they used it concerning Jehovah, it sounded harsh, as if He, too, was a tyrant master!  
18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Everything is in covenant with me if I am in covenant with God! There is nothing so high that it can hurt me, there is nothing so low that it can injure me, there is nothing so great that it need distress me, there is nothing so little that it shall torment me!  
18. And I will break the bow and the sword of the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. Oh, the security of God’s people when they get into their right position towards God!  
19. And I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. What a glorious promise is this! It is marvelous that our wayward, wanton, wicked souls should be brought back, by infinite mercy, and then that God should be so enamored of us as to declare, “I will betroth you unto Me forever.”  
20. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the LORD. It is said three times that He will betroth us unto Himself, as if the Lord knew that we would hardly be able to believe it.  
21, 22. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, said the LORD, will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; and the earth shall answer with corn, and wine, and the oil and they shall answer Jezreel. So that there shall be no famine to try God’s people! Their prayers shall be abundantly answered and all their needs shall be supplied.  
23*.*And I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God. Oh, blessed Scripture! May the Lord write it on all our hearts! Amen.

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STRANGE DISPENSATIONS AND MATCHLESS CONSOLATIONS

NO. 2754

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 24, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1859.

**“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.”  
Hosea 2:14.**

THIS is one of the many instances in the Word of God of His free, rich, Sovereign Grace. The Lord has set the children of Israel before us as a great model. They are our beacons with regard to sin, but they are a pattern to us when we see in them the gracious dealings of a Covenantkeeping God. Often did they rebel, but just as often did the Lord forgive them. Frequently did He smite them with His rod, but He never turned them over to destruction. He still remembered His Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and He suffered not His faithfulness to fail.

We have, in the prophecy of Hosea, an instance of what God thought of the sins of His people. He commands the Prophet to speak in rough earnest language of their constant rebellion and yet, no sooner has He directed Hosea to deal harshly with His erring spouse, than He seems to stop him in the middle of his furious prophecy and bids him now address her with words of comfort! This is the connection in which our text is found set in the black letters of the volume of threats against guilty Israel. This precious jewel shines all the more brightly in the thick darkness of their sin and despair. This torch of love and kindness sheds a heavenly light and makes their eyes and hearts rejoice.

Let us now turn to these words of the Lord and regard them under the following aspects. First, I see, in the text, the singular reasons for Divine Grace. “Therefore, behold!” I see, in the next place, the strange dispensations of Divine Grace. “I will bring her into the wilderness.” In the third place, matchless consolations. “I will speak comfortably to her.” And, in the fourth place, sweet persuasions. “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.”

I. In the first place, we have, in our text, THE SINGULAR REASONS FOR DIVINE GRACE. “Therefore, behold!”  
It is not without cause that the word, “therefore,” is inserted here. We are to look to the context to find what are the premises from which a conclusion of mercy is drawn. You might naturally conceive, judging according to human logic, that the preceding verses described either Israel’s goodness, or else her abject repentance if she has gone astray and rebelled. But, on the contrary, there is no mention of these things at all! They speak not of her goodness, but of her badness and, in fact, they speak so strongly that the Prophet uses terms that are never employed except after excessive iniquity. He charges Israel with whoredom and speaks of her as having committed uncleanness with many lovers. This is strong language and shows that he means to declare the excessive character of her sin and, instead of speaking of her as being a penitent, he declares that she was still impenitent. Notwithstanding many, many Providences and the hedging up of her way with thorns, she would break through and run after her many false lovers. And then, strange to say, contrary to all human reasoning, there comes the inference—if I may so call it—an inference of sunshine from a dark cloud, an inference of mercy from a whole mass of sin and iniquity!  
If the inference had been, “Therefore I will destroy her, I will cut her in pieces and give her children to the sword, and her women to be carried away captive,” our reason could well have seen that it was the natural consequence. We could easily have seen that the logical terms agreed, but here it seems as if it were quite a non sequitur. How can it be that a, “therefore,” should spring up, when the previous verses have been filled with a description of her sins?  
Here let us pause to remember that the reasons for God’s Grace to us are far above all human reason, for He Himself has told us, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” No, I will go further than this and say that not only are God’s modes of reasoning far above our own, but they often seem as if they were even contradictory to ours. Where we should draw one inference, God draws the very opposite! See yon poor penitent sinner? He “would not lift up so much as his eyes to Heaven; but he smote upon his breast and cried, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’” What is our inference from this, looking at the publican as he stands there? Why, that he is a rebellious creature, and that God cannot and will not accept him, but must punish him! Does God draw this inference? No, for, “this man went down to his house justified.” See yonder Pharisee with outstretched hands? He stands and prays thus with himself, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are,” and so on. What is our inference? Surely God will accept so good a man as this! He will be sure to justify a man so holy and so moral. Not so, for that man went down to his house without justification, unsatisfied, unblessed with the smile of Heaven—while yon sorrowing publican received God’s gracious forgiveness!  
We, ever since the Fall, have learned to reason badly. Our reasoning faculty has been as much confused as any other power that we possessed. We have turned aside from the straightforward path and we know not how to draw the true inference which God draws from our sins. So then, it seems from our text, that so far from looking at any reason for mercy to anything that is good in man—if God ever seeks in the creature a reason why He should show mercy, He looks not to the good, but to the evil! When we come before God it would be well if we would always remember this. We are committing great folly if when we are spreading our case before Him, we dare for one moment to speak of ourselves as good or excellent. We shall never succeed in that way—He will not listen to us, for this plan has no power with Him! But if, when we come to Him, we can plead our sin and our misery, then shall we prevail. No, we may even go the length of the Psalmist, David, when he prayed, “For Your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity”—and for a strange reason, you would say—“for it is great.” He used the greatness of his sin as an argument why God should have mercy on him!  
O you legalists who are looking to yourselves for some arguments with which to prevail with God! O you who look to your sacraments, to your outward forms, to your pious deeds and your almsgivings for something that will move the heart of God—know this, that these things are no lever that can ever move Him to 1ove! Nothing but your sin and misery can ever stir His mercy! And you look to the wrong place when you look to your merits to find a plea why He should show pity on you!  
And yet, albeit that this reasoning seems extremely strange, I may use an illustration which will justify such reasoning as this in the mind of every thoughtful man. Here is a poor creature shivering in the cold with nakedness. And there is one who has warm garments to give away. Will not the nakedness of the man be his claim to benevolence? If there is any generous soul who desires to feed the hungry, it is not likely that he will bestow his bread upon one that has abundance! But if he hears a soul uttering the wail which is excited by the pangs of hunger, that very wail shall make him move his hands to supply the needed food. Generosity, liberality and mercy know of nothing that can move them as misery can. And the very reverse argument is formed from that which men are so fond of using. They will go to God with a plea analogous to this—as if a beggar should meet me in the street, and say, “Sir, give me charity! I am not very poor, I am not very hungry, therefore give me charity!” He would not use such a foolish argument as that! He, like a wise man, says, “I am hungry, I am starving, therefore give me food.” Would that you would use the same sensible argument when you come before God and plead, not for your merit’s sake, but for your misery’s sake! Think not that you are to tip the arrows of your prayers with the feathers of your own merit— that shall never make them fly to Heaven. It will be better if you can wing them with a sense of your own miseries, for then they shall reach the heart of God and He will send you the promised blessing in return. Strange reasoning, you say, this of Grace—that God will save men, not for their goodness, but if there is any reason that can be found in them, it is rather for their sin and for their misery than for anything good in them!  
If you will carefully look at the text, again, you will notice that after the word, “therefore,” there comes a word of exclamation—“behold!” Whenever we see the word, “behold,” in Scripture, we may be sure that there is something well worthy of our attention. It strikes me that Hosea, when the Lord commanded him to write this verse, was quite staggered. “Lord,” he said, “how can this be?” He was filled with amazement. “I have been threatening Your children. You have told me to set their iniquities before their face—and now you bid me say, ‘Therefore I will have mercy upon them.’” The conclusion seemed to him so strange that he was utterly astonished! And the Lord permitted His servant to record his astonishment by putting in that word, “behold.”  
Nor do I think that is the only reason for the use of the word. It is also, I think, put there that we may admire the Grace here displayed and that we may remember the mercy of God—and especially the deep-rooted secret reasons for that mercy. They will continue to be, on earth, the theme of admiration and, in Heaven itself, the object of eternal astonishment. When we shall be permitted to see why God had mercy upon man and especially why, out of the human race, he had mercy upon us—why He chose us while others were suffered to perish—we shall be incessantly compelled to lift up our hands in astonishment! And even in the heavenly city, itself, joy shall sometimes be superseded by wonder, and we shall, even there, be astonished to find such matchless Grace displayed for such singular reasons. “Therefore, behold!” Again I would say to those who are trusting in themselves—Give up your foolish hopes! Men and brethren, look not to the empty cisterns, but come away at once to the fountain, the Divine, kingly fountain of Sovereign Grace, for there, and there only, it is that your hope of pardon can be realized! For, in yourself, there is nothing but that which would lead to your destruction—only in Jehovah can reasons for salvation be discovered!  
II. The second point is THE STRANGE DISPENSATIONS OF DIVINE GRACE.  
God is about to have mercy upon poor fallen Israel, so what does He say? “I Will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.” This may seem to some a strange way of showing His love, yet it is not an unusual one, for it is the common method by which God manifests His love towards His chosen ones. You will, perhaps, smile when I make the observation that there was nothing which a Roman slave more anxiously desired than to have a box on the ear from his master. “That was a strange desire,” you will say, yet that box on the ear was the object of the morning and evening prayer of many a slave in Rome, for, you must know, if a master once gave his servant a box on the ear, he was free from that day forth and was no longer a slave! Now, that strange manner of freeing a slave is analogous to that which God uses when He is about to set free one of Satan’s bondsmen.  
He first of all gives us the blow of conviction and then He gives us the liberty of Grace. Is it not singular that God should begin to show His love to His people by taking them into the wilderness? Is it not a strange manifestation of Divine favor that He should bring us, not into Canaan, not to the grapes of Eshcol, not to all the riches of the land which flowed with milk and honey, but that He should bring us, first of all, into the wilderness? Your experience, if you are a child of God, will help you to understand this. “The wilderness” may be explained thus—when God is about to save a man, He first of all brings him into a state of spiritual destitution. He thinks himself rich and increased in goods and that he has need of nothing. Talk to him about the sinful state of a natural man and he is insulted! He says he is as good as his neighbors. He does not know that he has much to confess when he is on his knees. Indeed, he hardly sees the use of confessing to God at all! If such as he does not get to Heaven, at last, he does not know who will!  
Now, when God means to have mercy upon a man of that sort, instead of feeling that he has every virtue and all strength, all of a sudden he finds himself without one good thing to recommend him to God! And, worse than this, he finds that he has no strength to perform a single good act. “Oh,” he says, “I once thought I could repent and believe whenever I pleased, but, now all my strength is gone, my heart is hard and I can scarcely compel a tear to flow! I imagined that in the last moment of my life, I could say, ‘O God, have mercy upon me!’ and that, then, I would be saved. But now, I find faith to be quite another thing from what I thought it was. Now I am stripped of all self-confidence. My comeliness is departed, I must robe myself in sackcloth and cast dust and ashes upon my head. My soul is spiritually shut up. I find no food. Nothing comes from within and nothing comes from without.” This state of spiritual destitution is set forth by this wilderness state.  
Moreover, by the wilderness, doubtless, is meant affliction, for full often, when God means to bring a man to Himself, He sends affliction upon him. This is the Good Shepherd’s black dog with which He brings His wandering sheep back to Him. It comes howling after us and biting at our heels, and then we fly away to Christ. How many are there among you who were first brought to repentance by the loss of your property, or the death of someone dear to you? If everything had gone on smoothly, the stream would have wafted you along down to the gulf of black despair, but, all of a sudden the flood boiled around you, and the tempest gathered above your devoted head! Then you cried unto God in your trouble and your losses were more than recompensed—your God was found and your soul was saved! Happy are you who lose a fortune to find a Savior! Blessed is the burial of a friend or relative that leads to the new birth of our own souls and brings us to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! We have, many of us, great cause to bless that rough right hand of God which has smitten us so sternly, but which has always been moved with love whenever it has given us a blow of chastisement.  
Further, I think this wilderness may mean not only spiritual destitution and affliction, but also loneliness. When God means to save a man, He always makes that man to feel himself to be all alone. There was a time with me, I know, when I went up to the House of God and I knew not whether there was anyone else there while the sermon was being delivered. I seemed to be shut in by a black wall while the minister’s eyes appeared to be looking down into my soul. I believed that the good man meant me when he used the word, sinner—I could not think he was referring to anybody else! I loved not society, but was always seeking solitary places for prayer, trying to draw near to God in prayer, to tell Him my needs and to ask for His mercy. It is a happy sign when the Divine Hunter singles out one from the herd. He looks round, singles out His prey, and hunts him until, at last, He brings him down and carries him home rejoicing. The deer, when wounded, retires to weep, and bleed and die alone—and so, too, hearts when wounded love shady solitudes, that they may weep alone before God. This is, I believe, the meaning of, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness.”  
I will give you one more picture and then I think I shall have described this wilderness sufficiently. Can you, for a moment, imagine yourself taken away, all of a sudden, and carried by some giant hand swiftly through the air and deposited in the midst of the Desert of Sahara? You look around you and there is nothing to be seen that can afford you hope. Above you is the burning vault of Heaven with the furnace sun sending forth its fire upon you. Beneath you is the arid sand with no track of a traveler anywhere! At first you rush on, hoping soon to find the desert’s edge and to escape. Night succeeds day and in the thick darkness you still travel on—fear and hope together winging your feet. Day dawns again, but you are as far from deliverance as ever! And I can imagine that with your throat parched, and with your soul melted within you, you would cast yourself down upon the sand and cry, “Lost, lost, lost!” The echo of your words would come back to you from the burning Heaven above you and you would be the complete picture of despair— lost, lost, lost! Yet this is where God brings the

man whom He means to save! He puts him into such a position that above him seems to be an angry God. Beneath him a desert of sin and not a glimpse of hope—and he lies down, helpless and despairing, and cries, “Lost, lost, lost!”  
My Hearer, are you in such a position? Then, remember that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost and that you are one of those whom He came to save, for you are manifestly lost. He will never be disappointed with the result of His work! Those whom He come to save, He will save and if you trust Him, He will save you! You shall be brought in among His redeemed people here on earth and you shall see His face and rejoice in His great salvation in the day when He Shall come in the Glory of His Father with all His holy angels with Him!  
III. Now, note the next division of the passage—GOD’S MATCHLESS CONSOLATIONS.  
Does He bring her into the wilderness that she may be the prey of the vultures, or that the jackals may devour her? Oh, no! He brings her there that He may “speak comfortably to her.” You see how the two things go together. There is a precious golden band in the text—a band which neither death nor Hell can ever shatter, which, like a sacred rivet or heavenly link, joins the two sentences together. “I will bring her into the wilderness”—that is true, we know—“and I will speak comfortably to her.” That is also true. The two are linked together and cannot be separated. Those who are brought into such a wilderness as I have described, shall hear the comforting words of Jehovah spoken to their hearts!  
Now, with regard to these comforts, I would remark that they are sure comforts. We may take the words, “I will,” which stand at the beginning of the verse, as relating to each clause and, therefore, we may read it, “I will speak comfortably to her.” Therefore we have, first of all, sure mercies—“I will.” Good old Joseph Irons used to say, “Our shalls and wills are impotent and impracticable, but God’s shalls and wills are Omnipotent.” Has He said it, and shall it not be done? Has He decreed it, or promised it, and shall it not stand fast? Rest assured, poor Soul, that whatever may not be or whatever may be, if you are brought into the wilderness by God, He will assuredly speak comfortably unto you there! It may be a long while that you will have to wait, but, though the promise tarries, wait for it, for the time for its fulfillment shall surely come—it shall not fail! In due season, the Lord will remember you and will not forget you in your low estate, for His mercy endures forever and His faithfulness knows no end. He will speak comfortably unto you.  
Note next, that they are not only sure consolations, but Divine consolations. “I will speak comfortably to her.” Many ministers have tried what they could to cheer the sad, but they have done nothing. I have never learned so much of my own weakness as when, in preaching, I have sought to comfort some of God’s tried ones. I have sometimes, in my sermons, put in a little honey on purpose for them, but, somehow, that honey has seemed to ferment and become sour, so that they could not feed upon it. I have talked with them and done all I could to comfort them and, sometimes, I have had to turn them over to my Brothers in the Eldership and they have done their best—and failed. What, then, shall I say, Lord? Your poor servant can do nothing here. Will You do it, Lord? Will you, O blessed Spirit, who are the Comforter, take them by the hand and “speak comfortably” unto them? If You speak, they cannot refuse to hear, and then shall they indeed be comforted! O poor, tried Soul, is not this a rich promise, indeed? “I will speak comfortably to her.” He will not merely send an angel or minister to comfort them, but He will Himself do the work—“I will speak comfortably to her.”  
The third remark I make upon these consolations is that they are effectual consolations. The Hebrew bears the interpretation, “I will speak to her heart.” We speak to your ears, but God speaks to your heart. Oh, what speaking that is, when God speaks right from His heart into our hearts! Some of us have experienced this at times. We have found the Word of God to well up, as it were, from Him and then, as it has welled up, it has gone down deep into our hearts and we have been made to drink of it to the very fullest. “I will speak to her heart.” Poor Soul, if you are brought into the wilderness, God will effectually comfort you. He has effectually convicted you and He will effectually console you! If He has brought you into the wilderness of humility and sore distress, He will as surely bring you into the Canaan of faith and joy!  
I remark, in the next place, that these consolations are not only sure, Divine and effectual, but they are full. “I will speak comfortably to her.” What rich words of comfort are those which God addresses to His people! He pardons them, He justifies them, He sanctifies them, He preserves them, He upholds them, He prevents them, He brings them safely home, at last, and all this He speaks to the heart of the poor, tried and tempted soul in the wilderness—and thus He makes it “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”  
It is not in my power, my dear Friends, to speak to your hearts. I can only speak to your outward ears, but let me repeat some of those things which God says when He speaks to the heart. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them.” Thus God speaks rich promises of pardon and He also says, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”  
How sweetly He speaks concerning the trials and troubles of this world! “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.” And how graciously He tells His people, “In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” And how comfortably does He remind His people that, come what may, they shall still be secure! “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the fire kindle upon you.” And then, when His poor people think He can hardly remember them, He says, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.”  
And then, lest even this should be of no avail, He says, “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.” “For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.” Truly did I speak, when I remarked that this consolation is full, and well does one of our poets express the same sentiment when he says—  
*“What more can He say than to you He has said, You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*We have a Bible that cannot be enlarged! We have promises that cannot be extended! We have blessings that cannot be exaggerated! And imagination’s utmost stretch could not make us conceive of anything beyond! Oh, may God, who has brought you into the wilderness of sore trouble, bring each one now present into His gracious Presence, that you may know that He Himself thus speaks comfortably unto you!  
IV. Now I close by coming back to the first clause of the text, and meditating on THE SWEET PERSUASIONS with which God draws us to Himself. “I will allure her.”  
There are many who are very much afraid they are not converted because they have not had a thunder-and-lightning experience—they were not converted in stormy weather—they had not the terrors of the Law of God and the shaking over Hell’s mouth that some have experienced. They have read of John Bunyan and his desperate struggles, but they have not gone through anything of the kind. They can say that they have felt their need of a Savior and realized their sin, but the accounts they have heard of what others have known of the terrors of Hell have been so impressed upon them that they have feared that they could not be God’s people. Read our text. It says, “I will allure her.” It does not say, “I will drive her.” It does not say, “I will drag her.” It does not even say, “I will compel her.” It does not say, “I will make her run into the wilderness for fear of Me.” No, but the Lord says, “I will allure her.”  
What does this mean? I cannot explain it better than by a very simple figure. I see the fowlers come, sometimes, to Clapham Common. I once saw a man with a robin redbreast in a cage. This poor little bird was made to sing and so tried to decoy other birds from the sky. The fowler was luring birds, catching them by the lure—and, my Brothers and Sisters, this is how God brings many of His children to Himself. We have all been like wild birds, but He has converted some of us, by His Grace, and put us into the cage of the pulpit—and made us sing as best we can, so as to lure poor sinners to come to the Divine Fowler, the Lord Jesus Christ! I wish I could sing better. I would that I were a better decoy, that I might bring more to Jesus. Many a Sister has been a decoy to her brother. Many a wife has lured her husband to Christ. You cannot drag them, but you may draw them. All that you can do, in your daily life, and in your house, or wherever else you may meet with these poor worldlings, is to lure them to Christ by letting them hear how sweetly you sing and see how happy you are, even while you are, as they say, a poor caged bird! Let them see how you enjoy your liberty in Christ and so seek, with all earnestness, to bring them to the Savior!  
There is another figure which will explain the Lord’s words, “I will allure her.” When your little children are learning to walk, they are set up by the side of the table. They are quite frightened at first, for they have hardly tried their little legs yet. The nurse desires that the child may walk a little way. Well, what does she do? She holds out an apple, or a sweetmeat, to tempt it, and it tries to come to her, but it is ready to fall— so the nurse’s finger is held out and the child is supported. It rests a moment and it is lured on again, with some toy or picture, something that tempts it on—and thus it learns to walk. Possibly you say that I ought not to use such a simple figure. No, but, I ought, for it is used in Scripture—“I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms,” just as a father might hold up his little one by the arms and let its feet just lightly touch the ground. The Lord condescends thus to speak, and surely I may do the same! May not a man speak thus with his fellows? Yes, surely this is the way in which God brings many of His children to Christ! He lures them! He does not thunder forth and frighten them, but He tempts them on by mercies and baits of heavenly pleasure—and so are they drawn to the Cross of Christ.  
Some have been lured by the sweetness of the Character of Christ. They have taken His yoke upon them because He is “meek and lowly in heart,” and they have found rest unto their souls. Others have been lured by the blessings of religion. They have said, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace,” and have said to the people of God, “We will go with you.” Many have been lured by the prospect of Heaven and the joy which has been set before them. And they have counted their lives as less than nothing in order that they might first suffer the reproach of Christ and then inherit His Glory. Do not be cast down because you have not had a terrible experience. Perhaps you are among those whom God sweetly lured to Himself.  
So I conclude my discourse by bidding every Christian here to go forth and endeavor to lure poor souls to Christ. You must alter the shape of that face of yours that is so long and miserable! You are not luring souls to Christ—you are doing quite the reverse—you will drive them away from Him. Put away, I beseech you, that constant habit of murmuring and grumbling at everything and everybody. Come, take your harp down from the willows and sing us one of the songs of Zion! Let us have no more groaning—that will frighten away the poor wild birds. They see your misery and how can they be lured to come when they see you so unhappy? I think that the long faces of God’s people do a good deal of mischief. I see nothing to cause them, but just the reverse. Our Lord Jesus says that the hypocrites are of a sad countenance, so I should not like to have a sad countenance, for fear any man should think me a hypocrite!  
What does He further say? “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face: that you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.” Do not let the worldling know that you are fasting. If you have troubles, keep them within you, do not let him know of them— let him see a happy exterior. In this way, you will allure him to Christ! And take care, by the gentleness and kindness of your conversation, to bring him to think of that religion which he has hitherto rejected. I have heard it related of some Methodist that, after praying a long while for his wife’s conversion, threatened to beat her if she were not converted in a certain time. I believe she was not converted, but that was not the way to bring her to the Savior! Instead of wooing sinners and alluring them, there are some who, if they do not go to the length of physica1 force, nevertheless seem as if they would bully them to Christ, they speak to them so sharply and sternly.  
There is never any good done in that way. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and more souls are brought to Christ by sweet words than by sour and bitter ones. Let our life be like that of Christ—“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”—and then, added to this, let us have a heavenly cheerfulness about us which will lead others to see that though our religion takes away from us the pleasures of the wicked, it gives us something so much better! Isaac Watts was right when he said—  
*“Religion never was designed  
To make our pleasures less.”*  
Go, Beloved, and lure others to Christ! And may God the Holy Spirit bless each one of you! If in the wilderness, may He speak comfortably to you. If hardened in your sin, may He bring you into the wilderness! And if He has already spoken comfortably to you, may He help you to speak comfortably to others! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 9:51-56.**

Verse 51. And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. It is a very remarkable expression that is used here—“when the time was come that He should be received up.” It does not say, “that He should depart,” or, “that He should die.” It leaps over that and speaks only of His glorious Ascension into Heaven! When that time was drawing near—and, of course, His death would come before it—Christ “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,” where He knew that He should die upon the Cross.

52, 53. And sent messengers before His face: and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And, of course, Jerusalem was a sort of rival of Samaria. And if He was going there to worship, they did not want Him to stay with them. Yet the Samaritans were believers in the first five Books of the Bible. They accepted the Pentateuch, and they ought, therefore, to have practiced hospitality, imitating Abraham’s noble example. They erred both against their own Scriptures and against the dictates of humanity when they refused to receive Christ because He was on His way to Jerusalem.

54. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did? James and John, two of the most loving of Christ’s disciples! John, the most loving of all, startles us all by failing in the matter of love and so being as bad as the Samaritans themselves! I have often noticed that very “liberal-minded” people who denounce bigotry in general, do it with about seven times as much bigotry as those who are out-and-out bigots! In fact, it is a wonderfully easy thing to be a bigot against all bigotry, and to be illiberal towards everybody except fellow-liberals. Well, that is a pity. It is far better to have the spirit of Christ, even when the Samaritans refuse to exercise hospitality. At any rate, let them live. You notice that John quotes the example of Elijah and this should teach us that the best men mentioned in Scripture did things which we may not copy, and that they did some things right, which it would be wrong for us to do. Under special Inspiration of God, Elijah, the Prophet of Fire, may call down fire from Heaven—but you and I must not do so—we are not sent for any such purpose. Let us, therefore, be cautious how we make even Prophets our exemplars in some things.

55, 56. But He turned and rebuked them, and said, You know not what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. If that principle had been always remembered and followed, there would have been no persecution. To cause a man to suffer in his body, or in his estate because of his religious opinions, be they what they may, is a violation of Christianity! Consciences belong to God, alone, and it is not for us to be calling for fire, the stake, the rack or imprisonment for men because they do not believe as we do! “The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

56. And they went to another village. That was the easiest thing for them to do and a great deal better than calling for fire from Heaven upon anybody! If one village would not receive them, another would. And if you cannot get on with one person, get on with somebody else. Do not grow angry with people—that is not the way to make them better. To fight God’s battles with the devil’s weapons is generally, in the end, to fight the devil’s battles on his behalf—let none of us make such a mistake as that!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2569 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 2.15

THE BACKSLIDER’S DOOR OF HOPE

NO. 2569

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 8, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 22, 1883.

**“And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.” Hosea 2:15.**  
A FORTNIGHT ago, you will remember that we considered the very terrible description which the Prophet gave of the sin of God’s ancient peo  
ple. [See Sermon #2564, Volume 44, “Strange Ways of Love”—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org ] They were even described

coarsely, because only such imagery could set forth their disgraceful filthiness in departing from Jehovah, the living and true God, and setting up false gods, the rites of whose worship were indescribably obscene. I would not dare to mention what these men did under the guise of religion when they turned aside from Jehovah and set up Baal, Ashtaroth and other idols that were not gods. You will also remember how the Lord, in His holy jealousy, dealt with His people. He sent them affliction after affliction. He took away from them those mercies which they had prostituted for the purpose of sin. He made them poor, sick and wretched. They were invaded and enslaved by the neighboring nations whose deities they had set up in the place of the Most High. Further, you remember—for we tried to describe it—they were so desperately set on mischief that they would not be turned from their wicked ways—they revolted more and more. The more it cost them to sin, the more extravagant they were in it.

Then it was that the Lord, in great mercy, changed His mode of operation. He told His servant, Hosea, to say that He would try another plan of working. The Law had failed, in that it was weak through the flesh, so He would use the Gospel—He would bring the Omnipotent power of love into the field! Our text a fortnight ago was, “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart.” And I sought, then, to set forth the strange ways in which God, with wondrous love, allures His people to Himself—how He draws them away from all their former confidences and hopes and brings them into a wilderness alone with Him. And there He must feed them, or they must die— there He must guide them, or they must hopelessly stray. And there He must be everything to them, or else they must be destroyed with a great destruction. When the Lord, in love, brings His people to be alone with Him, then it is that He makes His promises come home to their hearts—and His person, His purposes, His ancient love and all the great preparations of that love as to the eternal future are laid home to the hearts of God’s backsliding children—and they are made, again, to rejoice therein so that they are comforted. That was our subject, as you may remember.

Now we follow with this next verse which is intended to show yet more the goodness of God towards backsliders when they return to Him, or, if you like, towards sinners when, for the first time, they approach His feet. On this occasion I intend mainly to speak to those who have lost a sense of God’s love. Perhaps there may have strayed in here some who were once professors, but they are not professors, now—some who were once members of a Christian Church, but no Christian Church would acknowledge them, now. Once they could, perhaps, speak to others in Christ’s name, but they would be afraid to say a word for Jesus now, for they have gone far astray from Him. The message of infinite mercy to such people is, “Return, you backsliding children!” Come back, come home to your God! There is no other place of rest for you in the whole world—you will be as a bird that wanders from its nest. Sinners may rest content in their sin, for as yet they know no better, but you are disqualified even for that! You have so much knowledge still left and so much of conscience still remains that you are spoiled for this world, spoiled for the pleasures of sin, spoiled for all confidence except the one confidence which you used to have in Christ Jesus your Lord. There is no alternative for you but to return, for you cannot go elsewhere. Therefore, come home to your first Husband—that is God’s own metaphor—for it was better with you then, than now!

Oh, that the blessed Spirit would now allure you, draw you apart, get you alone with Christ and speak comfortably to you! While He is doing that, permit me to tell you something, first, concerning restored blessings. “I will give her vineyards from there.” Then, next, concerning revived hopes. “I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope.” And then, thirdly, concerning renewed songs. “She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”

I. First, then, let me talk to returning backsliders ABOUT RESTORED BLESSINGS.  
You have lost a good deal by losing Christ. In fact, to your own consciousness, you have lost everything. All that made you joyous and glad has departed from you like a dream of the night—as a man awakes and finds himself in darkness—even so have you awakened from the brightness of that foolish dream of yours and you find yourself undone. Now come back to God, for in coming back you will have fulfilled to you the promise of our text—“I will give her vineyards from there.”  
By this is meant, first, that God will give back to returning penitents that which He took away. Read the 12th verse—“I will destroy her vines and her fig trees.” Now the Lord says, “I will give her her vineyards from there.” When you come back to Christ, the very things that were taken away from you shall be restored to you! It is sometimes so even in temporal things. The rod is put aside when it has answered its purpose. Many a man has been kept poor, or sick, or grievously depressed in spirit until the time when he has heard the rod and Him that did appoint it. And then, when he has turned, again, to his God, he has once more prospered. I do not say that it is always so, for there may be other reasons why the affliction should continue, but I do say that it is often so in the experience of God’s people. While they have gone astray, they have had affliction upon affliction—but when they have returned to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, He has made them to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. I am sure that it is so as to spiritual matters.  
If you have backslidden, the House of God ministers no comfort to you now. When you come to it, it is no longer a home to you. But if you come back to the Lord, you shall find the same pleasure in the House of Prayer that you used to find in it. Now, perhaps, the Sabbath has become a weariness to you, for it does not bring you any holy joy—it only sounds the knell of your departed blessings. Come back to God and the Sabbath bell shall have all its silvery music restored and you shall wake up on the morning of the Lord’s-Day and begin singing—  
*“Come, bless the Lord, whose love assigns So sweet a rest for wearied minds;  
Provides an antepast of Heaven,  
And gives this day the food of seven.”*  
You shall have the House of Prayer made none other than the House of God to you, and the first day of the week shall become to you the best of all the seven!  
Possibly, also, you continue to read your Bible, but it appears to have lost all its former interest. You fall upon your knees and try to pray, but you do not meet with God. You associate with the Lord’s people, but you find no charm in that communion which was once so hallowed—the very essence seems to have gone from every means of Grace. You go out in the morning, but there is no manna. The dews of Heaven are withheld, so no blessing comes to your spirit. Now, if you return to the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth—and His great love restores you to Himself—then all this shall come back to you! “I will give her her vineyards from there.” Do not wait till all this blessing comes back and then return to Christ— do not try to put the effect before the cause! But come now, just as you are, in all your dullness and your deadness—come back to your first love and trust in Jesus as you did at the very beginning—for then the Lord will restore to you all the privileges that made your life so happy and bright.  
Notice, next, that not only are these things which are restored to the backsliding nation those that were taken away, but they are now made to be more hers than they were before. Read again verse 12—“I will destroy her vines and her fig trees.” Now God says, “I will give her her vineyards from there.” She shall feel a peculiar possession about what she now has, for she shall see that there is a deed of gift by which God has again given to her those mercies which she had lost. Oh, I do love to feel, when the Sabbath comes, that it is God’s Day which He has hedged about for me! And when I go to the House of God to worship, I like to think that it is appointed for me there to draw near to God, to open His Book, and to feel that the Bible is my Father’s letter to me, a gift from God to me—and that the Mercy Seat was the gift of Infinite Love and Divine Grace, prepared on purpose that I and others like I might come to it! How precious do even our common mercies become when we see them given back to us by a Father’s hand! I reckon that there is no man who loves the means of Grace like the man who at one time felt them to be dry and barren. When the Lord fills the dry beds of the rivers with the torrents of His love, then we come and drink abundantly and we rejoice exceedingly. When, for a while, all outward means have seemed to become a wilderness to us, oh, how glad we are when, once again, the Lord appears, and puts life, and power, and efficacy into them, so that our soul rejoices in them! Poor Backslider, ask the Lord even at this moment to give you back all that you have lost and to make you feel that He is giving it to you by a double act of Grace and that, therefore, it is yours—you have a Covenant right to it and what He gives you is now your very own so that you will enjoy it to the fullest without any idea that you are presuming when you do so! Thus you will understand the meaning of God’s gracious promise, “I will give her her vineyards from there.”  
Further, notice that when the Lord restores a backslider, He does not withhold even the sweetest of His former blessings. The Lord give him not only that which is necessary—that might be described as cornfields—but He gives that which tends to luxury, to joy, to exhilaration—“I will give her, her vineyards.” Vineyards are not necessary to the life of man, but God does not stint Himself in giving to His people barely bread and water, but He gives them things not absolutely necessary, that He may further increase their joys. He gives after a royal manner! The house of God’s mercy is not a workhouse, where they weigh out so many ounces of bread—it is a banqueting house where the Lord, as King in Zion, makes His guests to rejoice as He distributes the riches of His Grace! “I will give her, her vineyards.” Oh, listen, you who are now distressed! You shall not only have back your former peace of mind, but you shall have even joy in the Lord! You shall not merely be permitted to sit at the Lord’s table and eat a little morsel, and then go your way hungering for more—but He will satiate your soul with goodness, He will make you to eat of fat things full of marrow and to drink of wines on the lees well refined!  
Never imagine that the Lord will let in a poor backslider to a sort of second-rate Gospel feast, put him in the back rows and give him something less than he gives to his Brothers and Sisters. No, the prodigal’s father killed for him the fatted calf which he had not killed even for the elder brother. And if you will come back to God, my wandering Friend, He will give to you the chief things which He has stored up, even the abundance of Infinite Love, till your heart shall leap within you and your life shall become a Psalm, and your whole being shall be as a harp upon which the fingers of God shall play to bring out sweetest music henceforth and forever! Only return and you shall see what lies before you! Go on in your sin and your way shall become blacker and blacker—the pitfalls and snares shall multiply every step you take—and the darkness shall deepen into a tenfold night! But return unto your rest and the way shall become smoother beneath your feet, your heart shall grow stronger in the Lord, your ways shall be established and a new song shall be put into your mouth, even praise unto your God! Thus runs the promise, “I will give her her vineyards.” She shall have all the mirth and all the joy that a ransomed spirit ought to know! Oh, what comfort there is in this to any who have wandered away from God, but who resolve to return to Him!  
I want you also to notice, before I leave this first point, that it is said, “I will give her, her vineyards from there,” which means, I think, that God gives these blessings in the wilderness into which He allures her. He promises to give her her vineyards in the solitude into which He allures her when He takes her away from all her earthly trusts to be alone with Himself. And, mark you, the vineyards given, “from there,” will be worth ten thousand of the world’s vineyards! I mean, by this, that a joy which is found in Christ, alone, is true joy, one single particle of which will outweigh the joy of all the world besides! The joy that springs from the garden dies when the garden is dry, but the joy that is given in the wilderness is a root from a dry ground so it can never lose its moisture. It can never decay, for it is nourished from above, not from beneath. The joy that I get in the creature dies with the creature from which it comes, but the joy that comes from Christ the Creator is like He from whom it comes—it can never expire! “I will give her her vineyards from there,” that is to say, I will fetch her gains from losses, her crowns from crosses and her sweet from sweat. I will bring her honey from a lion. I will bring her life from Christ’s death. I will bring her Heaven from all His woes! “I will give her, her vineyards from there.”  
I should like everyone here, who is very happy, to be asking, “What is the secret of my joy? Am I rejoicing in the Lord? Or, is mine like the mirth of the ungodly that sustains itself on corn, wine, oil and on the abundance of these perishable things? Have I peace at this moment? Then, on what is my peace founded? Is it built on something which I can see, and taste, and handle of the world’s goods? If so, it will fail me at the last! But if I get happiness that springs from Christ, my Lord, who has become everything to me, then I have a peace that I may grasp and hold fast in the article of death as well as in the trials of life! “I will give her, her vineyards from there.” Come, poor Backslider, whatever your sad case—the Lord can give you joy in Himself! All the joy that your soul can hold, He can give you when alone with Himself. Poor Sinner, if you are sorely grieved with a sense of your sin, and if outward trials are pressing you very heavily, the Lord can give you joy that shall fill your heart to overflowing from Himself, alone, if you will but come to Him! He can give you the resolve to come—oh, that, with all your heart, you would now seek His face and live in Him! May His blessed Spirit work this Grace in you, and to Him shall be all glory!  
Many here well know what these vineyards are which the Lord gives to His returning people. I will tell you of some into which I have been, myself, and I wish to live in those vineyards all my days. One of them is access to God in prayer. The wanderer is shut out from God, he cannot come near to God in prayer. But when he returns to the Savior, he finds that the Mercy Seat is still open and he can speak with God as a man speaks with his friend. That is a vineyard bearing the sweetest clusters!  
A second vineyard is that of communion with God—to feel that God dwells within us and we dwell in Him—that we are His children and that He is our Father always manifesting Himself to us. That is a glorious vineyard! If a man can but eat the fruit thereof, it will make him long to go into the hill country of Heaven where the best grapes are ripening for the perfected ones.  
A third vineyard is that of full assurance of faith. May a backslider ever come back to that vineyard? Yes, that he may! If you, poor Wanderer, do so, you will be a happy man—not only to hope and to trust that you are saved, but to know it. And not only to know it, but to know it infallibly, to know it so that all the devils in Hell cannot shake your confidence that it is so—to know it by the witness of the Holy Spirit’s inward sealing of the Truth of God to your soul. This is a blessed vineyard, indeed! God will give it to all those who truly come back to Him. And may those who have not wandered, often go and dwell amidst those sweetsmelling vines!  
Yet another vineyard is usefulness. When backsliders return to the Lord, He condescends to employ them and honor them in bringing others to Himself. This is, indeed, to live in a vineyard where the grapes are very sweet to the palate, for surely, men can hardly have greater joy than that of leading others to the Savior’s feet! And then, besides these vineyards, there are the manifestations of Christ to His own. There are openings up of the Word of God by the blessed Spirit. There are the tokens of Divine Love even in Providence in a thousand varied forms. I cannot tell you all the sweet and precious things—the joys unspeakable—which the Lord gives to His own people when they come back to Him and dwell with Him! Therefore, come back, poor Wanderer, and you shall find it out for yourself! And you who have never come, before, you, also, come by simple, humble faith, and the Lord will receive you graciously and bless you this night and forever!  
So much, then, for the first part of my subject—restored blessings.  
II. The second division of my discourse is this, REVIVED HOPES—“I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope.”  
What was this Valley of Achor? It was the place of their first victory over their enemies. It was the first land upon which the Israelites entered after they crossed the Jordan and the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground. Hard by the city

of palm trees was the fertile Valley of Achor. If ever the Israelites were to go back, again, they must enter Palestine by the same door if they crossed the Jordan at all—the key of the position was the Valley of Achor, the first region of which they would have to take possession if they wished to win the rest of the land.  
And, surely, the spiritual meaning of the metaphor is this—the Lord will give to backsliders, when they return to Him, a renewed realization of His Grace—the old joyous feelings, the consciousness of their first love coming back, their first simple faith being revived. This taking possession, again, of that which was theirs at the first, shall be to them, “a door of hope,” that they shall, in time, take possession of the land! I tell you, Brothers and Sisters, it is a very blessed thing to get back to our first days. We may have better days than our first ones if we go on and make the progress God desires for us, but though they may be, in some respects, deeper and fuller, yet I do not know whether we do not all look back upon the first days of our conversion with very fond memories and some regrets. Other days have become indistinct, like coins in general circulation, but, as far as I am concerned, that first day of my spiritual life is, in my memory, as clear, fresh and sharp as when it first came from the mint of time! Oh, the bliss of that first joy when Jesus told me I was His and my Beloved was mine! That first moment of rest when the burden rolled off my shoulders—I will never forget it! I cannot help remembering it at this moment. And it is a very sweet way of putting it, that the Lord will give you back that first Valley into which you then came—that Valley of Achor where first you set your foot—and you shall feel, again, as you felt then!  
To use another figure—though now you are covered with leprosy, your flesh shall be, again, to you as the flesh of a little child—you shall feel as if you were beginning your spiritual life over again. That shall be to you, “a door of hope,” for you shall say to yourself, “Surely, the Lord means mercy to me. He has led me back to the very spot where He blessed me at first! He has made me feel just as I felt, then, and He has brought me to the same simplicity of faith which I exercised in the young dawning of my spiritual life. Therefore am I persuaded that He means, now, to lead me on from strength to strength that, as I capture Achor, I may capture all the rest of the land and all the blessings of the Covenant may be mine.” Listen to this, Backslider! Pluck up heart of hope! May God help you to do so and to come back to Him, for He will give you that Valley of Achor to be a door of hope!  
But we cannot help remembering that the name of that Valley of Achor signifies trouble. You have only to look in the margin of your Bible, at Joshua 7:26, and you will find that it was the Valley of Trouble, and the trouble came in this way—when the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground, there was one Achan, or Achar, or Achor, who took some of the spoil which was all to have been either dedicated to God or else destroyed. Before the children of Israel could have God’s blessing, they had to clear themselves from the guilt of this accursed thing. They went out to battle and were defeated at Ai. Then there had to be a searching and a digging—and at last they found the godly Babylonian garment and the two hundred shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold. And then they took Achan, and all that he had, and brought them into the Valley of Achor— and destroyed and burned them—and buried them under a great heap of stones. That Valley of Achor was, indeed, a Valley of Trouble, but after Joshua and all Israel had purged themselves from the evil, it became a door of hope to them!  
So, dear Friends, when you and I began our spiritual life, it was not long before our joy was marred. Sin was still in our heart and, before long, it broke out. There are many poor sinners who want to find peace, who seem to me to be searching their hearts exactly the wrong way—they are seeking for any good thing there may be in them—but that is a sheer waste of time! The proper thing to do is to search your heart for the bad things that are in you—to do as Israel did in the case of Achan when they cast lots that God’s will might be known and that His Spirit might reveal the criminal. And then go and dig until you turn up the evil and find the accursed thing. “Why, Sir!” you say, “I can already see quite enough of my sins.” Can you? I think that the fault of most sinners is that they do not see half enough of their sin. “Oh, but,” you cry, “I see enough to drive me to despair!” I wish you saw enough to drive you to double despair, for when a man heartily and thoroughly despairs of himself, then will he begin to hope in Christ! But many men try to find out some good thing in themselves and they dig all over the camp to discover something of great price. Believe me, there is not a grain of pure gold in all your mines! There is not anything worth the finding in all Israel’s camp! Dig as long as you may, you will only dig out the evil thing on which God’s curse is resting!  
There is many a sinner who cannot find the door of hope because he is holding on to some evil thing. There is, for instance, the man who is clinging to strong drink—he never can have peace with God when, perhaps, only once in six months can he walk home in an upright fashion. He cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils! There is another man who is practicing some secret sin. I dare not say what it is, but he knows. Yet he says that he is trying to find peace with God. Ah, Sir, you will never obtain it while you cling to that iniquity! You must cut off the evil thing, even if it is your right arm! You must pluck it out, even if it is your right eye! Here is a person who does something in business that he ought not to do—and here is another man who omits to do what he knows that he ought to do. They think that God will make peace with them on their terms, but He makes no terms with sinners unless they will part with their sins and trust in Christ alone! God will not save you and let you save your pet sin—that cannot be! The place in which a man shall honestly give up every willful act and thought of sin and, by the help of God’s Spirit, shall quit everything which is revealed to him to be evil, shall be to him a door of hope! The place where he troubles himself because of his sin, where his conscience frets and worries over it. The place where he puts away the sin and buries it—and piles stones upon it because he abhors it—that is the place where God shall come and manifest Himself to him in the fullness of His Grace! “I will give her the Valley of Achor for a door of hope.” The place of Grace and the place of purging, the place of chastisement and the place of turning away from sin—this is the place that shall become the backslider’s door of hope!  
Now, Beloved, we will not spend all our time in talking about the door and forget what the hopes are, but who can describe the hopes that come trooping through that door? The hope of being kept, preserved and sustained through every struggle of this life’s campaign—the hope of entering into eternal rest with Christ—the hope of the resurrection from among the dead—the hope of infinite glory for body and soul with Christ, world without end—all those hopes which your backsliding has cast away shall come back to you! And, filled with hope, your spirit shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!  
III. I have but a minute or two to dwell upon the last point, whereon one might well speak for an hour—that is, RENEWED SONGS.  
You must have noticed, dear Friends, that whenever men turn aside from Christ, they go away from all the music of true religion. A little religion is a very miserable thing! If you have just enough religion to let you know that you are wrong, but not enough to make you right, you are spoiled for the joys of the world, yet you do not possess the joys of the world to come. I cannot help telling you again the old American story about the apples in the orchard. There is said to have been a gentleman who asked a friend to come and have some of his apples, which he said were among the finest apples in the State. Yet his friend did not come, though he was invited several times. The gentleman thought that there must be some reason for his refusal, so he asked him why he did not come, and his friend answered, “The fact is, while I have been driving by your orchard, I have picked up an apple or two that fell into the road and I can’t say that I have, at all, pleasant memories of those apples—they were the sourest that I ever ate in my life! They set my teeth on edge even to think of them.” “Oh,” said the owner of the orchard, “now I understand! I sent a great many miles to buy those particular apples that grow just by the side of the hedge and fall into the road. I bought them for the special benefit of the boys who might be inclined to steal my fruit. Whenever they taste them, they say to themselves, ‘It is no use to rob that orchard, the apples are horribly sour.’ But,” he added, “if you will come inside, where those boys do not come, you shall then see what a good apple is like.”  
So is it with religion. All along the outside of the hedge, where those people come who have just a little religion, the fruit is as sour as it can be—repentance that needs to be repented of—and that gripes the very spirit of the man who has it. There are plenty of those things on the outside, but you have no idea of the luscious sweetness of the fruits that grow in the center—and these shall be yours if you come back to the Master and give yourself up wholly to Him! And the result will be that you will again begin to sing!  
“She shall sing,” says the text. She shall not be able to talk out her joys, she shall feel that she must sing! “She shall sing there.” That is, in the wilderness, alone with Christ. “She shall sing there.” “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” “She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth.” Youth is the time for singing! Young converts are usually full of song and if we return to our Lord, after having backslidden from Him, we shall get back the songs of our spiritual childhood as well as all the other good things that were with us when first we knew the Lord. Ah, poor Wanderer, if you come back to Christ, you shall relish, again, the hymns that you began to despise when you acquired that fine taste that some have which scorns the precious things that please God’s humble people. I know some who have become so lofty and proud that the Gospel is not good enough for them—they want something much more refined to suit their precious wisdom and their wonderful culture! Yes, but when the Lord puts them on short commons for a while and whips them well for their ill manners, they are glad to get back to the simple hymns and to the elementary Truths of God they once loved. You know how dear, good Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted those around him to sing him a child’s hymn and, in another sense, when the children of God are spiritually reviving, they always want to have the hymns that were good for them when they were in their spiritual childhood.  
The text further says, “She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.” I read you that song—oh, that our hearts might time to its tune! May we come back to the Lord so perfectly that we shall be able to say, “Let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” May we see so much of His conquest of our sin that we may magnify His name and exalt in Him! May we take Him so wholly to be ours that we may say again, “He is my God and I will prepare Him an habitation. He is my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.” I want you who have gone back from God, to get such a renewed hold on Him that you will not know how to make enough of Him and not know how sufficiently to praise and land and magnify that infinite love which has brought you, as it were, through the very depths of the sea and landed you safely on the other side! Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord! If your feet may not dance, yet let your heart dance! And if you need no timbrel, as you are not under the old dispensation in which such instruments were allowable, yet let your fingers seem to beat the heavenly tunes! Let your whole being praise and glorify the Lord who has brought you back from the land of your captivity! If you blessed Him when you first came to Him, bless Him yet more, now that you are allowed to come to Him for the second time! If you praised Him when first you plunged in the fountain filled with blood, oh, bless Him still more, now that He comes and washes your feet which have wandered so far from Him. If the first homecoming was with music and dancing, what shall the second homecoming be?—  
*“Angels, assist our mighty joys.”*  
Rejoice with us over Brothers and Sisters who were dead and are alive again—over lost ones that are now found! So may it be! Poor Wanderers, do come home, do come home! “The door is shut,” you say. Who shut it? Certainly not the Father, for He has sent His Son to be the open Door for all who will come unto Him! Christ Himself invites you to return! The Spirit is given to draw you back to God and if you have never come before, come now! Oh, that you might be persuaded to come, ere yet you leave this House of Prayer, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HOSEA 2:14, 15; EXODUS 15:1-21.**[Exposition was always **before** the sermon.—EO]

You remember that, a fortnight ago, we read the second chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, and I preached from the 14th verse. I am going to continue that subject tonight, so we will read two verses of the same chapter over again. I am sure we shall never exhaust it and you will not be weary of hearing it. We will begin with the text from which I then spoke to you.

Hosea 2:14, 15. Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor for a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. Now I want you to hear how she did sing in the days of her youth, in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. Turn to the 15th Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we have the joyful song of the emancipated chosen nation.

Exodus 15:1-10. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spoke, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation. He is my father’s God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is His name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his host has He cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power: Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of Your excellency You have overthrown them that rose up against You: You sent forth Your wrath which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. They were all noise, bluster and boast, but observe the sublime attitude of God, how readily He eased Himself of His adversaries—“You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.”

11-14. Who is like unto You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth the people which You have redeemed: You have guided them in Your strength unto Your holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. That is, the heathen nations who, at that time, inhabited the land of Palestine. “Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine.”

15. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. This great deed of God would be told, and told again, all over Palestine. And the inhabitants would feel that their end was come, for who could stand against Israel’s mighty God?

16. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which You have purchased. And how still they were! All the 40 years that the Israelites were in the wilderness, they were scarcely ever attacked. And even then it was not by the inhabitants of Canaan, but by the wandering Bedouin tribe of the Amalekites, who slew the hindmost of them. It was amazing that no troops ever came from Egypt to molest God’s people after the destruction at the Red Sea. Neither from Canaan did any come to block their way. When God strikes, He makes His adversaries dread all future conflicts!

17-21. You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have established. The LORD shall reign forever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them, but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing you to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea. They sang as in an oratorio, Miriam singing the solo, and all the women joining in the jubilant chorus! And well might they rejoice after the great deliverance which the Lord had worked for them.

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A DOOR OF HOPE

NO. 2750

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 27, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1859.

**“The Valley of Achor as a door of hope.”  
Hosea 2:15.**

A CHRISTIAN must walk by faith, not by sight. The way to Heaven is not one which is to be trodden by the carnal foot of the man who must see before he can believe. It is a dark way to those who have not the eyes of faith. It is a way through the air, utterly inaccessible to those who have not faith’s wings. It is a way upward, quite impassable to the man who has not faith’s ladder. The way through this world, under the guardianship of God, and upward to the eternal Home of the faithful is by faith and not by sight. Yet, nevertheless, the Lord is pleased to humor our weakness and our frailties—albeit that we would be quite as safe if we had to walk by faith in the dark—as we are when we walk in the light of the supernatural inward sight of faith, still seeing a brighter light than that which glistens around us. Yet it does please God to give us, in this wilderness, comfortable tokens and sure evidences by which we are enabled to understand, even by reason, judgment and sense, that we are His reconciled people. When God withholds the Presence of His comforting Spirit, or when the sunlight of His Countenance is taken from us, we are, nevertheless, quite safe, for then we are enabled to cling to Christ in the dark with the arms of faith—but God often gives us more than is absolutely necessary—He gives us glimpses of Heaven while here below and rich spiritual enjoyment while we are in this otherwise barren land.

Now, on the present occasion, we have to speak not of the meal on which faith necessarily feeds, but of a luxury, a dainty, a kind of celestial dessert which faith feeds upon, not so much for her nourishing, as for her delight. If the children of Israel in the wilderness had manna for their necessities, they also had quail for their satisfaction and delight. Now God gives us, in the Presence of His Son, the manna of Heaven! In the finished work and spotless righteousness of Jesus, He gives our faith its solid and substantial food. But here, in these vineyards—in these gardens which we enter through the doors of hope—He gives to faith its fragrant spices and its clusters of grapes of Eshcol, which, as they come in contact with the spiritual palace, cause faith to leap for very joy!

What is this which, in our text, is called, “a door of hope”? I think it may be understood in four ways. There is, sometimes, a greater embarrassment in the richness of Scripture than in is poverty. In fact, there can be no poverty in any text. I have sometimes heard a complaint made by one who was studying a sermon, that there was not much in the text. I have generally to complain that there is far more in the text than I can possibly bring out and so, in this one, there seem to be four interpretations, each of which has a host of commentators to back it! And, as I am incapable of judging which is the best, I will give you all four—and you shall take your choice.

If you read attentively the history of the coming of the children of Israel into Canaan, you will see that the Valley of Achor was the first spot on which they settled. Just at the time when they were close to Jericho, they pitched their tents in the Valley of Achor. It was there, for the first time, that they ate the old corn of the land. And it was in that plain that the manna ceased to fall because there was no further need for it. They had entered into Canaan, itself, and this valley was their first possession.

I. Now I take it that by the Valley of Achor, in this text, you and I may understand OUR FIRST SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENTS.  
We remember—and we can never forget—the time when we were going through the wilderness, seeking rest and finding none. We remember looking for some substantia1 city which had foundations, in which our unquiet spirits might find repose. We were cheered, now and then, in that season of conviction of sin, by heavenly manna secretly given—not to feed us by the lips of enjoyment, but secretly given simply for our support while we were seeking something higher, something better—even our heavenly inheritance. We remember well how, with weary feet, we trod the hot sand, with the scorching sun above us—and found no place where we might rest and permanently take relief. Well do we remember the hour when we passed through Jordan, when the Spirit of God led us to the blood of Christ! We were brought to see His finished work upon the Cross, His spotless righteousness in His glorious life and then, laying hold upon Him, and believing in Him, we understood the meaning of the Apostle’s declaration, “We which have believed do enter into rest”—we had come to Canaan—to the goodly land which flowed with milk and honey!  
And, my Brothers and Sisters, if the wilderness is still fresh in our memory, even more so is that Valley of Achor where we did feed and lie down. Oh, the raptures of that season when I first knew the Lord! My lips will utterly fail to tell of the bliss of that hour when my spirit first cast itself upon Christ. John Bunyan describes his pilgrim as giving three leaps at the Cross, but I must claim at least 300 for my share! How I did leap for joy of heart and lightness of spirit! My sins were gone, buried in the sepulcher of Christ, washed away by the river of His blood and I stood “accepted in the Beloved.” Was I not like the prodigal in that hour when his father’s arms were about his neck when the sound of music and dancing was in his ears and the fatted calf was spread before him as a dainty feast—the token of his father’s affection? Surely, at that day, we went out with joy and were led forth with peace! The mountains and the hills did break forth before us into singing and all the trees of the field did clap their hands! Do you not remember how sweet your Sabbaths were, then, how rich was every hymn, how precious was every prayer? There was not a text of Scripture which was not helpful to you! As for your times of seclusion, your hours of private prayer, were they not as the days of Heaven upon earth? No human penman can describe the heavenly rapture! No banqueting house could equal that, except it be that heavenly banquet of which the spouse sings so sweetly in her song of love!  
“But,” you say, “in what way can these early enjoyments be considered to be a door of hope? They are like the Valley of Achor, it is true, but how are they a door of hope?” Why, they are a door of hope to us in the time when we are enjoying them, for then it is we can exclaim, “Surely I am reconciled to God, or else He would not treat me thus. Would He put His lips to my lips and kiss me with the kisses of His love if I were not reconciled to Him? Is it possible I should feel His arms about my neck and sit at His table, and be called His child, if I were still His enemy and my sins were still not cancelled?” The first transports of bliss, the first enjoyments after conversion are like golden doors of hope to those who have just escaped from under the lash of the Law of God and have been delivered from their sins! Surely, all of you who are in that state can say they are doors of hope to you, for, looking back upon your past misery, you say to yourself, “If I were not one of His children, could I be thus? If He had not accepted me in the Beloved, if He had not taken me to Himself forever, from where could this rapture come, this transport, this delight?”  
They are, therefore, truly doors of hope to you, in this sense, that as when the children of Israel took possession of the Valley of Achor they did, virtually, take possession of the whole promised land! So you may have had some first enjoyments, which are, in truth, but an earnest of complete and unspeakable happiness. There was an old English custom by which a man took possession of an estate “by turf and twig.” A sod of the turf and a twig from a tree were given to him. It was a token that the whole estate, with everything which grew upon it, was his property. And so, when Jesus whispered into your ear and gave you the assurance of reconciliation with the Father and fellowship with Himself, He did, as it were, give you the whole land of promise! The richest enjoyment of the Believer is yours! You have the foretaste and that is the pledge that you shall yet enter into the possession of the whole! However great the promise, however rich may be its treasure, it is all yours! You have not yet fed upon the clusters of its vineyards, but it is all yours because, in taking possession of your first enjoyment, you have virtually claimed the whole. It was said of Caesar, when he landed here, that he stumbled, but, clutching a handful of earth, he hailed it as a happy omen, saying that in taking possession of that handful of earth, he had taken all England for his own. And you, who on your bended knees fell prostrate before God in that first rich treasure of joy which came into your souls—you took possession of all the inheritance of the saints on earth and of their inheritance in Heaven, too!  
Further, I must add that in looking back to those first enjoyments, they are a door of hope to you, you aged ones, who can talk of those days long gone by—and to others of us who can look back some ten, twelve, or 20 years, when first we were quickened by the Spirit and taught to know the Savior’s preciousness. To all such, those early enjoyments are still doors of hope. I would not have you feed on experience long gone by— such bread may be moldy—but yet, I think, sometimes, there is a way of storing up that old manna in the golden pot of remembrance in such a way that it remains sweet even to this day. I know that I have, sometimes, when doubting my interest in Christ, been led to look back to that first season of fellowship with Jesus and to say—  
*“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!”*  
And though this stale provision would not do to feed upon constantly, yet, as an old Puritan says, “When there is nothing else in the cupboard, this cold meat that has been left from last night must satisfy us for a little while until we get some fresh food direct from Heaven” We may get some new experience from past enjoyments! You see the pole men and bargemen—they lean backwards to press forwards! Some lazy people lean backwards and never come forward at all, but we may use our experience as the long poles of these men are used and, as we walk backwards and push backwards in recollection, we may be really going forward in faith, in hope and in love!  
This we may do and so these early experiences—these loves of our espousals—these early breakfasts in the vineyard with our Beloved—these days of early fellowship and sweet acquaintance may become as doors of hope to our poor troubled spirits.  
I have thus endeavored to explain the first meaning of the text. May God make your early spiritual enjoyments to be doors of hope to you!  
II. But, again, the Valley of Achor is declared by the Rabbis to have been a most fertile plain. Some commentators of great judgment and discernment declare that the Valley of Achor is identical with the valley of Eshcol, while they are all agreed upon this point—that Achor was one of the richest and fattest valleys of the whole promised land. Wherever you might walk within it, there was not a single barren spot. It was all fertile, bringing forth vines and grapes of the very richest kind, so that the wine that came from them was noted above every other.  
And, my Brothers and Sisters, may not the Valley of Achor represent to you and me not only our early enjoyments, but THOSE VERY SWEET AND MEMORABLE SEASONS WHICH WE HAVE HAD SINCE THEN? For Christians, though they have long Lents, do have happy Easters! They may sometimes have forty days of fasting, but one day of such feasting as God’s children have is quite enough to make them forget all this and go fasting more forty days and yet not hunger! There are some days when God’s children are satisfied with fatness—and so satisfied that they have not only all that heart could wish, but their cup runs over and they can do nothing but sit down in astonishment, in a very repletion of satisfaction—content to sing and so to pour out their souls in gratitude before God! Oh, you who think that religion is a dull, dry, dreary thing, from where did you get this idea? Perhaps you have derived it from the Pharisee—it may be that you have acquired this falsehood from the hypocrite—but from the real Christian, I know that you have had very little that will lead to such a conclusion as that!  
We are a tried people. We have our troubles, griefs and woes, but we are happy people and never spoke a Prophet more truly than when he said, “Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” We have not only times of quiet calm and deep serenity, when our peace is like a river and our righteousness is like the waves of the sea, but we have times when our joy exceeds all description—when the river swells to its utmost bank and, running over—covers the green pastures of our life and fattens them for many a future day with its rich deposits of Divine Grace! We have sometimes had very tempests of delight, when our leaping spirits could scarcely stay within our body and when, in a very transport we have said, with Paul, “Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows.” In the breaking of bread at the Communion Table, in coming together in our frequent meetings for prayer, in our silent meditations and in the reading of the Scriptures, our Master has appeared to us! He has taken us by the hand and our hearts have burned within us while He has talked with us by the way. At such moments we have been full of Heaven and, if not actually inside the pearly gates, we have certainly stood just this side of them and the gates have seemed to be wide open— and nothing to divide us from Heaven except the infirmity and weakness of our nature!  
Think it not a fable I am telling you—it is a sober fact! There are redletter days in our diary. Some among us, who appear frequently with mournful faces, nevertheless could tell you of days when the light of the sun has been as the light of seven days and, as for the light of the moon, it has been as the light of the sun to them! Their meditation concerning Christ has been sweet and rapturous. He has taken them, as on eagle’s wings, and carried them up to the very Heaven of delight where they have beheld Christ and have been able to say, “His left hand is under my head, and His right hand embraces me.”  
These enjoyments are doors of hope. The fat Valley of Achor is a door of hope, but in these respects you certainly will perceive it is so. The Believer, after his joyous frames of mind, often has a season of sadness, and then these bright experiences become doors of hope, for he says, “I am sadly changed, but God has not. Did He manifest Himself to me yesterday? He is just the same today as He was then.” The faithfulness of God, combined with our recollection of His kindness to us, compels us to draw the inference that He is still good, that He is still rich in mercy and full of loving kindness! And so the old experiences, coupled with our belief in God’s Immutability, become doors of hope to us.  
Besides, they are doors of hope in this respect, for we argue thus—Did He once shine upon me? Then He is mine forever and He will shine upon me again! ‘Tis true, I have not seem the Sun for many days, but He did shine once and He is shining now and I shall see Him yet again. ‘Tis true, I see no sun, nor moon, nor stars, but the sun and moon and stars are not quenched by the tempest of our trouble—I shall see them again. Yes, I shall behold His face in righteousness. “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.” Though He gives trouble, yet will He give peace. Though He kills, He will yet make alive—the third day He will raise me up and I shall again live in His sight!  
So you see the rich enjoyments, the transports, the raptures, the delights, the ecstasies of Believers become doors of hope to them when many other doors are shut. Now, Believer, turn back to your experience and see if you cannot make it be a door of hope to you. Are you now distrustful and desponding? Then, think of “His love in times past” and, surely, it will—  
*“Forbid you to think  
He’ll leave you at last in trouble to sink.”*Turn back to your Ebenezers, those golden signposts on the road to Heaven. Can you, Believer, sit down by the side of one of those signs of help and then despair? Or can you remember the days of old, the years of former times when your God sent from above and took you and brought you up out of many waters? And do you believe that He has brought you thus far to put you to shame? If He had intended to destroy you, would He have shown such kindness to you as this? Would all these banquets have been given to a foe? Would the King have brought you to His house of wine if He had not intended to bring you in to the marriage supper of the Lamb?  
Thus may past experiences be doors of hope—but do not depend upon them, for Christ must still come through them to you—and though it is a door of hope, what is the good of that door if it is locked? You must get at Christ through the door—it must be your door of consolation, for it is through this that you are helped to find Him!  
III. So far the matter has been simple enough, but now, in the third place, the Valley of Achor, you will all recollect as a matter of history, was the place where Achan was stoned. All the spoils of Jericho were dedicated to the Lord, but Achan had taken a goodly Babylonian garment and a wedge of gold, and had hidden them in his tent. He was discovered, by God’s Providence, and was brought out and stoned to death and burned in the Valley of Achor and, therefore, it is called by that name to this day.  
Now, do you not see how this may be turned to spiritual account? THE PLACE WHERE THE CHRISTIAN MORTIFIES HIS SIN SHALL BECOME TO HIM A VALLEY OF HOPE. You and I have our Achans in the camp. I have already had to stone a host of them and I lament that the evil family is not yet cut in pieces, but there still remain some of the sons of Achan.

Would to God I could burn them all! There was a time, my Brother, my Sister, when your Achan was so strong that you would not give heed to that Gospel which lays the sinner low and gives all the glory to God. But you were compelled to bring it out and you did—you cast it out, you stoned it, you burned it with fire—and now you are to be numbered among the humble in Zion. But this day you are still distressed and you say, “How is it I am still afflicted? I have been trying to do good. I can do but little for my Master. Truly, there must still be some accursed thing in my camp.”  
Perhaps it may be worldliness—the common Achan of our churches. Possibly it is covetousness—a common sin that is seldom admitted. It is a singular thing that Francis de Sales, a noted confessor of the Romish Church, said he had met with many who confessed to the commission of the most abominable sins, but not one who ever confessed covetousness. It is an Achan hard to find out, for the man who is worldly says he is industrious! And he who is griping and who grinds the poor and says he is only diligent in business is, doubtless, fervent in spirit somewhere or other, but you cannot find out where it is. Look and see whether this is your Achan. If so, bring it out and stone it! By your contributions to the poor, drain the life-blood from your avarice and make it turn sickly and pale—let it die and burn it—and bury it. And if that is not the sin, seek it out, whatever it is, and bring it out and let it die, for, depend upon it, the place of mortification of sin is the place of the comfort of the soul! If you will be at friendship with but one traitor, God will not give you the comforting light of His Countenance. Bring forth the idol out of your house! Make Rachel rise and search even the camel’s furniture, lest the idol be hidden there! Bring it out and let it be utterly destroyed before the face of the Lord your God, for He is a jealous God and He will not let you serve another, nor give your love unto strangers, or else He will hedge up your way with thorns and chastise you with whips of scorpions till He brings you back to the simplicity of your consecration to Him.  
It is a high and noble thing when a man knows how to mortify sin. The old Romish pretended saints had a very curious way of doing this. For instance, they mortified their bodies by not cleaning and washing themselves and by wearing their garments till they were full of vermin—they thus thought themselves holy! I am sorry to say we have many such saints in our time—I wish we could find them out and spoil them by a good bath! A thorough washing would not be discreditable to God, while it would be exceedingly healthful to man! Moreover, we have read of some other saints who would eat nothing during Lent but dry bread sprinkled with ashes. They thought that while they mortified their bodies, they pleased God—and did not understand that their lusts and pride might be fattening while their poor bodies might be starving—for what they lose in one way, they gain in the other, until their souls are like Jeshurun—they wax fat and kick! It is in mortifying our evil passions, our lustful desires, our wrong thoughts, our intemperance, our seeking too much after the things of this world, even our abstaining from pleasure which we think allowable in itself, and a humbling of our pride before God—it is this which is such a Valley of Achor as shall be a door of hope to us!  
I believe many of our distresses, many of our doubts and fears, arise from our Achans. I may be giving you the most comforting advice if I urge you to search yourselves, and examine yourselves, and turn out the accursed thing. Let it die! Destroy it! Seek to be conformed to the image of Christ. Be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Put away every evil thing from you and then put on, as the elect of God, a heart of compassion, humbleness of mind—and all those things whereby the child of God shall be adorned and beautified—and so shall the Valley of Achor become a door of hope to you. I shall not explain how it will be so—you will find that out for yourselves better than I can tell you. Go and try it and you will soon discover that the mortification of sin is the gladdening of the soul!  
IV. The last interpretation is one closely connected with this. The Valley of Achor was so called from a word which signifies TROUBLE, doubtless because Achan there troubled Israel. “Why have you troubled us?” asked Joshua. “The Lord shall trouble you this day.” And, therefore, they called it the Valley of Achor, that is, the valley of trouble.  
“Oh!” says one, “I am glad the valley of trouble is a door of hope.” But stop! What trouble was it? It was trouble on account of sin. There is some trouble which is not a door of hope at all. There awe some troubles into which men thrust themselves and they may get out of them as best they can. Trials do not prove a man to be a Christian! There is a way to Hell “through much tribulation,” as well as a way to Heaven through “the strait gate.” We may go to Hell in the sweat of our brow. We may go from one evil to a greater from the sparks into the midst of the fire. The trouble here intended is trouble on account of sin—and that valley of trouble is a door of hope.  
My Friends, I speak earnestly and pointedly. There are some here present in whose hearts the Lord has been at work. You are now in great trouble on account of your sins. You were once peaceable and happy enough in your own hearts. You loved the ways of sin and you little thought of the wages that would follow. You were delighted enough to dance your merry round with the poor foolish worldlings! But now you are startled and amazed to discover your mistake! You find yourself to be a lost soul. Sin follows behind you with terrible howling. You discover that you can by no means quiet your clamorous iniquities which have been demanding your death. You have been lately crying to God for mercy, but the mercy has not as yet come—at least you are not conscious of it. Your trouble has been waxing worse and worse and, as David said, your sore runs in the night and it ceases not. You make your very bed to swim while your tears become your meat day and night. If any should ask you if you are a child of God, you would say, “Certainly not—would that I were!” You are told to believe in Christ and you say, “Oh, could I but believe! But it seems impossible that there shall be salvation for such a sinner as I am. I am the very chief of sinners and the worst of my case is that I do not feel this as I ought to feel it. I am hardened and careless although I mourn my hardness and carelessness of sin.”  
My Friend, I am glad to see you in trouble on account of sin, for this trouble is a door of hope! Let me show you how it is so. It is, in the first place, a door of hope because it shows that you are one whom Christ invites to come to Him. Christ invites the heavy laden—you are such an one, so come to Him! You are one for whom Jesus died, for Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Now you are consciously a sinner, rest assured that those He came to save He will save, or else His mission would be a frustrated one. If He came to save sinners, He will save them and you are consciously such a one. I know you can set your hand and seal to this declaration—  
*“I am surely a sinner. Then Jesus died for me!”*  
Then let that Valley of Achor be a door of hope to you!  
“But,” says one, “I feel myself to be condemned, lost and ruined.” That is the reason that you are to believe! God means you to be saved. Martin Luther used to argue from contradictions and apparent impossibilities. He said, “I will cut your head off with your own sword, O Satan! You say I am condemned, but I tell you for that very reason I shall be saved! Christ came to clothe some. He could not have come to clothe those who were already clothed! He must have come to clothe the naked. I am such an one—then He came to clothe me! Jesus came to wash some. He could not have come to wash those who did not need it, but to wash the filthy. I am filthy—therefore He came to wash me! Christ came to forgive the sinful, to cleanse those who have many iniquities. I am such an one and I claim, therefore, to be one of those for whom His mission was undertaken—and that He came purposely and expressly to save me.”  
“Oh,” one says, “that is a very narrow door!” Is it? Well, it is such a door as I have been content to creep through many and many a time, for when everything else has failed me, I have been obliged to come back to this—that if I am not a saint, I am a sinner—and I do humbly confess it. Jesus said He came to save sinners. I know that. Then He came to save me. I clutch the precious Truth of God and joy and peace return at once!  
Come, poor Sinner. Do you not see this to be a door of hope? It is not the hope, but the door of it. Christ comes to you through the door of your felt necessity and your conscious distress. If now you know yourself to be lost, ruined and undone—if now your heart grieves on account of its own hardness and obduracy of which you accuse yourself—now cast yourself on Him who is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them.”  
And, besides, there is another door of hope here. If the Lord has brought you to feel your need of a Savior, then you are not dead in trespasses and sins. Dead men cannot feel! Prick them with a dagger and they start not! Blow out their very brains with a pistol and there shall be no motion, for they cannot feel. Even though the vital part is touched, they cannot feel the pains and agonies of death. And if you are conscious of sin—if you are seeking the Savior—there is hope for you. “But,” one says, “I am dead in sin, notwithstanding all.” Well, now, a king’s ransom for one tear that ever streamed from a dead man’s eye! Come now, I challenge you! I will give you all this world’s wealth if you will bring me some signs of the pulsations of a dead man’s heart, or the moving of dead man’s lips. If you can bring them to me, then I will give you leave to despair—but such a thing cannot be! Your sighs, your groans, your tears, your silent prayers prove that you are spiritually alive! From this take comfort and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope! Let this lead you to remember that where God has begun a good work, He will carry it on. God always begins to work in a way that looks like undoing and not doing. When we begin to build, we first dig out before we build up. And so God digs deep with the spade of conviction before using the trowel of His Grace to build us up unto the edification of His people. We must, my Brothers and Sisters, first of all be slain before we can be made alive! First wounded before we can be healed! No, we must be buried to self and all self-confidence before we can be quickened to enjoy a resurrection to a new life in Christ Jesus.  
I may be speaking to one who says, “I am convinced that my affliction is a door of hope, but the door is shut.” “Ah,” says another, “and my experience is a door of hope, but I cannot open it.” “And,” says another, “all my mortification of sins should be a door of hope, certainly, but I do not find it a door of hope to me.” They are doors of hope, though not always open doors. What is your duty if the door is shut? Your first duty is to wait till it is open. “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” Wait on the Lord—be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart.”  
In the next place, while you are waiting at the door, worship. Wait with many prayers. Wait with many tears. Wait with anxiety. Wait believing that God is just and merciful. And while you are thus waiting, and while the door is shut, let me give you another piece of advice. Cast your eyes up to the lintel and mark well that this door of hope is a blood-sprinkled door. Look up to that sign that the Sacrifice has been offered and, perhaps, while you are looking upon the blood on the lintel, the door itself will open! It is a master key—many have found that when they have learned to spell the blood and trust in that, then the door has opened of itself.  
But, if this fails you, what should you do next? Why, knock! Knock! “But,” says one, “I have knocked.” Knock again and keep on knocking— and never cease, though you are faint. Keep the knocker in your hand, for to him that asks, it shall be given and to him that knocks it shall be opened. But, while you are waiting outside and knocking, let me give you another piece of advice. Clear the door for, perhaps, you are like Cain who was not accepted because sin was at the door. Give up all your lusts and when you have cleared the door, then knock again, and so continue to knock with a good clear door and surely it shall soon open! But if it opens not, let me bid you, once more, comfort yourself by looking through the crevices and the keyhole, for I have known many a poor soul who, when the door has not opened, has looked through the keyhole and has found comfort—and the door has opened immediately. If you cannot get a whole promise, get half a promise! If you cannot get full enjoyment of Christ, touch the hem of His garment! And if you cannot get the children’s bread, be like the Syrophenician woman and be willing to be a little dog to eat the crumbs which fall from the children’s table. Gently creep up—look down between the doorsill and the door itself. Peep through the keyhole and see if you cannot find some comfort from what you see within.  
But let me give you one more piece of advice—keep on knocking and remember that there is One who has the key of that door. Who is He? The Prince of the house of David! He opens and no man shuts! He shuts and no man opens! Who is He? He is near you, wherever you are. If you will believe with all your heart in the Lord Jesus and trust Him and repose all your confidence in Him, you shall find you door open straightway! Look not to the rusty key of reason, but to the golden key which He carries at His belt. Look to Him, alone, and say to Him, “Lord Jesus, I am content to stay here knocking if You do not open the door, but I beseech You, for Your mercy’s sake, to let Your poor prisoner in and let me see the hope which You have prepared for Your children.”  
May it come to pass that you and I, having stood on this side of the door, may soon be seated on the other side of it! While you are on this side, it is a door of hope. On the other side, it is a door of gratitude. If any of you have got inside the door, sing to the praise of Him who opened this door and let you in—and who has given you a feast of good things which He has prepared for all them that love Him.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**ROMANS 5:1-5.**

Verse 1. Therefore. The Apostle Paul had the logical faculty largely developed, so his writings are full of, “therefores.” And the Christian religion, as a whole, stands logically connected—doctrine with doctrine, Truth of God with Truth of God. Error is inconsistent with itself, but the Truth of God is consistent, logical, and unerring. “Therefore.”

*1.*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Chris. Are you enjoying that peace, dear Friend, at this moment? If you are, indeed, justified by faith, you are at peace with God. Therefore know it and feel no disquietude. Draw near to God as a dear child might to a loving father. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. By whom also we have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God. When a man is at peace with God, then he has the desire to draw near to Him. When he is justified, he has the right to draw near, so that, being justified and having peace, we have access by faith. And this is not a transient privilege, but the Grace into which we have access is a Grace in which we stand! We abide in it. The Lord has given us, through our justification, a permanent standing near to Himself. “We have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand”—and this gives us joy—the joy of sweet hope concerning the bright future that lies before us! “We rejoice in hope of the Glory of God.”

3. And not only so. Whenever the Apostle begins to talk of the Lord’s bounties to His people, he abounds in the word, also, and in the phrase, “not only so.” As if he had not already said enough when he had reminded us of the joy of hope in God’s Glory, he says, “And not only so.” We have something in possession as well as something to hope for—we have a present glory as well as glory laid up in store! “And not only so.”

3-5. But we glory in tribulations, also, knowing that tribulation works patience and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. Beloved, it is a mark of great Grace to be able to acquiesce in tribulation and to accept it with patient resignation at the Lord’s hands. But it is a sign of a still higher state of Grace when we glory in tribulation—when we welcome it and say, “Now, the Lord is about to elevate me to the upper class in His school—to teach me some deeper Truths than I have learned before—to give me a closer acquaintance with some mystery of His Kingdom than I have previously had—to work in my heart some new Grace which has never been there before.” We also glory in tribulations knowing that tribulation works patience. You cannot learn to swim on dry land and you cannot learn to be patient without having something to endure! “Tribulation works patience, and patience, experience.”

There are some who think that they will get experience through tribulation. So they do, in a certain sense, but not experience of the right kind. There is a middle term—patience—which keeps its right place— “Tribulation works patience and patience, experience.” I know some people who have had a thousand troubles, but they have no more experience, now, than they had when they began. I mean they are just as foolish—just as untaught in the things of God—just as ready as before to blunder into a fresh trouble because they have lacked that middle term. Then, further Paul says, “and experience, hope.” Our experience of the Lord’s goodness in the past leads us on to hope for still greater things in the future and, thus, experience works hope. I have seen some persons who were called experienced Christians, in whom it seemed to me that experience had worked despair, for their faces were always very long and very sad—and their speech was as dolorous as it well could be. But here I find that true Christian experience works hope—a hope that makes us not ashamed—“because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2629 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 2.16

GOD’S WORK IN MAN

NO. 2629

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 2, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1857.

**“And it shall be in that day, says the LORD, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.” Hosea 2:16.**

WITHOUT any preface or prelude, we shall draw from these words three on four lessons.  
I. The first lesson from the text is this, that GOD SPEAKS CONCERNING HIS PURPOSES OF GRACE IN MAN WITHOUT NOTICING EITHER MAN’S WILLINGNESS OR UNWILLINGNESS—AND WITHOUT ALLOWING HIS OWN PURPOSE TO BE CHANGED BY THE ONE OR THE OTHER.  
According to the free-will plan of salvation, it would be absolutely necessary for God to put it thus—“At that day, says the Lord, if you are willing, you shall call Me, Ishi, and shall no longer call Me, Baali. And if you will believe and repent, if you are willing, I will take away the names of Baalim out of your mouth. And if you are willing, they shall no more be remembered by their names.” But note that God puts in no, “ifs,” at all, but talks about men as if they had absolutely nothing to do in the matter—and as if He, Himself, did it all! One might object, “But suppose they are unwilling to forget the names of Baalim?” “Ah,” says God, “but I have their will in My hands! I have the key of man’s will—I can open it and no man can shut it. I can shut it and no man can open it.” “But suppose they should be hard-hearted and will not repent?” “Yes,” says the Lord, “but I have the hammer that can break the heart in pieces and make it fly into shivers!” “But suppose they should be stony-hearted and will not melt?” “No,” says the Lord, “but I have a fire that will melt the most adamantine rock that was ever known. Yes, that can consume the rock out of the heart and utterly burn it away.” Therefore, speaking concerning the Israelites, who were serving Baalim, who were drunk with sin, who were desperately set on worldling iniquity and who had gone far away from God, He puts in no, “if,” but distinctly says even concerning them, “I will take away the names of Baalim out of their mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”

Have you ever noticed, throughout Scripture, how positively God speaks with regard to His acts of salvation in men? “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him.” “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.” “Him that came to me I will in no wise cast out.” “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” The free-willer might rise up and say, “But suppose they are not willing to be saved? Will God save them against their will?” To this we reply—There is nothing said about their will at all—the only reference is to God’s will! It is evident that God has such a power over men that He can work in their hearts just what He pleases, apart from their willingness or unwillingness, so that, when I come into this pulpit to preach, if God the Spirit should so please, though you all should gnash your teeth in anger, yet He could, under the sound of the Word, convert you all. Though you should set your hearts desperately against God’s Word and enter His House with a curse upon you, yet He could, before you left the place, change you to another mind!

And though you should have come here with all levity of spirit, hardened in heart, despising God and His Gospel, yet He has such strength that He could, by one word of His mouth, by the breath of His Spirit, transform you into His living children who should do the very reverse of what you are now doing! It is in vain, then, for an infidel to say that he could never be converted, for God could convert him. It is in vain for a man to say, “God will never bend my knees in prayer.” God knows how to make your knees bend, be they ever so stiff. “I never will, like a coward, cry for mercy,” says one. But God knows how to create penitent cries in your heart and how to make them struggle for utterance, too! He has you in His hand, He has the bit even in your mouth. And desperately as you may be set against Him, yet He can turn you wherever He pleases. He who binds Leviathan and cuts the dragon in two will not be stopped by a poor puny mortal like you! But if He has purposes of Grace towards you, He will work those purposes out. If He is determined to save you, He will, Himself, lure you into the wilderness and give you a new heart and a right spirit! And if He has so decreed it, struggle as you may against Him, the hour shall come when, with one blow from the hammer of His Word, your heart shall be broken in pieces! And with one sip of His blessed cordial of Grace, your soul shall rejoice in pardon bought with blood!

This is a great Doctrine of the Gospel—the Doctrine of the power of Grace—the Doctrine that God saves whom He wills, that “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” “Ah,” says one, “if I am willing to be saved, will not God save me?” Sir, He has saved you! If you are willing to be saved, God has made you willing, and therein He has given you the very germ of salvation, for your willingness to be saved in God’s way is the very essence of being saved! “But,” says one, “if I am unwilling to be saved, will He save me?” No, Sir, not while you are unwilling, but, if He so pleases, He will make you willing and then He will manifest in you His power to save! God saves no man against his will— and yet it is against his will. Ralph Erskine puts it thus—he says, “I was saved with full consent against my will.” He means to say, “against my old will, that always willed to do evil, but yet, with the full consent of all my powers, they being renewed, created anew in Christ Jesus and, therefore, at once willing to submit to everything that God laid down.”

Oh, how I rejoice to preach a Gospel that does not borrow strength from me, but gets its power from God! What a consolation that, go where we may to preach God’s Word, if God wills it, that Word shall be rendered effectual among the very worst of men—among mockers, scoffers and despisers! Why is it that men go not to preach the Word among the Romanists of Ireland? Because they say they will not hear them. Oh, but they would! And we should at least free ourselves from their blood if we did but stand up and testify the Word of God! However unwilling they might be, God could yet, by His abundant Grace, change their hearts! “It is of no use,” said one, “to go to the Bechuana in his kraal—he cannot be saved—he would never be willing to give up his old habits.” But you do not depend upon his will at all! You go to him with the Gospel and God gives him a new will and the great change is worked! All you have to do is to preach the Word! “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” for, with the Word of God, there goes forth His Holy Spirit which changes men, renews their characters and hearts and makes them what they never were before. Oh, I bless God’s name that, though all the people in the world should lift their hands against the Most High and declare that they never would be saved, yet God could, in an instant, if so it pleased Him, make the whole of them bend their knees before Him, cry for the mercy they once rejected and seek the Savior whom they once despised! Here lies the power of the Gospel, in that it gains the mastery over man’s evil will and without his consent changes his nature, and then fully gets his consent after his nature has been changed!

That is the first Doctrine of God, I think, we may fairly draw from the text.  
II. Now for the second, which is, that GOD WILL MAKE THOROUGH WORK OF IT WHEN HE SANCTIFIES A MAN.  
Note that these Jews were idolaters, yet God says, “I will not only make them leave off their idolatries, but I will do more—I will take away the names of Baalim out of their memories—for they shall no more be remembered by their name.” God’s sanctifying work either is already, or it will yet be a complete one. I said that it either is or it will be complete— it is so in yon bright spirits before the Throne of God and, for the rest of us, if God has begun the good work, He will carry it on to ultimate perfection until the very name of sin shall be clean taken out of our mouth and the remembrance of it shall be purged from our conscience and memory!  
It is worthy of remark that this promise has had a literal fulfillment in the case of the Jews. They have many sins, but there is one sin that they have not—except spiritually—that is, they are not idolaters! Before the time of their captivity, they were constantly worshipping one false God or another. It was the hardest thing in the world to keep them from bowing down before blocks of wood and stone. But now, go where you may, you can scarcely find a Jew who is an idolater. Here and there, one or two of them have joined the Romish church and so have become idolaters by bowing down before images and saints’ relics—cast clouts and rotten bones and such things. But, taking the Jews as a race, they are the last people in the world to become actual idolaters! That ancient message, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord,” seems to have been burnt into them and you cannot get it out of them—neither will they acknowledge any form of faith that seems to deny the unity of the Godhead, or implies that worship is to be given to any save the incomprehensible and mysterious Being whom they, as well as we, worship as Jehovah. The name of Baalim has been taken clean out of their mouths—they do not remember it, neither do they call it to mind!  
And it is also a very notable thing, which we have often seen, that men, when they are converted, usually become the most clear of the very sin with which they were once the most defiled. You will note that a man who has been, before his conversion, a great drunk, will, in some instances, not only become exceedingly sober afterwards, but he will even carry his views, if possible, to an extreme. He will be so desperately set against everything that once injured him, that he will even look with suspicion on others who indulge themselves in moderation. You will note it is so with the man who has been an habitual Sabbath-breaker. So surely as he is converted, he will become the most precise Sabbathkeeper you ever knew! The sin that hurt him will be the sin that he will kill, if possible. The burnt child dreads the fire and it is the same with the man who has been burnt by sin. He does not like to touch it again. He must keep clean away from it, turn from it, pass by it and utterly abhor it. So was it with the Jews—the worship of Baalim had been their favorite sin, so the name, Baalim, was to be taken out of their mouth and to be no more called to their remembrance.  
But, my Brothers and Sisters, what noble beings you and I will be when not only has our sin been purged, when not only have our daily corruptions been done away with, but when all our sinful nature has been utterly removed! Well said the Apostle, “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” No, Brethren, we can scarcely guess what we shall be! But we can for a moment contemplate it. What a noble being man must be when he is thoroughly refined—when all his sin is gone—when there is not an evil passion left—when there is not a lust hidden in a snug corner, but when his soul has become thoroughly pure and his heart entirely renewed! Oh, what a noble creature! And just remember this, poor, weak, and worthless though we are, that faith which we have in us will ultimately purify us and we shall be holy, like yon bright spirits before the Throne of God!  
What a grand man would he be who had no sin in him! Suppose him to come into this world? He would lead a life exactly like that led by our Lord, Jesus Christ, and He was the grandest of all men! It is marvelous to consider the different attributes of His Character, as they are manifested in His life, but remember that we, too, shall be like He when we see Him as He is. We shall be as pure as Adam was in the Garden, with this addition—that our purity shall be not merely spotless, but it shall be so white that it shall be beyond the possibility of ever being spotted! Our nature shall be not merely pure, but so pure that it can never be impure! God will stamp it so indelibly with the stamp of purity that it will be pure throughout eternity! Oh, what a blessed thought—the name of Baalim out of my mouth, sin out of my heart, the lustful glance forever gone from my eyes, evil things from my imagination all gone! Oh, will we not praise our Lord in the bright moment when we wake up in His likeness, when our glorified spirit shall be white as driven snow in the glad companionship of the Immaculate, the Pure, the Perfect? Oh, what joyous shouts we shall raise then! What choral symphonies, what bursts of song, what hallelujahs of gratitude! Verily, words fail to express the emotions we shall then feel, when, pure and holy, clean and purged, we shall be presented, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” before the Throne of God!  
“I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.” I think the first day in Heaven will be a day full of surprises. We shall not know what to make of it! Never will there have been a day before, in our lives, when we had not some trouble, or some sin. The first day we are there, when we shall have no devil to tempt us, and no sin to pain us, and no trouble to grieve us— when we find ourselves all pure, I think we shall scarcely know what to do, we shall be so surprised! Mr. Medley’s hymn has caught the right idea—  
*“Then let me mount and soar away  
To the bright world of endless day  
And sing with rapture and surprise,  
His loving kindness in the skies!”*  
We shall be almost like poor Caspar Hauser who was kept for many years—in fact, from his childhood—in a dark dungeon where a ray of light could scarcely enter. He was, afterwards, taken out by his keeper to see the light of the sun and to mingle among men, whom he had never seen before, and to hear their voices even though there was scarcely an intelligible sound he had been taught to utter. Oh, what a delightful thing it would have been for him if he had been uninjured by his confinement! But you and I, uninjured by our confinement in this cavern below, shall be at once snatched from the earth, set down in the streets of Paradise and find ourselves pure! The surprise of a beggar, who wakes up and finds himself a king would not be one-half so great as the surprise of a saint, when he shall wake up in Christ’s likeness and find himself transformed into the pure image of God! Let us contemplate this with joy and gladness and, amid all our daily conflicts, let us count upon the victory! Let us anticipate the conquest by faith and let us already seize the palm branch and put the crown upon our heads with the ecstasy of hope and with the full assurance of faith, for if we fight, we shall reign! If we suffer, we shall triumph! If we endure, we shall obtain “the crown of life” that fades not away!  
That is the second lesson of our text, that Christ will make thorough work of it, wherever He has begun to save and to sanctify.  
III. And now I bring to you a third lesson. THERE ARE SOME THINGS, WHICH ARE NOT EVIL IN THEMSELVES, THAT A CHRISTIAN MUST HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH EVIL THINGS.  
I will explain what the Lord meant when He said, “You shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali.” Was Baali a bad name? Not at all—God calls Himself Baali in two or three places in Scripture. You remember that blessed passage, “Your Maker is your Husband”? It is really, “Your Maker is your Baali.” And there are several other instances where the word, Husband, is used in reference to God which might have been left untranslated—and they would have read like this, “Your Maker is your Baali.” Why, then, is God not to be called, Baali? The Jews did, at one time, call Him so. They prayed to Him under that title—why might they not continue to do so? Because the heathen had made a wrong use of the word—they called their false God, Baali, and, therefore, God said, “Do not apply the title to Me, because they have used it for their false gods.” I can suppose a Jew, like some young man in these times, saying, “Now, no man is going to step between me and my conscience. I believe the name Baali is a very good one. I have always used it and many good men have used it. I use it very sincerely in prayer and it is nothing to me that other people make a bad use of it—I cannot help that! I know that it expresses my thought—it means husband, lordly husband—and I cannot be quite so particular as the Prophet Hosea, so I shall keep on using it.”  
That is how many argue in these days. Says one, “I am a Christian. I intend to serve God, but there are certain pleasures that stand on the boundary line between the allowable and the unallowable.” “I intend,” says one young man, “to follow them, because I do not see that there is any harm in them. I confess that they are the cause of great injury to others, but they do me no hurt. I used to practice them when I was in the world, but they are no hurt to me now—you cannot bring anything in Scripture to prove they are wrong. There is such-and-such a place, I sometimes truly worship God there. I may be mistaken, but I cannot see why I should not do such-and-such a thing when I see nothing exactly wrong in it, though I admit that it has a connection with wrong and others are thereby injured.” That is just it—you are not to use the title, Baali, not because it is a bad name, but because others have used it for an evil purpose! So, Christian, there are many things you are not to do, and many places you are not to frequent—not because they are absolutely wrong, but because they have a connection with wrong—and if you tolerate them, you will be sharing in the sin which is committed by them! And, moreover, whether you know it or not, your going there is but the little and little of which it is written, “You shall fall by little and by little.” So that the best way is to stand out against the littles—to be rather too strict than too loose—and in so doing, God will give you a reward, for He will make it become a greater happiness to you to abstain from fleshly pleasures than it would have been to have partaken of them. “You shall call Me no more, Baali,” because, though the name may be all right in itself, others have misused it.  
I can never look upon dice except with abhorrence. If you ask me why, I reply—Because the soldiers at the foot of the Cross threw dice for my Savior’s garments, and I have never heard the rattling of dice but I have conjured up the dreadful scene of Christ upon His Cross—and gamblers at the foot of it with their dice spattered with His blood! I do not hesitate to say that, of all sins, there is none that more surely damns men and, worse than that, makes them the devil’s helpers to damn others, than gambling! And yet many say, “Well, I only play for the fun of it—you know there is nothing in it.” Of course there is nothing in it, but look at the connection of it. Lord So-and-So thinks it a very nice thing for him to go and see a horserace, he says that I cannot prove it to be wrong. Nice company he will meet there! They don’t speak very well for the thing.  
Another says, “I can do this, that, and the other. It does not hurt me.” I daresay you can, but look at the connection of the affair. You are to avoid a thing, not merely from the moral wrong of it, or the injury it is to you, but because it encourages others in their sins! A good pious Jew kneels down to pray and cries to God, “Baali, hear me!” There is a poor idolater by his side and he says, “That good, venerable-looking man just now prayed to Baali—and so may I.” “Quite a mistake, my dear fellow,” says the Jew. “I did not pray to Baali! I was praying to God Almighty, not to your Baal.” “But you said, Baal, my dear Sir.” “Ah, my Friend, but you do not understand me! I was praying to the God of Heaven and earth, and not to that poor, paltry idol which you call, Baal.” Yet the poor heathen naturally thought the Jew was worshipping the false god.  
We are to take care not to do what appears wrong in the sight of others, so as to lead them astray. We are not to be judged by other men’s consciences, but, at the same time, we are not to lead others to offend. As far as we can possibly do it, we must seek to cut off those things that are likely to do injury to others. If I were to hear of any of my members going to a theater, I think I would go after them, and they would never go, again, as church members. I might, perhaps, do as Rowland Hill did. He took a box-ticket for the theater and saw some of his members there. “There you are,” he said, “I never would believe it from hearsay.” And then he walked away and immediately turned them out of the church. It may be that I may have the misery of looking after some of you who make a profession of religion and do not carry it out. I am not now speaking to you worldly men who choose to frequent these places. But I say to you who profess to be Christ’s followers, “Put away even the name of such things. Your business is not to talk of its being allowable, but to put it away because others

ake a bad use of it.” You may say, “Baal,” perhaps, without any very great sin, but by doing so you encourage others in sin.  
A man who makes a profession of religion ought to be something more than other people. He who talks about being saved by Grace and washed in the precious blood of Jesus. He who expects to live up yonder and wear the white robe, and sing the praise of the Eternal before the Throne of God must be different from others. The things which another might do with impunity, he must not dare do. A native of India might live in a jungle and not die, but we, who are not natives of the country, might very soon die of the jungle fever. So, the man who is not a Christian may, perhaps, go into many amusements and yet not become any the worse for them—but a Christian must not go there because he is not an inhabitant of that land! It is not his native air, it is not his proper place and he knows it is not! Therefore, his business is to go as far away from it as he can!  
I have read of a lady who wanted a coachman. She advertised for one. Three presented themselves. She called them in, one by one, and she said to the first, “My good man, you want a coachman’s place, do you?” “Yes, ma’m.” “Well, there is one question I want to ask you—How near to danger could you drive me?” “Well, ma’m, I think I could drive within a yard.” “You won’t do for me,” said she. A second one was brought in and she said to him, after asking other questions, “How near to danger could you drive?” “Well ma’m, for the matter of that, I could drive you within a hair’s breadth.” “You won’t do for me,” she said, “you are not the sort of driver I want.” The third was introduced. He was a careful soul and when the question was put to him, “How near could you drive to danger?” He said, “If you please, ma’m, I never tried that. I always drive as far off as ever I can.” Said she, “You will do very well. You are just the coachman I want.” I would recommend you all to imitate that coachman! Do not test how near you can drive to danger, but say, “My business is to drive as far off as I can.” Do not to see how much you can endure of that which is not right, but how much you can avoid it, pass it by and not mingle with it!  
IV. Now we come to the last lesson from the text. GOD HAS PRECIOUS TITLES TO BE USED ONLY BY BELIEVERS. “It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali.”  
I left this part of the subject to the last because I am not sure that what I am about to say has all the weight that some would attach to it. There is a difference between the words, Ishi, and, Baali. The word, Ishi, means, “my husband.” So does the word, Baali, but the word, Ishi, is the word that the wife would use to the husband as a fondling expression, expressive of her love. The word, Baali, is the word she uses for him as a humble expression, on those very rare occasions in which she feels herself to be subject to him for a moment. It is expressive of her humility. It is the kind of word Sarah used, when, rather out of the ordinary way, she did reverence to her husband, “calling him, lord.” The word, Ishi, is the term she would have used when she called him simply by the loving epithet of “my own dear husband,” her man, her Beloved. She would most likely have used the word, Baali, when her husband had spoken a little sharply to her and claimed a little of the headship that the husband has. But when they sat down together, in their softer moments, she would not call him, Baali, any longer, but it would be, Ishi, my much-loved—not feared, but muchloved husband.  
“Now,” says God to His Church, “you shall no more call Me, Baali—‘my Master, my Lord, my haughty Husband,’ yet, after all, having all the right attributes of a husband, too, but you shall call Me, Ishi—‘my loving Husband.’” Mark, there is nothing wrong in the word, Baali, as I said before, because it is applied to God in that very passage, “Your Maker is your Husband.” And there it has a kind meaning, as well as the aspect of superiority, but, still, the word, Ishi, is the fonder title of the two and is, by far, the better. It is the one which we would always wish to use towards God. If we are His people, He does not like us to come crouching and cringing before Him. He does not wish us to come and cry, “Baali,” but He wants us to come to Him as to a loving Friend and Father, with the sweet word, “Ishi,” upon our lips. He wishes us to come, speaking of Christ as Emmanuel Ishi—“God With Us”—not as Emmanuel Baali— “God Our Ruler.” He wishes us to speak of Him as “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh”—“our Man, our Husband”—and not as, “our Man, our Lord.”  
There is a very blessed distinction here. I think the Christian can perceive it, though the worldling cannot. When a sinner is in his sin, he sometimes attempts to serve God. Conviction of sin works in him some kind of legal repentance—he tries to be better, but the sinner always tries to be better with Baali on his lips—“O Lord, I must do right, else I shall be punished for it. I must mend my ways, or Hell stares me in the face. I must grow better, or else I shall die and share eternal torment.” So he tries to do better through fear. Not so the Christian! He tries to serve his God, but he puts the name, Baali, away. “O my blessed God!” he says, “You have done so much for me, I do truly love You. I must love You, I will serve You, I will live for You, I will die for You. It is a pleasure to serve You. If Heaven were quenched and Hell blotted out, I would still serve You, for You are my Ishi, my Loved One, whom with all my heart I serve.”  
But it is not so with the sinner when he first seeks mercy. He kneels down and prays to God to have mercy upon him, but all the while it is Baali to whom he speaks. He can never say, Ishi, while he is under conviction of sin. His cry is, “O Lord, I am the chief of sinners!” “I am not worthy to be called Your son.” That is all Baali! But as soon as the Lord has appeared to him and told him, “I have put away your sin,” he offers no such prayer as he did before! He comes with boldness and says, “Lord, I am Your child! For Jesus’ sake give me these things,” and he prays out of his heart with a fullness of confidence, for it is now, Ishi, not Baali! It was the same God before, but under a different aspect. He was a kind God before, but He was the Baali God. Now He is a kind God, but He is kinder—He is the Ishi God to all Believers.  
O Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I would you could all keep this word, Ishi, on your lips! It is a Hebrew word. I bless God for having kept a few Hebrew words in the Bible to make us remember the Jews. But, besides this, there is something very sweet in this old term, Ishi—my man, my Husband! Go home, Beloved, sit down and think of this title. God bids you come to Him boldly tonight and call Him, Ishi. Sit down and begin to think of the Son of God, who became Man. When you see Him in His cradle, call Him, Ishi, and fondle the Infant to your breast. When you see Him a grown Man, go up to Him and, by faith, clasp Him in your arms and call Him, Ishi, while He preaches to you the Sermon on the Mount. Find Him in the Garden. Stand and look at Him, not as some marvelous Man, far above you, your superior, a Baali to you—but come and kneel by His side and as you kneel, see, in contemplation, the bloody sweat still streaming from His brow. Bend over Him and say, “O, Ishi, You are my Man, my Husband, paying the costly price for me by this awful sweat of blood!”  
Then follow Him along the pavement. See His back all gory with the lash of Pilate’s whip and call Him, Ishi, then. And when you see Him on the Cross, oh, it is there that Ishi is spelt more clearly than ever! When His heart is opened, when His veins are bleeding, then you can see written in His blood that name, Ishi—Man With You, your Husband. And then see Him in His grave and call Him, Ishi, there. Track Him up to Heaven in His Ascension and call Him, Ishi, as He leads captivity captive. See Him pleading before the Throne of God with outstretched hands. Look on His breastplate, read your own name and call Him, Ishi! And then look forward—see Him as He comes in the clouds of Heaven—and call Him, Ishi, then. See Him when He and all His people shall be gathered home to Glory. He shall be your Ishi, then—not your Baali, your Lord, your superior—but your Ishi, your Man, your Husband—to be embraced and loved, to be in sweet communion with you, to be your Acquaintance, your Friend, your “Fellow,” as His Father and yours has been blessedly pleased to call Him!  
And, Christian, when you go forth to labor, tomorrow, take care not to do it as a slave. Practice this, “Ishi,” out every day. Do not serve God because you dare not do other than serve Him! Do not serve Him because you are afraid not to serve Him! Do not do it from fear. Do not work like a slave, under his master’s lash, but go out and serve your Master from pure delight because He is also your Ishi, your Man, your Husband— *“We would no longer lie,  
Like slaves beneath the throne,  
Our faith would ‘Ishi, Jesus,’ cry,  
And You the kindred own.”*  
Go forth to your work, serving your Lord in love and joy and gladness— *“‘Tis love that makes our willing feet  
In swift obedience move.”*  
And now, in conclusion, my Friends, there are many here who cannot say, Ishi, for Christ is not Ishi to them! Baali is the only word they can use for God. What shall we do for them, dear Friends, those who know the Lord here? What shall we do for these? We have a little Sister—what shall we do for her, against the day that she shall be spoken for unto the King? If she is a wall, we will build upon her with many prayers, precious as silver! If she is a door, we will enclose her with the cedar of our supplication! We will, day and night, pray for these poor souls who are not yet brought in, but many of whom must be brought in, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd! Poor Sinner, I will preach the Gospel to you before I send you away. Are you trembling and shivering, crouching and cowering before God? Are you afraid of Him? Do you think His sword is out of its scabbard, hunting after you? Do you see the arrow of vengeance thirsty for blood and winged to slay? Do you see the Law of God after you? Then you have got as far as Baali! Ah, Soul, if you know what sin is, in all its blackness, and if you weep on account of it, and if you desire to be pardoned, if you are willing to abjure all sin and all selfrighteousness, here is the way of salvation!  
Ishi bids me tell it to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Let me go, Sir! Let me go home and pray.” No, Sir! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! “Let me go out of this chapel and I will run home, and read a chapter.” No, Sir! As you are standing there, if you know your need of a Savior, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! Look at the jailor. He had made the feet of Paul and Silas fast in the stocks and shut them in the inner prison, like a brute as he was. But when there came the earthquake that shook the prison, he said, “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” said Paul! He did believe and became a child of God! And he was baptized directly afterwards, walking in the fear of Jesus. I believe conversion is very often gradual, but there is no reason why it should be so. If God has put you, now, in such a condition that you know yourself to be lost and ruined, you have every reason to believe that Christ died for you and to cast yourself upon Him, just as you are, without one plea but that Jesus died for you!  
Are you under conviction of sin? Do you feel that God would be just if He were to destroy you? Do you ask, “Can it be possible that all my sins could be blotted out in a moment?” Possible, Sir? It is certain that they may be! It is certain that they will be! It is certain that they ARE if you now believe in Christ!  
A lady called upon me, last Monday, with this trouble upon her. She said she had not heard me preach, but she had been reading my sermons and God had been pleased to bless them to her—not only to her conviction, but to her conversion. She went to the clergyman of the parish, full of joy at having found the Savior. She began to tell him of her gladness and how she rejoiced that all her sins were blotted out. He stopped her, and said, “My good Woman, that is all a delusion! You have no right to believe that your sins are pardoned till you have led several years of piety and devotion!” She went away sad—and she came to ask me if what the clergyman said was true. And when I quoted that verse— *“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in His crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Redemption in full through His blood!”*  
“Oh,” she said, “I see it clearly now!” And when I went on to tell her that many who had believed in Christ had been black sinners one moment, and white as snow the next—had cast themselves simply on Christ and had instantly found peace—she could not but take to her heart the precious promises of Christ and, believing in Jesus, being justified by faith, she had the peace of God that passes all understanding!  
I pray the Lord may give it to you right now! As many of you as shall now look to Christ. As many of you as shall lift up your hearts to Him. As many of you as God has ordained to eternal life and who, therefore, believe in Him, may you now go out of this house, like the publican of old, “justified rather than the other,” triumphing that you, who came in here to confess your guilt, crying, “Lord, have mercy on me a sinner,” can go out calling Jesus, Ishi, and clasping Him in your arms as your Redeemer, your Savior and your All-in-All!  
May the Lord give all of you such faith, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2571 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE CLIMAX OF GOD’S LOVE

NO. 2571

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 22, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1883.

**“And it shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”  
Hosea 2:16, 17.**

You who have been here, on recent Thursday nights, will remember how Israel was described at the time to which our text refers. [See Sermon #s  
2564 and 2569—Strange Ways of Love, and The Backsliders Door of Hope—read/download the entire sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] She was represented as a

woman who had been false to her marriage vows, had left her husband and defiled herself in the most abominable way. Being greatly inflamed with evil passions, she had gone astray times out of number—and then the Lord Jehovah, who was Israel’s true spiritual Husband—in the abundance of His love, sought to bring her back to Himself. He exercised her with severe discipline, taking away from her many things in which she delighted, till she became poor, sick and wretched. He hedged up her way with thorns and put obstacles in her way so that she could not find her paths. And when she went after her lovers, she could not overtake them. But, notwithstanding all that, she still continued to go further and further away from Him to whom her love was due—the God to whom she owed everything—the only living and true God who had been so gracious and true to her.

At last the Lord tried other means of bringing her back to Himself. Instead of driving her from Him, or threatening her with destruction, He allured her into the wilderness and there He manifested Himself to her in all the charms of His Divine Purity and Beauty. He drew her away from all her old companions, brought her into a place of solitude and then spoke to her very heart with a voice of Infinite Love so that He won her, again, and brought her back to Himself. And then it was that He once more gave her the joys which she had lost—and a great many others— and made her rich with everything that could cause her to be, indeed, blessed!

Now comes in this passage, which I have just read in your hearing, that which appears to me to describe the climax of God’s love. His Infinite Mercy at last taught Israel to know Him in deed and in truth and, by the mighty power of His Grace, she was clean delivered from all her former idolatrous lovers and made to cleave in holy constancy to Jehovah, her God! I want to speak to you about that work of love in the heart of these wanderers which, at last, brought them to be right with their God. And my hope is that our meditation upon the text will be blessed in the same fashion to many others. When a man is truly right with God, he is right everywhere. As long as he is wrong with God, he may be right everywhere else, yet he is not right in the most important matter of all! But as long as he is right with God, everything is put in due order and everything will go on well with him in all respects.

Coming closely to our text, I want you to notice, first, the conquest of love—“It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi.” That is, “my Husband.” Secondly, I shall say a little upon the jealousy of love. “At that day . . .you shall call Me no more, Baali.” Because that name had been defiled and God would not have His servants use toward Himself a title which had been stained with sin. Then, thirdly, I shall speak of the nearness of love, which is a point that lies concealed within the text, but which I will try to bring out. And, fourthly, I shall speak upon the vengeance of love, for true love will lead us to take vengeance upon that evil which has brought so much sorrow to our heart—“I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”

I. First, then, let us think for a little while upon THE CONQUEST OF LOVE—“It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi.” That is, “my Husband.”

They had never called God by that name. They had stood in awe and dread of the Most High, but as to calling God, their Husband, that they had never done, though He was truly a Husband to them, for He lavished on them all the kindness and tenderness which a husband renders toward his beloved wife. Yet God’s people had never given Him that love which was due in return—and they had never dared to call Him by so sweet and endearing a name as that of Ishi, “my Husband.” But the Lord said, “At that day, you shall call Me, Ishi.” Grace has really won us when it has won our hearts! When we yield to God not a mere external obedience, but the affection of our hearts, then all is won and all is well.

Note, first, dear Friends, that these people were so truly won back to God that they had a new name for Him, a name which had never occurred to them before. They had called Him, God. They had spoken to Him as Jehovah, or as El, or as Elohim, but they had never thought to call Him, “Ishi.” But now they understand Him better and here is a new name for Him who is, to them, practically a new Being, a new Person. Alas, that still many men do not “know the Lord.” There is a depth of meaning in that expression and to multitudes God is quite unknown. It was said, long ago, that it is the highest wisdom for a man to know himself—but I deny that. The first, the highest, the best of all wisdom is for a man to know his God. As for himself, he is but a speck, an atom, a nothing. If he truly attains a knowledge of God, he will afterwards know himself in the best possible way. Pope said that “the proper study of mankind is man,” but it is not so. His proper study is mankind’s Maker, the God who made us all! But man, until he is Divinely taught, knows not God—he has not, by nature, a name for God. He borrows a name out of the Bible and calls Him, “God.” That is, “good.” but he does not mean what he says, for if he thought that God was good, he would love Him. But inasmuch as he does not love God, he does not, in the highest sense, know God.

But when a man comes to know the Lord. When God, in all His wondrous majesty, draws near the heart and opens the eyes of the understanding till the man sees his Maker and cries, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven”—when he feels that the Lord is there and he knows it, then, straightway, he uses a right name for God! That is a very precious name which Christ puts into our mouths when He bids us say to God, “Our Father, which are in Heaven.” And there is a wonderful sweetness when we come to know that we may call Him our Husband. I do not like to compare the two, or say which title is to be preferred—whether Husband or Father—they are both unutterably sweet when they are enjoyed to the fullest.

You see, then, dear Friends, that Grace had taught these people a new name for God. David said to the Lord, “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” In another Psalm, the Lord’s response is given— “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he has known My name.” So was it in the day of which our text speaks.

Further, that name, Ishi, “my Husband,” is a name of love. There is a mutual engagement between the true husband and wife, they complement of each other. So is it with Christ and His Church. Yet, as I read of it in the Bible, it often astonishes me. Paul wrote to the Colossians, “It pleased the Father that in Him,” (that is, in the Divine Husband, Christ Jesus), “should all fullness dwell.” Then to the Ephesians he wrote, “And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.” It is marvelous that the saints should be to Christ a fullness, but so it is! He is to be to us as the Husband and we are to be to Him as the dearly-beloved object of that love, desiring to return it as best we can, loving Him and Him, alone, with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. What a sweet name that is for our Divine Lord—our Husband! What but the Grace of God could ever have given backsliding Israel courage to utter it? What but the Grace of God could ever have taught us to know that we, also, might truthfully say it? Yet I trust that many of us do say of God in Christ Jesus, “He is our Ishi, our Husband.” This name, then, is a name of love, suggesting the mutual engagement between Christ and His people.

It is also a name of honor, involving obedience, “for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church. . .Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” In the relationship between Christ and His people, everything is written in capital letters, for truly He is the Head of His body, the Church. Therefore, dear Friends, it is for us who belong to Him to be obedient to Christ in everything. It was a wise word that the mother of Jesus spoke to the servants at the marriage at Cana, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” That is exactly what we ought to do under all circumstances. Christ’s will is our law. His teaching is our doctrine. He, Himself, we call Lord and we do well, for so He is. He has become everything to us, now, as the true husband is to the true wife. It is a joy to us to obey Him. If a command comes to us from Christ, our feet have wings, like the fabled Mercury! If a word comes from Christ, our mind is wax to be stamped with it, as with a seal! And we desire never to lose the impression. If we know that Christ does but wish a thing, it shall be as the bonds of law to us. We wish to do—no, we long to do His will and to have every thought brought into captivity to the Law of Christ. I am sure, dear Friends, it is a wonder of Grace when we can say this, for there was a time when we never cared for Christ. A little while ago some of us did not mind what His Laws were, or what His teaching was—He was nothing at all to us. “He was despised and we esteemed Him not.” But now, how different it is! The faintest accent that falls from His lips has in it a power and a majesty which we do not wish to question! He is our Husband and we are His obedient spouse.

Husband, again, is a name of trust and expectation. A wife expects her maintenance and all that she needs from her husband and she ought to have it, too. It is the part of the husband to render to his wife all that he can for her necessity and her happiness. All our expectations are from Christ. Some wives bring their husbands a dowry, but we brought Christ nothing but our poor selves. Sometimes a wife has nothing but what she stands upright in, but we had not even that, for we could not stand upright at all. We were like that infant whom the Lord described by the pen of Ezekiel—cast out into the open field, neglected, unwashed, unclothed—left there to die—but when our Lord passed by, it was the time of love and He said to us, “Live.” We had to be indebted to Him for life and we have had to be indebted to Him for everything since then! I have no doubt that some wives think it is a fine thing to have their husband’s purse to draw from, but I know that it is glorious to have Christ’s purse to draw from! “Of His fullness have all we received, and Grace for Grace.” And we expect to receive a great deal more and sometimes we sing about what we are to have, by-and-by—

*“And a ‘new song’ is in my mouth,*

***To long-loved music set!  
Glory to You for all the Grace  
I have not tasted yet.”***

Yes, this name of husband is a name of trust and expectation and, in God’s case, as the Husband of His people, the trust and the expectation are never disappointed!

But, best of all, it is a name of indissoluble union. I could not trust myself to speak on this wondrous theme, for even Paul, when he wrote upon it said, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.” “This is a great mystery,” added the Apostle, “but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” It is, indeed, a great mystery that Christ should have left His Father to become one flesh with His people! Think of Him here on earth, hungry, weary, toiling and, at last, scourged, crucified, faint and dying because He took upon Himself our flesh and became one with us. And now there is such a union between every Believer and Christ as can never be destroyed! Paul triumphantly asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” There is no possibility of divorce between Christ and the soul that trusts Him, for it is written, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away” and, therefore, He will never practice it, nor will He ever banish from His heart one whom He has taken to be His own. “Your Maker is your Husband,” is a sentence full of comfort to everyone who can claim that blessed relationship! This union stands fast forever and ever. The Lord did not approve of giving a bill of divorcement in the olden days, although Moses permitted it because of the hardness of men’s hearts, and He will never do what He did not approve of, but He will cling to us forever. Once joined to Christ, we shall never be divided from Him, but shall always be able to call Him, “Ishi, my Husband.”

Is not this, indeed, a conquest of love? That those who were utter strangers to Christ—that those who were downright enemies to Him— that those who lived year after year, and even when they thought a little, did not give Him a thought? Or if they thought of Him, refused to yield to Him—is it not wonderful that even these should come to be as much in love with Christ as the newly-married wife is with her husband—and that these people should be linked with Christ so as never to be separated from Him, world without end? O Beloved, I think I said nothing but the truth when I called it the conquest of love!

II. Now we come to the second part of the text, which speaks of the JEALOUSY OF LOVE—“It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali.”

What does, “Baali,” mean? It means, husband. It means the same thing as Ishi. I will show you the point of difference, presently, but speaking broadly, it is the same thing. Then, why not call Him, Baali, if it means the same thing? Was there anything wrong in the word, Baali? No, nothing, for the Lord Himself uses it on other occasions. Why, then, does He say, “You shall call Me no more, Baali,” when He calls Himself so? Well, it was for this reason—they had used the name for false gods, they had called them, Baal—therefore they were not to use that title any more for Jehovah. He said to them, “You have been accustomed to speak of Me as, Baal, and to speak of this god, and that god, and all the gods as so many Baals, or Baalim. Now, from this time forth, I will have a name to Myself, and it shall be, Ishi, and you shall never again call Me, Baali.” This was the command of God and, moreover, it met with His people’s full consent. You may depend upon it that what God here orders, His people were willing to carry out. They would no more call Him by a name which had been dishonored by association with Israel’s idols and which, therefore, could not properly be applied to Jehovah.

I want you to listen very intently to what I am about to say. Some of you have lately united with the Lord’s people—may God give you great love to Himself and may that love have a holy jealousy associated with it! There are some things which, in themselves, may be right enough, but having become connected with wrong things, you must not meddle with them any more. If the word, Ishi, means, husband, and the word, Baal, also means, husband, yet, inasmuch as that word, Baal, has been used concerning idols and so has become defiled and despoiled of its beauty and purity, you must not use it in reference to God. There is nothing wrong in the word, itself, but there is evil in its associations. Therefore, drop it. There have been other words that have fallen in a similar fashion. The word, “tyrant,” used to mean a lord or king—there were so many little kings of Greece who were called tyrants and who so misbehaved themselves, that at last nobody wished to wear such a name as that of tyrant! It is no longer applied to a king simply because he holds that office, but only to an oppressive tyrannical despot. So, in the Latin, there is a word which used to mean, servant, but now, if you turn to the dictionary, you will find that it means a thief—and a servant is not called by that name, but it came to mean a thief because, I suppose, in those days many servants were thieves. In this way words get pulled down from their original meaning—and this word, Baal, was just one of them. It is no use saying, “Oh, but there was a time when it was a very proper word to use!” You have nothing to do with that matter—is it a proper word to use now? For, if it is not, do not touch it!

There are many things in the world of that sort. I am not going to mention them, one by one, because you have your own senses and you can apply a general rule to particular instances. There are a thousand things which, today, in your minds and in the minds of all thinking persons, are connected with evil. And if you have a truly jealous love to Christ, you will say, concerning any of them, “I must not do this.” Avoid the very appearance of evil, keep clear of it altogether! Just picture to yourself a true Ishmaelite kneeling down to worship Jehovah. I will suppose that he has been accustomed to speak of God under that word, Baal, as his Husband and, as he worships,, with others, he cries, “O Baal, hear us!” I can imagine that as God heard that prayer, He accepted it—the man meant it rightly enough—He worshipped God under a right name, one which the Lord had given to Himself. But supposing that a heathen happened to stand where he heard the Israelite pray? He would say to himself, “That man worships Baal the same as I do!” Well, if it had been my case and I had risen from my knees, and heard such a remark as that, I would have said, “I see that the title I have used is calculated to mislead—I will never use it again—but what word shall I put in its place?” The Lord, here, answers the question! “It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call Me, Ishi; and shall call Me no more, Baali,” because the name, Baali, was likely to be misunderstood.

For God’s sake be pure, for nothing but purity ought to appear in His Presence! For your own sake, be very careful—you cannot be too precise and particular. Your tendencies are toward evil, keep them in check and, for the sake of others, who, if they see you take an inch, will take a yard, be you doubly careful and let not even a name which, to you, may have been sacred and holy, come upon your lips if it has been used in an unholy manner and would suggest a sinful idea to the minds of others! That is the drift of the subject—that a man who loves Christ should be jealous of himself to the last degree.

I never knew anyone who was too precise or too Puritan—I have heard some people say that of certain men and whenever I have come to know those who have been so described, I have found them such godly people that I have wished to be like they! It is always better to be too precise than to be too lax. Our chastity of love to Christ is a thing that must not be questioned. Caesar’s wife must not only be beyond blame, but she must be above suspicion—and so must Christians try to be. Oh, that we did always guard ourselves most jealously lest in anything we should grieve our Lord! Better that I deny myself a thousand things which I might take than that I should mislead one person and lead him into sin! “If meat offends my brother, I will eat no flesh while the world stands,” said the Apostle Paul. He might lawfully have eaten meat and he said that he felt free in his own conscience to do as he pleased in that matter, but he had regard to the conscience of others who might be caused to stumble through him. Therefore he made himself weak that he might gain the weak and, lest haply another man, doing what he might safely do, might be lost through doing it. Take care, then, dear Friends, as to your influence upon other people. Do not be among those who say, “We shall still use the title, Baali. We always did before and it is a very proper title. God has applied it to Himself and we are not going to use anything else. What if other people do misuse it? We cannot help that—we are not our brother’s keepers.” That is the way Cain talked! “Am I my brother’s keeper?” If there is such a man among us, I hope he will be very uncomfortable until he has come to a better state of mind! Our feeling is that we are our brothers’ keepers and we desire, as much as lies in us, only to do that which will be safe for others to imitate. God help us to put the spirit and teaching of this passage into constant practice in our daily life! III. Now, thirdly, I want to prove to you that in our text there is a reference to THE NEARNESS OF LOVE. It lies hidden there, as honey is concealed within a flower, and the bee must dive right into the flower to find it!

It appears, dear Friends, according to a great number of commentators, that those two words, Ishi and Baali, though they both mean, husband, yet mean, husband in a very different way. If a husband were to command his wife in an imperious fashion, as I suppose the Oriental husbands usually did, then the spouse might say, “My lord,” or, “Baali.” But when the husband was kind, tender and loving, his wife might say, “Ishi.” Baali means, “my husband,” “my lord,” as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him, “My lord,” or, “Baali.” Yes, but, Ishi, means, “My husband,” “My well-beloved,” “My man,” in that genial, loving, tender sense in which that expression is used by a loving wife. Let us be astonished as we learn that God would have His people call Him no more, “Baali,” or, “Lord,” but, “Ishi,” “My Man,” “My Husband.”

God is thus revealed to His people as ruling them not so much by law, as by love. It is no longer “You shall,” and, “You shall not,” but a sweet constraint is upon them by which they delight to do His will! When the worldling dreads sin, it is because he is afraid of Hell. But the Christian is delivered from all fear of Hell and he hates sin, itself, because he fears to grieve the God he loves. In the Church of God, the great rule is not, “Do this and you shall be rewarded; do the opposite and you shall be punished.” That is the way Hagar ruled Ishmael, but that is not the way in which Sarah governed Isaac! The Lord does not put us upon legal terms with Him. He does not say, “You must do this and that, or else you shall have no Grace from Me, and I will cast you off and destroy you.” Nothing of the sort! You who believe in Jesus are not under the Law, but under Grace! You are under the sweet and blessed rule of gracious and generous love—

*“‘Tis love that makes our willing feet*

*In swift obedience move.”*  
The Law of God drives and scourges, but it gets nothing out of us. But Love comes with its abundant gifts of all-sufficient Grace and straightway we say, “Lord, enable us to serve You. Help us to be obedient to You.” Love accomplishes what Law never can—and when we view God as Love, then He is Ishi—and no longer do we look upon Him as ruling us by Law, for then His name would be Baali.

Further, this nearness of love changes servitude into honor. When we are under the Law and call God, Baali, life is servitude. Look at some who are trying to serve God without really knowing Him—they must do so much, they must feel so much, they must pray so much, they must work so much, they must go through such-and-such ceremonies—and all they do is looked upon as being something required at their hands by a stern taskmaster! Rowland Hill tells the story of one who said that she had been preparing herself for the “sacrament”—she took a week to do it and then she found out that she had mistaken the day—and she said that through her mistake she had lost the whole week! That is the way they act and speak to whom God is Baali! But the child of God, when he comes to the Communion Table, if he thinks it right to spend the whole week in getting himself in a right condition of heart for so doing, would say, if the Table were not spread, “Well, I have had a blessing even in preparing for it. Even if I cannot, just now, observe the outward ordinance, I have been waiting upon God and so I have drawn near to Him in spirit and in truth.”

It is one of our highest pleasures to attend a place of worship, yet to some people it is a self-denial. Well, I do not say to them, “Do not go to the House of Prayer.” But I do say, “You are not going in the right spirit.” I like to see the people coming here on the Lord’s-Day, or on a weeknight. I can almost tell them by the way they walk. They trip along joyously as if they were pleased to come and as if they came to enjoy themselves, as I believe they do. That is how God would have you worship Him—in the spirit of freedom—not in the spirit of slavery! Does He want slaves to grace His Throne? In the old days of Legree and the slavedrivers, a man might be thought great who had all his slaves bowing down before him as he walked along, but what true man wishes for that sort of servitude? To rule over free men should be the ambition of a monarch—God will rule over spirits that love Him, that delight in Him, that are perfectly free and that find their freedom in doing His will. You shall call Him no more, Baali, counting it as servitude to wait upon Him, but you shall call Him, Ishi. It shall be a joy and an honor to serve your beloved Lord!

You know how a loving wife waits upon her husband—it is never a slavery to her, but always a delight. She thinks of a hundred things that she can do for his comfort—some of them things that are perfectly unnecessary, they would never be commanded by any kind of law—but her loving heart suggests to her that she should do them so as to give him pleasure. So is it with the child of God. He tries to think of what he can do for Jesus and he never imagines that he can do enough for the Savior who has loved him and died to save him! Had he ten thousand hearts and lives, he would like to spend them all—and the help they bring with them—and the force they have in them for His dear Lord and Master!

The name, Ishi, instead of, Baali, further means that, henceforth, the Believer’s life is not one of fear, but one of confidence. The slave is afraid of the crack of the whip—look how the blood flies from his poor cheeks, lest he should feel the cruel lash! That is the condition of the man who thinks that his eternal safety depends upon his own watchfulness, his own prayerfulness, his own doings and his own will! But the child of God says, “I am trusting in Christ, I am everlastingly saved and have no need to fear.” And he adds—

*“Now for the love I bear His name,*

***What was my gain I count but loss,  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His Cross.”***

He is now not at all afraid. What? Not afraid of sinning? Yes, he is, but not on legal ground. The true Christian reminds me of a little boy who had a very kind and loving father and he was very fond of his father, too. One day some boys agreed to go and rob an orchard and they said to him, “Jack, you come with us.” “No,” he answered, “I cannot go with you, for it would grieve my father.” “Oh, but,” they said, “your father loves you and he won’t beat you as our fathers will if they find out.” “Ah,” he replied, “that is the very reason why I could not go—because he never beats me—he is so kind and loving that I will not do anything to grieve him.”

That is just the spirit that animates true Christians! If we live unto God, we cannot bear to do what is wrong. Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin—he must be holy! Love binds him fast, crucifies him, makes him dead to what he once loved and makes him live in newness of life. You who prefer the bondage of the Law, may have it if you please. You who like the crack of that whip, may live under it if you will. But oh, if you once really knew the Love of God, you would never want to go back to that servitude! You would never say, “Baali,” and crouch down, like a poor woman before a husband who was about to strike her. But you would come to your Lord in loving confidence and say to Him, “Offend You, my Lord? I cannot do it! I love You too well for that. I would give all I am and all I have, that I might give You pleasure, for You are my Ishi!”

O Christ, by your bleeding wounds and bloody sweat, by Your death and resurrection, You are my Man, my Husband! You are Man and You have become Man for me. My Man, to whom my soul is married, once and for all, and I must love You and serve You till my life’s last breath.”—

*“I will love You in life, I will love You in death, And praise You as long as You lend me breath! And say, when the death-dew lies cold on my brow, ‘If ever I loved You, my Ishi, ‘tis now.’”*

IV. So to close, I want you, for a minute or two, to notice, in the fourth place, THE VENGEANCE OF LOVE, for, when jealousy is stirred up, love makes a clean sweep of everything that comes in its way—“I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”

What a sweeping vengeance it is! “I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth.” The very name of the one we once loved shall be taken away from us! One good effect of the long captivity of the Jews was that after they returned to their own land, they never fell into idolatry again—and I do not believe they ever will. They are clean cured of that evil! I should think it is the rarest thing in the world to find a Jew become a Romanist because it seems contrary, now, to the very nature of Israel to bow down before a visible emblem. But what did the Jews do? They took the name that they used to give to their false god, Baal, and they applied it to the devil—hence you get the term Beelzebub, or Baalzebub, the god of flies, the god of dung—a caricature name which they applied to the devil himself. So, the things you loved when you were in the world and made your god, are now to you like the devil! What a change the Grace of God makes when it enters the heart! Has your false god become your devil and what you despised become your God? That is the meaning of the promise of the text—“I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth.” When we pronounce the word that once was sweet to us, it shall positively mean something else. It shall be bitter to us even to think of it. There are some words which were in our vocabulary when we were ungodly, but we never use them now, or, if we do use them, they mean the very opposite to what they meant before we came to love the Lord!

There are professors who talk a great deal about some things that are better not mentioned. Paul says, “It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” I always regret, when a person tells the story of his past life, when he seems to think it necessary to drag in some of the black bits. If you do so, my Brother, mind that you rub in plenty of salt before you put any of the unsavory meat, otherwise it may leave a bad smell behind. There may be mischief done even by those who fancy that they are magnifying the Grace of God. It is sometimes necessary to tell what we were, in our unconverted state, but if we do so, we must be very careful not to take the name of Baalim on our lips while we are trying to glorify our God!

The fact is, dear Friends, the Lord makes such a thorough change, such a spiritual change, that it is true of past things, “they shall no more be remembered by their name.” That is the last clause of the text. You cannot help remembering the things in which you delighted in the days of your ignorance. You cannot quite blot them out of your memory, even though you have forsaken them long ago. But you do not remember them by their old name and you do not call them by that name now. You have learned to call a spade a spade, and you do not know it, now, except by that name. People talk about “seeing life,” but if they were to say to a Christian that he had been seeing life, he would not understand them. He would say, “You do not see life in the places where you go—you see corruption. To see life is to live unto God.” “Oh, but,” says one, “I have been enjoying myself, I have been having pleasure.” But, to the Christian, those words do not mean what they mean to the ungodly man, for sin would be no pleasure to him—it would be utter misery. The swine find great pleasure in a few inches of filthy mud but if you could change them into men and put them to sleep in nice soft beds, I guarantee you that then they would have a good night’s rest!

I daresay the devil finds himself at home in Hell, or wherever his dwelling place may be, but if he could be converted into a seraph, he would not stay in Hell for an hour! He would never want to go there again for pleasure, of that I am certain. And when a man who professes to be converted says that he goes into the world, and into sin, for pleasure, it is as if an angel went to Hell for enjoyment! The Lord give you Grace, Dearly-Beloved, so to love Him and to find such perfect liberty in His service, that though you may be tempted to sin, you will not yield, for invincible love binds you to His heart and holds you fast forever!

Paul said, and it was a grand utterance, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” When a Roman had a slave whom he did not mean to ever sell, or to part with—in his cruelty he branded him with his own name. Suppose that it was Caesar? He took his slave and burned the name of Caesar right into his flesh! So the Apostle says, “I bear in my body the marks”—the brand—“of the Lord Jesus. I am His forever! I never wish to run away from Him, nor can I.” There are some friends about to be baptized. I only trust that they will receive the spiritual brand right into their soul. What a brand this Baptism is to a man! You see, it is not on his arm—so he cannot cut it off—it is all over him. It is a water-mark that cannot be removed! You may go into sin, but you have been baptized, and that fact shall rise against you in judgment! Whatever you do, you have been professedly buried with Christ and if you are not dead, you have no business to be buried! But if you have lied to God and, during the rest of your life, if you turn away from Him, yet that mark is still upon you. Woe unto you, for you have been a deceiver!

But the true and genuine Christian does not mind what mark he has, to tell to whom he belongs. “Set it on my forehead,” he says, “for there I hope to wear it, by-and-by.” “His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads.” God grant that we may all come to that glorious condition, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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÷Hos 2.5-7

THE BACKSLIDER’S WAY HEDGED UP

NO. 590

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1864, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“She said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. Therefore,  
behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. And she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband;  
for then was it better with me than now.”  
Hosea 2:5-7.**

GREAT and grievous was the apostasy of the seed of Abraham from the Lord their God. They had been chosen by special Grace from among all people and had the high honor to receive the oracles of God—yet they were bent on backsliding from God and were unfaithful to the Most High. The gods of the surrounding heathen were constantly a snare to them and they forsook the only living and true God to prostrate themselves before blocks of wood and stone. Though chastened a thousand times they learned nothing by the rod. And though as frequently forgiven and visited with mercy, the holy bonds of gratitude did not bind them to their God. As an abandoned woman leaves a kind and tender husband for the base love of the vilest of the vile, even so both Israel and Judah played the harlot towards the Lord who had espoused them in infinite love.

Yet God has not even now written a bill of divorcement, or cast away the people whom He did foreknow. Through eighteen hundred years the sons of Israel have had to wander to and fro without a settled dwelling place, yet God has not utterly given them up or broken His Covenant with them. For the day shall come when Israel shall return, when again she shall be called Hephzibah, and her land Beulah. Come, long expected day! Appear, glorious King of the Jews! And you, O Judah, return from your captivity! Shake yourself from the dust—put on your beautiful garments and salute the Lord, your Ishi, your tender loving Husband!

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, the apostasy of the children of Israel has been recorded for our learning. As they were prone to wander, so are we— and the methods by which God brought them back of old are precisely those which He uses with His erring children at the present day. Instead of wondering at Israel’s wickedness, let us examine ourselves and repent for our sins! And while we see the hand of God upon them, let us learn to admire those methods of unerring wisdom by which Divine love preserves the ransomed ones from going down into the pit.

In considering our text, my aim will be to be used as the Holy Spirit’s instrument to arouse, instruct and restore backsliders. Such wanderers may be present now. Their first love they have lost and their zeal is quenched. There may be some here who have gone further still and have forsaken the Church of God altogether, having given up their profession

and all attendance upon Divine worship. O that the voice of Israel’s God may be heard in their hearts this morning, crying, “If a man puts away his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man’s, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to Me, says the Lord.”

I. We commence the consideration of the passage before us with the remark that WHILE SINFUL MEN ARE IN PROSPERITY THEY PERVERT THE MERCIES OF GOD TO THEIR OWN INJURY, making them instruments of sin and weapons of warfare against God. While the children of Israel enjoyed an abundance of temporal comforts they ascribed all these blessings to their false gods. Hear the wicked and treacherous words—“I will go after my lovers who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.” Oh, base ingratitude to their bounteous Jehovah! Infamous ascription of His Glory to graven images!

Prosperous sinners make three great mistakes. At the outset they give their temporal mercies the first place in their hearts. Because their business prospers they do not consider that their soul is perishing! Because there is enough on the table for themselves and for their children they forget that their soul is famished for lack of Heaven’s bread! They put the shadows of time before the realities of eternity. They say, “We must live.” But they forget that they must also die. So long as the current glides smoothly and the gentle flow of the river of their joy is undisturbed they forget the waterfall, red with the blood of souls, down whose tremendous steeps those treacherous waters will soon hurry them!

Is it not a gross mistake to attach so much importance to this poor body of clay and forget the priceless jewel of the immortal soul? Why do you think so much of a world in which we only tarry for a few evil years and neglect the world where we must dwell forever? Such folly is most shameful in one who was once a professed Christian, because he knew, or professed to know, somewhat of the superiority of the eternal over the temporal. He supposedly knew of the vanity of things earthly and the glory of things heavenly.

Yet because things go well with him—because his wife is in health, his children blooming, his house well furnished, his property increasing, he says, “Soul, take your ease,” and disturbs not himself though Heaven is black with lowering tempest and the light of God’s countenance is hidden from him. The loss of God’s Presence, the man thinks to be a trifle because he is succeeding in the world—as though a man should count it nothing to lose his life if he may but keep his raiment whole to be buried in!

O Fools, why do you put the last things first and the first things last? One error leads to another and therefore such people hold their temporal things upon a wrong tenure. Do observe how many times the word “my” is found in the text. “Give me my bread and my water and my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.” Why, they were not hers but God’s, for the Lord expressly claims them all in the ninth verse and threatens to take them all away! Backslider, there was a time when you did confess yourself to be God’s steward—when you said, “I am not my own, but bought with a price.” Yet now you have so set your heart upon worldly things that all your talk runs in this fashion—my horses, my houses, my lands, my profits, my children and an endless list of things which you think to be altogether yours.

Why, Man, they are not yours! They are only lent you for a season! You are but God’s under-bailiff. You have possession only as tenant-at-will, or as a borrower holding a loan. The Lord claims even now the prior right to all you have and the day shall come when He shall show you this! For if He has mercy upon you—and I pray He may—He may take these from you one by one and make you cry out in abject wretchedness of soul, “O God, forgive me that I made these my gods and claimed them as my own!”

Then further, backsliders are apt to ascribe their prosperity and their mercies to their sins. I have even heard one say, “Ever since I gave up a profession of religion I have made more headway in business than I did before.” Some apostates have boasted, “Since I broke through Puritanical restraint and went out into worldly company, I have been better in spirits and better in purse than ever I was before.” Thus they ascribe the mercies which God has given them to their sins and wickedly bow down before their lusts, as Israel did before the golden calf and cry, “These are your gods, O Israel, which brought us up out of the land of Egypt!”

Sinner, if you did but know it, a long-suffering God has given you these things! Even to you who will perish He has given many mercies as your portion in this life, seeing that you have no heritage hereafter. O take heed, lest you be fattened upon them as beasts for the slaughter. Unto you, Backsliders, He has given these things to try you, to see how far you will go—to what extravagances of ingratitude you will descend and how far you will despise His tender means. O Backslider, is it not marvelous that God has not long ago stretched you upon a bed of sickness, when you consider how much you have brought dishonor upon Christ’s name—how you have vexed God’s people—how you have made the wicked open their mouths against God?

Is it not a wonder that He did not take you away with a stroke when you first forsook Him? And yet, see—instead of this, He multiplies your mercies! Does He not as good as say, “Return unto your rest for I have dealt bountifully with you. I am married unto you and therefore I treat you as a husband treats his spouse. Although I might well proclaim a divorce against you, yet since I have betrothed you unto Me forever, My goodness and mercy shall not leave you even in your sins.” Herein lies the gross mistake of the backslider—that he will attribute his present happiness and comfort to his sins rather than to the forbearance of God.

Here are three great errors and oh, I fear they are so deadly that unless God interposes in Providence and in Grace, they will be as fatal as the three darts which Joab thrust through the heart of Absalom as he was dangling by his proud hair in the wood of Ephraim! I fear that the goodly Babylonian garment and the talents of silver and the wedge of gold will ruin you as they did Achan of old. These three falsehoods, like the three daughters of the horseleech, will never be satisfied until they have utterly destroyed your soul! You will be wrapped in fine linen and fare sumptuously and all this shall but ensure you the torments of the damned.

Go now, weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you— your riches are corrupted! Your garments are moth-eaten! Your gold and silver are cankered and the rust of them shall be a witness against you and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have forsaken the right way and are gone astray—following the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Hear the Word of the Lord by the mouth of His servant Peter! Tremble at it and be afraid—“If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again. And the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”

II. Let us turn from this gloomy side of our subject and observe with gratitude that THE LORD INTERPOSES ADVERSITY IN ORDER TO BRING BACK HIS WANDERING CHILDREN. Let us consider for a moment the hindrances which a God of Love frequently puts in the way of His elect when they backslide from Him. Here we have the matter opened up to our attention. “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.”

Here you see that it is an unexpected hindrance, for it is placed right in the woman’s way—“I will hedge up your way”—it was her way, her habit— she had fallen into it and she meant to keep on. But suddenly she met with an unlooked-for obstacle. Just as farmers, when a public path runs through their field and persons begin to wander too much into the grass or corn, will put up bushes to keep the public to the path. Or just as ranchers, to keep their cattle in their fields, make thick thorn hedges which the beasts cannot break through, so God puts a thorn hedge of troubles right in the way of His chosen to stop them in their sins.

This hedge may be placed in your way in different shapes—perhaps you will meet with it this day. I see the hand of God as it touches the elect but erring man! Suddenly business grows slack—customers fall off one by one—bad debts multiply. Bankruptcy stares him in the face. Where he had enough to lavish on his pleasures he now has not enough to supply his needs. A mighty famine has arisen in the land of sin and he begins to be in need. He little expected this. If anybody had told him when he was so proudly driving that fast-trotting horse along the streets that he would come to hard work, he would have laughed him to scorn!

He thought he should live like a millionaire, but now he seems far more likely to die a pauper. Or it may be that sudden sickness has fallen upon his once strong and healthy person. He could drink with the most drunken and no voice could ring so loud as his in the midnight revelry. But now he is paralyzed—he has lost the use of half his limbs! Or perhaps some internal complaint has weakened him and made him totter along the road in constant jeopardy of sudden death. Now the smooth road is rough, indeed, and the world has lost its many charms.

Ah, Sinner, the sound of music is hushed for you and the joys of the flowing bowl are yours no more. Your foaming tankards, your wantonness and chambering are gone—Mercy has torn them from you in love to your soul! Possibly the hedge is made of other thorns—perhaps the man’s children sickened. There are many funerals in the house in quick succession. That first-born son, the expected heir, the joy of his father’s heart falls like a withered flower. His wife is cut off as a lily snapped from its stalk and he stands weeping—a widowed husband—a childless man. Any of these ways, and thousands more which I need not here recount, are God’s methods of building walls across the way of those whom He ordains to bless.

When the man breaks through one hedge, the Lord of Mercy will build another and maintains His hedges at such a degree of strength that the bullock which is most accustomed to the yoke shall not be able to push through. O Backslider, the Divine finger can touch you in the most tender part and though up to this moment you have boasted, “Nobody can make me wretched! Nothing shall ever make me fret,” yet He can shut you up in such despair that none can remove the heavy bar! Think of what your brain may yet become—it is cool and calculating now and you can clearly see that your fellows are left behind in the race of competition—but remember how soon an unseen cause may soften that brain into imbecility, or excite it into incipient insanity! How soon may that boasted brain become like a burning sea throbbing with waves of fire!

Beware lest such a visitation become the prelude of the wrath eternal! My prayer for you is that more gentle means may bring you to repentance. But to that you will never come unless the Lord hedges up your way with thorns. Observe that it was a very disappointing impediment. While the prosperous sinner was securely pursuing his way he was stopped. “Why,” says the man, “if it had not been for that, I should have made a fortune. Why did death come just when my fair girl looked so lovely in the bloom of opening womanhood and when my dear boy had grown so engaging that his company was my delight? Ah, this is trouble, indeed! To meet with misfortune just when I had built that new house and held my head so high, and expected to see my daughters so respectably married—why, this is very disappointing.”

And the man kicks. And though once he professed to be a child of God, yet it is painfully possible that he is ready to curse God and die. But if he knew—oh, if he knew the Divine motive—he would thank God for his troubles on bended knees! You remember that story of the painter in St. Paul’s when on high he painted his picture upon the ceiling? As he went backward upon the stage to look at it and was so engrossed with his occupation he was just on the edge of the stage and in great danger of being dashed to pieces by a fall from that dizzy height. A friend saw him and knowing that if he called out to him he would be startled and thus his fall might be hastened, he took up a brush full of paint and threw it at the picture. The desired effect was produced, for the painter in great anger rushed forward to upbraid him and thus his life was spared!

God seeing you painting a fair scene of life and happiness on earth suddenly spoils it all—you rush forward, crying out against Him. But oh, what reason have you to thank Him for that disappointment which has robbed Satan of his prey and saved your soul! Moreover, what painful hindrances our heavenly Father often uses. He hedges the sinner’s path

not with rhododendrons and azaleas, not with roses and laurels, but with thorns. Prickly thorns which curse the soil and tear the flesh are God’s instrument of restraint. Nothing but a thorn hedge would have stopped the man—he was so madly set upon his present course that he would dash through anything else.

But God, whose eternal mercy has marked that man out as a special object of love, uses the most effectual remedies and plants a fence of thorns. Are you smarting this morning—so smarting that you wish you had never been born? Do you feel so much the cuts and lashes of evil fortune that you would sooner end your existence than continue any longer as you are? I bless God for this, if you are one of His children, for it is this and this only, that will change your ways!

Furthermore, the fence is effectual if the thorn hedge will not suffice—it is written, “I will make a wall.” There are some so desperate in sin that they will break through ordinary restraints. Then a wall shall be tried through which there is no breaking, over which there is no climbing. Ah, Backslider! Backslider! Perhaps you have already broken through the thorn hedge—your trials have not been sanctified. I have known some who have had enough trials, one would think, to have melted a heart of adamant and yet they have set their faces like a flint against God and gone on worse than ever. “Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?” said Pharaoh, when he was vexed with many plagues. And so have you said!

God, I trust, will not destroy you as He did Pharaoh, but He will break, one way or another, the iron sinew of your proud neck. For when it comes to a wrestle between God and you, you may be sure of a fall! The Lord never was defeated, even by the stoutest adversary and He will not, in your case, be frustrated in His design. If you are really one of His chosen, you shall meet with an affliction such as perhaps you never heard of in any other man. And if nothing but this will stop you, He will invent some new form of disease, some fresh method of pain in order to get at your soul. If you cannot be saved by the gentle wind, He will send the storm.

If this suffices not, He will try the hurricane and if you will not run into port even then, tornado shall follow tornado till you are broken to pieces like a wreck and compelled to swim to the Rock of Ages for rescue. These are but parts of His ways and even His hard things are full of mercy. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, but the cruel things of God are full of tender mercy! He only uses these methods because nothing else will do and He would sooner that you should enter into Heaven with every bone broken, than that you should descend into Hell with the full use of your powers.

III. In the third place, you would think that the sinner would now stop, but instead of it, according to the text, EVEN THOUGH GOD WALLS UP THE WAY OF SIN, MEN WILL TRY TO FOLLOW IT, BUT IN THE CHOSEN THIS RESOLVE WILL BE IN VAIN. “She shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them. And she shall seek them, but shall not find them.” Do you see the man? He has suffered such loss that he cannot find the means to sin as he used to do! Where he had money to spend to indulge himself he now finds an empty purse but yet he tries to do his worst.

He goes up and down that wall to see if there is not a hole in it somewhere. He tries to scramble over it where there is a projecting stone—he climbs half-way up, and falling, cuts his hands—but he will try again and again. He runs all along that thorn hedge and looks and looks again for a gap and oh, if he could find but one! If he could but escape from God’s boundaries! If he could but scrape enough money together to have another debauch. If he could find just enough to play the gentleman again. But he cannot—he has no means whatever to indulge his sin.

Perhaps the case runs another way—God has taken away from the man all the pleasure of sin. He cannot be so satisfied as he used to be with his money. As he puts it into the till he despises it—and when he sees it accumulating at his banker’s it only brings him care and no content as once it did. His children turn out, one by one, a curse to him. In business everything seems determined to plague him. Whereas at the theater he could gaze and listen with ecstasy, the whole affair is now tame and dull. Those wines, so full of flavor, have now, through his satiety lost their usual charm. Let him do what he will, the world is all a blank and wretchedness for him!

Like Tiberius he would give a mint of gold to anyone who would invent him a new pleasure or restore the vigor of the old. But no, the thorn hedge is too well made—the Great Farmer has planted it too well. The sinner would become a spiritual suicide but he cannot, let him desire it as he may. He is desperately set on destruction as though it were to be desired. O Sinner, how is this—how has the fall spoilt us that we should be so enamored of our own destruction? O my God, what a creature is man! Though he knows that sin will be his ruin, yet he hugs it as though it were his chief mercy! He heaps to himself destruction as though it were gold and digs for his own ruin as for hid treasure!

Oh, if the righteous were half as intent in seeking after goodness as the wicked are in hunting after sin, how much more active would they be! If we were half as strongly set upon the things of God as sinners are set upon their own ways and their own pleasures, we should have no waverers, no timid, cowardly spirits! Truly this love of sin is so strange that if we did not see it in ourselves we should wonder at it! But Christian, this is in you as much as in the worst of men! You, too, if it had not been for Divine mercy, would have plunged on from bad to worse. If Omnipotence itself had not seized the reins and turned us into the way of Truth, we should at this moment have been dashing on in the road of sin!

I say if Omnipotence itself had not interposed—it was not the minister, it was not conscience, it was not merely Providence. It was more than this—Jehovah’s own right arm threw back the horse on its haunches and cast the rider to the ground as He did Saul at Damascus, or else we should have hastened on to our destruction and perished through the hardness of our hearts. Let us sing unto Him whose mighty mercy has rescued us and let us pity those whom the restraints of Providence cannot bind—those who will, if they can—leap through stone walls to have their way and their sin.

Thus, dear Friends, we have presented to you the deplorable picture of the infatuated sinner, perfectly infatuated and drunken with the love of sin and enmity to God! And Mercy itself, so far as we have gone, foiled of its purpose. The thorn hedge not enough—the stone wall not enough. What shall come now?

IV. Our next business is to consider THAT THE BACKSLIDER’S FAILURE IS FOLLOWED BY A BLESSED RESULT. The hunt was very arduous but the greedy hunter has missed his prey and there he sits weary with the chase and ashamed of himself. What comes of it? Do observe it, for the result is one which I hope you and I know already. “Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now.” O Lord, teach some who are here this morning to pray this prayer!

Observe here is repentance attended with sorrow. The poor creature in this case feels, deeply feels to the very soul, the wretchedness of her condition. She is in so bad a plight that though she had despised her former state she now confesses it to be better. Observe that it is an active repentance. It is not merely “I will return,” but, “I will go and return.” When the Grace of God sets a backslider upon returning, he will stir up all the powers of his soul to seek after God. He cries, “My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.” I say more than they that watch for the morning.

There is much earnestness in a sinner seeking Christ, but, if possible, there is more in a backslider returning from the error of his ways—for he has not only the guilt of sin to mourn over—but the double guilt of having despised the Savior, of having known the way of righteousness and having turned from it. Here are two spurs to make him speed on in his course. Observe, dear Friends, that the confession which this poor soul makes of folly is one which is sustained by the best of reasons. She says, “Then was it better with me than now.” Let us see whether this is not true with you.

Well, Backslider, what have you gained by it, after all? Have you gained anything more comfortable than the light of your Father’s face. You once could say, “Abba, Father!” You rejoiced to know that God was at peace with you. You were reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Now God is angry with you! Your fears tell you that He has forgotten to be gracious. What can make up for this loss? When God lights a candle, what brightness is in the room! But when God’s candle is gone, where is the sun and where the moon? They give no light to you.

Before, when you were in your right senses, you had the privilege of going to the Throne of Grace. You could tell your needs before God and spread your sorrows there. But you have no Throne of Grace to go to now. Why, you scarcely dare pray! As for your friends, you would not like to tell them your troubles. Poor Prodigal, what sorry friends are those who waited on you in your days of wealth! They sat with their legs under your mahogany and drank your wine while you had any—but you know that you would be a fool to expect any help from them now that you need it.

Your lovers have forsaken you and those who once were so kind—where is their love now? Do I see one among you who has been cast off by her companion in sin and shame! Ah, Woman! Poor wretched Woman! Have you been made to feel that smart so common to those who sin as you have done—cast into the street by him who first decoyed you by his fair promises of love? Your case is but one of many and there are thousands who find that the world knows not what faithfulness means.

First sin deludes, deceives, and pretends to love and then afterwards it casts off its victims. Ah, you had a father’s house to go to and a father’s mercy to plead. But you do not have it now—it was better with you then than now. And then, you had God’s promises to fall back upon. If you had any trouble, you opened your Bible and there was a passage to cheer you. When you had losses, the cheering words exactly met your case. But now that Book is full of fire—it flashes lightning upon you as you read it—there is not a promise there which smiles on you!

Your fears whisper that the treasury of God is shut against you. Once you had communion with Christ Jesus—ah, now I touch a tender string— you did sit at the banqueting table of Christ! Unless you were awfully deceived and a gross hypocrite, you could say, “He has kissed me with the kisses of His mouth.” After this, how could you go to the door of that deceiver Madame Wanton! How is this? O Soul, if you have ever known the love of Christ I am sure you will say, “It was better with me then than now.”

What can the world afford you comparable to fellowship with Jesus? One hour upon His bosom is worth ten thousand years in the palaces and courts of the world’s wealth and royalty and you know that it is so. There is no room to entertain a comparison for a moment—

*“What peaceful hours you once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still.*

*But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.”*  
O that your repentance, fixed upon such reasons as these, may be deep! May you make a confession of your extreme folly and now fall down before God and find mercy!

To close this point, this repentance was acceptable. It is not often that a husband is willing to take back his wife when she has so grossly sinned, as the metaphor here implies. And yet observe that God is willing to receive the sinner, though his sin is even more aggravated. By the mouth of Jeremiah He speaks these words—“Return unto Me, for I am married unto you.” I do not know anything which should make the backslider’s heart break like the doctrine of God’s immutable love to His people! Some say that if we preach that “whom once He loves He never leaves, but loves them to the end,” it will be an inducement to man to sin.

Well I know man is very vile and he can turn even love itself into a reason for sinning, but where there is as much as even one spark of Grace, a man cannot do that. A child does not say, “I will offend my father because he loves me.” It is not even in fallen human nature, generally, unless inspired by the devil, to find motives for sin in God’s love and certainly no backsliding child of God can say, “I will continue in sin that Grace may abound.” They who do so show that they are reprobates and their damnation is just.

But the backslider who is a child of God at the bottom, will, I think, feel no cord so strong to hold him back from sin as this. Backslider, I hope it will also be a golden chain to draw you to Christ. Jesus meets you,

meets you this morning. You were excommunicated. You were driven out from among God’s people with shame but Jesus meets you, and pointing to the wounds which He received in the house of His friends at your hands, He nevertheless says, “Return unto Me, for I am married unto you.” It is a relationship which you have broken and it might legally be broken forever if He willed it—but He does not will it—for He hates divorce.

You are married to Jesus. Come back to your first Husband, for He is your Husband still! The Fountain which washed you once can wash you again. “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The robe of righteousness which covered you once can cover you again! Though you have cast it from you with scorn, yet it is yours and the Father bids His servants bring forth the best robe and put it on you. He says, “Come to Me!” You have forgotten the Lord, but He has not forgotten you1 You love sin, but He will change your will and set your heart upon Himself, for He is determined that you shall be His forever!

Is not this a soul-melting doctrine? If there is so much as a spark of spiritual life in you, I think you will say, “Against such love as this I cannot sin! Against such tender mercy I will not rebel—I will return unto my first husband, for then it was better with me than now.” I do not know, but I may be speaking very pointedly and personally to some here—I hope I am. I know that the most of you are not in this condition and for this I thank my God. I pray you, however, lift up your hearts in prayer for those who are and ask my Master that as this bow is drawn at a venture He may direct the arrow.

There are some such here—I know there are. There are some here who have come this very morning with no idea that God would meet with them. You have put the reins upon your neck and you have given yourselves up. The restraints of morality can scarcely bind you and yet once you prayed at the Prayer Meeting and sat at the sacramental table and you put on the Lord Jesus Christ by profession in Baptism. But oh, what are you now? Your life would not bear to be talked of. Your conduct has become so gross and vile you might have expected to have heard this morning some word that should have cut you off forever from hope! But, by God’s Grace, instead of it the silver trumpet sounds today with notes of love and pity. Return! Return !—Your Husband woos you over again— return! For then it was better with you than now.

V. Not to be longer on the point, let us observe in the fifth place that THERE IS AN AWFUL CONTRAST TO ALL THIS. There are some who prosper in this world until, like a wide-spread tree, they are cut down and cast into the fire. There are backsliders, who, never having had the root of the matter in them, go back unto their own ways to the land from which they came out and continue there forever. I beseech you never trifle with backsliding. I have put God’s Free Grace in the boldest manner that I could just now, but oh, let me warn any man who would pervert that Free Grace into an excuse for sin!

Let me warn him against playing with backsliding! One man may roll down a precipice and may scarcely be injured, but I would not try it, for I might break my neck. One man took poison and he was hurried off to the hospital and by the use of proper antidotes was spared, but I would not advise you to try it—no I would beg you to put it away from you. Chosen vessels of mercy, notwithstanding their backslidings, are brought back. But ah, remember that nine out of ten of those who backslide never were God’s people! They go out from us because they were not of us and this is the history of their lives and may be the history of your life—ah, and may be the history of mine yet!

They joined the Church. They had been greatly impressed under a sermon. They were young, they knew little as yet of the trials of life—being in the Church they walked consistently for years. They kept the faith. But the Church was cold and they grew cold, too. They neglected weekday services. The closet was forsaken. Family prayer was hardly attended to. Then they forsook the sanctuary altogether, but they were still moral and upright. They began soon to associate with those whom once they avoided—their business went on well.

They had risen from the lowest grade of society to occupy a middle position. They still prospered—gold accumulated. They were the successful people. There was a worm at the root of it all, it is true, but nevertheless it looked so fair and seemed so well. The man did not like to remember that he ever had gone to that little Meeting House—he felt ashamed that ever he had associated with those whom once he knew to be the people of God. He went on still accumulating wealth, but one day he was found dead! Shall I pursue his history? In Hell he lifts up his eyes in torments forever! With this as the special worm that never could die to gnaw his conscience—that he did know in his head the way of righteousness—but had turned away from it in his heart!

In letters of fire he sees written across that burning sky: “YOU KNEW YOUR DUTY BUT YOU DID IT NOT. You have come from the cup of the Lord to the cup of devils—you turned aside from the people of God to the children of Satan! You deliberately chose the evil and you forsook the good—you perished not as the ignorant perish, not as they perished who were careless from their birth—not as those who were unvisited by pangs of conscience, or who knew not the Word! You perished in the light of the Gospel, with the sun of mercy shining upon your eyeballs! You perished, though you stood, as it were, on the very doorstep of Heaven! You drifted back to Hell in the teeth of a tide of mercy.”

“This, I say, may be your case and mine, if we are not really rooted and grounded in Christ—we may fall by little and little. We may even continue till we die to be Church members and yet backslide in heart by slow degrees until we become rotten through and through and God casts us on the dunghill. I say by the special and miraculous mercy of God His elect will be ingathered, but take heed, Sirs, that you build not on your profession, for profession is no proof of election. You must be born again and only the man who continues to the end shall be saved. May we have such perseverance given us, for His name’s sake.  
VI. With this last we conclude—IS NOT THIS SUBJECT A VERY SOLEMN WARNING TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD? What some do others may do. If one man falls, another may. If one professor turned out to be a hypocrite, so may another. If one minister reels from the pinnacle of honor and is dashed upon the rocks beneath, so may another. I want to make a personal application of this to myself and I pray my Brothers in office behind me, venerable though some of them are in years, to remember that this may be their case.

And you, my associates and fellow members, many of you united to the Church before I was born, remember that age and habit are no security against apostasy! There must be the continual keeping and anointing of the Holy Spirit. I beseech you, and here I do beseech myself also, let us watch against the beginnings of backsliding. Let us take care of the little sins. O let us watch against the little coolnesses of heart. Brethren, no man backslides all at once. Few men who profess to be saints become outward sinners in one step. It is usually by little and by little. I pray you do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together!

Wake up from your coldness in private prayer if this has come over you. If your love to Christ has grown cold stay not in this state of danger but pray to the Master to inflame your heart again! If any of you have in any respect whatever fallen from your first love—if that old enthusiasm which was in us as a Church has departed from any of you—pray God to give it back to you. If any of you are not bringing forth such fruit unto God as you used to do, O be suspicious of yourselves! Carnal security may be the Heaven of fools, but it is the ruin of Believers—

*“Be watchful, be vigilant, dangers may be, In an hour when all seems secure to you”*

Especially at this time when the eyes of the world are fixed upon you as a Church and upon me as a witness for God, let us walk carefully. If ever I might ask your prayers, no, claim them as my right, it is now! I beseech you who love God, ask for me my Lord’s upholding Grace that His servant may not flinch nor turn his back in the day of battle. Ask for yourselves the same, that when the fight shall grow less hot and there shall come an hour of calm and quiet thought, I, your pastor and yourselves, my fellow soldiers in Christ, may look down the ranks and say, “Not one comrade has fallen. The arrows flew thick about them but their armor was complete! The enemy was fierce, but the Master gave them strength equal to their day. He has kept those whom He gave to us and not one of them is lost.”

May it be yours and mine on Heaven’s starry steeps to look back upon the superlatively glorious Grace which shall have kept us to the end and brought us to the land where there shall be no more sin! Let us trust the Savior. There is the sinner’s hope—there is the saint’s strength! Let us cling to the Cross again and may Almighty Grace keep us there and so glorify itself forever. Amen.

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÷Hos 2.8

THE UNKNOWN GIVER AND THE MISUSED GIFTS

NO. 2252

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 17, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore I will return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and flax.”**

**Hosea 2:8, 9.**

IN reading any of the records concerning the people of Israel and the people of Judah, one stands amazed at two things, and scarcely knows which to wonder at the most. The first thing which causes astonishment is the great sin of the people. And the next thing, which is even more marvelous, is the great patience of God. I scarcely know which of the two things causes me greater surprise—that men should be so guilty, or that God should be so gracious! On every page of Israel’s history, the kindness and forbearance of Jehovah are manifested towards the people whom He had betrothed unto Himself. Even in the midst of their backsliding and idolatry, He did not forget the Covenant which He had made with their fathers. Yet, in spite of all this goodness, the people sinned times without number and grieved His Spirit again and again! Instead of being led to repentance, they sinned yet more and more! Their iniquity and the forbearance of God stand like two mountain summits of the history of the chosen yet wayward people.

Let us transfer these thoughts to ourselves and see if we can, with any justice, cast a stone at the people who, in spite of such love, went so far astray. Alas, we are condemned by the comparison! We are nothing better than they were! Our case is, perhaps, fuller of contradictions and inconsistencies, if that is possible. Is it not amazing, first of all, that we should have been so guilty, that we should have persevered in sin so many years, that even after we have known God we should have been so unfaithful to Him, so unfaithful to our own convictions and to our own conscience? Is not this awful fact amazing? But that God should love us, still, that He should follow us with warning and invitation, that His Holy Spirit should strive with us and continue to strive until He wins the day—and that in spite of our shortcomings and our transgressions—He should have remained faithful to us, even to this very hour, is still more amazing!

O my Soul, sink low in deep humiliation because of your sinfulness! But, rise higher and yet higher in adoration of the unutterable love, the boundless mercy of God to you in spite of your iniquity! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if it were possible for us to only know adequately these two things—man’s sin and God’s love—we would have learned more than the greatest scientists of this world ever knew! And we would have attained to more true wisdom than all earth’s philosophers ever possessed. There are some, who in their search for knowledge, have almost seemed to walk the heavens in order to tread the stars, and to dive into the depths to arrange the rocks and all their ancient life. But there are two things that none of the wise among men have ever been able to compass. Two things which unaided reason has always failed to grasp and always will—sin and love! Sin for its thunder and love for its music—sin for its Hell and love for its Heaven. But we who have been taught by the Grace of God, do know something of sin—may we know increasingly what an evil it is! I trust we also know something of Divine Love—may we be filled with it, even to overflowing!

But, coming now close to our text, I am going to make four observances upon it.  
The first will be one that seems self-evident, yet is often forgotten, namely, that God is the Giver of every good gift. “I gave her corn, and wine and oil.” In the second place, I will dwell upon the sad fact that many seem not to know this. “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil.” My third observation will be that this ignorance leads to perversion of God’s gifts—the gifts of God were profaned by being “prepared for Baal.” In the last place, the solemn Truth of God will demand our attention, that this ill use of God’s gifts causes God to withdraw them. “Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and I will recover My wool and My flax.” We lose what we are determined to put to improper use. So you see that my discourse promises to be a very practical one.  
I. The first thought in the text which claims our attention will be THAT GOD IS THE GIVER OF EVERY GOOD GIFT. “I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” Whether we know it, or not, it is true that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” Do not, then, exult over your brother if you are more richly endowed with God’s gifts than he is—“For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive?” All things that we possess have been bestowed upon us, for it is as certain that we brought nothing into the world, as that we shall take nothing out of the world. We receive everything from the great Distributor who opens His hands and satisfies the desire of every living thing. Though used with reference to a higher gift than any of those mentioned in the text, the words of John the Baptist are true concerning all God’s gifts, “a man can receive nothing, except it is given him from Heaven.”  
But someone may say, “Corn and wine are mentioned here, first of all— surely these are the fruit of tillage. Men sow and reap. Men plant and gather grapes. How, then, can these things be the gift of God?” Why, the moment we think seriously of this matter, we perceive that no farmer can command a harvest! No vinedresser can be sure of fruit unless He that rules the heavens and sends the dews, the rains, the snow and the frosts shall take care, both of the budding vine and of the ripening clusters. All that springs from the earth comes by a miracle of God’s benevolence! If God withheld His hand, you might plow your land, but you would wait in vain for the harvest—an unfruitful season would not return to you even so much as the seed which you had sown. When famines come upon the nations because of blighted harvests, then men ought to understand that the corn, the wine and the oil are God’s gifts—but, alas, many are very slow to learn even that elementary lesson!  
Perhaps others say, “Our share of these things comes to us as the earnings of labor.” Of course, in some form or other that must be true. Ever since man fell, that Word of God to Adam, “In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread,” has been the rule of life for his sons. If men do not till the soil, but dwell in cities, they must still work—but in less pleasant ways than the farmer knows. They may have to toil in murky workshops where they would be glad to catch a breath of fresh breezes that come over the fields. I know we get our bread by our work, but then, who finds us work? Who gives us strength to do it? Let God but withdraw from us His gracious power and our hands would hang feebly at our sides. You know how true this is. When you have been laid aside on the bed of sickness, then have you understood that, unless God gave health, the breadwinner could not go forth to his service and there would be nothing on the table for the wife and children. It is God that gives us our bread, however hard we work in order to earn it. Still have we need to present the petition that our Lord taught His disciples, “Give us this day our daily bread.”  
Besides this, the text also mentions the gain of commerce. “I multiplied her silver and her gold.” Here, also, God’s hand is plainly seen. I admit, of course, that men gain their silver and their gold by trading—but will the ship come home again in safety unless God watches over it? Will the men that go into the heart of the earth to dig for minerals come up alive unless the Providence of God preserves them? Is not the benediction of Heaven needed in every enterprise to which men can put their hands? “Except the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes in vain.” The success of business is based upon a thousand conditions and surrounded by many risks, as every merchant knows. How easily God can lay His finger upon my human scheme and bring to nothing all our plans!  
They used to call those who engaged in commerce, “merchant venturers,” and they were rightly named. There is many a, “perhaps,” about business life in these days of cruel competition, even in our home trade, and it is even more at a venture that a man goes to a far-off land for gain. God must give him success if he is to get it. In our bills of lading we even now insert a clause by which the ship-owner disclaims responsibility in certain contingencies, among which is mentioned, “the act of God.” And when men dispatch a vessel, they often pray—and they always ought to pray, “God speed this ship,” for God-speed is needed if it is to reach its destination safely!  
But some come in by their own corn, their own wine and their silver and gold by the legacies of their friends. In such a case, you may easily trace the gifts of God. If your parents have left you sufficient money for your maintenance, who gave you those parents? Who placed them in a position to be so generous to you? Who arranged the place and manner of your birth but the great Lord of Providence? If you are living in specially favorable circumstances and are able to obtain food and the other necessaries of life, with a good share of its luxuries which others can only gain by long labor, if at all, ascribe to it, I beseech you, the bountiful Providence of the Most High. If you do not give all the glory to the Giver of these gifts, surely you are forgetting your God.  
And yet, perhaps, another says, “I have not labored with my hands, but I am a man of resources. What I possess is the result of thought. I have carefully elaborated an invention and, in a few months I have been able to get for myself what others cannot get with a whole life of toil! Surely I may trace my prosperity to my capacious mind.” And if you do, you will be very foolish unless you also adore the God who gave you your mind! By whose power is it that you have had the wit to gain wealth so speedily? I beseech you be humble in the Presence of God, or you may, in a few days, lose your reason—for it has often happened that men who have had more wit than others have been among the first to lose it! “Great wit to madness is allied.” In many a case it has proven to be so. Remember Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, builder of cities, inventor of great things, and yet, “He did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of Heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws,” because he was proud and exalted himself against God, neither gave glory for His greatness to the Most High.  
We therefore settle it in our hearts as true, once and for all, that God is the Giver of the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and the silver, and the gold, and whatever temporal blessings we enjoy! If honestly gained, we trace them to His hands and we should thank Him now and always for every good gift that we have received from Him.  
I need not make a list of spiritual blessings, nor need I remind you that they all come from God. You know how dependent you are upon Him for them. By nature you are dead. What spiritual life can you get for yourselves without God? Can the dead make themselves live? When you have been made alive, you are pardoned—can you pardon yourselves? From where can forgiveness come but from God? You have more than pardon if you are a child of God—you are possessed of righteousness—how shall you ever have it but as God arrays you in the righteousness of Christ? Joy and peace are our portion, but both come by believing—they are the gifts of God! Holiness, too, and everything else that prepares us for Heaven and helps us to reach that blessed place, is the gift of God freely bestowed upon unworthy men. We were unworthy when He began to bless us and we are still unworthy—yet the hand that at first bestowed the gift upon us continues to enrich us every day in all bountifulness! Shall we not praise Him, lifting high our grateful song?—  
*“Come You fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing Your Grace!  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise!*  
We will not withhold our thanks for such abounding goodness— *“Oh, to Grace how great a debtor  
Daily I’m constrained to be!  
Let that Grace, now, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.”*  
So much for the first point.  
II. Now, secondly, and we come closer to our text, MANY SEEM NOT TO KNOW THIS. “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold.” She did not know and in this lack of knowledge she stands not alone. There are great numbers in the world who do not know this elementary Truth of God—that all good gifts, of any kind whatever—come from the hand of God. Why is this?  
With some it arises from natural ignorance. Myriads of men know not God, as yet, and they are to be pitied if they have not even heard of Him. I fear that in London there are many who have never received even the plainest instruction with regard to God and His Christ. It ought not to be so, seeing that so many in earlier years have passed through our Sunday schools into which a child may go and come out, again, and know but little that will abide with him. It is a pity that this should be the case, but facts go to show that I state no more than the plain truth. There are many whom we may meet in the street who could give us no intelligent account of what they owe to God. They scarcely know who He is! They use His name as a part of their profanity and that is it. Brothers and Sisters, I charge you, by the living God, that as far as your ability goes, you do not suffer a single person in London to be ignorant of God and what men owe Him! With all your might, instruct those with whom you come in contact concerning the great Creator, Preserver and Judge of men—and show them how all our blessings are to be traced to His generous hand! Thus shall be laid a foundation whereon may rest a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.  
There are, however, many more who, from thoughtless ignorance, do not know that God gave them their Providential mercies. Oh, what a thing it is that the bulk of the people by whom we are surrounded should have a thought for everybody but God! Some persons are strictly honest to their fellow men, but they never think that they owe God anything. Everybody is treated fitly by them except their Creator! They will be ungrateful to nobody but their very best Friend—and all for lack of thought. Is it not ten thousand pities that so many miss Heaven from heedlessness and that so many go down to Hell for lack of thinking how they may escape from it? “The wicked shall be turned into Hell,” says the Psalmist, “and all the nations that forget God.” What did these do who thus perish? Did they blaspheme? No. They only forgot God. Did they oppose His purposes? No. It is not said so—they forgot God—that is all. He that forgets his king becomes a traitor. The soldier that forgets his captain becomes a deserter. The child that forgets his mother becomes a prodigal. But the man that forgets his God is the worst of all—his sheer thoughtlessness leads him to the abyss of woe!  
Some lose sight of God because of their wrong thoughts. They look upon everything that happens as luck. “I was a lucky fellow,” says one. “Wonderfully fortunate I have always been,” says another, “I have always had good luck.” So God is pushed from His Throne and men pay their tribute to an imaginary something which is really nothing—but which they call, “luck.” If luck has actually done anything for you, then by all means worship luck and pay homage to it! But it is not so. Luck, fortune and chance are the devil’s trinity! If things have gone well with you, it has been so because it has pleased the Most High to favor you. I pray that you may not be unmindful of the heavenly blessing, but thank your God and bless His name.  
“Well,” says one, “I do not attribute my success to luck. I say I owe it to myself!” So you turn from your God and worship yourself, do you? The Egyptians have been counted the most degraded people of this world in their worship. They worshipped onions, till Juvenal said, “O blessed people, who grow their gods in their own gardens!” But I do not think they were quite so degraded as the man that worships himself. If I could bring my soul to worship an onion, I could never degrade myself low enough to worship myself. A man who makes himself his own god is mad! When you begin to adore yourself as a self-made man, you have surely come to the very abyss of absurdity and idolatry. “Know you that the Lord, He is God; it is He that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” Let us, then, not be guilty of the folly of forgetting Him to whom we owe our all. “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” Still, alas, it is true that some, through their thoughtlessness or their corrupt thought about God, know not that He gave them their corn and wine and oil!  
There are others who forget God from assumed ignorance—they know better, but they profess that they are too intelligent to believe in God! Do you often hear the proud boastings of such men? Oh, it is folly of the most profound kind for any man to think he is too intelligent, or too clever, to believe in God, or to trace anything to Him! “These things happen according to the laws of Nature,” they say. “The arrangements of Nature are fixed and invariable.” Thus, “Nature” becomes nothing more than a false god which they worship. They have elevated a certain something which they call, “nature,” into the place of God—and they suppose that God is somehow tied by His own laws and can never do any other than that which He has been accustomed to do. By such reasoning natural law is lifted up and made higher than the Omnipotent God, Himself! Go, you that worship Nature, and worship her if you will!  
I have not generally found much worship in it. I had a neighbor who said to me, “I do not go and shut myself up in the stifling atmosphere on a Sunday. I stay at home and worship the god of Nature.” I said to him, “He is made of wood, is he not?” “What do you mean?” he said in some surprise. “I think,” I answered, “that I have heard you at worship and, you seem to me, to adore your god by knocking him down.” “Ah,” he said, “have you heard me playing skittles on Sunday?” “Yes,” I said, “you are a pretty fellow to tell me that you stay at home and worship the god of Nature. Your worship is all a lie.” When you hear men talk about this god of Nature, it often means that they only want an opportunity of having more drink, or of amusing themselves, or of otherwise wasting the hours of God’s holy day. As for us, I trust that we shall not assume an ignorance which is not ours. We know that God gave us all we have and unto Him shall be the praise!  
A great many have no real lack of knowledge at all if you search their minds. Theirs is a practical ignorance. They know not that God gave them these things

in the sense that they do not confess that it is so. They never speak about Him as the One who provides for all their needs. They never praise Him for His bounty. They may, perhaps, jerk out a, “Thank God,” as a matter of common speech, but there is no thankfulness in their hearts. Practically, they live from year to year as if there were no God and spend their time and their substance as if they were under no obligation whatever to the great Lord of Providence. Practically it may be said of them, “They know not that I gave them their corn and their wine and their oil.”  
A lower depth is reached by those who do not recognize God because of their willful ignorance, who, because of their deeds of darkness, hate the Light of God and refuse to acknowledge the gifts of God. Our Father in Heaven “makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust.” But the unjust do not receive the refreshing showers as from His hands, nor do those who are evil acknowledge that it is God’s sun that shines upon their head! They hate God and are willfully ignorant, “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”  
Now, it does seem to be a very grievous thing that men should be indebted to God for everything and should never praise Him. That they should, every morning, be awakened by the light that He gives—and every evening be helped to sleep by the shades of darkness with which He mercifully closes the day and curtains the night—and yet that they should never adore His name! Am I not speaking to some here, who, through a tolerably long life, have never thought of their God, or whose thoughts concerning Him have been but fitful and feeble? I would like to hold you to your seat for a moment, my Friend, while I ask you whether you do not feel ashamed that you have never considered the claims of the Most High, or have never thought that He could have any claims, but supposed that you had just to live to think of yourself and your friends and, perhaps, of your fellow men, but never of your God? His goodness has been practically denied by you!  
You have lived as if there were no God, or as if He were too far off to operate upon your life. You live as if you had received nothing to have secured for Him your service. Yet what have you done? Does a man keep a cow without expecting its milk? Would he keep a horse without putting it to work? Would he own a dog if it did not fawn upon him and come at his call? Yet God has kept you all these years and He has had nothing from you but sheer forgetfulness, or, possibly, something worse than that! What do you say to this? I press the matter upon you and ask you to carefully review it before your own conscience and before the Lord—to whom you must, one day, give account! Seeing that you have received so much from Him, you should, at the very least, acknowledge that He is the Giver of all your good things. May God the Holy Spirit make you confess that you have not dealt well with your God. And may He strive with you until, by His almighty Grace, you shall be constrained to change your evil course and acknowledge the goodness and mercy you have received from Him throughout your whole life!  
III. In the third place, when men thus fail to recognize and acknowledge God’s goodness, THIS IGNORANCE OFTEN LEADS TO THE PERVERSION OF GOD’S GIFTS. See how God puts it with reference to the people of Israel, “I multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.” What a depth of infamy it would be to receive the bounty of one king and to pay homage therewith before the throne of his rival! This is what Israel did and, alas, too many imitate them today! The people burned incense to the false god of the heathen on every hill. “She decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgot Me, says the Lord.” This was a great iniquity! The very gold which God gave them, they fashioned into ornaments for their idol, and poured out the wine that came as a gift from Heaven, as an offering at Baal’s shrine!  
There was a certain Indian potentate who deposed his father from the throne and then desired that father to send him his jewels, that he might wear them at his own coronation. These people desired God’s gifts in order that they might present them to Baal and, alas, in this impiety they have many followers! How many there are who are using, against God, all that He has given them! They have prepared it for Baal.  
We do this whenever the gifts of God are used to augment pride. This is a temptation that besets all. We have all a tendency to swell and grow great, simply because God has given us more than other people—whereas that but makes us the greater debtors. I have heard that in the days of imprisonment for debt, there were people in prison who used to be quite proud because they owed ten thousand pounds and who looked down with scorn upon a poor fellow who had come in there only owing a hundred pounds, or perhaps, only a five-pound note. The more they were in debt, the more they thought of themselves!  
Now, is not that the case with every proud man? Because you have greater ability, or greater wealth than another, you owe so much the more to God—and yet you are foolish enough to make that which ought to be a reason for being humble, a reason for being proud! God surely feels that His gifts are being misused when we handle them so as to make ourselves haughty and important. In doing this we forget Him who gave us all, even as Hosea, in another place, says concerning the people, “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore they have forgotten Me.”  
Moreover, the gifts of God are perverted when we use them to justify sin, setting our necks stiffly in the way of evil because, though we have wandered from God, the corn and the oil are still continued to us. “There are my rewards that my lovers have given me,” said this nation that went after Baal—and, therefore, she thought that her worship of Baal was worthy to be continued. How horrible a thing it is for a man to boast in his sin because God does not swiftly follow it with judgement—and to continue therein because God does not at once withdraw His common mercies! Those whose hearts are set in them to do evil because the sentence against the evil work is not executed speedily shall have sore distress in the day when, at last, the righteous God arises to judgement!  
Again, God’s gifts are ill-used when, because of the very abundance of them, we begin to excuse excesses. The drunk and the glutton pervert what was meant to be a good gift into an occasion of sin and riot. God gives us all good things richly to enjoy, but, when, instead of enjoying them, men abuse them and ruin themselves, body and soul, by missing the gifts of Heaven, it would be small cause for wonder if God was roused to remove the gifts put to such base use. And since so many of those around us abuse God’s gifts in this manner, it behooves us, who desire to glorify God, to use all things with great temperance and wholly to abstain from some thing, lest we should cause our brother to stumble.  
Equally bad is it when a man uses the gifts of God’s Providence so as to foster selfishness. His silver and gold are multiplied—he hoards it up and makes a god of it. The poor are at his gate. Let them stay there—why should he trouble about them? The Church of God needs his aid. Let it need it. It shall have nothing from him! “Soul,” says such a man, “you must lay up much goods for many years.” And, when he has effected his purpose, then he talks to his own soul, again, poor creature that it is, and says, “Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years: take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” He has made a god of his goods and thus he has perverted God’s gifts and used them to God’s dishonor. He has given them to Baal!  
It grieves one’s heart to see gifts of God used to oppose God. What would you have thought of David, when Jonathan gave him his sword and bow, if he had taken the sword and cut off Jonathan’s head? Or if he had fitted an arrow to the string and shot Jonathan in the heart? It would have been ingratitude. But men fight against God with God’s own gifts! A woman endowed with beauty, the rare gift of God, uses it to ensnare others to sin. God gives us garments and there are some who use their very garments for nothing else but pride—and who go through the world with no motive but display. A man has a musical voice given to him, but he sings what God cannot be pleased to hear, and what no man or woman ought to listen to! Another has great intellect and he gives himself up to pulling the Bible to pieces and, as far as he can, to destroy much good. Another has a voice that is clear and loud—and he has much skill in using it—and you hear him stand up and lead others to war against their Maker and to sin with a high hand against the King of Heaven!  
Oh, the pity is that there should be so much of good in the world, all heaped up to rot—that so many gifts of God should be used by men against Him! When those in high authority oppress the righteous, they use their authority against God, and when men in high standing are seen at police courts advocating that which is injurious to morals, they not only degrade themselves, but they make us think that the “nobility” with which they are said to be endowed must be a myth! God keep us all, dear Friends, from ever using the gifts of our Maker against our Maker. And we are certainly acting against Him when we go contrary to anything that is honest, lovely and of good repute. And when, in any way, we sanction that which will do our fellow creatures wrong and will be injurious to the interests of true righteousness, and the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ.  
My text is sadly true with reference to many—“She did not know that I gave her corn and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.” They prepared for God’s enemies what God, Himself, had given them, and what He meant to be used only for His own Glory.  
IV. And now my fourth observation is this—THIS PERVERSION OFTEN MOVES GOD TO WITHDRAW HIS MISUSED GIFTS. “Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and my flax.” God has given to many of you a great many mercies. Remember that if you become proud of them—if because you have become fat, like Jeshurun, you begin to kick— He can take His gifts away. If you forsake God, who made you, and lightly esteem the Rock of your salvation, He will forsake you and withdraw His bounty.  
He can withdraw His gifts easily. “Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward Heaven.” You have seen the crows on the plowed field, have you not? There they are, blackening the ground. But clap your hands and they are gone! So have we often seen it with a man’s wealth. There has been a little change in the money market, some little turn in commerce, and all his money has taken to itself wings and flown away. Is it health and strength that you have, or great wit? Ah, Sir, a puff of wind may take away life! A little gas may be fatal to health! We know not what dependent creatures we are. God can easily take away the blessings which He gives. Therefore let us remember Him in the use of them. “Whether, therefore, you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.”  
Moreover, God can take away His gifts unexpectedly. In the text, He says, “I will take away My corn in the time thereof,” that is, in harvest. “And My wine in the season thereof,” that is, just at the time of vintage. When it seems as if the harvest and vintage were secure, God would send a sudden blight upon both and they would perish. God can take things away when they almost touch the tips of our fingers. And He can easily deprive us of misused blessings at the very moment when we think we are most sure of them! “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip” and there is many an occasion of final disappointment when we think we have succeeded. We are only secure as we trust in the Giver of all good.  
God can take away these thing rightfully. What would you do if you had one whom you fed who was always kidding against you? Would you feed a dog that was always barking at you and trying to fly at you and do you mischief? Is it not right that God should take away Providential benefits from men when they misuse them and pervert them to His dishonor? It is of His Grace that these things are ours at all—He has but to withdraw that Grace and to deal with us as we deserve, and lo—we are impoverished at once!  
If God takes these things away, I would pray that He may take them from you mercifully. I was riding, one day, with a young gentleman who was leading a very reckless life, indeed, but whose father was a very gracious man. I found that the son had taken to horseracing and I said, “That is right—go on as fast as you can—till you have lost every penny you have, you will scarcely be willing to turn to God. Young fellows like you do not often come home, except round by the swine trough. When you get down to that, then, I trust, you will cry to God for mercy and say, ‘I will arise, and go to my father.’” He was very astonished at my advice, but I think it was the right thing to say under the circumstances.  
How often have I seen something of this sort take place! The Lord has taken wealth away from a man or He has taken away health, or else the man has fallen into dishonor—the Lord takes away the corn in the time thereof, and the wine in the season thereof—and then it happens, as we have it in the verse before the text, the afflicted one says, “I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now.” So long as you come to Christ, I do not mind if you come round by “WeepingCross.” Even if you come with a broken leg, with the loss of an eye, or with consumption making a prey of you, it will be well, if only your souls are saved and you come home to your great Father, we will be glad!  
But why do you want to be whipped to Christ? Why not come willingly? Why do you need to have these Truths of God burnt into you as with a hot iron? Why not learn them easily. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding—whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Be not hard-mouthed with God, for He will master you if He once takes you by the hand! If He means to bless you, He will conquer you, though He may have to use rough measures with you. By-and-by, when He has broken you in, He will deal with you in all the infinite tenderness of His compassion— and you will acknowledge that even His roughness was all the result of His love for you!  
Now, I close by saying that the Lord may take these things away from us justly. He sometimes withdraws His bounty without intending mercy. The sufferings of guilty men here are like the first days of a horrible tempest that will continue forever and ever. If they will not turn to Him when He calls in mercy, but continue to reject His love, then He will begin to speak in thunder—the first storm of His righteous wrath shall only be the beginning of an endless hurricane—  
*“You sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear.  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there.”*  
I have tried to speak very earnestly, but if I have failed to speak as tenderly as I would, may the great Master forgive me! Oh, that you would acknowledge your indebtedness to God! Oh, that you would cast away your idols! “As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.”  
God grant that you may be led by the blessed Spirit to yield yourself to Him who has given you so much cause to trust Him! And to His name shall be eternal honor! Amen, and amen.

**Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—Hosea 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—709, 524, 596.  
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÷Hos 2.23

GOD’S PEOPLE—OR NOT GOD’S PEOPLE

NO. 2295

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God.”  
Hosea 2:23.**

**“As He says also in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.” Romans 9:25.**

To my mind, it is very instructive to notice how Paul quotes from the Prophets. The Revelation of the mind of God in the Old Testament helps us to understand the Gospel revealed in the New Testament. There is no authority that is so powerful over the minds of Christian men as that of the Word of God. Has God made known any Truth in His Word? Then it is invested with Divine authority! Paul, being himself Inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to write fresh Revelations of the mind of God, here brings the authority of God’s Word in the olden times to back up and support what he says—“As he says also in Hosea.”

Beloved Friend, if you are seeking salvation, or if you need comfort, never rest satisfied with the mere word of man. Be not content unless you get the Truth from the mouth of God. Say in your spirit, “I will not be comforted unless God, Himself, shall comfort me. I want chapter and verse for that which I receive as Gospel.” Our Lord’s reply to Satan was, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Give me, then, but a Word out of God’s mouth, and I can live upon it! But all the words out of man’s mouth, apart from Divine Inspiration, must be as unsatisfying food as if men tried to live on stones.

Notice, again, how Paul teaches that the very essence of the authority of the Scriptures lies in this, that God speaks through His revealed Word—“As HE says also in Hosea.” It is God speaking in the Bible whom we ought to hear. The mere letter of the Word, alone, will kill, but when we hear God’s voice speaking in it, then it has power which it could not possess otherwise. It is a blessed thing to put your ear down to the promises of Scripture till you hear God speaking through them to your soul. It is truly profitable to read a Gospel Commandment and to listen to its voice until God, Himself, speaks it with power to your heart. I pray you, do not regard anything that is preached here unless it agrees with what is written there in the Bible. If it is only my word, throw it away! But if it is God’s Truth that I declare to you, if God, Himself, speaks it through my lips, you will disregard it at your peril.

I will make only one other observation by way of introduction. Is it not wonderful how God’s Word is preserved century after century? There were seven or 800 years between Hosea and Paul and it is remarkable that the promise to the Gentiles should lie asleep all that time, and yet should be just as full of life and power when Paul was quoting it after all those centuries! God’s Word is like the wheat in the hand of the mummy, of which you have often heard. It had lain there for thousands of years, but men took it out of the hand and sowed it—and there sprang up the bearded wheat which has now become so common in our land! So you take a Divine promise, spoken hundreds or thousands of years ago, and lo, it is fulfilled to you! It becomes as true to you as if God had spoken it for the first time this very day and you were the person to whom it was addressed. O blessed Word of God, how we ought to prize you! We cannot yet tell all that lies hidden between these covers, but there is a treasury of Grace concealed here which we ought to seek until we find it.

Having thus introduced our texts as taken from God’s Word in the Old and New Testaments, and as being God’s voice to us, speaking adown the centuries with all the freshness and force it would have if it were uttered anew tonight, I invite every unconverted person to listen with both his ears and his whole heart, to hear if there shall drop some living word of cheer and promise that shall make this evening to be his birth night! If so, this shall be the time wherein his captivity shall be ended, his mouth shall be filled with laughter and his tongue with singing—and his spirit shall rejoice in God his Savior!

I. Now, first, in considering the words in the Epistle to the Romans, let us look at THE ORIGINAL STATE OF GOD’S PEOPLE. “I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”

If we look at the original state of God’s people, we shall gaze upon a very gloomy picture. Yet this portrait reveals the state in which every unconverted man is tonight—the state in which all of us, who are now saved, once were! We were not God’s people—that is to say, we had not God’s approval. I speak now of all those whom God has saved. There was a time when there was no approval of them! As the Apostle says, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” So was it with those who were not God’s people—their thoughts were contrary to God’s thoughts, their ways were such as God could not endure—their speech grated in His ears, they followed the devices and imaginations of their own hearts! The prince of this world had dominion over them and God’s Grace had not been displayed upon them. They went astray like lost sheep.

That is your condition tonight, Sinner—you are the object of Divine disapproval. “Not beloved,” says the text. “Not beloved.” How can you be beloved of God? How can the Lord take any delight in a man who takes no delight in his God, who tries not even to think of Him—who breaks His Law with impunity—and finds pleasure in that which God abhors? “Not My people,” says the text. That is, they were not the subjects of Divine approval.

Next, such people receive from God no good thing of the highest order. “Oh,” say some, “but we are receiving all sorts of temporal blessing’s from God.” I know you are and you ought to thank Him for them. But as you are not His people, and not beloved, even these good things turn out to be evil things to you. Your table becomes a snare and a trap to you. Men who receive God’s mercies before His Grace has brought them to Himself, make idols of the good things He bestows upon them. They receive benefits at His hands and use them to provoke Him to anger! They take of their wealth and they say, with the rich fool, “Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take your ease—eat, drink, and be merry!” And so they forget that they must die and they forget their God.

Oftentimes, even health and strength become a snare to men. They will plunge into greater sin because they have so much vigor of body. We have known some who have been so robust in health that they would not think of God, or of Christ, or of their souls, or of eternity! I tell you, Sinners, that while you are as you are, God’s curse rests upon your blessings! There is no good thing out of Christ, for that which would be good with Christ becomes evil without Christ! It becomes a thing which destroys rather than blesses and which helps men the more rapidly to destroy their souls. Oh, what a sad state is yours of whom God says, “They are not My people, and they are not beloved”! While they are as they are, they cannot receive the highest good from God—even the best things that He sends them, they turn into evil.

Remember, too, you who know not God, that you are in a very miserable condition because to you there is no application of the precious blood of Christ. Jesus died for sinners, but you pass by His Cross as though you had nothing to do with it. Israel in Egypt was saved because God saw the blood and passed over the houses of His people. But you are not beneath that crimson sign! You have never looked to Christ by faith! No blood is on the lintel and on the two side posts of your door. All we can say of you, as we look at you, is, “Not beloved! Not beloved.” Oh, poor Souls, you who have not believed, what does the Scripture say to you? Why, that you are “condemned already” because you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God! You who have not believed in Christ are lying in the Wicked One—and what does that expression mean? Why, lying in his bosom, as if you were the darling children of the devil! How can there be any sign of the Divine delight or complacency towards you while your delight is in Satan and in sin? No, you have no interest in the precious blood of Jesus! Ah, me, what would I do if this were my case? I would sooner lose my eyes, my hearing, my sense of taste! I would sooner lose life, itself, than lose an interest in the precious blood of Jesus! Yet some of you live at ease though there has been for you no pardon of sin, no washing in the blood of sprinkling. You are still guilty before God.

Again, when these people were called by God, “not My people,” and, “not beloved,” there had been no saving work of the Spirit of God upon them. I am addressing some here, tonight, who have never had their hearts broken by the Spirit of God. They have never been brought to repentance, they have never been led to faith in Christ. Consequently, to them the Spirit of God is not a Quickener. To them He is not a Comforter. To them He is not an Illuminator. All His Divine offices are fulfilled in other people, but not in them. They are strangers to that blessed power without which no man can come to God, or believe in Christ. Oh, what a sad condition for any to be in—“not My people,” and, “not beloved”! They have no trace of that life which they would have if the Spirit of God had made them to pass from death unto life. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living—and as long as you are dead in sin, He is not your God in this special sense—neither does He call you His people.

Those who are in that sad state have no relief in prayer. They do not pray—they cannot pray! Now, when I am in trouble, I need nobody to advise me to pray. A trouble no sooner comes to me than I spread it before God and I find a sweet relief at once. Oh, if there were no Mercy Seat, I should wish that I had never been born! But there are some of you who never truly pray. Such prayers as you do offer have no heart in them, no life in them and, therefore, God does not hear you, and you live on in this world without prayer. Men, how can you exist thus? Life must be to you like a burning desert where every particle of sand blisters the foot that treads upon it. What can this world be to a prayerless man?

And as you are without prayer, so you are without the promises of God to sustain you. The wealth of God’s people seldom lies in ready money. Their treasure consists mostly in promises to pay—promises which God has made to His own people. But for the ungodly there are no blessed promises! God will give nothing to you who will not even believe His Word! He has made no Covenant with you who will not even trust His Son! You remain as He says—it is not my word, but His—“not My people,” and, “not beloved,” as long as you are without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Whatever promises He has made to His people, you are without power to plead those promises at the Throne of Grace, for they do not belong to you.

In addition to all this, you are now without any fellowship with God, or with His Son, Jesus Christ. God made this world, but you never speak with the world’s Maker. You are guardianed by His Providence and yet you have no fellowship with the God who rules over all. Why, the joy of life to some of us lies mainly in our fellowship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! He is the very center of the circle in which we move. He is the height and glory of our manhood. He is the All in All of our existence. We would not wish to live if it were not for Him. He is the sun that makes our Heaven bright—all would be dark without Him—and yet some of you have no communion with Him, perhaps not even any knowledge of Him! Oh, my dear Friend, you have no Christ, no Savior, no communion with God, no fellowship with the Most High! What a terrible condition is yours!

Besides this, you have no hope of Heaven. If you were to die as you now are, what could be your eternal portion but to be driven from the Presence of God, and from the Glory of His power? The Lord Jesus would say of you, “I never knew them, I never knew them. They are not My people. They are not My beloved.” Why, you have never even sought Him! You have never cried to Him! You have never forsaken the sin which He hates! You have never rested upon the Atonement which He has made! You have never trusted in His living power to save! Ah, poor creatures that you are, how I pity you!

“Do not call us poor,” you say. “We are rich, we are increased in goods and have need of nothing.” So much the worse is your poverty because of your fancied wealth! It will be an awful thing to go from your well-spread table to the place where you will be denied a drop of water to cool your burning tongues! It will be a terrible thing if you go from the weakness and sickness of the dying bed at once to stand before your God—to be driven from the pangs of your last moments into that dread position of a culprit, unpardoned—to receive sentence from the great Judge of All. “Not My people,” and, “not beloved.” I cannot bear the thought of your doom, and I can say no more on that terrible theme.

II. But now, in the second place, I have to speak of THE NEW CONDITION OF GOD’S PFOPLE. Listen, and as you listen, may God make it to be your new condition! There are many in this world to whom my text has been proven to be true—“I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”

Now see the change which God can make. It is God who makes it! The very same people of whom He said, “They are not My people,” He now calls His people! Yes, and in the very place where He said that they were not His people, He says they are the people of the living God. Now, what if tonight I have been saying of such and such that they are not God’s people? But what if, before they leave this place, God should say to them, “You are My people”? Oh, what a blessed change would have taken place in them! Let me describe it.

If the Lord shall say to us, tonight, “You are My people, and you are My beloved,” then we shall know, first, that He thinks upon us, that His mind is toward us, that He has a kindly regard for us, that He takes delight in us, that His heart is set on doing us good! Oh, you who love the Lord and are His children, think of this—you have the thoughts of God running towards you in streams of ever-abounding tenderness, mercy, goodness and faithfulness!

And, as the Lord thinks of us, He speaks to us. Oh, to think that the Lord should speak to those who were once not His people, and speak to them so effectually as to make His sweet promises enter into their ears, yes, into their hearts! And should become familiar to them, for, “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant”! Oh, how sweetly does God commune with His own children! How He does open up His very heart to them and make them to know Him, even as Jesus manifests Himself unto His chosen as He does not unto the world! It is a choice privilege of a child of God to be thought of and then to be spoken to by the Lord!

More than that, God hears us speak. When we are His people, and His beloved, then our accents become sweet in His ears. You know that your dear children often speak very poorly and badly, and other people do not much care to listen to their talk. But to a father’s ear the sound of his own child’s voice is always sweet! You have been away from home for some weeks. I know that you are longing to hear the dear prattlers once again. Well, like as a father loves the voice of his child, so does our heavenly Father love the voices of His beloved whom He calls His people—and He has regard to what they say—He hearkens to the voice of their cry.

Then, beloved, He not only hears us, but He grants us our desire. He will come to our deliverance in the time of trouble. He will bestow upon us all good things—“No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Oh, the privileges of those who are God’s people! The theme is too vast for human language to compass!

One special mark of our new condition is that the Lord forgives our sin. Once we were loaded with sin, but now we have not a single sin left upon us. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin! Paul challenges the whole universe to lay anything to the charge of God’s elect, for God has justified them. “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” Oh, the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! And that is true of all whom God calls His people, though they once were not His people!

And then, dear Friends, sin being forgiven, the Lord works all things for our good. Whether we are joyous or depressed, if we are the Lord’s people, all is working for our good! “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Our losses and our crosses, our bereavements and our bodily pains, as well as our rapturous joys and our highest delights, are all working out the best results for us!

More than this, when we are in trouble, God pities us, for, like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Yes, and He sends us relief, too, according to that word of David, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” What is better, still, God dwells in us, as He said, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” And the Holy Spirit has come, and taken up His abode in these mortal bodies— and He dwells there, our Teacher and our Comforter, our Guide and our Friend.

By-and-by, the Lord Jesus will come, again, and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may also be. I wish I had the tongues of men and of angels that I might tell you the splendor of the position of those who are the Lord’s own people, the Lord’s own beloved! And who were these people once? I come back to my text. They were not God’s people, and not beloved—“I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.” Now then, some of you, whom God cannot now look upon except with anger—why should He not look upon you with love, tonight, through Jesus Christ? He that believes in Christ Jesus may have the blessed assurance that the Lord loves him and that he is one of the Lord’s people!

You may have come in here saying, “I belong to the devil. I am sure I do. I feel within my spirit that I am under his cruel sway. Alas! I have not a spark of Grace, or a thought of goodness. I am as far off from God, holiness and Heaven as I can ever be.” Then to you, may God say, “I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved”! Oh, the magnificence of this Grace that waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men, but works according to the eternal purposes of God and accomplishes all His sovereign will!

III. This brings me, in the third place—going back to the text in Hosea—to notice THE GRAND RESULT OF THIS WONDERFUL CHANGE. “I will say to them which were not My people, you are My people; and they shall say, You are my God.” Here is a dialogue between the Lord and His people. God says something to them and they say something to Him.

Remember that there is no change in God—it is only a change in our relation to Him, because those who have become His people were really His people, in His everlasting purpose, from before the foundation of the world—though they were not actually so as to their own spiritual condition. But now, when this change comes to pass in their relations to God, see the grand result of it!

First, the Lord says, “You are My people.” Now I pray that the Lord may come, tonight, and speak to some who never made mention of His name before, some who never knew Him, who never trembled at His Word, never hoped in His mercy, never trusted in His Son, never, indeed, meant to be His people at all! I trust that the Lord will now say to some of them, “You are My people.” Oh, what a wonderful experience it is when the poor lost sinner finds out that he belongs to God, that he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, that God means to save him, that He will not let His Son’s blood be shed for him in vain! I remember the shame and yet the joy that filled my soul when I first woke up to the consciousness of what Christ had done for me. I remember the confusion of face I felt because I had treated such a Savior so badly and yet I also felt intense delight in thinking that He loved me, notwithstanding all my sins. This is a text that comforted me— I pray the Lord to send it home to some other heart— “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” And this one, also, “I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” Oh, if the Holy Spirit would apply those Words with power to some sinner’s heart, tonight, what a running after God, what a seeking after Christ there would be!

“I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people.” The Lord does not always say that to His people with equal force. At first, they half hope that it is so. They indistinctly hear His voice saying it, but as faith increases, they hear Him say it more distinctly, “You are My people.” I feel that it is most gracious of God to call those His people that were not His people. You see that He gives them a new name and that overrides the old one. I think that I hear someone saying, “I have found the Savior!” “What? What?” says somebody who knows you. “You? Ha! We all know what you were.” Perhaps one says, “Ah, you know that you have been as bad as any of us!” Possibly in one case they might say, “You talk of being God’s child? You are a fallen woman,” or, “You have been a thief,” or, “You have been a liar,” or, “You have been a frequenter of places where God is forgotten, a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God.”

Yes, but, Beloved, if the Lord says, “I have called you by your name; you are Mine,” you can say to yourself, “They may say what they please about me, and I must acknowledge the truth of it all, but this Word of the Lord, ‘You are Mine,’ overrides them all!”

What a blessed text this is for one who has lost his character, for one who has lost all repute! If you come to Christ, and believe in Him, here is a text that applies to you! God says, “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you.” God can make “right honorables” out of those who are, in themselves, most dishonorable, and He can give them a name and a place among His people. Yet I can imagine God looking upon someone here, to-night, and saying of such an one, “How can I put Him among the children? What? Put such a sinner among My children?” I can fancy there is somebody here who is so extremely sinful that if I were to propose to God’s people that he should be received among them, they would say, “We would not like to receive that man into the Church.” Ah, but when our heavenly Father welcomes home His prodigal son, He will not have the older brother talk like that! He comes out and reasons with him, and says, “It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad, for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again, and was lost, and is found.”

Jesus would have us receive the very chief of sinners, the jailbirds, the Hellbirds, the men who have gone farthest astray—the men who have lost all hope, the most forlorn and self-condemned, the most dejected, distressed, devil-haunted men and women out of Hell! These are just the people in whom the Grace of God triumphs over all sin! “I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.” “And I will say to them, which were not My people, you are My people.”

When the Lord says this to any, their sin is put away! My Lord is a great Forgiver! My Lord, whom I preach to you tonight, who was once nailed to the Cross, is able to save all them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. “He delights in mercy”—it is His right-hand attribute, His last-born, His Benjamin! Never does He display His mercy more than when, like the mighty sea, His love rolls over the very tops of the mountains of iniquity and covers them!

I close by noticing what the Lord’s people say to Him, “ They shall say, You are my God.” That is the right saying for every one of the Lord’s people, “You are my God.” Poor Sinner, may God the Holy Spirit help you to begin to say that, “You are my God”! Here is a text that should help you to say it, even as it helped me in the hour of my conversion, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Will you look to God, Sinner? Will you say to the Lord, “You are my God”? “My God, I have long forgotten You, I have blasphemed You, I have rebelled against You, I have desecrated Your Sabbath, I have decried Your Gospel, I have ridiculed Your servants! But, behold, I look to You, for I have sinned. Have mercy upon me for Your dear Son’s sake!”

That is a good beginning, but may you have Grace to advance beyond that experience, so that you may come and lay your hands on Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, saying, “This Savior is my Savior. I accept Him as my Substitute, to stand in my place”! When you have once rightly uttered this blessed sentence, “You are my God,” God’s Grace will help you to keep on saying it! There is no getting farther than this, “You are my God.” That is the end of all good things. What more does a man need? What more can a man desire? There is not a good thing anywhere out of Christ!

One of the old Puritans, in the days when nobody much liked going to sea, said, “When a man is in a ship and in his own little cabin, if he casts his eyes all around, and sees nothing but the wild waste of waters, without a sign of land anywhere—nothing but angry billows tossing the vessel up and down—and if anyone says to Him, ‘Will you leave your little cabin? Will you leave your little ship?’ ‘No,’ he says, ‘where else can I go? There is nowhere else to go.”’ That is just how I feel tonight about my Lord! My cabin, my ship, my Christ, my faith in Him, gives me rest and peace! I cannot see anywhere else that I can go except to destruction and despair—so my soul says over again, “You are my God, you are my God. Others may have what they will, but I will have my God. They may have what god they like, but You, Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—You are my God and on You my soul does rest, seeking no other confidence.”

Will you say that, tonight, my dear Hearers? I do not know your cases, but I know that if I need to get sheep into a fold, a good way is to set the gate open as widely as ever I can! And then another good way to entice the sheep in is to have rich pasture inside. Well, I have tried to set before you the rich, Free Grace of God to the very chief of sinners. And I have pointed to the opened Door that is wide enough to let the biggest sinner come through! Jesus said, “I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

Now, if Noah’s ark had a door that was big enough to let an elephant through, then it was big enough to let a dog through, or a fox, or a cat, or a mouse. You may come if you are the biggest sinner in the world, but I do not suppose that you are, for the biggest sinner died and went to Heaven long ago. Paul says that he was the biggest sinner, the chief of sinners— and I believe that he knew what sized sinner he was. If there was room for him to go through the gate of salvation, there is room for you! May God’s Grace draw you this very night—and unto the God of all Grace shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. **HOSEA 2:5-23.**

In this chapter God compares Israel to a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband in the very worst and most wicked manner.  
Verse 5. For their mother has played the harlot: she that conceived them has done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. She attributed to false gods the gifts which God had given to her. This was great ingratitude to God, and a high insult to His holy majesty.  
6. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. That is what God does to sinners whom He means to save. He will not let them take their own course. He gives them thorny trials which hedge up their way. He puts an obstacle in their path—perhaps some sickness or poverty. When men are desperate in wickedness, God has a way of stopping them. Even in their mad career, His mighty Grace comes in and says, “So far shall you go, but no further.”  
7. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them. Thus sinners go after the pleasures of the world and the pleasures run away from them. They make one thing their god, and then another, and they put out all their strength to attain the object of their ambition, but God thwarts them. In Infinite Love, He baffles all their endeavors because He means to bring them to Himself!  
7. Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. That is what He brings us to—weary of the world, yes, weary of life, itself—we get worn out in the ways of evil, and then we say, “I will go to God.” What a blessed conclusion to come to! However terrible the whip with which He scourges us, it does us good. The fierce billow that washes the mariner upon the rock of safety is a blessing to him.  
8, 9. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness. God claims the blessings of Providence as His own and when He sees His people misuse them, He says, “I will recover them. She is giving them to Baal, she is using them for an evil purpose—I will take them away.”  
10, 11. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of My hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. When God deals with men, He uses no half measures! If they have been very happy in the ways of sin and He intends to save them from their evil courses, He will take away all their joy. They shall henceforth have none of the merriment in which they indulged. He will give them better happiness, by-and-by, but for the time being it shall be true, “I will cause all her mirth to cease.”  
12. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. Her most precious things shall be destroyed, or, if they are allowed to exist, they shall become a cause of fear and trouble. Oh, how often have I seen this verified in the experience of men and women whom God has saved by His almighty Grace!  
13. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot Me, says the LORD. They burnt no incense at Jerusalem. They refused to offer sacrifice there, but they went to this hill and to that, to worship the different images of Baal, and said, “These are our gods.” Therefore, God says that He will make them sick of their idolatry! They shall grow tired of thus polluting His holy name and degrading themselves by worshipping things made of wood and stone.

14. Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. Oh, glorious verse! She that went so far astray, God will come and draw her back from the path of sin! He will get her alone. He will bring her into a place of grief and sorrow, a wilderness— and then He will come near and speak sweet words of comfort into her ear. “I will allure her, as the bird catchers whistle to the birds and draw them to the net, so will I allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, the place of loneliness, the place of need, and I will speak to her heart,” so the Hebrew has it, for God knows how to speak, not only into the ears, but into the heart.

15. And I will give her her vineyards from there. He will give back what He took away. He will seal with loving kindness the real kindness which made Him deal roughly with her at first.

15. And the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. Oh, Backslider, God can give you back your early joy, your early love, yes, and your early purity! And He can make you sing as at the beginning! Therefore, be of good comfort and come to your Lord—come even now, with all your sins about you—and He will receive you!

16. And it shall be at that day, says the LORD, that you shall call Me Ishi; and shall call me no more Baali. “Baali” means, “My Lord,” in the sense of domination. But God will not seem to us, anymore, like a domineering Governor, as we once thought Him. But we shall call Him, “Ishi,” “My Husband.” There shall be such nearness of love, such confidence of hope between the restored soul and her God, that she shall call Him no more Baali, but Ishi.

17. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. Oh, the love of God! He does not want us to remember our old ways. I do not like to hear people talk about their old habits, except they do it very tenderly, with many a tear and many a sigh, and tell the story to the praise and glory of Divine Grace. God takes the old names out of our lips—we forget them, we have done with them, we bury the dead past—and we live in newness of life.

18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of Heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground. So that the insects should not devour the crops, the foxes should not spoil the vines and the birds should not steal the seed! So will God take care of His people! It does seem that, when we once get right with God, we get right with everything—when we are at peace with Him—then neither beast, nor fowl, nor creeping thing can do us harm.

18. And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. They had been much troubled by war. It had killed their children, destroyed their homes and made them poor and wretched. Now God says, “I will break the bow and the sword and the battle.” How often God gives a heavenly calm to us when we are once washed in the blood of Christ and covered with His Righteousness! I remember how the storm within my heart was hushed into a deep calm as soon as I had seen my Lord and had yielded my heart to Him. Oh, you that are in storms tonight, I pray that God may bring you to Himself and give you “peace, perfect peace!” And then what more will the Lord do?

19. And I will betroth you unto Me forever. What? This woman that had gone so far into evil? Can a man receive such an one back? No, but God can! He says there shall be a new betrothal, a new marriage—“I will betroth you unto Me forever.” Blessed word!

19, 20. Yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the LORD. You shall know Jehovah! You shall know that there is none like He, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin—and faithful to His people even when they are unfaithful to Him! Is there any god like our God? Have you ever tasted His Grace? Do you know His pardoning love? Have you ever been brought back to Him? Have you been restored to His favor? Then I am sure you can say, “There is none like unto Jehovah.”

21, 22. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, says the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. God would send rain when it was needed. He would be all ear to hear on behalf of His people. He would not only hear them, but hear the very earth they tilled, and the heavens above their heads, as if Nature, itself, began to pray when the child of God learned that holy art!

23. And I will sow her unto Me in the earth. He would make the people to be like the seed which He, Himself, would sow, and cause to spring up and abide.

23. And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy. I would like to read that again. Somebody has, perhaps, come in here, tonight, who has never obtained mercy. Perhaps you have been seeking it and you have not found it. Hear God’s promise, and lay hold upon it—“I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy.”

23. And I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God. See, it is all in, “shalls,” and, “wills!” God is speaking! God Omnipotent, Omnipotent over men’s hearts. He is not saying, “I will if they will,” but, “I will, and they shall,” for He has the key of free agency—and when He turns it in the lock, without violating the free will of man, He makes him willing in the day of His power to the praise of His Divine supremacy, for God is God when He saves as much as when He reigns! Yes, His reigning Grace is the very glory of His Nature, and this we love and adore. Grant us a taste of it! Amen.

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Sermon #2801 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 3.5

A FEAR TO BE DESIRED

NO. 2801

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 19, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7, 1878.

**“They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.” Hosea 3:5.**

THIS passage refers, in the first place, to the Jews. If we read the whole verse and the preceding one, we shall see that they describe the present sad condition of God’s ancient people and inspire us with hope concerning their future—“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king or prince, without sacrifice, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” From this and many other texts of Scripture, we may conclude, without a shadow of a doubt, that the Jews shall, one day, acknowledge Jesus to be their King. The Son of David—who is here, doubtless, called by the name of David, and who, when He died upon the Cross, had Pilate’s declaration inscribed over His head, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews”—will then be acknowledged by them as their King and then shall they be restored to more than their former joy and glory. God has great things in store for the seed of Abraham in the latter days. He has not finally cast them away and He will be true to that Covenant which He made with their fathers—and on Judaea’s plains shall roam a happy people who shall lift up their songs of praise unto Jehovah in the name of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior! Whenever that shall happen, we, or those who will then be living, may know that the latter days have fully come because it is foretold here and in other passages that this is what will occur in the latter days. I am not going to attempt any explanation of the prophetic intimations concerning the future, but this one fact is plain enough—when the end of the world is approaching and the fullness of the Gentiles is gathered in, and all the splendor of the latter days has really commenced, then “shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.”

On this occasion I intend only to call your attention to this expression, “They shall fear the Lord and His goodness,” for what Israel will do, in a state of Divine Grace, is precisely what all spiritual Israelites do when the Grace of God rests upon them. The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, fills the heart and the goodness of the Lord becomes the source and fountain of that fear in the hearts of all those whom the Lord has blessed with His Grace. So I shall, first of all, ask you to notice a distinction which is to be observed. Secondly, a Grace which is to be cultivated and then, thirdly, a sin which is to be repented of in the case of many.

I. First, then, here is A DISTINCTION TO BE OBSERVED. Human language is necessarily imperfect. Since man’s fall and especially since the confusion of tongues at Babel, there has not only been a difference in speech between one nation and another, but also between one individual and another. We probably do not all mean exactly the same thing by any one word that we use—there is just a shade of difference between your meaning and mine. The confusion of tongues went much further than we sometimes realize and so completely did it confuse our language that we do not, on all occasions, mean quite the same thing to ourselves even when we use the same word. Hence, “fear,” is a word which has a very wide range of meaning. There is a kind of fear which is to be shunned and avoided—that fear which perfect love casts out— because it has torment. But there is another sort of fear which has in it the very essence of love and, without which there would be no joy even in the Presence of God! Instead of perfect love casting out this fear, perfect love nourishes and cherishes it and, by communion with it, derives strength from it. Between the fear of a slave and the fear of a child, we can all perceive a great distinction. Between the fear of God’s great power and justice which the devils have—and that fear which a child of God has when he walks in the Light with his God, there is as much difference, surely, as between Hell and Heaven!  
In the verse from which our text is taken, that difference is clearly indicated—“Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord”— so that this fear is connected with seeking the Lord. It is a fear which draws them towards God and makes them search for Him. You know how the fear of the ungodly influences them—it makes them afraid of God, so they say, “Where shall we flee from His Presence?” If they could, they would take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost part of the earth if they had any hope that God could not reach them there! At the last, when this fear will take full possession of them, they will call upon the rocks and the hills to hide them from the face of Him who will then sit upon the Throne of God, whose wrath they will have such cause to dread! The fear of God, as it exists in unrenewed men, is a force which always drives them further and yet further away from God. They never get any rest of mind until they have ceased to think of Him—if a thought of God should, perchance, steal into their mind, fear at once lays hold upon them again—and that fear urges them to flee from God.  
But the fear mentioned in our text draws to God! The man who has this fear in his heart cannot live without seeking God’s face, confessing his guilt before Him and receiving pardon from Him. He seeks God because of this fear. Just as Noah, “moved with fear,” built the ark wherein he and his household were saved, so do these men, “moved with fear,” draw near unto God and seek to find salvation through His love and Grace. Always notice this distinction and observe that the fear which drives anyone away from God is a vice and a sin—but the fear that draws us towards God, as with silken bonds, is a virtue to be cultivated!  
This appears even more clearly in the Hebrew, for they who best understand that language tell us that this passage should be read thus, “They shall fear toward the Lord, and toward His goodness.” This fear leans toward the Lord. When you really know God, you shall be thrice happy if you run toward Him, falling down before Him, worshipping Him with bowed head, yet glad heart—all the while fearing toward Him, not away from Him! Blessed is the man whose heart is filled with that holy fear which inclines his steps in the way of God’s commandments, inclines his heart to seek after God and inclines his whole soul to enter into fellowship with God that he may be acquainted with Him and be at peace.  
It is also worthy of notice that this fear is connected with the Messiah. “They shall seek the Lord their God and David their King”—who stands here as the type of Jesus, the Messiah, the King of Israel. And further on it is said, “They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.” And I should not do wrong if I were to say that Christ is Jehovah’s goodness—that, in His blessed Person, you have all the goodness, mercy and Grace of God condensed and concentrated. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” So that fear which is a sign of Grace in the heart—that fear which we ought all to seek after—always links itself to Christ Jesus! If you fear God and know not that there is Mediator between God and men, you will never think of approaching Him. God is a consuming fire—then how can you draw near to Him apart from Christ? If you fear God and know not of Christ’s Atonement, how can you approach Him? Without faith, it is impossible to please God—and without the blood of Jesus there is no way of access to the Divine Mercy Seat. If you know not Christ, you will never come to God! Your fear must link itself with the goodness of God as displayed in the Person of His dear Son, or else it cannot be that seeking fear, that fear toward the Lord of which our text speaks. It will be a fleeing fear, a fear that will drive you further and yet further away from God into greater and deeper darkness—into dire destruction— in fact, into that Pit whose bottomless abyss swallows up all hope, all rest and all joy forever!  
II. Let this distinction be kept in mind and then we may safely go on to consider, in the second place, THE GRACE WHICH IS TO BE CULTIVATED—“They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.”  
We will divide the one thought into two and, first, I will speak about that fear of God which is the work of the Holy Spirit—a token of Grace, a sign of salvation and a precious treasure to be always kept in the heart.  
What is this fear of God? I answer, first, it is a sense of awe of His greatness. Have you ever felt this sacred awe stealing insensibly over your spirit—hushing and calming you—and bowing you down before the Lord? It will come, sometimes, in the consideration of the great works of Nature. Gazing upon the vast expanse of waters—looking up to the innumerable stars, examining the wing of an insect and seeing there the matchless skill of God displayed in the minute. Or standing in a thunderstorm, watching as best you can, the flashes of lightning and listening to the thunder of Jehovah’s voice—have you not often shrunk into yourself and said, “Great God, how awesome You are!”—not afraid, but full of delight, like a child who rejoices to see his father’s wealth, his father’s wisdom, his father’s power—happy and at home, but feeling oh, so little? We are less than nothing, we are all but annihilated in the Presence of the great eternal, infinite, invisible All-in-All. Gracious men often come into this state of mind and heart by watching the works of God and so they do when they observe what He does in Providence. Dr. Watts truly sings—  
*“Here He exalts neglected worms  
To scepters and a crown—  
And on the following page He turns,  
And treads the monarch down.”*  
The mightiest kings and princes are but as grasshoppers in His sight! “The nations are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance,” that has not weight enough to turn the scale. We talk about the greatness of mankind, but “all nations before Him are as nothing and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.” Again Dr. Watts wisely sings—  
*“Great God! How infinite are Thee!  
What worthless worms are we!”*  
When we realize this, we are filled with a holy awe as we think of God’s greatness and the result of that is that we are moved to fall before Him in reverent adoration!  
We turn to the Word of God and there we see further proofs of His greatness in all His merciful arrangements for the salvation of sinners— and especially in the matchless redemption worked out by His wellbeloved Son, every part of which is full of the Divine Glory. And as we gaze upon that Glory with exceeding joy, we shrink to nothing before the Eternal—and the result is once again lowly adoration. We bow down and adore and worship the living God with a joyful, tender fear which both lays us low and lifts us very high, for never do we seem to be nearer to Heaven’s golden Throne than when our spirit gives itself up to worship Him whom it does not see, but in whose realized Presence it trembles with sacred delight!  
It is the same fear, but looked at from another point of view, which has regard to the holiness of God. What a holy Being is the great Jehovah of Hosts! There is no fault in Him, no deficiency, no redundancy. He is whole and, therefore, holy. There is nothing there but Himself, the wholly perfect God. “Holy! Holy! Holy! is a fit note for the mysterious living creatures to sound out before His Throne above, for, all along He has acted according to the principle of unsullied holiness. Though blasphemers have tried, many times, to—  
*“Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod, Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God,”*they have always failed and still He sits in the lonely majesty of His absolute perfection, while they, like brute beasts, crouch far beneath Him and despise what they cannot comprehend! But to a believing heart, God is all purity. His Light is “as the color of the terrible crystal,” of which Ezekiel writes. His brightness is so great that no man can approach it. We are so sinful that when we get even a glimpse of the Divine Holiness, we are filled with fear and we cry with Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” This is a kind of fear which we have need to cultivate, for it leads to repentance and confession of sin, to aspirations after holiness and to the utter rejection of all self-complacency and selfconceit. God grant that we may be completely delivered from all those forms of pride and evil!  
The fear of God also takes another form, that is, the fear of His Fatherhood, which leads us to reverence Him. When Divine Grace has given us the new birth, we recognize that we have entered into a fresh relationship towards God—namely that we have become His sons and daughters. Then we realize that we have received “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Now, we cannot truly cry unto God, “Abba, Father,” without, at the same time, feeling, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” When we recognize that we are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,” children of the Highest, adopted into the family of the Eternal, Himself, we feel at once, as the spirit of childhood works within us, that we both love and fear our great Father in Heaven who has loved us with an everlasting love and has “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.”  
In this childlike fear there is not an atom of that fear which signifies being afraid. We who believe in Jesus are not afraid of our Father—God forbid that we ever should be! The nearer we can get to Him, the happier we are. Our highest wish is to be forever with Him and to be lost in Him. But, still, we pray that we may not grieve Him. We beseech Him to keep us from turning aside from Him. We ask for His tender pity towards our infirmities and plead with Him to forgive us and to deal graciously with us for His dear Son’s sake. As loving children we feel a holy awe and reverence as we realize our relationship to Him who is our Father in Heaven—a clear, loving, tender, pitiful Father—yet our Heavenly Father who “is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”  
This holy fear takes a further form when our fear of God’s Sovereignty leads us to obey Him as our King, for He, to whom we pray and in whom we trust, is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and we gladly acknowledge His Sovereignty. We see Him sitting upon a Throne which is dependent upon no human or angelic power to sustain it. The kings of the earth must ask their fellow men to march in their ranks in order to sustain their rules, but our King “sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be” a king! As the Creator of all things and all beings, He has a right to the obedience of the entire creature He has made. Again I say that we who believe in Jesus are not afraid of God even as our King, for He has made us, also, to be kings and priests, and we are to reign with Him, through Jesus Christ, forever and ever!  
Yet we tremble before Him lest we should be rebellious against Him in the slightest degree. With a childlike fear we are afraid lest one revolting thought or one treacherous wish should ever come into our mind or heart to stain our absolute loyalty to Him. Horror takes hold upon us when we hear others deny that “the Lord reigns”—and even the thought that we should ever do this grieves us

exceedingly—and we are filled with that holy fear which moves us to obey every command of our gracious King so far as we know it to be His command. Having this fear of God before our eyes, we cry to those who would tempt us to sin, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” It is not because we are afraid of Him, but because we delight in Him, that we fear before Him with an obedient, reverential fear! And, Beloved, I do firmly believe that when this kind of fear of God works itself out to the fullest, it crystallizes into love. So excellent, so glorious, so altogether everything that could be desired, so far above our highest thought or wish, are You, O Jehovah, that we lie before You and shrink into nothing! Yet, even as we do so, we feel another sensation springing up within us. We feel that we love You and, as we decrease in our own estimation of ourselves, we feel that we love You more and more. As we realize our own nothingness, we are more than ever conscious of the greatness of our God! “Your heart shall fear and be enlarged,” says the Prophet Isaiah, and so it comes to pass with us. The more we fear the Lord, the more we love Him, until this becomes to us the true fear of God—to love Him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. May He bring us to this blessed climax by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit!  
Now I want to dwell, with somewhat of emphasis, upon the second part of this fear—“They shall fear the Lord and His goodness.” It may, at first, seem to some people a strange thing that we should fear God’s goodness—but there are some of us who know exactly what this expression means, for we have often experienced just what it describes. How can we fear God’s goodness? I speak what I have often felt and I believe many of you can do the same as you look back upon the goodness of God to you—saving you from sin and making you to be His child—and as you think of all His goodness to you in the dispensations of His Providence. You may, perhaps, be like Jacob who left his father’s house with his wallet and his staff—and when he came back with a family that formed two bands and with abundance of all that he could desire, he must have been astonished at what God had done for him! And when David sat upon his throne in Jerusalem, surrounded by wealth and splendor, as he recollected how he had fed his flock in the wilderness and afterwards had been hunted, by Saul, like a partridge upon the mountains, he might well say, “Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?”  
In this way, God’s goodness often fills us with amazement—and amazement has in it an element of fear. We are astonished at the Lord’s gracious dealings with us and we say to Him, “Why have You been so good to me for so many years and in such multitude of ways? Why have You manifested so much mercy and tenderness toward me? You have treated me as if I had never grieved or offended You. You have been as good to me as if I had deserved great blessings at Your hands. Had You paid me wages, like a hired servant, You would never have given me such sweetness and such love as You have now lavished upon me, though I was once a prodigal and wandered far from You. O God, Your love is like the sun—I cannot gaze upon it—its brightness would blind my eyes! I fear because of Your goodness.”  
Do you know, dear Friends, what this expression means? If a sense of God’s goodness comes upon you in all its force, you will feel that God is wonderfully great to have been so good to you. Most of us have had friends who have become tired of us after a while. Possibly we have had some very kind friends who are not yet tired of us, but, still, they have failed us, every now and then, in some points—either their power could not meet our need, or they were not willing to do what we needed. But our God has poured out His mercy for us like a river! It has flowed on without a break. These many years He has continued to bless us and has heaped up His mercies, mountain upon mountain, until it has seemed as though He would reach the very stars with the lofty pinnacles of His love! What shall we say to all this? Shall we not fear Him, adore Him and bless Him for all the goodness that He has made to pass before us? And, all the while, feel that even to kiss the hem of His garment, or to be beneath His footstool is too great an honor for us?  
Then there will come upon us, when we are truly grateful to God for His goodness toward us, a sense of our own responsibility and we shall say, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” We shall feel that we cannot render to Him anything compared with what we ought to render—and there will come upon us this fear—that we shall never be able to live at all consistently with the high position which His Grace has given to us. As God said concerning His ancient people, we shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that He has procured for us. It will seem as though He had set us on the top of a high mountain and had bid us walk along that lofty ridge—it is a ridge of favor and privilege, but it is so elevated that we fear lest our brain should reel and our feet should slip because of the height of God’s mercy to us! Have you ever felt like that, Beloved? If God has greatly exalted you with His favor and love, I am sure you must have felt like that many a time.  
Then, next, this holy fear is near akin to gratitude. The fear of a man who really knows the love and goodness of God will be somewhat of this kind. He will fear lest he should really be, or should seem to be, ungrateful. “What,” he asks, “can I do? I am drowned in mercy. It is not as though my ship were sailing in a sea of mercy—I have been so loaded with the favor of the Lord that my vessel has gone right down and the ocean of God’s love and mercy has rolled right over the masthead. What can I do, O Lord? If You had given me only a little mercy, I might have done something in return to express my gratitude. But, oh, Your great mercy in electing me, in redeeming me, in converting me, in preserving me and in all the goodness of Your Providence toward me—what can I do in return for all these favors? I feel struck dumb and I am afraid lest I should have a dumb heart as well as a dumb tongue! I fear lest I should grieve You by anything that looks like ingratitude.”  
Then the child of God begins, next, to fear lest he should become proud, “for,” he says, “I have noticed that when God thus favors some men, they begin to exalt themselves and to think that they are persons of great importance. So, if the Lord makes the stream of my life flow very joyously, I may imagine that it is because there is some good thing in me and be foolish enough to begin to ascribe the glory of it to myself!” A true saint often trembles concerning this matter. Sometimes he is even afraid of his mercies! He knows that his trials and troubles never did him any hurt, but he perceives that, sometimes, God’s goodness has intoxicated him as with sweet wine, so he begins to be almost afraid of the goodness of his God to him. He thinks to himself, “Shall I be unworthy of all this favor and walk in a way that is inconsistent with it?” He looks a little ahead and he knows that the flesh is frail and that good men have often been found in very slippery places, and he says, “What if, after all this, I should be a backslider? You, O Lord, have brought me into the banqueting house and Your banner over me is love. You have stayed me with flagons, and comforted me with apples. You have laid bare Your very heart to me and made me know that I am a man greatly beloved! Shall I, after all this, ever turn aside from You? Will the ungodly ever point at me and say, Aha! Aha! Is this the man after God’s own heart? Is this the disciple who said he would die rather than deny his Master?” Such a fear as that very properly comes over us at times—and then we tremble because of all the goodness which God has made to pass before us.  
I think you can see, dear Friends, without my needing to enlarge further upon this point, that while a time of sorrow and suffering is often, to the Christian, a time of confidence in his God, on the other hand, a time of prosperity is to the wise man, a time of holy fear. Not that he is ungrateful, but he is afraid that he may be. Not that he is proud—he is truly humble because he is afraid lest he should become proud. Not that he loves the things of the world, but he is afraid lest his heart should get away from God—and so he fears because of all the Lord’s goodness to him. May the Lord always keep us in that state of fear, for it is a healthy condition for us to be in! Those who walk so very proudly and with too great confidence are generally the ones who first tumble down. My observation and experience have taught me this. When I have met with anyone who knew that he was a very good man and who boasted to other people that he was a very good man—he has generally proved to be like some of those pears that we sometimes see in the shop—very handsome to look at, but sleepy and rotten all through!  
Then, on the other hand, I have noticed a great many other people who have always been afraid that they would go wrong and who have trembled and feared at almost every step they took. They have feared lest they should grieve the Lord and they have cried to Him, day and night, “Lord, uphold us!” And He has done so and they have been enabled to keep their garments unspotted to their life’s end. So, my prayer is that I may never cease to feel this holy fear before God and that I may never get to fancy, for a moment, that there is, or ever can be, anything in me to cause me to boast or to glory in myself. May God save all of us from that evil! And the more we receive of His goodness, the more may we fear, with childlike fear, in His Presence!  
III. Now I must close with just a few words upon the last point which is, A SIN TO BE REPENTED OF.  
I cannot help fearing that I am addressing some to whom my text does not apply except by way of contrast. Are there not some of you, who are unsaved, and yet who do not fear God? O Sirs, may the Holy Spirit make you to fear and tremble before Him! You have cause enough to fear. If you live all day long without even thinking of God, or if, when you do think of Him, you try to smother the thought at once—if you say that you can get on very well without Him and that life is happy enough without religion—I could weep for you because you do not weep for yourselves! You say, “We are rich,” yet, all the while, you are wretched, miserable and poor. Your poverty is all the worse because you fancy that you are rich. You are also blind. That is bad enough, yet you say, “We can see.” It is doubly sad when the spiritually blind declare that they can see—for they will never ask for the sacred eye-salve, or go to the great Oculist who can open blind eyes—as long as they are satisfied with their present condition. It is a great pity that many unconverted men do not fear God even with a servile fear. If they would only begin with that, it might prove to be the lowest rung of the heavenly ladder and lead on to the blessed fear which is the portion of the children of God!  
There are others of you, I am afraid, who never fear either God or His goodness. How I wish you would do so, for the Lord has been very good to you. You were saved at sea after you had been wrecked. You were raised up from fever when others died. You have prospered in business, on the whole, though you have had some struggles. Blessed with children and made happy in your home—all this you owe to the God whom you have never acknowledged! The goodness of God to some ungodly men is truly amazing! I think, when they sit down at night, when everybody else has gone to bed, and remember how they began life with scarcely a shilling to bless themselves with, yet God has multiplied their substance and given them much to rejoice in—I think their hearts ought to be full of gratitude towards their Benefactor. I would like all such people to remember what God said by the mouth of the prophet Hosea, “She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.” Take care, O you ungrateful souls, that the Lord does not begin to strip you of the mercies which you have failed to appreciate! I pray that you may be led to confess from where all these blessings came and to cry, “My Father, You shall be my Guide henceforth and forever. Since You have dealt so lovingly and tenderly with me, I will come and confess my sin to You and trust in Your dear Son as my Savior and Friend, that I may henceforth be led and commanded by You, alone, and may fear before You all the days of my life.”  
May God grant to everyone of us the Grace to believe in Jesus, to rest in Him and then to walk in the fear of the Lord all our days, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 103.**

Verse 1. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. We ought to be always blessing God. This sacred employment should be like an atmosphere surrounding us at all times. Yet there are special seasons when we feel as if we must wake ourselves up and brace ourselves up for some special adoration, talking to ourselves as the Psalmist does here.

2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Alas, that forgetfulness of God’s benefits is an evil kind of worm that eats into the very heart of our praise. Oh, for a retentive memory concerning the loving kindness of the Lord! Come, my heart, you have been thinking of many things while you have been away from the House of Prayer. Now forget them! Perhaps you have even dwelt upon your sorrows and remembered the wormwood and the gall. If so, now let those sad memories vanish, “and forget not all His benefits.”

3. Who forgives all your iniquities. What a great, “all,” that is! From your childhood until now you have been full of iniquities—and the Lord has been equally full of forgiveness.

3. Who heals all your diseases. There is no other physician like He— and all human physicians, whatever skill they may possess—derive it from Him! Blessed be the healing God!

4. Who redeems your life from destruction. Else had you, long ago, gone down into the Pit! But redemption has kept you out of it. Your natural life and your spiritual life have both been preserved to you through the precious blood of Christ.

4. Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. We talk about crowned heads. There are many such here in this assembly. Let everyone whose head is crowned “with loving kindness and tender mercies” magnify the name of the crowning Lord!

5. Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. You were down on the ground lately, with all your feathers shed, but they have grown again and you are up on the wing once more. Your youth has been given back to you! Renew, then, your praises of your God. With the dew of your youth restored to you, let the dew of your gratitude also abound. Who would not bless the Lord when he knows the blessedness of pardoned sin, a wounded spirit, healed, the life redeemed from destruction, youth restored like the eagle’s and the whole being crowned with loving kindness and tender mercies?

6. The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. Therefore let the oppressed praise Him! Let the justice which adorns His Throne be the subject of our constant delight. There is no act of oppression, on the part of the great ones of the earth, at which He will wink—“The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.”

7. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. Bless Him for having thus revealed Himself, giving us His Holy Word in which we see Him as in a mirror. When God makes Himself known to His people, then is the time for them to praise Him! You can scarcely worship an unknown God, but when He makes Himself known by special revelation in your heart, then you must and you will praise Him.

8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Therefore again praise Him. All who know and love the Lord should form a great orchestra continually magnifying His holy name!

9. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever. So that if you are just now being chided by Him—if you have some consciousness of His anger—begin to bless Him that it will not last long! “He will not always chide.” Behold the rainbow painted on the storm cloud and bless the name of the Lord even while you are under His afflicting hand.

10. He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Therefore praise Him again and again. Had He dealt with us as we deserve, we should not have been here. But we are still here, on praying ground, and on pleading terms with the Most High! Therefore let us praise Him.

11. For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. Such great mercy as this should have the highest praise of which we are capable. This verse speaks of the height of God’s mercy—the next one tells of its breadth.

12. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. They are gone—never to return! It is impossible that they should be imputed against us any more forever! Therefore praise Him to the very utmost.

13. Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him. Notice that as this sacred song rises, it gets more tender. If it is not quite so jubilant, the praise is all the deeper and quite as thrilling. One of the sweetest thoughts that we can have concerning God is that which relates to His fatherly tenderness toward His children.

14. For He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. Let His name be praised for this! Dust must be handled daintily, lest it should resolve itself into its separate particles—and God thus delicately handles us.

15, 16. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. Yet does God think of us, even as He does of the grass—and as He gives to each blade of grass its own drop of dew, so do we seem to feel hanging about each one of us a glistening drop of mercy, for which let us praise His holy name as the sunlight of His favor sparkles in every drop of His loving kindness!

17, 18. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them. Then, surely, we must bless God for His favor to our posterity, for His loving kindness, not only to ourselves, but also to our children, and our children’s children! As we look back, we praise the God of our fathers and as we look forward, we praise the God of our children’s children!

19. The LORD has prepared His throne in Heavens and His kingdom rules over all. For which again let us say, “Hallelujah!” The Lord of Hosts is no dethroned monarch! He has not lost His power to govern all whom He has made! “His kingdom rules over all.”

20. Bless the LORD, you His angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Magnify Him more than ever, if that is possible, you mighty hosts who—

*“Day without night  
Circle His Throne rejoicing.”*

21, 22. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul. The praise is now spread widely, over all the universe! Yet, O my heart, do not forget your own personal note in it—“O Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE SILKEN FETTER

NO. 888

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Fear the Lord and His goodness.”  
Hosea 3:5.**

THE whole verse runs thus: “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” A brief word may suffice upon the prophecy. I think no reader of Holy Scripture can doubt but that the seed of Abraham, however long they may be in blindness, will at the last obey the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of David, and in those days the goodness of God to them will be so extraordinary that they shall fear and wonder at it. Constrained by gratitude, they will be numbered among the most earnest servants of the Lord. May the Lord hasten so blessed a consummation in His own time.

O that the happy day would dawn, when Israel’s sons shall acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, to be the Messiah that was promised of old! The expression, “Fear the Lord and His goodness,” much impressed me and I have therefore ventured to take it from its connection that we may meditate upon it. Is it so, that there are powerful motives and active causes for fear not only in God Himself, but also in His goodness? Alas, dear Friends, too many who enjoy Divine blessings are far enough from fearing Him! His goodness, from the very commonness and continuity of it, casts them into a self-complacent slumber in which they dream that they will continue in prosperity forever—but they spend not even a single thought on Him from whom all goodness flows.

Alas, another class of persons are even excited by the goodness of God to a height of pride and arrogance. If Pharaoh is fixed on a powerful throne. If his dominions are in peace. If the Nile causes Egypt to be fat with harvest, the proud monarch defiantly demands, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?” If the hosts of Sennacherib are mighty in battle and if God gives prosperity to his kingdom, what will Sennacherib do but wax exceedingly haughty against God, the God of Israel and laugh His people to scorn? Many a man has put his trust in his riches and has presumed against the Most High. Because he has enjoyed long years of success, he believes that no evil can befall him, and his pride towers aloft, even to the very heavens!

Alas, even in those men who are right-hearted, in whom Divine Grace reigns, it has too often happened that the goodness of God has not worked in them a corresponding gracious result. Hezekiah is endowed with riches and displays them with ostentatious pride instead of honoring his God in the presence of the ambassadors that came from far. He sought only to give them a high idea of himself and thus by the pride of his heart he brought upon himself a stern rebuke from his Lord. Asa prospered, but when he was lifted up in outward circumstances, he became also lifted up in heart and departed from the Most High. Even good men cannot always carry a full cup without some spilling. Even those whose hearts are right have not always found their heads steady enough to stand with safety upon the pinnacles of prosperity and honor.

Yet, my Brethren, though these things occur as the result of the goodness of God, in spite of the evil of our hearts, yet the true and right effect of goodness upon us ought to be to make us fear God. Not to lift us up, but to keep us down. Not to make our blood hot with presumption, but to cool and calm it with a grateful jealousy—not unduly to exhilarate us until we become profanely defiant—but to sober us with conscious responsibility till we humbly sit with gratitude at the feet of Him from whom our good things have proceeded.

This, then, is to be the drift of this morning’s discourse—the right and proper result of the goodness of God upon our hearts. I shall address myself, first of all, to God’s people and secondly to such as are yet unreconciled to Him.

I. First, TO GOD’S PEOPLE. It is yours, Beloved, to fear the Lord and His goodness. You have received of God’s goodness in two ways—the first and the higher is His spiritual goodness to you with regard to your immortal nature and your eternal concerns. The second form of goodness in which God has been very lavish to some now present is the Providential bounty of God towards you as a pilgrim in this present world.

Let us take the first and dwell upon it and survey the spiritual goodness of God to you, His people, for a moment. It was no small goodness which chose you at the first, when there was no more in you than in others whom God beheld in the same glass of His purposes. He might have passed you by as He has passed by tens of thousands of others, but He chose you because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He determined that you should be the vessels of mercy to be filled with His Grace. It was no slight goodness which ordained a Covenant on your behalf with Christ Jesus, a Covenant ordered in all things and sure, which is, I hope, to you today all your salvation and all your desire, even if your house is not so with God as you could wish.

It was no slight goodness which fulfilled that Covenant, by the gift of the Only Begotten. My words, when applied to such a topic, seems to me to be threadbare and miserable things, too poor to set forth the loving kindness manifest in our Incarnate God dwelling among men. In our holy Savior working out a perfect righteousness. And above all, in our bleeding Redeemer making expiation for innumerable sins by the giving up of Himself to death. Here are heights of goodness which the deer’s foot of imagination shall never scale. Here are depths of mercy which the plummet of most profound reasoning can never fathom—what do you not owe unto Him who loved you and redeemed you unto God by His blood?

Think again of the goodness of God to you when you were as yet unconverted—what longsuffering—what tenderness! When you were determined to perish, He was determined to save. When you rejected His offers of mercy, He did not reject you. He would not take your denial for a reply, but He persevered with the sweet solicitations of His Gospel and with the silent influences of His Holy Spirit, until at last He made you willing in the day of His power and brought you to that Cross to find your Hope hanging there. And you were filled with joy and peace as you looked up to Jesus and rested in Him. Months and years have glided away since then, but all along life’s checkered way, Divine goodness has continually followed you.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, I need not be choice in my language in order to excite gratitude in you. If you will but now turn over the pages of your diary, one by one, and think of what God has done for you since that dear hour when He brought you to His feet and placed you among His children. Why, your bread has been given to you spiritually and your waters have been sure. You have been preserved from temptations and preserved in temptations and brought out of temptations! You have been led first into one Truth of God and then into another. You have been conducted, step by step, in the pathway of experience. Little by little, as you have been able to bear it, He has revealed Himself to you. You have been kept until this day by His power—you have been comforted unto this day by His Presence—you are being taught every day by His Spirit and you are being made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Oh, the goodness of God to you! If you do not feel it, I desire to be, for my own part, overwhelmed with thankfulness, so as to say in my own soul, “Oh, the goodness of God to me in spiritual matters! Oh, His goodness to an unworthy one who continues still unworthy! Oh, His goodness in watering the plant that bears so little fruit! Oh, His goodness in ministering comfort to one so ready to create distresses by foolish fears! Oh, His amazing goodness in bearing in His teaching with one so prone to forget and so slow to understand.” Brethren, we cannot mention even the small dust of our great Father’s mercies! He has outdone all that we have asked or even thought in what He has revealed to us. He has dealt well with His servants according to His Word.

Now, all this goodness, which I would gladly recall to your remembrance should constrain you to fear the Lord. To fear the Lord and His goodness—how is this to be done? First, there should be a fear in your souls of admiration to think that ever the infinite God should deal graciously with you—that He who made the heavens and the earth should stoop from His loftiness down to you. That you, being sinful and having therefore provoked Him and angered His sense of purity—that He should stoop to you in your defilement and loathsomeness and should reveal His Son in you! The wonder grows as we think not merely that He should give mercy, but such mercy! Not merely Divine Grace, but such boundless Grace, such unsearchable goodness and loving kindness!

A truly enlightened mind is bewildered amid the multitude of the Lord’s favors and bowed down with sacred awe. The fear that has torment, love has cast out—but the fear which must ever suffuse a spirit when it stands on the brink of the boundless and gazes into the infinite—such a devout and wondering fear we feel when we behold the everlasting love of God! I remember well being taken one day to see a gorgeous palace at Venice where every piece of furniture was made with most exquisite taste and of the richest material. Where statues and pictures of enormous price abounded on all hands and the floor of each room was paved with mosaics of marvelous art and extraordinary value. As I was shown from room to room and allowed to roam amid the treasures by its courteous owner, I felt a considerable timidity. I was afraid to sit down anywhere, nor did I hardly dare to put down my foot, or rest my hand to lean. Everything seemed to be too good for ordinary mortals like myself.

But when one is introduced into the gorgeous palace of infinite goodness, costlier and fairer by far, one gazes wonderingly with reverential awe at the matchless vision! “How excellent is Your loving kindness, O God!” I am not worthy of the least of all Your benefits. Oh, the depths of the love and goodness of the Lord! Saints who have tasted that the Lord is gracious should fear Him for His goodness with the worshipful fear of adoration. Everything which comes to us from Divine Love should bow us to our knee. Mercies should be the unhewn stones of which we should build an altar to our God. Even the sterner attributes of God compel devotion in right minds much more than the gentle glories.

Survey the nightly Heaven and feel how true it is, “An undevout astronomer is mad.” Galen, the physician, when studying the marvelous fabric of the human body, declared that he who saw not there the handiwork of God must be devoid of reason. When one reviews the goodness of God the same feeling is produced—but it is more melting, personal, tender and practical. In the works of creation we behold grandeur and goodness, but in the Grace that gave to man a Savior, you behold all the attributes of God in a soft subdued splendor which charms the soul to a more loving worship than Nature alone can suggest.

From Nature up to Nature’s God is well, but from Grace to the God of Grace is the more sure and easy way. I have never worshipped, even in the presence of Mont Blanc, or amid the crash of thunder, as I have at the foot of the Cross. A sense of goodness creates a better worshipper than a sense of the sublime. In our best seasons the most excellent sublimities of Nature become too little for us—they dwarf rather than magnify our conceptions of God. The day in which I saw most of creation’s grandeur was spent upon the Wengern Alps. My heart was near her God and all around was majestic. The dread mountains like pyramids of ice. The clouds like fleecy wool. I saw an avalanche and heard the thunder of its fall. I marked the dashing waterfalls leaping into the Yale of Lauterbrunnen beneath our feet, but my heart felt that creation was too scant a mirror to image all her God—His face was more terrible than the storm, His robes more pure than the virgin snow—his voice far louder than the thunder, His love far higher than the everlasting hills.

I took out my pocketbook and wrote these lines—  
*“Yon Alps, who lift their heads above the clouds, And hold familiar converse with the stars, Are dust, at which the balance trembles not, Compared with His Divine immensity.  
The snow-crowned summits fail to set Him forth Who dwells in Eternity and bears  
Alone the name of High and Lofty One.  
Depths unfathomed are too shallow to express The wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord. The mirror of the creatures has no space  
To bear the image of the Infinite.  
‘Tis true the Lord has fairly writ His name, And set His seal upon creation’s brow,  
But as the skillful potter much excels  
The vessel which he fashions on the wheel, E’en so, but in proportion greater far,  
Jehovah’s self transcends His noblest works. Earth’s ponderous wheels would break, her axles snap, If freighted with the load of Deity—  
Space is too narrow for the Eternal’s rest, And time too short a footstool for His Throne. E’en avalanche and thunder lack a voice  
To utter the full volume of His praise.  
How then can I declare Him?  
Where are words  
With which my glowing tongue may speak His name? Silent I bow and humbly I adore.”*

But in musing upon the Person of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation, a very different result has been experienced. I have been prostrate under the weight of Deity there revealed and ready to die amid the splendor there so graciously unveiled to my soul in rapt communion. Not fear which comes of bondage, but that which is borne of gratitude and bliss has bowed me before the mercy-throne with awful wonder at Divine goodness!

Further, the goodness of God to us should suggest aspiration as well as adoration. If He has treated us so as never any other did. If He has dealt with us in tenderness surpassing thought, then will we serve Him if He will but condescend to accept the sacrifice. There was never such a God as He. Oh, what an honor to be His servants! With tears of joy bedewing our eyes, we ask, “My God, may we be permitted to serve You? Is there anything of service or of suffering which You can condescend to allot to such as we are? Your goodness constrains us with Your fear—we are bound by it to be Yours forever.”

Brethren, the greatness of God’s goodness should suggest to us great service. The continuance of that goodness should move us to persevere in honoring Him. The disinterestedness of the love of God should make us ready for any self-denials. And above all, the singularity and specialty of His goodness towards His elect should determine us to be singular and remarkable in our consecration to His cause. Each Believer is so remarkably a debtor to his Lord that he should not be content to render mere ordinary tribute, but should be panting and sighing that he may attain to eminence in holy labor. He owes more than others—He should render a worthier return.

Oh, if the goodness of God would inspire but one here today to make a full surrender of his whole life to Jesus’ love, what a gain would this be to the Church! If some young man whom God has favored with special mercy would say, “Here am I, indulged as I have been with God’s goodness I will press into the front rank of self-abnegation. I will give myself up, spirit, soul and body, to the Master’s service in foreign lands,” what might he not achieve! Come, you gallant of heart, you generous of spirit—you owe a boundless debt to Him—it is but your reasonable service that you give Him your all! Come, lay your hands upon His altar horns and dedicate yourselves this day as a whole burnt-offering unto Christ! This is that fear of God and His goodness which every saint should covet.

We should also fear the Lord and His goodness in the sense of affection—an affection combined with the fears peculiar to holy jealousy. Has the Lord done so much for us? Then how we ought to tremble lest we should grieve so kind a God! If you have a master for whom you do not care because he is ungenerous or tyrannical, you will be little careful to please him, except so far as your sense of duty might demand. But when you are serving a kind and generous person who has been your benefactor from your youth up, you would not, for all the world, vex him either by negligence or fault. No father commands the obedience of his children like the parent whose affection to his children has been most manifest and undoubted. Fathers who provoke their children to anger must not wonder if they find them discouraged in their reverence.

Our gracious God wins the deepest affection of His people and they become jealous lest by anything done or undone they should grieve His Holy Spirit. Oh, that blessed, holy fear, that sacred jealousy of sin! I wish we all had more of it. We had, I fear, more of it at our first conversion, but alas, many professors have little of it now. They are too familiar with the world. They have lost their sensibility of sin. They are no longer quick as the apple of an eye—they allow sins which horrified them once. God save us from getting a film over our consciences by slow degrees. He that serves God serves One who is very jealous. Remember, Beloved, there are some among us here who have been permitted to enjoy communion with Christ in a very remarkable degree. You have been like John with his head on Christ’s bosom, taken into the innermost chamber of Divine affection.

Now, none can grieve God so soon as you can! There are none that must pick their steps more carefully than you! A common subject would be allowed by a monarch to do 50 things which one of his familiars must not do. Are you a favorite of the King? It is an awful thing to be beloved of Heaven—it is as dread as it is glorious—and it calls for great care and deep anxiety. May the Lord grant that you may walk humbly before Him with that fear of His goodness which dreads lest for a single moment God should be provoked by your temper, your thoughts, words, or deeds.

We must fear Him again—for I have a sevenfold fear to describe and must therefore be brief upon each—with humiliation. The goodness of God to us, if it finds us in a healthy state, will always make us think less of ourselves. We shall be like Peter’s boat, which when empty floated high, but which when full began to sink. God’s great mercy to us will make us sit down with David, overwhelmed with astonishment and say, “Why has this come to me? What am I and what is my father’s house?” Reckon that your soul is right with God if His mercy humbles you. But if it puffs you up, there is some base thing within your heart that must be purged away.

Again, the goodness of God ought to make us fear Him with a sacred anxiety, an anxiety of a double character. Am I really His? This great salvation which I hope I have received—have I really received it, or is my experience mere fancy? I see before me a vast estate, is it mine, or do I misread the title-deeds? Does it belong to some other, or actually to me? The higher thoughts you have of the Grace of God in the Gospel, the more carefully should you examine yourselves whether you are in the faith—the more anxious should you be to go every day to the Cross to make your calling and election sure by looking into those five wounds again and counting once more the purple drops and crying with holy faith, “Thus my sins are washed away.” Oh, if you had but a small Heaven and a God of little mercies, you might play fast and loose with them—but with a God who brims with kindness and a Heaven that is flooded with glory, oh, be anxious that there is no question in dispute as to whether you are Christ’s or not!

Our second anxiety should always be this, “If I am, indeed, His and I have such goodness bestowed on me, am I rendering to Him what He may expect?” Beloved, you are God’s vineyard. He has built a hedge about you. He has watered you and planted in your soul the choicest vine of the true spiritual life—but see how little fruit you have yielded to Him in return! He looks for clusters and He finds but gleanings! You give harbor to the wild boar of the wood, but you find little room for the Lord of the vineyard. He looks at your branches and lo, they are covered with the moss of carelessness and at your root the ground is overrun with evil weeds of pride and self-seeking. What more could He do than He has done for you? What more of goodness could He show you? Oh, fear and tremble lest you give Him nothing where He has given so much, rendering no interest on your talents, no return for the outlay of His mercy.

Once again, there is another fear, We should fear the Lord and His goodness with the fear of resignation. You remember Job, noble Job? He was once very rich and increased in goods. God had been very good to him for many years, both in spirituals and temporals and Job loved his God because of His goodness. This love he proved to be genuine, for when the cattle and the camels and what was worse, his children and his health were all gone, he said, “What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

In the hour of the gladness of your spirit, you ought to say within yourself, “Ah, after He has pardoned me, made me His child and promised me that I shall be with Him in Heaven forever, He may do what He wills with me. Lord, here am I, do what seems good in Your sight. By Your Spirit’s help, I will not complain though the bone comes through the skin through long tossing on the bed of sickness. Since You have delivered me from Hell, what is sickness that I should complain of it? If the wind whistles through my scanty rags and my table is bare and my house unfurnished—if I have a Christ on earth and a Christ in Heaven to be my portion—then I dare not murmur.”

Now this is the true fear of God, and if we could always keep in it, how happy should we be! If we were so satisfied that God is good, that we would not believe He could do us an unkind turn, so overjoyed with His spiritual goodness that all else appeared mere dirt and dross, we should honor our Lord more and be far more blessed ourselves. Thus I have spoken at length upon fearing the Lord and His goodness, taking it as spiritual goodness. Now, for a few minutes, I wish to address myself to Believers in Christ who possess much of the goodness of God in Providential matters. All the saints are not poor. Lazarus is a child of God on the dunghill, but Joseph of Arimathea is no less beloved though he has great riches. Many were converted to God from the poorest classes in the Apostles’ days, but the Ethiopian eunuch, who had great possessions, was none the less a genuine disciple.

Now, there are some of you whom God has always prospered in your business. You have a healthy family growing up around you, while you enjoy excellent bodily health—indeed, you have the comforts of this life in profusion. I beseech you above others to fear the Lord for all this goodness. The tendency of prosperity is too often injurious. It is much harder to bear than adversity. As the refining pot to silver and the furnace to gold, so is prosperity to a Christian man. Many a man will pass through trouble and praise God under it, who, when he is tried with no trouble, will forget his God, decline in Grace and grow almost a worldling.

Believe me, there is no trial so great as no trial, even as an old Divine used to say that there was no devil so bad as no devil. There is no state in which a man is in such great danger as when he can see no danger—

*“More the treacherous calm I dread*

*Than tempest howling overhead.”*  
Let me put these few thoughts to you, you who are blessed with temporal goodness. Fear God much more than ever before, lest these temporals should become your God. Money is compared in Scripture to thick clay, because it sticks. And what is more, it sucks a man into itself. Many a man sinks in wealth like a horse in a bog—his possessions suck him under. While your earthly goods are kept under foot, they will do you no hurt, but when they rise as high as your heart, they have begun to bury you alive. While a man carries money in his purse, it is well, especially if the rings are not too tight—but when he carries it in his heart, it is bad, be he who he may—his gold shall eat as does a canker and work him infinite mischief.

Child of God, need I tell you this? You know better than to trust in uncertain riches. Well, then, if you worship the golden calf, you will be guilty, indeed. Oh, be anxious to fear your God and not to be an idolater! Fear Him more than you ever did at any time of your life before, and in proportion to your prosperity let the depth of your godliness increase. Fear God and His goodness, again, lest you should undervalue your responsibilities. What you have is none of yours. As far as your fellow men are concerned, your possessions are your own, but as far as your God is concerned you have nothing. You are but a steward—and is it the part of an honest steward to be constantly amassing for himself and refusing his master his due?

Why, if a steward should say, when he pays his master a certain part of his profits, “I have been generous and have given my master so much,” is he not a rogue to talk so? All that he makes in a year, since he is but a steward, belongs to his master and it is not generosity in his case to render it up! O Believers, all that you have belongs to Him who bought you with His blood! I pray you ask for Divine Grace that you may not accumulate sin as you increase your wealth! There is awful sin resting somewhere in the Church. I know some Christians who are giving to God’s cause beyond their means and others fully up to their proportion. And yet there are souls perishing by tens of thousands because they have not the Gospel and they might hear the Gospel within a week if we had the pecuniary means of sending it to them. We have the men waiting, but not the means to support them.

There are heathen nations in darkness ready to receive the Gospel— Providence has opened the door—but there is a lack of funds for entering the door. Now, I believe there is no lack of funds whatever among the whole body of professors, but the gold gets into the hands of certain pretenders to religion who are base hypocrites, since they profess to be wholly Christ’s, but their actions belie them. They do no more than others, and what is done is rather to get their names in the subscription lists than with an eye to God’s Glory. It is a sad thing it should be so, for we ought never to give to receive honor of man, but out of love to God and God alone. The more you have, the more responsibility you have! Get Grace, then, to know and feel your responsibility and ask for more Grace as your talents increase, that you may be honest with your God.

Thirdly, fear God and His goodness, lest He turn His hand and make you poor. How soon can He dry the springs and send a drought upon you! He can send seven years of famine to eat up all the years of plenty. If He should do so to you who serve Him so miserably, how you will wish that you had served Him when you had the opportunity! God never leaves His people, but He often chastises them. And I do not doubt that many a man is brought down in the world because God tried him in other circumstances, but he was not faithful. “Ah,” says the Master, “he is not a good steward and I will not trust him any more.” I should not wonder but that many of you might have been rich, but when in prosperity you did not give in proportion and the Lord said, “I will not put My talents out to so bad a servant.”

Is it not often so, that when Christian men have given away their wealth in shovelfuls, God has given it back to them in wagon loads? “There was a man,” said Bunyan, “and some did count him mad. The more he gave away the more he had.” Let all wealthy Christians remember that He who gives them prosperity today may give them adversity tomorrow and therefore with holy fear let them adore their God while they have the opportunity of serving Him. You should fear the Lord now, especially while you have your children about you and you are in health, because

you will have to leave all these things very soon. They may leave you, but certainly you will have to leave them.

Oh, let loose of worldly comforts! Enjoy them as though you had them not. Take them and say as you receive them, “These are but passing, fleeting things.” Embrace not such deceptive clouds, look not on these as your rest, but as slight refreshments on the way to your eternal Home. Beloved, fear God and His goodness because He is better than all His gifts of Providence. Let Him give you a fair house and a goodly estate. Let Him plant you among the rich and the noble. Let Him bestow on you good health and cheerful spirits. Let Him give you a numerous and happy family. Let Him cause His candle to shine upon you—still He is better than all this!

All these put together could not fill a hungry soul. God alone can satisfy a true heart. You have Him, and having Him you have more than all the rest can contribute to you! Therefore, fear Him and fear His goodness. This is a lesson for the prosperous people of God to learn.

II. May the Holy Spirit help us to say a few solemn words to SUCH AS ARE NOT GOD’S PEOPLE, but remain enemies to God, careless and yet prosperous. God has been very good to you. He has spared your lives, that is something. You might to have been in Hell, you ought to have been there. If Justice had had its due you would have been there. You have oftentimes provoked God. You could not bear to be teased 10 minutes and yet you have vexed your God these 40 years with your sins, your negligence, your despising of His Sabbaths, of His Word, of His Christ. You have put your finger, as it were, into the very eye of God in speaking ill of His Gospel—perhaps in ridiculing those Truths in which His honor is most concerned. And yet you have been spared!

You have not only been spared, but have been surrounded with the comforts of this life. I speak to many here who are not among the poorest and the neediest—you have received many comforts. In fact, you have all that heart could wish except the one thing necessary. God has dealt very graciously with you, indeed. Now hear a message from God to you! Will you not fear Him and serve Him out of gratitude? Is it not unjust to receive so much and to give nothing in return, no love, no thanks, no service? If you make a tool you make it for your own use and expect some benefit from it. God has made you for His own Glory and yet He has had no Glory out of you. If you keep any animal on your farm you expect service and yet God has kept you and you have rendered Him no return. Do you not feel ashamed that so good a God should be so ill repaid?

I know you have so much manliness about you that you would feel very hurt if any friend who had rendered you a kindness should accuse you of being ungrateful. You have always felt through life that ingratitude is one of the vilest of vices and that it lowers him below a brute, since the brute has a kindness for those that do it a kindness. The dog will fawn in return if you fondle it. The ox knows its owner and “the ass its master’s crib.” And would you despise yourself to be worse than they? And yet you are so if you fear not God who has treated you so well. Let me ask you, why will you not serve Him? Is there anything that you can set off against His kindness to you? Do you suspect Him of any sinister motive? If so, your gratitude might be withheld. Do you suppose that Divine goodness does not lay you under any obligation? Surely you cannot be so foolish!

Well, then, if, indeed, God has for long years of remarkable goodness had from you no recompense but neglect, shall it always be so? Is there not an invincible power in tenderness? The old fable tells us of the sun and the wind which strove to see which could first remove the traveler’s cloak. The wind blustered, but the traveler only wrapped his cloak more tightly about him. But when the sun shone warm and soft upon his head, the traveler speedily cast off his cloak. If God had dealt roughly with you, I should not have wondered if you had said, “I will not serve Him.” But after His being so kind to you—off with that cloak of indifference and be His servant! Will not the warmth of God’s love thaw your soul? The chilling frost of threats might have hardened you into a rock of ice, but this sunshine of prosperity which the Lord has given you—will it not melt you— will it not bring you to Jesus? God grant that it may be so with many in this house, now and evermore.

Ought you not also, Brethren, to fear God out of hope? If He has dealt so exceedingly well with you in temporals, though you have not feared Him, have you not every reason to expect that He will do as well for you in spirituals? You call at a friend’s house—you are riding on horseback. He takes your horse into the stable and is remarkably attentive to it—the creature is well groomed, well housed, well fed. You are not at all afraid that you will be shut out—there is surely a warm place in the parlor for the rider where the horse is so well attended to in the stable. Now, your body, which I might liken to the horse, has had its temporal prosperity in abundance. Surely the Lord will take care of your soul if you seek His face!

Let your prayer be, “My God, my Father, be my Guide. Since You have dealt so well with me in these external matters, give me Grace within my heart, give me the true riches, give me to love Your Son and trust in Him to be forever Your child. You have given me the nether springs, give me to drink of the upper springs. I have the blessings which You give to the ungodly, O give me the blessings of the godly, the peculiar heritage of Your saints!” O Holy Spirit, constrain many thus to hope and pray!

Should you not, again, fear the Lord and His goodness out of great admiration? For how well, how kindly, how strangely well has He dealt with you! You could not have been patient with anyone who had plagued you such a length of time and yet God has been so with you! I have sometimes thought, as I have read the story of the dying Savior, that even if Jesus Christ had never lived and died for me, if I had no part in His precious blood, I must still love Him because of His love to other people. He is so good and so kind, that were I lost, myself, I must admire the loving Savior. Do you not admire what you have seen of God’s kindness to you? And do not you feel that such a God and such a Christ should have your heart?

Lastly, let me say you may well fear God out of apprehension concerning His goodness, for the goodness which He now renders to you will pass away before long. All the temporal mercy of God is but like a land-flood— but the surface water. You have not touched the great springs which cannot be dried up. The great deeps belong only to Believers. Theirs is the fountain of Jacob which never can be exhausted. Your comforts are but the surface waters and will be gone. What will you do, then, when you have only the goodness of God to think of to leave a bitterness upon the memory because you loved not God for His kindness when you had it?

Remember, if God’s kindnesses do not bring you to repentance, He will deal with you in another way. The axe of the Roman lictors was bound up in a bundle of rods and the bundle was tied together with knotted cord— and the reason was this—when the judge examined the prisoner, then the lictors began to undo the cords, knot by knot, waiting to see if there was any hope that the prisoner might escape. They waited to see if there was any repentance that might permit the scourging to be put away. If not, when the cords were unbound, then the rods were used and if the culprit turned out to be a greater offender—still, then came the axe—but only as a last resource.

So the Lord, up to now, has treated you with great mercy. He has not untied the knots yet, but the angel of Justice is beginning to untie them. There is trouble in store for you except you turn and repent! There will come first one rod—sickness to the child. Then another—loss in business, sickness to yourself, death to your wife—more rods. I have seen this in observing God’s hand in many. And if all the rods bring you not to repentance, then the axe remains to be used last. Woe to that man whom neither goodness nor severity can move—whom neither loving kindness could draw, nor justice drive! For such a man there remains nothing but to be cast away forever from God whom he would not love, from Christ whom he would not accept, from mercy which he despised, from love which he rejected. O let it not be so with you!

I feel this morning as if my tongue were tied, comparatively, contrasted with the way in which I want to speak to you young people who at present live in much gaiety and pleasure. It would be such a noble thing, such a just thing, such a fitting thing, if in the heyday of your joy you would come to Jesus because God’s mercies draw you. O say in your hearts, “My Lord, You have shone on me and I, like the flower, will open to You and pour out the love of my heart like sweet perfume. You have kept me from poverty and from sickness. You have preserved me from many of the ills of life—here, then, Your lamb for whom You have tempered the wind, comes to You and says—‘Good Shepherd, carry me in Your bosom. Mark me with the red mark of Your blood. Take me into Your flock.’—

*‘Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground, And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.’” PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE THE SERMON—Psalm 103.* Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1140 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 4.17

LET HIM ALONE

NO. 1140

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”  
Hosea 4:17.

TO what purpose these vast assemblies Sunday after Sunday? Why do you crowd these aisles and galleries till every seat is occupied, and every foot of standing room is filled? Have you, all of you, a zeal to worship? Do you all thirst to hear the Word of the Lord? Ah me! I am beset with fears and misgivings. My heart is troubled for full many of you. Many persons entertain the evil notion that preaching sermons and hearing sermons is a light matter. When the occasion is past, the exhortation closed, the congregations broken up and the Sunday over, they think that all is done and ended. The doors are shut and what they have heard they no longer heed any more than if they had been at the theater, and the curtain had fallen, and the lights were out.

To them the Sunday is but as any other day and the preacher but an orator who helps them to while away an hour. But it is not so. Whether we look for a result from the proclamation of God’s Word or not, you may be sure God looks for it! No man in his senses sows a field without looking for a harvest. No man engages in trade without expecting profit. Oh, Sirs, God is not mocked! He does not send His Word that it may return unto Him void. Neither does He think that it is enough when His servants have been as those who make pleasant music, or sing a sweet song and the audience may repair to the sanctuary as they would go to a theater— content to be pleased and careless about being profited.

Listen, then, to this solemn lesson! For every Sunday that I occupy this place I shall have to give an account before God. My fidelity to my congregation is of such solemn moment that were it not for the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus, I feel it had been better for me that I had never been born than to have to render in that account. Oh, the faults of which I am, myself, personally conscious! They fill me with shame, though they are, I fear, but few compared with what God, Himself, beholds in the service I attempt to render!

But, then, you also will have to answer for every sermon you have heard or may yet hear. Dare any of you imagine that an opportunity of hearing the Gospel is given to you that you may tread it under foot? Oh, what would dying men give to hear the Gospel again! What would lost souls in Hell give if they could have the opportunities of Grace again! They are priceless beyond all estimate and, as they are so precious, a strict account will be taken of them! The hearer who went his way and said, “I heard the sermon and I formed a judgment of the preacher’s style,” and

flippantly quoted this or that, will find that another view of the service has been taken by Almighty God—and another form of reckoning will be carried out before His Judgment Seat!

Do you suppose that the preaching of the Gospel is no more than the performance of a play? Or shall men come and listen to the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, preached earnestly to them with less concern than to an orator in Parliament? Are death and judgment, Heaven and Hell, to be looked upon as common themes which awaken nothing but a passing interest? You may judge so if you will—but God’s servants dare not think so, nor does God, Himself, think so.

The text suggests these enquiries. It appears that the Ephraimites, or rather the whole people of Israel, the 10 tribes, had been warned again and again and again—and because they did not turn at the warning, but refused the message of God and continued in their sin—at last God was provoked with them and He said to His servants, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” No longer waste your powers on careless minds. On such a rock as that it is vain to plow. The case is become utterly hopeless! Cease your labor. Go somewhere else where your hallowed occupation will be more remunerative, where hearts will be touched and ears will be opened to the Word. “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”

Fearing lest there may be some in this congregation—no, being persuaded that there are some on the verge of being such, I shall try to speak, first, upon the sin which provoked this punishment. Then I will speak upon the strange punishment. And thirdly, upon such practical reasoning as arises out of the whole subject.

I. WHAT THEN, IS THE SIN WHICH PROVOKES THIS UTTERANCE, “Let that man alone”? The sin appeared to be, in Ephraim’s case, continuance in idolatry. Israel had set up idols. They knew the Lord, but when they separated from the tribe of Judah, Jeroboam, in order to keep them from going up to Jerusalem, set up golden calves. It was not intended that they should worship other gods, but the theory was that they would worship God, the true God, through the representation of an ox, which represented power.

It was a symbol which they conceived to be appropriate and instructive, just as they tell us nowadays, “We do not want people to worship idols, but they are to worship Christ through a representation of a cross, or of a man hanging on a crucifix. This will teach them and assist their devotions. They are not to worship the image, itself, but to worship God through the image. Now, be it never forgotten that this method of devotion is expressly forbidden in the Law and is contrary to one of the Ten Commandments. “You shall not make to yourself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything which is in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them nor worship them.”

This command was disregarded, and the 10 tribes became practically the representatives of the Papist or Ritualist of the present day. They worshipped God through images and after a while they went further, (as this kind of superstition always does go further)—they began to set up false gods and goddesses—Baal, Ashtaroth and the like. Thus at length they went aside altogether from the Most High. Prophet after Prophet came and said, “If you do this you will be visited with judgments for it. The Lord our God is a jealous God and can only be worshipped in the manner which He has, Himself, ordained. If you decide to worship Him in these new-fangled ways, with these devices and superstitious ordinances of your own, He will be angry with you, and will smite you.”

They listened not to these Prophets. Even Elijah, that mightiest of God’s messengers, gained but a slender hearing from them. Elisha, his successor, was equally disregarded. Servant after servant of God’s household came to them and admonished them in the name of the Lord. It was all to no purpose. They despised the message, persecuted those who delivered it and in the sequel put many of them to evil deaths. So, at last, the Lord said, “They are bound to their idols; they cling and cleave to them with a morbid infatuation. Their heart is callous. Their purpose stubborn, they will never give them up. Let My servants, therefore, return and refrain themselves, and go no more to them. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.”

I fear the like judgment will come upon the Ritualists of our time, but I prefer to deal rather with you who hear me this day. To you, also, this bitter foreboding is addressed, or ever your ears are deaf to counsel and your conscience numb to reproof. Any vice deliberately harbored, any one sin persistently indulged may bring about this fearful result. God will speak of you, then, not as an erring creature whom it is possible to reclaim, but as a wretched outcast whom it is necessary to abandon! A man may be overtaken with a fault. If he has been guilty of drunkenness, his conscience rebukes him. Falling into that sin once or twice, he has felt, (as well he may), that he has been degraded by it. Let that man continue—and I might especially say, “Let that woman continue,” (for the common use or the constant abuse of intoxicating drinks exerts its baneful spell over both sexes)—let anyone continue to violate the laws of sobriety—and before long that sin will become a rooted habit. Then conscience will cease to accuse and God will practically say, “Ephraim is given to his cups: let him alone!”

Or let a man begin some practice of fraud in his business. At first it will trouble him—he will feel uneasy. By-and-by his systematic dishonesty will bring him no compunction. He will become so familiar with crime that he will call it custom and wonder how he could have ever been so chickenhearted as to feel any trouble about it at all! God will let him alone and leave him to eat the fruit of his own ways. He is given to his sin and his sin will bind him with iron chains and hold him a captive.

I cannot, of course, pick out the special sin of any here present, but whatever your sin is, you are warned against it! Your conscience tells you it is wrong. If you persevere in it, it may come to be your eternal ruin. God will say, “The man is joined unto idols: let him alone!” Continuance in sin provokes sentence—especially when that continuance in sin is perpetrated in the teeth of many admonitions. A person who continues in sin, unwarned, may, comparatively, have but little fault compared with another who is frequently and faithfully rebuked.

The child, who in his early sinfulness was affectionately admonished by a gracious mother, who felt the hot drops of her tears fall on his brow because his offense had grieved her. The child who was again and again admonished when he had grown somewhat older, by a faithful father, but laughed to scorn paternal teaching and went further and further astray, does not sin at all so cheaply as the Arab of the streets who has been poisoned by bad example from his youth up. Some of you who have sat under the sound of the Gospel, where the Word of God is preached in awful earnestness, will sin 10 times more grievously if you despise the exhortations of the Lord, than those whose Sundays were wasted by listening to sermons which never touched their conscience and were never intended to do other than lull the moral sense and charm the taste.

You, young man, cannot have been warned as you have been of late by that kind friend. You cannot have been admonished as you have been, lately, by that Bible you have been reading, which has deeply impressed you. You cannot have been impressed as you have recently been by the example and especially by the dying words, of your departed sister and then go on as you used to do, without incurring seven-fold guilt! Continuance in sin after admonition is that which provokes God to say, “He is joined to his idols: let him alone.”

Remember, too, that where a man becomes guilty of despising the chastisements of God and perseveres in his wickedness after having suffered for it, there, again, the guilt assumes a double dye. For instance, the sailor has been profane, a common swearer. At whatever port he has touched he has spent his time in riotous living. But the other day he was at sea in a tremendous storm and he cried unto God. He escaped, as it were, by the skin of his teeth, and while he was being saved from impending death, his heart trembled on account of his guilt. Now, if that man, after being saved from shipwreck, goes back to blasphemy and debauchery—there will be sharp reckoning with him.

That soldier who has been in the hospital, laid aside by sickness brought on by his own folly, who, after his life was despaired of, has nevertheless recovered—if he shall return like a dog to his vomit—every sin that he will commit will count for many times as much as those sins he rebelled in before that warning. That young man who left his father’s house in the country, where he had been trained to virtue, and came to London, and plunged into its whirlpool of vice, but who, in the infinite mercy of God has been snatched like a brand from the burning for a while and is able, again, to come up to worship with God’s people—if he should go back like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire—woe be unto him!

It may be that he will never have God’s rod to make him smart again. The rod will be put up and the axe of justice will be used before long. You know how the Roman lictors, as they went through the street with the consul, carried a bundle of rods. And when a culprit was brought before the consul, he would say sometimes, “Let him be smitten with rods,” and they began to unbind the bundle. It was a rule that the “fasces,” as they were called, should be tightly bound so that it would take a long time to unbind them. This was to give time for the criminal to make confession, or to plead something as a mitigating circumstance.

Sometimes, where the case was one of treason, which perhaps the culprit repented and confessed, he would be forgiven. They would be, for a while, untying the knots, and the consul would look the man in the face, to see if there were any signs of relenting, or if he were altogether stubborn. Then when the rods were unbound, it was a good thing for the criminal if the lictors began to smite him with the rods, because that might be a token that he was not to die. But if the rods were laid aside and the axe brought forth, then it was known that he must die.

So God has smitten you in mercy. Fever and disease have been God’s lictors that have used the rods upon you. By-and-by He will say, “Let him alone,” because He is reserving you for the axe of future and inevitable doom. Oh, Sirs, the Lord knows all your hearts! Where are you? I may be speaking right into the face of some of you who have endured many afflictions and been brought low by poverty and need, or by disease and sickness, so that you have come to death’s door. And all this has been the milder chastisement of God by which He has been saying to you, “My Child, do not destroy yourself!” It has been the hand of Mercy put upon the bridle of that wild horse of yours, to draw him back, that he may not leap with you over the precipice! But if you spur him on in defiance of the hand of Mercy, you will be permitted to take the leap to your own destruction, for God may say, “He is joined to his idols: let him alone.”

Once again. This punishment may be brought, and generally is brought, upon men when they have done distinct violence to their conscience. Before sin has come to its worst there is a great deal of struggling in men’s minds. Conscience will not be quiet. It cries out against the maltreatment which it suffers from ungodly lives. Many a young man, especially if he has been well brought up, and many a young woman, too, if she has been trained in religious ways, will have times in which they are pulled up short and it comes to this—“I have been wrong. If I go further in this wrong I shall suffer for it. There is a way of Grace. I see the door of Mercy open to me.” They have stood hesitating, as if a hand had been laid on their shoulder, and they have felt as though they were turned from the wrong and drawn into the right way.

But some have fought against Mercy, and the evil spirit has set before them all the sparkle of fleshly lust and worldly pleasure. And at last, with a desperate effort, they have dragged themselves away to their sins. Now, the next time they do that they will not suffer half the compunction. And the next time after that they will have less, still, for every time Conscience is violated it becomes less vigorous and is more easily tranquillized. I remember an earnest Christian man telling me how, before conversion, he used to spend his nights in shameful ways and frequently would be in the streets—though the son of a most respectable man—in a state of half intoxication.

As he stood under a lamp one night, with his brain confused and his mind bewildered, he put his hand into his pocket and took out a letter. By some strange impulse he was induced to begin to read it. It was a tender appeal from a loving, pious sister. Unknown reflections cast their shadows across his breast. Taking counsel with himself he thought, “Well, what is it to be?” He was sober enough, even then, to feel as if he had come to a point. Thinking over the matter, and deliberating upon it, it pleased God to lead him to put that letter back into his pocket, and say, “I will go home, and I will seek my sister’s God.”

That resolution proved to be the first step to his conversion— *“He left the hateful ways of sin,  
Turned to the fold and entered in.”*

Ever afterwards he came to regard this as the crisis of his soul’s history. He said to me, “If that night I had gone elsewhere and God’s Spirit had not graciously led me there and then to something like decision, it may be that it would have been the very last time my conscience ever would have troubled me. And I should have gone headlong to destruction.” I wonder whether such a time as that may have come to some of my hearers! If it is so, O Eternal Spirit, throw in the weight of Your Omnipotent influence to decide the will of man for that which is good and right—and let not evil win the day!

Do you not see in the pictures I have drawn and the descriptions I have given, some delineation of that aggravated guilt which provokes the withering blast of incensed Mercy turned into Wrath which wails forth the woe of my text, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone”?

II. Now, I crave your earnest attention to THE SINGULAR PUNISHMENT—“Let him alone.” Is there anything in this to excite our surprise? The calamity is so dire that we may well shudder at it! But the sentence is so just and the issue so reasonable that we can only acknowledge it to be such as might have been expected. What can be more natural? There is a piece of ground. Last year it was fertilized and it was sown with good seed, but nothing has come up from it. The year before the like pains were bestowed upon it.

They trenched it, and it has been thoroughly drained. There could not have been better seed cast upon it than has been used. Yet nothing grew last year. No harvest rewarded the laborer’s toil. Year after year its hopeless barrenness has vexed the farmer’s soul. Farmer, what will you do this year? “Do?” he asks. “Why, I will do nothing! What can be done with it? Let it alone.” Is he not right in his verdict? Here is a man grievously sick. The doctor called upon him, but they shut the door in his face. He called again and he gained access to the patient—but the patient cursed him. He called again and gave him a prescription. The sick man took the prescription, tore it in pieces and flung it away. What do you mean to do, Doctor? “What can I do?” he says. “I must let him alone! What can I do? My services are rejected. I am treated with insult! What more remains for me?”

And here is a sinner in danger of being lost. The Lord says to him, “Behold My Son! I have anointed Him to be a Savior. If you trust Him, He will save you.” This counsel is despised. It is thought nothing of, forgotten, neglected, put off—in some cases scoffed at, made a matter of ridicule, treated with hatred—and perhaps the deliverer of the message is made the subject of persecution. What will God say? Why, “That is a case in which I will let him alone! I sent his mother to him when he was a child. I sent his Sunday school teacher to him. I sent a godly friend to him. I have sent My servant, the minister, to him, times out of mind. I have put good books in his way scores of times. It is all in vain!”

Brothers and Sisters, is there anything that can be more reasonable or more just than for God, on His part, to say, “Let him alone”? The tree never has brought forth any fruit! What need is there to waste any more time upon it? It seems right on God’s part that He should say, “Let him alone.” You judge if it is not so! Well, but what happens when a man is thus let alone? Why, he is as a great many people would like to be. Liberty is given him! No. Let me correct myself—he takes license to pursue his own course. He is no more “pestered and bothered about religion.”

He is no more fretted and worried in his conscience about duties and obligations. God’s people begin to let him alone, for, if they speak to him, he only growls at them and returns an answer which grieves their hearts. So they keep out of his way, or if they do speak to him, their word, though given in earnest, is taken in jest. Like water on a slab of marble, the warning does not penetrate the surface or affect his heart. He has got out of the way of being impressed. Now he has no mother to trouble him. She has long slept under the green ward.

He has no poor old father, now, to talk to him about his sins—he has long been carried to Heaven. No minister disturbs him, now, for he gives the servant of God a wide berth and keeps clear of him. No books come in his way that can at all alarm him—he will not open them if he thinks they might. Give him the Sunday newspaper, that is enough for him! Give him a book of science, or something that has to do with this time. Having put his faith in infidelity, he fortifies his heart against fear—he takes care not to trouble himself about religion. No qualms or questioning. No doubts or disputes disturb him. No fierce temptations or fiery trials distract his peace.

Everything seems to go merrily and smoothly with him. He is the man to make money. He is the jolly fellow that can indulge in sin with impunity—put his hand into the fire and take it out again without being hurt— where another would be badly burned. He seems to wear a charmed life. God has said, “Let him alone!” Those about him envy him—but if they knew! If they knew! If they knew! If they knew that God had “set him in slippery places,” and that “his foot will slide in due time,” they would no more envy him his prosperity and peace than they would envy the bullock that is fattening for the Christmas show, or the full-fleshed sheep that is driven to the shambles. His end is destruction!

Perhaps I am speaking to some who are wrapping themselves up quite complacently in the idea that the lines have fallen to them in pleasant places, that fortune smiles on them and their reputation is in the ascendant. They would not wish to have their course altered and yet the terrible sentence has gone out against them, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” O men, I pity you from my soul, but I fear you will ridicule my sympathy. Alas! Alas, I can but mourn in secret, for I see that your day is coming! I have shown you, then, what it is to be let alone by God.

Do you ask, now, “What is the general result of it?” Why, let me tell you. For the most part it leads the man into greater sin than he had ever committed before. It leads him to become more defiant and more boastful than before. Very frequently he becomes a scoffer and a skeptic. And not infrequently he becomes intolerant to the poor and a persecutor of those who fear the Lord and observe His ordinances. Restraints are taken off from him—those moral obligations which curbed him and that respect for public opinion which induced him to practice a little decency—he has renounced. They are nowhere to be found.

Vain conceits fill the place of virtuous counsels. He violated Conscience and Conscience has left him. He wearied out those who rebuked him and they have ceased to reprove him. Or if they rebuke him, he turns a deaf ear to their admonitions. He has become like the adder that cannot, and will not, hear the wisest charmer. So the man goes from bad to worse, still with the full conceit that he is among the happiest and most highly favored of mortals! But here is the evil of it! The dreadful sound is in my ears! God has said to all the agents that might do that man good, “Let him alone!” But wait awhile! He will not say that to the agents which can do him harm.

God has not said to the Devil, “Let him alone!” He will not say to Death, “Let him alone!” He will not say to Judgment, “Let him alone!” Nor will He say to the devils of Hell, “Let him alone!” He will not say to infinite Misery, “Let him alone!” On the contrary, He will let loose all the destroying angels against him and the man who was let alone in sin shall not be let alone in punishment! I cannot speak of this as I could wish. These are things to be thought of and weighed in the soul. I pray that you may so weigh them, that, if you have fallen into a state of indifference, you may be awakened out of it and resolve that it shall not be so any longer. Oh, that you would cry out in terror, “God helping me, I will not be one of those of whom God shall say, ‘Let him alone!’ ”

III. THERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS VERY SAD SUBJECT to which I must now draw your attention. It becomes the preacher, so long as he does not know the individual—and this he never can know—to whom God has said, “Let him alone!” to try and use the utmost endeavor to awaken every careless and indifferent man within his reach. I pray the Spirit of God to help me while I try to do so. Some of you are living in this world entirely for your own pleasure or your own gain. I do not deny that it is right that you should seek gain, or that it is natural that you should desire pleasure. Neither do I think that attention to the things of God will deprive you of any gain that is worth having, or of any pleasure that is desirable. But the sad thing is that many of you are living as if there were no hereafter.

Now, do you really believe that there is no future in reserve for you? If you are quite persuaded that you are no better than a dog. If you are quite certain that you are nothing but an animal and that in due time, when you die, and the worms eat you, that will be the end of you—why, Sirs, if I were of the same mind I should have but little to say to you! I should wish you to be as virtuous as may be in this life—for that is the best way to be happy and to benefit the community—but I do not know that this is any particular business of mine. I would leave that matter to the policeman and the magistrate.

But do you really suppose that you have no higher origin than the flesh and no further destiny than to mingle your dust with the mold of the earth? Would you like me to speak to you as to a dog? Would you like anybody to treat you as a dog? Being, as you say, only a dog, why should you not be treated as such? Can you, in your heart of hearts, really believe that the cemetery and the shroud, and the sexton’s spade will be the last of you? You do not believe it! You cannot believe it! You may try to persuade yourself that the terrors of judgment to come are merely bugbears of the imagination—but there is something within you—an irrepressible consciousness of immortality which tells you you will live after death.

God has fixed the conviction of a future state as a kind of instinct in men, so that where the Gospel has never come, a future state has been conjectured, though for the most part but dimly inferred rather than distinctly expected. There has scarcely been a heathen tribe so abject but they have had glimmerings of the fact that there is another state after death. Well, my dear Sir, I cannot conceive that you have degraded yourself into the notion that you are a beast! At any rate, I will not allow myself to think that you are a beast. You will live somewhere or other after your present career is closed. Does it not stand to reason that if you have lived entirely for self there must be a reckoning with you?

Somebody made you! God made you! If you keep a horse or a cow you expect some service of it and, if God made you, He must expect you to render Him some service. But you have rendered Him none. Though He

has winked at your disobedience in this life, do you think He will always wink at it? Well, if you think so, you are grossly mistaken, for, as the Lord lives, there is a Day of Judgment coming when the Lord Jesus Christ shall descend from Heaven with a shout and all the dead shall rise out of their graves! And all the living shall appear before His Great White Throne. You will as certainly be there as you are here!

And when you are there, you will discover that every secret thought of yours has been written down against you and will be read out and published before mankind. Then and there, for every idle word you have spoken, you will be brought into judgment! Can you think of this as possible, even though you may not admit that it is certain? Can you yet remain callous, indifferent, unconcerned? Is there not a something in your heart that says, “If this is so, it is terrible—it is terrible for me! What must I do to be saved?” I am bound to answer you, (and cheerfully do I answer you), “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

Whoever you may be. However far you may have gone astray, trust Jesus, dying and bleeding for sinful men, and now gone into the highest heavens to plead at the right hand of the infinite Majesty—trust Jesus and you shall live! But if you have not Christ to put away your sin, to espouse your cause and to plead for you in that Last Great Day—as surely as you live, whether you believe it or not, this is true—the Judge will say, “Depart from Me you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

And that may happen to you within much less time than you dream. Not many Monday nights ago, there came a beloved Christian Sister, here, who joined with us in prayer. She was taken ill. She did not leave this house conscious. She was taken home with death upon her. Her disease proved to be past human aid and in an hour or two she died. I hope there will never be another death in this Tabernacle, but more than once individuals have been thus called away from our very midst. Before this congregation shall have broken up, some of you may have gone to the world of spirits! In all probability within this week, one of you will be summoned before the Great Judge. If it is you, Sir, or if it is you, good Woman, are you ready?

Are you ready? Do you feel no trouble about that question? Then I think you may be among those whom God has given up. But if the question rings through your soul like a knell and cuts like a sharp knife, then I pray you do not think God has given you up—and do not give yourself up—but fly to Jesus! Yes, before you lay your head upon the pillow and fall asleep, cry mightily unto the living God to save you so that you may be His in the day when the earth and the heavens will be in a blaze and ungodly men will sink into Hell! That is the first practical inference—it is the preacher’s duty to continue to warn men.

Another practical thought is—if any of you are awakened, be obedient to the voice of Conscience and the calling of the Spirit. Oh, if you have any life, do not attempt to stifle it! Rather fan it to a flame! If you do but feel a little of the pain of penitence, pray God that it may deepen into true contrition and sincere repentance. If you feel anything, do not, I pray you, repress the feeling if it is anything of a spiritual kind. I knew when I was seeking the Lord what it was to feel that. I would have given everything I had to be able to repent. When on my knees, I felt that if I could but have shed a tear for sin, I would have been willing to be poor and blind my whole life long!

To have a hard heart is an awful thing! It is well, however, when it can repent and when the man can smite upon his bosom, with tears, and sobs, and groans, and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” If there is any tenderness in you, oh, do not crush it out! Do not despise it! Look well to it and, above all, fly away to Christ at once! With many a man it is, “now or never.” Whenever you hear the clock tick, this is what it says to you, “Now or never.” “Now or never.” “Now or never.” “Now or never.” Ah, if some would hear that, it might be the means of driving them to the Cross of Christ at once, where they would find eternal life!

Dear young people, especially, do not postpone the thought of eternal things while you are young and tender. Do not say, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” When Grace comes into the heart while the heart is yet young and tender, there is less struggling against it in most cases. And it is a more cheerful task for the soul to submit itself to the power of Christ. The Lord bless that thought to you and make it a converting power to your souls.

And, last of all, if there should be an unhappy individual here who says, “I believe God has given me up”—let me ask you a question. Friend, does the suggestion of such a thing make you very sad? Then the Lord has not given you up! Do you say, “I feel alarmed lest I am given up”? Then you are not given up! He is more likely to be given up of God who says, “I do not care whether I am or not! Give me my jolly companions. Give me my amusements. Give me plenty of money to spend, and good health and strength to enjoy myself, and you may have Heaven if you like—I will run the risk of the future.”

Ah, Sir, though you talk big, I do not believe in your bravado, for I know that many braggadocio sinners are cowards at heart, and I hope, notwithstanding what you say, there is something in you that answers to the appeals I have made. But there may be some who really mean, down deep in their souls, that they have steeled themselves against reproof and are prepared to dare all consequences. They stand like oaks I have seen shivered from top to bottom by lightning, never to send forth a shoot again. Ghastly and grim amidst the forest, they lift up their heads as though they were huge deer with antlers, glorying in their desolation.

There are such withered souls, defiant in awful desperation. Oh, if there are such here, if they were friends of mine, I would say, “O Man, be in pain and travail like a woman with child rather than be damned! O Man, better for you that you should, from this moment, begin a life of torment and agony, and never look up to God’s sun again, and never see

the fields, nor hear the birds sing with joy, nor ever have a hopeful thought of this world again, so that you may but be saved, rather than go on with all your mirth and jollity, and then lift up your eyes in that eternity to come where you shall be forever, forever, forever lost! For, let those say what they will, who are the enemies of your soul—I speak the Truth of God before the Lord—if you are lost, you will be lost forever!

And if God once pronounces that word, “Depart, you cursed!” back to Him you can never come, but departing, and departing, and departing into blacker night, and into denser glooms, you must forever and forever continue. This is the dread inscription over the gate of Hell—“All hope abandon, you who enter here!” This is branded on their chains and stamped upon their fetters! This is the worm that never dies and the fire that never can be quenched! The letters of fire that burn overhead in the dungeon of eternal despair spell out this word, “Eternity! Eternity! Eternity!” O my fellow Men and Women, as I shall meet you at the Judgment Seat, I implore you to fly away to Jesus lest you perish eternally!

When your eyes and mine shall meet again in the next state. When we have passed through the grave and the resurrection, do not say I did not tell you of sin and of punishment and of the Savior! You will not dare to say it! But as I, poor guilty sinner as I am, stand there, this shall not be one of the sins laid to my charge—that I was not in earnest with you—and that I did not speak all that I felt to be the Truths of God. To Jesus Christ I fly, myself, on my own account, for if I am not washed in His blood, unhappiest of mortals surely am I, for I have preached to more men for a larger number of years than any other man, perhaps, that lives! And if I have played with souls, I have their blood upon me and the most accursed of men am I!

But I shelter my soul beneath the purple canopy of my Savior’s atoning blood! My Hearers, come under that same shelter, all of you! There is room enough for you! That blessed purple covering will hang between us and God even though there were millions of us, and it will cover us all! Nor can there be any fear that the dart of Divine Vengeance shall smite any of us who will cower down beneath the blood-red Propitiation! God save you, Friends, who are strangers here! God save you, Friends, who frequent these courts! God save you all for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Proverbs 1:20-33. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #2819 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 5.13

A CAUTION FOR SIN-SICK SOULS

NO. 2819

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1861.

**“When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to King Jareb: yet he cannot heal you, nor cure you of your wound.”  
Hosea 5:13.**

THERE is a tendency, in the heart of man, to want something to look at rather than something to trust to. The children of Israel had God for their King and a glorious King He was. Where else was there found such impartial justice, such tender compassion for the poor, or such perfect righteousness in every statute that was ordained and every sentence that was enforced? But they said, “No, let us have a king whom we can see—a king whose pomp and magnificence shall dazzle our eyes, even though he will take our sons to be his bond slaves and our daughters to be his confectionaries. Let us have a king that we may see the gaudy glitter of his crown with our eyes and hear the sovereign mandate from his throne with our ears.” God granted them that request.

Their sole allegiance was due to that almighty King whose superlative Glory admitted of no natural similitude. The Lord Jehovah was the God of Israel, a God always ready to forgive their sins, to hear their prayers and to seek their welfare. But the children of Israel said, “Not so! Let us make a king to judge us like all the nations—and let us set up gods after the fashion of the Gentiles, that our hands can handle and that our eyes can behold! Let us have blocks of wood and stone. Let us have the carved images of the heathen.” Neither would they rest till they had set up for themselves in every high place, gods that were not gods. For this the Lord chastised them—He gave up their lands to famine and their habitations to the spoiler. He brought enemies from far countries to lay them waste, so that the State became sick and the whole nation impoverished. Then the people of Ephraim opened their eyes and looked to their condition.

But when Judah saw himself to be wounded, what course did he pursue? There was God waiting to help him when he returned to his allegiance. There was Jehovah ready to heal all his distresses, to give him back all that had been laid waste and to restore to him everything that the spoiler had taken! But, no, the arm of Jehovah was not enough for Judah—Judah must rely upon a force that could look imposing in its array. “Oh,” said the people, “let us send to the king of Assyria and let him furnish us with tens of thousands of soldiers, and aid us with his mighty men so we shall be safe! Thus will our State recover itself.” But if they had trusted in God, my Brothers and Sisters, how secure they would have been! Mark what God did for them in the days of Hezekiah. Their enemies came upon them in great numbers—Hezekiah prayed before the Lord. And it came to pass, that night, God sent forth the blast of His nostrils and their foes were utterly destroyed! When the men of Judah arose early in the morning, “behold, they were all dead corpses!” As often as they trusted in God, they found immediate succor and their enemies were put to confusion!

But not so was their heart stayed in its confidence. No, they cannot rely upon the unseen arm. They must have men and men’s devices. They must have something they can see. Unless they have the spear, the sword and the shield of the Assyrian state, they can feel no sense of security. They went to the Assyrian king—they sent to king Jareb, “yet could he not heal them, nor cure them of their wound.” How foolish they were to hope he could, for, as soon as they sent their ambassadors to the king of Assyria, he flattered himself while he spoke to them, “Oh, you want help, do you? I will send you some soldiers to help you.” Remember that their houses had been stripped of all the gold and silver they contained to give a present to the king of Assyria. “I will send you soldiers to help you” he said to them—and then he whispered to himself—“After they have helped you, they shall help themselves!” And so they did. When they had come and, for a little while, had fought for the people of Israel and set them free, then they turned round upon them and carried them captive and spoiled them of all they had! This comes of trusting in man. “Cursed be the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord and whose hope is in the Lord.”

Looking at this fallacy of a nation as illustrative of a common tendency of mankind—and using my text as the picture of a sinner in a certain peculiar state of mental anxiety, I shall observe, first, the sinner’s partial discovery of his lost estate. Secondly, the wrong means which he takes to be cured of his evil. And then I will endeavor to direct you, as God shall enable me, to the right means of finding healing and deliverance through the Atonement and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. We have in our text somewhat of A PICTURE OF THE SINNER WHEN HE HAS PARTIALLY DISCOVERED HIS LOST ESTATE.  
Mark, it is but a partial discovery. Ephraim felt his sickness but he did not know the radical disease that lurked within. He saw the local ailment, but was ignorant of the organic derangement of his very vitals. He only perceived the symptoms! He was uneasy, he felt pain, but the discovery did not go deep enough to show him that he was actually dead in trespasses and sins. “He saw his sickness and Judah saw his wound.” Yes, he saw his wound—it smarted and, therefore, his eyes were drawn to the spot. But he did not know how deep it was. He did not know that it had pierced to the heart, that it was, in fact, a death-blow—that the whole head was sick, that the whole heart was faint and that, from the crown of the head even to the sole of the foot, it was all wounds, bruises and putrefying, festering sores! There was but a partial discovery of his lost estate.  
How many men there are who have got just far enough to know there is something the matter with them! They little reckon that they are totally ruined, though they do feel that all is not quite right with them. They are conscious that they are not perfect, not even up to their own low standard of rectitude—hence they begin to be uneasy, albeit they still seem to think they can make themselves better and that by degrees of reformation and daily prayer they will become superior to what they are. They have not yet learned the Doctrine of the Fall, the deep depravity of mankind, the total perversion of the human heart. They have only gotten so far as some modern ministers who speak of man as being a little marred, but not entirely broken—as having had a fall and become somewhat damaged, and rather spoiled as to outward beauty, though not altogether ruined, or incapable of raising himself up and recovering his strength. In fact, the fashionable phrase that has been recently coined is, “the lapsed state of men.” Depend upon it, when men use Latinized words to express their meaning, they do not mean much! The Fall of man is full and entire—and when people frame certain phrases of rather uncertain significance instead of talking honest English—they show a disposition to dispense with the bare facts. I know there are some sinners brought so far as to find themselves undone and to feel convinced that unless some change takes place they are not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. But they have not as yet seen the fountains of the great deep of their depravity broken up. They have not been taken into the chambers of imagery and shown the abominations of their own hearts! They still cling with some hope to their own devices.  
However, I would remark that even this, though it is but a partial discovery of their state by nature, is not without its good effects. When a man gets this far, the first good sign in him is that he cannot speak against religion. While he is at peace with himself, he calls religious men hypocrites—he can rail at the things of God and despise and trample them underfoot. But the man who is like Ephraim, in our text, will not be very anxious to find fault with others. His philosopher’s tongue has been plucked out and he is now a little more gentle in his speech as he sighs for something in religion that he would like to have. “Oh,” he says, “I do not now find fault with the good folk who are always praying and singing. Would to God I could become like they are! Would that I had as they have—an interest in the blood of Christ!” So far, so good.  
Such men, again, are generally thoughtful. I have known many a man who, before he came into this state, was a very daredevil and never thought anything with regard to his soul and eternity. Yet, when brought to know his sickness and his wounds, he has become not only thoughtful but serious, until some of his former companions have noticed it and called him, “Old Sobersides,” or some such epithet, and laughed him out of countenance. They tell him he is a saint. The man says, “I wish what you are saying was true.” They tell him, “You are beginning to be religious.” “Yes,” he says, “I wish I were really so.” Some man once called me a saint as I went along the street and I turned round and said I wished I could make him prove his words. I would certainly like to be one! Such is the condition of a man when he begins to discover, though it is but partially, his lost estate. He is thoughtful. He cannot laugh as he did. He does not now shut his eyes, throw the reins upon the neck of his lusts and let them rush madly on down to the Pit, but he tries to curb them and hold them in with bit and bridle, for he knows that all is not right within him.  
Such a man, too, has another good trait, another hopeful feature in his case—that he begins to attend to the things that belong to the peace of his soul. You now see him coming into the House of God be it Chapel or Church—to hear the Word preached. He never cared for that before. He worked so hard all the week that he was not able to go out on a Sunday—but now he feels he must go. He must be by the side of Bethesda’s pool. Even though the angel stirs not the water, he feels a kind of satisfaction while he is lying at the edge of the healing pool. He longs to be saved and, therefore, he is found in the Way, hoping that God may meet with him.  
Such a man, too, you will find, takes no pleasure in sin. If he is asked by his worldly companions to go into the haunts of vice where once he went, even should he go, he comes away and says, “It was the dullest evening I ever spent. No enjoyment whatever does it yield me. God has turned the sweet wine of my memory into bitter gall. ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’ I can find no comfort in sensual pleasures.”  
Have I been depicting the state of one who is here present? I hope I have and I pray God that what I shall be able to say will, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, be instrumental in leading such an one to the true remedy for his soul-sickness.  
II. But when the man is thus partially awakened to know his lost estate, HE USUALLY BETAKES HIMSELF TO THE WRONG MEANS FOR DELIVERANCE—“Then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb.”  
A sinner, when he finds himself lost, usually at first thinks, “I will make myself better, I will be diligent in religious observances—I will attend to every ceremony, I will keep my tongue from evil and my life from speaking guile. I will restrain my steps from evil haunts, my hands from evil deeds.” And so he thinks within himself that all his sins will be forgiven and that he shall have rest for the sole of his feet. Be it known, once and for all, that all this is a vain and useless effort to work out a radical cure in the soul of man! All that man can do apart from faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ is utterly in vain! Let him do his best and strive to the very uttermost—not one inch has he proceeded on the road to Heaven! He has done mischief instead of doing anything meritorious. He has pulled down instead of having built up!  
O you that are now hoping, while you are under conviction, that you will get relief by works of your own, let me remind you that you are undertaking a long task which will tax your endurance. The men mentioned in our text went a very long way to the king of Assyria—it was a wearisome journey they took, while God, who was near at hand, was forgotten! How long do you suppose it would take you to work out your own salvation by your own good works? Why, my Friends, you may bend your knees till your joints grow stiff. You may work till there is no flesh upon your bones. You may weep till there is no moisture in your body from which to draw a tear and you may persevere incessantly in every exercise of body and mind—trying fresh postures and trifling with fresh problems—but you will find yourselves not half a league nearer eternal life than when you left the life of sin you used to like—  
*“Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill Your Law’s demands—  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone—  
You must save and You, alone.”*  
If a criminal should get it into his head that he could climb up to the stars by going up the steps of a treadmill, he would be about as rational as when a poor sinner thinks of getting to Heaven by his own good works! Tread, tread, tread—up, up, up—but never one inch higher! As old Matthew Wilks used to say, “You might as well hope to sail to America on a sere leaf as hope to go to Heaven by your own doings.” This is not the way, Man, and run ever so fast in it, if it is not the right road, it will not bring you to the right end! If a man takes the road to the right when he needs to go to the left, he may run as fast as a race horse, but he will but lose his labor and find out that he is a fool for his pains.  
And it is not only a very long task, but it is a very expensive one. If you would have salvation by the works of the Law, you must give body and soul up—all you have—hope and joy and comfort included. I used to live near some persons who regularly attended mass early every morning and I noticed how straight they used to look down the face. I thought they had good reason to be gloomy if they were trying to reach Heaven by their own righteousness. It is enough to put any man out of countenance if he has to stand before God and justify himself! We might put our hands upon our loins and roll in the dust in despair if we had no hope but in our own merits. Go and look for cooling streams in the arid desert. Cast about for fresh water to drink in the midst of the sea. Seek shelter on the mountaintop where the hurricane is spending its fury and then crave for comfort in the Law! Go and visit Sinai, you that seek to be saved by your own works. Look at it—shrink, tremble and despair! Behold, the mountain is altogether on a smoke while God proclaims His holy Law! If it melted like wax of old, how much more, now, after you have broken the commandments and incurred the penalty—now that God comes not to proclaim the Law—but to execute His fierce anger upon the lawbreakers?  
“Well,” says one, “but suppose we do our best, will not that suffice?” My Friend, God requires from man, if he would be saved by his works, perfect obedience. Nothing but perfection can be acceptable to a perfect God. One wrong thought, one evil desire—not to say anything of one wrong act—will effectually shut any man out of Heaven if he desires to go there by his own works! That one sin at once puts up an impenetrable barrier across that meritorious way to Heaven which is known by the common name of, “the Law.” If you can be perfect and have kept the precepts from your youth up, and shall do so till your dying day—then might there be salvation by works. But if there is one flaw, then is that road to Heaven effectually stopped up so that no human foot can ever tread it!  
And, once more, let me remind you, O Man, when you try to be saved by your works, you presume that your enemy will prove to be your friend! “And who is my enemy?” you ask. Why, Moses. The Law of God is sworn against you. It has become your enemy and do you go to your enemy to help you? It is a device of Satan to try and draw poor sinners away from the path of faith into the path of Law. Remember how John Bunyan graphically describes it? Poor Christian, with the burden on his back, is going to the wicket-gate with the light above it and, all of a sudden, a very good-looking gentleman meets him and says, “It is a dangerous journey you are going, you had better turn aside to the right there. There is a town there known as the town of Legality, where lives a very skillful physician who will soon help you off with your burden. And if he is not at home, he has got a very good lad who will do almost as well as his master. Go there and you will soon get cured.” Away went poor Christian! Nor had he gone far before he found that he had come to the foot of Mount Sinai and the mountain hung right over the way. And there stood Christian. And while he was looking up, presently the mountain began to shake, the thunder to roar and the lightning to flash—and he fell down upon his face and said, “I am undone, I am undone!” Then came Evangelist and showed him the right way once more.  
Just so, Sinner, if you trust to the works of the Law, you will have to cry out, “I am undone, I am undone.” Mr. Morality cannot cure you—he may put on a little poor man’s plaster and make your wound worse, and tie it up, and bandage it a little, but he can never relieve your pain, or recover your sore. It will go on bleeding, notwithstanding all the balsams he can apply. No hand can heal a sin-sick soul but the hand that

wounded it, even the hand of God, through the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord!  
It is astonishing, after all the Gospel preaching in England, how deeply rooted is this constant fallacy of going to king Jareb for cure! Not very long ago, having engaged to preach at a seaport town, I arrived some hours before night and, as I was standing by the riverside, I thought I would like to go down the river in a boat. So, hailing a waterman, I went with him and, while sitting in the boat, wishing to talk with him about religious matters, I began by asking him about his family. He told me that the cholera had visited his place and that he had lost no less than 13 of his relatives, one after another, by death. So I said, “Have you, my Friend, a good hope of Heaven if you should, yourself, die?” “Well, Sir,” he said, “I think as how I have.” “Pray tell me, then,” I said, “what is your hope, for, of a good hope no man need ever be ashamed.” “Well, Sir, I have been on this here river, I think, for these 25 or 30 years, and I don’t know that anybody ever saw me drunk.” “Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” I replied, “is that all you trust to?” “Well, Sir, when the cholera was about and my poor neighbors were bad, I went for the doctor for ‘em, and was up a good many nights. And I do think as how I am as good as my neighbors.” Of course I told him that I was very glad to hear that he had sympathy for the suffering and that I considered it far better to be charitable than to be churlish, but I did not see how his good conduct could carry him to Heaven. “Well, Sir,” he said, “perhaps it will not. I cannot be often going to church, but I think, when I get a little older, I shall give up the boat and take to going to church, and then, I think, that will be right— won’t it, Sir?” “No,” I said, “certainly your resolutions will not renew your heart. And should you ever perform them, they will not purge your soul from its sinfulness. Begin to go to church as soon as possible, but you will not be an inch further, if you think that by attending the sanctuary you will be saved.” The poor man seemed perfectly astounded while I went on knocking down his hopes, one after another. Then I put the question, “You have sometimes sinned in your life, have you not?” “Yes,” he said, “I have.” “On what ground, then, do you think your sins will be forgiven?” “Well, Sir,” he said, “I have been sorry about them and I think they are all gone—they do not trouble me now.”  
Trying to awaken his conscience, I said, “Suppose you were to go and get into debt with the grocer where you deal, and you should say to her, ‘Now, mistress, you have a score against me. I cannot pay for these goods, I am sorry to say, but I’ll tell you what I’ll do—I’ll never get into your debt again.’ Why, she would say that was not the way she did business and do you suppose that is the way in which God does business, or that He is going to strike out your debts because you say you will not run deeper into debt?” “Well, Sir,” he said, “I should like to know how my sins are to be forgiven. Are you a parson, Sir?” In reply, I said, “I preach the Gospel, I hope, but I do not go by the name of a parson. I am only a Dissenting minister.” I told him how the Lord Jesus Christ had paid the debts of sinners. How those that reposed in Him and rested in His blood and righteousness would find peace and mercy. And the man was delighted and he said he wished he had heard that years ago. “But, to say the truth, Master,” he added, “I had not felt quite easy, after all, when I saw those poor creatures taken away to the graveyard. I did think there was something I needed, but I did not know what it was.”  
I tell you this little personal incident because I see here a great many working people and I know they delight in a little homely dialog. It is not what we do or devise, the religious rites we observe, or the romantic aims we aspire to, the self-satisfaction we encourage, or the sufferings we endure, that can lead us to the land of the Light of Good! Not all your uprightness, however plausible, or your honesty, however rigid you may be, will carry you to Heaven! Your good works are good enough in themselves, good enough in your generation—but they will never do for a foundation to rest upon. Do not run away and say something like the foolish man who went to a place where there was a house being built and, seeing the chimney pots standing there, he took them and laid them in the trench to make the foundation.  
“What are you doing?” said one of the workmen. “Why, laying the foundation.” “What, with the chimney pots?” “I did not know that it was wrong,” he said. “Well, take them away—they won’t do for a foundation.” “Oh!” said the other, “you are finding fault with them.” “No, I am not finding fault with them, but with the place where you put them. They are good enough on the top, but they won’t do at the bottom.” So with good works—they will do at the top, but they will not do at the bottom! As a foundation for the soul to rest upon, nothing will suffice but the righteousness of Christ and His finished work. This is our hope of salvation! Our good works are good enough afterwards, when God the Holy Spirit, by His Grace, works faith, love and all other good things in us.  
III. WHAT, THEN, IS THE WAY OF SALVATION?  
Whoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary he should know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from Heaven and was, for our sin, Incarnate in human form, born of the Virgin Mary, lived a life of sanctity and of suffering and, at last, this glorious Son of God—this griefstricken Son of Man—became obedient even unto death. In the garden He wrestled and shed, as it were, great drops of blood in the prospect of the coming terrors of His death-struggle. To the Cross He was nailed, amidst shame, ignominy and scoffing. There He endured incredible pain, pangs of body and agony of soul. He hung there, through the thick darkness, three hours and, at last, when the appointed time was come, when He had suffered all, when the full chastisement of our sin had been laid upon Him and the iniquity of us all had received its dreadful retribution at His hands, He cried, “It is finished!” Thus He gave up the ghost, was laid in the tomb and then arose from the dead on the third day and ascended to Heaven.  
Now, if you would be saved, my Friend, it is necessary that you should believe in Him who was the Son of God and the Son of Man, and that you should believe in your heart these things of Him—First, that He is a Divinely-ordained Savior, able to save all those that come to God through Him. You must believe, likewise, that He is willing to save and that He will save those that seek salvation, believing and trusting in His power. When you have believed this, you have gone a good part of the way toward that saving faith which shall bring you into a state of Grace. It is by acting upon this belief, by casting yourself simply on the merits of His blood and of His perfect righteousness as the ground of your acceptance before God, that you shall find peace. No man can be saved if he does not trust his soul in the hands of Christ. We must give up ourselves from our own keeping into Christ’s keeping saying, “Lord, take me, save me, make me what You would have me to be and then, when Your Father shall require my soul at the Last Day, stand as my Surety and bring me, perfect and spotless, into His Presence.”  
I must add one thing more—there must be what the old divines call a recumbency—a leaning on Him, a dependence on Him. But here I must warn you that some people have an idea that if they get faith in Christ, it matters not how they live, or what they are. Now, be it understood, once and for all, we are saved by faith—not by works! But we must have good works if we are really saved. You know that faith is not only leaning on Christ, but obeying Christ. Suppose there is a man who says to me, “You have committed such-and-such an offense. You are in such-andsuch difficulties, but if you will implicitly trust me and leave the matter entirely in my hands, I will see that you come through all right.” Well now, if I get to meddling with it, that will prove I do not trust him! But, by-and-by, he comes to me and says, “My dear Friend, are you trusting me wholly?” “Yes,” I say, “I am reposing all my trust in you.” Suppose he says, “I want you to look over this document, which you must sign, and then I shall want you, on a certain morning, to be at such-and-such a place.” What if I answer, “I shall do no such thing! I will not sign the deed, nor meet you by appointment.” “Then,” he says, “you are not trusting me.” “I am leaning on you and trusting you,” I say. “Well,” he says, “unless you do what I tell you, your faith is not genuine faith, neither are you trusting in me at all.”  
Now, if you are perfectly trusting Christ, your next question will be, “Lord, I am trusting to be saved by You, but how will You have me be saved?” “Oh,” says Christ, “I will save you, but you must break off those old habits.” “Oh,” you say, “Lord, assist me with Your Grace and I will renounce them all.” “Well,” says Christ, “and if you would be saved, I will have you, in the next place, attend to My ordinances. Come forward and make a profession of your faith. Be baptized. Unite yourself to the Church visible. Receive the Lord’s Supper.” But you say, “No, Lord! I will do no such thing.” “Well, then,” He says, “you are not trusting Me because whatever I tell you to do, you ought to do it.”  
You may have heard the good illustration which Mr. Cecil gives of faith. His little child was standing, one day, at the top of a dark cellar. She was in the light and he was down below in the cellar. “My dear child, jump down and I will catch you,” he said. And the child, without a moment’s thought, sprang into the father’s arms! Now that is one kind of faith. That is when we are enabled so to trust Christ that we do, so to speak, venture our souls on Him, risk all with Him. But mark, that is not the complete picture of the faith of saints. This kind of faith some people profess to have, but their lives do not bear out their profession and, therefore, there must be something else to make it clear. And Mr. Cecil gives another illustration through the same little girl. “I said to her, one day, as she had a necklace of beads, ‘My dear child, you know I love you and you would do anything I told you. Take those beads off and throw them into the fire.’ She did so at once.” Now, the first faith was the faith of daring, venturing herself. But the second proved her faith to be true and genuine, when she could obey at such a cost. To a large extent, faith and obedience are really one, and it is useless for you to say that you believe in Christ as your Savior if you do not obey Him as your Lord. Some try to do so, but their faith is worthless. But when we can unite unwavering trust with implicit obedience, we prove that we are really trusting in Christ—and then we are safe.  
O my dear Hearer, if I have puzzled you instead of making the Truth of God plain, I can say I did not intend to do so. I would have you to understand, if you are troubled on account of sin, that God requires nothing of you but what He gives you. He requires nothing but that you should depend for all on Christ. That is all He asks. Do it. Oh, may His Holy Spirit enable you to do it now!  
Let me tell you a parable which shall illustrate faith. There were two children, according to the fable, walking with their father along a narrow ridge. On either side there was a dark, deep precipice. One of the dear children put his hand inside the father’s hand and his father grasped it. The other put his little fingers round his father’s hand and took hold of his father’s hand. It was not long before, in the midst of the thick darkness, the children grew weary. And the child who had taken hold of the father’s hand perished. But the child who had put his hand into the father’s hand and let the father take hold of it, was carried safely to the end. Now, put your hand inside the hand of Christ and when He bids you obey Him, don’t take it away! Give yourself wholly up to Him to be His— come life, come death, for better or for worse—to be His to trust and His to obey, being from this time forth His forever!  
Oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead us to do this! It is easy enough when the Hoy Spirit enables us, but it is hard enough when our human nature kicks against it. May Sovereign Grace subdue our hearts and teach us to depend on Christ—and no more foolishly attempt to work out our salvation by impossible means! I can only pray that God will bless this brief, hurried discourse, and to His name shall be the glory, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ISAIAH 1:1-20.**

Verse 1. The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. During the time in which Isaiah prophesied, the worship of God was, upon the whole, maintained in Judah. Yet, prosperous as the times appeared to be, there was visible to the eyes of the Lord much iniquity. He who saw not as man saw, but who looks beneath the surface and into the hearts of men, saw that the condition of the people was exceedingly unsatisfactory. Do not forget that these upbraiding words were spoken during the reigns of comparatively good kings. Try to imagine how the Lord must have felt towards the people who lived in the reigns of bad kings.

2, 3. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider. God’s own people were worse than the brutes that perish! They had no gratitude towards their Maker and Preserver. Am I not addressing many persons of the same kind, who have little or no thought concerning Him who made them and who supplies all their needs? God seems here as if He were tired of appealing to His people, so He speaks to the heavens and the earth, as if He knew that even inanimate things would be more capable of feeling than hardened Judah was!

4. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. If I am now addressing any who have backslidden from God, let them take these words of His to heart—He observes how you have forsaken Him. He feels grieved at your provoking Him. He mourns over your going backward from Him. May you be moved by the Holy Spirit to mourn, too!

5. Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. One of God’s ways of bringing people to Himself is by chastisement and affliction. He had tried that method upon Judah—He had used His rod so long that, at last, He exclaimed, “Why should you be stricken anymore?” What is the good of My sending any more affliction upon you? Now, whenever the rod is of no more use, there will be a sharper instrument to follow! When men can no longer be chastened for their good, the axe of execution is ready to be brought forth. What a sorrowful description is here given of the people of Judah and their land!

6-8. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. The Lord had allowed invaders to pillage the land until it was almost reduced to a desert, yet, even then, the people did not, and would not, turn unto their God! It is a terrible thing when sickness, or loss of property, or frequent bereavements do not bring men to their knees. Unsanctified afflictions prophesy certain condemnation to us. “He, that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

9. Except the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. The state of the country, even under godly kings, had become so bad that if there had not been a remnant according to the election of Grace, there would have been no help for the land and its inhabitants—and they would have been burnt up like Sodom and Gomorrah.

10-15. Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the Law of God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, says the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of ram, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the brood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblation; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot! Away with it, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moon and your appointed feasts My Soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me, I am weary to bear them, and when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. It is very possible for people to be outwardly very religious and yet really to be very wicked. The fact is that the multiplication of rites and ceremonies, the observance of forms, feasts, fasts, new moons and all the rest of mere external ritual—may rather indicate an increase of sin than an increase of anything else! Often, in proportion as men’s hearts get further and further away from God, they have more and more of outward ritual, more Roman rags on the priest’s back, more smoking incense, more gorgeous architecture! The more of all the externals of religion, the less they have of the internal and eternal. If a man is conscious that he needs something in the shape of godliness and he knows that he has none of it in his heart, he often tries to get it outside. But this is what God says—

16, 17. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doing from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Repentance, practical change of life, renewal of heart, the giving up of evil, the following of right—this is what the Lord approves. Otherwise, all your fripperies and trickeries of worship are loathsome to Him. Do you think your finest music is sweet to the ears of Him who listens to the angels’ everlasting songs? Do you imagine that you can build temples worthy of Him who made the heavens and the earth? What cares He for temples made with hands? He despises all material things where the heart goes not with them—but purity, holiness, true spiritual worship—these are the things in which He delights!

17. Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. This is better than all your incense, or the fat of rams and he-goats.

18. Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be a white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. This, too, is what God loves—confessed sin, pardoned by His infinite mercy and Grace.

19, 20. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1483 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

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THE PRESENT CRISIS

NO. 1483

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

**“I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early.” Hosea 5:15.**

THE Lord does not always tell us what He will do. “Verily You are a God that hides yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior.” He has told us that “it is the glory of God to conceal a thing” and our Lord Jesus has said, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power.” When He does make known to us what He is about to do, it is not to gratify our curiosity but to direct our conduct. In this case the Lord speaks aloud concerning His intentions. He had grown weary with chastening His people and, therefore, He was about to withdraw Himself from them and leave them alone, as a man leaves a hopeless work, or as a judge leaves the bench and gives the prisoner over to condemnation

He says, “I will go and return to My place,” as if His waiting time was over and He would no longer remain in their midst to be provoked by their obstinacy. This withdrawal would occasion the non-acceptance of their prayers and offerings, even as He had said in a former verse, “They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them.” This He tells them in order that they may be led to implore Him to remain with them. Or that if He is already gone, they may, by hearty confession of their sin and an immediate seeking of His face, prevail upon Him once more to visit them in His Grace. If God is about to go, then all is going, even hope itself is. The Divine departure is the worst of calamities and, therefore, it is but right that those who are threatened with such a judgment should put their thoughts together, consider their ways and use the best means to hold Him by the skirts before He has departed, or to bring Him back again before He has effectually closed the door between Him and them. There should be an eager desire to bring the King back so that once more the heart may sun itself in the light of His favor.

Dear Friends, I shall speak, this morning, with the most anxious desire to be practical. I am longing and praying in my heart that wherever sin has begun to separate us and God, we may be stirred up to acknowledge our offenses and to seek His face. And that where such a separation has long existed there may arise an intense desire of the whole soul to return from its banishment and draw near to God. We shall, this morning, use our text, first, in reference to our national troubles, for the words were originally spoken with regard to the national troubles of Israel and Judah. Secondly, we shall use it in reference to our personal trials as Believers. And then, thirdly, in its relation to the personal trials of the unconverted. Instructive lessons may be learned here in each of the three cases. May the Holy Spirit speak the Truth of God home to our hearts.

I. And first, with regard to OUR PRESENT NATIONAL TROUBLES. I desire to speak of these things as before God in all sincerity and simplicity. I know it is impossible to touch upon such a subject without being suspected of political bias, but I can truly declare that from all such partiality I desire to be freed so that I may speak, not as a partisan, but as the servant of the living God. Calmly and solemnly would I speak words of soberness and truth and justice. It is a burden to my heart to speak a hard word of my own beloved country and if I seem to do so it is not in wantonness, but because of a pressure upon my conscience which will not let me be silent.

Surely no one will deny that our country is passing through a season of great and grievous adversity. We have been perplexed for many months and even for years with perpetual rumors of wars. For a long time no man knew, when he went to bed at night, but what the journal of the morning would inform him that our nation had plunged into war with at least one of the great powers of Europe. Our policy has been such, whether wise or unwise, that we have been constantly on the verge of conflict. It is amazing that we have escaped from embroiling ourselves in a long and serious war, for many a time the flames of contention have threatened a general conflagration.

This disquietude, itself, has been a serious injury to the prosperity of our country, for trade and commerce make prosperous voyages upon the waters of peace—but even before those waters are disturbed by the storms of actual war—while only the threat of battle ruffles the surface, they make small headway or are driven back. Commerce is timid as a dove and is fluttered by every turmoil or whisper of coming trouble. In a thousand ways political agitations stab at the heart of national prosperity! In addition to this we have been actually engaged in two wars at least—wars certainly expensive and questionably expedient. In these two conflicts it is impossible for us to gain honor since they are cases of the mighty assailing the feeble.

Laurels gained from nations so far inferior to us would have been unworthy of a place upon the brow of a brave nation. We have invaded one country and then another with no better justification than the law of superior force, or the suspicion of future danger. Disaster has followed upon the heels of disaster and at the end of it all there are great expenses to be met. Our acts of aggression must be paid for, not only with the blood of our soldiers, but with the sinew and sweat of our working men.

Results of industry which ought to have gone to support the arts and promote the comfort and advancement of the race have been thrown away in wasteful feats of arms. The food which should have fed our children has been flung into the mouth of the lion, to be devoured by war, that its evil spirit may become yet more ravenous. Willful waste, it is to be feared, will be followed by woeful need unless God, in His mercy, shall interpose. We have meddled in many things and have threatened at least three of the great quarters of the globe either with our fleets or our armies. Nothing could content us till we had drawn the sword against a brave, though savage people, whose fighting may well be fierce, since it is for their invaded fatherland!

These wars, whatever their issue, are serious calamities. On the back of all this war has come depression in trade. Everywhere there is complaining and not without cause. Even the most cheerful of men who have always been rejoicing when others have lamented, have begun, at last, to look very serious and to admit that the times are threatening. Striving tradesmen wonder whether they shall be able to “provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Many a man now plans and labors but his care and toil earn but a scant reward. All trade is dull and some trade is dead. Some branches of industry are already paralyzed and there is but little prospect of their ever being revived.

The land mourns and men’s hearts sink for fear. Matters are not so bad as despondency would paint them, but even hope is unable to draw a cheerful picture. It is a day of darkness and of gloominess—a day of clouds and of thick darkness. As if all this were not enough, the heavens refuse to assist the processes of our farmers. For the most part, the hay crop, so necessary for the cattle, may be regarded as lost and now great peril is upon the corn. In some places the corn is too backward to have suffered much at present, but in others the prospects are dark, indeed. It seems certain that a continuance of this constant rain must deprive us of the most precious fruits of the earth.

Farmers are beginning to cry out bitterly and there is a demand that prayer should be offered in all the churches for fair weather. May God be pleased to look upon our land and deliver us in this hour of trouble, for, indeed, it is a time of loss and ruin to thousands! If ever prayer was needed, it is surely at this hour! You who live in London do not know much about what is happening to the crops and what the eye does not see, the heart does not rue—but to our agricultural friends this ill weather is a matter of most serious consideration—they are suffering very heavily. No one can doubt that the badness of trade affects the farmer in common with the rest of the community—and now comes the further burden of sunless skies, winter in summer and the clouds returning after the rain.

In the first matter, that of a warlike policy, we may, by God’s goodness, make a change. It may be possible that before long better principles will come to the front and we may no longer be made to appear as a nation of snarlers and growlers, breathing defiance and delighting in war. God grant it speedily! But as to the two other matters, what can we do? We are powerless to quicken trade! We are certainly powerless to stay the bottles of Heaven. If God wills it, the clouds will gather from day to day and drench our fields with their pitiless downpour. Deluge will follow deluge till the corn shall rot in the fields if God so determines.

Prayer is therefore desired and well it may be! But by some, prayer is desired as if it were quite certain that if certain pious words are repeated the rain must necessarily cease and the weather become favorable. I am not quite so sure! Let prayer be offered, by all means, but only under certain conditions can it prove effectual. I know of many reasons why it may be possible that such prayers as are likely to be offered will not be heard, but instead the threatened judgment of God may, nevertheless, come upon us. I desire, this morning, to speak about prayer in the way of warning, lest men should place an unwise confidence in the formality of reading a form of prayer in churches, or uttering extempore formalities in

meeting houses.

Few men believe more thoroughly in the power of real prayer than I do and I have tested and proved it in many remarkable ways so fully that I have no doubts as to its efficacy and heartily magnify the name of our prayer-hearing God. But we must still use our understandings, lest we be deceived and come to expect what we shall not receive. I would call to your recollection the fact that, under certain circumstances, God does not answer prayer. Our text says, “I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense.” And, if this is the case, there will be no answering of prayer till repentance is manifested.

Sometimes the heavens are brass, even to good men, and their cries reverberate and come back into their own ears, not without a blessing to themselves, but still without any visible reply as to the people for whom their intercessions were offered. It is not every sort of prayer that God will hear, for He says by His servant Isaiah, “When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood” (Isa. 1:15). Intercession is sometimes useless, for Jeremiah tells us, “Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people” (Jer. 15:1).

Ezekiel also warns us that the presence of the godly may not, at all times, avert judgment, for thus says the Lord, “Son of man, when the land sins against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out My hand upon it and will break the staff of the bread thereof and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, says the Lord God” (Ezek. 14:13, 14).

David, doubtless, prayed earnestly that he might escape from the chastisement of his sin when he numbered the people, but it could not be removed. He had a choice of three evils, but one of the three was inevitable. When God has come to this point with a people, that He must and will smite them, prayer is their only resource and even that may fail to avert the threatened stroke. A child may have so transgressed that his father may feel bound to punish him and then he will not spare the rod because of his crying. I pray God that the rain may cease, but if it should be continued, it will not be because the Lord cannot help us, or has ceased to answer prayer.

Here is the secret of it all—I tremble as I quote the words—“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood” (Isa. 59:1-3). Remember, too, that not only may God withdraw Himself in anger, but it may be His determination to punish a people out of a far-seeing design for their good. Perhaps, as a nation, we have had too much prosperity. Ease and plenty have begotten pride and luxury and these may have weakened the spirit of the nation. It may have become absolutely necessary for this favored nation, if it is to still be the stronghold of liberty and the fortress of Gospel Truth, that it should again endure those northern blasts of adversity which have aforetime strengthened it at heart.

It will not be the first time that our land has suffered for her good. Bad harvests and decaying trade are not new things to Englishmen! There linger among us now a few venerable men and women who can tell us of the straits of the old war time—of how there was great scantiness of bread, heaviness of taxation and frequent alarms from abroad and riots at home. What a long and dreary time it was when the sound of cannon might almost be heard across the straits and watch fires were ready on every cliff and height! Yet good came of the affliction and since that gloomy time the country has made rapid progress in many respects! Especially in civil and religious freedom—may it be so again! I would not wish ill to my country, but if our fellow men will not remember God except in adversity, adversity, itself, might be desired by the kindest heart.

If true religion is to be cast into the dust by boastful infidelity! If a bastard popery is to be allowed to occupy our national churches! If drunkenness is to remain shameless and almost universal! If the language of the common people is to become filthy and obscene! If the exaltation of one favored sect above its fellow Christians—a crying deed of injustice—is to be perpetually endured! If our nation is to shed the blood of weaker nations and send its armies into lands which are none of ours—then it will not be a strange thing if the Lord resolves to punish—and it will be hard for the righteous man to find an argument with which to plead for pity! When the offense is repented of, the punishment will be withdrawn—but can we expect pardon on any other terms? Can we even ask for it? The verdict of the sternly just would rather be, “Let the rod fall,” than, “Let it be withdrawn,” if only by severe means the nation can be made to put away its evil deeds!

In our text God declares that He will not give audience to His erring people, but will retire into His secret place until they acknowledge the offense and seek His face. It may be so with our nation at this time. And if it is, we need to be exhorted to something more than public prayer! There is need of a work more thorough and more difficult than the public use of a devotional form! But, says one, “We hope we shall have national prayer.” I hope so, too, but will there be a national confession of sin? If not—how can mere prayer avail? Will there be a general desire to do that which is just and right between man and man? Will there be a declaration that England’s policy is never to trample on the weak or pick a quarrel for her own aggrandizement?

Will there be a loathing of the principle that British interests are to be our guiding star instead of justice and right? Personal interests are no excuse for doing wrong! If they were so, we should have to exonerate the worst of thieves, for they will not invade a house until their personal interests invite them! Perhaps the midnight robber may yet learn to plead that he only committed a burglary for fear another thief should take the spoil and make worse use of it than he! Does the footpad stop a passenger on the road for any other than his own interests? When our own interests are our policy, nobility is dead and true honor is departed—but I fear that only a minority are of this mind.

Will the nation repent of any one of its sins? Will it settle itself down like the people of Jerusalem during the great rain of Ezra’s time and do that which is right in the sight of God? Remember what they said in that day—“The people are many and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing.” If stern reformation went with supplication, I am persuaded that prayer would prevail. But while sin is gloried in, my hopes find little ground to rest upon. But will there be general prayer? No, there will not. I speak sadly, but I speak no more than the truth.

There are numbers among us who say that prayer is of no use with regard to the winds and the clouds, for certain laws govern the weather and prayer cannot affect those laws. These men, therefore, will not pray and there are multitudes of others of the same spirit whose atheism is practical though it is unavowed. How, then, can prayer be general when such vast numbers utterly disregard it? Turn your eyes to Nineveh! When Jonah threatened that great city and, upon its repentance the judgment was withdrawn, of what character was its humiliation? From the king on the throne even to the beasts in the field—all were clothed with sackcloth and fasted and cried out to God—and therefore we marvel not that He heard them!

Will there be any such crying to God among us? I think not! A defiant silence will seal millions of lips. But what of those who are supposed to pray? Are all these men of the Elijah stamp, whose fervent prayer could open or shut the windows of Heaven? We dare not put much confidence in the prayers which will be offered. Will they be offered in faith by a tenth of those who will repeat them? I wish I could hope so. By many, the public prayer will be regarded as absolutely ridiculous—and by many more as a mere matter of form which it is proper to use—but in which no confidence, whatever, can be placed.

Do not, therefore, say, if the rain should continue by the month together, that prayer was ordered by the Archbishop of Canterbury and that God did not hear it and, therefore, all prayer is idle! No, but see what kind of prayer it will be and how little connected it will be with confession—and how little it will be general and how little it will be sincere—and then you will not wonder if no comfortable answer comes of it. It may be that my text will be the sole answer of the Lord—“I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early.”

What, then, is to be done? This much is to be done—all hope for a country lies in the true Believers who dwell there! Remember Sodom and how it would have been spared had there been 10 righteous men found there and know that you, also, are the salt of the earth by whom it is to be preserved! Loathe the spirit of those who say that because we are citizens of Heaven we are to have nothing to do with the concerns of men below. A more un-Christianlike sentiment, a more selfish sentiment never degraded spiritual minds! Wherever the Jews dwelt, in the days of their scattering, they were commanded to care for the good of the people among whom they dwelt.

Here are the words of the Lord by Jeremiah—“Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall you have peace.” Surely Christians are not to be less generous than Jews! Happily we are not under a despot! In England we are our own governors and the man, who, in this land does nothing to secure the good government of the country is, by his silence, on the side of wrong! You cannot shirk your responsibility except by clearing out of the land altogether—and then, if it suffers by your absence, you will still be found guilty. You are part and parcel of the nation, for you share in its protection and privileges and it is yours, as Christian men and women, to feel that you are bound, in return, to do all you can in the midst of it to promote truth and righteousness.

What then? What course should we now pursue? Let us make confession of sin on behalf of the people as Moses and Jeremiah and Daniel did! You may not consider that to be sin which I judge to be so, but, my Brothers and Sisters, you see sin enough all around you of one sort or another. Take it to yourself and, as the high priest went in to the Holy Place to plead for the people, so you act as a priest before God in your quiet personal devotions! Confess the sin of this nation before God! If it will not repent, repent for it! Stand as a sort of consecrated sponsor before God and let the sin be on your heart till you fall on your face before the Most High! Remember, the saints are intercessors with God for the people! You are God’s remembrancers and, as you are called to make mention of His name, keep not silent day nor night, but in this hour of trouble pour out your hearts before Him!

Get up to your Carmels and cry aloud, you that know how to cry unto God, that He may send deliverance! And when you have prayed for this people and asked the Lord to forgive its sin and also to take away the chastising rod, then all of you promote, by your daily lives, your precepts and your actions, “whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report.” Be on the side of temperance and sobriety—be on the side of peace and of justice—be on the side of everything that is according to the mind of God and according to the law of love! Love God and your fellow men and seek to promote all interests which look that way.

I believe that a country can never have a larger blessing, a truer safeguard for the present, or a firmer security for its future greatness than a band of praying men and women who make mention of it before the Throne of God! English history, from the first day till now, is as full of instruction as the history of Israel from Egypt even to Babylon. Did you ever read Cowper’s wonderful description of the care which God has taken of this little island? How He has favored and protected it? When all the nations were in arms against it, they could not touch its shore for God was there! And, on the other hand, the Lord has laid us low and made us suffer when we have boasted of our fleets and armies. Our nation has been as much under the peculiar and especial Providence of God as were the descendants of Jacob themselves and, therefore, God deals with us as He does not deal with other nations!

The smothering of black men with smoke in the caves to which they had fled. The burning down of human habitations and the hunting of men as if they were wild beasts is greater iniquity with us than it would have been in savages, or even in Papists or Mohammedans! Our religion is higher, nobler, purer than theirs! We ought to be ashamed to act as they do! Bloodshed, by some nations, God winks at, for they know but little better—but a country which has in it the very sun of the Gospel shining in the fullness of its strength should set to the world an example which it can follow and, if it does not, it may expect to have trouble after trouble and blow after blow from the hand of God!

Thus have I spoken what was burdening my heart. Make what you will of it—it is the warning of an honest lover of his country who fears the Lord and fears none besides! Judge me to have spoken with political bias or not and censure me as you choose. I could say no less, or I would gladly have held my peace. Before God I am clear in this thing of any attempt but an upright one. May God grant that my feeble protest may touch the hearts of those who ought to feel its truth. I am not very confident that it will be so, for we have fallen upon evil times and the heart of the people has waxen gross.

II. And now, secondly, let us view the text in reference to our PERSONAL TRIALS AS BELIEVERS. Brothers and Sisters, let us now commune with one another concerning the ways of God with our own souls. The Lord will not cast off His people—notwithstanding their faults, they are His own children and they shall be His children forever. But when His children sin, God is sure to chasten them for it. “You only have I known of all the people, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.” He leaves His enemies alone for a while, but He smites His sons. His foes shall go unpunished till the end shall be—but as for His beloved, He is exceedingly jealous over them and He will make them smart when they sin.

Has the Lord been chastening any of us of late? Has the moth been in our estates, or has the lion been tearing our peace? Let us turn at His rebuke! Let us say unto the Lord, “Show me why You contend with me. Lord, if You are smiting me, I would not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, but I would turn unto You at once, before You smite me again.” It is good to repent at once and seek our heavenly Father’s face. For, note next, when chastisements are of no avail, withdrawment follows!

The Lord has promised that He will not forsake His people, nor will He utterly do so, but there are withdrawments which are not included in that promise. God may so hide Himself from His servants that they may have no conscious fellowship with Him, no enjoyment of His Word, no power in prayer. In fact, they may pray and He may shut out their prayer. Their life may be sapless and spiritless; joy and peace may flee. They may possibly try, at such times, to make up for their loss by enjoying the world. They may run after carnal pleasures and vain amusements, but they cannot fill their minds with them—they have no joy with such empty vanities—Grace has made them incapable of finding soul food in the corn and wine of earth. They must have their God or die!

Let me tell you most solemnly that it is a very sad thing when God has withdrawn from a believing spirit and the more holy a man has been, the more sadly will he lament that he is now under a cloud and the more earnestly will he cry, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!” When these withdrawments of God are painfully felt, then we should begin most eagerly to search out the sin which has caused them, for sin is at the bottom of it all. If, Believer, there is a quarrel between your Beloved and yourself, is there not a cause? Our Lord Jesus is no fitful lover who, in a moment, will leave the soul which is espoused to Him merely to indulge a whim! Far from it! He never trifles with us, but treats our love as a sacred thing. There is some grave cause whenever the Beloved frowns.

Then is the time for a thorough search, a sweeping of the house and a cleansing out of all things that offend. Throughout the heart, the understanding and the lips, let a thorough search be initiated and if any sin is detected—and it will not be long before it will be—let it be brought to light and judged. Set it in the light of God’s Countenance and there confess it and lament it. Offer no excuses and explanations, but honestly confess the wrong and leave it! Have you restrained prayer? Confess it! Have you neglected the reading of the Word of God? Confess it! Have you been neglectful of your children and your family as to training them in the nurture of the Lord? Confess it!

Has there been laxity in your contact with the world? Have you given way to flippancy and levity? Have you been proud? Have you been slothful? Have you indulged too much in the pleasures of the table? Has your heart set itself upon your wealth? Then bring the idols out and let your heart see the wounds which they have given you and what it is that you have doted on and what these things are which have come between you and your God! Surely you will be ashamed of them when you consider that their love is the price for which you have parted with your Savior’s Presence! Is this a goodly price that your Lord was exchanged for by you? Judas’s pieces of silver were not more contemptible than these poor paltry bribes! Lament the treachery of your heart and hear Him ask you, “Do you love Me?” Do not hesitate to answer, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.”

But, Beloved, when you have obtained a sense of the sin or sins which separate you from God and have made a full confession, then take care that you seek the Lord with hopefulness and confidence, for, notwithstanding all this, you are still His child and must not give way to a paralyzing despair. You are married to Christ and there is no divorce with Him, “for the Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates putting away.” He will not cast off forever, nor put away His erring spouse. Come, therefore, to Him with humble confidence! He has torn and He will heal. He has struck and He will bind us up. Seek His face, for His face is towards you! The very face of God is Jesus Christ! The Son of God is He in whom we see the Father! Even as you see a man in his countenance, so God is seen in Christ! Seek God in Christ Jesus, for thereby good shall come unto you.

Do not say, “It is of no use, I have backslidden and revolted again and again and He will now refuse me totally.” No, He will not reject you! You are not out of reach of His love—He will turn, again, and have compassion on you, for He delights in mercy! If He withdraws, it is only that you may sigh after Him and seek after Him. A nurse, when her little child will go away from her and fall into danger, will sometimes hide herself from it to

teach it better. She still sees the child, though the little one cannot see her. She is near to help, but the child cannot find her and so it begins to cry for her and does not rest till she is found. The child will not so soon wander again.

Even so may the Lord hide His face to make us cry after Him, but He is very near us, all the while, and He will yet be found of us. “Behold,” says He, “I stand at the door and knock. If any man open to me I will enter in.” It is not much, is it, to open the door? That is all He asks. Open and let Him in, for He adds, “and I will sup with him.” “Ah, Lord,” say to Him, “we have no provision fit for You.” But know assuredly He brings His supper with Him and we sup with Him and He with us! He only wants you to lend the house, by opening your heart, for He has brought the food! Yes, He is, Himself, our Bread from Heaven!

Now, to whom is this spoken? To sinners? No, no, it is spoken to the Church of Laodicea, which was “neither cold nor hot.” Her Lord was ready to spit her out of His mouth and yet in mercy He cries, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” O Backslider, Jesus waits to be gracious to you! He longs to restore you! Only acknowledge your transgression and return to Him! Be of good cheer as to acceptance, for He casts out none who come to Him. End this backsliding for there need be no more misery! God help you to rise, this very day, into a closer walk with Him and may He keep you by His side forever! To be out of fellowship with God is for the heart to be in a state of spiritual disease. Things must be wrong within when we are wrong with God. When we do not walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, there is some evil in the eye of the soul. Dread the evil and cry for healing!

To be away from God is to be in a state of spiritual weakness. Samson may shake himself as at other times, but he can do no deeds of strength when the Lord has departed from him. God is our strength and God’s hiding makes us weak as water! If the Lord should leave us, we cannot plead with Him and prevail, nor can we plead with men and win them for Christ. Our strength has departed—both towards God and towards man—when our fellowship with God is suspended. Our heart cannot leap like a young roe upon the mountains—our spirit limps as one whose bones are broken. We cannot even gaze through the gates of pearl to see the Glory which the Spirit reveals, for our eyes are dim so that we cannot see afar off when Jesus is away.

If you are in this condition, you are in an evil case—carking care invades you, anxieties annoy you, your temper gets the mastery, Satan accuses—and conscience trembles! Your spirit is like that of a carnal man and you are apt to speak unadvisedly with your lips and to be readily moved by every external influence. What is worse, when a man is out of fellowship with God, he is in danger of presumptuous sins! David, on the terraces of his palace, had not been walking with God, or else the sight of Bathsheba had not caused him so grievous a fall. Lose communion with Christ and you are on the verge of a folly which will stain your character and terribly mar your life! It is only when we are near to God that we are safe—therefore let a sense of danger drive us to Him at once! I speak from a widespread observation as well as from an inward experience. There is but a step between distance from God and the nearness of temptation and sin. If God thinks much of you, He will have you near Him, or else He will make you miserable. He will not permit you to rejoice except in Himself! If your love is not worth His having, you may love whom you like. But when He loves you much, He will be very jealous over you and if He finds you are content to be without His company, He will make you suffer for such wantonness ingratitude! That By-Path Meadow business—that going down the green lane to get off the pebbles of the right road; that getting away from Christ to have a taste of the world’s sweet delusions; that coming down from our high places as if we had grown weary of being happy and were discontented with an angelic life—all that means a succession of afflictions and regrets which can only, at the very best, end in our getting to Christ, again, with broken bones.

Such wanderings are painful, end how they may! David’s life, before his sin—how different it was from his life afterwards! You can always tell which Psalms he wrote before his transgression—they are so jubilant, so full of holy rejoicing! But afterwards, when he sings, it is in a bass voice. He sweeps his harp, but the strings are disordered. He loves his God, but it is the solemn, tearful love of repentance rather than the bright sparkling love of delight in God. Do not err, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, for error brings sorrow. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” If you have gone aside to evil, then seek early the face of God and He will be found of you in Christ Jesus!

III. And now my time is almost spent. I have but a few minutes to use on the third head and I would, therefore, speak few words, but speak them very earnestly, indeed. We shall now think of THE PERSONAL TRIALS OF THE SINNER. Oh, you that are unconverted, if God means to save you, He will, before long, begin by chastening you in body or in mind. You will have trouble! You are a wandering sheep and God will send His black dog after you to fetch you to the fold. If one trouble does not do it, you will have another and another and another! Perhaps I speak to some who, as the result of Providential chastening and the work of conscience on their spirit, have already been awakened—let them take heed of trifling with their awakening!

After that earnest sermon, or after reading that stirring book, you began to pray, but your desires and feelings have now subsided. I would have you greatly grieve over this. Let me warn you that God may withdraw Himself from you altogether. Some have been sitting in this Tabernacle, now, for years from whom I fear God has withdrawn Himself, for you used to feel much moved by the Gospel, but it is not so now! You would not come when you were called and admonished, but you revolted more and more—and now His mercy is growing weary of you. You were smitten again and again, but you still rebelled and now God says, “Let him alone.” This is a more terrible calamity than you suspect—unless it is averted, it will be your ruin!

I may be speaking to some strangers here who, at one time, had a disturbed conscience, but they have grown very callous of late. You are in danger of eternal wrath but you are amazingly carefree! You can even make jokes about religion, can’t you? Poor souls! I fear the Lord has given you over for a time, at least—I hope not forever! Do you ask me what you

should do? I reply that according to our text it is high time for you to seek the Lord! You were smitten before you tried self-righteousness, Churchgoing, Chapel-going, sacraments and so forth—as the Prophet says, you went to king Jareb, but he could not heal you of your wounds. You must now return to your God or you will never be right. It is vain to look to priests, or sacraments, or religion—all these things put together are nothing!

You must have personal dealings with your God and you must confess your sin to Him, or you will be eternally undone. Go and do it this morning! Tell Him all that you know about your sin and ask Him to have mercy upon you for Jesus’ sake. Seek to know Him as He manifests Himself in Jesus. Be willing to believe whatever He pleases to reveal. Be anxious to be reconciled to Him. Long to be at peace with the great God who made the heavens and the earth. Why should there be a quarrel between your Creator and your soul? The way of reconciliation is by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. You must, therefore, trust Jesus and then you shall find the peace of God. Oh may His Spirit help you to do this now! Seek Him and seek Him intensely, resolving that you will never cease to seek till you find God full of mercy and love to you. Come, I pray you, and turn unto the Lord, now, and may the Holy Spirit aid you in doing so.

He has torn and He will heal you. He has struck and He will bind you up. After two days He will revive you. On the third day He will raise you up and you shall live in His sight! God Himself must heal you, or you will never be healed! He who has broken your heart must give you comfort or you will never have any! Hasten to your chamber at once and then upon your knees cry out unto God with the prayer of faith. Be not content with your own sense of sin. Do not say, “I am doing fine, for I have felt my guilt.” No, your sense of sin may be but the first drop of a shower of eternal remorse. Get away to God in Christ and rest not till you are there.

Oh, if I had the power to put this into fitting and forcible words I would implore every man and woman that I look upon not to live without God! He made you and you cannot be happy without Him. While He is angry with you, you cannot be at peace! He bids you come to Him. The blows of His Providence are meant to separate you from the love of sin and drive you to your God! In Jesus Christ, the great Father stretches out His arms to you and says, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Believe in Jesus and live! “Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near! Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” God bless you, my beloved Friends, for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 5.**HYMNS FROM “OUR 0WN HYMN BOOK”—605, 620, 614. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1396 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 6.1

REASONS FOR TURNING TO THE LORD

NO. 1396

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 13, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Come, and let us return unto the Lord. For He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck us, but He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.” Hosea 6:1, 2.*

[Mr. Spurgeon was exceedingly unwell and his voice painfully weak, hence the pause in the middle of the sermon, during which the congregation sang part of a hymn to enable the preacher to gain strength enough to resume his discourse. This was the last sermon before Mr. Spurgeon’s departure from home to obtain needed rest. It has been revised by Mr. Spurgeon at Mentone. The sermons are continued regularly every week.]

IF man had never sinned, what delightful communion there would have been between him and God! A fairy vision rises before us of loving obedience and condescending fellowship, holy delight and boundless favor, lowly adoration and fatherly smile, perfect bliss and infinite complacency. Alas! Alas! It is no more than a vision! God would have treated man with familiarity and indulgence, lavishing favor and honor upon him. The Garden of Eden, fair as were its glades and lovely as were its flowers, was but a faint image of the things prepared for man had he continued in loyalty to God—inconceivable delights would have filled up the days of our life on earth had not the serpent’s trail come across our nature and slimed it over with sin.

I shall not attempt any picture of man dwelling with God and God revealing Himself to man in new forms—always increasing man’s knowledge and, at the same time, causing His bliss to overflow. Alas! That dream has never been realized. That dangerous fruit which hung upon the tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil has been plucked and eaten and we will not pause to rehearse the sad story of the foul iniquities and the countless ills which have come upon mankind and severed man from his God. Because of the Fall and man’s depravity, Justice now comes in with his rod and sword and changes the complexion of our life.

God deals very graciously with man, but not at all after the fashion in which He might have dealt with him—He cannot, now, perpetually smile, but is led, by His holiness, to look on him with wrathful countenance. The loving God, compelled by love, itself, frowns at sin. He threatens, He denounces. His justice and holiness lead Him to use rough words towards His erring creatures. He does more—in infinite love He chastens as well as rebukes. Instead of fatherly caresses, the great Lord wisely takes down the rod and lays it on the backs of those whom He most truly loves. “He scourges every son whom He receives.”

Those nearest to His heart and most approved of His soul among the sons of Adam have, nevertheless, to feel that “our God is a consuming fire.” Placed in the crucible, they are thrust into the white heat of the furnace and there are they called to suffer that their dross may be removed. If thus the Lord is severe to His own people, what are His dealings with the ungodly? “God is angry with the wicked every day.” The wise men of modern thought have made a new god of late—one of those gods newly come up that our fathers knew not and who is quite unknown to the Bible—as false a god as Apollo or Baal! The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob these deep thinkers cannot endure, but if you say that God is angry with the wicked every day, these modern god-makers tell you that He is too loving for that—that He cannot possibly be angry, but loves all, has redeemed all, and will, in the long run, save all—including Satan, himself!

They adore a god made of putty or of wax—plastic, effeminate, molluscous—with no masculine faculty about him and no quality that entitles him to the respect of just and honest men. For a being who cannot be angry at wrong-doing is destitute of one of the essential virtues and a moral ruler who is not angry with the wicked—who refuses to punish crime—is not Divine. We find no such God as this modern saccharine idol when we come to search the Scriptures, for there the true God says, “If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” “To the froward He will show Himself froward.” “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them.”

He is revealed as a God who “will by no means spare the guilty,” but declares that every transgression and iniquity shall have its just punishment of reward. Since evil obtained sway over the human race, God walks towards men, therefore, not at all as He might have done if men had never fallen. He speaks to them in the stern voice of a judge and handles them as one who sees the need of a rod. He treats men not so roughly as they deserve, for He is infinitely tender and gentle, but still with such severity as becomes necessary to show that He cannot smile on transgression. The conduct of God towards man is not like His dealing with the angels—not like His dealing with cherubim and seraphim but, according to our text— He tears, He strikes, He kills.

It is of such a God as this that I have to speak, tonight, and of such acts as these I have to talk with you. My design is not that any may flee from the Lord, but that as the result of what we have to say, many may return to the Lord, who He has struck, but who He will heal. Who He has slain, but who He will restore. There are three things in my text which are, to my mind, very clear. The first is a smiting God. The second is a believing heart, for he who used such words as my text was no unbeliever. And, thirdly, a persuasive voice—the voice which so pleadingly cries, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”

May God the Holy Spirit teach me how to proclaim the name of the Lord and render the Word quick and powerful to the salvation of the bloodbought. How much I need His strength in my extreme weakness! Pray for me, you saints of God, that once again I may faithfully and effectively do duty as one of the Lord’s ambassadors.

I. First, then, I see plainly enough in the text A SMITING God—“He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck us, but He will bind us up.” Notice, first, that the person who wrote these words discerns the Presence of the Lord, for he is convinced that his trials come from God. Ungodly men set down their troubles to chance and sometimes they even trace them to the devil—as if they expected their father to have dealings with them! Frequently they lay their ills at the door of their fellow men and grow quarrelsome, malicious and revengeful. It is a happy day for a man when he knows in whose hand is the rod and learns to trace his troubles to God!

Alas, there are even some children of God who greatly err in this matter when under affliction—they spend their time in bewailing second causes— and do not look at the First Cause! This is very brutish. If you strike a dog with a stick he will bite at the stick. Had he a little intelligence he would bite at you, knowing that the blow came not from the stick or stone, but from the hand that used these implements! So is it usually with unbelievers in trouble—they look at the secondary agent and they spend their anger or their thoughts entirely there. If, in the day of adversity they would consider, they would perceive that affliction springs not out of the ground, neither do distresses come by chance, but the hand of the Lord is in all these things.

“Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?” Whichever way the trial comes, it comes from Him. If the trouble was caused by a triumphant enemy or by a deceitful friend. If it comes as a loss in business or as a sickness of body—or if it wounded us through the arrows of death piercing the heart of our beloved—in either case it was the Lord. Learn that lesson! He has smitten or struck you! He has torn you! He has done it all! He has ordained our trials for judgment and established them for correction—let us not despise them by refusing to see His hand or by angrily rebelling against Him. We read that, “Aaron held his peace,” when his two sons were slain with fire because it was the fire of the Lord that struck them—what could he say?

If even Christian men too often forget the Lord’s hand, we need not be at all surprised that unconverted men do so. Perhaps I am speaking to one who has been followed by a succession of disasters till he is now surrounded by a sea of affliction. You have scarcely escaped from one trouble before you have plunged into another! It seems to you as if your “bad luck,” as you call it, were no more absent from you at any time than your shadow. You cannot get on at anything! Whatever you touch withers beneath your hands. You have been ill again and again. You have lost your best friend when you most needed him. You have lost your job and wherever you apply you get no favorable reply. It is true that you are not wise enough to trace some of these misfortunes to your own bad habits—your indolence or your drunkenness.

I wish, however, you were even as wise as that, for then you might amend your ways. If you grow wiser, still, you would say, “It cannot be that I am to have stroke upon stroke and loss upon loss without there being some reason for it, for God does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” I should not wonder, my Friend, that you are so sorely smitten because the Lord has some great design of love to your soul! Look at the prodigal son in the distant country. He had plenty of money and he

spent it in riotous living. He was in fine health and lived in the fastest style. Wine and women soon took away his money and then he said that bad luck had befallen him.

Of course it had and the young squire was obliged to swallow his dignity and independence and seek for a job! He looked in the daily paper and searched up and down among his dear friends who had drunk to his health with gallons of his rare old wines. But they knew of nothing for him and gave him the cold shoulder. No money-lender would grant him a loan and no man gave him any. He walked his shoes off his feet, but could find nothing to do. He had rags upon him and hunger within him. He was a broken down gentleman without a trade and without the physical strength to dig or plow. What could he do? He was “down on his luck,” as men of his kind are known to say—and nobody wanted his company.

One person who had some sort of pity for the poor wretch found him employment and he commenced active life in the noble capacity of a pig feeder—“He joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” He was now at his lowest, for his occupation was filthy and degrading—and the wages were not enough to keep body and soul together—so that he often envied the hogs that could so readily fill themselves with husks. Yet in this deep distress there was mercy and hope—his way home was round by the swine trough! He might never have come to his father if he had not come, first, to those pigs and husks!

Perhaps, O tried Sinner, the way to God for you is through your troubles. If the Lord had prospered you in that piece of betting, for instance, or if you had got on in that infamous business which you ought never to have touched, you might have been a rich man and have been damned! But you are not to be rich—God does not mean that you should be. He means to follow with stroke upon stroke and tearing upon tearing till at last you shall realize that He is saying to you, “Return to Me, for you will never rest until you do.” You shall never know prosperity until you have come clean out and made your peace with God! Then shall your peace be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

I am certain that I speak as though I were a prophet to the soul of some who are in this house tonight and I pray God that if it is so, they may look on the series of trials through which they have passed as being really sent to them, not by chance or haphazard, nor by the conjunction of the stars, nor by anything of that atheistic foolery which men are so fond of inventing—but sent from God Himself with benign intent! He smites, He tears, He slays—but this is all the surgery of love! The person who uttered these words, then, had learned to trace his troubles to God.

Now, notice that it is customary with God to smite His own according to His own Words, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” I remember being severely called to account by a fastidious critic for using the following vulgar metaphor, which I will therefore use again. It may serve for another paragraph for some other superfine reviewer. I think I said that if you were going home and you saw a number of boys round a house breaking windows, it is 10 to one that you would not care much about what they did. BUT, if you saw your own boy doing it, he would be sure to get as sweet a box on the ears as you could manage to convey to him!

Would that be because you loved him less than the rest of the boys? Not so, but because you loved him more! You had something to do with him and nothing to do with the rest—therefore he obtained the privilege of correction which the others missed. Now, oftentimes the sinner who falls into trouble, or the Christian who endures heavy trials, does not receive such severe treatment because the Lord is about to destroy him, but because He has a secret love to his soul. Thus says the Lord, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” These chastisements and heavy blows which are compared in the text to tearing and to striking, often fall upon God’s own beloved because they are His beloved and He cannot, in any better way, display His love to them.

“I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree”—no axe has come to his root and no blight to his leaf— God has left him alone to fill the earth with his branches. But why? Was it not that he might become fit for the fire when the axe of the woodsman would lay him low? But look at the vine which bears fruit and you shall see, every year at the proper season, the ruthless knife of the pruner cutting away what seems to be the liveliest shoots, removing the hopeful branches and leaving the poor vine to bleed, or to appear to be a mere dry stick! Yes, the vine is worth pruning—it belongs to the vinedresser’s choice plants and he looks to it for rich clusters.

As for the green bay tree—who cares to prune it? What profit would come of blunting the knife on a fruitless tree? Woe to you who are increasing your stores—you who never have aches or pains! Woe to you who say that no thought of sin will ever depress you! Woe to you who can drink your fill and eat abundantly without being sick or sorry. Lo, you are fattened like bullocks for the slaughter and there shall nothing happen to you till death’s poleax lays you low! Count it to be one of the most fearful curses that can happen to you to be happy in your sins! “Moab has been at ease from his youth and he has settled on his lees and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers that shall cause him to wander and shall empty his vessels and break their bottles.”

You who are tossed to and fro and are broken by sorrow need not start with dread because you are made to suffer, for the Lord lays heavy hands upon His own and reserves the ungodly for His wrath. The dealings of God with men will often appear to be very severe. Kindly read the 14th verse of the 5th chapter—“I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear and go away.” From this it is clear that our text, when it says, “He has torn,” alludes to a lion rending his prey. The Lord seems, sometimes, to spring upon a man and suddenly to bring him down. And then by terrible trials He appears to lacerate him from head to foot. Fears, pains of body, awful suggestions within his mind, loss upon loss in business, grief upon grief, his home desolate, his heart broken, his hope gone—such things does the Lord lay upon men

until they know what the Lord meant when He said by His Prophet, “I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them.”

God does this with men and yet He means them no ill. The case of Hezekiah explains it all. Hear him cry in the bitterness of his soul, “I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will He break all my bones: from day even to night will You make an end of me. Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: my eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. What shall I say?” But his own answer to his own question is, “O Lord, by these things men live and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so will You recover me, and make me to live?” The text says that the Lord smiles. He uses such force that He leaves bruises and welts, for, “by the blueness of the wound the heart is made better.”

He smites and He knows how to do it, for He is a wise corrector. “He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct?” He can touch a man in His most tender place and make the stoutest heart to quail. He knows our frame and when He comes to deal with us in wrath, even though there is love behind it all, yet still He smites very sternly. David says, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.” And in another place he shows that this chastening is no child’s play, for he says, “When You with rebukes do correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth.” Yes, and according to the text, God may lay a man’s soul so low that he may count himself to be as dead and he may continue like one in the grave by the space of two days—and yet on the third day He will raise him up!

This, of course, is not to be taken literally, but represents a considerable period, though a period that has an end, during which heart and flesh utterly fail. God knows how long to make a man lie under the sentence of death. It will not be four days—that would be too long, for one said of old, “By this time he stinks, for he has been dead four days.” There shall be three days wherein deadly despair shall rule—but destruction shall not actually take place—as Jesus came up out of the earth on the third day, so those who have felt the sentence of death in themselves shall come out into the joy of resurrection-life to praise and bless His name.

I perceive that I almost startle you while I show you what God does with the sons of men. But there is one thing I ought to add. “He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” A man who lies in the hospital half his time has still more mercy than he could have claimed. And he who shivers in this winter’s cold and knows bitter penury, yet still has more mercy than he deserves. And he among us who sinks lowest in sorrow of soul—he who seems to go down into the dread abyss till all God’s waves and billows go over him—he may still thank God that he is not in the torments of Hell! He who suffers most may be grateful that justice has not yet taken the plummet and the line and meted out righteous wrath!

At our worst we are indulged with a fullness of mercy compared with what our transgressions deserve! And, oh, I want to show you that there is love in it all. I do not call him a loving father who sees his boy indulge bad habits and never chastens him. I do not call her a loving mother who, when she has seen her child showing ill-tempers and displaying self-will, has never chastened her. It is often a wicked self-indulgence which prevents parents from doing what should be done to drive out wickedness and train for a noble life. When a father, with tears in his eyes, has taken his boy alone and said, “I cannot be like Eli, upon whose house there came the curse because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. I must chasten you at times. If you will thus break my commandments and grieve God and dishonor my family, I must make you smart for it, though every stroke is a pain to me.”

I say when a father acts in this way, he is both wise and kind. Many a young scoundrel, now in the streets of London, might have been a moral young man if his father had done his duty by him. And, mark you, God will never have this to be laid at His door—that He permits sin in His family and leaves His chosen unchastened! His own children must feel the rod and be brought under the bond of the Covenant. “Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

Here let me wait a minute to recover my voice and gather a little strength, for I am very feeble. Could you, do you think, ease me for a moment by singing a verse or two of the 605th hymn in “Our Own Hymn Book,” to the tune, “Farrant”?—

*“Come let us to the Lord our God  
With contrite hearts return.  
Our God is gracious, nor will leave  
The desolate to mourn.  
His voice commands the tempest forth  
And stills the stormy wave,  
And though His arm is strong to smite,  
‘Tis also strong to save.  
Long has the night of sorrow reigned;  
The dawn shall bring us light:  
God shall appear, and we shall rise  
With gladness in His sight.”*

Tremblingly I will now endeavor to go on to the next point. May the Holy Spirit guide my mind, and heart and tongue.

II. Secondly, I see in the text A BELIEVING HEART—to my mind a remarkably believing heart because the man believes in the goodness of God even when he is smarting and suffering. Do notice it. He says, “Come, let us return to the Lord, for He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck, but He will bind us up.” It is wonderfully easy to believe in God when you have all you need and are free from trial. But such fair-weather faith as that is very often a mere sham. True faith believes in God when He is angry and trusts Him when the rod is in His hand—and to my mind, as I have said before—it is a very beautiful instance of faith which we have in this text.

The man has been torn, yes, torn as a lion tears his victim—there are the gashes, bleeding and smarting—yet he cries, “Come, and let us return to the Lord.” What, to the God who has torn us? Yes, yes! Let us go to Him, for He will receive us and will not cast us away, but, on the contrary, He will heal the wounds He made! You cannot think too well of God, nor expect too much mercy from Him! Beloved, if you believe that He will pardon your greatest sin for Jesus’ sake. If you believe, tonight, that He will

cheerfully receive you to His bosom because of His dear Son. If you believe that He can make you an heir of Heaven by faith in Christ—you will not believe too well of God! I shall challenge you to try and make your thoughts of the Lord too high and honorable! If you attempt the task, you will certainly be foiled in it.

This believing heart in my text actually finds an argument in the blows of God why we should trust Him. Does He not say, “He has torn, but He will heal us. He has struck us, but He will bind us up”? Yes, and there is argument here. When a physician finds a man’s bone badly set and breaks it again, what am I sure that he is going to do? Why, to set it, and set it right! When I see a physician using a very severe remedy in a very difficult case, say a blister, or some form of bleeding, or the like—I feel certain that he does not mean to leave his patient to bleed to death and that he does not wound without a purpose. If a spreader should be inserted in order that the wound may be kept open till the proud flesh is cut away, I know that the physician does not do that out of unkindness, but that he intends the good of his patient. He means to do something which, for the time, the patient cannot appreciate, but about which he must exercise faith. If I were at any time to be subject to the surgeon’s knife, I should have no hesitation in feeling that if he wounded me he would see me through the operation and do his utmost for my restoration.

Now, God is the great Surgeon of men’s souls and sometimes He has to put man upon the table and cut—and cut to the very bone! But He never means to kill. He never takes the knife of discipline except with the intent to bind up every wound He makes and set the man upon his feet again, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. “Though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.” So, you see that he who wrote the text did well to argue from the tearing and the smiting that God must mean well to the afflicted soul. And, notice such is the faith of this text that the writer expects to be restored though he writes himself down among the dead. “After two days,” he says, “will He revive us.”

I know—I wonder whether you know—what it is to feel as though utterly dead to all spiritual power, all natural hope, all claim on mercy and, sometimes, even to all possibility of salvation. I may be addressing one tonight who feels as though his death warrant had been signed and sealed. He has the sentence of death in himself. But, dear Brother or Sister, still have faith, for so the text has it—“We shall live in His sight.” You know what Job said—to my mind it is the grandest thing a man ever said—he was not reigning on a throne, but sitting on a dunghill! He was covered with boils and scraping himself with a potsherd, yet he was more than royal.

Glorious old Job bravely said, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.” This was grand! Can you imitate it? Though you feel as if you were slain. Though you sit in your pew tonight and say, “Well, it is of no use. I know I am undone,” yet I charge you to trust the Lord, your Redeemer, over the head of it all! Trust the Covenant God in the teeth of everything! Believe God to be true and every fact and circumstance and thought and feeling to be a liar! Cling to the eternal mercy of God who casts out none that come to Him by Jesus Christ! Oh, it is a blessed thing to be empty and to believe that God can fill you—to be nothing and to believe that He can make you His child! It is a blessed thing to be lost and to believe that the Lord can save you—to feel condemned and yet to believe that Christ can justify you! Oh, to sink and sink and sink, even into the grave of all natural hope and yet to feel that you shall rise again when the third day has come! This is the faith of God’s elect!

Notice that the faith of my text looks for brighter things, for it says, “In the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.” You are afraid of God now, perhaps, but when He comes and lifts you up out of your state of spiritual death-gloom you will delight to see Him, to feel Him near, to know that He has quickened you and to spend your new life in delightful communion with Him! You shall live in His sight! What heavenly living that must be! Life under the eyes of the Lord! Life such as He calls life! Life which He can look upon with pleasure! In His Presence is fullness of joy and this, His wounded ones shall know when He has healed them! I wish I could say what I want to say, but I am very feeble and, therefore, not much at ease in speaking. Yet I do not know but what my broken words may, after all, be best—when voice will not answer to mind and we have to bring out our discourses piecemeal—the morsels may be all the sweeter to the afflicted.

But this is what I want to say—I pray you never, never, never yield to that temptation of the devil which would lead you to cry, “God is dealing roughly with me! He will never save me!” No, expect quite the contrary! Because of these blows and strokes, because of your misery of heart, because of your troubled conscience, because of your inward distress you may all the more have hope! Nothing is more dreadful than to be without sensation—that is a token of death! But to be broken in pieces all asunder! To feel your thoughts to be like a case of knives cutting to the very center of your heart—this, at the very least, proves that life is still in you! Besides, remember that the path to joy is sorrow, the door to life is by death, the road to salvation is by condemnation in the conscience. The way to enjoy God’s love is, first of all, to be troubled under God’s wrath.

That brings me to my third point, upon which I must be brief, but I would be earnest. Oh, Spirit of God, enable me!  
III. The text has in it A PERSUASIVE VOICE. Oh that I could say it in wooing tones! But though the music of love is in my heart, my voice is hoarse. Bear with me, however, while I cry, “Come! Come! Come, let us return unto the Lord.” This persuasive voice is to be attentively regarded, in the first place, because it pleads for a right thing. Dear Friends, if we have wandered away from God and if God is angry with us, what ought to be our first step? Why, to get back to God! If I had offended any man or felt that I had done him an injustice, I hope I should not need much persuasion to go to him and confess my wrong and ask him to give me his hand. I trust it is the same with you.  
Now, since you have grieved the Lord, you ought to be the first to seek reconciliation. And if instead of it, He is first and comes to you with overtures of peace, surely you should not need much persuasion to end the quarrel! Come, poor erring child, you have acted sinfully towards your loving Father—does not your heart, itself, suggest to you the resolve—“I will arise and go unto my Father”? You have grieved Him and because you have grieved Him, He has struck you that you may know for yourself the evil of your actions! Let the first smiting suffice and yield at once to His reproofs. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”  
A great part of the persuasiveness of the text lies not merely in the rightness of it, but in the speaker putting himself with the people whom he entreats to return. He says, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” My dear Hearers, willingly enough, without any sort of mock humility, do I feel compelled to put myself among you. If you have never returned to the Lord, come, let us go together, for I know the way and have good cause to tread it over again. I went to Him, I almost forget how many years ago, but I was only a stripling of 15 years of age. Deeply conscious of my guilt, I sought the Lord God of my fathers in much brokenness of spirit.  
He had struck me. He had torn me. He had slain me by the Law of His mouth. Where could I go? I tried every helper, but I found all carnal hopes to be mockeries. I went trembling to my God and pleaded the precious blood of Jesus—and He healed me! He bound me up and He gave me to live in His sight! To this I bear my solemn and sure witness. But though I went to Him so many years ago, I have been many times since. I have felt sin upon the conscience. I have had my own inward depravity to mourn over. I have had to feel myself to be nothing, yes, and to be less than nothing! And I have been very heavy in soul and, therefore, driven by distress to my Lord.  
Yes, I have gone to Him a thousand times! And therefore I did not boast when I said I knew the way. Ah, poor helpless Soul, I know your downcastings and distractions, for I know the heart of a stranger by having felt, myself, to be an alien to my mother’s children, unworthy to be numbered with the family of God. I have comforted God’s people, but sometimes could not comfort myself! I have tried to fill others while mourning my own emptiness! But I bear witness that I never went to my Lord in vain. Come, give me your hand—one on this side, one on that—and let us return to the Lord! Come, let us make a ring all round the place and hand in hand let us return to the Lord!  
You who do not know the way will, perhaps, be helped by brotherly sympathy as we tell you how we resolved to return. You that think yourselves the biggest, blackest sinners—you do not think so badly of yourselves as I often think, and rightly think, of myself—but though of sinners the chief, and of saints, the least. “I know whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day.” And you, dear Friend, though up till now you have never sought Jesus, I hope that you will seek Him now and find abundant satisfaction in laying hold upon Him.  
Notice that this exhortation is put in the present tense. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” It is not tomorrow. It is not next year. It is so written that it means—“Let us return to the Lord now.” If at all, why not at once? The sooner a good thing is done, the better. As far as I am concerned, there is a very personal reason for pressing upon any unconverted person here that he should return to the Lord now. I reckon it to be a great privilege to be able to stand here and bid you come to the Lord, though the exercise of that privilege has worn me out and made me brainweary and full of pain. That privilege I shall not enjoy for some little time and it would charm me if I might win you now.  
Oh that my Lord would make this last sermon of mine for a while— perhaps forever—to be a weight cast into the scale to decide a hesitating will for Christ! I see the balances—how evenly they are poised! I see them trembling—a decision is to be arrived at one way or the other. This side for God—shall it go down? Is there weight enough? Satan clings to the chains of that evil scale! He seeks to drag it down! He casts in new temptations. Who will win? With all my heart would I throw earnest entreaties into the scale of right that salvation may win the day! But which shall it be? Which shall it be? Perhaps the turn it takes tonight will be the turn it takes for eternity! God grant that it may be for God, for His Truth, for Christ, for Heaven—and not for the world, for sin, for self and eternal perdition! O Holy Spirit, work mightily to decide men aright!  
The pleading of my text—and with this I close—is rendered all the more powerful because it is full of pleasing expectancy. Imagine that you had to try to make up a quarrel and the offending person were to say to you, “Well, suppose I agree to end this dispute. Will the other party be satisfied?” Upon the answer to that question your hope of success would very greatly depend. It has sometimes been my lot to have some such work as that to do and I have not felt quite sure that I would succeed till I had crossed that bridge. The aggrieved individual has been in a very hot temper and I could not altogether wonder, for he had been shamefully treated. “Well,” I have said to the offender, “I will try my best, you know, and it will greatly strengthen me if I can say that you bitterly feel that you were in the wrong and desire to offer an ample apology.”  
My client has said, “I should not mind going a good way in apologizing, but it can only be on the condition that I shall be kindly met. If I am to be repulsed—well, I shall not say anything until I have some idea of the temper and spirit of my opponent.” When I have been able to say, “The person whom you have offended is grieved for you as much as for himself. He is quite willing to receive you at any time and will give you every token of forgiveness. He hardly needs you to make any confession at all, he is so ready to forgive you—and nothing will give him greater pleasure than to have your friendship”—why then the other party has said, “What? Does he really say that? Does he speak kindly of me after what I did? Did he really say that he would be glad to see me at his house? Did he speak of me as still being his friend? Then be so good as to tell him that I am very sorry and I will be round to say it myself, directly.”  
Now, my God, my gracious God, bids me say that He is a God ready to pardon! You have not to go and propitiate Him, make Him tender and plead with Him in prayer till you melt His heart. No! He waits to be gracious to you! He has come tonight, by His poor feeble servant, to entreat you to accept His love and Grace. Let my broken accents reach the ears of your hearts. Repent of sin! Believe in Jesus Christ and look to Him for mercy! May God help you to do so and to do it now! Do not let returning to the Lord be left to be talked of when you get outside—return before you rise from your seat! I dread that vain companion who waits for you at the door. I am afraid of that idle chat on the road home. Do not even allow the exhortation of the text to wait to be thought of when you get home, for perhaps it may then be forgotten—but NOW—upon that seat or standing where you are, may God help you to respond to the gracious invitation, “Come, and let us return unto the Lord. For He has torn, but He will heal us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.”  
God bless you, dear Friends. May His richest blessing rest upon every one of you. Other voices will be heard, here, for a few weeks, but none will speak more lovingly than mine all broken, cracked, hoarse and unmusical though it is. May those Brothers who speak to you have more strength than I have—and more Grace! If they shall be the means of bringing some to Jesus whom I have never reached, I shall be glad, indeed! I want you all, members of the Church, to be very, very diligent in helping in the February meetings by your efforts and your prayers. My dear Brothers Clarke and Smith are well fitted for their work. You ought to have this Tabernacle crowded every night of the week—that is what I want to hear!  
Each one of you must get to work to get the outside people into the house that they may hear and live! The evangelists will be here for the best part of the month and if you all work hard and earnestly to gather the crowds together when those two Brothers speak and sing, I do not doubt that a blessing will rest upon them like that which came upon our Brothers Moody and Sankey in years gone by.  
Pray for me, I beseech of you, and having done so, prove the sincerity of your prayers by helping in the Lord’s work—this will be as medicine to your sick pastor’s soul and body! I rely upon you, each one, to see these services made a success, God the Holy Spirit helping you.

[A fortnight elapsed between the preaching of the above sermon and its being revised. Mr. Spurgeon is mending and begs for the prayers of his friends that he may, before long, be quite restored and may return to his work in full vigor.]

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OUR MISERIES, MESSENGERS OF MERCY

NO. 400

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 14, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Come and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn and He will heal us. He has smitten and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us: in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight.” Hosea 6:1, 2.**

TENDER fathers seek first to train their children by gentle means. The Lord, in His long-suffering dealt very kindly with His erring Israel, sending them favor after favor and blessing after blessing, saying by His acts, “I have given them their corn and their wine and their oil. They will surely turn unto Me and say, ‘Our Father, You shall be the guide of our youth.’ ” But the more He multiplied His bounties, the more they multiplied their iniquities as they burned sacrifice unto the gods of Edom and of Moab— even to those that were no gods, saying, “These be your gods, O Israel, which have given unto you your corn and your wine and your oil.”

So they spent the mercies of God in sacrifice upon their idols and committed transgressions with the false gods of the heathen. They consumed with their lusts the very mercies which God had sent to bring them to repentance. When at last God saw that this measure did not move them because their sin was written as with an iron pen and engraved upon the very horns of their altars—then He tried harsher means. He hewed them by the Prophets—they rose early and they prophesied until the going down of the sun, giving line upon line, precept upon precept—threatening them with the anger and vengeance of God.

At last that vengeance came. He carried them away captive and they went into a land that they knew not—among a cruel people—whose speech they could not understand. Again He delivered them out of the hand of their enemy. And yet, again, because of their sin, He sold them to Assyria and afterwards to Babylon. So that at last, after they had been rent and torn, they might say within themselves, “Come and let us return unto the Lord.”

Now, my Brethren, the people of Israel are but a picture of ourselves— especially are they representatives of a certain class, some of whom are now present. God has tried you with mercy upon mercy—kept you long in health till you scarcely ever had a day’s sickness. He has given you all that you could wish, till your cup was brimming and flowing over. But you used His mercies for your own self-indulgence and the bodily strength which was given you to be a blessing you have made a curse. Streams of mercy never ceasing, God has granted to you, and your return has been streams of sin, broad and black and deep.

And now today He has been changing His ways with you. I am speaking to some whom God has of late heavily afflicted. Seeing gentler means would not do He has turned your wine into wormwood and your honey

into gall. He has made you sick in body and dispirited in mind. Your earthly goods are melting like snow before the summer’s sun. Your children die before your very eyes and the desire of your heart is taken away with a stroke. God has made all His waves and His billows go over you. The Law has sounded its trumpet in your ear and brought your sin to remembrance. Conscience has started up in alarm from its long sleep and cries like a mighty man that wakes up from his slumber and finds the camp besieged.

You are troubled and sore broken. Your heart is melted like wax so that while you are sitting in the house of God today you are complaining, “I am the man that has seen affliction.” And perhaps worse than that you are groaning, “His wrath lies hard upon me, I cannot look up.” It is to you I am about to speak this morning. I single you out from the crowd and I trust while I address you there may be also some words of comfort or of instruction for the rest of the congregation. Oh, may you, my Hearer—you upon whom I fix my eye this morning, you whose case is the case of Israel in Hosea—may you say, “Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He has torn and He will heal us. He has smitten and He will bind us up.”

I desire to come straight up to you who are in this condition and put my hand inside yours—holding you fast while I strive in God’s name to reason with you—beseeching God the Holy Spirit to reason better than I can. I pray He sweetly moves your soul, till you say, “I will arise and go unto my Father.” Three things I must do this morning. First, I must deal a blow at the old Tempter, who has got the first hand at you. Secondly, I will come to reason comfortably with you. And then, thirdly, I must lovingly persuade you, saying—“Come, let us return unto the Lord.”

I. First then, I must DEAL A BLOW AT THE OLD TEMPTER WHO HAS GOTTEN BEFORE ME AND HAS BEGUN TO DECEIVE YOU.  
I cannot tell what is the precise temptation that Satan has been using with you, but I think it is very likely to be one of four. The first one has been this—“Oh,” says he, “see how troubled you are, nothing prospers with you. What pains of body you suffer and how depressed you are in spirit. God is a tyrant to you, He treats you cruelly. Hate Him—set your teeth together and curse him. Say, ‘If He treats me thus He is not a God that I can love. I will abhor Him from my very soul.’ ”  
I have uttered that temptation in startling language because such dark insinuations as this have been very common with much tried and troubled men. I remember many who, in telling their experience of how they were brought to Christ, have confessed that when first the hammer of God’s Law fell upon their hearts it hardened them. When God smote, they were like the bullock which kicks against the pricks of the ox-goad. They felt like a high blooded, unbroken horse—the bit was in their mouths— but they pulled and tugged at it. And the more it cut and wounded them the more resolved they were that they would not turn. In fact, hatred was stirred up against God by what was intended to bring them to His feet.  
Soul, does Satan tempt you thus? Then indeed it is a sad proof that sin is madness. I can only compare your case to yon poor maniac who has labored hard to destroy himself by throwing himself into the fire or into the water. Some kind person willing to bear all the inconveniences of such an office has volunteered to be his keeper. See, the man is dashing to the water’s brink and means to throw himself into the stream. His keeper holds him back and with stern words and sterner acts throws him down upon the ground and binds him so that he cannot take the fatal leap.  
But look again. He longs to burn himself, he makes a tremendous effort to thrust his body into the flame! But his keeper shuts him up in a room where he cannot get at the devouring flame. All the while this madman hates him, curses him, spits upon him and would do anything if he could but kill his keeper and tear him to pieces in his fury. Mark you, when the maniac shall get back his reason he will kiss the feet of that man whom now he hates, he will say—“I bless you for the loving violence which has restrained me from my own destruction. I thank you for denying me my own will—that you stood in my path and thwarted my mad desire—and that you would not let me ruin myself.”  
Now, poor sinner, God is doing this with you. Oh, do not hate Him. He does not hate you. He is not dealing with you in wrath, but in mercy. There is still behind the black cloud the sun of His mercy shining. Oh, that Satan may be cast out of you that you may not be tempted to hate God because of His sore smiting of you.  
Or, perhaps the temptations of Satan have taken another shape—not so much hatred as sullenness. You have lost all you care for now and you think that your state does not matter much to you. You would as soon die as live. And as for your soul, you think you cannot be more wretched in Hell itself than you are now. And you say, “So let it be. It is so bad that it cannot be mended.” You do not bestir yourself but you sit down with a stony heart waiting to be crushed. You are like some poor man benighted on the frozen Alps who feels sleep creeping upon him and is content to lie down there and die—as he certainly must unless some friendly hand shall shake him out of his desperate sleep.  
There is a kind of numbness which pain brings to the body, which has its equivalent in the spirit—a numbness because the grief has been so acute that nature could bear no more. Then death itself loses its horror in the nearer terrors of the soul. “My soul chooses strangling rather than life.” Soul, Satan desires to have you that he may utterly destroy you and this is one of his ways. He seeks to make you torpid that he may find you dead. For when you are sullen he knows that the warnings of the ministry and the earnest exhortations of the Gospel will have but little force with you. Wake, Man, wake! Your danger is awful! Multitudes have perished here.  
Wake, I pray you, wake! Oh, if you have any sensibility left, wake up! Depend on it, that bad as your case is, it will be worse in the world to come unless the badness of it be now blessed to your soul. Oh, Man, the pains you have had as yet are but as a hurt finger—they are but mere trifles compared with the miseries of eternity. Instead of opiates to make you sleep, let them be goads to stir your sluggish flesh and make you start from the deadly couch of presumption. I would be but too glad if I might thrust lancets into you again and again—anything sooner than you should sleep that sleep of death and be utterly destroyed.  
Possibly, however, the temptation of Satan has taken the form of despair. “Oh,” says he, “there is no hope for you. You can clearly perceive that you are the subject of divine hatred. God has not dealt with others as He has with you. These trials are but the first drops of the long shower of His eternal wrath. Depend upon it,” says Satan, “now that your conscience is in this state your convictions will deepen into a settled remorse. And then that remorse will end in final despair and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Your sins are too many and too great. There is hope for any man—but there is no hope for you. You are beyond the lines of mercy.  
“The arm of grace is not long enough or strong enough to reach such a wretch as you are. You are not jammed in Hell yet, but you are the same as if you were. You are reprobate. The decree shuts you out of Heaven while the greatness of your sin confirms it. You are bound up in fetters that cannot be broken and will be cast into a horrible pit out of which you never can be drawn.”  
Satan, you are a LIAR! Oh, that this poor heart did know it—I tell you this to your face, Satan, for you did once bewitch me with your falsehood. You did bring me into this state of despair, too—till I was ready to put an end to myself, because I thought nothing awaited me but the wrath of God. Oh, you lying Hell-hound, how you did slander my Lord and Master! He was willing to receive me but you made me think He would reject me. He stood waiting at the door of my heart, saying, “Open to Me,” and you said that He had gone, that He had shut up the heart of His compassion and doomed me forever to destruction.  
I will get even with you, you great destroyer of souls, for your cruel treachery with me—as long as I live I will raise the hue and cry against you. Soul, do not believe him—he is a murderer of souls—and a liar from the beginning. There is hope for you. There is hope for you now. There is still the Gospel preached to you—still is it freely presented in your hearing. May you say today, “Come, let us return unto the Lord” and He will heal you. He will bind you up. He will receive you to His heart. He will in no wise cast you out.  
But it may occur that yet a fourth temptation has been tried with some of you. Satan has said, “Well, now, you can see it is of no use. Give it up altogether and if you cannot be happy one way, try another. You clearly perceive that you are shut out of Heaven, Well, make the best of this world.” “Now,” says the devil, “Christ will not have you. What is the use of your going to a place of worship? Do not go. Stay away. It is hopeless. The Gospel will never be of any use to you. You have heard it these three or four years and you only are more hardened. Don’t go again. Besides, why make yourself miserable for nothing? Drink your fill of the world’s delight. If you cannot get the best good, get the other. Eat, drink and be merry.  
“Live a fast life and satisfy yourself. You may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. You may as well perish for a great sin as perish for a little one. God evidently has cast you off—follow your own way and choose your own delight.” Oh, Soul! Oh, soul! How sad it is that these afflictions and warnings of conscience which are meant to bring you to Christ should be used by Satan as the reason why you should go from Christ. Oh, Soul, the Lord has designs of mercy for you now. He has begun to try you in your circumstances and afflict you in your soul. And the devil knows it and is afraid of losing you and so he wants you to get out of the way of mercy just when mercy is coming.  
What? Suppose you have as yet gained no good by attending the means of grace—does that prove that you will not soon be blessed? You are traveling in the wilderness. You had a torch and the wind blew it out—you lit it again and it blew it out again. Do not say that therefore you will never see. The sun is rising, the sun is rising and the fact that torches have been blown out does not prove that the night will last forever. If your false hopes have left you and your self-righteous trusts have all been taken away, I am glad. I am glad it is dark with you—for the darkest part of the night is that which heralds the dawning of the day.  
I am glad the Lord has laid you low, for it is now He means to lift you up. Do not, I pray you, be cajoled out of this divine mercy by the temptations of the fiend of Hell. Rouse yourself, Man! Cry, “Through He slay me yet will I trust in Him! If I am at Bethesda’s pool and the water is not stirred, yet will I die there,” (that you will never do—mark that). “Though I pray and He hears me not, yet my cries even to my dying hour shall go up to Him.” And mark you, He will surely hear you! Only do not be led astray of the Evil One to turn what is the mercy of God into an excuse for excess of riot. Instead listen now to the voice of wisdom and mercy while I seek in the second place to reason with you comfortably that I may bring you to say, “Come, let us return unto the Lord.”  
II. Now forget your troubles for a little while if you can—or only think of them as a background for the brightness of THE COMFORT which I would give you as God’s messenger.  
1. So you say you have had so many trials in life and so many strivings of conscience that therefore you feel you must be too guilty to be saved? Do you think that you have been punished for your sins? Permit me to remind you that this is not the place where the Judge of all the earth usually punishes sin. His wrath He reserves for the Day of Judgment and the world to come. All sorrow is the result of sin. But still it does not come to any particular man except in some remarkable instances. Now there was Job—will you equal him among the saints? Was he not one of the chief of them?  
Yet he was more tried than any other man. That evidently was not because he was a greater sinner than others. Do you not know the fact that often the most wicked men are the most prosperous, while the most holy are the most afflicted? Therefore this is not the place where God dispenses Providence according to the sole and absolute rule of justice. That is to be in the world to come. How would you account for such an instance as this, which occurred not long ago in a certain railway accident? There were two men who entered the train. One of them a Christian, the other a worldling. The Christian man took his seat. So did the other.  
At a station the worldly one said, “I should like a game of cards. Will you get out and go with me?—there is So-and-So in such a carriage— come with me and we will play together.” “No,” said the other, “I would much rather be out of your company, if that is what you are at.” “Well then,” said he, “good morning, I am going there.” An accident of the most frightful character occurred. The Christian man saw those on each side of him killed—his two companions crushed and he himself such a mass of bruises and broken bones as you scarcely ever saw. His leg was broken in seven different places and he was, as it seemed, at death’s door.  
His companion who went to play cards was perfectly safe. All the carriage in which he rode was untouched! Now this plainly shows that this is not of the world in which God deals with men according to the rules of justice. Ships sink whether men are at prayer or whether they are cursing God. Providence here is not ordered according to the rule by which God shall dispense His favors or His fury in the world to come. This is the land of long-suffering rather than of execution. This is the land where God in His wise Providence rather brings us to repentance than to punishment. Now I can see the hand of God in all. The man who escaped as a card player, I fear, was hardened by the Providence by which he escaped.  
Yet, mark you, God was glorified because His Providence will become a savor of death unto death to that man should he live and die impenitent— while in the Christian who was thus injured God is honored. For if you could see him as I saw him—with his smiling face relating the fact that he has never murmured once though he had laid upon his bed for very many weeks—you would only admire the favor and goodness of God which gave the sinner space for repentance and gave the believer room to display the grace of patience. It was good for the one that he was afflicted. It was good for the other that he escaped.  
But this is not the hand of punishment and your having more afflictions than others may be because God loves you. Certainly it is not because He hates you. I have seen the wicked in great power—spreading themselves like green bay-trees. And I have seen them in their death, too—and they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. They are at ease, they are settled on their lees. They are not emptied from vessel to vessel. As for God’s people—they are chastened every morning and vexed every evening—and the Lord’s hand lies heavy on them. Yet there is God’s goodness in that heavy hand and infinite loving kindness in their tribulations.  
God only gives the wicked prosperity as we give husks to swine. He gives them this world’s transient things because He loves them not. I pray you then, do not misconstrue your sufferings of body and mind—they may be tokens of mercy. They certainly are not indicators of any special wrath.  
Secondly, you will say that you have great distress of mind and trials of soul and therefore there is no hope for you. I say, therefore, there is hope. Perhaps some of those troubles of mind come from Satan. Now observe This—Satan very seldom troubles those men who are all his own. A poor Negro who had been tempted by Satan was once laughed at by his master about it. Said he, “The devil never tempts me, I do not even know that there is such a being in existence.” They went out sometime after shooting wild ducks. As the master shot at a covey of them and some of them were wounded he was exceedingly earnest with clubs and stones to secure those that were wounded—while he left those that were evidently dead to float on the stream till he had time to pick them up.  
This gave the Negro a fine opportunity of explaining his master’s experience. “Massa, while you was a splashin’ in de water after dem wounded ducks and lettin’ de dead ones float on, it jist come into my mind why it is dat de debil troubles me so much while he lets you alone. You are like de dead ducks—he’s sure he’s got you safe. I’m like de wounded ones—trying to git away from him—and he’s afraid I’ll do it, so he makes all de fuss after me and jist lets you float on down de stream.  
“He knows he can get you any time, but he knows it now or never wid me. If you were to begin to flutter a little and show signs like you were a goin’ to get away from him he would make jist as big a splashin’ after you as he does after me.” But again, you will remember that it is not God’s way to send convictions of sin to

reprobates. Do men plow the sand? Do they send their oxen upon the rock? Do they attempt to use materials that are utterly rotten? No, they give them up and leave them alone. Now, why is the all-wise Jehovah at work with you unless He has gracious designs for you? I hope it is because He is about to bring you to Himself.  
Let me show you in the third place that this is according to the analogy of nature. Did you ever hear this parable?—There was a certain shepherd who had a sheep which he desired to lead into another and better field. He called it and it would not come. He led it and it would not follow. He drove it but it would only follow in own devices. At last he thought within himself, “I will do this.” The sheep had a little lamb by its side and the shepherd took the lamb up in his arms and carried it away and then the ewe came, too. And so with you—God has been calling to you, mother and you did not come.  
Christ said “Come,” and you would not. He sent affliction and you would not come. Then He took your child away and you came then. You followed the Savior then. You see it was loving work on the shepherd’s part—He did but take the lamb to save the sheep. The Savior took your child to Heaven that He might bring you to Heaven. We had before the Church the other night a sister who is here now. I dare say there were four in the family and the Lord took one child away. But that was not enough—He took another and another—and the fourth lay sick and ready to die. And then the mother’s heart was broken—and mother and father both came to Jesus.  
Oh, blessed afflictions, blessed losses, blessed deaths that end in spiritual life! Now this, I trust, is how God is dealing with you. You know if a man has a field and desires to gather a harvest from it, what does he do? First of all he plows it. The field might say, “Why these scars across my face? Why thus upturn my sods?” Because there can be no sowing till there has been plowing. Sharp plowshares make furrows for good seed.  
Or take yet another picture from nature. A man desires to make of a rusty piece of iron a bright sword which shall be serviceable to a great warrior. What does he do? He puts it into the fire and melts it. He takes away all its dross and removes all its impurities. Then he fashions it with his hammer. He beats it full sore upon the anvil. He anneals it in one fire after another till at last it comes out a good blade that will not snap in the day of warfare. This is what God does with you—I pray you do not misread the book of God’s Providence. If you read it aright it runs thus—“I will have mercy on this man and therefore have I smitten him and wounded him. Come, therefore, let us return unto the Lord, for He has wounded and He will heal, He has smitten and He will bind us up.”  
I have other arguments to use and you must bear with me somewhat patiently. You are wounded in spirit this morning, poor Mourner. Will you remember that it is God’s delight to bind up broken hearts? “He tells the number of the stars.” What is the next verse—do you remember it?—“He binds up the broken in heart.” What a mighty stoop this is! From counting the stars and leading them forth—mighty worlds though they are—He bows to become a surgeon to the poor wounded heart! You know what Christ’s occupation is in Heaven?—“He shall wipe away tears from off all faces.”  
What a blessed occupation—wiping away tears! Soul, Christ will be glad to wipe away your tears now. He delights to do it—Christ is never more happy than when He is showing His heart to sinners. He is so glad when He can find His poor lost sheep and put it on His shoulders and carry it home. It will make you glad to be saved. But He will be infinitely glad to save you and delighted to receive you, for He delights in mercy.  
Please remember, yet once again, that the wounds which you now feel He made Himself and if He is willing to heal any wounds, how much more those that He has Himself made? There are some diseases in which the surgeon is compelled to wound. The proud flesh has gotten in. The cure has been a bad one and in order that it may be thoroughly sound, he perhaps makes a cross cut—a deep cross cut that goes into the very core of the matter. Well, his lances have made a bad wound—do you think the doctor will not do his best to heal it?  
I will go to him and say, “Surgeon, you did yourself make the wound— you made it in order to my healing. heal the wound, I pray you, heal me.” Occasionally when a man has broken his leg, it has been badly set by some bungler and when he has consulted a skillful surgeon, he says, “I can do nothing for you till I break your leg again.” And so often is it with men’s minds. They get peace, peace, when there is no peace and there is no doing anything with them until God breaks their heart again. Suppose a surgeon should break a man’s leg again—do you think he would go away and leave the poor man without setting it? No, he broke that he might heal it—that he might make the cure a sound one.  
And so is it, perhaps, with your broken heart. Go to Him, then, go to Him. Say, “Lord, you did break my heart. I was a hard blasphemer once but You have brought me to my knees. I once said, ‘I would never enter a place of worship.’ Lord, you know I go there now, though I get no comfort. But I pray You give me comfort. It was such-and-such a sermon that brought me to despair—Lord, guide Your servant to preach another that will bring me into liberty. Lord, if You have not broken my heart, break it now. But if you have broken it, Lord, I appeal to You to heal it. You have begun the work by killing me, finish the work by making me alive. You have begun by stripping me, Lord, clothe me.”  
That is a good argument. He will surely do it, He will not fail to carry on and complete that which He has begun to perform.  
Once more only—and perhaps this will be the best argument of all— remember you have got His promise for it. The text I read is a promise. It looks at first sight as if it were spoken by man and so it is. But then inasmuch as it is put in God’s Book as the utterance of God’s inspired Prophet, it is a part of God’s Word and it is warranted to be most true. “He has torn and He will heal.” Go and put your finger on this text and say, “Lord, You have torn me and it is written in Your word, ‘He will heal us.’”—  
*“Lord, I know You cannot lie,  
Heal my soul or else I die.”*  
Put you your finger on the next—“He will bind us up.” Say, “Lord, I do not deserve it. I deserve only to perish, but then You have said You will do it—be as good as Your Word. Lord, here is a poor sinner near despair, he comes to you—bind up his broken heart. Give him peace.” And Soul, the everlasting hills shall bow, the hoary deep shall itself be burned up and earth’s foundation shall be removed—but God’s Word shall never pass away, nor shall His promise fail in one single case! Only believe the promise. Receive the promise—and this very day—poor broken heart, He will heal your wounds and you shall have joy and peace in believing through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
III. I shall not detain you much longer, but I have now the third point to dwell upon and, O Spirit of the living God, bless these words! Jesus, woo hearts to Yourself while we seek to win them to Your love.  
And now I would come LOVINGLY TO PERSUADE YOU and the persuasion I would use is this—“Come, let us return unto the Lord.” Do you see it? The Prophet does not say, “Go,” but “Come.” He does not say, “Go you,” but “Come, let us.” Poor Soul, you say there is none like yourself. Behold I take my place side-by-side with you. Are you a sinner? So am I. Do you deserve God’s wrath? So do I. Have you gone very far astray? So have I. Come, let us return, let us go together. Or if that comforts you not enough, let me tell you I have gone as you now are. As despairing, perhaps more so. As cast down, perhaps worse. But I have found Him to be a loving Savior, a blessed Savior, willing and able to save to the uttermost.  
Soul, come and try Him, come and try Him. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ—did Christ reject you when you came to Him? You were as bad as others, some of you were worse—did He reject you? I am sure that if I should ask it there would be not one thousand here but a vast company who would rise and say, “I sought the Lord and He heard me. This poor man cried and the Lord heard me and delivered me from all my fears.” Soul, come, let us return. He saved me. He will save you.  
**“Tell it unto sinners tell—**  
I **am,**I **am saved from Hell.”**  
If he could and would save one, why not another? And if the thousands of Israel, why not poor sinful you?  
Then, that I may persuade you further, let me remind you that to return to God is not a cruel request. He does not ask you to perform a pilgrimage and blister your weary feet, or to thrust an iron in your back and swing yourself aloft as does the Hindu. He asks you not to lie on a bed of spikes or starve yourself till you can count your bones. He asks no suffering of you—for Christ has suffered for you. All He asks is that you would return to Him and what is that?—that you would be unfeignedly sorry for your past sins. That you would ask His grace to keep you from sin in the future. That you would now believe in Christ who is set forth to be the propitiation for sin—that through faith in His blood you may see your sin forever put away and all your iniquity cancelled. That is neither a hard nor a cruel demand. It is for your good as well as for His glory. O Spirit of God, make the sinner now willing to repent and to believe in Christ!  
But yet again—remember the comfortable fruits which will surely follow if you return. What would you think if I could show you yourself within a week? There you stand. You are singing —  
*“A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of Covenant mercy I sing;  
Nor fear with your righteousness on,  
My person and offering to bring.  
The terrors of Law and of God,  
With me can have nothing to do;  
My Savior’s obedience and blood,  
Hide all my transgressions from view.”*  
What man is that? Why that is the man who came in here last Sunday morning and said he was utterly lost. He heard the minister exhort him to trust Christ and he did it—and that is where he is standing now. He has been brought up out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay and his feet are set upon a rock. “If I thought that would be the case,” says one, “I would try it.” My dear Sir, you need not think it will be the case. God promises—and He cannot lie—“He that believes and is baptized”—He does not say, “may be,” but “shall be saved.” And God’s “shalls” and “wills” do not play with men. But He speaks them in real earnestness, “Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”  
Dare you say that this is not true? “No,” you say, “it is undoubtedly true.” Well, then, if you call upon the name of the Lord you shall be saved, or else the promise is false. Again, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they will be whiter than snow.” Do you believe that? Is it not a promise made to the penitent who casts himself at the feet of Jesus? Very well, try it personally. And if you cast yourself there—either this Book must be withdrawn and God must change—Christ’s blood must lose its power—or else He must and will save you.  
Oh, that there were such a heart in you and such a mind towards God that you would now say, “I do believe. I will believe. I trust my Savior with my soul.” This done, you are saved. Once more, may I not plead with you to return to God because of the precious love of Christ? Love, I know, has great power to move. You will remember how in that wonderful book, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” there is a singular instance of the power of love. Miss Ophelia had been laboring to train up that wicked girl, Topsy, but she would not learn anything. Miss Ophelia tried to make her say the Assembly’s Catechism in order that she might know all about it.  
But one day, Eva, the little Eva, (the very Gospel incarnate, just as Miss Ophelia was the picture of the Law), sits down by her side and says to her, “Topsy, why will you be so naughty? What is it makes you so wicked?” “Miss Eva,” says Topsy, “it aren’t no use my being good—nobody loves me.” The little girl puts her arm round her neck and kisses her, saying, “Why I love you, Topsy and it grieves me very much to see you so naughty.” “Oh,” said Topsy, “I will try to be good if you will but love me.” Love had won the poor child and had subdued her.  
Well, now, perhaps you are saying, “If Christ would but say He would love me, I think I could repent that I ever sinned against Him. I think I would be willing to give Him my heart.” Soul, if that is what you say, He does love you. He loved you and gave Himself for you. Behold His Cross— is there better proof of love than that? See His flowing wounds. Hear how He groans. Behold Him dying! “It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and He saves them because He loves them.  
Oh, if that love will woo you, it is indeed in plenteous abundance flowing down to you now. “Ah, well,” you say, “I cannot do enough for Him.” If that be true, I am glad you have got as far as that and I have finished when I have told you an anecdote which I trust will do us all good.  
A missionary was preaching to the Maori tribe of the New Zealanders. He had been telling them of the suffering love of Christ. How He had poured forth His soul unto death for them. And as he concluded, the hills rung to the thrilling question—“Is it nothing to any who pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow?” Then stood forth a plumed and painted chief, the scarred warrior of a thousand fights. And as his lips quivered with suppressed emotion, he spoke, “And did the Son of the Highest suffer all this for us men? Then this Indian chief would like to offer Him some poor return for His great love. Would the Son of God deign to accept this Indian’s hunting dog? Swift of foot and keen of scent, the tribe has not such another and he has been to the Indian as a friend.”  
But the missionary told him that the Son of God had need of no such gifts as these. Thinking he had mistaken the gift, the chief resumed—“Yet maybe He would accept this Indian’s rifle? Unerring of aim, the chief cannot replace it.” Again the missionary shook his head. For a moment the chief paused. Then as a new thought struck him, suddenly despoiling himself of his striped blanket, he cried with childlike earnestness, “Perhaps He who had not where to lay His head will yet accept the chieftain’s blanket. This poor Indian will be cold without it, yet it is offered joyfully.”  
Touched by love’s persistency, the missionary tried to explain to him the real nature of the Son of God—that it was not men’s gifts but men’s hearts that He yearned for. For a moment a cloud of grief darkened the granite features of the old chief. Then as the true nature of the Son of God, by His grace, slowly dawned upon him, casting aside his blanket and rifle he clasped his hands—and looking right up into the blue sky, his face beaming with joy, he exclaimed—“Perhaps the Son of the Blessed One will deign to accept this poor Indian himself!”  
Is that what you say this morning? You would give Christ this and that and the other? Soul, give Him your heart. Say to Him now,  
*“Jesus, I love Your charming name,  
’Tis music to my ear;  
I wish I could sound it out so loud,  
That earth and Heaven might hear.”*  
And then it is done. The compact is concluded. The work is over. You are in the arms of Christ. You love Him and He loves you. He wounded you but He has healed. He killed you but He has made you alive. Go in peace. You are loved much. Your sins which are many, by God’s grace, are all forgiven you. Amen!

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

**“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”  
Hosea 6:3.**

I MUST first remove the moldy piece from the text, and that is the word, “if,” which has no sort of business here whatever. You notice that the translators put it in italics, to intimate to us that it was no Word of God, but one of their own words which they thought necessary to complete the sense. We might read—and we should, to be far nearer the sense—“Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord.” Or, perhaps, better still, “We shall know: we shall follow on to know the Lord,” for there is no trace of question in the matter, and no indication of an, “if.” We will cut out man’s, “if,” and then take the text as it should have been—“Then shall we know when we follow on to know the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning.”

I continually hear it said concerning those who have been converted, or profess to have been converted of late, “We hope they will hold on.” I wish people would speak what they mean and not veil their speech, for the plain English of that expression frequently is, “We do not believe that they will hold on.” “We hope they will,” means, “We do not expect it.” One thing is quite certain, however—those who are truly converted to God can be safely left in God’s hands. If they have, indeed, believed in Jesus Christ— in Jesus only, with all their hearts—their salvation is as sure as if they were already within the gates of Paradise! The Redeemer will not suffer any soul to perish trusting in Him—

*“His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of His sheep,  
All that His heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep.  
Nor death, nor Hell, shall ever remove  
His favorites from His breast,  
In the dear bosom of His love  
They must forever rest.”*

Question whether it is a work of Grace if you will, though I would much rather the questioning spirit were laid aside. But if it is the Lord’s work, it will stand, for neither time nor eternity, nor life nor death, shall ever cast down that which Divine Omnipotence builds up! Jehovah puts not His hands to a work which shall ultimately crumble into nothingness! My dear young Friends, if you have believed in Jesus and are tormented by these quibblers, with their pretended hopes as to your holding on, I beseech you, be in earnest to disappoint the fears of your friends and the expectations of your foes, by living near to God, by asking for persevering Grace,

by watching carefully every step you take and by guarding jealously, by the aid of the blessed Spirit, your own hearts in private, lest by any means the enemy get an advantage over you.

Let it be the great object of your ambition that you may hold on and hold out to the end—and so prove that the Lord has, indeed, looked upon you with an eye of love. There is a sweet verse in one of our hymns which I commend to you who are beginners in the Divine Life—

*“We have no fear that You should lose  
One whom eternal love could choose;  
But we would never that Grace abuse,  
Let us not fall, let us not fall.”*

The first part of the text meets all doubts about perseverance in Divine Grace and the second comforts souls distressed for another reason. While some young Christians are troubled about whether they shall hold on, others are very much exercised because of the slenderness of their knowledge. They compare themselves with older Christians and they say, “How can I be a child of God when I know so little?” They even contrast themselves with their teachers and because they, as they might naturally expect, are somewhat behind them, they conclude that surely they cannot have been taught of God at all!

I beseech these friends to remember that the green blade has not the ripeness of the full ear, nor can it expect to have as yet—that the child has not the experience nor the strength of the man, nor can he expect to have as yet—that the early morning has not the warmth of noon, nor can we expect it should have. It has its own peculiar beauties, though it has not yet the full glory of meridian splendor. There is a growth in the Divine Life. You do not know what you shall know, you are not what you shall be, you have not yet what you shall have, you do not enjoy what you shall enjoy. But these are among the things to come which are yours.

I begin, therefore, the handling of my text with this double remark—let not the fears of some that you will not hold on disturb you, rather let them excite you to lean more fully upon Christ. And let not your own consciousness of ignorance depress you—let that, also, lead you nearer to the Savior, who alone teaches us to profit. In our text there are three points. The first is, our business—“Follow on to know.” The second is, God’s promise—“Then shall you know.” And the third is, the modes by which this promise is fulfilled—“His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

I. First, then, here is OUR BUSINESS. It is to follow on to know the Lord. And that implies, first, that we begin with knowing the Lord. You cannot follow on with that which you have not commenced. There is a religiousness which contains in it no knowledge of God whatever. Beware of it! The religion which consists only in the knowledge of outward rites and ceremonies, or the knowledge of orthodoxies, the knowledge of doctrinal distinctions, the knowledge of religious language and brogues and experiences or the knowledge of popular hymns—that religion is vain. There must be a knowledge of God!

And, mark you, if you know God, you will think very little of yourself. He who knows not God thinks man a noble being—he who has seen God thinks man to be dust and ashes. He who knows not God’s holiness thinks himself to be a good creature, but when he sees a thrice-holy God he says, “I abhor myself.” He who knows not God thinks man to be a wonderful being, able to accomplish whatever he wills. But in the sight of God, human strength is burned up and man becomes lighter than vanity. Do you know God? O my dear Hearer, do you know God in the majesty of His Justice as condemning your sin and you for sin?

Do you know God in the splendor of His Love, as giving Jesus Christ to die for sinners, blending that Love with Justice—for Love gave Jesus and Justice slew Him? Do you know God in the fullness of His power to save, renewing the heart, changing the mind, subduing the will? Do you know Him, even, in this which is, comparatively, a slender branch of knowledge? If you do, you have begun to know Him and you have begun to know yourself, too, for he knows not himself who does not know something of God. Oh, to know the Father as my Father who has kissed me and put the best robe upon me! Oh, to know the Son as my Brother, in whose garments I am accepted and stand comely in the sight of God! Oh, to know the Spirit as the Quickener and the Divine Indweller and Illuminator, by whose light, alone, we see, and in whose life we live!

To know the Lord—that is true religion! And I say again, any religion, whatever it is—Churchianity or Nonconformity, or whatever you like—if it does not lead you to know God, it is of no use whatever. The knowledge of God is the basis of all saving experience. “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.” “Acquaint yourself, now, with Him and be at peace.” This is the one great business of human life—to know the Lord. And next, our business is to advance in this knowledge. We must shut out of our minds all ideas that we fully know the Lord, for the text says, “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know.” Now a man will never follow on if he judges that he has reached the end! If he comes to the conclusion, “I know the Lord. I know all about Him. I know all that is knowable”—that man will not follow on and, therefore, I am afraid that he will never know the Lord at all.

I trembled for a very beloved Brother the other day when I heard that he had declared that he could not sing “Nearer my God, to You,” for he was already as near to God as it was possible to be. Brothers and Sisters, my soul feels a horror creeping over it when such expressions are used! And more so when they fall from those I love. I know nothing about such talk as that—it seems to me to be sheer vanity! I think I know the Lord— no, I know that I know Him. I have been favored with His Presence and have enjoyed a very clear sense of my acceptance in the Beloved, but to suppose that I know all that is to be known, or that I possess, in myself, all the holiness that a creature can attain this side of the grave, is as far from me as the east is from the west!

I growingly feel my unworthiness—I sink lower and lower in my own judgement. I was nothing and now I am less than nothing. I do not know the Lord as I hope to know Him. I would have you remember that the Apostle Paul said that he desired to know Christ. If you look at the Epistle to the Philippians, which contains that wish, you will find that it was written by Paul at least 20 years after he had been converted! He had enjoyed 20 years of walking very near to God and of very marvelous Revelations— 20 years of very successful working for God, such as, perhaps, were never accorded to any other man—and yet he still aspires, “That I may know Him.” What? Paul, do you not know Him? “Oh, yes,” he would reply, “I know Him so sweetly, so blessedly, but I would wish to know Him better still. The more I know Him, the more I find there is yet to be known. He is such a deep of Love! He is such a mountain of Mercy that as I dive deeper, a further deep opens up to me! And as I climb higher, a loftier peak towers above me.”

Dear Hearer, if you think you can never be better than you are, I do not think you ever will be. Self-contentment is the end of progress! When you have attained, why, what remains for you but to rest and be thankful, and do a little pious boasting? I do not believe you if you say you have got to the ultimatum. As long as you are this side of Heaven there will be room for progress and something yet beyond you after which you will labor. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know.” You will still have to press forward and the exhortation will still sound in your ears—

*“Forget the steps already trod,  
And onward urge your way.”*

Not as though you had already attained, either were already perfect, this one thing you do, forgetting the things that are behind, press forward, still looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. Our business, then, is to begin with the knowledge of God, to press forward in the knowledge of God, and not to flatter ourselves into the idea that we have no more to learn.

Another thought. Our business is to continue in what we know. There are some persons who are everything by turns and nothing long. They say that they have begun to know the Lord in the right way, but very soon you find them following another route. A tree which is often transplanted is not likely to bring forth much fruit. The vessel which changes its course because its captain is full of caprice, is not likely to make headway to any desired haven. Brethren, in whatever you have attained, mind the same thing—rush not after novelties, as certain vagrant bands in this city are always doing. If you have begun in the Spirit, do not hope to be made perfect in the flesh! If all that you have already known concerning your Lord has come to you by faith, do not expect the rest of it to come by feeling.

Some Christians seem to live by jerks. They live as bankrupt sinners, dependent upon the mercy of God—and then they get encouraged, and set up to live as saints rolling in riches of realized sanctification. But before long they are insolvent again, and no wonder, for this sort of paper money generally leads to a collapse. Keep to the one point—“I am nothing. Christ is everything. I am sin. He is my righteousness. I am death. He is my life. I look to Him for everything. I trust not in excitement or feeling, or attainments, or graces, or works—I rely on Jesus only.” Brothers and Sisters, that is the fight path to follow. Follow on! Turn not to the right hand or to the left. Your hope of knowing more of Divine things must lie in your persevering in this course.

But take care that you persevere eagerly. I find the Hebrew here is strong enough to bear to be translated, “Then shall you know if you eagerly follow on to know the Lord.” The knowledge of God is not to be attained, certainly no great proficiency in it is to be attained, without an intense desire. Even to obtain human knowledge, a man separates himself and engages in much study which is “a weariness of the flesh.” If we would know God it will not be by trifling over His Word, nor by neglecting the assembling of ourselves together, nor by slighting the Mercy Seat, or neglecting private meditation. There must be a keen scent and an eager pursuit, as when the hound pursues the stag, for we cannot know much of God so as to feel His going forth as the morning and His refreshing as the dew, except our heart thirsts after God as the hart thirsts for the water brooks.

Let me urge you, newly-converted ones, to be very diligent in searching the Word of God! Be much in attendance upon the means of Grace, but, especially, be much with God privately, holding personal communion alone with God. You may learn something of a person by reading his books. You may get a better idea of him by hearing him speak. But if you want to know him best, you must live with him. Even so you may know much of God from His Word and much from the speech of His servants. But if you want to really know Him, you must abide with Him in habitual communion. I urge this upon you—then shall you know Him, when, in this manner, you follow on to know the Lord.

Once more. Our business is to be receptive. If we are to know the Lord we must follow on to know the Lord by being willing to learn. Notice that the text says, “He shall come unto us as the rain.” Now, the earth drinks in the rain. That portion of the soil which repels the rain—the rock, which turns it off from its surface—cannot be blessed thereby. It is a great blessing to have a soul capable of receiving Divine Truth. Alas, there are some who have heard the Gospel so long that they have almost become Graceresistant! I have seen a new tent, when a shower has come on, let in the wet in a hundred places. But, after a while, when the canvas has been well swollen with the rain, it has become waterproof and not a drop has come through.

Certain hearers seem to be so saturated with the rain of the Word that they are Gospelproof! The heavenly moisture does not penetrate them. They hear, but hear in vain—insensible as steel. Open your breasts to Christ whenever He comes! Let the gates of your heart be set wide open, that He may enter. Let him not knock, and knock, and knock again in vain! When Jesus of Nazareth passes by, let Him see that there is an open door to your house, so that if, today, He must abide in your house, He may come in and welcome. The Lord opens the door of our hearts like

that of Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened.” Prejudice often shuts out the Word—some people do not know the Lord, or much about Him, because they do not want to know. Certain points of God’s Truth would disturb what they call their, “settled views,” and therefore they wear blinkers for fear of seeing too much.

Happy is that man who wants to find Truth wherever it may be and is glad to discover and amend his errors, because his heart is set upon being right before the Lord! He longs to follow the Lord fully, as Caleb did of old. Here, then, Beloved, is our business. May Grace be given to us to attend to it—to know the Lord to begin with, to exclude all idea that there is nothing further to know, to continue in what is known, to persevere eagerly in the endeavor to know more—and to daily be receptive of Divine influences.

II. Now, secondly, we have GOD’S PROMISE—“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” You shall know, young Friend! God says that you shall know! What will you know? Why, you will know, when you follow on to know the Lord, more about the past. Take the text in its connection. You observe that it details the experience—the very perplexing experience—of a quickened soul. “He has torn and He will heal; He has smitten and He will heal us up; after two days He will revive us,” and so on.

Now, you do not know, perhaps, at this time, what your present experience means. You thought that as soon as you believed in Jesus you would have perfect peace and joy—and that your delight would never depart from you. You have heard others sing, “Oh, happy days,” and you have sung it yourself. But just now you do not feel at all as happy as you hoped to be. On the contrary, you feel very miserable because you have found out that the devil is not dead—and that your sins are not dead—and that outside in the world, people do not look upon you with any greater love because you are a Christian. In fact, on the contrary, they oppose you! Some of your dearest relatives even scoff at you for loving the name of Jesus! And you are a good deal staggered by their opposition.

Besides, you do not enjoy prayer as you did at first and the Bible, itself, scarcely seems to glitter before your eyes as in your first love. And even the sermons, which seemed to be so very sweet, appear somehow to have become sharp and cutting to you. Well, you will understand all this byand-by. When we are very little, our mothers carry us in their arms. But when we get a little bigger they set us on our own feet. It is natural that the child that has to walk alone should, when weary, regret that the time is over when it lay so closely in its mother’s bosom. Yet it is good for the babe to try its own feet—good for it to tumble down and know its own weakness—or else it might always be helpless. Many things in the beginning of Christian life are very pleasant and delightful, but trials come in due time to exercise our graces that we may be no longer children.

We do not understand this at the time and to the raw recruit I would say, do not wish to understand it now! You shall understand it when you follow on to know the Lord. Leave your experience to God. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and hang on to that—and when you cannot comprehend your own feelings, and your religion all seems to be in a tangle, never mind—hold on to the Cross and sing—

*“I, the chief of sinners, am,*

*But Jesus died for me.”*  
Stand to that! Rest in the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins and, by-and-by, you shall know all about the winding experiences through which you are now going. Then shall you know, when you follow on to know the Lord.

Beloved, the text means not only that we shall know about the past, but as we follow on to know the Lord we shall know in the present the sweet things of the Gospel and the enjoyments which are stored up for the Lord’s people. “Eye has not seen, neither has ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.” You will not know the choice things which God has prepared for His people except as, by degrees, the Spirit of God reveals them to you. Press on to know more of God!

I know it sometimes puzzles you to hear us talk of election. You cannot quite understand the Doctrine of Eternal Love which had no beginning and never shall have an end—of Immutable Love which neither shifts nor changes, of vital union to Christ—Justification through Imputed Righteousness, and the like. Very well, we will not trouble you with high sounding terms and theological phrases. But as you follow on to know the Lord you will know the deep things of God. Continue to follow on to know more about Christ. Stick to the one desire—to know more about Him—and you will find your way through difficulties.

As in a maze, if you follow the clue, you will get to the center of it. Christ is the clue to all Gospel mysteries—follow that silken clue stained with scarlet and you will arrive at all those precious Truths of God one by one and have the present enjoyment of them as God shall see that you are able to bear them. He deals with us in much prudence and according as our strength is, so does He reveal these choice things to us. “You cannot bear them now,” said Christ concerning certain Truths which He would gladly have taught to His disciples. So you beginners cannot bear the higher doctrines, now, and if we were to preach them to you we should stagger you, but you will bear them soon. No, you will love them soon and, whereas they may seem bugbears to you tonight, the day shall come when you shall bless God that ever He revealed them in Scripture and you will be prepared to die in defense of them!

Beloved Christian Friends, those of you who have gone to greater lengths than others in Divine knowledge may well take this promise to yourselves as to the future—“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” We know something of our Lord’s love and faithfulness, and truth and power to save. We know the Covenant of Grace and we have seen something of its lengths and breadths and depths and heights. But we are conscious that we have no more fully understood the boundless

Love and Grace than the child who takes up a handful of water from the sea has held the Atlantic in his palm! But we shall know, we shall know! We shall know more and more and more, and especially we shall know more as we get nearer to Heaven.

That land Beulah teaches very much. Saints grow speedily wise in that region where the angels bring bundles of spices from the other side of the river—and stray notes from the harps of angels are borne on favoring breezes to the blessed ears of God’s beloved ones who are waiting to be called away. We shall know. All that has been revealed to the saints shall be revealed to us when we follow on to know the Lord. Their rapturous enjoyments when they have been overcome with Divine Love —we shall drink of those wines on the lees, well refined. Their confident assurance when they were as certain of their interest in Divine Love as of their own existence—we shall climb to that and stand upon our high places, too. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.”

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, can you guess what yet is to be revealed to you? Could you have imagined at the outset of the Christian life that you would, or could have had such confidence and rest and peace as you have now? I ask those of you who have had many trials and have been rooted and established in the faith—could you have thought it possible that you would have had such a grip and hold on Christ as you now have? Perhaps you were, for many years, under a misty, cloudy ministry—and yourselves in a sort of semi-darkness, “not light, but darkness visible”—but the Lord has brought you out to see all things finished in Christ and to understand the Covenant of Grace! Oh, what brightness is before you now!

But—but the day comes, even before you get to Heaven, when the light of this day shall be as dimness compared with what you shall behold! For the light of one day shall then be as the light of several days, if you press forward in this knowledge as God shall help you. There are ascending rungs in the Ladder of Grace and stages each one above the other in the Divine climbing. The mount of the Lord is very high—he who stands, even, at the base is saved—but there are higher platforms and we ascend first to one and then to another! And from the elevations, gradually rising, the scene widens and the air grows clearer. Oh, to be higher, higher, higher and so near to light, nearer to perfection, nearer to God! Press on, O Climber, and you shall find that you shall know more and more of the Lord as you press towards Him!

III. The third and last point is THE FULFILMENT OF THIS PROMISE. I will not be very long over the two figures lest I should weary you, but they are both very suggestive. “His going forth is prepared as the morning.” That is to say, press on to know the Lord and you shall know the Lord more fully in the light and heat which He brings to men. The going forth of the morning is peculiarly bright because it stands in contrast with the night. There are countries in which the night suddenly gives place to the morning. Here we have long intervals of twilight, but in those lands, after the eye has been in darkness all night, the sun suddenly seems to leap above the horizon and there is light.

Now, it has been so with you, already, who know the Lord, and it shall be more and more so with you. The contrast between your sorrow and your joy shall be very striking. As your tribulations abound, so, also, shall your consolations abound. Your broken bones shall rejoice! The place of your weeping, the valley of Achor, shall be the door of your hope! Now be joyous about this. Follow on to know the Lord and there shall be light for you—light out of darkness—your midnight shall blaze into day. The Lord will come as the morning as to His freshness, for every morning is a new morning. No second-hand morning has ever dawned upon the earth, yet. The dawn is always fresh with the sweet breath of the zephyrs and bright with the sparkling dews which hang like new jewels in the ears of nature.

The light is always as of newly minted gold and the air is as perfume fresh pressed from its spices. All the earth seems like a newly married bride in the early morning. Well, now, such shall you find true religion to be as you press forward—it will always be fresh for you—never flat and stale. I have wearied of a thousand things, but never of my Lord! Ask the saints whether they ever wearied of the sight of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness who rises with healing beneath His wings! It is said of our Lord in “the Song” that His locks are black as a raven, that is to say, He is always young. Truly He wears the dew of His youth to our hearts. Never does our Lord grow old! Though He is so ancient that His locks are white as snow, yet He is still so new and fresh that the raven’s plume has not more joy. You shall find it so as you press forward, joy shall be given to you—and that joy shall be forever new.

This blessing shall come irresistibly, for when the morning comes to the earth, none can stop it. Can any human hand seize the reins of the horses of the sun and restrain them from passing through the gates of the morning? Impossible! God bids the sun rise and rise he does! So with you Christians, abiding in the knowledge of God and pressing forward, the light must come to you. Nothing can prevent it! The sun rejoices to run his race and defies all competitors. And even so shall the Lord, your Redeemer, scorn all who would restrain Him and come to you in the fullness of His love.

The blessing shall come increasingly, too, for the morning awakes, at first, with a few gray streaks. Then follow the redder hues which stain the sky, as though night, in retreating, hung out the banners of defeat. And soon succeed the brighter tints and then the sun, himself, is seen above the mountain’s height and all the earth is robed in splendor! So with your soul. At first there is a little light, then more, and more, and more till you come unto the perfect day and see Jehovah face to face and fear no ill! His coming forth shall be prepared as the morning. The text says, “is prepared as the morning.” I find that the word may be read, “is decreed”— determined, fixed, appointed, prepared.

Christ’s coming to gladden your soul, O you that know the Lord, is a fixed thing! It is not a perhaps, but is determined of God. You must have it! It is a decree as powerful as that fiat which said, “Let there be light,”

and there was light. And therefore the blessing must come to you. It should be no small joy to the believer in God through Jesus Christ that the mercies he is to enjoy are measured out, fixed and determined by an unalterable will which has been framed of old by Eternal Love and Infinite Wisdom! Follow on to know the Lord and if all the devils in Hell try to keep you in the dark, they cannot, the sun must rise for you! Follow on to know the Lord and if all apparent Providences should seem to keep you back, they cannot, for the secret and Omnipotent decrees which rule the Providences shall carry the point. His going forth is prepared as the morning— and that going forth shall be for your joy and delight.

The second figure of the text has less to do with the light of the knowledge of Christ, and more to do with the inward power which comes of that knowledge. “He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” This is the inward power. Dwell upon those words, “unto us”—not only, “shall He come as the rain,” but, “shall come unto us.” I rejoice to feel the Gospel come home to me. It is very sweet to preach it, but when I get to hear it for myself, and it comes unto me, then I know its power to refresh my soul!

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has a way of coming unto us which is as the rain when it waters the earth. The earth is dry and dusty, parched, barren. The rain does not ask the earth for anything, but it looks down from the heights and sees the gaping mouths of the parched fields and the clods crumbling as they lie baking in the cruel sun, and the rain says, “I will go and bless that field.” And down it comes, drop after drop, in plenteous refreshment. Each drop finds its way, until the rain enters the crevices and descends into the bosom of Mother Earth and the field is refreshed, the hidden seeds start up to life, and the green blades take another shoot.

Now, follow on to know the Lord, Beloved, and you shall find the Lord Jesus Christ not only giving you more light and knowledge like the sun, but giving you more life within yourself, more sap of Divine Grace, more vigor within your own soul so that you shall become fruitful and shall grow to perfection! As you drink in the rain of Grace from Heaven, you shall yield back to Heaven the fruits of righteousness to the honor and glory of God. Observe that it is written, “He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and the former rain.”

Now, these come in their season. The former rain came in Palestine at the end of autumn, when they had sown the corn. The latter rain came at the beginning of our spring, when corn in the east is getting nearly ripe. It is not so with us, of course, but it is so in Palestine. The latter rain came to plump out the ears. Now, God will give you Grace when you need it, Grace to help in time of need. A shower when you begin and another shower when you go on, and perhaps the heaviest shower just as you are ripening. Do not be frightened when you see a cloud of trouble. If we were to expect rain without clouds we should be very great fools! I sometimes think that to expect a shower of blessing without trial is almost as great a folly—

*“You fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.”*

God knows how to send a shower of rain when it is needed and to send Grace when it is needed—to give us the former rain and the latter rain in their season.

Notice, again, it is a repeated gift. He shall give the former rain and the latter rain. If you have had Grace once, the Lord has more for you. Did you have happy times when old Dr. So-and-So was your pastor? Well, the doctor is dead, but God is not! Were you very much delighted when you used to sit in such-and-such a Church, in years gone by, but have you moved into the country now? Yes, but God has not moved! He is in the country as well as in the town! You tell me you had such happy times when you were young. Yes, but God is neither younger nor older. Go to Him, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Do you suppose that because He gave you the former rain, He has emptied the bottles of Heaven? It is not so! The clouds, “those wandering cisterns of the sky,” fill again and empty again, and fill again and empty again—and so is it with the mighty Grace of God! There is an exhaustless fullness in the Lord—however much you have had from Him you shall have more. Follow on to know the Lord and you shall have Grace upon Grace! The showers shall never cease to fall till you get to the land where you shall be as a tree planted by the rivers of water and shall drink in unfailing supplies from the river itself.

One word more, only, and it is this—all this fulfillment of the promise that you shall know comes only to you through the Lord Himself. If we are to know, it must be by His going forth and because He shall come unto us. There is no knowing in any other way. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I know that your desire is like mine—to know more of the Lord by that deep, vital, practical knowledge which makes the soul like the God it knows! Never let us forget that our only way of knowing the Lord is through His coming to us! We may read the Bible—I trust we shall—but there is such a thing as resting in Bible reading and if we do so we shall fall short.

Our Lord denounced that in His day when He said, “You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me that you might have life.” As much as if He had said, “Your searching the Scriptures is well enough, but coming to Me is the main business.” It is not the letter-god, but the Living God that we need. It is not the Book of God so much as the God of the Book that we must know! We must seek Christ Jesus, the personal Christ, really existent to ourselves! And falling at His feet, confessing our sins, looking up to His wounds, trusting and confiding in Him, we shall be, indeed, blessed.

You cannot know the Lord in any other way than by His coming to you in the reality of His Incarnation as the very Christ of God. I wish I knew how to put the matter so that everyone here would recognize to the full my meaning. You know the moment people begin to think about religion they say, “Well, yes, we must keep the Sabbath. We must attend a place of worship. We must have family prayer.” Thus they dwell upon the many things that they “must do,” all of which things are right enough, but they are only the shell!

What the sinner has to say is not, “I will arise and go—to Church.” No, no! “I will arise and go to my closet and pray.” No, that is not the first thing. “I will arise and go and read a chapter of the Bible.” No, that is not it, good as that is! But, “I will arise and go unto my Father.” That is where you have to go—to a real God! “How can I go?” Well, not with those feet, but He is not far from any of you. In Him you live and move and have your being—you are also His offspring. Let your hearts think of Him now. Let your hearts mourn that you have broken His Law. Let your hearts listen to His gracious Words, for He says, “Return unto Me, and I will return unto you. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

No turn will do but a turning unto the Lord. No new birth, but a birth by His Spirit. If you do not know the Lord, remember that He has revealed Himself very clearly in the Person of His only-begotten Son who took our nature and died in the place of His people upon the Cross. Whoever looks to Jesus, the Man, believing Him to be the Son of God, sees all of God that He needs to see in the Person of the crucified Redeemer! Look to Him, however weak and feeble your eyes may be! Trust Him, trust Him fully, trust Him only, trust Him now! God enable you to do so by His everblessed Spirit, and you are saved.

You know the Lord, and as you go on to know more about Him, you shall find Him to be as the sun in his brightness, and as the rain in its sweetness and life. God bless you. May we all meet in Heaven, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 6.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—605, 670, 673.  
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CONSTANCY AND INCONSTANCY— A CONTRAST

NO. 852

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 24, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you? For your goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew it goes away.”  
Hosea 6:3, 4.**

THESE two verses very fitly describe in very similar imagery the opposite characters of the true and persevering Believer and the fictitious and the transient professor. There are many things in this world which are very much alike and yet are totally dissimilar. The king who, after stern conflict and arduous struggles, has at last obtained the empire, shines not with greater pomp than yonder actor mimicking majesty upon the stage in borrowed robes and tinsel crown. How like each other that monarch and the player, and yet how wide the difference! The one rules with real power, the other with but fancied sway—the king has fought for many a day to earn the scepter—the other in a few minutes in the green room has attained his monarchy and, we may add, in a few minutes more he will lose it, too!

As in a glass, see here the true Christian and the base pretender to that royal name. Take into your hand this paste gem so skillfully manufactured, how exceedingly like a diamond! Yet this was made in almost the twinkling of an eye, while yonder sparkling gem of real adamant has taken years, even, to cut its facets on the wheel. Yet when that paste gem with other unconsidered trifles shall be resolved into the vile dust from where it sprang, that sparkling jewel shall shine with as clear a radiance of morning light within it as flashes from it now! Such is the true heir of Heaven and the hypocrite when seen by the eye of wisdom.

Look but a year or two ago at two houses of business, how like each other! How large their transactions, how respectable their names. Yet the one all hollow, its capital long spent, its reputation all a bubble. The other solid and substantial, with ample means and large connections—this last has outlived the storm of commercial panic—while its rival has long been stranded and left a total wreck. Even thus men trade with Heaven and such are the differing results.

We will inspect those two fine vessels upon the stocks and unless well educated in the art of shipbuilding, who shall give a preference to the one or the other? But see them out at sea, let old Boreas blow, let the Atlantic rollers advance in their fury and you shall see how the flimsy ill-built ship opens at every timber, her bolts loosen, her entire hull is disjointed and shivered, she is blown down and sinks to her doom! But the other vessel, built of sterner stuff, well bolted, with seasoned timbers all fitted, staunch and sound, braves the fury of the tempest and reaches her desired haven.

After this sort does the sea of life try the sons of men and discern between the precious and the vile. As in the outer world things may be very like and yet have no likeness, so in the spiritual world there are persons so like Christians that even a seraph’s judgment could not detect the imposter. There are characters so like to that which the renewed nature exhibits, that even if you lived with the man, you scarcely could tell him to be a counterfeit! And yet after a little time and trial the falsehood oozes through and the man is found out.

If some of the remarks of this morning should help us to test and try ourselves and so, incidentally, lead some into comfort and others into anxiety, I shall be very grateful and so will you who shall receive the blessing! The first verse seems to me to describe the constancy of God to those who are really His people, and the second, the inconstancy of men in their dealings with their God.

I. Let us commence with the third verse of our text and accept it as a description of THE CONSTANCY OF GOD TOWARDS THOSE WHO ARE HIS PEOPLE. It is our solemn conviction that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance—that wherever the Lord bestows spiritual life and salvation He never recalls the gift—that it is not His wish to play fast and loose with the sons of men, to give today and retract tomorrow. We enjoy the doctrine of final perseverance and cannot think how anyone can doubt it. Without doubt or fear we sing—

*“Whom once He loves He never leaves,  
But loves them to the end.”*

We are persuaded of the immutable love of God towards His children. But mark the connection of the text leads us to observe the fact, the constancy of God to His people is not occasioned by their constancy to Him. For Ephraim and Judah, of whom this text was written, were the most fickle and inconstant of people. They were unstable as water towards their God. He brings accusations such as these against them—“Israel slides back as a backsliding heifer.” “Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment”—that is, the evil commandment of heathen kings.

All through the book of Hosea there are exhortations to repentance and returning from backsliding. If, then, God remained faithful towards such a people, it was not because they remained faithful to Him! The fact is, that wherever there is in any Christian a holy patience and a diligent perseverance, this is the work of God in his soul, and is worked in him by the faithful Grace and abiding Presence of God. It is not our faithfulness which holds God to His promise, but it is God’s faithfulness which holds us near to Him. Ah, Lord, if Your love should hang on our poor love which is as a rusted nail driven into rotten wood, our salvation would soon fail! But when we hang upon Your faithfulness in Christ Jesus, how safe we are!

Ah, if one single stone of the entire fabric of our salvation had to be quarried out of our carnal nature, it could never be found, for our whole nature is as a miry place, a bog in which nothing stable can be discovered. Beloved, thought we believe not, God abides faithful! Though we twist and turn aside a thousand times, yet He brings His wandering servants back and restores them to His ways, out of the infinite love and compassion of His heart. I know some prostitute this doctrine into an excuse for sin. Oh, mean and sensual hearts! They are base-born pretenders to a Divine Grace they never knew! If they found not this excuse they would make another, for they are generations apt in lies and well skilled in perverting the Truth of God to their own purposes! They turn the Grace of God into licentiousness and their damnation is just!

But no converted man ever found an apology for sin in the immutability of Divine affection. No, but this is the greatest condemnation of our sin— that we transgress against a God who still loves us! That we dare to play the traitor to Him who never, for a moment, was inconstant in His love to us! If a husband were unstable in his marriage love, there were some excuse for the unfaithful wife—but the firmness of our Great Husband’s love to our souls makes it the blackest treason and the most accursed unchastity if our hearts turn aside from our Best Beloved to follow after idols! The fountain does not depend on the stream, or the sun upon its beams, or the soil upon the flowers—effects depend on causes—not causes on effects! And so the attending love of God does not depend upon the constancy of His people.

Note next, that the faithfulness of God to His people does not always show itself in the most pleasing ways. The first verse tells us that God had torn and struck His people and the last verse of the former chapter represents the Lord as saying, “I will go and return to My place.” A father’s love does not always reveal itself in kisses and gifts of sweets. Love often has to force itself to blows and stripes—and those black love tokens which blossom upon the rod of chastisement are as true proofs of a father’s kindness as the soft blandishment and sweet endearments which at other times he lavishly scatters. Our God does not indulge His people with constant prosperity, lest they drown in the river of worldliness. His beloved are often plunged in troubles—“Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” and their troubles are not only outward—the iron enters into their soul, also.

We who have believed have our deep-sea sorrows and are downcast when we feel every wave and billow goes over us. We smart under dreadful desertions. Some of us have had to cry with the Master on the Cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” We know why He has forsaken us—it is because we have forsaken Him! And therefore He has hidden the light of His Countenance from us until we could scarcely believe ourselves to be His children at all. We have turned to prayer and found words and even desires fail us when on our knees. We have searched the Scriptures with no consolatory result—every text of Scripture has looked black upon us! Every promise blockaded its ports against us! We have tried to raise a single thought heavenward, but have been so distracted under a sense of the Lord’s wrath which lay heavy upon us, that we could not even aspire for a moment! We could only say, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? Why are you disquieted within me?”

Such suffering of soul will often be to the erring Christian the very best thing that could befall him. He has walked contrary to his God and if his God did not walk contrary to him he would be at peace in his sin. Remember, no condition can be more dangerous, not to say damnable, than for a man who is no longer agreed with his God to believe that all is well and go on softly and delicately in the way which tends to destruction. Brothers and Sisters, I have to thank God and I think you may join with me, for many a sharp pang which has gone through the soul, for many a sharp cut which has come from a stinging text of Scripture when that Word of God has searched us through and through and like a strong corrosive, or sharp acid, has burnt its way into our inmost soul, destroying and maiming in us much that we looked upon as precious and admirable!

The faithfulness of God does not always wear silken robes and is not always arrayed in scarlet and fine linen, but it puts on steel armor and comes out to us, sword in hand, cutting and wounding and making us bleed. It is very faithfulness which thus afflicts us! In love and tenderness God often seems to deal harshly with His children. He hurls them upon the ground and crushes them till they lie like a bleeding, helpless mass of wounds and faintness—ready to perish—and overwhelmed with anguish. “Their thoughts,” as George Herbert says, “are all a case of knives,” piercing their souls and not a ray of comfort, nor a word of promise succors them! It is clear, then, that God does not always show His immutable love to His people in the way which they might select. His wine is not sent to us always in golden flagons, nor His apples of love in baskets of gold. Good comes in a chariot of fire and mercy rides on the pale horse.

But, for all that, God reveals Himself comfortably to His saints in proof of His faithfulness in a timely and sure manner. Turn to the second verse and learn that we may be as if dead for two days, but no child of God can be dead eternally. We may lie buried in the sepulcher of our despair for two days and nights—nights cold and days black—but “the third day He will raise us up.” We cannot raise ourselves up, but He will raise us up! God, who raises the dead, is our Savior. Glory be to His name, we may be as dead and lifeless and as far removed from right desires as the carcasses that rot beneath the sod, but He will raise us up and, “we shall live in His sight”!

What would we do when God leaves us to be cast down and to feel our spiritual death and emptiness, if it were not for such a promise as this which certifies the soul sepulchered in sorrow the Lord will raise up? If your heart is right towards God and you are, indeed, trusting in none but Christ, it is no more possible for you to die of despair than for Christ Himself to return to the tomb! He must rise when the third morning comes, and so must you. Death cannot hold the immortal Son when once the hour of Resurrection dawns—and despair and darkness cannot hold the Believer in Jesus one moment longer in bondage when the decree of deliverance goes forth. The promise will yet come forth to meet you with tabouret and harp!

The Holy Spirit will yet shed abroad in your heart the love of God like the oil of joy! You shall be crowned with loving kindnesses as with sweet flowers, and with consolations as with wines on the lees shall you be refreshed. Not all the devils in Hell shall be able to stop you of your glorying, or imprison your quickened energy! You who are passing through the valley of the shadow of death may look for the sun rising! Angels’ wings are bringing consolations for you! O Mourner, mourning dies at morning! Still cling to Jesus in your extremity and believe that He is able to save to the uttermost and you shall live to sing of judgment and of mercy in the great congregation of the faithful!

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” You shall pass through the gate of tears into the sea of pearls! You shall cross by the bridge of sighs to the palace of content! The bittern and the owl shall fly away and the lark and the nightingale shall sing of bliss! You may groan and sigh like a Jeremy, but you shall yet dance and feast like a David! The tents of Kedar shall no more enclose you, but you shall dwell between the curtains of Solomon! “All in good time when wisdom ordains the hour.” Mordecai, who sat in sackcloth at the gate, shall ride in triumph from the palace. And Job, penniless upon his dunghill, shall have twice as much as before!

This fact is, in the text, illustrated by two metaphors. It is said that the child of God who follows on in the path of faith, despite the wounding and the striking which he may suffer, shall without doubt know the faithfulness of God whose, “going forth is prepared as the morning.” Observe this figure, for it is very comforting and instructive. Note the preparation spoken of. The morning comes not unlooked for, like one in haste, with hair disheveled and garments in disarray. In the gloomiest watch of the night preparations are being made for the dawning of the day. The sun’s flaming chariot is hastening with glowing axles along the celestial road to reach again that eastern clime from which he comes to us sowing the earth with orient pearls.

As soon as the earth, by its continued revolutions, has taken Great Britain away from the light of the sun, it begins at once to hasten its return. Every moment of the night this portion of our planet is moving on towards the light. The world is spinning round in the silent hours of night so as to bring our little island as speedily as possible once more under the morning rays. On the black wings of night the dawning is hastening. Even thus, at the worst period of our sorrows, there is a preparation being made for a turn of the tide! Our winter is making ready for our summer! You tell me you do not see how this can be so, but even you might see it if you would consider, and, if you cannot see it, at any rate I pray you believe it, for surely it is so.

God you clearly see in Nature is bringing on the morning by allowing the passage of the night—and within your heart He is preparing you for joy, brightness and comfort by your present sorrows. Is He not teaching you to value His Presence by making you know how bitter it is to be without it? Is He not humbling you that it may be safe to exalt you? Emptying you that there may be more room for His fullness? Is He not now sharpening your spiritual desires and quickening your heavenly appetites to make the feast of His love the more welcome? Is He not now purging you, but not with silver—refining you in the furnace of affliction, that you may be made a vessel unto honor—fit for the Master’s use? Oh, yes, the morning is prepared for you! Faith’s eye can detect the first streaks of the light upon the horizon. Hope is already come to you like a John the Baptist, to foretell the coming of the Lord! Sing, for the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

But the text not only speaks of preparation—the figure evidently sets forth certainty. The Lord’s goings forth of mercy are as sure as the return of day. No power known to us can put off tomorrow morning by so much as an hour. It is ordained that the sun shall rise at such a time and rise it will. The publication of an Act of Parliament by which the night should be prolonged would be an act of insanity. The gathering together of all the armies of the nations to hold back the sun, even for a single second, from his predestinated time of rising would be a monstrous freak of madness! Surely the sun, all blithely rising from his rest, would look upon the nations of the earth assembled to stay his course and scatter his laughing beams among them—darting his rays from his quiver as the swift-winged arrows of contempt!

Truly thus it is with the Presence of God in the regenerate soul. Saints have their times to mourn and mourn they must. But in their time of dancing they shall dance, let who will howl at their sacred mirth. If April has its showers, May shall have its flowers. When God appoints, none can alter it. The joy which is sown for the righteous shall grow into waving sheaves—and blight nor withering wind shall prevent the golden ears. When God’s time comes to turn mourning into joy, none shall say no to Him! Neither shall cold death freeze the genial current of our soul, nor Hell obscure with rising smoke the landscape of our hope! Nor sin, with serpent’s trail, defile our Eden’s joys! Nor trouble, with its rough wind, sweep through the bowers of our bliss! The King shall walk with us in the quiet garden of meditation and our joy shall be full!

Rejoice in this, Believer! Your hope does not lie in what is in you. Your darkness is very dark, but the sun is bright—exceedingly bright—and God, at His own time shall bid the light come streaming into your soul! The figure brings before us not only the idea of preparation and certainty, but that of naturalness. Art and science could not have done so well what Nature achieves with Divine simplicity. There is no light like that of the sun! God does gloriously what we could not do with all our toils. Brethren, I have tried, oftentimes, when I have lost the light of my Lord’s Countenance, to set myself right by earnest efforts, but I have never succeeded. I have tried to make myself earnest, to make myself believing, to make myself spiritually-minded, but it is wretched work! It is an attempt to pump sweet water out of a sour soil!

But let the Lord Himself appear—and He will appear when we give up all our own attempts and cast ourselves wholly upon Him—then what we could not do in that we were weak through the flesh—is all accomplished at once, to the glory of our God and to the sweet solace of our soul! Observe that this metaphor of the morning sets forth the glorious efficiency of the Grace of God. The morning never fails to light up the land on which it smiles. The illumination is never half done—the light is bright, clear, effectual—no darkness visible, or mingled gloom and gleam! The sun, itself, wears an excess of brightness upon which no eye of mortal man may steadfastly gaze. And from that central orb, over hill and valley, rolls a flood of glory unrivalled in its splendor.

Thus let the Lord but once come into our poor dark souls, how bright they become! Let Him but visit us and the barren woman does keep house and becomes a joyous mother of children! We who were farthest off from God and thought ourselves to be withered branches and dead plants yielding not so much as a bud for the Master’s Glory, even we begin to sprout and bring forth fruit! Yes, and fruit unto perfection, like Aaron’s famous rod of old. We are made to wonder, as we see God’s handiwork in such poor creatures as we are. Let no Christian despair! Let no child of God, in his long wintry nights, begin to mistrust his God! His coming forth is as the morning and it shall be such a coming! Oh, such a coming that your soul, now so empty, shall not merely be filled, but shall overflow! The Lord will not give a mere sip to you who are thirsty, but He has said it, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.” All, and more than all your heart can desire, shall be furnished you at the coming of your Master!

The second figure is equally beautiful, “He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” There were two great rains in Palestine. One rain fell at the time when the seed was cast into the ground. Almost as soon as the farmer who watched the seasons had turned over the soil and dropped in his golden grain, there fell heavy showers which lasted for some time. Usually rain did not fall again for months, but it returned again when the ear was well formed and needed filling up.

The farmer was always thankful for the rain. It plumped out the seed and when the return of fair weather ripened it, the harvest was abundant. Now the Lord’s Presence is to all His people as the two rains to the seed. What a shower of Grace He gives us when first the seed is sown in our hearts!—

*“What peaceful hours we then enjoyed,*

*How sweet their memory still!”*  
Well do we recollect the love of our espousals, the time of peace and of drawing near to God. Those first early years of our religion were very, very happy. We grew as the lily and we cast forth our roots like the cedars of Lebanon. All went well with us. But with many a Christian the lament is put up*—*

*“They have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill.”*

Beloved, you should be looking out for the next rain. You have had one, you shall have another. God will give you a shower of blessings—it may be today. You are very barren. Well, it is to the barren and to the dry that God delights to give His mercy! If the Grace of God only came to those who deserved it, it would not be Grace at all! If it only visited those who could claim it, it would be a matter of debt and not a free gift! But since it is the wish of God to give His Grace to the most unworthy, why should He not give it to you and to me? Since He gives the riches of His love to those who need them most, then, my Heart, put up your claim, for none need it more than you do! If you can but look right out of yourself to your God and trust in Him, then be assured as the rain falls upon the thirsty pastures of the wilderness and fills the pools and makes the little hills rejoice on every side, so your God who visited you before will deal graciously with you again and turn your barrenness into verdure and all your drought into plenty! Lord, let it be so and we will bless Your name!

This is what our heavenly Father aims at to get praise from the lips of His children. Let us offer prayer in our inmost heart, today, that our Lord Jesus, the Beloved of our souls, may come down like rain upon the mown grass and that the result in us may bring to God a revenue of Glory from refreshed hearts. Beloved, the drift of all this is just this—earnest Christians, in toiling towards Heaven, often grow faint and in year after year of the pursuit of righteousness, human nature becomes weary of the daily watching unto prayer. But the Lord is faithful and He will strengthen His saints for the pilgrimage, lest they faint or turn aside. The Lord will renew the strength of those who wait on Him, so that they shall hold on their way.

Poor traveler to Mount Zion, the devil tells you that you will soon turn back unto perdition, but be of good courage, mighty is He that is in you! His Grace is sufficient for you! The Divine life within you will not stop its sacred impulse for the holy and the heavenly till it has brought you up from the wilderness and lodged you within the palace gate of Jehovah!

II. Now, with too short a time to deal rightly with it, let us take the second text. The second text speaks of THE INCONSTANCY OF MEN TO GOD. Though there are many illustrations of this sad fact, I shall only take one, namely, that which unconverted people so constantly furnish us with. Not many days ago I thought I saw the Alps. I have stood on the platform at Berne and viewed with growing wonder that magnificent range of the snow-clad Alps. and the other day within a few miles of this spot, in our own county of Surrey, I saw upon the horizon clouds which were the very facsimile of Switzerland’s glorious mountains!

To me there seemed no perceptible difference—the snowy masses of cloud were the exact counterpart of the Alps. Had I just risen from my sleep and not known where I was, I should have said, “I am at Berne, looking at the mountains which I saw years ago.” Yet before some five minutes had passed, the fair vision had melted away and there were no peaks of granite there, but mere aggregations of vapor. How often have I seen Christians, as I have thought—and as all others have thought—and I have rejoiced and blessed God over what seemed converted men and women! But before long we have had clear proof that we have been grossly deceived.

There was goodness in them—the text calls it “goodness”—but it was only such nominal goodness as nature boasts of and it vanished “like the morning cloud.” Observe the contrasting metaphor—God’s love is the morning. Man’s fair promise is but the morning cloud. A mist is often seen in Palestine early in the morning and the farmer hopes that the drought will come to an end. But it mocks his hopes and there is no rain—the cloud is exhaled in the sun and the earth is as parched as ever.

Early dew is also mentioned as a very fleeting thing. A child of the night, it is gone when the sun looks upon it. So is it with the religion of hundreds of people of whom we, in charity, judge hopefully, but concerning whom we are deceived. Many hear a sermon and are impressed, but their impression is soon gone. They remind one of the famous preacher who, while earnestly exciting the people by a description of the next world and the terrors of it, when he saw them all bursting into tears and using their handkerchiefs freely, stopped and said, “Dry your eyes, for I have something much more terrible to tell you than anything I have as yet spoken. It is this—you will, all of you, forget the impressions that are made today and go your way to live as you have done before.”

This is the worst point of all, that after bearing a true report to our fellow men concerning most weighty matters, the messengers of the Truth of God are forced to cry, “Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Our hearers appear to believe, but having eyes they see not, and having ears they hear not so as to understand. Some cases are particularly painful to remember because their impressions continue—so continue that they reform their manners. They begin to pray. Spiritual life apparently visits them. They take a great delight in holy company. They are much in reading the Word.

And yet all is gone and the men become as before. We have seen so much about certain people that we thought admirable, that we were ready to think if they were not converted we were not! And yet they have gone back, and the House of God sees them no more—or if the House sees their bodily presence, yet their heart is not in the worship. I fear we get a sad number of this sort into Church membership. Young people, impressed early when they have not known temptation, because they have not gone out from their parents’ homes, too often disappoint us in later life. The seed springs up, but under the hot sun of temptation it withers away.

Ah, and this is sad. According to the text it is mournful to the heart of God Himself that there should be goodness enough to be comparable to a cloud and to dew, and yet, like both cloud and dew the goodness should utterly pass away. Brothers and Sisters, you see the case before us—you see how like the hopefulness of some is to the reality that is in others— how near akin the morning cloud is to the morning and how like that early dew is to the heavenly shower! What is the reason why so many thus deceive themselves and us? Is not it, in most cases, the lack of a deep perception of sin? Though I rejoice in sudden conversions, I entertain grave suspicions of those suddenly happy people who seem never to have sorrowed over their sin.

I am afraid that those who come by their religion so very lightly often lose it quite as lightly. Saul of Tarsus was converted on a sudden, but no man ever went through a greater horror of darkness than he did before Ananias came to him with the words of comfort. I like deep plowing— skimming topsoil is poor work! The tearing of the soil under surface is greatly needed. After all, the most lasting Christians appear to be those who have seen their inward disease to be very deeply seated and loathsome—and after awhile have been led to see the Glory of the healing hand of the Lord Jesus as He stretches it out in the Gospel. I am afraid that in much modern religion there is a lack of depth on all points—they neither deeply tremble nor greatly rejoice! They neither much despair nor much believe.

Oh, beware of pious veneering! Beware of the religion which consists in putting on a thin slice of godliness over a mass of carnality! We must have thorough work within! The Grace which reaches the core and affects the innermost spirit is the only Grace worth having! To put all in one word, a lack of the Holy Spirit is the great cause of religious instability. Beware of mistaking excitement for the Holy Spirit—or your own resolutions for the deep workings of the Spirit of God in the soul! All that ever Nature paints God will burn off with hot irons. All that Nature ever spins God will unravel and cast away with the rags.

You must be born from above! You must have a new Nature worked in you by the finger of God Himself! Of all His saints it is written, “You are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus.” Oh, but everywhere, I fear, there is a lack of the Holy Spirit! There is much getting up of a tawdry morality, barely skin deep, much crying, “Peace, peace,” where there is no peace and very little deep heart-searching anxiety to be thoroughly purged from sin. Well-known and well-remembered Truths of God are believed without an accompanying impression of their weight! Hopes are flimsily formed and confidences ill-founded—and it is this which makes deceivers so plentiful, and fair shows after the flesh so common.

According to the text—and I ask your solemn attention to this remark— such persons are the objects of Mercy’s anxiety. Observe it—it looks as if Justice and Mercy held a dialogue. “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?” “Sweep him away,” says Justice, “the man vows and promises, only to play the liar’s part! He says he will repent, but turns again like a dog to his vomit! He declares he will be saved, but he goes back like a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire.” “Spare him,” says Mercy, “spare him, O God! You can yet give him a new heart instead of that fickle heart and a right spirit in lieu of that wayward spirit! He is a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but, Lord, You have broken others into Your service, break him in also!”

So Justice urges one thing and Mercy pleads another and therefore the conflict, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do unto you?” The Lord has two courses open to Him. The first is He can leave you altogether. The man has heard the Gospel. He has had it preached to him affectionately and he has felt its power in a measure. He shall never hear it again—and if he goes down to Hell, he cannot say he had not an opportunity. He will not be able, amidst the fires of the pit, to say, “I never heard the Gospel and I never was impressed with it.” “Mercy,” says Justice, “you have had your turn, the man has had enough of you and he is not bettered by you. Come, put up your silver scepter, Mercy, I have a more potent weapon. Let me try my sharp, two-edged sword. They who will not bend shall break and he who will not stoop shall be dashed to the ground as with a rod of iron.”

Our compassionate God has, however, another alternative and that is to try something more with you deceptive ones. I could wish that some of you unconverted people who have been hearing me a long while would not come to this Tabernacle again. I speak out of kindness. I wish, if God would be pleased to convert you by somebody else, that you might be led at once to attend that ministry which He will bless to your souls. Perhaps I am not adapted to your case. Perhaps the Lord will never make use of me as a net to take such a fish as you are. Well, try somebody else, but, oh, do not grow so used to my voice as to go to sleep under it and so sleep yourselves into Hell! May the Lord resolve, “I will send another preacher.”

If my Master takes me away to my grave and sends another who will be blessed to you, I am well content. Perhaps, however, the Lord will try what Providence can do with you. You have lost your wife, what if He takes away the child? Or, good mother, you have buried a dear child and your darling’s going to Heaven has not tempted you to the skies. What if the Lord takes away your husband? If He loves you, He will not give you up nor spare your feelings, but will bring you to repentance by any means, however severe! If the Lord does not give you up and you do not soon repent, it will come to this—He will strip every earthly comfort away from you! He will hedge up your way with thorns and so will compel you to come to Himself!

It may be that some of you will never be saved while you are well-to-do in this world. Well, then, the very mercy of God will make you poor and, perhaps, when your belly is hungry like the prodigal’s, you will cry, “I will arise and go to my Father.” This I am sure of—if the Lord takes the alternative of not giving you up, but of saving you—if He tries gentle means and they succeed not, He will turn to rougher methods. You shall be beaten with many stripes! The fire shall burn up your comforts. The moth and rust shall consume your treasures. The light of your eyes shall be taken from you at a stroke. Your children shall die before your eyes, or the partner of your bosom shall be laid in the grave—for by any means God will bring you in. He has determined to save you and He will do it, let it cost what it may!

He spared not His own Son to save you and He will not spare yours. Nor will He spare your body. You shall be worn with disease and wasted with sickness. You shall have misery of soul and despair of heart—but He will save you if He so resolves upon it. And for this you shall one day bless His name and kiss the rod by which He chastened you to Himself! He seems to me to say this morning to those of you who are unsaved after many impressions, “What more can I do than I have done?” And the answer must be, “Lord, there is only one thing more. Send Your Divine Spirit this morning on dove-like wings and change my poor heart. Lord, You have tried the means, now come to me Yourself. O my God, I am undone, I am lost! I am hopeless! But there is one hope left! Your arm can save! Your eyes can pity and Your voice can comfort.”

O God, this morning, in Your plenteous mercy, deal graciously with such souls and let Your mercy be extolled in the very highest as You lift up the beggar from the dunghill to set him among princes! I feel the hope in my own soul that to some of the most despairing and sad the true light has already come and from now on they shall rejoice! God make it so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

*PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Hosea 6 and Luke 8:4-13.*  
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÷Hos 6.4

THE ROUGH HEWER

NO. 2134

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away. Therefore have I hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the Words of My mouth: and your  
judgments are as the light**

**that goes forth.”  
Hosea 6:4, 5.**

VERY simple is the way of salvation—very plain is the road home. The chapter begins with it—“Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” By going away from the Lord we have lost our privileges, have become wounded and have lost ourselves. To find all these things again we must go back to the Lord, from Whom we have wandered. We must cry with the repenting prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father”—and if we at once begin to carry out the resolve—the way home is not far to seek.

Concerning salvation we need only preach one sermon by way of explanation—but men need 10 sermons by way of exhortation. Turn to the right when you come to the Cross and keep straight on and you will get home, however much you have wandered from the right way. Alas, too many of our hearers complicate this sweet simplicity! They will not be content to take the plain way—they love more winding paths. They will not drink of the cool flowing waters—they look for a mingled cup of their own filling. They are waiting. For what are they waiting? They are looking about. For what are they looking?

They choose a thorny maze instead of a straight road. The Lord God, when He is resolved to save, sees it necessary to use peculiar methods with these who will not be satisfied to receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child. Because they will not come when they are bidden, the Lord adds blows to His words. Because they will not come when they are gently drawn, they shall be roughly driven. Because the cords of love and the bonds of a man fail to bring them, they shall have the goad of the ox and the bit and bridle of the mule. If gentle breezes will not waft the ship, the tempestuous Euroclydon shall force it to the haven!

When the Lord resolves to save, He will lay on His chastisement until the whole head is sick and the whole heart faints. He will smite until, from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet, the body is all wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. By strong measures and strange methods He will bring back the stray sheep. “Yet does He devise means that His banished are not expelled from Him.” It is a great pity that there should be need for these unusual means, for the method of salvation is simple—and if we are willing and obedient we shall find her ways to be ways of pleasantness.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” is a command which is plain as a pike-staff. The Gospel precept is such as a child can understand and its commandment is not grievous. Alas, men will not follow this path of peace—and even those whom God eternally ordains to save are, for many a day, most rebellious against His easy plan. Therefore does God go about and use all sorts of wise dealings with men, that He may hide pride from them and may make them willing to accept the humbling terms of salvation by Grace alone through Jesus Christ.

In the case before us, love seems to have reached its nonplus. Infinite Love and boundless Wisdom seem, in this instance, to be brought to a dead halt. God has been dealing with Judah and Ephraim in ways as wide as the poles asunder—He has been as a moth, which, without noise eats the garment—and thus He has caused them a grave disquiet in a gentle and secret manner. But as this sufficed not, He has also turned His lion upon them and by sharp afflictions and terrible visitations they have been torn and wounded—as when a wild beast rends his prey in pieces.

But neither the gentle nor the terrible has availed—they have remained hardened. What treatment can now be tried? The Lord asks the question. He appeals to those whom He would bless and puts it to them. Infinite Wisdom is pictured as crying in bewilderment, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?” What is the next thing? “O Judah, what shall I do unto you?” What else can be hopefully used after so many failures? In what terms shall I now address you? By what methods shall I now attempt to win you?

Ah, it is a thousand pities that the case should ever wear this complexion. Why should the line of Love be thrown into such a tangle? For, after all, today, at this very moment, the way of salvation is plain, open and simple to those of you whose cases are most perplexing! All else is intricate, but this is plain—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Since men will complicate it, the Lord pursues them in His infinite compassion and follows them, despite their devious ways, double dealings, inconstancies and falsehoods.

Our text tells us, first, of the disappointments of Love—“What shall I do unto you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.” Secondly, it mentions the devices of Mercy—“Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth.” When we have thought of these two things, we shall be led, very briefly, to notice the declaration of Justice. If all these ways of longsuffering are despised, God’s Justice will be abundantly vindicated—“Your judgments are as the light that goes forth.” The condemnation of those who disappoint Love and defy Wisdom will be richly deserved. In closing, we shall, in the fourth place, come back to where we began and remind you of the direction of Wisdom which stands before us in the first verse— “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”

I. First, then, THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF LOVE. May the Holy Spirit aid us in this meditation! We have a number of persons about us of whose conversion we have been very hopeful. We know those who for years have presented cheering signs of a gracious work within them and yet, up to now, they have occasioned us grave disappointment. They bud, but they never fruit. Long have they disappointed us and our fear is that they will disappoint us even to the end.

These people give very speedy promise . We have hardly begun with them but we feel optimistic of success. Theirs is the religion of haste but it never speeds. They are as the morning cloud—we have not to wait until evening—and like the mists on the hills they are visible before the break of day. Some people are up early and yet do nothing—such are these. We reckon on them at once but we reckon wrongfully. We have not preached long before we see tears. We have not talked long before we perceive emotions. We feel sure that the Word of God will not return void from them— for they attend carefully and are moved by the Word as the boughs of the forest are swayed by the wind.

It all comes to nothing. These are the stony-ground hearers. That scanty soil with a hard piece of rock below it no sooner received the Seed than, because there was no depth of earth, the Seed began to spring up. The same cause which made them so easy come made them so easy go— because of the lack of root and soil they speedily withered away. Oh, these stony-ground hearers—what a fraud they are! These come by scores to the Penitent Form—but where are they afterwards? These throng the Inquiry Room but never unite with the Church.

They make a great display of emotion but it is all a flash in the pan. They are very impressionable, but they are as impetuous as they are impressible! They never stop to think, but go for a matter blindly. They never look before they leap—they leap and then they look—and come to the conclusion to jump back again. They are quick to promise but slow performers. Thus they act treacherously with God. These people give striking promises. For the morning cloud was a very striking promise of rain. Looking out of his door in the morning, the Eastern farmer saw a heavy mist hanging over his fields and he said, “It will rain, and let the Lord be praised, who waters the hills from His chambers.” Very soon he perceived that the sign was not fulfilled, for the dew and the cloud were gone as quickly as they came. But at the time, the tokens were very impressive and full of hope.

So have some of you, my dear Hearers, greatly cheered us with a fair prospect of your conversion. You were so broken down under an address that we hoped you were about to display true repentance. You were so pleased to hear the Word of God that we thought you really had received Christ into your heart. You made some very plain and decided remarks and your life, for a while, appeared happily altered so that we and others said, “We trust it is a work of Divine Grace.” But you have deceived us! And, worse than that, you have dealt treacherously with God in this matter—for you have gone back to your old ways though you know them to be evil.

You yourself thought that you were converted and you openly avowed that you were so. You determined to be this, that and the other—and yet you are none of these beings. I will not go into detail about your promises but I would have you remember that these are so many bonds and notesof-hand which you have not taken up and they will be brought out against you at the Last Great Day. We could stand and weep over you, for we know not what to do next. God Himself seems to enquire of you, “What shall I do to you? What shall I do to you? Your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.”

These persons give repeated promises . Though they have failed once, they very freely promise again—though they have failed 20 times—they confidently resolve anew. They are always beginning, never going on. The work of a minister with such people is endless. A mason who is hewing stone has hard enough work—the chips fly in his face and his tool is often worn down—yet when he leaves off at night, he continues in the morning where he left off. But what would be his toil if what he took off in the day grew again at night? What would the hewer of trees do if the tree grew so fast as to fill up the gashes which his axe had made? This would be a case of labor in vain.

Such is my work with many of you, my Hearers. Practically, I have to deal with you as I began 30 years ago—if, indeed, you are not worse! If I were the hewer of timber, I should feel pleasure in the woodman’s craft. But if each time I had half felled a tree its wound would heal up, I think I should give up in despair. Yet how does this differ from my case with some of you? O my Hearers, it is heart-breaking work to seek your salvation! For the more eager we are, the more bitter are the disappointments with which you recompense our loving anxieties.

I have said, “Surely that tree will soon fall.” But, lo, every mark of the axe is effaced and the tree looks as if it had never seen a woodman! I wish you had a little consideration for pastors and teachers who desire your eternal welfare, for you send us home lamenting, “Their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goes away.” After all, these persons do but give us empty promises. Their vow has no more substance in it than cloud or dew. Shall I show you how it is that they are so quick to promise and so ready to yield to our persuasions—and yet do not come up to the mark and carry out their resolves?

In some cases they have a very impressible nature. Many men seem made of hard, unworkable metal. I cannot say I am very fond of them, but others are made of very soft metal and I cannot say that I am any fonder of them! These are your men of willow, easy to bend. These are your lumps of unbaked clay—you can mark them at pleasure with your thumb or your little finger—they are easily affected by their surroundings. Hundreds of these people come to places of worship and are encouraging till they become disappointing. Better still, there are many who have a naturally tender conscience. Such are here now. When you were boys you could not do wrong without being troubled about it. You have wept yourselves to sleep when you have felt that you grieved your father or mother.

What a mercy it is to have a tender conscience! And yet a conscience which is only naturally tender, but has never been renewed by the Spirit of God may be very deceptive—for we may think we have spiritually repented when we have done nothing of the sort. These people weep about sin but go on sinning! They desire faith but remain unbelievers. They soon feel but they quickly leave off feeling. They are superficial and hence untrue. Many are affected by a strong tendency to imitate those about them. We all imitate one another more or less—but evidently many are not born to set examples, but to follow examples—these easily promise but as easily forget.

The love of approbation acts upon many with great force. Especially will young people follow each other and follow leaders if they are praised for it. Converts may easily be made by mutual admiration. If it happens to be a religious time and it is the fashion to profess conversion, many of all ages go with the rush and yet are by no means truly called into the kingdom of God. That religion which lives upon companionship is apt to die when the company is changed. Beware of the godliness which is carried off its feet by the crowd—true religion is the personal conviction of one who has repented and believed on his own account

No man can be carried to Heaven by the stream of outside influence— there must be a work within—“You must be born-again.” No doubt we have many who disappoint our hopes because they are moving in the right way—but they are not going there from a force within—but are being compelled to go by an influence from without. One person of great strength of mind may have a vast influence over others—but subjecting to the best influence can never take the place of personal conversion. We read, in the Word of God, of a young king who did that which was right in the sight of God all the days of the venerable high priest who had been his guardian—but when the gracious man was gone, the king went his own way—and that way was an evil one.

Many persons are under the holy influence of godly relatives and friends, but they are by no means gracious themselves—their real character is concealed by the godly one who overshadows them. Oh, how sad, to be going the right way openly and yet in heart to be treading the downward road! We are before God what we are in heart and not what our surroundings compel us to be. No doubt some give us early promise of better things because they are under temporary excitement and hardly know what they say. Or they are afraid because of prevailing sickness, or fear of death and judgment. They have no sense of sin but they feel a fear of Hell. They have no wish to escape from doing wrong, but they want to save their skins from the punishment which follows upon wrong-doing.

When they are ill they not only send for the doctor, but send for the Christian man to come and pray with them. They send for the doctor because they would be freed from pain and for the other because they would be freed from Hell. Every murderer would, of course, escape the gallows if he could—but this desire is no proof of repentance and no sign of reformation. In such cases their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it passes away. These people involve themselves in greater sin by breaking their promises for, according to the 7th verse, these breaches of

contract are treacheries to God. “There have they dealt treacherously against Me.”

A man cannot have lived in this world year after year, vowing and promising, proposing and delaying without hardening his heart in the process. It is perilous to promise faith and remain in unbelief. I say a man cannot have lived in idle promises and vain resolves without the crimson dye of falsehood soaking into his inmost soul. His very heart and thoughts will become tinctured with a practical untruthfulness and superficiality. Beware of violating your conscience—even once tampering with convictions is like once taking the leprosy. To put down conviction is a species of soul-stifling. To drive out a holy thought and crush a right desire is spiritual suicide.

If you have not carried it to the last degree of actually killing your soul, yet in its essence, every lie to one’s soul is a dagger at the heart of its best life. To resist the Spirit of God is a deadly sin and to quench the Spirit is a capital offense. I cannot, even if I forget his future, look upon any man who has disappointed our just hopes without a horror of soul that anyone should have acted in this fashion against Almighty God, the God of infinite long-suffering, who has borne with him so long.

II. But I must hasten now to notice, in the second place, with a view to the comfort of some here, THE DEVICES OF MERCY. “Therefore,” says the text—what? Therefore I gave them up? Therefore I left them to themselves? No, but, “Therefore have I hewed them by the Prophets; I have slain them by the Words of My mouth.” To many men whom God has predestinated unto eternal life it has happened that, after they have long resisted the drawings of Divine Grace, the Lord has dealt with them in quite another fashion, though with the same end and design.

In this case, according to the text, He hewed them by the Prophets—but I have seen the Lord hew men with cutting Providences. One man would not think till the Lord laid him on a bed of sickness. Even there he tried to brazen it out— but the sickness grew worse and a more painful disease followed upon the first. He began to be shaken in mind by his pains, especially when he had to lie awake night after night. Depression of spirit followed upon weakness of body and suddenly the curtain seemed to lift and the man was compelled to look into the eternal future—black and grim. He had always shunned that sight but now it haunted him. He who would not think nor care about eternal things began to be exceedingly thoughtful and careful about such matters! The Lord was hewing him with personal sickness and it was of no use for him to attempt to stand out against Him.

Or the hewing has been by bereavements. His wife, who was the delight of his eyes, suddenly sickened and died. A little child followed—the darling of the household was laid upon its mother’s coffin. When the second stroke came the man cried, “O God, I cannot bear this! What would You have me to do?” But he still held out and continued impenitent. He had one left—his daughter—the lone star of his life. On a sudden she was taken from him. Then he wept in the bitterness of his spirit, for he was a heart-broken man. In my experience in dealing with anxious souls, I often meet with men and women who find life through the death of their beloved children.

An open grave has been God’s doorway to their hearts. The arrows of the Lord have struck one after another and, when deprived of earthly lovers, they have turned to the heavenly Friend. They will have reason to bless God to all eternity for those sad days of bereavement wherein the pruning knife cut away from them the wild wood of worldliness and carelessness! There are many who can say, “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Your Word”! The rough hewing has often taken another shape and has come in the form of loss and impoverishment. The man was getting on wonderfully in business—everything prospered with him and his increasing wealth ministered to his presumption. He had an excursion for God’s day, a jest for God’s Word, a contempt for God’s house and an ill word for God’s people.

But suddenly there came a turn of the tide and he was carried down stream. He struggled against it but he found himself hastening to the lower reaches of the river of debt and drawing near to the sea of bankruptcy. He did not see that the hand of God had gone out against him. He cursed his bad luck and resolved to fight it out. He had to leave his comfortable house and live in a very reduced fashion. But he did not yield. He would find a situation—he would earn his living by harder work. But he could not find a situation—he tramped London in vain till his bare feet almost touched the stones of the pavement—and his clothes grew ragged about him.

Now, the prospect was grim, indeed, for no citizen of the far country would even send him into his fields to feed swine. Then it was that he said, “I will arise and go to my Father.” The extremity of his need was the opportunity of the good Spirit. If you will not come to God while you have a good coat on your back, I could almost pray that you might come to rags! May a hungry belly bring you, if nothing else will! I am glad to see your worldly estate prosper—but if your soul is perishing you are in a sad case. Better far that the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stall than that you should be cut off from Christ and have no Grace in your heart!

If some of you are passing, just now, through very trying Providences, I pray with all my heart that they may be sanctified to you. It will be no ill wind which wrecks your ship if the tempest casts you upon the Rock of Ages. I trust that the Lord is laying you low that He may build you up upon a sure Foundation. With certain others, the Lord does not so much deal with cutting Providences as by sharp and convincing ministries. Do you not remember, some of you, before you found the Lord, how quietly you heard your minister and were comfortable and sleepy under him? But the Lord came forth by that ministry against you and you were sorely wounded by it!

You had amended your faults, rectified your life and you felt very much at ease. The evil spirit had gone out and the house was empty, swept and garnished—you were in a very hopeful and happy condition! Do you remember that dreadful sermon which, like a bombshell, broke through the

roof of your house and set the whole place on fire? You were very angry, but the deed was done! Sometimes it has been my business, in the name of God, deliberately to break in pieces the choice ornaments of selfrighteous men. This has made them feel ferocious! The special things wherein they delighted themselves have been destroyed before their eyes! The ministry has been as a hammer breaking their idols in pieces!

Do you not know that the Spirit of God is a destroyer? Is it not written, “The grass withers because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people are grass”? Everything that grows out of human nature is dried up when the Spirit of God blows upon it and reveals its imperfection. The Holy Spirit is to self-confidence a Spirit of judgment and a Spirit of burning. To many it is necessary that the Lord’s servant should be a rough hewer. Then is a man famous according as he lifts up his axe upon the thick trees! The faithful preacher lops away many a goodly bough and as the man’s natural state is made bare, he cries, “Why is all this? What sharp preaching is this?”

I have known hearers exclaim, “I will never hear that man again. He makes me miserable.” Why not hear him again? Do you want him to flatter you? I have no such commission. O my Hearers, do you think that I come here on the Lord’s-Day with an anxious heart aiming at your gratification? Do you think that I play a fiddle that you may dance to it? God forbid that I should so ruin both you and myself! A minister flings his soul away if he spends his energies in the attempt to please his congregation! It may not be well that some of you should be pleased. Sometimes when a man grows outrageously angry with a sermon, he is getting more good than when he retires saying, “What an eloquent discourse!”

I have never yet heard of a salmon that liked the hook which had taken sure hold of it—nor do men admire sermons which enter their souls. When the Word of God becomes as an arrow in a man’s heart, he writhes—he would gladly tear it out—but it is a barbed shaft. He gnashes his teeth, he grows indignant—but he is wounded and the arrow is rankling. The preaching which pleases us may not be the Truth of God but the doctrine which grieves our heart and troubles our conscience, is, in all probability, true. At any rate, there are grave reasons for suspecting that it is so.

It is not the way of the Truth of God to flatter guilty men. I say the Lord uses ministries of a cutting kind to make men uneasy in their sins and cause them to flee to Christ for peace. It is well for the preacher to remind men that they are lost by nature and that in their flesh there dwells no good thing. It is well that sin should be made to appear sin and that selfrighteousness should be made to look like filthy rags. Human inability and the need of the Holy Spirit must be set forth clearly and the Sovereignty of God must be proclaimed solemnly. The Lord has a right to pass over whom He pleases—and if mercy comes to any man it will be by the sovereign act of God—because God wills to do it and not because any man deserves it. We must preach the need of cleansing in the precious blood and the necessity of being born-again from above. While the preacher thunders out the doctrine of death by sin and life in Christ, and other kindred truths, then it is that the Lord hews men by the Prophets and they fall slain by the Words of His mouth.

“I shall never hope again,” says one. “That sermon drove me to despair.” Self-despair is the beginning of true hope in Christ! Go and hear that man again! “Oh, but he hung up all my hopes like so many criminals on the gallows.” Go and hear him again! For more of that hanging needs to be done till your last carnal hope is executed. “But he hits so hard.” Thank God he does! There is no hewing stone without hard blows! Oh, it is well to be riddled by the Gospel, for God never heals those whom He has not struck and He never binds up those who have no wounds. Why should the physician come to those who are not sick? It is to you who are bleeding to death that Mercy flies on wings of wind! There shall be no delay when you are at Death’s door spiritually. Look unto the Lord and live! He waits to heal the wounds He has made.

Beyond this the Lord uses, with many men, very cutting operations within their souls. They feel spiritual hewing within which are most terrible. It is my lot almost every day in the week to meet with those who are pressed beneath the heavy hand of conviction of sin. By long experience of the Lord’s hewing I feel at home where the axe has made gaping gashes and the chips lie deep about me. But this is awful work in certain instances, for the tree seems cut down close by the roots.

The Holy Spirit comes to some men and makes a discovery to them of what their past lives have been and oh, the horror of it! They were most respectable people in their own esteem—if not Christians, they were quite as good as the most of those who are and far better than some—but how soon was this changed! When the Lord pulls back a shutter and lets a little light into the dark room of the soul, what filth and loathsomeness appear where all seemed clean! The Lord does more than that—He takes up the cellar flap and lets the man peer beneath the surface into the dark vault of his heart. What a sink of depravity! What an abyss of deceit!

No man’s reason would survive a full sight of his own inner self. A cage of unclean birds is nothing to it. The lusts and filthy imaginations, the pride, the wrath, the deceit, the meanness of our natures—who can know them? When we see these hidden evils revealed by the Scriptures we are, indeed, slain by the Words of the Lord’s mouth! I have known persons, under horror of sin, try to pray but prayer has died in their throats. They have read their Bibles and every chapter has thundered at them. The Word of the Lord has seemed like a red hot harrow full of burning spikes and it has been dragged up and down the field of their tender hearts.

Even the Gospel has forgotten its sweetness to their ears. The ambassador of peace has had no kind word for them. I have met with those who have even tried to believe in Christ but they have been so overloaded with fear that they failed to hope in His mercy. I spoke to one the other day who said, “Sir, I am spiritually dead.” I answered, “Jesus says, ‘He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.’” He replied that he was without hope and I reminded him that at one time we, also, were without Christ and without hope, and yet we were made near. “Alas,” he said, “I have no strength for anything.” I bade him remember that it is

written, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

“O Sir,” he said, “You are very skillful to turn things about. But I am lost.” “Yes,” I said, “And ‘the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.’ If you will describe yourself as a pretty gentleman I shall find nothing in the Bible to comfort you. But as long as you have only black words and condemning words with which to daub yourself, I feel that you are Christ’s man for you describe yourself just as the Scriptures describe those whom Jesus came to save.” Painful as are God’s strokes, I rejoice to hear His axe going—for those whom the Lord hews today He will help tomorrow!

When the Lord is hewing a man and making him feel that he is nothing and nobody, or worse than that—when He is making him feel that he is just a heap of sin and misery only fit to be shoveled into the bottomless pit—then I know that salvation is near! When God brings a man down there will soon be a lifting up. When the night is darkest, the dawn is nearest. When carnal hope is killed, spiritual hope begins to live. Thus have we seen the rough methods of tender Love and spied out the devices of effectual Grace.

III. And now I have to notice with deep solemnity, for a moment only, THE DECLARATION OF JUSTICE which is placed in the midst of this Revelation of mercy. What does the Word say? “Your judgments are as the light that goes forth.” Perhaps I address one this morning who has promised fair for Heaven but has deceived everybody and now God has been dealing with him in another way and made him feel the axe of affliction— if, after all, he remains obstinate and will not yield to the love of God his condemnation will be just.

If, despite all this, he is determined to be lost, God’s judgments will be as clear as the light of the morning, or as the flash of lightning in a storm. All you have suffered you have well deserved—you have been brought very low, but it is of the Lord’s mercies that you are not consumed. It is true He seems to have struck you with cruel blows—but had He dealt with you after your sins and rewarded you according to your iniquities—you would have been where hope can never come. If God had not been longsuffering, you would long ago have been where they ask in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongue, tormented in the flame.

It is great mercy that has dealt so unmercifully with your temporal estate. It is great love that has taken away those you love. In any case you have deserved it all and God’s dealings with you are clearly righteous. You cannot question His procedure. But if all this is in vain and you pass into another state unsaved, God’s eternal judgment against you will be “as the light that goes forth.” Who will plead for you? I think I see you in that Last Dread Day. Yes, here you come! This is the man who knew all about Christ and His precious blood and salvation by Grace through faith! This is he who knew, but did not act as he knew.

Who will be his advocate? Here he comes, the man who 52 Sundays in the year heard the Gospel faithfully preached and yet closed his ears to it. What excuse has he? Here he comes—the man who was pleaded with but would not come—who will lament for him? Here he comes, the man that was the subject of many prayers and many anxious pleadings—the man that was so near to the kingdom as to be almost persuaded to be a Christian! What can be said for him? For this man so much was done that the Lord said, “What could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” Mercy itself came to a pause and said, “What shall I do to you? What shall I do to you?”

Surely, it is now the turn for Justice to ask the same question. Here he comes, the man on whom the Gospel has exhausted all its pleadings and God’s ambassadors have spent all their arguments! Here he comes and, when the Judge asks him what he has to say in his own defense, what answer can he make? Will it not be another case of, “He stood speechless; and the King said, Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”?

My God! Am I speaking to anyone this morning whose case this will be? I pray, of Your mercy, that it may not be so! If I had the misery of knowing that one soul here would be lost and if I was bidden to point out the one that should be cast away forever—how could I bear it? No, my Lord, blot my name out of Your book sooner than one of these should perish! I tremble as I stand before You! Yet there are those here who are as unaffected as the seats they sit upon. When such go down to destruction, who shall act as advocate for them? If one would plead for them, what could he say?—

*“How they deserve the deepest Hell  
Who slight the joys above!  
What chains of vengeance must they feel  
That break such cords of love!”*

IV. So, then, I finish with my fourth head, which is not in the text and yet is the true drift of the text—consider THE PATH OF WISDOM. Leave all I have said, if you please, but listen to the voice which says, “Come, let us return unto the Lord!” Why should you be struck any more—you will only revolt more and more! Why should you be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle? Why should you be “like dumb driven cattle?” Listen to the voice of Wisdom and be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. “Come, and let us return unto the Lord.”

This is very simple. So much the better for you. Think of it. No, practice it! What is the way back to God? The Lord Jesus answers—“I am the way.” Take Him to be your door of access to the great God on whom you have before turned your backs. Along the blood-sprinkled way of the atoning Sacrifice return unto the Lord your God. Not only are the words simple, but they are encouraging. It is put here in a way that ought to cheer you— for others invite you lest you be afraid to go alone—“Come, and let us return unto the Lord.” Let us go together. Here, take my hand. I, too, will go to Jesus as a sinner.

All of us who have gone to Him before will go to Him again with you. Come! Do you hesitate? Come, let us go at once. Let us go together. We will pray with you and for you—we know the road and will point it out to you. You are sitting side by side with your wife this morning and you

are, neither of you, saved. Oh, that the two of you would seize each other’s hands and say, “Come and let us return unto the Lord!” And you, Brothers and Sisters, or you, Friends, who know each other well—would it not be a happy thing if, hand in hand, before you leave this place—you did return unto the Lord? Come! Come! Come! Let us return! Why do we linger?

Oh, that all here present who have not come back to God by Jesus Christ would come in a great company to the Lord! Does it seem too bold a thing for you to go back to God? Be not dismayed! Take heart because of the word of promise. You cry, “He has torn me! He has wounded me!” Yes, that is why you should come to Him, for it is written, “He has torn and He will heal us; He has smitten and He will bind us up.” “Look!” cries the sick man, “see what a gash the surgeon made! He has gone away! Do you think he will come again to me?” Come again? Of course he will. He must come again. If he made that wound, he had a purpose in it and he will go through with his design. He has made the open wound because it was necessary to make it and he has thereby bound himself to attend to you till you are healed.

In conviction there is promise of consolation. It is not the nature of our good Lord to cause needless grief. His wounds intend a cure. The Lord, who has broken your heart, will bind it up! The Lord, who has made you tremble at His name, will yet make you rejoice in His salvation. He has said it—“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word.” The Lord will come to you in the grave of despair and bid you live! Behold His gracious promise and believe it to be true—“After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.”

May we all live in His sight by faith in Christ Jesus. And to Him be glory forever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Hosea 5:11-15; Hosea 6.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 570, 656.

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÷Hos 7.9

GRAY HAIRS

NO. 830

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 13, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not.” Hosea 7:9.**

THE Prophet here testified that the kingdom of Israel had learned the way of the surrounding heathen, and had polluted itself with their vices, and consequently the strength of the kingdom had decayed. He declares that he could discern signs of this decay—signs as manifest and certain as gray hairs which mark the decline of life—yet the inhabitants of the realm of Israel had not observed their decline, but had boasted of their strength when all the while it was departing from them. We need not go into any particulars as to that little kingdom which after awhile was swept away by Assyria, but there is no doubt that what happened unto them happens unto many a nation—it may happen unto our own! Before we are aware of it the scepter may depart from Britain. A general laxity of commercial morality may, by degrees, sap and undermine the foundation of our commerce and before we are aware, our industry may be crippled, our trade withdrawn and our position among the nations debased. If so, we shall fall by our sins, and by our sins alone.

Certainly such has often been the case with churches. It was notoriously so with that presided over by the bishop of Rome. The sins of that modern Babylon came not all at once, but by slow degrees. First, it submitted itself to one vain dogma of man’s invention. Then to a superstitious decree of a haughty council. Then to a third invention of a potent pontiff— and so by degrees the church apostatized until it ceased to be a church and became the persecutor of the saints!

Thus after their own fashion has it been with some of our churches at home. Zealous and active, prayerful and united, they grew every day like cedars which the Lord has planted and they were a blessing to the neighborhood in which they stood. But discord crept in, or worldliness, or pride—and by-and-by the Holy Spirit departed—the ministry became barren, the people looked up to the shepherd and they were not fed. Soon the church was scattered abroad, the light was blown out and the place that once was blessed by the Church knew it no more. May this never be written in the history of this church! May gray hairs never come upon its head at all, or if they should come may we have Divine Grace to perceive them at once, and resort unto the Holy Spirit for strength so that we may be saved from driveling into imbecility or apostatizing into error!

But I shall not discourse of nations this morning, nor yet of churches. To handle such extensive themes might rather interest than edify. I shall now speak of individuals. Brothers and Sisters, let us turn our thoughts to ourselves. It is an excellent rule for the hearer as well as the minister concerning a text, to apply himself to the text, and then, secondly, to apply the text to himself. Keep your thoughts to the text, and then when you have drawn out its meaning, let all that it has to say be spoken in your own ears as addressed personally to you. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may stir us up to self-examination—that if any strange sin or evil passion may have devoured our strength—at any rate we may know it and drive out the traitor at once!

First, this morning, I shall endeavor to explain the reason for the ignorance mentioned in the text, “yet he knows not.” Secondly, I shall hold up the glass, that every Ephraim here may see his gray hairs. And then, thirdly, I shall recommend remedies for this gradual decay.

I. Let me EXPLAIN THE IGNORANCE here mentioned, or show how it is that many a man is backsliding and declining in Divine Grace and yet knows it not. I take it that this often is caused by a lack of acquaintance with one’s own soul. It is said that in London we do not know our next door neighbors but it is a stranger thing that we should not know ourselves—that the soul should be so closely allied to the body as to be even married to it—and yet man scarcely gives his nobler part a thought—but lives as if he were a horse or a cow!

You have never seen your soul, and yet it is yourself! How is it you have lived so long, O man, without giving to your immortal spirit some consideration, some hours of thought, some studious moments? And you, O Christian, how is it that you, saved as you profess to be by a price immense—you who have received quickening from the Holy Spirit—that you think so little of soul affairs? We open our eyes in the morning, and right on until we close them at night we scarcely look for anything but that which is external and of the body. Would it not be well if we could open our spiritual eyes, too, and gaze into ourselves and understand what business is going on in the world of souls—what vice increases or what virtue declines within our hearts?

I am afraid we give our thoughts so much to this world that the next world is neglected. If there is but a scratch on the hand, if there is but a pimple on the flesh, timid folks must need send for the surgeon! But ah, they can let the souls be wounded and a deadly gangrene come upon them—and they send not unto the Beloved Physician that He would come and heal them of their diseases. Everywhere we see among men a great lack of acquaintance with their souls, a great forgetfulness of the motto of the old Delphic oracle, “Man, know yourself!” And consequently it is that men decline almost unto spiritual death and yet scarcely know it!

Some there are, again, who do not want to know any evil thing of themselves. They had rather suppose themselves to be rich than actually know the true condition. “No,” they say, “bring not the day-book! Show me not the ledger! I am spending now as if I were a wealthy man and living at a lavish rate. I do not want to know that I am nearly a bankrupt—I had rather not perceive it.” Hear how these wounded ones dread to be dealt with honestly, and therefore cry, “Surgeon, film over the sore—it shall be enough for me—I want not the knife! I care not to have my wound radically healed.” Fools are they who talk thus, and yet how such fools abound!

My Hearer, are you one of this tribe? Are you content to have a fair name to live? Are you satisfied to dream that you are rich and increased in goods and in need of nothing, while you are in reality naked, and poor, and miserable? If so, the Lord have mercy upon you and make you enough your own friend to be willing to know the truth of your state! Many see not the gray hairs because they do not took into the glass to see them. We cannot very well perceive gray hairs without the use of the mirror, or our sins without the glass of the Word of God.

Many professors search not the Scriptures. They will never win the blessing of the first Psalm, for they are not day and night found reading God’s Word. They do not come unto this Book, which is God’s looking glass which He hangs up in the chambers of His people that they may see the natural face, and perceive what manner of men they are. Oh, these unread Bibles! These neglected Bibles—how they cry out against us! What swift witnesses will they be against many professors in the last heartsearching day! What? Does God give us a gauge by which we may measure ourselves, and will we not use it? Does He send us these detectors and tell-tales by which we may discover whether all is well with us or not, and will we close our eyes and refuse to see? Oh, then, if we die and utterly perish, surely our blood must be upon our own head! He that will not be saved must be damned! He that will not take the trouble to look into the glass shall have no one to blame if the undiscovered evil brings him into grievous ill and irretrievable mischief!

There are some, again, who look into the glass to see whether there are gray hairs coming, but they use a false mirror, one which does not truly reflect the image. I mean this—that multitudes of Christians use a standard, other than Holy Scripture, of what a Christian ought to be! They compare themselves among themselves, and they are not wise. They say, “I am as holy, I am as unworldly, I am as conscientious, I am as prayerful as So-and-So.” Perhaps they even boast that they have more spirituality of mind than such a one—and being content to have excelled their fellow creatures they cannot conceive that there can be gray hairs upon themselves—and so their pride is flattered and their soul is thus cankered through and through by a false conception of what they should be.

It is well for us, Beloved, all of us, to aim high. It is said that he who shoots at the moon, if he does not hit it, will at any rate shoot higher than he who aims at a bush. And so he that aims at absolute perfection, if he should not attain it, may, at any rate, be something better than he who takes some poor imperfect friend of his and makes him to be a standard. Break your false mirrors! Throw away your flattering looking glasses and take to the clear crystal of the Word of God! There see what Jesus was, and ask yourselves how near, or rather how far, you are from being like He! Look at the Son of God, the image of perfection, and hear Him say, “Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect,” and blush as you see your deformities, your sins, your gray hairs! And so blushing, may God bless you!

I am ashamed to have to say one more thing, namely, that some men who are decaying in strength do not see their spiritual gray hairs because they dye themselves so thoroughly. I mean that they color themselves with hypocrisy. There are men who, if every hair were gray, would still wear raven locks in their own judgment—and the judgment of others—for they are masters of deceit. There are some who, if we speak of private prayer, retire into their closets as regularly as others—but yet they never draw near to God in spirit and in truth. How many there are who are as apparently devout in the externals of religion as if they were the children of God—while all the while they are formalists, and Pharisees without the root of the matter in them?

It is the easiest thing in all the world to counterfeit the issues of the mint of Heaven! Yes, and to pass the spurious coin among your fellow creatures and to make them think that you are far richer than they in gracious things, while all the while your virtue is counterfeit and your profession a lie! O my Hearers, take care of putting formal prayer, sham holiness and imitation godliness into the place of the real fruits of the Spirit! You must be not merely washed and cleansed, but “born again!” You must undergo a radical change and you must serve the living God in the power of His Eternal Spirit—not with the tongue and with profession only, but with heart, and soul, and strength—or else your religion will be nothing but a funeral pall to cover your dead soul and help to increase the pomp with which you shall be carried to Hell.

God save us from hiding from ourselves our secret faults. Let us be willing to be spoken to by the rough preacher’s stern voice! Let us be greedy to read those passages of Scripture which try us most! Let it be our prayer, “Search me, O God, and try my heart.” Daily and hourly let us desire to feel the refining fire go through our soul. Come with the fan in Your hand, O Savior, and thoroughly purge my floor and let my chaff be driven away! And let nothing but the pure wheat remain!

Thus I have, as briefly as I could, shown you why it is that many, perhaps of ourselves, may have well-marked decay in our souls and yet we may not know it.

II. Secondly, I am to HOLD UP THE LOOKING GLASS. Remember, Brethren, that decays in Divine Grace and backsliding are usually very much like the fall of the autumn leaves. You are watching the trees, for now they are beginning to indicate the coming fall. They evidently know that their verdant robes are to be stripped from them for they are casting off their first loose vestments. How slowly the time of the brown leaf comes on! You notice here and there a tinge of the copper hue, and soon the gold leaf or the bronze is apparent. Week after week you observe that the general fall of the leaves is drawing nearer, but it is a matter that creeps slowly on.

And so with backsliders. They are not put out of the visible Church all at once. They do not become open offenders all at once. The heart, by slow degrees, turns aside from the living God and then, at last, comes the outward sin and the outward shame. God save us from falling by little and little! The devil’s little strokes have felled many great oaks. Constant droppings of temptation have worn away many stones. God save us from it!

Some cities have been carried by storm. Brave soldiers have made the irons of the scaling ladder bite on the top of the wall, and up they have swarmed in defiance of death and carried the city by sudden force within a few hours. But many other cities have been taken by the slow process of the siege—the supplies have been cut off, warriors have been slain at the sally-ports, slowly. Entrenchments have been thrown up nearer and nearer to the wall. Mines have been dug under the bastions. Forts have been weakened, gates have been shaken—and at last the city has been subdued.

Where Satan captures one man by force of strong temptation, he captures ten by the gradual process of sapping and undermining the principles which should rule within. May God preserve us from this! The cunning fowler can adapt his arts to suit our case, and if some of us may be taken by a sudden surprise, he understands how to draw the bow and bring us down. But if others are to be entrapped by being accustomed to the lure, he will occupy weeks, and months, and years, for he counts no time lost so that he may bring a child of God to shame, and bring disgrace to the name of Jesus!

I will, then, hold up the glass to let those see their own hearts, in whom the evil is insinuating itself by degrees. One of the gray hairs which marks decay is a lack of holy grief for daily sin. Comes not this close to home for some of you? “Repentance? Why,” says one, “I repented when I was converted.” What, and not since then? Why, repentance and faith go hand in hand to Heaven! A Christian must never leave off repenting for I fear he never leaves off sinning. Where there is none of the dew of repentance, there is one sign of a curse.

Gilboa’s mountain was barren because on it there was no dew, and what shall I say of you who have lost the dew of repentance? What? Can you grieve your God and not grieve yourselves? What, Sirs? Can you go into your business and know that you have spoken and acted amiss, and when you come home at night are there no lamenting and confession? Have sin and you grown so friendly that you can carry this viper in your bosom? Your God is a jealous God! And if He sees that you treat sin so lightly, rest assured He will make you smart before long and withdraw His Holy Spirit from you—and leave you to grope in darkness. There is perhaps not a more common gray hair than this, and yet there is not one which more surely indicates that the constitution of the Christian is being secretly undermined. If you see this evil in the looking glass, God give you Grace to repent over your lack of repentance, and to weep that you do not weep for sin!

A second gray hair is the absence of lamentation in the soul when Jesus Christ is dishonored by others. Time was with some of us when, if we saw others sin, we could sit down and cry our heart out at our eyes—we could not bear the thought that thousands of our fellow creatures should be living in continual neglect of our precious Lord Jesus! We thought we could lay down our lives, or a hundred lives if we had them, if we might but make Him a throne in men’s hearts and write His name on the very skies so that everyone that ran might read it!

But now we hear of sin and it does not fill us with holy horror as it once did. Perhaps, dear Hearer, you can hear the precious name of Jesus dishonored and yet your soul is not pierced through and through as with a dart. Ah, if you loved the Master it would be a painful thing to live in such a wicked world as this! If you loved the sweet Lord Jesus your heart would yearn over those who see not His beauty, and to whom He is as “a root out of a dry ground.” Shame on us! Shame most of all on myself that I can walk through these streets of London without tears!

Jesus saw Jerusalem and wept, but what was Jerusalem? A petty village compared with London! And yet He wept over it! Have we no tears for a city with equal light, and with equal sin, and with a population multiplied so many times?—

*“Did Christ over sinners weep,*

*And can our cheeks be dry?”*  
Yes, they are dry—dry from year in to year out—and scarcely a sigh or cry for poor dying souls is heard from some of us! We can be satisfied to have our friends saved, and our children and a few neighbors saved—but as for the rest we talk as if they were delivered over to ruin by God’s decree—and we satisfy ourselves with vain drivel about sovereignty, or some other idle conjecture! And we do not mourn or lament, though Hell is filling and Christ’s name is blasphemed, and the Lord’s Day disregarded and I know not what of infamy committed beneath the light of the moon! It is a sure sign that our Divine Grace is not at flood tide, but sadly at the ebb, when there is no grieving over the sins of others.

A third gray hair in the Christian, a very plain one, and marking that the disease is gone far, is the indulgence of certain minor sins. I call them minor only because they are supposed to be so. When a thief finds that he cannot enter the door of a good man’s house and that the windows are so barred up that there is no entrance for him, what does he do, but, finding that there is a little window through which a child might creep, he fetches a boy and passes him through the narrow opening. And then the child opens the door to the man, and the house is plundered.

Even so, when Satan cannot overthrow a Believer with the gross sins of the flesh, he is certain to find some lesser evil which he introduces through an unguarded place—and then the lesser sin opens the door for the next. You know the process of the wedge. Try to put the blunt end of the wedge into the timber and how useless it would be! But put in the thin edge first—give it but a gentle stroke with the hammer and then again, and again, and again—and see how it cleaves its way, widening little by little.

So some professors begin with a little conformity to the world. “Oh!” they say, “I cannot see the harm of it,” though others of their fellow Christians are grieved. Then they come to the next, and the next, and the next—and so by slow degrees they give up virtually all the truthfulness of their profession and make shipwreck of faith and are castaways—because the Grace of God was not truly in them, but only notionally so. While others who go a certain distance in the road to apostasy are met by Divine Grace and turned back—not without many broken bones and much sore lamentation all the after days of their life.

Covetousness, which few men will confess, is yet a very common gray hair upon the heads of professors. Beware of a growing covetousness, for covetousness is, of all sins, one of the most insidious. It is like the silting up of a river. As the river comes down from the land it brings with it sand and earth and it deposits all these at its mouth. And by degrees, unless the conservators watch it carefully, it will block itself up and it will be difficult to find a channel for ships of great tonnage. You cannot see when the river closes its own mouth, but so it is—by daily deposit it creates a bar which is dangerous to navigation.

Many a man, when he begins to accumulate wealth, begins, also, to ruin his soul—and the more he deposits the more he stops up his liberal spirit, which is, so to speak, the very mouth of his life. Instead of doing more for God, he does less. The more he saves the more he needs, and the more he needs of this world the less he craves for the world to come. This disease creeps upon men as slowly as certain disorders which slumber in the blood for months until they find occasion to develop themselves. Watch against a grasping spirit, dear Friends. If you find money sticks to your hands, mind what you are doing! It is all well enough for you to seek to make all you can rightly—you are bound to do so, and to use it properly—but when the gold begins to cleave to you, it will eat as does a canker—and will soon prove your ruin unless God prevents it.

With some it is not quite so much what we call covetousness, though it is the same sin, as it is worldliness. They are as much taken up with the little they have as some would be with their much—and as much drawn away from God by their losses as others would be by their gains. They are, from morning to night, always fretting and worrying about the things of this life. Our Lord’s great text, “Be careful for nothing,” they have never understood. The first, last, and middle thoughts of their life are, “What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and how shall we be clothed?” They rise up early and sit up late—they eat the bread of carefulness, but forget the Lord who alone can build the house. Do not some of you find yourselves falling into this fretful way?

There was a time when it was not so. Oh, that hour of prayer—how you enjoyed it, but you clip it very short, now! You say you cannot afford the time. Ah, that Thursday night lecture, that evening Prayer Meeting—how sweet those used to be! How you went home thanking God that there were such wells in the desert! But you cannot come out to them now—you are to pestered with cares—and even on the Sabbath your business intrudes itself into your thoughts! You have been making calculations in the pew this morning! You have been worrying yourself about interest and discount, and mortgage and commission. The stockbroker’s din and the rate collector’s knock have sounded in your ears!

The fact is, my Friend, you are growing worldly. Take a bright knife from your table and dig with it into the earth in your garden—and leave it there—see how it will rust. This is what will become of your soul—put it into the earth, and keep it there—it must corrode. A man can do as much business as the wealthiest merchant in the world, and if he lives near to God it will not hurt him! But a man can do a tin-pot business, as they say, and yet for all that, because he puts his soul into it, cares about it, worries over it, and departs from the living God—it will consume the graciousness of his soul and take away all the sharpness of his Christian zeal and all the brightness of the holy communion which he once had with his God. Beware of that gray hair! O my beloved Brothers and Sisters, I have held the glass up! You can see the evil! Avoid it for the Lord’s sake and your own!

In some professors the gray hair of envy is very visible—yes, in some of the best, too. Some of God’s servants are not satisfied to serve God in their own way, but they must make it their aim to excel some other Brother, and if that Brother should happen to be more successful, or to be thought to be so, straightaway they feel aggrieved and are apt to try and pick a hole in his coat, or pull a feather from his cap lest he should outshine them. This is the sin of some of the hardest workers in Christian Churches!

I wish we could all get the spirit of dear Mr. Dodd, the Puritan, who said, “I wish that I were the worst preacher in all England,” by which he meant, “I wish they were all better than myself.” He did not mean that he would like to he any worse than he was—but he desired that all his Brothers might be better than himself. We ought to be like the old Roman, who, when another was elected to an office in preference to himself, thanked God that his country had better men than himself! So should we.

But the spirit that was evinced in the days of Luther is often seen even in our churches—many confessed that Luther had proposed many excellent reforms—but they could not endure them because they were proposed, as they said, by a beggarly monk. At this time many would confess to the notable deed of a zealous Brother, but then they must find fault because the man is so young, “How shall he be allowed to outstrip venerable sires?” Or, “He is such a poor man, who is he that he should be making such a to-do?” Or, “The man has never had an education, how dare he pretend to be useful?” This is very mean and despicable, and yet, alas, most common! Let us give no quarter to the foul spirit of envy. It is a devil with as many lives as a cat, and you will have to kill it a great many times over to get rid of it—and it must be slain. It is a gray hair of the most pernicious kind, for it marks a sad declension of soul from right walking with God.

Another gray hair is pride. When we think ourselves to be something, then we are nothing. When we boast within ourselves, “I have none of these gray hairs,” we are then snow-white with them. When we conceive that others might well take a pattern from us, we may soon be beacons to them. Rocks always lie in the way of the ship of pride. When we write fine things about ourselves, we shall soon write bitter things against ourselves. A professor is never lower in the sight of God than when he is high in his own esteem.

Neglect of prayer , again, is another gray hair. When a town begins to decay in its commerce, its decline may come by slow degrees—careful watchers observe it because they perceive that the ships in the harbor grow fewer and fewer. Our soul is the harbor, and our prayers are the vessels by which we trade between our souls and Heaven—and when these prayers begin to be fewer, or are of lighter tonnage—when they make fewer voyages to the celestial haven, then be sure that our soul’s spiritual trade is under a sad decay.

It is a gray hair, too, when we have no delight in listening to the Word of God, or reading it. Time was with some of you when you would cheerfully stand in the aisles with the crowd to listen and were glad, though you had not a place to lean against, if you might catch a good Word from the Master. But now it must be a soft cushion so you may sit easy, and the preacher must mind that he choose out goodly similes and choice words if he would hold your ear. You are dainty now. When you were hungry, you could eat Gospel meat from the bone, cut how it might be! But now it must be daintily carved, or your stomach turns against it. When the appetite fails, the man’s health is wrong and he needs a tonic, and perhaps the great Physician will before long send him a bitter draught which will bring him right.

Another gray hair is lack of love to God—when we think hard thoughts of Him because we are in trouble. When we do not seek His honor. When we can hear His name blasphemed without a feel of horror. When we do not, in fact, love Him as a tender child loves a parent. O Beloved, it is a sweet thing to love God! It is the true life of man, this love of God in the soul! It is a sweet thing when you can talk with Him, walk with Him, rejoice in Him, bless Him, praise Him and hold Him to be good even in the darkest of His dispensations!

But we do not love God as we should. O our dear God, our blessed Father, our tender Parent, whose truthfulness we have proved 10,000 times, and whose loving kindnesses every day are innumerable—how little do we praise Him, how often do we complain of Him, how few good words do we speak to others concerning Him—and how ready are we, at the very first rebuff from Him, to murmur against Him! May our souls get to love God better, and this will be a sign that we are in a holy and happy state.

A lack of love to Believers is another gray hair. They who love not the Father are not likely to love the children. Many professors seem to be entirely wrapped up in themselves. Their notion of religion is their own salvation, and their idea of zeal is simply seeing after their own prosperity. Brothers and Sisters, see that you love one another! “Little children, love one another,” said John, “for love is of God.” And if you do not love the poor and needy of Christ’s Church, and the feeble and the suffering—yes, if your heart does not go out towards all in whom there is anything of Christ Jesus—depend upon it, you are not living so near to God as you should!

Again, lack of love to perishing sinners is a sad gray hair to be found, I fear, in some of us ministers, as well as in the people—would God it were not so! Ah, when we can think of the perishing and yet be not dismayed on their account. When we refuse to speak the Gospel to them. When we do not warn them. When we never pray for them. When our closets never witness to our sighs and cries for these poor souls that will so soon be damned and cast away from all hope. When we can even think of neighbors, children, friends perishing, and not feel any brokenness of spirit, nor pour out any lamentations over them—oh then, indeed, we must have forgotten the compassion of Jesus and our heart must be terribly diseased!

Look at the gray hair and ask God to deliver you from what it indicates. One other gray hair is the suspension of communion with God. We sang of it just now—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?”*

How wretched is it to follow Jesus afar off and to be unable to say, “He brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” When we can no more rejoice with the joy of them that make merry in His name, nor can weep at His feet—then have we turned aside and may God in mercy bring us back again!

III. Two or three words shall suffice for the third point, namely, to recommend to you CERTAIN REMEDIES. I would press it home upon any professor here who has seen gray hairs in the glass I have held up, to make an enquiry as to whether he is a child of God or not, for these things go far to make us doubt whether we ever were born again. And if this is a question, then all is at stake.

Oh, I pray you make the trial, for it would be better for you to doubt and fear than to go to Hell blindfolded with carnal security! Young people, you joined the Church some years ago and you thought then you felt deep repentance, conviction of sin, and a true faith in Christ. You have had two or three years to try yourself—how is it with you now? Is not the world getting the upper hand with you? Does not that tempting offer of marriage almost persuade you to break the Lord’s command not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers? Do not the pleasures of the world, which are so congenial to poor evil flesh and blood—do not they begin to fascinate you?

Then ask yourselves, “Am I built on the rock, or is it a sandy foundation? Have I received the Grace of God in truth, or am I under some fond delusion which is lulling my conscience for awhile, and stupefying my reason? I beg you by the blessed God, by death and by eternity—make sure work of it—see that you get to Christ and not to a fancied peace! See that you possess true and living faith in a living Savior and not a confidence based on mere excitement! I ask you that, because I believe the answer to that question may very much help you to get rid of these gray hairs.

Next, I beseech you professors who can honestly feel that you are converted, to remember what will be the result of decays in Divine Grace. You cannot always keep those decays inward—even if you could they would be mischievous. They will lose you the company of Christ! They will deprive you of the joy of the Lord! They will mar your prevalence in prayer! They will take away from you much of your usefulness in outward life—and do you know what it will come to in the long run, unless Divine Grace prevents? Why, these decays will begin to tell upon your outward conduct and conversation!

Say not, “I shall never be an open sinner.” Little do you know what you will be! That lip which vows today, “I will never deny Him,” may yet deny Christ with oaths and curses. Who are you that you should be better than Peter? Do not you start at the thought of it? Then start at the sight of these gray hairs! Amend, I pray you, and return to God with grieving and repentance, to think you should already have so much departed from Him—or else your last end may be worse than the first!

I recommend to every Believer here a daily self-examination. Pythagoras commanded his disciples three times every night, before they went to sleep, to go over the errors of the day that they might see them and avoid them in the future. Repentance is a blessed Grace. Mr. Rowland Hill used to say it was one of his regrets that he could not take repentance into Heaven with him. It is so blessed a thing to weep under a sense of sin, that we may say in the words of our hymn writer*—*

*“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,  
And after none but You.  
And then I would, O that I might,  
A constant weeper be.”*

Look at the great heinousness of the sin of departing from God! See sin in its true deformity and blackness, and repent of it!

Then with repentance join much supplication, especially supplication for the power of the Holy Spirit to be shed abroad in you. I do feel, Brothers and Sisters, as if few of us have ever entered into the power of religion. We are living in the weakness of it. We live on the outskirts! We have not pierced into the metropolitan city of intense vital godliness. We are like those poor Eskimos far away at the poles. O that we could reach the tropics of true godliness where the sun of Divine Grace should be vertical all the day long, and its Divine heat should bring forth in our hearts all the tropical luxuriance of which renewed nature can be capable! We need to yield sweet fruits for Christ, delicious flowers and all that human nature can produce when sanctified by the blessed Spirit! Oh, by supplication, seek to get more power from on high that you may get rid of these gray hairs!

Brethren, to our supplications let us add renewed faith. Let us go to Jesus as we went at the first. Living waters from that sacred well we may draw—waters which shall refresh us still! Let us go with the penitent’s cry, beating on our breast because of our wanderings, and ask for restoration and a fresh cleansing in the fountain which Jesus filled! Jesus is not slow to be entreated. He will bind up that which is broken. He will restore that which has gone astray. And then to this prayer of faith, let us add a daily watchful activity. Let us guard ourselves that we slide not down the glassy precipice of declension. Let us keep our feet with all diligence and cry to the great Keeper who alone can hold us up and make us safe.

And let us see to it, Brothers and Sisters, that we are not deluded into the idea that we can get to Heaven safely and yet live at a distance from God—that so long as we are just saved, it will suffice. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, rise! Let your motto be, “Superior,” higher yet! Rise like eagles that God has trained to face the sun! Rise like angels whose abode is Heaven! Get up! Get up, you lingerers in the valley! Ascend to clearer atmospheres, to do yet better service for your God! I long heavily for more Divine Grace to serve my Master, and more consecration to His service! And I wish the like for all of you. Let none of us be content to tarry down below in the marshland of the poor poverty-stricken religion of this present day—but let us climb the high mountains where the sun of God’s Grace is shining brightest—and stand there enjoying communion with Him, leaving the world.

So shall gray hairs vanish, and so shall we, like the eagle, renew our youth. Beloved, there is much that may strike the ungodly in this sermon as well as the Believer—and I pray God to make it a two-edged sword to wound and to heal both. “Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” There is the Gospel! Receive it and live in the power of it! Amen.

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÷Hos 7.11

A SILLY DOVE

NO. 2984

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1863.**

**“Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart.”  
Hosea 7:11.**

THE race of Ephraim is not extinct. Men are to this very day very much like what they were in the days of the Prophets. The same rebukes are still suitable, as well as the same comforts. As man has altered very little, if at all, in his outward bodily conformation, so has he not varied in the inner constitution—he is much the same today as he was in the time of Hosea. In this congregation, in the midst of the city of London, we have too large a company of those who are “like a silly dove without heart.”

To proceed at once with the text, I want you to notice four things. First—a saintly similitude. Secondly—a secret distinction. Thirdly—a severe description. And lastly, a serious consideration.

I. Here we have A SAINTLY SIMILITUDE—“Ephraim is like a dove!” The people are not compared here to the eagle that soars aloft and scents its prey from afar, nor to the vulture which delights to gorge itself with carrion. They are not likened to any foul and unclean bird which was put aside under the Law of God, but the very figure which is constantly chosen to set forth the beauty of holiness, to describe the Believer, and to picture the whole Church—no, that very emblem by which we set forth Him who is Holiness, itself, God the Holy Spirit—that same comparison to a dove is here used to describe those who were without heart. “Ephraim is like a dove”—it is a saintly similitude.  
Let me remind you that in all congregations there are those who are like doves, but not Christ’s doves, who never build their nests in the clefts of the rock, in the bosom of the Savior. They are like doves—you can never tell them from genuine Believers and, like doves, they are perfectly harmless. They do no mischief to others in all their lives. Track them, if you will, you will never find them in the alehouse. They sing not the song of the drunkard. No man ever lost anything in business by them. Men may have their pockets picked in the streets, but never by them. Persons may go staggering home under a wound, but that wound never comes from their hands—there is no uncleanness in their heart and no slander on their tongue—they are amiable, admirable. We might almost hold them up for examples of propriety. Alas, alas, that we have only to look within to find that they are not what they seem!  
Moreover, being like doves for harmlessness, they are also like them for loving good company. We find not the dove flying with a host of eagles, but it consorts with its own kind. Some of you are never happier than when you are either in the Tabernacle or else in some of the classes formed by various members of the congregation. You also find such a pleasant excitement in the Prayer Meeting that you are not absent from it except when you are prevented by business. You love being where God’s people go—their hymns are sweet to your ears. In their prayers you find some sort of comfort and in the ministry of the Word you take delight. You fly like a cloud and like doves to their windows, and it is a joy to us to see you do it. And yet it may be that although you know how to congregate like doves, you are simply “like a silly dove without heart.”  
Moreover, these persons are still more like the dove in that they have the same meekness, apparently, as distinguishes the dove. They hear as God’s people hear and sit as His people sit. They are not skeptics. They never object to the exposition of the Doctrines to which they listen. They pick no holes in the preacher’s coat—they have no particular fault to find either with the style or the matter of his discourse. They decorously frequent the House of God and behave themselves in a seemly manner when there. No, more than that, they seem with meekness to receive the Word, though they do not receive it as engrafted into their own hearts. They even receive it with joy when the Seed is scattered on them, but having no root in themselves, the good Seed comes to nothing. O my dear Hearers, it is a great subject for thanksgiving that so many of you are ready and willing to listen to the Word with deep and profound respect! But I do beseech you to remember that you may, in this, be like the dove, and yet, after all, you may be taken in the same net and destroyed with the same destruction as that which fell upon the Ephraimites who were “like a silly dove without heart!”  
The dove, you know, is a clean feeder, and so we have many who get as far as that. They know the distinction between the precious and the vile—they will not feed on Law—they can only live on Grace. They have come to know the Doctrines of the Gospel and they feed on them—upon pure corn, well winnowed. You have only to bring in a little free will and straightway they know the chaff from the wheat and refuse to receive it! They cast it away as refuse metal which is of no value to them. But, while they have an orthodox head, they have a heterodox heart—while they know the Truth of God and feel it, yet it is still not the right kind of feeling—they have never so received it as to incorporate it into their very being. They have accepted it with the same sort of belief and in somewhat the same manner as Simon did in Samaria. But, after a while, when trouble and persecution shall come, and waxes too hot, they will turn aside.  
But I have to add yet further that there are some of these persons who are like doves in another respect still more singular—as a dove is molested by all sorts of birds of prey, so these persons do, for a time, share the lot which befalls the people of God! Why, there are some who for the mere coming to the House of God, get nicknamed, “saints.” They are not saints, but they have to bear the scoffing which is given to saints. And I know some who have turned out to be great sinners, who have, for a time, put up with much scoffing and rebuke for the sake of Christ! When pointed at in the street, it has been part of the manliness of their character to acknowledge that they did frequent such a place of worship. Though their soul has never been stricken by the Divine Word, yet it has become so sweet in their ears that they are willing to bear some degree of reproach for the sake of it! I should not like to be compelled to say precisely wherein the saint is to be distinguished by outward signs, for really, the counterfeits nowadays are so much like the genuine that it needs the Wisdom of the Infallible God, Himself, to discern between the one and the other! We can have false faith, false repentance, false hope and false good works. We have all sorts of things—paint, varnish, tinsel— and we may so grain that a skillful eye will scarcely know whether it is the genuine wood or the artist’s skill. There are many ways of preparing metals and sometimes the alloy seems to have in it, for some purpose, qualities which the unalloyed metal lacks. O Lord, the great Searcher of hearts, do search us lest we should have applied to us saintly names and pass the saintly reputation and character—and hold saintly offices—and after all be cast away with the rubbish over the wall and left to be consumed forever and ever! But, enough on that point.  
II. I have now to call your attention to A SECRET DISTINCTION— “Ephraim is like a dove without heart.”  
This implies a lack of understanding. The dove knows but little and experience scarcely teaches it anything. We may almost spread the snare in the flight of that bird and yet it will fly to it, it is so silly. It does not seem to possess, at least to the outward eye, the wits and sense of some others of the feathered tribe. It has little or no understanding. And oh, how many there are who are, spiritually, like the dove! They have no real knowledge of the Truth of God! They rest in the letter and think that is enough. I solemnly believe that there are those who have not the shadow of an idea of the meaning of the words which they hear every Sabbath in a form of prayer! They repeat those prayers without any appreciation of the sense of them. They would probably not notice if the words were put in any other way. Doubtless they would get as much good out of them if they were thrown together in wild disorder, as they do out of the beautiful and magnificent array in which they are marshaled! Many who come and hear the most simple Truths, go away and say, “It is a riddle to us. We cannot understand how people can sit and listen to that.” Either they condemn the preacher’s words as trite or else as fanatical—they cannot understand them.  
You may fetch a clodhopper and set before him the masterpiece of an eminent old painter and tell him, “That picture is worth sixty thousand pounds.” He looks, opens his mouth, starts again and says he can’t make anything of it. He can’t see where the money could go. He’d sooner have carts, and horses, and pigs, and cows, and sheep. Well, now, to some extent we might almost sympathize with him, but the high-art critics despise the man at once for having no soul above his clod. And it is just the same in spiritual things! Exhibit the glories of the Person of Christ and the matchless wisdom of the plan of salvation—that man can see nothing in it. “It is, no doubt, a very good and very proper thing.” He will attend to it and so on—and then he goes to church and thinks he is pious, sits in his seat and goes through the routine—and then supposes he is reconciled to God! Oh, how many such silly doves we have fluttering in and out of our places of worship! As a quaint old preacher said, there were scarcely seats enough for the saints on account of the number of simpletons that came to listen!  
But, again, they were silly doves without heart, because, lacking an understanding heart, they also lacked a decided heart. Sometimes, however, the dove would be slandered if we should use her as a metaphor in this respect. Have you not seen the dove when, from afar, with her quick eyes she has seen her cot, fly straight away, over miles of sea and land, straight to her beloved home? There, she could not be used as a metaphor of the ungodly—but of a child of Jesus who thus flies to Him over the wild waves of sin. But, perhaps, you have seen the dove as first she rises in the air and then flies round and round. She deliberates in order to find out which is the right direction and, when she has made up her mind, away she flies straight as an arrow to the goal. But, while she is fluttering about, she is an apt emblem of some men. They are undecided whether for God or Baal. They halt, to use Elijah’s figure, between two opinions. “How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” On Sundays, they go to church, but on Mondays, they put off their religious habits—the weather is too rough, or something else prevents them from going to the Prayer Meeting. On Sunday, they say—

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

but, on Monday or Tuesday, the sound of the wheels in the street and the noise of them that buy and sell put the music of Jerusalem out of their ears and they would gladly go back to the world again! Ah, they are silly doves without understanding and without decision!

No, there are some who may be said to have a sort of decision for a time, but they are like the dove in that they are without resolution. The doves seeks to fly in one direction. Somebody claps his hands and she changes in a moment. Or else he sprinkles a handful of barley on the ground and, though she was flying yonder, she is over here again! How many persons there are of that kind, setting their faces to Zion, intending to join the church—perhaps they have seen the elders and the pastor and been accepted—but, after a little time, they say, “Well, they did not know all about it. There are more frightful things than they dreamt of in it!” Like Pliable, they would go to Heaven, but they get into the Slough of Despond and there is strange stuff there that gets into the ears and mouth—and so they get out on the side nearest home and tell Christian he may have the brave country all to himself, for they don’t like the miry places on the way. Or, it may be that some old companion comes up from the country and he will treat them to some place of amusement. Or, perhaps, it may be that there is a prospect of gain to be got in some branch of business that is not quite as honest as it might be. But does not the money count as well? Isn’t it as good to spend? Will not other men think it worth twenty shillings to the pound, however it may have been gained? These people who seemed so true and warm-hearted are like the silly dove without resolution—and fly away again to their old haunts and become just what they used to be.

So likewise there are many, like a dove, without bold hearts. They never turn upon a persecutor. They never stood in the gap with Mr. Valiant-for-Truth, holding the sword in their hand. They cannot open their mouth to speak for Jesus, but they run away when they ought to stand out like a lion against their foes. They never give a reason for the hope that is in them. We have plenty of Baptist churches educating cowards by the score! They never come out before the whole church— that would be too trying for their nerves! They are never expected to come out boldly on the Lord’s side. Too often, Baptism is administered somewhere in a corner, when as few as possible are present and, in that way, where we ought to have lion-like men, we breed those who hide their principles and are ready to amalgamate with any sect of people so long as they can but bear the name of Christians! I would to God, dear Friends, we had bolder men for our Lord and Master! Be as full of love as you can, but take care that you mix iron with your constitution! Silly are the doves that have no bold heart for God. The day will come when only the bold heart shall win, for the fearful and unbelieving are to have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone!

Too many, also, there are like a silly dove, in that they have a powerless heart. If you visit a great factory where there is a large engine, you will notice that the amount of power used in the factory is proportionate to the capacity of the steam-engine. If that should work but feebly, then the wheels cannot revolve beyond a proportionate rate— and every part soon discovers that there is some lack of motive force. Now, man’s heart is the great steam-engine of his whole being—and if he has a heart that palpitates with swift strokes, it will put his whole nature in motion and that man will be mighty for his Lord and Master! But if he has a little, insignificant heart that never did glow, and never did burn, and never did know anything about the warmth, life, heat, power and benediction of God’s Love, then his will fritter away his time, knowing the right and doing the wrong, loving in some sort the thing that is beautiful, but still following that which is deformed, giving his name to God and giving what little strength he has to the other side! Brothers and Sisters, I would to God there were not so many in all our communities that have but a pigeon’s heart, or a dove’s heart, or no heart at all!

The root of the master lies here— these Ephraimites have not renewed hearts and so they fail. Verily, verily, it is true to this hour, as in Jesus’ day, “except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Many strive to see it in their own way, but, until the effectual Grace of God comes down to turn their hearts from the great and extraordinary confidence which their proud flesh has in their own works, they never will see, they never can see, the Kingdom of God! How many like Ephraim, then, have the heart altogether wrong because it is not renewed? Therefore it has none of those qualifications which tend to make the man what he should be.

III. With great brevity, we notice, in the third place, A SEVERE DESCRIPTION—“Ephraim is like a silly dove.”  
It is a fine word, that word, “silly.” Hardly do I know another that is so eminently descriptive. There may be some sort of dignity in being a fool— but to be silly—to attract no attention except ridicule—is so utterly contemptible that I do not know how a more sarcastic epithet could be applied!  
“Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart.” And why silly? Why, it is silly, of course, to profess to be a dove at all, unless a dove at heart! Silly of you to enslave yourselves with the customs of a country of which you are not a citizen—to bind yourselves with the rules of a family of which you are not a member! We find men, when they go to another country, if there is a conscription there, only too willing to plead their own nationality in order to escape it! And yet we have persons who will serve in the Christian conscription, who give as God’s people give and outwardly do what God’s people do—and yet they are not of the godly nation, but are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel! Is not this silly— to take the irksome toil and not to get the joy and the benefit of it? You are silly to go and work in the vineyard, though you have never eaten of the clusters, and never can unless your heart is right in the sight of God.  
Isn’t it silly, then, to profess to be a dove at all, and yet not to be a dove? Isn’t it silly, again, to think you can pass muster when your heart is wrong—to fancy that if you go with the crowd, you shall enter Heaven without being seen? Do you think to deceive Omniscience? Do you think Infallible Wisdom will not discern you? Do you think to enter Heaven while your soul is estranged from God? Then, indeed, you are worse than a fool! You are “silly” to think such a thing! How can you thus hope to deceive your God? What is more silly than to play fast and loose in this way—first, to sing the song of Zion, and then the song of lasciviousness! There is something dignified even in the devil, himself—there is something awful about the grandeur of his wickedness because he is consistent in it! But there is nothing of that consistency in you because you are here and there, everywhere and nowhere—everything by turns, and nothing long.  
Some of you are so silly as to hasten your own condemnation. You know that to be without God and without Christ will ruin you, and yet you do that which keeps you from going to Christ! You hug the sins that prevent your laying hold on Him and still dandle upon your knee the lusts which you know will shut the gates of Heaven against you! Like Ephraim, you are silly enough to trust in that which will be your ruin. Some of you rest upon good works, or hope to be saved by good feelings. The two powers which had oppressed Ephraim—Egypt and Assyria—were still the powers in which he trusted. Do not imitate his folly by trusting to that which will ruin you!  
You are silly, again, because when there is so much danger, you do not fly to the place of shelter. O silly dove, when the hawk is abroad, not to seek the clefts of the rock to hide yourself! And how silly are some of you! Day after day, year after year, Satan is hawking after you! The great fowler is seeking your destruction, but the wounds of Christ are open to you and the invitation of the Gospel is freely given to you—and yet, you are so silly that though you know better, you prefer the pleasures of the day to the joys of eternity! Yet I know not that you do prefer them, only somehow or other you are too silly to prove your preference and go on, like a child that is playing on the hole of the cockatrice, making mirth over your damnation—too silly to make up your minds to choose either Heaven or Hell! I know there are some such people in this house—would God that the arrow might find out the right persons, but, too often, these doves are so silly, in another respect, that they will not let the appeal of the Gospel come home to them. They say, “it cannot be for me, for I go to Mr. A’s or Mr. B’s class! It cannot be for me, for I go to the Prayer Meeting, I contribute to the College and every good work!” Yet all the while it means just you who act upon your own whims, but not for God, who give God anything but your heart, who are ready to make a sacrifice of all, except that you refuse that which He asks of you! “My son, give Me your heart.” It was considered to be a sign of great calamity when the Roman prophet slew a bull and found no heart—and it is the worst of all calamities when a man has no heart to give to God! “This people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me,” is one of the complaints against Israel of old, and one of the sins which made the Prophets weep and caused Jerusalem to be plowed like a field.  
IV. I close with just a few words upon the fourth point, and that is, A SERIOUS CONSIDERATION. There are one or two things I would say solemnly, softly and hopefully. Oh, that they may stick in the memory and the conscience of many of you!  
Those of you, my Hearers, who have been long sitting in this Tabernacle—some of you ever since it was built and before then in other places under our ministry—yet are just the same as you used to be, ought to recollect how sadly we look on those who are not saved. It is no rare thing to find the attendant of the sanctuary an unbeliever. It is a common thing to find the child of converted parents, the lad educated at the Sunday school, the man who has always had a seat in God’s House, still having no hope and without God in the world. Think of that! Be not deceived—the Gospel will harden such people as you are! Speaking after the manner of men, (for with God, all things are possible, and a Sovereign God does as He wills), it does seem less and less probable that you ever should be called by Grace after you have sat and listened to the Word so long. The voice that once startled you now soothes you! The manner that once attracted the eyes, and sometimes seemed to touch the heart, fails to do either! And the very Truths of God that once went over your heads like a crash of thunder has so little force in them now that you even sleep under the sound of them! Think of that, you who are like a silly dove without heart!  
Remember, too, that some of the vilest sinners that have ever lived have been manufactured out of this raw material. Some of the worst men were once, apparently, meek-hearted hearers of the Word, but they sat under the preaching of the Gospel till they grew ripe enough to deny God and curse Him. The unsanctified hearing of the Gospel has sometimes produced more gigantic specimens of sin than the deaf ear of the adder. Beware, my Hearer! I know that you will say with Hazael, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” Yes, there is dog and devil enough in you unless you have been changed by Grace, to do that thing and 20 other things that you have never dreamt of yet! Think what multitudes of souls in Hell there are like you—silly doves without hearts! Many of the population of that place of wailing once heard the Gospel, heard it with gladness and appeared to receive it for a time—but they had no root, and so the impression withered away. They never had been called effectually by Grace and never had been renewed in heart, although they had all the outward semblance of holiness1 They are gone! Even now, your soul may listen to their groans and moans, the lesson of all which would be, “Make your calling and election sure, and be not satisfied with the name to live while you are dead.”  
May the Spirit of the living God stir you up to this, for, if not, I have one more consideration to urge upon you. Remember how soon you may be in Hell. And they who go there, if they have been such as you are, go there with a vengeance. To go from under the shadow of the pulpit to the Pit is terrible. To go from the Communion Cup, to drink the cup of devils—from the song of saints to the weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth of lost souls—from all the hallowed joys of God’s Sabbath, of God’s House and of His Word, down to the unutterable infamy of spirits that have no love of God, but curse Him day and night—my Hearers, that may be your lot within an hour, a week, a year! It matters not what the period may be, for if it ever is your lot, the time past shall seem to have been but the twinkling of an eye for its joy, though it may appear to you to have been ages for the awful responsibility which the day of mercy will have entailed upon you. Repent and be baptized, everyone of you!” As Peter said, so say I! If you have not as yet received Christ, lay hold on eternal life and oh, that the Spirit of the living God, while I preach the Word generally, may apply it particularly, finding out His own chosen and gathering them out of the ruins of the Fall, that they may be jewels in the crown of the Redeemer! The Lord make us doves, but God forbid that we should be “silly doves without heart.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
PSALM 88:10-61; 1 PETER 4:1-13.

The story of how the children of Israel behaved themselves towards their gracious God.  
Psalm 88:10-16. They kept not the Covenant of God and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them. Marvelous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and He made the waters to stand as a heap. In the daytime also He led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the Rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. In such a scene of miracles, surrounded by such prodigies of goodness, what did they do?  
17. And they sinned yet more against Him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. What a fierce fire must sin be that it is even fed by the rivers of God’s goodness and burns by means of that which ought to have quenched every spark of it! Yet there is such a fire as that raging in our hearts and even God’s mercies will make us more sinful unless His abounding Grace comes with them to teach us how to use them rightly.  
18. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Not for their needs, but “for their lust.” It is a dreadful thing when prayer, itself, is prostituted and the Mercy Seat becomes a place for the expression of sinful desires which ought never to have been in our hearts. It was so, however, with these children of Israel.  
19. Yes, they spoke against God. As you read that “they spoke against God,” you naturally suppose that they uttered some blasphemy, or some denial of His Deity. Listen and learn!  
19. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? That is speaking against Him—to speak unbelievingly—to speak in a questioning way concerning His power. I am afraid that there are very few of us who can plead innocence on this score.  
20. Behold, He smote the Rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people? These things, which they lusted after, they also turned into subjects for unbelief. And they even misused the miracle which they dared not deny.  
21, 22. Therefore the LORD heard this, and was angry: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation. This was the provoking sin. The Lord would not endure such wanton and wicked unbelief as this. After He had turned the rocks into rivers, could He not turn the stones into bread, and the dust of the desert into flesh if He chose to do so?  
23-32. Though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of Heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of Heaven. Man did eat angels’ food: He sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the Heaven: and by His power He brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: and He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for He gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. For all this they still sinned. Mercy failed to move them, and judgment failed too. The right hand of God’s gifts and the left hand of His chastisement were equally ignored.  
32-34. And believed not for His wondrous works. Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and inquired early after God.

Perhaps some of them fought Him even while they were dying and the remnant that survived trembled and, “returned and inquired early after God.”

35, 36. And they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. Oh, this is terrible! One would have thought that they would have been sincere when they were broken down with sorrow, but it was not so. And I fear that the kind of religion which has to be whipped into us is never good for much. It must have in it the element of spontaneity if it is to be sincere. It was not so with these people.

37-41. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they steadfast in His Covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and comes not again. How often did they provoke Him in the wilderness, and grieve Him in the desert! Yes, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. In their unbelieving imagination, they circumscribed His power. They thought that He could do something, but not everything. They believed Him one day and doubted Him the next.

42-45. They remembered not His hand, nor the day when He delivered them from the enemy. How He had worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan: and had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. All these judgments fell upon their enemies, but they failed to remember them.

46-56. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up the cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. He made a way to His anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence, and smote all the first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: but made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like flock. And He led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. Yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies. Oh, these terrible “yets”! Though God was faithful to the end and kept His Covenant, and brought them into the land which He swore to their fathers that He would give them, yet they tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not His testimonies.”

57-61. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hand.

1 Peter 4:1. Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for He that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Brethren, we have a Savior who suffered for us. As the Head was, such must the members expect to be. Let us, then, be resolutely determined that, suffer as we may, we will never turn aside from our Lord, for, inasmuch as we suffered in Him, yes, and died in Him, we ought to reckon that we are henceforth dead to sin and that we have ceased from it, and can no longer be drawn into it. “He that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”

2. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. The doctrine of Substitution is the strongest possible argument for holiness. You lived in sin once, but Christ died for your sin, so you must reckon that, in Him, you died to sin, seeing that He died in your place. And the argument is that, henceforth, your life is to be a life in Him, a life of holiness, to the praise and glory of God.

3. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles. Suffice? O Brothers and Sisters, let it do much more than that! Let it make us cry, “Would God that we had never worked the will of the Gentiles at all!” Some young people foolishly say that they must have a little space in which they can “see life.” Ah, those of you who have been converted in later years regret that you ever saw what men call, “life,” which is but the alias for corruption and death! “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles.”

3, 4. When we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excesses of wine, revellings, banquets and abominable idolatries. Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. What a strange world this world is! It speaks evil of men because they will not do evil! Yet it has always been so. The men, “of whom the world was not worthy,” have been the very people of whom worldlings have said, “Away with such fellows from the earth! It is not fit that they should live.” The world’s verdict concerning Christians is of little value.

5, 6. Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. This is a very difficult passage to expound, but I suppose the meaning is that the Gospel was preached to those departed saints who had been called to die for Christ’s sake and that it was preached to them for this very reason, that while they were judged by wicked men, and were by them condemned to die, they still live a far more glorious life than they lived here, because they were thus enabled, by their martyr death, to consummate their consecration to God.

7, 8. But the end of all things is at hand; be you therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. It covers them sometimes by not seeing them, for, where there is much love, we are blind to many faults which, otherwise we might see. We do not exercise the sharpness of criticism which malice would be sure to exercise. Besides that, when love applies herself to prayer, and when, in addition to prayer, she kindly gives admonition to a beloved friend, it often happens that true Christian love does really prevent a multitude of sins. The Apostle does not mean that by loving another person I shall cover my own sin; nor does he mean that the exercise of charity, in the common acceptation of that word, can cover my sin! But if I have much love to others, I may be the instrument, in the hand of God, for covering many of their sins in one or other of the senses I have mentioned.

9, 10. Use hospitality, one to another, without grudging. As every man has received a gift, even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God. Whatever “the gift” is, whether it be money, or talent, or Divine Grace, “even so minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.” God gives much to you that you may give it to others—it is only meant to run through you as through a pipe. You are a steward and if a steward should receive his lord’s goods, and keep them for himself, he would be an unfaithful steward. Child of God, see to it that you faithfully discharge your responsibility as one of the “good stewards of the manifold Grace of God.”

11-13. If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad, also, with exceeding joy. If you do not share in Christ’s humiliation, how can you expect to share in His exaltation? But if worldlings begin to rebuke and reproach you, take it for granted that they can discern something of Christ in you. Dogs do not usually bark at those who live in the same village with them—it is only at strangers that they bark. And when ribald tongues are lifted up against you, you have reason to hope that you are a stranger and a foreigner to the citizens of this world, for they love their own, as our Savior reminded His disciples, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”

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÷Hos 8.1

THE MINISTER’S TRUMPET BLAST AND CHURCH MEMBER’S WARNING

NO. 2772

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 30, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1859-1860.

**“Set the trumpet to your mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My Covenant, and trespassed against My Law. Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!”  
Hosea 8:1, 2.**

WE do not use instrumental music in the worship of God because we consider that it would be a violation of the simplicity of our worship. We think it far better to hear the voices of Christian men and women than all the sounds which can be made by instruments. Yet I am sure there is no Christian here who would object to a minister who can play well upon an instrument and, indeed, a minister is good for nothing if he does not know how, spiritually, to give forth instrumental music! A true minister of Christ should know how to blow the ram’s horn so that the walls of Jericho may be made to tremble and fall. He should understand how to play the harp, so that when any of you are disquieted, he may be to you as David was to Saul, and may drive away the evil spirits that trouble you. He should be able, also, to play upon the timbrel, and to lead you forth, sometimes, in the sacred song of joy and thanksgiving. He should be able to go forth like Miriam and cry aloud to you, and ask you to follow him while he says, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.”

His sermons should often seem to you to fulfill that exhortation of David, “Praise you the Lord. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.” The minister of the Gospel should also understand how to blow the silver trumpet to proclaim that the year of jubilee is come and that the ransomed debtors may once more receive their lost inheritance. And there is one instrument upon which he should be well skilled and which he should often use, namely, the trumpet. I do not mean the silver trumpet, but the war trumpet—that clear, shrillsounding instrument that gives the certain sound whereby men prepare themselves for the battle.

I have to use that trumpet tonight and, in explaining my text, I will speak of several things that are hinted at here. First, there is a command to the Gospel minister—“Set the trumpet to your mouth.” There is, secondly, the particular reason for this command, in order that he may warn God’s people—“Because they have transgressed My Covenant, and trespassed against My Law.” Then, thirdly, there is another special reason appended, because God was about to execute judgment upon these sinners—“He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord.” In the second verse we find our fourth point—the blessed result of the blowing of this trumpet—“Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!”

I. First, then, here is A COMMAND TO THE GOSPEL MINISTER—“Set the trumpet to your mouth.” The Hebrew has it, “Set the trumpet to the roof of your mouth.” Set it to your mouth. Keep it there—do not put it up sometimes and then take it down again—but have it always in readiness, so as to sound the note of alarm. Set it to the roof of your mouth—blow with all your might and let men hear that the alarm comes not merely from your lips, but from within your mouth—from your very heart! With such earnestness shall you sound the trumpet of warning.

What is meant by the minister setting the trumpet to his mouth? I think just this. In the first place, that when the minister is dealing with the souls of men, the tone which he uses should be very decisive. He should not set some little Jew’s harp to his mouth, so that people hardly know whether he is making a noise or not—he should blow a trumpet and produce a decisive sound so that men may know what sin is reproved—what virtue is commended. They should never have to ask themselves, “What does the minister mean? Does he really intend to condemn sin, or does he palliate it?” The declaration should be decisive, as the sound of the war trumpet is. When men hear that trumpet sounded in the East, they do not ask themselves, “Does that mean dancing? Is that the sound of them that make merry?” But they say at once, “That means war! We are sure it does. Let us prepare ourselves for the battle.” So should it be with the message of God’s servant. He has not to say, “If this,” or, “if that,” but to set the trumpet of Gospel warning to the roof of his month and give out a note that none can mistake.

For the text means not only a decisive sound, but a clear sound. Of all sounds, perhaps that of the trumpet is the clearest and so should it be with the message of Christ’s servant. It should not be indistinct and full of hard words that cannot be understood. It should not be a piece of music, the tune of which is so difficult that no man can possibly follow it or even know what is meant by it, but it should be the one, two, three notes of, “Awake! Awake you sleepers! What are you doing?” Or this yet more solemn note, “Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!” “Prepare to meet your God!” There should be something so clear that the moment the minister’s statement is heard, those who are willing to understand it should have no difficulty in knowing its meaning.

Again, in setting the trumpet to his mouth, the minister should not only give a decisive and clear testimony in all his ministrations, but it should also be a loud and startling testimony! You know some preachers who send their congregations to sleep—not only because of their monotonous style of address, but because their matter, itself, is sleepy! The people seem to say, “Well, if that is all the man has to talk about, we may as well be asleep as awake.” Sometimes they preach the doctrines which teach men to sit still and do nothing. And then the people say, “Well, let us sit still and do nothing—only let us sleep by the way and enjoy ourselves.” There are too many droning preachers that Satan employs to rock the cradle of immortal souls while he is standing by waiting till the time shall come for him to carry them off. “You play,” says Satan to the minister, “and I will dance to them. And between the two of us, we will lead them to Hell.”

There will be a fearful amount of blood upon the skirts of a man whose ministry has startled nobody. When a trumpet is blown in a besieged city, there are many persons with weak nerves who are quite frightened and many children, too, and many timid souls that are greatly alarmed. And someone might come to the trumpeter and say, “Why did you sound the clarion? Weak women are made to tremble.” “Yes,” he says, “but better that weak minds should be made to tremble than that stout-hearted ones should perish! It is better these should be alarmed, now, than go quietly on until the enemy infests the city and puts them all to the sword.” A startling time is often to come to the minister—he is not to be content to keep to ordinary subjects and deal with them in an ordinary manner. He must go out with a, “Thus says the Lord” and, like a new Elijah, he must speak with fire from Heaven hanging on his lips and the thunders of God rolling around his brow! He will never fully discharge his office if he is always playing on the harp with its soft dulcet notes—he must take down the war trumpet and sound an alarm—that all men may be warned!

I think I may add that when the minister of Christ blows this trumpet aright, it is one that is pretty sure to be heard further than he, himself, is seen. Men do not always see a trumpeter when they hear the sound of his trumpet—and let the minister of Christ fearlessly proclaim his Master’s Word and his line shall go out through all the earth. Let him be honest and faithful, and he need not fear that he shall lack hearers. That trumpet sound, it may be, shall be heard all over England—across the Channel shall it be heard upon the Continent—it shall go beyond the Alleghenies and make the Rocky Mountains echo with the sound! Let him but preach the whole Gospel and set the trumpet to the roof of his mouth, and all the world shall hear or, at least, if they hear it not, he shall have performed his duty—but many will hear it, for God will always find ears willing to listen to the sound that comes from an honest mouth!

II. “Set the trumpet to your mouth.” That is the command to the Gospel minister and I mean to obey it while I deal with the second head, THE PARTICULAR REASON ASSIGNED FOR IT. The reason why Hosea was to become a trumpeter at this particular time was this—the children of Israel had broken God’s Covenant—they had gone astray and transgressed His Law. Therefore God was angry with them and was about to smite them with sore judgments. Before, however, He smote them, He warned them. God does not usually give a word and a blow, but He gives a word and another word, and another word and then yet another word and, after all that, there comes the blow! He warns before He strikes. The axe of God, like the axe of the Roman dictator, is bound up in a bundle of rods—He smites first with the rod and if that suffices not, then He draws out the axe and smites with it—and its strokes are enough to destroy the soul.

Now, with regard to this Church—God, I think, has put it into my heart to speak to you about your transgressions and your sins. And, in this matter, the trumpeter includes himself—and while he addresses the Church and congregation, he intends, thereby, not to exempt a single person unless there is one, indeed, who can claim exemption. Well, my Brothers and Sisters, to begin with ourselves—the members of this Church—is there no good reason that the minister should always have the trumpet to his mouth to warn us of our particular sins? God has blessed us very greatly as a people. We have lived in the sunshine of His Countenance. He has been pleased to give us success in our labors beyond our most sanguine anticipations. Whatever way we turn our hands, God seems to prosper us—if not in our worldly business, yet certainly in our business for Him. There is nothing that I am aware of which this Church has undertaken but God has been pleased to give us success in it. But have we not, with all this blessing, very great sins to confess before God?

When I sit down and think of myself, I am, to my own self, a wonder and a marvel that God has not cast me off—that He has not said to me, “I will no more speak My Word through you. I will leave you to yourself. You shall be like Samson when his hair was gone.” And, oh, if He should say that to any of us, where should we be? Brothers and Sisters in the Church, may you not, personally and collectively, cover your faces and mourn and weep by reason of your own private and individual sins? Are you perfect? Are you quite clear of guilt? Are your garments unspotted and unsullied? God forbid that you should say they are, for this were, indeed, to vaunt yourselves in pride! No, every man may weep apart, and his wife apart, and his children apart, for, with us, even with us, there are sins against the Lord our God! I sometimes fear lest, as a people, we should be tempted to pride. Lest we should conceive that the success with which God favors us is owing to something in ourselves—lest we should begin to say, “We are the men, and wisdom shall die with us.” We stand in a position in which God has made us eminent by His blessing, but let us take heed lest, by exalting ourselves, we become like Capernaum, once lifted to Heaven, but afterwards brought down to Hell!

There have been many churches which God has left because of their sin. Riding through the country, we can see, every now and then, a chapel, and when we enquire how the cause prospers, we are told that it is in the worst position possible. “But was it always so?” “No,” it is said, “there was once a servant of God there and the people gathered round him—and they walked well for a time and there were many conversions.” But, alas, they fell into sin, and God left them—and there is “Ichabod” written on every piece of mortar in the walls! If you could see it, there is the great “Tekel” of Belshazzar put upon the pulpit and upon the pew! Pastor and people alike have been weighed in the balances and they have been found lacking! Shall it be so with us as a Church? Shall we be found lacking in the time of testing?

Shall I tell you—and here I speak without the slightest tone of severity—one thing in which some of our friends are lacking? A conscientious regard to social prayer. There are some who are always at the meetings for prayer, but I cannot conceal from myself the fact that there are many whose faces I never see there. Or, if I see them once a year, it is indeed a treat. I doubt not but that their business is so urgent that they could not constantly attend, but then I know there are others, who regularly attend, who have business that seems to me to be equally as urgent and I think these absentees might come sometimes, at any rate. Now, if we begin by some of us neglecting the meetings for prayer, and if our neglect should increase, we shall then be on the high road to the loss of God’s favor and to the prevention of all future prosperity!

Besides, may I not also say that there are some, I fear, in the Church, who have lost their first love? It is remarkable to me that there are so few in this church who have turned out to be deceivers. Sorrowful are the meetings when we have to excommunicate, here and there, one. But out of so vast a number we have great reason to thank God that they are comparatively few. But, oh, may there not be many among us who, if they cannot be made amenable to church discipline, are nevertheless rotten at the core? Have we not some that are like trees, fair on the outside, but inwardly their hearts are but fit to be tinder for the devil’s tinderbox? Have we not too many among us who are secretly living in sin, whose practice in trade would not bear strict investigation, but who, nevertheless, cannot be laid hold of because there is no gross vice, no open, public and flagrant sin? And, oh, Brothers and Sisters, if these things increase, if this leprosy breaks out in the garments, it will spread and God will come to abhor His own inheritance and will say of this Church, “I will leave this place—I will abide here no longer—I will find a people who shall be more faithful to My Word, who shall live more true to the promises and vows which they have made.”

I will set the trumpet to my mouth tonight, on behalf of every member of the Church, and on behalf of myself, also. O Brothers and Sisters, the time past should suffice us to have worked the will of the Gentiles! Let us seek Divine Grace that we may be purged from all our former conversation in the days of our flesh, that we may come out from the world, that we may be more and more separate from it, that there may be a greater distinction between us and the ungodly sons of men, that we may prove to be what we profess to be—Israelites, indeed, in whom is no guile! O Christian Church, if you shall fall from your integrity, you will soon fall from your prosperity! Suspend prayer and you will suspend success! Break down our hedges, let in the hypocrites—or let them even come in by stealth—and the wild boar out of the forest will soon waste this Church! And where are the goodly clusters now? Where are the grapes of Eschol and where are the winepresses gushing with new wine? Famine has devastated the land! Black death has covered all the vineyards and the vines lament and are burned up with fire. If God forsakes us—and He will do so if we turn aside from Him as a Church—then this must be the result. The lamentation that I have taken up must be the lamentation of this Church unless God shall keep us true to Him in prayer, diligence and holiness. God does not cast away His people forever, but He often casts away a separate Church from its degree of usefulness. He does not put out His lamps, but He does let them burn very low, indeed, so that there is scarcely anything but a smoking wick left. May it never be so with us!

Having set the trumpet to my mouth for the members of the Church, I blow another blast of it to every one of you. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in the days of Jesus, there was found a Judas in the midst of His twelve Apostles. “I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil.” Is there not reason to fear that among the many hundreds in this Church there are to be found some who are like Judas? O traitor, if you are still in the ranks, tremble to hear your doom! O you deceiver, the day is coming when judgment must begin at the house of God! Though chaff is mingled with the wheat, the rushing, mighty wind is rising now! I hear it—I hear it in the distance and soon it will come and winnow this Church and then, where will you be? Where will you be when Christ shall take His fan in His hand and thoroughly purge His floor? Do not think, my dear Friends, members of the Church, that you will be saved if you are out of Christ because you are members of the Church. Remember what happened to Joab—he ran right into the tabernacle and caught hold of the horns of the altar. Solomon said to Benaiah, “Fetch him forth.” And Benaiah said, “Come forth from there,” and he said, “No, but I will die here.” And Benaiah told Solomon what he said—but did the king spare Joab because he had his hands on the horns of the altar? No! He said, “Go and slay him there,” and Benaiah thrust his sword through him even while he had his hands upon God’s own altar! So will it be with you. You may put your lips to the communion cup, you may come and sit round this table—you may be a deacon, you may even enter this pulpit as a preacher—but, unless your heart is right with God, even with your hands upon the horns of God’s altar, you must be damned! From the pulpit you must go to the Pit! You must descend from the table to commune at the feast of fiends! Go from the general assembly and Church of the first-born, to the general assembly and congregation of the lost in Hell! I can blow my trumpet no louder than this to each one of you. Oh, hear it, hear it, hear it, Church members! Listen to it and regard it—and search and try yourselves, and see whether you are in Christ or not!

Yet one more blast from my trumpet and this is for those who are not members of the Church, but who constantly attend the ministry of the Gospel. O ungodly Hearers, the day is coming when you shall have no man to warn you, when you shall have no one to invite you to come to Christ! Sabbaths will not last forever. Eternity is drawing near and bears in its hand the stamp that must seal your doom. I remember a sermon of William Dawson’s on Death—the three heads of which were, “First, Death is following after us. Secondly, he will certainly catch us. Thirdly, we don’t know when.” That third head is a very solemn one—we don’t know when. And what if it should be tonight? Hear the blast of my trumpet— “Consider your ways!” “Prepare to meet your God!” “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still.” “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Sinner, while the lamp holds out to burn, turn to Christ and live! Otherwise know that when that lamp is quenched, God’s mercy will be quenched, too, for you, and you will be cast away into the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth! Remember that ancient message, “He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon his own head.” If all that is said is of no avail to you, then shall he that blew the trumpet be clear, but on your own head shall be your doom forever and ever!

I have to mourn because I cannot sound this trumpet as I should. Oh, that I had a voice powerful enough to find its way into the poor, dead, stony hearts of sinners dead in trespasses and sins! It were easy work to preach if we preached to none but the living in Zion, but to have to talk to hard stones that will not break, and to speak to icebergs that will not melt—that is a work that requires large faith and often depresses our spirit! Yet must we come back to it again, for the thought of eternity rises upon us. We see sinners plunging down to Hell in one awful stream! We see the grave glutted with their corpses and Hell swollen with their blood! We mark how every night sucks in its prey and how every day shuts its devouring jaws upon the helpless thousands of our race—and we cannot be still—especially when we have before us some who will go from these galleries and from these pews to help to feed the everlasting burnings!

Did I say there would be some such? I mean, “Except they repent, they shall all likewise perish.” If we could but look any one man in the face and know that he would be in torment within a year, oh, what pity we should feel for him! We could scarcely rest under such a burden. I am quite sure I should not sleep tonight—I should lie tossing on my bed, crying to God for mercy on that poor man—and I would not stop a moment before I would go to him and tell him the way of salvation. Ah, but there is not only one, but scores, perhaps hundreds, in this place of worship who have no hope! They are prayerless men and women—those whose knees never bend in prayer before their Maker—hard-hearted people who have never trembled under conviction of sin, and who have never sought and never found Christ as their Savior. Ah, poor Friends, poor Friends, we may well weep for you, and sigh for you, and all the more because you will not weep and will not sigh for yourselves!

To be on the high road to Hell and yet to be trifling with eternal things—to be on the brink of Perdition and yet to be jesting at religion! To be nearing the everlasting burnings and yet to be breaking the Sabbath and treading the blood of Christ beneath your feet—oh, this is mad work! Bedlam has not within its walls a man more insane—a more mad, manacled wretch—than the man who knows that the wrath of God abides on him and yet makes merry and dances to the sound of his own funeral knell—who goes leaping to the gallows and, chanting a song, bows his neck to the death-block and the gleaming axe! O Spirit of God, it is Yours to wake the dead and Yours to change the heart! Do it, we pray You, for all the blasts of our trumpet cannot do it unless You take the work in hand.

III. Having gone through two parts of the text—the command to the minister and the reason found among his people—I shall next ask your attention to the third point, THE REASON WHY HOSEA SHOULD, AT THAT TIME, ESPECIALLY SET THE TRUMPET TO HIS MOUTH, NAMELY, THAT JUDGMENT WAS IMPENDING UPON THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL—“He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord.”

Different expositors have given various interpretations of this verse and applied it to the peculiar plague which was, at that time, about to fall upon the Israelite people. Some say it was one thing and some, another. I do not care to enter into these diverse interpretations—it is enough for me to believe that there is a visitation threatened here against the Church of God. What does it say? Look at the text again. “He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord.” But will the Lord let anything come against His own house? It cannot be so, surely! Ah, but it is so—and the emphatic name of God, Jehovah, is used, for you see the word, LORD, is in capitals—“He shall come as an eagle against the house of Jehovah.” If sin gets into God’s house, He will no more spare sin in His house than He will spare it in the devil’s house. God hates sin everywhere and if sin gets into His own Church, He will flog it out. It is of no use at all for this traitor to go and hide himself in the house of God’s children—the Lord will drag him out to execution, even though he creeps into our bedchambers! There shall be no sparing him! He may hide under the camel’s furniture, but every Rachel shall be made to stand up and God will turn out our bronze images and cast them away from us!

It seems, then, that a visitation is threatened against the Church of God—against God’s own house. Notice the form of this visitation—“He shall come as an eagle.” Now, an eagle comes in two ways. First, it comes all of a sudden. Poised high in the air, so far aloft that you cannot see it, it keeps its wings fluttering as birds of prey are known to do and, with its sharp eyes so powerful that at that tremendous height it can see the smallest fish in the water, it marks its prey and all of a sudden down it dashes, as if it had fallen from Heaven like a meteorite, or like the lightning flash! It is up there where we cannot see it and suddenly it swoops down and bears away its prey! Now, such is often God’s visitation upon His Church—He comes suddenly, like an eagle, and chastens His children.

Besides, here is an allusion to the strong flight of the eagle. When the eagle once stretches his wings to fly, who can stop his wings? He bears up against the wind. He buffets the storm. He cuts through it as a ship sails through the billows or a fish swims through the sea! On, on, like an arrow from the bow, he shoots to his desired target. So shall God’s judgments be to His Church—they shall come on His Church irresistibly— and there shall be no escape, there shall be no deliverance! The eagle shall come with such force that none shall stay his might!

How true this has been of the Church of Christ in many ages! As I have said before, God has never left His chosen people, but He has often left separate churches, when those churches have become mixed with the world. Look at the Seven Churches of Asia. It would be an interesting and an instructive journey for any of us to make, to go to Sardis and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to the other spots where there once were the Churches to which John the Divine wrote a part of the Book of Revelation. We would see that some of them have no inhabitants whatever— only the bittern and the owl, and the ruins of a long-past grandeur. In others a few huts, and Bedouin Arabs pasturing their flocks, with, perhaps, not a dozen Christians to be found within a circuit of a dozen miles! God has taken the candlestick out of its place and quenched His Light in darkness. Just so is it with the Church of Rome. What prosperity there was there once! Paul had, doubtless, a large number who used to gather together in his hired room to listen to him. And if Peter ever went to Rome, and he may have done so, he would, doubtless, have gathered a goodly band around him.

We have good evidence that there was a very large number of Christians there, for, in the catacombs under Rome, all along the corridors, many miles in length, there are inscriptions to the memory of Christians. You look on one and another, and there you see the name—one man with an anchor to show his hope, or another with a dove—and on most of them are these words, “He rests in peace,” or, “She rests in peace.” And there are thousands of these! The Church in the catacombs must have numbered a great many members, and there they flourished, down there in the darkness of the earth, worshipping God by candlelight when the sun was shining above them and his brightest rays could never reach them in those gloomy caverns. That Church seems to have been a very eminent one—the inscriptions bear the proofs of the very highest and most spiritual forms of piety. And now, the mother of harlots sits upon her seven hills and the ancient candlestick is taken out of its place.

Again, to give you another picture, which will, perhaps, strike you still more forcibly, look at Germany. In the days of Luther it was the stronghold of the Gospel! You know how Luther used to preach the Word and what crowds gathered to hear that mighty thunderer, while in simple language he proclaimed the Truth of God and defied the Pope and the devil, too! Things are improving now, I hope, but it might have been said, some years ago, “How are the mighty fallen!” The Lutheran churches had become nearly all Unitarian or Rationalist. They had forsaken the fountain of living waters. They forgot the Lord who bought them and turned aside to damnable heresy. And why should it not be so here! Unless the Lord will continually preserve unto us a remnant, we will become like Sodom and be made like Gomorrah! That descent may come in an instant—the eagle may even now be watching in the air—and his swoop may be without any warning. There may come sudden destruction, as pain upon a woman in travail, and we may not escape!

As long as we walk with God, as long as we are true to the faith, as long as we labor for the salvation of souls, so long we are secure. But as surely as sin is permitted to spread among us—if the spirit of lukewarmness, of laxity of doctrine, of prayerlessness should creep in here, it will be all over with us. The Lord will say, “Let me go from there.” There will be heard, in this place, what was heard in the Temple just before the time of its destruction by Titus. It is said that there was heard within the veil a rushing of wind and the high priest who was officiating declared that he heard a Voice say, “Arise, let Us go from here.” That Voice has been heard in many places. I could point to chapels where that Voice must have been heard—houses of prayer where once there were crowds of hearers but which are now covered with dust and cobwebs, where scarcely anybody cares to enter—and where those who enter are cold, dead, dull and careless. Shall it ever be so with this Church? God forbid!

O God of Benjamin Keach, Your suffering servant! O God of Gill, Your servant who declared Your Truth in all its fullness! O God of the sainted Rippon, whom You have taken to Yourself—You who has been the God of this Church for, lo, these many years! You who has kept us beneath the shadow of Your wings and brought us into a position of high privileges and responsibilities—be You our God even until the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and then forever and ever!

IV. I think I need not say any more with regard to this great and solemn reason why the trumpet is to be blown. Let me, in closing, just dwell for a minute or two upon THE VERY BEAUTIFUL AND BLESSED EFFECT OF THIS BLAST OF THE TRUMPET—“Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!”

In the Hebrew, this expression is very remarkable, indeed, it runs thus—“They shall cry unto Me, My God, we know you—Israel.” I do not know whether you perceive the meaning of this expression. It is, perhaps, difficult for me to say it so as for you to perceive the pith of it. They say, “My God, we know You”—then, as if God did not know who they were, they say, “Israel.” “My God, we know You—Israel.” They mention their name and plead it before Him. Or else it may be, as another excellent translator says, that they thought perhaps the Lord would not remember them, but He would remember the man with whom He had made a Covenant, namely, Jacob, Israel, for they say in the Hebrew, “My God, we know You—Israel.” Remember Israel. Think of him who wrestled with You and became a prevailing prince.

We will be content, however, to take the passage as it stands. “Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know You!” Can you sincerely utter that cry, Brothers and Sisters? If so, a blast of the trumpet will have had a blessed effect if you can say, “Lord, we know You!” What do you know about Him? There is one point in His Character I want you especially to remember. If you know God aright, you will know that He is a jealous God. That is one of the first things which He said when He spoke to His people in the wilderness, “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” I do not know that we fully understand the meaning of that word, “jealous.” You know what it means in common life—how, if there is one who has a right to another’s love, if that person suspects that the other’s heart is given away, there is jealousy. Well, now, there is jealousy in God’s heart if His people give to others love that is due to Him. And do you know when we are most jealous? It is an object of utter indifference to me who certain people may love, because I have no affection for them—but if there is one on whom my whole heart is set, if that person’s heart were given to someone else, I should feel jealousy.

Now, God is not jealous of sinners—He is jealous of saints, of His own people, especially the people He loves best. I remember that an old Divine says, “It is an awful thing to be one of God’s favorites”—I have turned that over in my mind many times and shuddered at the thought—“for,” he says, “God does not deal with all His children on precisely the same rule. There are some of His people whom He makes more His favorite’s than others. He takes them out and makes them His eminent servants, puts them in the first rank of the battle, and makes them very useful and very serviceable. He is more jealous of them than He is of any others. He is jealous of all His children, but especially of those children upon whom He has bestowed most of His favors.”

You remember the story of the poor king of England? When there had been a rebellion against him and he had put it down, He promised that he would give pardon to all who were concerned in it. He had brought to him the list which contained the names of those whom he was to pardon. He read the name of his son, Richard, and he wept—“Is Richard a rebel?” He read the name of his son, Henry, and he wept again—“Is he a rebel?” But he had one favorite son, his son, John, and he saw in the midst of the paper the name of his son John as one whom he had to forgive. He forgave him, but it broke his heart and he died. The more favor there is, the more jealousy there will be. Now, as a Church, we may truly say, not in pride, but in thankfulness, that God has been very gracious to us. He has distinguished us by His Grace. He has caused our candle to shine brightly. He has heard our prayers, but He will be very jealous of us if we begin to ascribe the good work to ourselves. If we take any honor to ourselves and leave off praying to Him. If our zeal diminishes, if we become lax in our lives, if immoral characters are tolerated among us, God will be very angry with us and we must expect that though He will not cast away His own people, yet, as a Church, He will take away our beauty and cause it to fade away like the moth! And the fine gold shall become dim, and the Glory shall depart from this portion of His Israel.

Now what is the lesson of all this? It is just this, Brothers and Sisters, that I would stir you up to continue in prayer! To some of you, perhaps, the exhortation is not needed, but to others I am sure it is. Thank God we have many in the church who know how to wrestle with God, but, oh, we need more of these! We want not merely to have the few like Gideon’s men that lapped, but we want to have you all among the lappers—to have you all wrestlers with God, all diligent in His service and seeking to extend His Kingdom! Let us be, from this day forward, more prayerful than we have ever been before.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷Hos 8.7

“WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?”

NO. 2632

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 23, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 14, 1882.

**“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it has no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if it should produce, strangers shall swallow it up.”  
Hosea 8:7.**

PRUDENT men look before them to see the result of their actions. Their eyes look beyond the present to the future. They look before they leap. It is only the foolish man who goes blindly on till, at last, he stumbles and has a desperate and probably fatal fall. Brothers and Sisters, I hope that I am addressing those who have enough wit and wisdom to look at the consequences of what they are doing. This is how I wish to live—not merely doing what may give me today’s temporary pleasure, but asking myself what will be the result of those actions, by-and-by. How will they appear to me when I come to be old? What aspect will they wear when my eyes are failing me in death? What will be the result in that life after death—that endless future which is so sure to come to me, let me live as I may? I say that I hope I am speaking to those who look a little ahead, and are not, “like dumb driven cattle,” satisfied if there is grass enough within the reach of their mouths, but who look before them to see the consequences on the morrow and especially on that Last Great Day for which all other days were made—“the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

We are all sowing, Brothers—we cannot help it. You Sisters, too, are sowing—perhaps but a little garden plot, or possibly a broader acreage in public life—but you are all sowing. And every day there is a sowing. No man goes forth in the morning without a seed-basket. What may be in it is not so easily told. There may be nothing in it but the wind. There may be chaff in it. There may be in it curses which shall grow up to plague yourself and others, but it is certain that we do not move an inch along the furrows of life without scattering some kind of seed. He that does least is seeding his idleness and, like the thistle that stands still, and offers its downy seed to be carried by every wandering wind, so does the sluggard—he does mischief by doing nothing.

As we are all sowing, the great question we have to consider is, “what will the harvest be?” Every wise man will ask himself that question. I may have sown very little in my small plot, or I may have walked far and scattered the seed broadcast over the wider field committed to my charge—but what have I sown and what shall I reap? What sheaves shall I gather into the garner? Sheaves of fire that shall burn into my soul forever, or sheaves of glory that I shall bring with rejoicing in the Last Great Day? Brothers and Sisters, if it is rightly examined, this matter of the harvest from our sowing will be found to be full of very rich encouragement to those who are seeking to serve God. If you have believed in Christ and received eternal life by faith in Him, and if now you are trying to labor for Him, you are sowing blessed seed—and if it comes not up today, or tomorrow, yet Divine Grace ensures a crop and you shall have precious sheaves which you shall gather in one of these days! Therefore, be encouraged to labor on! The farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth through the long and dreary winter, through the checkered days of spring, through March winds and April showers he waits, until, at last, the golden harvest rewards him for all his toil. Labor on, then, Beloved, “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” That which you sow, you shall also reap! Your Lord has told you so. Therefore, be not dismayed by the long waiting but—

*“Sow and faint not,  
Till the seed a harvest bears.”*

But, while this Truth of God is full of encouragement to God’s people, it ought to be a very strong and powerful check to those who are living in sin. As you sow, you will have to reap! Those “wild oats” about which you laugh are easily sown, but they will make hard and sorrowful reaping! That act of iniquity, that indulgence in lust, that lie, that blasphemy, that revolt against God in stifling your conscience and refusing to yield to Christ—all these will produce a harvest in due season! It is easy to toss these pigeons up into the air, but they will all come home to roost. At nightfall you shall see every one of them—and they will have grown greater than when you set them flying. And they will be bearers of messages of misery to the rash hand that sent them flying abroad. It is a dreadful thing to be so living that you would not wish the result of your actions to come home to you! And if any of you are so living, I pray God, the Holy Spirit, now to give me something to say which shall, like a strong hand, lay hold of your bridle and compel you to stand still and race no longer in the downward course to Hell!

My text naturally divides itself into two parts and, at first sight, they do not seem to be very closely connected. But I think that I shall be able to show that they are. From the first part of the text we may learn that some sowings will have a horrible harvest. “They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” Then the rest of the text will teach us that some sowing must end in failure. They are such poor, windy things, that they shall never come to anything that is good. If a blade shall come up, yet “it has no stalk.” And, if it should seem to come to a stalk, “the bud shall yield no meal.” It shall be like the devil’s meal—all bran—there shall be no good flour in it. Or, if it should yield meal, “if it should produce, strangers shall swallow it up.” The old proverb says, “There’s many a slip ‘twixt the cup and the lip,” and these sowers find it to be so with their sowing! Strangers come in and steal away the fruit out of the very mouth that hoped to be fed by it so that no good result comes of the sowing as far as he is concerned.

I. The first part of our text teaches us that some sowings will PRODUCE A HORRIBLE HARVEST.  
Some have a horrible harvest even in this world, as, for example, the sowing of oppression which leads to revolt and revenge. I do not know a better instance of this than France. Some two hundred years ago, or even less than that, the owners of the land in that country treated the peasantry worse than they treated their cattle. Poor and almost naked men might have been seen dragging the plow over the soil, themselves, because they were reduced to such poverty by excessive rents that they could not afford to keep animals to do the hard work. Kings, princes and the great ones of the land cared for nothing but their own pleasures— and those pleasures were often of the most vicious kind. Read the first chapters of Carlyle’s French Revolution and see in what a state France was. Yet, for a time, everything seemed to go on favorably for the oppressors. If the peasantry revolted, they were put down with an iron hand.  
The mighty rulers thought that their empire would never come to an end and, as for the Grand Monarch, himself—was there ever such another mortal as he thought himself to be, and as his courtiers spoke of him? Might not his kingdom last forever—at least, in the hands of his successors? Yet, one after another, those kings and nobles sowed the wind and, at the end of the last century, they reaped the whirlwind! Having, themselves, defied all law and justice, they had taught the people to do the same—and when the masses once rose in rebellion and got the upper hand—you know how they worked the terrible guillotine and how the streets, not only of Paris, but of many another city and town, were deluged with blood! And, at last, the oppressors were made to realize that their cruelty and oppression had come home to them.  
It is always so, sooner or later, according to the rule of God’s righteous government. Men may stretch the cord for a long while, but at length it snaps and woe be to those that are holding it when it gives way! The people may be, for a time, trodden down beneath the tyrant’s hoof, but, in the long run, the tyrant gets the worst of it. France has more than once furnished an awful instance of the retribution that comes upon those who do not regard the dignity of man and who treat him as if he were merely a beast, or something worse! They have sown the wind and they have reaped the whirlwind.  
Now take another view of the picture presented by our text. We have lately had, over in Ireland, a terrible proof that the justification of outrage leads to murder. Certain persons say, “We never meant to urge our countrymen to commit the crime of murder and we are shocked at the Phoenix Park tragedy. We wash our hands in innocence, for we are clear of guilt in this matter! We denounce it, we have no part in it, we abhor it.” So they say, but what led up to that awful deed of blood? When men have used expressions in which they have not condemned, but have almost justified outrage and murder in other cases, what could come of it but that their disciples should go a little beyond what their masters may have intended? You cannot scatter fire and then when, at last, the city burns, say, “Oh, we never meant it to spread like that! We only intended to burn down that cottage, or that wretched shanty! We never thought of burning down the city! We are as innocent of the crime as newborn babes—we never meant to do anything of the kind.” Yes, but you cannot say to fire, “Thus far shall you go and no further.” And in like manner, if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind.  
There is a whole province of Holland protected from the sea by a dyke and there is a man who wants to let in a little water to the other side for a certain purpose. He says he is only going to let a little stream run through, so he takes his pickaxe and he worlds away till he has made a passage through the dyke. And then, of course, the whole dyke is swept away and the province gets drowned! The foolish fellow says, “God forbid that I should have the blame of this catastrophe! I never meant to do anything of the sort.” Of course he did not—he intended something far less than that, but his action naturally produced the result that followed and, therefore, he is rightly regarded as responsible for it! Beware, I pray you, of trifling with the eternal principles of justice and of right and wrong! Beware of ever sanctioning what you consider to be only a little evil, for, if you do, the greater evil is sure to follow at its heels! It is like the boy that the burglar takes and pushes through a little window, that he may open the door and let in those who commit robbery and murder. So, if any of us begin to advocate principles which sap and undermine the foundations of law and order, we cannot tell to what mischief our talk will lead—it is well for us to always be careful not to sow the wind, lest we should, by-and-by, reap the whirlwind!  
Passing from those great instances which prove the rule, I want you, next, to notice that there are many persons who fall into this same fault. Take, for instance, the teacher of error. He is, perhaps, in other respects, an excellent minister, but he is unsound on one important point. Just so and, before long, his unsoundness on one point will lead to unsoundness all round! It is like a single speck of decay in fruit—it is very apt to cause the whole to go rotten. Have you ever heard the story which was told by Augustine concerning a young man who had been, at one time, a professed Believer in God, but who had given up all trust in Him? It occurred to him, when he was very much tried by the buzzing and biting of flies, that God could not have created such troublesome little creatures. They were such a nuisance to him that he concluded that the devil had made them and, having once gone the length of believing that the devil made flies, he thought it highly probable that Satan created some other nuisances. And he went on till, at last, he actually came to believe that the devil made everything—and he did not believe in God at all. “Ah!” remarks Augustine, as he relates the story, “he that errs about a fly soon errs about all things.”  
Look at the progress of Romanism in our own country. When the most of us were boys, we used to hear our fathers talking of a Mr. Pusey and of baptismal regeneration—and it was thought, then, to be a strange thing if a man wore a cross around his neck. All England was stirred about the matter and everybody was horrified! But look at the so-called “priests” now—they have gone all the length of Rome. “Where?” you ask. Well, where are they not? They seem to be everywhere now, swarming over the land, and they have brought back rank Popery into what used to be called “the Protestant Church of England!” How has that come to pass? Well, first of all, there was a little of it tolerated and then a little more of it was needed and, gradually, more was sucked down until now I believe that many of the Ritualists would be prepared to receive the Pope and all his cardinals, red hats and all! I really cannot see why they should not, for, if they did, they could scarcely be more Popish than they are, already! Only go a little way in the course of error and it is like sliding down an inclined plane—there is no telling where you will stop. Go to the top of St. Paul’s Cathedral and throw a stone down from that height. You say that you only mean to throw it a yard. Ah, but it will never rest until it gets to the ground—and perhaps it will kill someone before it reaches the earth!  
So, when once you start in the way of error, there is no possibility of stopping unless Divine Grace shall interpose to save you from the consequences of the first false step! You sow the wind and you reap the whirlwind. A little error leads to more, and that to still more until the very idea of God is given up! I, therefore, love to meet a man who is stiff-backed in his orthodoxy and, in this age of laxness and looseness, I am prepared to clap my hands even when I see a little bigotry! I like a man to believe something—to stick to it, to know that it is true and not to be ashamed to avow it in the teeth of his fellow men—let them oppose as they will, for there must be something true and, oh, that God’s gracious Spirit may teach us what it is! And when we once know it, may we hold it fast, come life or come death—for if we do not, we shall sow the wind and reap the whirlwind!  
Here is another instance of the same Truth of God—an ill example at home. I will confine it to that one point, though it is of general application. You probably know a man who is very lax in the management of his family. He professes to be a Christian, perhaps, but his sons and daughters are allowed to plunge into every frivolity and every vanity. Yes, and they may even go into open sin and all that they will hear will be some gentle word like that which fell from the lips of soft-hearted Eli when he did but hint that his sons were not doing well when they were doing much that was terribly evil! The man even hears that such-and-such a vice has been committed by his son, yet he scarcely upbraids him. He is so easy-tempered that he says nothing, though he sorrows within his own heart. Perhaps his own example and the example of his wife are not such as could be desired. Family prayer is neglected and holy living is not known in the house. He gets prematurely old—his son has died very early—he has drunk himself to death, or destroyed himself by vice. His daughters, too, are unhappy in their marriages. The whole family has virtually gone to ruin as to any connection with the Christian Church.  
What shall I say of the old gentleman? He will not say it, himself, but I must say it for him—he sowed the wind and he has reaped the whirlwind! The father’s character is usually seen in his sons. It has been said that ministers’ sons often turn out badly—if it is so and I am not sure that it is—it must be because the ministers have not kept their own vineyards, for the rule still holds good, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Generally, though not always, if he does depart from it, it is because there has been some fatal neglect in his training—and there are some Christian parents who are acting thus. They are so indulgent, not only to their children, but to themselves, that they do not like to give themselves the trouble that ought to be taken in all such cases. They are sowing the wind and they will reap the whirlwind!  
Let me give another illustration of the truth of the text with reference to persons who fall into evil habits. At first those evil habits are under restraint. They admit that they drink, but they say that they cannot be called “drunks.” They may, now and then, take more than is good for them but, still, it is not very often. That is the beginning of the evil! And, by-and-by, where are they? They have sown the

ind and they reap the whirlwind! Did you ever hear the story of the Persian prince who dreamed that he was drinking from a cup and a fly came and tried to sip from it? He drove it away, but, as he kept on drinking from his cup, it came back—and it had grown as large as a bird! He drove the creature away, but it returned as large as an eagle—the largest kind of bird! He tried to chase that away, but it soon came back in the form of a man who grinned at him most horribly. He strove to get that man away, but soon he was back in the form of a giant who trod on him and crushed him to death! That is just the picture of the growth of an evil habit! At first you say, “Is it not a little one?” But it grows and increases till it becomes unconquerable. That parable illustrates our text—if you sow the wind you will reap the whirlwind! You cannot live in sin, you cannot do wrong of any kind, or in any form, but it will come back to you, not merely as wind, as you sowed it, but as a whirlwind, as a horrible tempest, as a rushing tornado, carrying everything before it!  
I will not tarry to give more illustrations of this solemn Truth of God because I want to leave a few minutes for the consideration of the second part of the subject. Only I pray that God may write on the memory and heart of any of you who are living as you should not live, the great fact that as surely as you so live, “That which a man sows, that shall he also reap.” And he will reap even worse than he sows, for if he sows the wind he will reap the whirlwind.  
II. Now let us turn to the second part of the subject which is that SOME SOWINGS MUST END IN FAILURE.  
There are some people who do not think that they are doing any hurt, yet they are living an aimless life. Go to them and ask what they are sowing? “Nothing,” they answer. They say that they are doing no hurt to anybody, for they are not doing anything at all—but is not that kind of life an injury to themselves and to others? If you have no aim in life, no high ambition, no objective, no noble purpose—does anything ever come of it? People talk of what they call, “chance,” but I never found any chance of a man’s getting to be holy without intending to be so! I never yet heard of a man doing any great good in the world if he did not mean to do it! I never heard of a man glorifying God by accident, nor of anyone getting to Heaven, as it were, by the throw of the dice, somehow finding himself there, but not knowing how it all happened. No, if you lead an aimless life, what will come of it will be just what the text says—“It has no stalk” There will be no plant from it and even if there should be some kind of stalk to the seed that you have sown, yet when it springs up, “there shall be no meal.” It cannot be any comfort to you, even if things should go pretty well without your intending that they should, for the comfort, after all, lies in the motive and in the intention. And even if your life should somehow turn out to be better than that of other aimless persons, though you never intended it to be so, “if it should produce, the strangers shall swallow it up.” If you meant it to be nothing, it will be nothing.  
I daresay that I am speaking to a large number of people who do not know what they are living for. You have come into the world and here you are and, in due time, you will go out of it—but that is all that can be said of you. You are doing nothing. You have no noble end in view, no glorious purpose to accomplish, no sublime aspiration to realize. Then take it for granted that if all you sow is the wind, you will reap nothing but wind—only it will come to you in a fiercer form—as a whirlwind, for God will say to you, “I made you for My Glory. I sent you into the world with a purpose. I entrusted you with talents. I made you a steward of My goods and now you are accused of having wasted My goods. Give an account of your stewardship.” What will you say? Alas, in that day the trifler, the idler, the mere butterfly in the garden of the world will find things going hard, indeed, with him! God save you all from leading an aimless life!  
But there are some who are sowing the wind in another form. They are leading a selfish life. Self is the beginning and the end of their life. They open a shop simply to make money. They live at home to be comfortable. Perhaps they enlarge themselves a little by taking the wife and the children into the circle of self, but still, that is all—they have no care for God, no love for Christ, no wish to help the poor, no thought about eternity. That is a life of sowing the wind and it will end, sooner or later, in reaping the whirlwind, for no man lives unto himself without earning for himself a fearful reward! Selfishness is often like the serpent that stings itself to death. It is not possible, within the compass of a man’s own soul, that he should satisfy the cravings and desires of that soul. When he loves God and loves his neighbor—he is really most of all blessing himself—for then is he living to true purpose.  
But when self is everything to a man, he confines his soul within the morgue of his own ribs—his spirit dies within him and becomes like a stone. In the case of the man who lives only for self, it may be said of his life, in the words of the text, “It has no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal.” He gathers riches, but has no happiness or contentment in them. He is like Solomon, who, with all his possessions, had to cry, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!” Or if he gets to be rich and seems to enjoy himself a little, he suddenly dies and strangers swallow up his estate! All that is left of him is a massive tomb and the notice in the newspapers that he died worth so many thousands of pounds—which is not true, for he never was really worth a farthing all his life! He was a worthless man whose only value consisted in the money he possessed.  
O my dear Hearers, I implore you, with all my soul, not to live unto yourselves! If you desire the highest, grandest selfishness that can ever be attained, I charge you, throw selfishness away, remembering our Savior’s Words, “He that loses his life for My sake, shall find it.” He who casts his life away for the sake of Christ and for love of the Truth of God, shall be the man who shall really save his life and find true joy and blessedness! But for anyone to live for self is to sow the wind and to reap the whirlwind.  
So, once again, will it be if a man lives a self-righteous life. A selfrighteous man is generally very great at sowing—so many prayers—so many almsgivings—so many sermons—so many ceremonies. Yes, wind, wind, wind! He is sowing wind, but what will come of it all? This very good religious man—I forget whether his name is Good Enough, or TooGood, but I believe the families are cousins—is, in his own opinion, so very excellent that he does all he ought to do and perhaps a little more. Yet he is only sowing the wind! And what will he reap from it? Well, if God is very gracious to him, he will soon reap the whirlwind, for he will find, to his confusion, that all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags and they shall be like the sere leaves of the forest borne away by the wind! I pray that he may, in this sense, reap the whirlwind very soon, for, if not, he will do so in the next world when all his pretended good works and all his formal observances of external religion will be nothing but so much whirlwind to blow in his face, and to fan the flames of Hell forever! O dear Friends, shun self-righteousness and trust, alone, to the righteousness of Christ! May the Spirit of God lead you to wash in the atoning blood and then cover you with the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ! Then it will be well with your soul—but all self-righteousness shall end in delusion and confusion forever and ever. May God grant that none of us may, in this sense, sow the wind!  
The text is pre-eminently true of every man who leads a deceitful life. Oh, have I the misery of speaking to one who makes a profession of religion and who wishes to be thought to be a Christian, but yet is not really so? It is hard for a true Believer to maintain a Christian character, but it is very much harder to keep up that character when there is nothing at the back of it! Oh, how desperately does the man who is a hypocrite have to labor! He has to patch up here, and patch up there—daub with untempered mortar here, and whitewash there, and he never has any peace. And all the while he is only sowing the wind! There is nothing real in his religion—what will come of it when that hypocrisy is discovered, when he stands revealed before the bar of God? Will his hypocritical religion do him any good? No, “it has no stalk” even now! It cannot yield him even present comfort! If there is a “bud” that looks a little like selfrespect, it “shall yield no meal.” I have already quoted the old proverb, “The devil’s meal is all bran,” and I may add that the hypocrite’s meal is all bran. There is nothing substantial in it. And even if he should seem to die in the odor of sanctity, yet the stranger shall come in and devour his supposed religiousness, for somebody shall tell the truth about him and so his fine reputation shall be utterly blasted.  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, I have come to the end of this discourse. And what should be the practical result of it but that if we have been sowing anything that we ought not to sow, we should pray God to come and plow it all up! Lord, drive the plow straight through every life that is not according to Your Word! Oh, to have all the evil obliterated—every seed of sin crushed and destroyed! Would God that it might be so with all of us!  
What next? Well, let us then go—oh, may the Divine Spirit lead us!—to Jesus Christ and ask Him to give us the good seed! Let us have our hands washed from the evil in which we formerly delighted and He, alone, can cleanse us. Then let us take the clean good wheat which He will give us out of His own granary and let us go and sow it. God help us to sow it right and left, from morn to eve, without weariness, that, at the last, we may gather in a glorious harvest, not to our own glory, but to the praise of Him by whose rich, Free and Sovereign Grace we were enabled to sow to the Spirit, and of the Spirit to reap life everlasting! Amen.  
Before we go, we will sing that very solemn hymn in Mr. Sankey’s book, “What Shall the Harvest Be?” It will help to impress the subject upon our memories and hearts—  
*“Sowing the seed by the dawn-light fair,  
Sowing the seed by the noon-day glare.  
Sowing the seed by the fading light,  
Sowing the seed in the solemn night—  
Oh, what shall the harvest be?  
Sowing the seed with an aching heart,  
Sowing the seed while the teardrops start, Sowing in hope till the reapers come,  
Gladly to gather the harvest home—  
Oh, what shall the harvest be?  
Sown in the darkness, or sown in the light, Sown in our weakness, or sown in our might, Gathered in time, or eternity,  
Sure, ah, sure, will the harvest be!”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **GALATIANS 5:13-26; GALATIANS 6:1-10.**

Remember, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that the Epistle to the Galatians is one in which Paul, with especial clearness, proves the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone. So much is this the case that the famous Commentary of Martin Luther upon this Epistle is, perhaps, the strongest work extant upon the Doctrine of salvation by Grace through faith. But that doctrine was never intended to be separated from the Scriptural teaching concerning the fruit of faith, namely, good works and, therefore, we find, in the close of this very Epistle, the strongest possible declaration that if men live in sin, they will reap the result of sin—and that only if, by Grace, they are brought to walk in holiness, will they win the rewards of Grace.

Galatians 5:13. For, brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. “Do not make license out of your liberty. Remember that liberty from sin is not liberty to sin.”

13, 14. But by love serve one another. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The condensation of the whole Law of God is contained in that one word, “love.” In the First Table we are taught to love God. And the Commandments of the Second Table teach us to love our neighbor.

15. But if you bite and devour one another. Finding fault, slandering, injuring, bearing malice and so on—“If you bite and devour one another.”  
15. Take heed that you are not consumed, one of another. “You will eat one another up. You will, each one, condemn his neighbor.” Paul represents the great Judge coming and waiting outside the door. And when He hears two men condemning one another, He says to Himself, “I will confirm their verdict. They have mutually condemned each other, I will say ‘Amen’ to it.” What a sad thing it is if professed Christians are found thus condemning one another!  
16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Walk under the Spirit’s power, following His guidance. The Spirit never leads a man into sin. He never conducts him into selfindulgence and excess.  
17. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. How often that is the case! You would be perfect, but, “you cannot do the things that you would.” We would, if possible, escape from every evil thought—we would not even hear of anything sinful if we could help it.  
18, 19. But if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness. Any kind of sensual indulgence—whatever it may be—a lustful glance, the cherishing of an unclean desire—the utterance of a foul expression—all this is condemned, as well as the overt acts of adultery and fornication.  
20, 21. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness. Is drunkenness actually put by the Apostle after murder, as though it were something worse than that terrible crime? Or is it not, oftentimes, the case that drunkenness lies at the bottom of the murder?  
21. Reveling and such like: of the which I told you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Paul never said, nor ever thought of saying, that a man might live in sin that Grace might abound. No, no—these evil things must be given up! Christ has come to save us from every evil work. And this is the salvation that we preach—not simply salvation from Hell, but salvation from sin—which is the very fire that has kindled the infernal flame. But how different from all this evil is the fruit of the Spirit!  
22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love. Universal love, first, to God. Next, to His people and, then, to all mankind. Have we that fruit of the Spirit? If so, it will make us of a very amiable disposition. It will dethrone selfishness and set up holy affections within our heart.  
22, 23. Joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Joy and peace seem to blossom and ripen out of love. Long-suffering, too, is part of the fruit of the Spirit. You will be hourly tried, but the Spirit of God will give you patience to suffer long and to endure much. You will also have gentleness. Some people are very hard, stern, severe, quick-tempered, passionate—but the true follower of Christ will be gentle and tender, even as He was.  
23. Against such there is no law. Neither God nor man has ever made a law against these things—the more there is of them, the better will it be for everybody. Oh, that they prevailed all over the world!  
24. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. A crucified Christ is the leader of a crucified people! Oh, to have all the affections and lusts of the flesh nailed up! They may not be actually dead, for those who are crucified may still live on for some hours, but they are doomed to die. Their life is a very painful one and it is hastening to a close. A man who is crucified cannot get down from the cross to do what he wills and, oh, it is a great blessing to have our sinful self thus nailed up! Ah, Sir, you may struggle, but you cannot get down! You may strive and cry, but your hands and feet are nailed—you cannot go into active, actual sin. The Lord grant that the nails may hold very fast, that none of the struggling of our old nature may be able to pull out those nails that have fastened it up to the cross!  
25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. If that is our real life, let it also be our course of action.  
26. Let us not be desirous of vain-glory. Do not let us want to be accounted as somebody, for, if we do, we prove that we are really nobody! Nobody is anybody till he is willing to be nobody—as long as he wants to be somebody, he is nobody and nothing!  
26. Provoking one another, envying one another. God save us from that and every other form of evil!  
Galatians 6:1. Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault. He is a slow traveler. He is not speeding swiftly on the way to Heaven, so the fault overtakes him. Had he been quicker of pace, he might have outstripped it, but he is “overtaken in a fault.” What then? Throw him out of the Church? Have done with him? No. “If a man is overtaken in a fault”—  
1. You which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Pick him up, help him to run better than he did before.  
1. Considering yourself, lest you, also, are tempted. Paul does not say, “Lest you also fall,” but, “Lest you, also, are tempted”—as much as to say, “You will be sure to fall if you are tempted,” and that man who thinks that other people ought to be cast off because they have committed a fault is so proud in his own heart that he only needs to be tempted and he would fall, too! This is a very expressive way of putting the matter! “Considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.”  
2. Bear you one another’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ. Help your Brothers and Sisters. If you see that they have more to do than they can accomplish, take a share of their labor. If they have a heavier burden than they can bear, try to put your shoulder beneath their load and so lighten it for them.  
3. For if a man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Paul does not say, “He deceives other people.” No, “he deceives himself.” As a general rule, other people find him out, they learn what he really is, but, “he deceives himself.”  
4, 5. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself, alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. There is, after all, a burden which we cannot carry for others and which we cannot shift upon others. There are burdens of care, sorrow and trouble which we can take from other men’s shoulders, but the great burden of responsibility before God, each man must carry for himself.  
6. Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things. Those who are taught and so receive spiritual things, should maintain those who are their teachers as far as they are able to do so.  
7. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. That is true under the Gospel as well as under the Law.  
8. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. That is what always comes to the flesh—it decays and corrupts.  
8. But he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. No corruption shall come to that which belongs to the Spirit! “He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”  
9, 10. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 95 (SONG I), 654— AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS”—42, “WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?”  
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THE BIBLE

NO. 15

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, MARCH 18, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

**“I have written to him the great things of My Law, but they were counted as a strange thing.”  
Hosea 8:12.**

This is God’s complaint against Ephraim. It is no mean proof of His goodness, that He stoops to rebuke His erring creatures. It is a great argument of His gracious disposition that He bows His head to notice terrestrial affairs. He might, if He pleased, wrap Himself with night as with a garment. He might put the stars around His wrist for bracelets and bind the suns around His brow for a coronet. He might dwell alone, far, far above this world, up in the seventh Heaven and look down with calm and silent indifference upon all the doings of His creatures. He might do as the heathens supposed their Jove did, sit in perpetual silence, sometimes nodding his awful head to make the Fates move as he pleased. But Jove never thought of the little things of earth, disposing of them as beneath his notice, engrossed within his own being, swallowed up within himself. He lived alone and retired. And I, as one of Jove’s creatures might stand by night upon a mountaintop and look upon the silent stars and say, “you are the eyes of god, but you look not down on me. Your light is the gift of his omnipotence, but your rays are not smiles of love to me. God, the mighty creator, has forgotten me, I am a despicable drop in the ocean of Creation, a sear leaf in the forest of beings, an atom in the mountain of existence. He knows me not. I am alone, alone, alone!” But it is not so, Beloved. Our God is of another order. He notices every one of us! There is not a sparrow or a worm but is found in His decrees. There is not a person upon whom His eyes are not fixed. Our most secret acts are known to Him. Whatever we do, or bear, or suffer, the eye of God still rest upon us and we are beneath His smile—for we are His people. Or beneath His frown—for we have erred from Him.

Oh, how ten-thousand-fold merciful is God, that, looking down upon the race of man, He does not smile it out of existence! We see from our text that God looks upon man, for He says of Ephraim, “I have written to him the great things of My Law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” But see how when He observes the sin of man, He does not dash him away and spurn him with His foot? He does not shake him by the neck over the gulf of Hell, until his brain does reel and then drop him forever. But rather, He comes down from Heaven to plead with His creatures! He argues with them, He puts Himself, as it were, upon a level with the sinner, states His grievances and pleads His claim. “O Ephraim, I have written unto you the great things of My Law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing”! I come here tonight in God’s stead, my Friends, to plead with you as God’s ambassador, to charge many of you with a sin. To lay it to your hearts by the power of the Spirit, so that you may be convinced of sin, of righteousness and of a judgment to come. The crime I charge you with is the sin of the text. God has written to you the great things of His Law, but they have been unto you as a strange thing! It is concerning this blessed Book, the Bible, that I mean to speak tonight. Here lies my text—this Word of God. Here is the theme of my discourse, a theme which demands more eloquence than I possess. A subject upon which a thousand orators might speak at once. A mighty, vast, incomprehensive theme which might engross all eloquence throughout eternity and still it would remain unexhausted!

Concerning the Bible, I have three things to say tonight and they are all in my text. First, its Author, “I have written.” Secondly, its subjects— the great things of God’s Law. And thirdly, its common treatment—It has been accounted by most men a strange thing.

1. First, then, concerning this book, who is THE AUTHOR? The text says that it is God. “I have written to him the great things of My Law.” Here lies my Bible—who wrote it? I open it and I find it consists of a series of tracts. The first five tracts were written by a man called Moses. I turn on and I find others. Sometimes I see David is the penman, at other times, Solomon. Here I read Micah, then Amos, then Hosea. As I turn further on, to the more luminous pages of the New Testament, I see Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Paul, Peter, James and others, but when I shut up the book, I ask myself who is the Author of it? Do these men jointly claim the authorship? Are they the compositors of this massive volume? Do they, between themselves, divide the honor? Our holy religion answers, No! This volume is the writing of the living God—each letter was penned with an Almighty finger. Each Word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit. Albeit that Moses was employed to write his histories with his fiery pen, God guided that pen. It may be that David touched his harp and let sweet Psalms of melody drop from his fingers, but God moved his hands over the living strings of his golden harp. It may be that Solomon sang Canticles of love, or gave forth words of consummate wisdom, but God directed his lips and made the Preacher eloquent. If I follow the thundering Nahum when his horses plow the waters or Habakkuk when he sees the tents of Cushan in affliction. If I read Malachi, when the earth is burning like an oven. If I turn to the smooth page of John, who tells of love, or the rugged, fiery chapters of Peter who speaks of the fire devouring God’s enemies. If I turn to Jude, who launches forth anathemas upon the foes of God—everywhere I find God speaking—it is God’s voice, not man’s! The Words are God’s Words, the Words of the Eternal, the Invisible, the Almighty, the Jehovah of this earth. This Bible is God’s Bible. And when I see it, I seem to hear a voice springing up from it, saying, “I am the Book of God—Man, read me. I am God’s writing—open my leaf, for I was penned by God. Read it, for He is my Author and you will see Him visible and manifest everywhere.” “I have written to him the great things of My Law.”

How do you know that God wrote the book? That is just what I shall not try to prove to you. I could, if I pleased, to a demonstration—for there are arguments enough, there are reasons enough—did I care to occupy your time tonight in bringing them before you—but I shall do no such thing. I might tell you, if I pleased, that the grandeur of the style is above that of any mortal writing and that all the poets who have ever existed, could not, with all their works united, give us such sublime poetry and such mighty language as is to be found in the Scriptures! I might insist upon it, that the subjects of which it treats are beyond the human intellect. That man could never have invented the grand Doctrines of a Trinity in the Godhead. Man could not have told us anything of the creation of the universe. He could never have been the author of the majestic idea of Providence, that all things are ordered according to the will of one great Supreme Being and work together for good. I might enlarge upon its honesty, since it tells the faults of its writers. Its unity, since it never belies itself. Its master simplicity, that he who runs may read it. And I might mention a hundred more things which would all prove to a demonstration, that the book is of God! But I come not here to prove it. I am a Christian minister and you are Christians, or profess to be so and there is never any necessity for Christian ministers to make a point of bringing forth infidel arguments in order to answer them. It is the greatest folly in the world. Infidels, poor creatures, do not know their own arguments till we tell them and then they glean their blunted shafts to shoot them at the shield of Truth again. It is folly to bring forward these firebrands of Hell, even if we are well prepared to quench them. Let men of the world learn error of themselves—do not let us be propagators of their lies!

True, there are some preachers who are short of stock and want them to fill up! But God’s own chosen men need not do that. They are taught of God and God supplies them with matter, with language and with power. There may be someone here, tonight, who has come without faith, a man of reason, a freethinker. With him I have no argument at all. I profess not to stand here as a controversialist, but as a preacher of things that I know and feel. But I, too, have been like he. There was an evil hour when once I slipped the anchor of my faith, I cut the cable of my belief. I no longer moored myself hard by the coasts of Revelation. I allowed my vessel to drift before the wind. I said to reason, “Be you my captain.” I said to my own brain, “Be you my rudder.” And I started on my mad voyage. Thank God it is all over, now, but I will tell you its brief history. It was one hurried sailing over the tempestuous ocean of free thought. I went on and as I went, the skies began to darken. But to make up for that deficiency, the waters were brilliant with flashes of light. I saw sparks flying upwards that pleased me and I thought, “If this is free thought, it is a happy thing.” My thoughts seemed gems and I scattered stars with both my hands. But soon, instead of these flashes of glory, I saw grim fiends, fierce and horrible start up from the waters. And as I dashed on, they gnashed their teeth and grinned upon me. They seized the prow of my ship and dragged me on, while I, in part, gloried at the rapidity of my motion, but yet shuddered at the terrific rate with which I passed the old landmarks of my faith. As I hurried forward with an awful speed, I began to doubt my very existence. I doubted if there were a world, I doubted if there were such a thing as myself! I went to the very verge of the dreary realms of unbelief. I went to the very bottom of the sea of infidelity. I doubted everything. But here the devil foiled himself. For the very extravagance of the doubt proved its absurdity. Just when I saw the bottom of that sea, there came a voice which said, “And can this doubt be true?” At this very thought I awoke. I started from that deathdream, which, God knows might have damned my soul and ruined this, my body, if I had not awakened. When I arose faith took the helm. From that moment I doubted not. Faith steered me back. Faith cried, “Away, away!” I cast my anchor on Calvary. I lifted my eyes to God—and here I am alive and out of Hell. Therefore I speak what I know. I have sailed that perilous voyage. I have come safe to land. Ask me again to be an infidel! No, I have tried it, it was sweet at first, but bitter afterwards. Now, lashed to God’s Gospel more firmly than ever, standing as on a rock of adamant, I defy the arguments of Hell to move me, for “I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” But I shall neither plead nor argue this night. You profess to be Christian men and women, or else you would not be here. Your profession may be lies. What you say you are may be the very opposite of what you really are, but still, I suppose you all admit that this is the Word of God. A thought or two, then, upon it. “I have written to him the great things of My Law.”

First, my Friends, stand over this volume and admire its authority. This is no Solomon book. It is not the sayings of the sages of Greece. Here are not the utterances of philosophers of past ages. If these words were written by man, we might reject them, but oh, let me think the solemn thought—that this book is God’s handwriting—that these words are God’s. Let me look at its date—it is dated from the hills of Heaven. Let me look at its letters—they flash glory on my eyes. Let me read the chapters—they are big with meaning and mysteries unknown. Let me turn over the prophecies—they are pregnant with unthought-of orders. Oh, Book of books! And were you written by my God? Then will I bow before you. Book of vast authority, you are a proclamation from the Emperor of Heaven! Far be it from me to exercise my reason in contradicting you. Reason! Your place is to stand and find out what this volume means, not to tell what this Book ought to say. Come my reason, my intellect, sit down and listen, for these words are the Words of God. I do not know how to enlarge on this thought. Oh, if you could ever remember that this Bible was actually and really written by God! Oh, if you had been let into the secret chambers of Heaven, if you had beheld God grasping His pen and writing down these letters, then surely you would respect them. But they are just as much God’s handwriting as if you had seen God write them. This Bible is a book of authority, it is an authorized book, for God has written it. Oh, tremble, tremble, lest any of you despise it. Mark its authority, for it is the Word of God!

Then, since God wrote it, mark its truthfulness. If I had written it there would be worms of critics who would at once swarm on it and would cover it with their evil spawn. Had I written it, there would be men who would pull it to pieces at once and perhaps quite right, too. But this is the Word of God. Come, search, you critics and find a flaw! Examine it from its Genesis to its Revelations and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz or any earthy substance. This is a star without a speck, a sun without a blot! A light without darkness. A moon without its paleness. A glory without a dimness. O Bible! It cannot be said of any other book that it is perfect and pure, but of you we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in you, without a particle of folly! This is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail. This is the book untainted by any error—it is pure, unalloyed, perfect Truth. Why? Because God wrote it. Ah, charge God with error if you please. Tell Him that His book is not what it ought to be. I have heard men with prudish and mock-modesty, who would like to alter the Bible. And (I almost blush to say it) I have heard minister’s alter God’s Bible because they were afraid of it. Have you ever heard a man say, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. But He that believes not,”—what does the Bible say?— “shall be damned.” But that does not happen to be polite enough, so they say, “shall be condemned.”

Gentlemen! Pull the velvet out of your mouths. Speak God’s Word. We want none of your alterations. I have heard men in prayer, instead of saying, “Make your calling and election sure,” say “Make your calling and salvation sure.” Pity they were not born when God lived, far-far back, that they might have taught God how to write! Oh, impudence beyond all bounds! Oh, full-blown self-conceit! To attempt to dictate to the AllWise—to teach the Omniscient and instruct the Eternal! Strange that there should be men so vile as to use the penknife of Jehoiachin to cut passages of the Word, because they are unpalatable. Oh you who dislike certain portions of the Holy Writ rest assured that your taste is corrupt and that God will not stay for your little opinion. Your dislike is the very reason why God wrote it, because you ought not to be suited. You have no right to be pleased. God wrote what you do not like. He wrote the Truth. Oh, let us bend in reverence before it, for God inspired it. It is pure Truth. Here from this fountain gushes aqua vitae—“the water of life,” without a single particle of earth. Here from this sun there comes forth rays of radiance, without the mixture of darkness. Blessed Bible, you are all Truth!

Yet once more, before we leave this point let us stop and consider the merciful nature of God, in having written us a Bible at all. Ah, He might have left us without it, to grope our dark way, as blind men seek the wall. He might have allowed us to wander on with the star of reason as our only guide. I recollect a story of Mr. Hume, who so constantly affirmed that the light of reason is abundantly sufficient. Being at a good minister’s house one evening, he had been discussing the question and declaring his firm belief in the sufficiency of the light of nature. On leaving, the minister offered to hold him a candle, to light him down the steps. He said, “No, the light of Nature would be enough, the moon would do.” It so happened that the moon was covered with a cloud and he fell down the steps. “Ah,” said the minister, “you had better have had a little light from above, after all, Mr. Hume.” So, supposing the light of Nature to be sufficient, we had better have a little light from above, too, and then we shall be sure to be right! Better have two lights than only one. The light of Creation is a bright light. God may be seen in the stars, His name is written in gilt letters on the brow of night. You may discover His Glory in the ocean waves, yes, in the trees of the field. But it is better to read it in two books than in one. You will find it here more clearly revealed, for He has written this Book, Himself, and He has given you the key to understand it, if you have the Holy Spirit. Ah, Beloved, let us thank God for this Bible. Let us love it. Let us count it more precious than much fine gold!

But let me say one thing before I pass on to the second point. If this is the Word of God, what will become of some of you who have not read it for the last month? “Month, Sir! I have not read it for this year!” Yes, there are some of you who have not read it at all. Most people treat the Bible very politely. They have a small pocket volume, neatly bound—they put a white pocket handkerchief around it—and carry it to their places of worship. When they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning. Then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat and goes to Chapel. That is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing! That is your style of entertaining this heavenly Messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write “damnation” with your fingers. There are some of you who have not turned over your Bibles for a long, long, long while and what do you think? I tell you blunt words, but true words. What will God say at last? When you shall come before Him, He shall say, “Did you read My Bible?” “No.” I wrote you a letter of mercy. Did you read it?” “No.” “Rebel! I have sent you a letter inviting you to Me—did you ever read it?” “Lord I never broke the seal. I kept it shut up.” “Wretch!” says God, “then you deserve Hell. If I sent you a loving Epistle and you would not even break the seal—what shall I do with you?” Oh, let it not be so with you. Be Bible readers. Be Bible searchers.

II. Our second point is, THE SUBJECTS ON WHICH THE BIBLE TREATS. The words of the text are these—“I have written to him the great things of My Law.” The Bible treats of great things and of great things, only. There is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it. You have seen mummies wrapped round and round with folds of linen. Well, God’s Bible is like that. It is a vast roll of white linen, woven in the loom of Truth. You will have to continue unwinding it, roll after roll, before you get the real meaning of it from the very depth! And when you have found, as you think, a part of the meaning, you will still need to keep on unwinding, unwinding and all eternity you will be unwinding the words of this wondrous volume! Yet there is nothing in the Bible but great things. Let me divide, so as to be more brief. First, all things in this Bible are great—but secondly, some things are the greatest of all.

All things in the Bible are great. Some people think it does not matter what Doctrines you believe—that it is immaterial what Church you attend—that all denominations are alike. Well, I dislike Mrs. Bigotry above almost all people in the world and I never give her any compliment or praise—but there is another woman I hate equally as much and that is Mrs. Latitudinarianism, a well-known character, who has made the discovery that all of us are alike. Now I believe that a man may be saved in any church. Some have been saved in the Church of Rome—a few blessed men, whose names I could mention here. I know, blessed be God, that multitudes are saved in the Church of England—she has a host of pious, praying men in her midst. I think that all sections of Protestant Christians have a remnant according to the election of Grace and they had need to have, some of them, a little salt, for otherwise they would go to corruption. But when I say that, do you imagine that I think them all on a level? Are they all alike truthful? One set says infant Baptism is right, another says it is wrong, yet you say they are both right? I cannot see that. One teaches we are saved by free Grace, another says that we are not, but are saved by free will. And yet you believe they are both right? I do not understand that. One says that God loves His people and never leaves off loving them. Another says that He did not love His people before they loved Him—that He often loves them and then ceases to love them and turns them away! They may be both right in the main. But can they be both right when one says “Yes,” and the other says “No”? I must have a pair of spectacles to enable me to look backwards and forwards at the same time, before I can see that! It cannot be, Sirs, that they are both right! But some say they differ upon non-essentials. This text says, “I have written to him the great things of My Law.” There is nothing in God’s Bible which is not great. Did any of you ever sit down to see which was the purest religion? “Oh,” you say, “we never took the trouble. We went just where our father and mother went.” Ah, that is a profound reason, indeed! You went where your father and mother did. I thought you were sensible people. I didn’t think you went where other people pulled you, but went of your own selves. I love my parents above all that breathe and the very thought that they believed a thing to be true, helps me to think it is correct. But I have not followed them—I belong to a different denomination—and I thank God I do. I can receive them as Christian Brothers and Sisters, but I never thought that because they happened to be one thing, I was to be the same. No such thing. God gave me brains and I will use them. And if you have any intellect, use it too. Never say it doesn’t matter. It does matter. Whatever God has put here is of eminent importance—He would not have written a thing that was indifferent. Whatever is here is of some value, therefore search all questions, try all by the Word of God. I am not afraid to have what I preach tried by this Bible. Only give me a fair field and no favor and this Bible. If I say anything contrary to it, I will withdraw it the next Sunday. By this I stand, by this I fall. Search and see but don’t say, “It does not matter.” If God says a thing, it must always be of importance.

But while all things in God’s Word are important, all are not equally important. There are certain fundamental and vital Truths which must be believed, or otherwise no man would be saved. If you want to know what you must believe if you would be saved, you will find the great things of God’s Law between these two covers—they are all contained here. As a sort of digest or summary of the great things of the Law, I remember an old friend of mine once saying, “Ah, you preach the three R’s and God will always bless you.” I said, “What are the three R’s?” And He answered, “Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration.” They contain the sum and substance of Divinity and of ruin. We were all ruined in the Fall. We were all lost when Adam sinned and we are all ruined by our own transgressions. We are all ruined by our own evil hearts and our own wicked wills. And we all shall be ruined unless Grace saves us. Then there is a second R for Redemption. We are ransomed by the blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and without spot. We are rescued by His power. We are ransomed by His merits. We are redeemed by His strength. Then there is R for Regeneration. If we have been pardoned, we must also be regenerated. For no man can partake of redemption unless he is regenerate. Let him be as good as he pleases. Let him serve God as he imagines, as much as he likes—unless he is regenerate and has a new heart, a new birth, he will still be in the first R, that is ruin! These things contain an epitome of the Gospel. I believe there is a better epitome in the five points of Calvinism—Election according to the foreknowledge of God. The natural depravity and sinfulness of man. Particular redemption by the blood of Christ. Effectual calling [Irresistible Grace] by the power of the Spirit— and ultimate perseverance of the saints by the efforts of God’s might. I think all those need to be believed, in order to salvation. But I should not like to write a creed like the Athanasian, beginning with, “Whoever should be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should deny the Catholic faith, which faith is this”—when I got so far, I should stop, because I should not know what to write. I hold the Catholic faith of the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible. It is not for me to draw up creeds. But I ask you to search the Scriptures, for this is the Word of Life.

God says, “I have written to him the great things of My Law.” Do you doubt their greatness? Do you think they are not worth your attention? Reflect a moment, Man. Where are you standing now?

*“Lo, on a narrow neck of land  
‘Twixt two unbounded seas I stand!  
An inch of time, a moment’s space  
May lodge me in yon heavenly place—  
Or shut me up in Hell.”*

I recollect standing on a seashore once, upon a narrow neck of land, thoughtless that the tide might come up. The tide kept continually washing up on either side. But wrapped in thoughts I still stood there until at last there was the greatest difficulty in getting on shore. The waves had washed between me and the shore. You and I stand each day on a narrow neck and there is one wave coming up there. See how near it is to your feet! Lo, another throws at every tick of the clock—“our hearts, like muffled drums, are beating funeral marches to the tomb.” We are always tending downwards to the grave each moment that we live. This Bible tells me that if I am converted, when I die there is a Heaven of joy and love to receive me. It tells me that angels’ pinions shall be stretched and I, borne by strong cherubic wings, shall out-soar the lightning and mount beyond the stars, up to the Throne of God, to dwell forever—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin*

*With God eternally shut in.”*  
Oh, it makes the hot tears start from my eyes! It makes my heart too big for this, my body and my brain whines at the thought of—

*“Jerusalem, my happy home,*

*Name ever dear to me.”*  
Oh, that sweet scene beyond the clouds. Sweet fields arrayed in living green and rivers of delight. Are not these great things? But then, poor unregenerate soul! The Bible says if you are lost, you are lost forever. It tells you that if you die without Christ, without God, there is no hope for you, that there is a place without a gleam of hope where you shall read in burning letters, “you knew your duty, but you did it not.” It tells you that you shall be driven from His Presence with a, “depart you cursed.” Are not these great things? Yes, Sirs, as Heaven is desirable, as Hell is terrible, as time is short, as eternity is infinite, as the soul is precious, as pains are to be shunned, as Heaven is to be sought, as God is eternal and as His Words are sure—these are great things—things you ought to listen to.

III. Our last point is THE TREATMENT WHICH THE POOR BIBLE RECEIVES IN THIS WORLD. It is accounted a strange thing. What does that mean—the Bible accounted a strange thing? In the first place, it means that it is very strange to some people, because they never read it. I remember reading, on one occasion, the sacred story of David and Goliath and there was a person present, positively grown up to years of maturity, who said to me, “Dear me! What an interesting story! What book is that in?” And I remember a person once coming to me in private—I spoke to her about her soul—she told me how deeply she felt, how she had a desire to serve God. But she found another law in her members. I turned to a passage in Romans and read to her, “The good that I would I do not. And the evil which I would not, that I do!” She said, “Is that in the Bible? I did not know it.” I did not blame her because she had no interest in the Bible till then. But I did wonder that there could be found persons who knew nothing about such a passage! Ah, you know more about your ledgers than your Bible. You know more about your day-books than what God has written. Many of you will read a novel from beginning to end and what have you got? A mouthful of froth when you have done. But you cannot read the Bible—that solid, lasting, substantial and satisfying food goes uneaten, locked up in the cupboard of neglect—while anything that man writes—as a catch of the day, is greedily devoured. “I have written unto him the great things of My Law, but they were counted as a strange thing.”

You have never read it. I bring the broad charge against you. Perhaps you say I ought not to charge you with any such thing. I always think it better to have a worse opinion of you than too good an one. I charge you with this—you do not read your Bibles. Some of you never have read it through. I know I speak what your heart must say, is honest truth. You are not Bible readers. You say you have the Bible in your houses—do I think you are such heathens as not to have a Bible? But when did you last read it? How do you know that your spectacles, which you have lost, have not been there for the last three years? Many people have not turned over its pages for a long time and God might say unto them, “I have written unto you the great things of My Law, but they have been accounted unto you a strange thing.”

There are others who read the Bible, but when they read it, they say it is so horribly dry. That young man over there says it is a “bore.” That is the word he uses. He says, “My mother said to me when you go up to town, read a chapter every day. Well, I thought I would please her and I said I would. I am sure I wish I had not. I did not read a chapter yesterday or the day before. We were so busy. I could not help it.” You do not love the Bible, do you? “No, there is nothing in it which is interesting.” Ah, I thought so. But a little while ago I could not see anything in it. Do you know why? Blind men cannot see, can they? But when the Spirit touches the scales of the eyes they fall off. And when He puts eye-salve on, then the Bible becomes precious. I remember a minister who went to see an old lady and he thought he would give her some precious promises out of the Word of God. Turning to one he saw written in the margin, “P,” and he asked, “What does this mean?” “That means precious, Sir.” Further down He saw “T and P,” and he asked what the letters meant. “That,” she said, “means tried and proved, for I have tried and proved it.” If you have tried God’s Word and proved it. If it is precious to your souls, then you are Christians. But those persons who despise the Bible have “neither part nor lot in the matter.” If it is dry to you, you will be dry at last in Hell. If you do not esteem it as better than your necessary food, there is no hope for you, for you lack the greatest evidence of your Christianity.

Alas, Alas, The worst case is to come. There are some people who hate the Bible, as well as despise it. Is there such an one stepped in here? Some of you said, “Let us go and hear what the young preacher has to say to us.” This is what he has to say to you—“Behold you despisers and wonder and perish.” This is what he has to say to you—“The wicked shall be turned into Hell and all that forget God.” And this, again, he has to say to you—“Behold there shall come in the last days, mockers like yourselves, walking after your own lusts.” But more—he tells you tonight that if you are not saved, you must find salvation here. Therefore, despise not the Bible, but search it, read it and come unto it. Rest you well assured, O Scorner, that your laughs cannot alter the Truth of God, your jests cannot avert your inevitable doom! Though in your hardihood you should make a league with death and sign a covenant with Hell—yet swift justice shall overtake you and strong vengeance strike you low. In vain do you jeer and mock, for eternal verities are mightier than your sophistries— nor can your smart sayings alter the Divine Truth of a single word of this volume of Revelation! Oh, why do you quarrel with your best Friend and ill-treat your only Refuge? There yet remains hope even for the scorner. Hope in a Savior’s veins. Hope in the Father’s mercy. Hope in the Holy Spirit’s Omnipotent agency!

I have done when I have said one word. My Friend, the philosopher says it may be very well for me to urge people to read the Bible. But he thinks there are a great many sciences far more interesting and useful than theology! Extremely obliged to you for your opinion, Sir. What science do you mean? The science of dissecting beetles and arranging butterflies? “No,” you say, “certainly not.” The science, then, of arranging stones and telling us of the strata of the earth? “No, not exactly that.” Which science then? “Oh, all sciences,” you say, “are better than the science of the Bible.” Ah, Sir, that is your opinion and it is because you are far from God that you say so! But the science of Jesus Christ is the most excellent of sciences! Let no one turn away from the Bible because it is not a book of learning and wisdom. It is! Would you know astronomy? It is here—it tells you of the Sun of Righteousness and the Star of Bethlehem. Would you know botany? It is here—it tells you of the plant of renown—the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. Would you know geology and mineralogy? You shall learn it here—for you may read of the Rock of Ages and the White Stone with a name engraved thereon, which no man knows. Would you study history? Here is the most ancient of all the records of the history of the human race. Whatever your science is, come and bend over this Book. Your science is here. Come and drink out of this fair fount of knowledge and wisdom and you shall find yourselves made wise unto salvation. Wise and foolish, babes and men, grayheaded sires, youths and maidens—I speak to you, I plead with you, I beg of you, respect your Bibles and search them out—for in them you think you have eternal life and these are they which testify of Christ!

I have done. Let us go home and practice what we have heard. I have heard of a woman, who, when she was asked what she remembered of the minister’s sermon, said, “I don’t recollect anything of it. It was about short weights and bad measures and I didn’t recollect anything but to go home and burn the bushel.” So if you will remember to go home and burn the bushel, if you will recollect to go home and read your Bibles, I shall have said enough! And may God, in His infinite mercy, when you read your Bibles, pour into your soul the illuminating rays of the Sun of Righteousness by the agency of the ever-adorable Spirit. Then you will, by God’s Grace, read to your profit and to your soul’s salvation.

We may say of THE BIBLE—  
*“God’s cabinet of revealed counsel ‘tis!  
Where weal and woe, are ordered so  
That every man may know which shall be his. Unless his own mistake, false application make It is the index to eternity!  
He cannot miss of endless bliss  
Who takes this chart to steer by  
Nor can he be mistook, that speaks by this Book. It is the Book of God!  
What if I should say, God of Books? Let him who looks Angry at that expression, as too bold,  
His thoughts in silence smother, till he find such another.”*

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #276 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Hos 10.2

A DIVIDED HEART

NO. 276

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty.” Hosea 10:2.**

THIS passage may be taken as referring to the people of Israel as a nation and it is not less applicable to the Church of God. It is one grand and grievous fault with the Church of Christ at the present day that it is not merely divided somewhat in its creed and somewhat also in its practice of the ordinances, but alas, it is also somewhat divided in heart. When the differences are of such a character, that as people of God we can still love each other and still unite in the common battle against the cause of evil and in the common end of building up the Church, then there is but little that is faulty. But when our doctrinal divisions grow to so great a head that we cease to co-operate. When our opinions upon mere ordinances become so acid towards each other that we can no longer extend the right hand of fellowship to those who differ from us, then indeed is the Church of God found faulty.

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Even Beelzebub with all his craft cannot stand when once his hosts are divided. If Beelzebub is divided against himself, even he must fall and assuredly this must be the case with those who lack that craft which might tend to overcome disunion. Oh, my Brethren, nothing can so soon cast down the Church from its high place, mar its glories and diminish its opportunities of success, as divisions among the hearts of God’s people. If we would grieve the Holy Spirit and cause Him to depart—if we would provoke the anger of the Most High and bring down trying Providences on the Churches, we have nothing to do but to be divided in our hearts and all will be accomplished. If we wish that every vial may empty out its ill and that every vessel may withhold its oil, we have but to cherish our bickering till they become animosities. We have but to nurse our animosities till they become hatreds and all the work will be fully completed.

And if this is the case in the Church at large, it is peculiarly true in those various sections of it which we now call Apostolic Churches. Oh, my Brethren, the smallest Church in the world is potent for good when it has but one heart and one soul. When pastor, elders, deacons and members are bound together by a threefold cord that cannot be broken—then are they mighty against every attack. But however great their numbers, however enormous their wealth, however splendid may be the talents with which they are gifted, they are powerless for good the moment that they become divided among themselves. Union is strength. Blessed is the army of the living God in that day when it goes forth to battle with one mind

and its soldiers as with the tramp of one man—in undivided march—go onwards towards the attack.

But a curse awaits that Church which runs here and there and which, divided in itself, has lost the main stay of its strength with which it should battle against the enemy. Division cuts our bowstrings, snaps our spears, hobble our horses and burns our chariots in the fire. We are undone the moment the link of love is snapped. Let this perfect bond be once cut in two and we fall down and our strength is departed. By union we live and by disunion we expire.

I intend, however, to take the text this morning specially with reference to our individual condition. We shall look at the separate individual heart of each man. If divisions in the great main body—if separation among the distinct classes of that body should each promote disasters, how much more disastrous must be a division in that better kingdom—the heart of man. If there is civil tumult in the town of Mansoul, even when no enemy attacks its walls, it will be in a sufficiently dangerous position. If the isle of man be governed by two kings, then is it disorganized and it will soon be destroyed. I address myself this morning to some of whom it can be said, “their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.” And thus shall I address you, first of all noticing a fearful disease. Secondly, its usual symptoms. Thirdly, its sad effects and fourthly, its future consequences.

I. Observe, then, that our text describes a FEARFUL DISEASE. Their heart is divided. I have called it a fearful disease and this will very readily appear if you observe, first of all, the seat of it. It affects a vital part, it is not merely a disease of the hand—that reformation might cure. It is not merely a disease of the foot—that restraint might sometimes mollify. It is not merely a disease of the eye which has but to be couched to let the light stream in upon it. It is a disease of a vital region—of the heart. A disease in a part so vital that it affects the whole man. The utmost extremity of the frame suffers when once the heart becomes affected and especially so affected as to be divided. There is no power, no passion, there is no motive, no principle, which does not become vitiated, when once the heart is diseased.

Hence it is that Satan, who is always crafty, endeavors to strike at the heart. He will give you the hand if you please. You may be honest. He will give you the eye if you please. You shall be outwardly chaste. He will give you the foot, if you please. You shall appear to run in the way of righteousness. Only let him keep the heart, only let him rule in the citadel and he will be well content to give up all the rest. John Bunyan describes this as being one of the terms which old Diabolus was said to make with King Shaddai—“Oh,” said he, “I will give up all the city of Mansoul, if you will but permit me to live in the citadel of the heart.” Surely there was but little in his terms and conditions. Yes but give up everything else. If you retain the heart, you retain all, O, Fiend—for out of the heart are the issues of life.

Thus the disease of our text is one that touches a vital part, a part which if once affected, tends to vitiate the whole frame. But you will observe the disease here described not only deals with a vital part, but touches it after a most serious fashion. It does not simply say the heart palpitates. It does not declare that the life-floods that issue from it have become more shallow and less rapid, but it declares something worse than all these, namely, that the heart was cleft in two and utterly divided. A stony heart may be turned to flesh but turn a divided heart into whatsoever you please, so long as it is divided, all is ill. Nothing can go right when that which should be one organ becomes two. When the one motive power begins to send forth its life-floods into two diverse channels, it creates intestine strife and war. A united heart is life to a man, but if the heart is cut in two, in the highest, deepest and most spiritual sense, he dies. It is a disease which is not only affecting a vital part, but affecting it after the most deadly fashion.

But we must observe again of this divided heart, that it is a division in itself peculiarly loathsome. Men who are possessed of it do not feel themselves to be unclean. In fact they will visit all society—they will venture into the Church, they will propose to receive her communion and to be numbered with her members and they will afterwards go and mingle with the world—and they do not feel that they have become dishonest. They think themselves fit to mingle with honest worldlings and with sincere Christians, too. If a man had spots upon his countenance or some disease that stared everyone else in the face as often as he was beheld surely he would retire from society and endeavor to keep himself a recluse.

But not so the man with a divided heart. He goes everywhere, utterly unconscious that his disease is of the most loathsome character. Shall I show you how it is so? Take the glass and look at the man’s heart and you will discern that it is loathsome—because Satan and sin reigns there. Although the man goes about and has sufficient of what is right and what is wrong to be uneasy in his sin, yet has he such an intense love of all manner of iniquity that he allows the loathsome demons to come and dwell in his heart. But his loathsomeness is worse than this, because all the while that he is really living in sin, he is a loathsome hypocrite, pretending that he is a child of God.

Of all the things in the world that stink in the nostrils of an honest man, hypocrisy is the worst. If you are a worldling, be a worldling. If you serve Satan, serve him. If Baal is god, serve him, but mask not your service of self and sin by a pretended service of God. Appear to be what you are, tear off your masks. The Church was never meant to be a masquerade. Stand out in your true colors. If you prefer Satan’s shrine, say so and let men know it. But if you will serve God, serve Him and do it heartily, as knowing Him who is a jealous God and searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men. It is a terribly loathsome disease, this of a divided heart. If the man were but known, his disease is so loathsome that the most wicked men in the world would have nothing to do with him.

I have known sometimes instances of this. A man who pretended to be religious and regularly attended his place of worship is seen on one occasion entering into a ballroom of the very lowest class. He begins at once to plunge into its gaieties, with the most evil intentions. He is at once observed. The right senses even of the wicked themselves are awakened. “Kick that man downstairs,” is the unanimous verdict and he receives it and he deserved it right well. When a man has a divided heart—tries to do right and to do wrong, to serve God and to serve Satan at the same time— I say his disease is of so loathsome and degraded a character, that the very worldling, whose leprosy is on his brow, despises, hates him and avoids him.

And yet again, not merely is the disease loathsome, but I must observe it is one always difficult to cure, because it is chronic. It is not an acute disease, which brings pain and suffering and sorrow with it, but it is chronic—it has got into the very nature of the man. A divided heart, how are you to get at that? If it were a disease in any other part, the lancet might find it out, or some medicine might heal it. But what physician can join together a divided heart? What skillful surgeon can set together the disrupted members of a soul that has been divided between God and mammon? This is a disease which enters into the very nature and will lie in the blood, though the most powerful medicines search it out. This is a disease, in fact, which nothing but Omnipotent Grace can ever overcome. But he has no grace whose heart is divided between God and mammon. He is an enemy to God, he is an injury to the Church, he is a despiser of God’s Word, he is a sheaf ripening for the harvest of eternal fire. His disease is deeply rooted within him and if left alone it will come to a most dreadful end—its end is sure destruction.

I must observe once more and then I will leave this point of the disease, that, according to the Hebrew of my text, this disease is a very difficult one to deal with, from the fact that it is a flattering disease. The text might be rendered—“Their heart flatters them. Now are they found faulty.” There are many cunning flatterers in the world, but the most cunning is man’s own heart. A man’s own heart will flatter him even about his sins. A man is a grasping miser—his heart flatters him that he is only exercising proper business habits. A man on the other hand is extravagant and spends the good gifts of God upon his own evil passions. Then his heart tells him that he is a liberal soul. The heart turns “sweet into bitter and bitter into sweet.” It is so “deceitful above all things,” and so “desperately wicked,” that it has the impudence to “put darkness for light and light for darkness.”

Now when a man has a divided heart, he generally flatters himself. “Well,” says he, “it is true I drink too much, but then there is never a time that I refuse a guinea towards a charity. It is true,” says he “I am not certainly what I should be in my moral character, but still, see how regularly I keep to my Church or Chapel. It is true,” says he, “I don’t now and then mind a trick or two in my trade, but I am always ready to help the poor.” And so he imagines that he blots out an evil trait in his character with a good one and thus flatters his heart. And see how self-contented and satisfied he is. The poor child of God is trying his own heart with the deepest possible anxiety—this man knows of no such thing—he is always fully assured that he is right.

The true Believer is sitting down and turning over his accounts day by day to see whether he is really on the road to Heaven or whether he has mistaken his evidence and has been deceived. But this man, self-satisfied, bandages his own eyes and walks deliberately on, singing at every step, straight to his own destruction. I know of some such now. It will not suffice for me simply to state what their character is unless God the Holy Spirit opens their eyes. They will be sure not to know their own likeness, even though I should paint it to the very life and put in every touch and stroke, yet they will say, “Ah he could not refer to me. I am so good and so godly, there could have been no reference to me in anything that he said.”

Do you know a class of people that pull the most tremendously long faces, that always look so serious, that talk the English language with a kind of unctuous twang, that give a savory pronunciation to every word they utter? Beware of them! When a man wears all his religion in his face, he has generally but a very small stock in his heart. Those tradesmen that put such a great display in their windows, frequently have very little behind. So with these professors—no one would know they were religious, so they label themselves that you may not make a mistake. You would think they were worldlings, if it were not for their sanctimonious appearance. But by putting that on, they think to glide through the world with credit. I hope they are not imagining that they shall stand accepted before the bar of God and deceive the Omniscient.

Alas for them! Their heart is divided. This is no uncommon disease, despite its loathsomeness and its terrible fatality. Rife is it in this day. Tens of thousands of Englishmen who are reckoned good and honorable are afflicted with it. Their whole head is sick and their whole heart faint from the fact that their heart is divided. They lack the courage to be thoroughgoing sinners and they have not sincerity enough to be truly-devoted people of God.

II. Having thus described the disease, I proceed to notice its USUAL SYMPTOMS. When a man’s heart is divided, one of the most frequent symptoms is formality in his religious worship. You know some men, perhaps, who are very stringent Believers of a certain form of doctrine and very great admirers of a certain shape of Church rule and government. You will observe them utterly despising and abhorring and hating all who differ from their predilections. Albeit the difference is but as a jot or a tittle, they will stand up and fight for every rubric, defend every old rusty nail in the Church door and think every syllable of their peculiar creed should be accepted without challenge.

“As it was in the beginning, so must it be now and so must it ever be even unto the end.” Now it is an observation which your experience will probably warrant, as certainly mine does, that mostly these people stand up so fiercely for the form, because, lacking the power, that is all they have to boast of. They have no faith, though they have a creed. They have

no life within and they supply its place with outward ceremony. What wonder therefore that they fiercely defend that?

The man who knows how precious the life of godliness is, the man who understands its vitality, its deep-seated, deeply-rooted heart power—he also loves the form, but not as he loves the Spirit. He approves the letter, but he likes the pith and marrow better. He is apt, perhaps, to think less of forms than he should do, for he will mingle first with one body of sincere Christians and then with another and he will say, “If I can enjoy my Master’s presence it is but little matter to me where I am found. If I can but find the name of Christ extolled and His simple Gospel preached, this is all I desire.” Not so the man whose heart is divided—who has no soul in godliness. He is bigoted to the extreme and well—I repeat it—he may be, poor man. All he has is the empty shell. What wonder, therefore, that he should be ready to fight for it?

You will notice many persons punctilious with regard even to the form of our own simple worship. They will have it that there must always be observed, not simply reverent behavior in the House of God, but something more than mere reverence, there must be an abject slavish, tyrannical fear upon the hearts of all who are gathered. They will have it that every jot and tittle of our worship must always be conducted with a certain traditional decorum. Now these people, as frequently as not, know nothing whatever of the power of godliness and only contend for these little shells because they have not the kernel. They fight for the surface albeit they have never discovered “the deep that couches beneath.” They know not the precious ores that lie in the rich mines of the Gospel and therefore the surface, covered though it is with weeds and thistles, is quite enough for them.

Formality in religion is very often a trait in the character of a man who has a divided heart. But this, perhaps, is not the most prominent symptom. Another mark in such a man’s character is his inconsistency. You must not see him always, if you would have a good opinion of him. You must be guarded as to the days on which you call upon him. Call upon him on a Sunday and you will find him like a saint—don’t call upon him on the Saturday night—you might, perhaps, find him very much like the worst of sinners. Oh, of all the men in the world whom I fear most for, because I know their dangerous and deceitful position, they are those among you who try with all your might to follow the Church and yet follow the world. You can come up and sing the sacred hymns of Zion one evening and another time you can go to your haunts and sing a profane and lascivious song. You can drink one day at the table of the Lord and another day at the table of devils. You appear to run first of all with God’s people in His service and then afterwards run with the multitude to do evil.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this, indeed, is a terrible fact—a terrible index of a frightful disease. You must have a divided heart if you lead an inconsistent life. It is a happy circumstance when a minister can believe of his Church that he has no hypocrite in the whole number. But I am bold to say, though with the deepest sorrow, this is more than I could believe of so large a Church as that over which I am called to preside. Ah, Friends, there may be some of you who practice sins unseen by your pastor’s eye. Neither elder or deacon has yet found you out. You have been cunning in your iniquity. Perhaps your sin is of such an order that Church discipline would altogether fail to touch it.

You know, however, and your conscience tells you, that your life is not consistent with your profession. I adjure you, by the living God, as you and I must stand at the Last Great Day face to face at His tremendous bar, either give up your profession, or be true to it. Cease to be called a Christian, or else be a Christian in truth. Seek more grace, that you may live up to the example of your Master, or else I entreat you—and do it honestly and if you would take me at my word, I should rejoice that you had done so—renounce your membership and no longer make a profession of godliness. An inconsistent life, I say, is a sure token of a divided heart.

And again I must observe there is another token of a divided heart, namely—variableness in object. I might depict a character which you have met with often in your life. A man who attends a public meeting upon some religious matter is seized with a sudden enthusiasm to do good. If he will not be a missionary to the heathen himself, yet he will undertake to devote of his substance to the cause and for the next week there is nothing on his tongue but the missionary enterprise. A little while after he attends some political meeting and now there is nothing before him but the reformation of politics. Another week and he is called to attend some sanitary commission and now there is nothing wanted but proper drainage.

Religion, politics, social economy, each in its turn and everything else must give place to the last topic which has engrossed his attention. These men run first in one direction—then in another. Their religion is all spasmodic. They are taken with it as men are taken with a chill. They shake by fits and now and then they are calm. They are sometimes hot and feverish and now and then they are chilly and cold. They take up their religion and then they lay it down again. What does this prove concerning them, but that they have a divided heart and they are in the sight of God diseased, loathsome persons, who shall never see His face with joy?

To conclude the list of symptoms. Once more, frivolity in religion is often a token of a divided heart. And here I address myself more immediately to those of my own age. It is perhaps too common a sin with young persons to treat religion with a light and frivolous air. There is a seriousness which is well becoming, especially in youthful Christians. Cheerfulness should be the constant aim of the aged. Their tendency is towards sadness. Perhaps a proper seriousness and solemnity should be the aim of the youthful Believer, whose tendency will rather be to levity than to despondency.

Oh, my Brethren, when we talk about religious things with flippancy— when we quote texts of Scripture in order to make jests upon them, when we come up to the Lord’s Table as if it were but a common repast—when we come to Baptism as though it were but an ordinary observance, about which no solemnity is to be found—then I fear we prove that our heart is divided. And I know that any soul conscious of its guilt, if it has really been brought to know the love of Christ, will always come to sacred things in an altered manner. We do not come to the Lord’s Table with lightness of heart. There have been times when it has seemed too solemn a matter for us to come at all. And as for Baptism, he that comes to Baptism without having searched his heart, without having looked well to his motives and without true devotion of spirit, comes altogether in vain. As the wrong communicant may eat and drink damnation to himself, so may he who would be thus wrongly baptized receive condemnation instead of a blessing. Frivolity of spirit is often a sign of a divided heart.

III. This brings us to the third point, the sad effect, of a divided heart. When a man’s heart is divided, he is at once everything that is bad. With regard to himself he is an unhappy man. Who can be happy while he has rival powers within his own breast? The soul must find a nest for itself, or else it cannot find rest. The bird that would seek to rest upon two twigs would never have peace and the soul that endeavors to find two resting places, first, the world and then the Savior, will never have any joy or comfort. A united heart is a happy heart—hence David says, “Unite my heart to fear Your name.” They that give themselves wholly to God are a blessed people, for they find that the ways of religion are “ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.” Men who are neither this nor that, neither one thing nor another, are always uneasy and miserable. The fear of discovery and the consciousness of being wrong conspire together to agitate the soul and make it full of unease, disease and restlessness of spirit. Such a man is unhappy in himself.

He is in the next place useless in the Church. Of what good is such a man to us? We cannot put him in the pulpit to propound that Gospel he does not practice. We cannot put him in the deaconship to serve the Church which his life would ruin. We cannot commit to his charge the spiritual matters of the Church in the eldership, because we discern that not being spiritual himself, he is not to be entrusted with them. In no respect is he of any good to us. “Reprobate silver shall men call them.” His name may be in the Church-book, but it had better be taken away. He may sit among us and give us his contribution, we should be better without it and without him than with either, though he should double his talent and treble his contribution. We know that no man who is not united in his heart, vitally and entirely, to Christ, can never be of the slightest service to the Church of God.

But not only this. He is a man dangerous to the world. Such a man is like a leper going abroad in the midst of healthy people. He spreads the disease. The drunkard is a leper set apart by himself. He does but little harm comparatively, for he, in his drunkenness, is like the leper when he is driven from society. His very drunkenness cries out, “Unclean, unclean, unclean!” But this man is a professor of religion and therefore tolerated. He says he is a Christian and therefore he is admitted into all society and yet he is inwardly full of rottenness and deception. Though outwardly whitewashed like a sepulcher, he is more dangerous to the world, I say, than the most vicious of men. Tie him up—let him not go loose—build a prison for him.

But what am I saying? If you would build a prison for hypocrites, all London would not suffice for ground for the prisons. Oh my Brethren, notwithstanding the impossibility of binding them, I do say that the maddest dog in the hottest weather is not one-half so dangerous to men as a man who has a divided heart—one who runs about with the rabid poison of his hypocrisy upon his lips and destroys the souls of men by contamination. Not only unhappy himself, useless to the Church, and dangerous to the world but he is contemptible to everybody. When he is found out nobody receives him. Scarcely will the world own him and the Church will have nothing to administer to him but its censure.

The most solemn consideration, however, is that this man is reprobate in the sight of God. To the eye of infinite Purity he is one of the most obnoxious and detestable of beings. His heart is divided. A pure and holy God hates, first, his sin and secondly, the lies with which he endeavors to cover it. Oh, if there is a place where sinners are more loathsome to God than anywhere else, it is in His Church. A dog in its kennel is well enough—but a dog in the throne-room is quite out of place. A sinner in the world is bad enough, but in the Church he is hideous. A madman in an asylum is a creature to be pitied, but a madman who protests he is not mad and will thrust himself among us that he may obtain means of doing mischief, is not merely to be pitied—he is to be avoided and needs to be restrained.

God hates sin anywhere, but when sin puts its fingers upon His Divine altar—when it comes and lays its insolent hand upon the sacrifice that is burning there—then God spurns it from Him with disgust. Of all men who stand in the most likely place to receive the mightiest thunderbolt and the most terrible lightning flash, those are the men who have a divided heart and profess to serve God while with their souls they are serving sin. Take heed, Sinner, take heed. Running on in your sin you will meet with punishment. But after all, O Hypocrite, look well to your ways—for your sin and your life together shall bring down a dread and swift destruction upon your devoted head.

IV. In conclusion I have to address some remarks to you with regard to the FUTURE PUNISHMENT of the man whose heart is divided—unless he is rescued by a great salvation.

I have endeavored to preach faithfully this morning, as faithfully as I could, but I am conscious that many of the children of God do not find food under such a sermon as this, nor is it my intention that they should do so. It is not rightly possible to blend the sieve of sifting, with the bushel of the Gospel. We cannot well bring you the wheat and the sieve, too. This morning I have sought to take the fan ministerially into my hand and

thoroughly purge this floor, in the name of Him who shall be the great “Purger” at the Last Day. We all need it whether we know it or not. The best Christian needs sometimes to question himself as to his motives. And when God’s children are not fed, it is often more profitable to them to be led to examine themselves, than it would be if they had some rich promise to feed upon.

My Hearers, out of so vast a number this morning, are there none among you with divided hearts? Is it possible that this whole congregation is made up of sincere Christians, truly enlightened, called and saved? Is there not one man, who, mistaking his place, has put himself among the sheep when he should have been among the goats? Is there not one man here who, without making a mistake, has dared impudently to thrust himself into the number of God’s priests, when he is really a worshipper of Baal? Let me then, in the last place, that I may with faithfulness discharge my mission, describe the terrible condition of the hypocrite when God shall come to judge the world.

The hypocrite comes with brazen face. He comes in the midst of the congregation of the righteous. The mandate has gone from the Throne, “Gather out first the tares!” He hears the mandate and his cheek pales not. His impudence continues with him even now. He would still knock at the door and say, “Lord! Lord! open to me.” The dividing angel flies. Terror is on the face of the wicked, as on the left the tares are bound in bundles to burn. Imagine, however the still greater consternation of this individual, who, standing in the midst of ministers, saints and Apostles, suddenly finds himself about to be gleaned from them. With a tremendous swoop, like an eagle descending from its lofty height, the death angel bears upon him, snatches him away and claims him as his own.

“You are,” says the black angel, “You are a tare. You have grown side by side with the wheat, but that has not changed your nature. The dew that falls upon the wheat has fallen upon you. The sun which shone upon it you have enjoyed also, but you are still a tare and your doom remains the same. You shall be bound up with the rest in bundles to be burned.” O Hearer, what must be his consternation when with mighty hand that angel plucks him up by the roots, carries him away and he that thought himself a saint is bound up with sinners for destruction!

And now imagine the reception that he meets. He is brought into the midst of the wicked—the wicked who once with Pharisaic tongue he had reproved. “Here he comes,” say they, “the man who instructed us, the good man who taught us to do better. Here he comes himself, found out at last to be no better than those whom he despised.” And then imagine, if you dare, the inner dungeon, the reserved seats of that fiery abode and the heaviest chain of despair—imagine, I say, if you can, the terrible destruction, terrible beyond every other, which shall overwhelm the man who in this world deceived the Church and dishonored God, but who is now detected to his shame. Common sinners have the common prison, but this man shall be thrust into the inner prison and made fast in the stocks of despair.

Tremble, Professors, tremble—you who are half-and-half religious men! Tremble, you who pretend to fear God, but like the Samaritans, worship your idols, also. O, tremble now, lest your trembling should come upon you in a day when you are not aware of it, when you shall long for the rocks to hide and for the mountains to cover you, but shall be without a shelter in the day of the fierce anger of the God of the whole earth.

And now, I cannot send you away without preaching the Gospel for a moment or two. I have, perhaps, one here who is saying, “Sir, my heart is not only divided, but it is broken.” Ah, there is a great deal of difference between a divided heart and a broken heart. The divided heart is cut in two, the broken heart is broken in pieces, all asunder and yet it is not divided. It is all in pieces, in one sense, as to its proud hope and it is melted, in another sense, as to its earnest longing that it may be saved.

Poor, broken Heart, I was not rebuking you. Are you desirous this morning to have your sins put away? Then from the bottom of your poor broken heart cry today, “Lord, save me from hypocrisy. Whatever I may be, do not permit me to think I am one of Yours if I am not.” Are you breathing out this prayer to God, “Lord, make me truly Yours. Put me among Your children. Let me call You ‘my Father,’ and not turn away from You. Give me a new heart and a right spirit. O wash me in the blood of Christ and make me clean. Make me what You would have me be and I will praise You forever”?

Remember, my dear Hearer, if that is the desire of your heart, you are this day bid to believe that Christ is able to save you and willing to save you and waiting to be gracious unto you and more ready to bestow mercy than you are to receive it. Therefore you are commanded to trust Him, for all your sins have been punished on Him as your Surety and for the sake of Christ, God is willing now to receive you, now to bless you. Come close with Him this morning. Lift yours eye to Him that did die upon the tree. Put your trust in Him who is my Redeemer and your Redeemer, too. Let the blood which flows from His side be received into your heart. Open your poor wounds and say, “My Master, heal these wounds for me. O Jesus! I know no other trust. If You will save me I will know no other love. My heart is undivided in its love, it looks alone to You. It shall be soon undivided in its gratitude. I will praise You, and You alone.”

Poor heart-broken Penitent, I did not wrongly contradict myself by saying, “Though your heart is broken, it is not divided.” Bring it just as it is and say, “Lord, receive me through the blood of Christ and let me be Yours now and Yours forever, through Jesus.” Amen.

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THE DIVIDED HEART

NO. 3527

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty.” Hosea 10:2.**

THIS was originally spoken of the Kingdom of Israel. For many years they had been under a king who commanded the worship of Baal and persecuted the worshippers of Jehovah. God chastened the people very sorely for this, but He did not utterly destroy them. At last Hoshea, the king, came to the throne. He was the last king of Israel and it is very remarkable that it is said of him that he was much better than those who went before him. He did not evil in the sight of the Lord after the manner of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He was not what could be wished, but still he was not like the rest—and it seems very odd to a person who reads it casually that God should spare the nation under worse kings— and then should carry it away into captivity when they had, for once, a far better king! But the matter is explained thus. Hoshea withdrew the curse of persecution from the people and they were left free to follow Jehovah.

While they were persecuted—compelled to worship Baal—God, as it were, had compassion upon them. He abhorred their idolatry, but still His anger did not burn against them to the same degree as it did afterwards when they were left to do as they pleased, religious persecution was withdrawn and the pressure was taken off. Then, when there began to be internal discussion and strife—and some went after the true God, but others still followed the old idol—then it was that God saw that the nation was incurable. They were altogether set upon evil and He said, “Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty.” Or it might be read, “Now shall they be condemned.” From which I gather that a sin in a certain case may be overlooked for a while, but the same sin under another circumstance may be speedily punished. God knows the circumstances of temptation in which a man may be placed, and though the force of temptation is not an excuse for sin, it may serve as a mitigation of it. A person under a tyrannizing power who is driven to sin by fear may be far less guilty than another who is under no such constraint, but who willfully, of his own heart, chooses the evil. And God may bear a long time with the same sin in a man under certain circumstances, which in another, under different circumstances, shall provoke Him at once to anger—and He shall sweep the man from off the face of the earth! Beware, dear Hearers, of deliberate sin! Beware of the sin which is of your own choosing! I may say, beware of all sin, for in a measure it is deliberate and of your own choosing—but especially that sin which is not brought upon you by any pressure, but simply by your own willful disobedience to God! This is a crying sin and one which God will not long put up with!

And now I shall take the language of the text and apply it in other ways. “Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty.”  
I. THIS MAY BE TRUE OF ANY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.  
It has long been my joy, Beloved in the Lord, that our heart has not been divided. We have walked together these many years in holy fellowship and, imperfect as we are, yet there have not been divisions among us. There has been no division about Doctrine. We have agreed upon the great Truths of God. There has been, I believe, no division about who shall be the greatest. We have been content, each one, to occupy his place in the Church and to work on. It is not our goodness that has made it so—it is only the power of God’s Spirit which has kept us, who otherwise might readily have been divided—kept us as the heart of one man in sacred unity. Oh, let it always be so—let it always be so! May these eyes be closed in the darkness of death long before I shall see you contending, the one against the other! If it should ever happen that I should be unfit to go in and out among you to your edification, may I be laid aside and some other found round whom you may rally as one man, that by any means and every means the Church may be kept in its integrity—one in heart—a threefold cord which cannot be broken! Let each man endeavor to avoid giving offense to his brother. Let us all be members unto edification of the same one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. May the same Spirit abide in us and work with us to God’s Glory, for we well know that a divided Church is found guilty. It is guilty so far as anything like usefulness is concerned. The strength that is spent in division is so much taken away from service. When the children of God use their swords against one another, they are not using them against the adversaries of the Lord. May our strength never be spent in division. A house divided against itself must come to nothing, but strong in the unity which God shall give us may we not be found guilty! I will not dwell upon that, however, but remark that the text—  
II. MAY BE USED, AGAIN, OF EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN.  
One-heartedness in a Christian is a great point. “Unite my heart to fear Your name” is a prayer which every Christian should always pray. “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” A double-hearted Christian—what shall I say of him? He is like the eye which when it is single, fills the body with light, but if it has lost its singleness, it causes the body to be in darkness—and if the light that is in us is darkness, how great is that darkness! Though a Christian, deep down in his soul, cannot be divided in heart, but must love his God, yet there may be very much of division of pursuit, division of aim and objectives in Christians. And, Brothers and Sisters, may I not suggest that it may be so with some of you, that your hearts may be divided and, therefore, you are found guilty? Take the Christian who desires to serve God, but still is equally desirous to amass wealth. Such a man—may God not put him into the scales and judge him, for I fear he will be found wanting—but if his desire for wealth is ever subordinate to that of the Gory of God only in a slight degree, he will never attain to any great eminence in the Divine Life. He cannot! In proportion as his vital force is divided and drawn away from the main business of life, he will become spiritually lean, even if he becomes peculiarity rich. He may be a millionaire in the world, but he will be a pauper in the Church. He may be a “strong” man in the market, but he shall be a very dwarf in the House of God! There will sure to be a guiltiness where the heart is so divided! The most charitable construction we can put upon it is that there are darker evils!  
We have known Christians, too, whose objective in life has been the large acquiring of knowledge, the pursuit of science, the gathering up of information. This, like the pursuit of wealth, is lawful enough in its subordinate place, but when it comes into rivalry with the seeking of the Glory of God, the man may become a scholar, but he will never become a beloved disciple that leans his head upon Jesus’ bosom! He may be great in the classics and he may be a master in the sciences, but he will never be a master in Israel! The division of his vital powers, the lack of concentration will be sure to keep him in the rear ranks of the Church of God— if he is kept there. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to see a wholehearted Christian, who, while he pursues his present business, still pursues it for God’s Glory! While he studies and stores his mind, is doing it for one objective, namely, that he may be thereby more useful to the Church of God and more helpful in the winning of souls! Give the man but one heart, one objective, and he is a man! Someone has said that he dreaded the man of one book—and so the wicked world may dread the man of one objective if that one objective is the Glory of God! They that have two targets to shoot at shall not strike either—they miss their aim—but he who lives only for God with all his might is like a thunderbolt launched from Jehovah’s hand that goes crashing through every difficulty and reaches the point God aims at—and that the man, himself, seeks! He shall live for something! He shall count upon his age! He shall leave his mark! The man with an undivided heart—he shall not be found guilty. But he that is this and that—a follower of Christ, but yet something over and above that, almost equally as much the other, as he is a Christian—he shall be a poor, poor thing! He shall not enjoy the light of fellowship with God. He shall not walk in nearness to Christ. He shall be saved, but “so as by fire.” No “abundant entrance” shall be administered to him into the Kingdom of God, our Father.  
I believe, dear Friends, and I will go a step further using the same words, that this case, if it should happen to be that of a minister with a divided heart, is more sad than it is in the case of the common Christian. Dear Brothers, those of us who believe that we are called to be ministers for Christ are, above all the rest of the Church, bound to devote ourselves to one thing. “This one thing I do.” If other men have two things to do, we, by our call and office, if we are not liars in professing to be of God, and traitors to our office, are bound to do but one thing—and that is to free ourselves from the blood of all men that we may stand before God as His honest servants. You may depend upon it that a minister with his heart at all divided will make a failure of his ministry. It must be so. I have watched the career of a good many young men, though not old, myself, [Spurgeon was near 36] and I remember one with remarkable abilities. In his preaching there was a good clear sound of the Gospel. But I, who was as a father to him, noted that he had an ambitious desire to be distinguished as a speaker. I saw that even when he sought to win souls, it was with a view that persons might say how earnest he was. I could not help detecting in his conversation that there was an evident objective to make himself something, that he might be great in Israel. And I remember well how I walked with him and warned him that if God’s servant did anything whatever for himself, God would not use him for His Divine purposes. That if we sacrificed to our pride, God would not let us stand as priests at His altar. That if we would be honored, we must stay down, stay humble—that God would not long bless a man who was selfseeking, even in the ministry of Christ. The warnings he received very kindly, but they never sank into his heart, and I can see him now! He is not here, but were he here I think he would confess the truth of what I say. He lies a miserable wreck upon the shore and he has fallen by his ambition! Had it not been for that, I would have conceived for him a high and excellent career. And I would say to every minister, “I charge you fling away your ambition! Your only ambition must be to be nothing, to be hated, scouted, called a fool, a driveller, if by any means you may win souls for Christ! But to cultivate rhetoric, to be an orator, to study that you may be thought to be a profound thinker, to labor earnestly with this idea that you may be esteemed to be a first-class soul-winner—even that is bad! The only thing is to seek to do what God would have you do and to glorify Him—to lay every honor at His feet and live for Him, for any sort of division in the Christian minister’s pursuit may make him faulty.” I believe that the man who gives himself to be a preacher should divest himself of the cares of this life, as the soldier does in the army, that he may be able to give his whole soul and life to the one matter for which his Lord has called him. It will be good for him to do this. And then he had better leave politics alone. He had better leave everything alone but his one work. We have not mind enough for two things—and besides, our work is such that if we had mind enough for 20 things it would be best to consecrate it all to that one thing! If I may snatch firebrands from the flame, who will, may fill your Senate and may guide the policies of Cabinets! If I may lead sinners to the Cross of Christ and tell them of life in His dear wounds, I should be content, though I should never influence anything else except the hearts of men to the Savior! One thing, young man, if you are about to be a minister—one thing, my Brother, however old you may be, permit me to say to you and myself tonight—there is only one thing we must do if we would not be found guilty.  
But the stress of my text I intend to lay tonight upon one particular case, and that is—  
III. THE SEEKING SINNER.  
There are some persons who are awakened and are seeking salvation, but they are not likely to find it because their heart is divided and they will be found guilty. Very briefly, and very briefly, indeed, I mean to speak upon this disease, upon the evil of it, and suggest a few thoughts by way of a cure for it.  
Of this disease, let me say that it is a disease in the heart. Now a very small prick in the heart will kill. A great gash in the head may be healed, but a slight wound in the heart is deadly. A division of understanding or of judgment may be remedied, but a division of heart is a very terrible and often a very fatal disease. Let me show you how and in what respects some seeking souls are divided in heart.  
And they are, first, divided as to a sense of their condition. At one time they think they are in great danger. Tomorrow they don’t know that there is anything very particular. When they have read a passage of Scripture, they believe their heart to be evil, but they forget the text and they think their heart is, after all, not so bad as Scripture says it is. They hear that there is a wrath to come and they are alarmed, but they get away to their friends and neighbors and say, “Why was I so foolish as to be frightened by the preacher?” They are in danger—they dare not say they are not, but yet they almost hope it is not true! They know it is not all right with them, yet they try to cheat themselves with the idea that it is pretty nearly all right. They are never likely to seek a Savior while they are in this condition, for until a man’s mind is thoroughly made up that he must be saved by Christ or perish, he will never go to Christ. A divided heart about our personal condition before God is a deadly sign.  
These same seekers are often divided as to the objects of their choice. They need salvation tonight—they would give their eyes to have it. They will get to their chamber and pray, “O God, save me!” They will endorse the language of that hymn—

*“Wealth and honor I disdain.  
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain.  
These can never satisfy—  
Give me Christ, or else I die.”*

Tomorrow they will forget all about Christ and they will be seeking after something else. Tonight they would have Heaven, but tomorrow they would find a Heaven on earth! Tonight they would give up sin, but tomorrow they wish to have much of it. Tonight they see the emptiness of earthly pleasure, but tomorrow they will suck it down as the ox drinks down water. Their heart is divided between this and that. They are not quite for the world nor quite for Christ—they halt between two opinions! Oh, that God would decide them that their heart, their divided heart, may not prove their ruin!

Some seekers are divided as to the object of their trust. They trust in Jesus Christ, but they also trust a little in themselves. They believe His blood has a great deal to do with it, but they think their prayers have something, too, and so they stand with one foot on the land and the other on the sea and, therefore, they fall! They are relying upon self in part and upon Christ in part, and so they will assuredly come to destruction, for Christ will never be part Savior! It must be all or nothing! He never entered into partnership with sinful worms to help save them—He is the sole Foundation—and other foundation can no man lay. Alas, upon this matter, how many have their hearts divided! They are trusting to their Baptism, or to their Confirmation, or to their “sacraments”—all false foundations—and yet they are trying to trust in Christ at the same time! Their heart is divided and now they are held guilty.

And this division is found in their love. They think they love Divine things, but by-and-by some earthly thing comes in and gets uppermost in their souls! Oh, I do remember myself when, if I woke in the morning, I always took care to have a godly book under my pillow, and an awakening book, too—Doddridge’s, “Rise and Progress,” Alleine’s, “Alarm,” Bunyan’s books and the like—and yet at another time I forgot all about that. I was hot today and cold tomorrow. I would have been ready to die in order to be saved, sometimes, and other times would gladly have escaped from the mercy of God to be permitted to “enjoy myself,” as I said, in the things of the world! Oh, it is a sad state to be in. A seeker will never get Christ until he must have Christ, and he will never get salvation until salvation is the first thing, the last thing, the middle thing with him—until it comes to this, “By God’s Spirit I must be saved! Nothing will content me. I must be saved and until I am saved, I cannot give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids.” The Lord in His mercy give us an united heart about this, for a divided heart, here, is a guilty heart in the seeker. Now let me speak upon—

IV. THE DANGER OF THIS DISEASE—the evil of it. The evil of it is, first, that seekers with divided hearts miss the blessing. You shall find Him when you seek Him with your whole heart—not till then. Mercy’s door opens to the knock of a whole-hearted knocker. A half-hearted seeker will have to wait many a day before that gate will ever give him entrance. No, Soul, if you do not think enough of mercy to ask for it with all your heart, you will have to wait awhile. No, Man, the choice mercies of God are too precious to be thrown away upon one who asks with a divided heart! Now look at Heaven’s gate instead of here and there, instead of looking right and left. For you one thing is necessary, Sinner—just one thing. Fifty things you may leave to be sought, by-and-by, but now for you it is one thing, and if you will not make it one thing, you will miss it—miss it to your eternal loss!

Again, remember that you who seek the Lord with a divided heart condemn yourselves. When you stand before the Judgment Seat you won’t be able to say, as some will, “Lord, we did not know of this salvation. Lord, we never were impressed with its value,” for the Lord would tell you, “Why, you trembled under a sermon. You knelt and prayed, and you cried to Me, though you lied with yours lips because your heart was not perfect before Me. Yet you did know the value of these things and you did feel them, too, in a measure, so that you are without excuse.” He that follows the world with all his heart and thinks that is the best, is a reasonable man in following it. But he who thinks the world to come the best, and yet follows this present evil world—why, what a fool he is—and who shall plead for him? When he stands before God, his prayers will damn him, if nothing else will, for his prayers will be swift witnesses against him that he did know, did feel and yet he would not act upon his knowledge—he blotted out that which he perceived in his feelings. God save us from missing Heaven and from condemning ourselves by seeking it with a divided heart!

Moreover, O Man, I would press one fact upon you very solemnly, and that is that a divided search after salvation is an insult to the Savior. Who is it and what is it, O Man, that you set up in competition with Christ? All Heaven and earth cannot produce His equal, and have you found something that can rival Him? What is it? Dare you say what it is? There have been men who have had good thoughts, but even a harlot’s love has been chosen by them, instead of Christ! There are others who have loved the wages of unrighteousness, and Sabbath-breaking has made them forego Christ. We have known others who, for fear of a little scandal from their worldly companions, have been ashamed to follow Christ, and they have given up Jesus Christ sooner than bear a fool’s derision! O Man, if you had the choice given you tonight of all the kingdoms of this world, or Christ, you would insult Christ if you should pause in the choice, for He is better than them all, and your soul’s salvation is better than them all! “For what shall it profit a man, though he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul?” But I can weep for you while I rebuke you. What is it you put in competition with Christ? What is it you prefer to Christ? Man, are you mad that you should insult your Savior, who poured out His heart’s blood for the salvation of such as you are, and do you think that anything can be worth the having at so dreadful a price as the loss of your soul, and the loss of the Savior’s salvation? I beseech you, turn that over in your mind! I cannot put it as forcibly as I would, but I pray you let your conscience help you and answer if it is right in you to have a divided heart, and so to insult your Savior.

Once more on this point, and that is, do you not know that a divided heart is a continued disobedience to God? He says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength”—and now you have sinned your soul out of His favor and in danger of eternal death—and still with only half a heart do you turn to Him! You put out one hand towards God, but with the other you would have your sin! You would gladly go to Heaven and take your sins with you! You would be saved, but you want to sit both at the table of the Lord and the table of Satan! You desire to hold with the hare and run with the hounds—be the friend of the devil and yet the friend of God. O Man, the very thought is rebellion against your Maker! Cast it away from you and ask the Lord, this night, to bind all your affections into one bundle, and then draw them all to Him—that for you the one thing may be to seek salvation through Christ and reconciliation to the good Lord in Heaven through the precious blood of His dear Son! And now hear the last few words which shall be meant to be—

V. A CURE FOR THIS DISEASE of a divided heart. And the first word shall be this. You ought well to have done with a divided heart when the matter in hand is your salvation or damnation. When a ship is floating gaily out at sea with favorable winds, men think but little of their safety. When she begins to rock and there is some danger, then their safety rises in importance and they put it side by side with the safety of the gold they carry with them! But when the winds break loose and the storm is up, and the ship is about to go by the board, and the man must leap into the lifeboat, he flings his gold away—he leaves his treasures loose upon the floor. As they sink into the abyss, he gives up anything if he may but save his life! In that dread hour when the vessel is going down and a handful of men alone are clinging to a mast, all is gone from them except the thought of saving life. And surely it should be so with you! When you are saved, you may begin to think of some other thing, but not tonight! For as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, there is but a step between some of you and death! Before another Sabbath—I may speak positively, for out of so many as there are here, someone of us will die this week, by all the probabilities of life and death—before another Sabbath one of us will lie in the shell, prepared to be taken to the grave! And if that should happen to be an unconverted man, then before another Sabbath you will know of Hell and of the Lake of Fire more than this Book can tell or these lips can utter, unless you are converted and fly to Christ! Surely in such jeopardy, your whole heart ought to be set upon the one matter—your own salvation—and I beseech you and I pray God the Spirit to make it so that you may now, with your whole undivided faculties, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. By the awful peril of your soul, I do entreat you linger, delay and remain undecided no more, lest your heart, being divided, should prove guilty and be cast away forever!

Remember, again, and the argument is equally forcible, though it is more pleasing, the mercy that you are seeking after is worth the concentration of all your thoughts to find it. To be delivered from all your past sin—is not this worth the seeking? To be made a child of God—is not this worth wrestling for? To be secure of Heaven, to be delivered from Hell—is not this worth an attempt to obtain? Oh, if it were necessary that you should go to your houses, tonight, and neglect your tomorrow’s business—it does not require it, but if it did—if you went not to the market or to the Exchange by the week together—yes, and if your tables were deserted and you snatched but a morsel that might sustain life—and if you took no walk, had no recreation, if you denied yourself anything and everything until you found Christ, I could not blame you! I am sure it would be well worth the while! Anything, everything should be neglected that you might become one of the people of God and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! Did you know the joy that belongs to Christians, you would never be satisfied until you had it! The man that saw the pearl of great price saw it in another dealer’s hands, and he thought, “I must have that! It is the finest pearl of all, so I must have it!” And he went his way, you know, and though he had many a dainty jewel, he sold all he had and turned it all to gold—and back he came to the trader—and he gave with joy all that he had that he might buy that one pearl, and he made a good bargain, too! And you would make a blessed bargain if everything were given up that you might find a Savior and be delivered from the wrath to come! Therefore I do pray you to seek Him with your whole heart.

Once more, do remember that the Savior gave His whole heart when He came to save men. There was no by-play about Christ. His zeal for souls did eat Him up. He, loved, He lived, He died to save them! Will you have a divided heart about that which took the Savior’s whole soul? Remember the devil is in earnest to destroy you. He will leave no stone unturned to keep you his victim that he may utterly destroy you! Shall Hell be in earnest to ruin you and will you not be in earnest to escape from it? Remember, good men are in earnest. I wish that I could speak to you with the tongue of an angel tonight. There is no faculty of my mind which I would not lay under a heavy mortgage if I might but bring your soul to Christ! I would willingly enough go to school, again, and sit at my Master’s feet if He could tell me how to deal with human hearts aright, and stir them and draw them to the Savior! Ah, ‘tis poorly done, but it is with my whole soul I would plead with you to fly to Christ! And yet ‘tis but little a concern of mine, compared with the way in which it is a concern of yours! If I have been faithful, I shall not be responsible for you—it is your soul that is at stake. Sirs, shall I be anxious about your souls and will you not care about them? Do they seem precious to me and trifles to you? Shall I urge you to escape and will you feel, “It does not matter—it is but a trifle”? Lord, deliver us from this insanity, for insanity it is for a man to trifle with his soul, when others are in earnest for him! And God is in earnest. The great eternal God is in earnest! He says tonight to you, “Turn you, turn you! Why will you die, O house of Israel?” If salvation is child’s-play to you, it is not to Him. He gave His Son from His bosom to redeem men! And He sent His Spirit unto men to sanctify them. He puts out His Omnipotence, lays His Wisdom under tax to find a plan and devise a way by which He might save mankind! Oh, trifle not where God is so in earnest, lest you find Him terribly in earnest in the day when His incensed love shall turn to wrath! Jealousy—what is it but love set on a blaze? And if you so hate God that you will prefer to live in Hell sooner than be indebted to His mercy, then rest assured you shall feel how heavy His arm can be—

*“What chains of vengeance shall they feel Who slight the cords of Love?  
How they deserve the deepest Hell  
Who scorn the joys above!”*

May God in His infinite mercy prevent anybody here from daring the wrath of God by following after Christ with a divided heart—trifling with his Maker, trifling with his soul, trifling with Heaven, trifling with Hell! May we be in earnest, each one of us, and may we all meet at the right hand of God through Sovereign Grace. The Lord bless you all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HOSEA 10:1-6.**

Verse 1. Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself. Not to his God. It matters not how much fruit we bear—if it is for self, we are fruitless. A thing which is good in itself may lose all its goodness because stained with a selfish motive. We are to live unto God—and we must always be watchful about this—otherwise we may be doing much, and doing nothing. “Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself.”

1. According to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. It is a very sad thing when the more men receive from God, the more they sin. But just in proportion as the land of Israel was fat and fertile, in that proportion did they set up altars to false gods and provoke the true God, who had given them these mercies. It is an ill thing when men grow rich and offer sacrifice to their own vanity—when men gather learning and only use it to debate against the simple teachings of God—when just as God blesses, men cease to bless Him!

2. Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty. A half heart is no heart at all. And when men seem to go after God, and at the same time to go after their idols, they are not going after God. Their religion is vain. The good side is but a pretense—the evil side is the real thing!

2. He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images. Let us take heed then, dear Friends, that we make nothing into an idol. The shortest way to lose the dearest object of your affections is to make an idol of him. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.” Sometimes this is done in great mercy to God’s people, for there is no greater evil than for a heart to be happy in idolatry. Sometimes it is done in judgment upon the ungodly. They will not have the true God, and the false god shall be false to them. “He shall break down their altars. He shall spoil their images.”

2. For now they shall say, We have no king because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us? Their king was slain, but if he had lived, what would be the good of him without God? What is the good of any temporal blessing if God is not in it? It is the husk with the kernel gone! And if we are able to enjoy the husk, it looks as if we were swine, and swine are being fattened for the slaughter! What is the use of anything that we possess if God is divorced from it? I put the question again. If you are a true child of God, all the corn and wine in the world cannot feed you. Your bread must come from Heaven.

4. They have spoken words. That which they spoke was not the truth. We cannot speak without words, but it is an evil thing when our speech is nothing but words. Words, words, words!—no heart, no truth! “They have spoken words.”

4. Swearing falsely in making a Covenant: thus judgment springs up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. God keep us from untruthfulness, and especially from a want of truth towards Himself. Do you not think that oftentimes, both in prayer and praise, it might be said, “They have spoken words—nothing more”? There has been a falsehood in the most solemn transaction towards God. Woe unto you, dear Friends, if that should turn out to be the case! You may cheat your fellow men if you have a heart for it, but you never will be able to cheat your God! He is not mocked. “They have spoken words,” He says.

5. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth Aven. Why, those calves are their trust. They rely upon those images of false gods—those images which they set up in the place of the true God. Pretending thereby to worship Him, they trusted in these—and now they shall become their fear. He who will have a confidence apart from God will find his confidence soured into a fear before long. Your greatest ground of distress will be that which was once the ground of your reliance apart from God!

5, 6. For the people thereof shall mourn over it. And the priests thereof that rejoiced in it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to King Jareb. The spiteful king.

6. Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. These golden calves excited the desires of the king of Assyria, and he took them away. These gods were baits to their enemies, instead of basis for their confidence. They were carried away captive of the people with them—their god, captive—their god melted down to make images, or to make money for the king of Assyria! Ah, what shame does God pour upon idolaters! And what shame He will pour upon us if we have any confidence except the unseen God and if we rely anywhere but upon the eternal Covenant of His Immutable Grace! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us try to flee away from that which is so tempting to sense— confidence in an arm of flesh—and let our sole and only trust be in Him who made the heavens and the earth, and in His Son, Jesus Christ!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1261 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 10.12

SOW TO YOURSELVES

NO. 1261

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.” Hosea 10:12.**

FARMERS are now devoting their attention to putting seed into the ground. They know right well that without sowing in the present they cannot expect a reaping in the future. Seedtime has many lessons. That which we shall learn this morning is very personal and practical. Our hearts are like a field and if we let them alone the only crop we shall get will be the natural weeds of the soil together with those tares which the evil spirit is quite sure to scatter whether we sow good seed or not. We are to sow beside all waters, but we must not neglect to sow to ourselves. There is need that we sow good seed in our own gardens, or else it will be of little use to us to have planted and watered others.

It is concerning this sowing of the home farm, this seeding of our own peculiar acre, that I shall now speak. May the Spirit of God bless the word. Before I launch into the subject, it may be well to observe that it does not apply to unrenewed hearts. It is in vain to sow unto yourselves till the soil has been prepared by our Father, who is the Farmer. Even Christ’s own seed of the Word, pure from His own hands, brings forth no fruit when it falls on unprepared hearts. His ministers are bound to scatter the seed in all places—on the hard rocks, on the highways and among thorns—but still no harvest ever comes till the soil is broken up and made receptive of the Truth of God by the Spirit of God.

Our text stands in the midst of a number of agricultural similes and it is preceded by that of plowing. “I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.” Without plowing what is the use of sowing? Some soils need plowing and cross plowing—they are so heavy by nature that in them the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and only by mighty ripping of the soil are they saved. Have you ever had a broken heart, dear Hearer? Did the Spirit of God ever drive the black horses of the Law across your heart with the sharp plow of condemnation, killing your false hopes, wounding your spirit and revealing your secret sins?

If you have not known something about this I cannot tell you to sow to yourself in righteousness! You are not prepared for that step—you must first be plowed. I pray the Divine Spirit to operate upon your heart to the breaking up of your fallow ground that you sow not among thorns. Let us, also, add another statement, lest we should be misunderstood. Even when we speak to the people of God and bid them, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness,” we, by no means forget that all true culture of the heart comes of the Spirit of God.

We exhort men as the Scriptures do, as active, intelligent beings. We exhort them as much as if there were no Holy Spirit, but we also pray to the Holy Spirit to make our exhortations, the efforts of His servants, effectual for the designed end. Without His Divine operations, neither the precept of our text, nor any other, will be obeyed. In this, as well as in every matter connected with the Gospel, Grace reigns! If the first sentence of the text might seem to breathe legality, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness,” yet the second clause of it most effectually evangelizes it, for it says, “Reap in mercy.”

Unless we reap eternal wrath we must reap in mercy. If anything comes of what we do—if our prayerful anxiety and earnest faith as to the condition of our heart shall be really productive of holiness—it will be the result of infinite mercy and the effect of the Spirit’s energy! Even the desire to be right before God arises from the operation of the Spirit of God! All the righteousness which is found in us comes by Divine power and is not of ourselves, but, like the whole of salvation, it is the gift of God! So, while I exhort, entreat and persuade, I am not forgetful of the Divine One without whose gracious working we can do nothing at all!

We will now draw near to the text. First, my Brothers and Sisters, we must not neglect seedtime and, secondly, we must not neglect harvest when it comes.

I. WE MUST NOT NEGLECT SEEDTIME. “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not cease.” Both are necessary and, therefore, God has decreed that time for both shall be given to men. All life is, in some respects, a sowing. All that we think, say, do, or leave undone is a sowing for the harvest of the Last Great Day. And if we sow to the flesh we shall of the flesh reap what always comes of the flesh, namely, corruption. But if we sow to the spirit we shall of the Spirit reap what is congruous to the spirit, namely, life everlasting! As a man sows, so shall he reap. It is not, however, upon that form of sowing and reaping that I am going to speak to you this morning.

As I have already told you, we shall deal with the inner life, for I think the connection shows that this is what was meant, for the Prophet is evidently dealing with the people, themselves, and their condition of heart before God. The outward sowing of righteous actions in the field of the world is, doubtless, very important, but none the less so is the secret sowing of the enclosed garden of the heart. Our subject will be just this—that after we have been plowed by conversion we need to take great care that our spiritual culture commences and is carried on.

The little spot enclosed by Grace out of the world’s wide wilderness now calls for our attention and claims the holy skill and industry necessary to spiritual farming. It must be sown with the good seed of the Word of God, even the precious Truths of Scripture, that from its soil there may be produced a harvest which shall be garnered with abounding joy and bring glory to God. The first thing after conversion to Christ is confession of Christ. And the next is instruction in Christ. I fear that too many professed converts leap over these hedges and endeavor to become teachers at once! Without joining themselves to the Church of Christ, or becoming disciples in His school, they rush to the front, endeavoring to teach before they have been taught—and if they are the least checked, they resent it as an interference and cast suspicion upon the zeal of their advisers.

They call themselves disciples and repudiate all discipline. They say they are soldiers of the Cross, but they can neither march in line nor keep step and neither will they submit themselves to order. They appear to think that the moment they are born, they are fathers! The instant they are enlisted they are officers! Now, conversion is the beginning of the spiritual life—not the climax of it! It makes a man a disciple and the main thing a disciple has to do is to learn. After he has learned, he will be able to teach others, also, but not till then. I have often said to you that nothing can come out of you that is not in you—and therefore if there is not something put into you to begin with, you may go out to war, but, as you have neither shot nor powder in your gun, the enemy will not be much injured by your valor.

We must be filled before we can run over! It is necessary for the Christian man to be prepared for holy service—in fact, what he does for God should be a harvest growing out of himself—because of a previous seedtime during which much precious seed was put into him. Let us take note upon this sowing and ask, first, what shall we sow? Here is our heart, a plowed field, ready to receive the seed. What shall we sow? I answer, see to it, my Brethren, that there is sown in you a real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let it be of the simplest and most childlike kind. Do not trouble yourselves with definitions which darken counsel or by words without knowledge.

Hold on to Christ as a babe clings to its mother with its arms around her neck. Trust Him, depend upon Him, rest in Him and in Him, alone. Mind that your faith is real reliance on Jesus, for I meet with some who think that faith is to believe that you are saved, but if, indeed, you are not saved, such faith will be a lie and you will entangle yourselves in the net of false confidence. Others think that faith is to believe that Christ died for them, when at the same time they think that He died for everybody, so, of course He died for them! Surely there can be no particular virtue or power in believing what is a self-evident inference!

Many believe that Christ died for them and yet they are not saved. To believe savingly is to trust Christ—see that you have this trust sown in you. You ought to know why you trust Him and what He did for you, and in what relationship He stands towards you and God. You should be able, not merely to sing about His blood, but to know the doctrine of Atonement—to grasp the blessed fact of His Substitution—and know the reconciliation thereby effected. To know whom you have believed should be one of the chief objectives of your life! I am afraid that some who profess to have been converted do not even know the A B C of the Gospel, namely, what is the faith of God’s elect and on what does it rest? Take heed to yourselves that you are not ignorant here, but let your heart be well sown with simple reliance upon the eternal Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.  
Sow to yourselves and see that in your soul there is repentance of sin.

Do not fall under the notion that the necessity for repentance is over. I have heard it said that repentance is “merely a change of mind.” I wish that those who so speak had undergone that change! It is a sad sign of a faulty ministry when men can depreciate that precious Grace of God! Mark you, no sinner will enter into Heaven who has not repented of his sins. No promise can be found in the Inspired Pages of eternal life to men who live and die without repentance! It is an old-fashioned virtue, I know, but it is in fashion with the angels who rejoice over sinners who possess it!

Know, my dear young Friends, that sin is an evil and a bitter thing— and the language to be used about it is such as David employed in the 51st Psalm. Pray to God to convince you of your guilt and ask Him to enable you to flee from every false way. Seek Grace to detect sin and as soon as ever you discern its presence, to fly from it as you would from a deadly serpent! May there be worked in you an inward abhorrence of sin and a loathing of yourself because of your tendency to transgress. “You that love the Lord hate evil.” “Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” May you also have a full conviction that in you, that is, in your flesh, there dwells no good thing—that your nature is empty, void and waste, like the chaos of old—except as the blessed Spirit shall brood over you and the everlasting God shall create you new.

There needs to be in your soul a deep sense of its rein or you will not prize redemption, or much of the godly sorrow of repentance, or you will not know the ecstasy of forgiveness. O for a plentiful sowing in tears, that we may reap in joy! Labor, also, to have sown in you a clear knowledge of the Gospel. Do not be satisfied to see men as trees walking, but ask for the eyes cleansed, even, of the smallest mote. Be thankful if you have only a little sight, but let your gratitude lead you to pray for the removal of every scale. If you are really to bring forth a harvest of wheat without tares, you must distinguish between things that defer, for a man’s belief affects his life more than some imagine.

You ought to know the plan of redemption, the system upon which God grants salvation. It will be a great advantage for you to understand the two Covenants and to see, plainly, the distinction between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. He who is clear upon that matter has grasped the marrow of theology and possesses the clue to the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ. I would have you know the Doctrines of Grace and understand them—and be able to defend them with Scriptural arguments whenever they are assailed. Young people, I pray you, be willing to learn! Learn before you teach!

Do not go blundering out to tell the tale of mercy before you have considered it and in some measure understood its grand points. God forbid that I should dampen your zeal, but I implore you to put a little knowledge with it, or else the best of causes will suffer at your hands. Become apt to teach by being first apt in learning. Grow in Grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior. Fill your basket with bread from His hands or you will never feed the multitude. I would have you well equipped for battle with the adversaries of the faith, or, at any rate, able to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Do not even be satisfied with clear knowledge. Ask for living principles growing out of this knowledge. The religion of passion is flimsy. The religion of principle will endure wear and tear. Heat and excitement too often engender a mushroom life which dies as readily as it is produced. We want you to know the Truth of God so as to feel its power till it dominates your entire nature, sways the scepter of your soul and becomes a resident monarch within you! Then will you be able to stand alone and you will not need a crowd about you, or a flaming orator to hold you in your place— you will know whom you have believed and be persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him.

Oh, if our young friends and old friends, too, were well sown in this fashion, so that the Truths they profess to believe had a living foothold in their souls by the Holy Spirit, what Churches we should have and what little injury would the Pope and the infidel be able to do to us! A man may hold a religion—he may hold 50 religions and have a new one every week and be none the better—it is the religion which holds the man which will save him! Your Bibles printed on paper are a blessing, but to have the Scriptures written on the heart is far better! We need not so much the doctrine which has been driven into the brain by argument, but the Truths of God worked into the soul by experience through the teaching of the blessed Spirit! Would to God that living principles were thus sown in all hearts!

The great point is that whatever is sown in us should be sown in righteousness, that is to say, that it is really sown and that honest seed is taken into our hearts. If you sow in error, however sincerely you sow, it will produce bad results upon your intellect. “Sow to yourselves in righteousness.” Do not take handfuls of seed out of your grandfather’s basket simply because he put it there—study to see whether it is God’s Seed. Do not snatch haphazard at what is in the creed, or the articles of your Church—go to the winnowed corn of Scripture—sow that and that only. And though we, or an angel from Heaven, should teach you anything contrary to the Infallible Word of God, refuse such seed a place in your hearts.

Pray God to forgive the preacher his mistakes, but do not follow him. Pray to “sow to yourselves in righteousness.” Receive the Truth of God and only the Truth of God and beseech the Lord to give you an honest grip of that Truth—for there is such a thing as “holding the Truth in unrighteousness.” It is very easy to be untrue to the Truth of God. Truth held by a bad man is as a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout. The fair lily of Truth should be held in a clean hand. Nor is this all. Let us ask the Lord to rid us of the mere pretence and mimicry of faith. Away, forever, with a sham faith! Never talk fictitious experience. Do not borrow bits from this man and bits from that and retail them as your own—this is unrighteous!

Pretence in religion is a sort of blasphemy. May all our religion be such as will stand the test of the Day of Judgement. I charge you, make sure work in this matter. If, indeed, the Lord has plowed your heart, the field belongs to Him. Therefore obey His Word and remember how He forbids

His people to sow with mingled seed. Let all that which is sown in you be true, honest, gracious, loving, Godlike and Divine, so when the harvest comes you shall not lose what you have worked. God help you thus to sow!

The second inquiry is, How shall we sow it? The answer is, Sow in the Lord’s appointed manner. The means of Grace are ordained of God to help us in sowing, watering, weeding and fostering the good seed. Let us, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, sow the heart, first, by diligently studying the Word of God. Every Believer ought to be a student in Christ’s College. We who preach the Gospel are to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Now, a disciple is a learner. Are all the people who professed to have been converted during the late special services learners? I should like to know, for one, where they are. I have anxiously asked several of my Brothers, the pastors of the neighboring Churches, and they do not know.

I should like to discover the Churches which have received these new converts, for wherever I inquire, I hear of one or two, but scarcely any more—and up to this moment my earnest inquiries have brought me nothing but bitter disappointment. If these thousands were made disciples, how is it that they do not come under discipline? They professed to be converted, how is it that they have not united themselves with our Churches? Do they need no instruction, or are none of us fit to edify them? Conversion should be the commencement of discipleship, but where are the disciples? Some months have now passed and with deepest sorrow I inquire with what Churches are they associated. Where are they learning the way of God more perfectly? I should rejoice to know.

My young Brothers and Sisters, lately brought to Jesus, search the Scriptures through and through! Be not satisfied with simply knowing the way of salvation—ask to know all that God has revealed—for there is nothing unnecessary in the Bible! There is not a leaf that we could afford to tear out and throw into the fire and say, “It is a superfluity.” It is all to be studied and we must give ourselves to the study of it by reading it, by hearing it and by bowing ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit, that He may lead us into all the Truth of God! How shall we sow? Why, by an inward reception of the Truth into the soul! I cannot tell you how the branch takes in the sap, but I know it does take it in. And you must receive God’s Truth into your hearts as living sap to your souls—it is the living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever.

I want you not only to know the Truth of God in theory, but to receive it in its inward power into your very souls as babes receive milk that you may feed thereon and grow. Only by such feeding can you come to the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. You can, also, thus, “sow to yourselves in righteousness” by much prayer, much praise, and much of every form of communion with Jesus Christ. O Brothers and Sisters, if you are to do exploits, you must be strong, and you cannot be strong except in the Lord and in the power of His might. O Brethren, if you are to be holy, you must commune with the Holy One and get a glow upon your countenance reflected from the face of your Lord! In His light, only, can you shine as lights in the world.

To say you are converted is nothing! We desire your sanctification, your growing likeness to the Lord! I do not know whether I make my meaning fully apparent, but I mean this, that we must by all means that God has put into our power make our hearts to be a well-stored seed plot in which there shall grow for God all manner of precious fruits, which afterwards we shall reap and use to His Glory. You are trying to sow others, some of you, have you sown yourselves with that Seed which yields seed to the sower and bread to the eater? Look to yourselves, for if you leave home plowing unheeded you may have to complain with the spouse, “They made me a keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept.”

I am certain that if we want to spread religion we must begin by securing the improvement of those who are already Christians. Until the army of the Lord shall be stronger and every man shall have more of the force of Divine Life, we cannot expect to see the nations conquered by the Church of God. Look well to this matter and see to it that you use the means of God’s ordaining, that by the power of the Spirit you may sow to yourselves.

Thirdly, When shall we sow to ourselves? What is the proper sowing time? I answer, specially at the time of conversion and immediately after your new birth. Very much depends upon the soil being well sown when it is newly plowed. Then the heart is tender. Then the soul is in the formative stage—like clay on the potter’s wheel, or like wax that has just been melted—it is, then, ready to receive the right impression and form. When Paul was converted he went into Arabia, for a time, and these months were, I have no doubt, the most profitable that Paul ever spent, for there he communed with God and his mind was impregnated with the Truths of God.

Perhaps he had never been so great an Apostle during the rest of his life if it had not been for that little tarrying in Arabia. The disciples, after the Resurrection of our Lord, were to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high. O you Christian people, see to it that you give your first thoughts, after your conversion, to being edified and built up in your most holy faith! It will be the most practically useful endeavor to others, in the long run, if, like your Lord, you take time to do your Father’s business in the quiet of Nazareth’s contemplation than in bearing unripe fruit.

But, Brethren, it is not immediately after conversion, alone, I take it, that every Christian should sow unto himself in righteousness. We must be always sowing and if we do not, we shall not be always reaping. Ask the best instructed Christian and he will tell you that he knows more of his own folly than he ever did and is more willing to be a learner, now, than when he first entered into the school of Christ. Lord, teach us! Teach us every day! Even to gray hairs, still instruct us, that we may have the power to instruct others!

There should be a special sowing, it seems to me, whenever we desire a special harvest. Notice our blessed Lord—whenever He was about to do some special action, such as sending out the 12, we always read that He

retired to pray. Praying was His habit, but there were peculiar seasons when He had more of it than usual—that more power might go out from Him. Whenever you are about to be, as you hope, a great soul-winner, wait on the Lord more abundantly concerning it. If you are about to pass through an extreme trial and need great strength to yield a greater harvest of patience, have a greater sowing of Grace by drawing nearer to God. Our Grace should always be at the flood tide—but even then some flood tides are higher than others and we may pray the Lord to give us a spring tide flood when extraordinary Grace is required.

Again, I say, look well to yourselves, lest you lose that which you have worked. Seeing there remains a rest for the people of God, let none of us even seem to come short of it. With all your ability, get understanding. With all your doings see to it that your inner man is not neglected, that you walk before the Lord in secret and are not negligent in soul communion with Him. See that you walk circumspectly, that you grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should be always sowing, for we have to be, in practical holiness, ever reaping.

In the next place, why do so many omit to sow? It may be, first, because they are lifted up with the notion that they do not require sowing. How idle is their conceit! Here is a piece of land that has just been enclosed from the devil’s common, and it has, for years, produced only briars and thorns. It needs sowing! Is there good seed in it by nature hidden among the clods? Impossible! Do you believe that because it has been plowed it may now be left alone and a harvest will come spontaneously? You know better! The novice is not to be set up as a teacher—he should sit down as a scholar. He may tell what he knows—so far he has been sown and so far he may produce a harvest—but how can he tell what he does not know, and how shall he communicate to others what has never been communicated to himself?

We do not pick up religious knowledge and maturity by instinct. We are bound to search out the meaning of the Word of God and yield ourselves to the illumination of the Divine Spirit. We must prove our conversion to be true by being teachable as little children. We are not to rush naked to the fight, but to seek full equipment—and that we have not in ourselves— helmet and shield and sword are to be sought for in the armory of God. Some do not like the sowing because it is very quiet work. A young man spends an hour searching into the Truth of God for a certain doctrine. Well, that will never be put into the newspapers, or written in the reports of a society and nobody will extol him for it—hence he is apt to despise such exercises.

He goes hour after hour to the Lord Jesus and begs to be instructed in the deep things of God—nobody will sound a trumpet about that! No, nor do they sound trumpets when they sow fields—the shouting is left till they bring in the sheaves! But the sowing must be done though nobody shouts over it and you must search the Word and get your souls well sown, none the less, but all the more, because it does not bring you applause. Sometimes it is even suggested that to cultivate the heart by quiet study is a waste of time. The sower in sowing does not see any immediate results! Rather, as he scatters his handfuls, he perceives a void in his basket and there is so much less corn in the granary. There are no results, except his weariness, as he toils over the furrows—yet he is a wise man.

Yes, and you, dear Friend, must not be snatching at results too soon. I and glad that you are wanting to win souls! May that passion be increased in you, but more glad, still, shall I be if you combine with that passion, the prudent thought that you must ask His blessed Spirit to make you a vessel fit to be used! If you have been trying to produce a harvest for God without any preparatory sowing, you have only to take counsel of common sense and learn your error. You must be conscious that in some points you will not succeed. You will be staggered by infidel objections. You will often be completely nonplussed when tallying with inquirers because you will not know how to meet the questions put to you. Sometimes you will blunder over a text and will not be able to make heads or tails of it.

Well, come to school a little while before you go out as a teacher! Come and be plowed and sowed a little before thinking about the harvest home! Sowing, besides, is often very sorrowful work. We read of some who sow in tears. To learn costs humiliation, weariness, trouble and crying because of the task. I have cried my way into many a Truth of God. I believe there is many a portion in God’s Word whose meaning will never reach you except you will work your passage, as some poor men do when they want to go to America. You cannot open these sealed treasure houses without hard thought, long toil, much prayer, much conquering of prejudice and yielding up of the soul to the Holy Spirit.

This is a kind of labor which always pays well and when it is over, your other work for God will be much lightened. After the sowing is over the farmer rests and the seed springs up both by night and by day. He knows not how but by thorough seeding of the soul with the Truth of God, studied and understood, there comes forth a future crop with wonderful ease and spontaneous growth. Lazy people generally take the most pains in the long run but it is a saving of time and effort to store the mind and heart thoroughly at the very first.

The shoeing of the horse and the buckling on of the harness with care will save time in the journey. Supplying a ship before it sails is a part of the means by which a safe and speedy voyage is procured. Your peace and strength in later years wild amply repay you for care and effort now. Sow in the present that you may reap in the future! Last of all, on this point, why should we sow? We should sow unto ourselves and cultivate our hearts very carefully because our lives must, after all, as to their results, depend upon this sowing. If a man sows scantily—if he learns little, if he receives little of the Spirit of Christ into him—his life must be feeble and barren. How can there be a rich harvest from a scanty sowing?

Little cast into the soil ends in little coming out of it. If a man sows in a patchy way, attending only to a few selected Truths and Graces, as some do, there will be a patchy character as the result. Some Brothers and Sisters have been thoroughly sown as to one furrow and there is a first-rate crop in that place. But then they neglect other portions—they do not strive before God to obtain all Grace or to know all Truth—and as a consequence their life is faulty in many points. Complete experience and watchfulness of every point are necessary to the formation of a complete character. Beware of a half obedience in the heart, or a semiillumination of the mind, for these will create an inconsistent character—a garden here and a desert there.

Be cautious, also, not to sow with mingled seed, for this was forbidden of old and if you do it there will be a bit of wheat in one place and a bit of tares in another—and you will be trying to serve God and mammon. Too many professors are as pleased with the tares as with the wheat! They scarcely know one from the other! As the Eastern plant called in our version, a tare, is very like the wheat, so there are counterfeits of the virtues and these deceive many. If we sow only with the good Seed of the Truth of God, we shall realize a holy, influential, acceptable character—but mingled seed will produce fickleness, inconsistency, poverty of character and we shall bring no glory to the great Farmer. I am certain I am right in enforcing this point upon all the children of God with great earnestness.

Brothers and Sisters, do you believe that people would be carried away with Ritualism, which has now grown to be undisguised Popery, had they been fully instructed in the doctrines of our Protestant faith? I do not believe it would have been possible! At the present moment the wolves leap into our Churches and they find easy prey where the people are least instructed and established in the Gospel. The people that know nothing for themselves—nothing by heart knowledge—are readily deceived. But where there is a clear understanding and a fervent love for the Gospel. Where there is a spiritual growth and an abundant communion with God arising out of inward vital principles, men are not carried away by every wind of doctrine. They are not deceived by the sleight of man and his cunning craftiness—they stand fast, rooted and grounded in Christ!

In conclusion, this steadfastness is a part of the harvest of which I have now to speak.  
II. WE MUST NOT NEGLECT THE HARVEST. If a man with constant watchfulness, holy fear, devout prayer and simple faith in Jesus seeks to cultivate his own heart, he may expect fruit to come of it, both towards himself and his God. Towards himself one fruit will be stability, as I have already said. The man will be able to say, “O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise.” He is not to be decoyed by the boasts of the finders of new truth, nor by the contemptuous sneers of modern thinkers who deride the good old way, nor by those mighty discoverers who have found out that there is no truth at all! Experienced Believers know and are persuaded and have firm moorings.  
Oh, be well sown, for then you will be stable and out of that stability will come solid comfort! Half the fears of Christian people rise like mists from the marshes of their ignorance. If we knew the promises better, knew the Gospel better, knew God better and knew Christ better, we should not have a tenth as many fears. Remember that as the soul is penetrated with the spirit of the Gospel, it will be filled with peace and consolation— *“’Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasures while we live,  
’Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.”*  
Those sweet pleasures and solid comforts are the harvest which those reap who look well to the good sowing of their souls. Those whose hearts are sown by Grace possess joys utterly unknown to other professors. What rapture and delight are frequently bestowed on those who have drawn near to God and had their souls full of Him! “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance.” When others starve they shall feed, and when others faint they shall renew their strength because their souls have learned to stay themselves on God, alone.  
One blessed fruit of this sowing is boldness in the Lord’s service. The men that know their God shall be strong and do great exploits. He who fears God much fears not men. He has been living near to God and cares no more for the opinions of men than for the howling of the wind over the moor. With this courage comes patience under suffering—the man who is full of Grace is able to bear the Lord’s will whatever it may be. This is a blessed fruit of the Spirit! You who think resignation a light thing may yet live to prize it. These are a few of the fruits which grow in a soul wellseeded by Grace.  
Now notice the text says that though we sow in righteousness we must reap in mercy. If any fruit, Beloved, ever comes out of your earnest prayerfulness and watchfulness, it will be God’s Mercy that gives it to you, for do what you will, anything that is God-like and holy must be planted, nourished and supported by Divine power—and nothing short of it! If you have shown any holy courage or gracious patience, or sacred stability, or hallowed experience, or spiritual joy, or heavenly rapture, or true holiness, it is God’s Mercy that has enabled you to reap this precious fruit!  
God bids you sow—it is your duty to do so and to be jealous over your own spirit—but to reap to the Glory of God is entirely the gift of His Grace, from first to last and we must cheerfully admit that it is so. The text most pointedly bids us reap. “Reap in mercy.” There is fruit upon you if you have sown aright in the power of the Spirit of God—therefore reap it! That is to say, when the season comes, be ready with the outward fruits of your inward Grace. Let patience be ready in growth and perseverance in the day of labor. As you bring forth these things, bless the Lord for them. Do not be exalted by them, for you are to reap in mercy—if you were to reap in any other way, you might be exalted—be humble, for it is God’s Mercy that gives you the Graces which flourish in your soul.  
Take care to bless God for every good and perfect gift. And whatever comes out of your inner life, reap it so as to lay it out for the good of others in order that God may be glorified! If there is in you any zeal, courage, patience and what not, as the result of the inner culture, then come forward and spend it for your Redeemer’s praise! Remember you have nothing which you have not received—and having received it, you are bound in gratitude to expend it for Him who gave it to you.  
But closing, let us see to it, I say, dear Brothers and Sisters, that all of us are keeping our hearts with all diligence before the Lord. It is the Spirit’s work! We have admitted this, over and over again, but the Spirit of God awakens us to activity and does not lull us into a passive condition, for He would have us careful that these things be in us and abound, that we are not barren nor unfruitful. He would have us see that we come not short in any good thing, but that we abound in all knowledge, all love and all patience to His Glory, that thus our life may show that we have, indeed, come under the fostering husbandry of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
I would to God we were as a Church lifted up to a higher platform altogether, the whole of us, by one blessed lift from the Divine Spirit! And then I would to God that out of us there might be chosen more ministers of Christ, more mighty soul-winners, more missionaries among the heathen and more of every order of soldiers for Christ! When our Master needs workmen, He does not take those who are sick. If you had to lay a railway you would not go to Brompton Hospital and pick out all the patients with consumption and give them a pickaxe or a spade to try and throw up embankments or dig cuttings. No, but you would select the strong men, the men of brawny arms, the men of muscle who know how to wield crowbar and spade.  
And so will God do in His Church. We must be strong in Grace, strong in secret, strong in private prayer, strong in fellowship with God, strong in vital principle within us and after that the Lord will let us loose as a Church upon His foes, like a tornado sweeping everything before us! We cannot bring out of ourselves what is not in us! We must go to God to be filled or we cannot run! Lamps may shine, but they must be trimmed with oil, or else they will smell amiss and cease to shine—we must have food, or we cannot keep up our stamina—we must live upon Christ! We must be nurtured with His very heart’s blood, or else the life in us will only be a life of pain and panting—not a life of triumph and of realization! See to this and may God bless you therein.  
As for you who are not plowed, I beseech you, remember that you can bring forth no fruit to God. Be ashamed at your barrenness and cry mightily unto Him that He would deal graciously with you and bring you to Jesus! For now you are near unto cursing, and before long, unless Divine Grace prevents, your end will be to be burned. May God save you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 4.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—719; 119 (VER. II), 4-6; 39. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #1563 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE DUTY OF THE PRESENT HOUR NO. 1563

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

**“Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness upon you.”  
Hosea 10:12.**

“BREAK up your fallow ground.” Nature at its largest is but a small farm and we had need to get a harvest out of every acre of it, for our needs are great. Have we left any part of our small allotment uncultivated? If so, it is time to look into the matter and see if we cannot improve this wasteful state of things. What part of our small allotment have we left fallow? We should think very poorly of a farmer who, for many years, allowed the best and the richest part of his farm to lie altogether neglected and untilled. An occasional fallow has its benefits in the world of Nature, but if the proprietor of rich and fruitful land allowed the soil to continue fallow year after year, we would judge him to be out of his wits! The wasted acres ought to be taken from him and given to another farmer who would worthily cherish the generous fields and encourage them to yield their harvests. Bad is the man who neglects to cultivate his farm, but what shall be said of the sluggard who fails to cultivate himself? If it is wrong to leave untended a part of our estate, how much worse must it be to disregard a portion of ourselves!

Now, there is a part of our nature which many allow to lie fallow. It is not often that they neglect the clay soil of their outward frame. They dress that field, which is called the body, with sufficient care and, truly, I would not that they should be careless about it, for it is worthy to be kept in due order and culture. Albeit that it is a very secondary part of our nature, yet it is so interwoven with the higher that it is most important that the body should not be neglected. See you well to that field and, by temperance, cleanliness and obedience to the rules of health, let it be as a garden. Though it is, after all, but dust and ashes, akin to the common earth around us, yet the body is honorable and when Divine Grace has sanctified the soul the body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Few need to be exhorted to pay attention to their bodies. “What shall we eat? What shall we drink and how shall we be clothed?” is a trinity of questions which the majority of mankind spend all their lives in answering. The fault is not that they care for the body, but that it takes an undue share of consideration and usurps a higher place than it can claim. There is a second field in man’s self-farm and this is called the mind, or the soul, and there are many who neglect this. These do ill, for, “that the soul is without knowledge, it is not good.” There should be, for the mental powers, instruction and discipline. We should seek to know and learn to understand, for we are not as the brutes which perish, which know nothing beyond their daily needs. We have thought and judgment and memory and imagination—these all need to be trained and used.

Let the mind be cultivated, by all means, and yet I need not say much upon this, for “culture” has become a kind of watchword with certain professors of religion and with supposed knowledge they are puffed up. They have enough thought for the mind and they glory in the harvests which it yields of human knowledge and earthly learning. The soul, in such cases, seems to be well tilled, but the spirit, the highest nature of all—that with which we speak to God—is suffered to lie entirely fallow! The soil where true religion should flourish in the furrows is left, by many, to produce the deadly nightshade of superstition, the hemlock of error, or the thistle of doubt!

Is it not so with some of you who listen to me at this hour? Your hearts, your innermost natures, have been neglected and from the finest part of your being the Lord has derived neither rent nor revenue! Your best acres lie fallow—fallow when you have good need to cultivate every inch of the ground. Do you know what happens to a fallow field? Do you know how it becomes caked and baked hard as though it were a brick? All the pliable qualities seem to depart and it hardens as it lies caked and unbroken—I mean, of course, if year follows year and the fallow remains untouched. And then the weeds! If a man will not sow wheat, he shall have a crop, you can be sure of that, for the weeds will spring up and they will seed themselves and, in due time, the multiplication table will be worked out to a very wonderful extent!

These seeds, multiplying a hundred-fold, as evil usually does, will increase and increase and increase, again, till the fallow field shall become a wilderness of thorns and briars and a thicket of weeds, nettle and thistle. If you do not cultivate your heart, Satan will cultivate it for you! If you bring no crop to God, the devil will be sure to reap a harvest! I fear that I am speaking to some who have never thought about this. It has not occurred to them to consider themselves and the reasons for which they have a being. There is one text which I should like to drop into your ear in the hope that it may drop down through your ear right into your heart, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell.” “Oh,” you say, “that is not me.” No, I did not mean that for you—I have not finished the verse yet. This is the part for you—“and all the nations that forget God.”

There are nations of them, so numerous are careless souls! What did they do? They did not do anything—they merely fell into a little matter of neglect, that is all. They forgot something—they forgot God! If I had to tell you how we are to be saved, I might take some time about it. But if you ask me how you are to be lost, I will tell you in a minute. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?” Neglect destroys men! Only sit still and allow matters to take their course and your damnation is sure! If you wish to be ruined in your spiritual farming, you need not sow thorns—you have only to leave your soul fallow and you will starve when the great harvest comes!

Fallow ground in human nature naturally and of itself will work famine and bankruptcy for every man who lets it have its own way. So my text begins right well by saying, “Break up your fallow ground.” Begin to look to what you have neglected! Take a survey of what has come already of your neglect! Contemplate what results will surely come of continued carelessness. God helping you, go into that field which is up to your knees with weeds and look around it and say, “This must be cleared out. This must be got ready for plowing. We cannot have this sad waste any longer. We have not gone through this gate before. We have scarcely looked over the hedge. We have left the field entirely to itself and everything cries out against our neglect.

“Now, by God’s Grace, we will enter into it and will clear all the rubbish away and pray the eternal God to bring the great steam plow of His almighty Grace and tear up the soil to the very bottom and then to burn these weeds and make this ground fit to be sown that it may bring forth a harvest to His praise.” Leaving that first part of the text, I am going to dwell upon the second—“It is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness upon you.”

I. First, here is A TIME MENTIONED. When is it time to seek the Lord? I am not going to try to say anything fine, but something that will come home to each unconverted person. May the Holy Spirit help me in this attempt and bless it to your souls. When is it time to seek the Lord? Well, it is time as soon as ever you know right from wrong. Oh, it will be a thousand blessings to you, dear boys and girls, wherever you may be at this moment and to you young people that are listening to me, if you are led to seek the Lord while you are yet little! While you are yet children may you become children of God!

Before you are permitted to go into open sin, may your hearts be opened to Divine Grace. Some of us who were converted while we were children will praise God forever, not only for our conversion, but for our early conversion. I have often prayed, with much sweetness to my own soul, that prayer of David, “O Lord, You have taught me from my youth and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works.” I look forward, hopefully, to the time when I shall add, “Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.” If you have had a man in your employ ever since he was a boy, you do not like to turn him away when he grows old—and our Lord never turns His old servants away. It is a surely prevalent plea with him, “You are my hope, O Lord God: You are my trust from my youth.”

It is time to seek the Lord as soon as we can seek anything, for to such seekers there is the special promise, “They that seek Me early shall find Me.” I found the Lord and joined His Church when I was 15 years old and I feel it no small joy to say with Obadiah, “I, Your servant, fear the Lord from my youth.” Early piety saves from much sin and sorrow and is often followed by a blessed and useful life. My heart rejoices that He, who was, Himself, “the Holy Child Jesus,” suffers the little children to come unto Him! Blessed be the name of the Lord for young people brought to Christ! May it please the Lord to touch each young heart here, at this time, with this thought, “It is time for me to seek the Lord.” Come, you lads and lasses, you boys and girls, and learn of Jesus while yet your life is in its sweetest hours!

But it is especially time to seek the Lord when it is late in the day of life and the shades of the eternal night are gathering. If it is time when first the morning breaks, how much more solemnly is it time when the shadows lengthen! You cannot live long, dear Friend, for age, I see, is taking its toll upon your once stalwart form. In the order of Nature you must soon be gone. You know that you have passed your threescore and ten, perhaps your fourscore years and you are living, now, upon the special charity of God. You have run out your lease and are now a daily tenant. Surely it is time for you to seek the Lord! You may be gone to the Judgment and the irreversible sentence before another Sabbath comes round—

*“It may be no tomorrow  
Shall dawn for you or me.  
Why will you run the awful risk  
Of all eternity?”*

Take heed to yourselves that you do not trifle on the verge of eternity. With one foot in the grave, oh, seek to have both feet on the Rock of Ages! Then you need not fear old age and its infirmities, or its closing hours. Jesus will cheer and comfort you and your eventide shall only be the prelude of a blessed morning—a morning without clouds.

Dear Friend, it must be time to seek the Lord when death already seeks you and infirmity tells upon you. When they that look out of the windows begin to be darkened, it is time to look up to Heaven! When the keepers of the house tremble, it is time to find a home in Jesus. When our grave is ready for us, it is time to be ready for judgment. When there are evident signs of an approaching end, it is time that you should end your ramblings and seek the Lord! What a mercy it is that the very wording of the text gives us encouragement! “It is time to seek the Lord”—then there is still time in which to seek the Lord! Then it is not over with me, even if I have long delayed. I may still come to Him!

Yes, when you are nothing but a bag of bones with a crown of gray hair, Christ will have you! When you can only totter on your staff, you may come to Jesus and if you have grown so infirm that even your memory begins to fail you and all your senses seem to be departing, yet He can give you a child’s eyes—the eyes of faith! And He can give you a child’s heart— the heart of love! And He can make you a new man in Christ Jesus! I see a good many here who are aged and I know many of them are my fathers in Christ—I speak not to them. But I see some who are, perhaps, even though in advanced age, “in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” Oh dear old Friends, it is surely time that you should seek the Lord! You cannot dispute my plea. Yield to it at once and seek the Lord before yet another gray hair falls to the ground!

There are special occasions in which a Divine call is made to men. If you remember, we read, just now, the Word of the Lord in which He says, “It is in My desire that I should chastise them,” and this is said in connection with the words of our text, “It is time to seek the Lord.” Now, have any of you been under the chastising hand of God of late? Have you been sick? Do you come up to this house after a time of illness? Well, it is a choice mercy to be afflicted! Take care that you do not despise it. The Lord has not given you up, it seems, for He still thinks it worth His while to put bit and bridle upon you! Waste not the opportunity which recovered health brings you, but hearken to the Divine call! He smites you that you may run to Him to have the wound bound up!

Or is it, dear Friends, that you have lately lost some of those who were dear to you? Are they in Heaven? Are you not going there, yourself? Then, God calls you by that baby that has been removed, by that godly mother or that Christian friend who has gone Home. He calls you and He says, “It is time to seek the Lord.” Or have you been losing property? Is trade very bad? Have you been out of work and are you brought to poverty? Will not these whips touch you and drive you to seek the Lord? I sometimes think that I have good reason for trusting God because I have nothing else to trust in! And beyond a question you might use the same reasoning. Go to God, for everything else is going away from you! You will soon have nothing left. O man, be sure of your God! When a Christian is in abundance, he finds God in everything and when a Christian is in poverty, then he finds everything in God.

But you cannot do that! You cannot do that, for God is nothing to you! And where will you be when all is gone and you have no God? When everything departs from you as “a dream when one awakes” and you wake up to find that you are “without God and without hope in the world”? Think upon this, I beseech you, and let it be a call from Heaven to you. “Hear the rod and Him that has appointed it” and, as the strokes fall upon you and you smart beneath them, think that you hear each stripe say to you, “It is time to seek the Lord!” It will be wise for us to add and for you to remember that it is time to seek the Lord before the chastisement comes. Is it not a wise thing to escape, if we can, from these judgments, for though kindly meant, would it not be better if we did not render them necessary?

Soul, do you want to be whipped to Christ? If God means to save you, He will bring you by fire and He will bring you through water! Yes, He will break all your bones in the bringing, but bring you, He will! Why necessitate the rougher means? “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose month must be held in with bit and bridle.” Why do you need to be goaded like an ox, or driven with blows like the stubborn mule? Yield at once! Yield to softer pressure! Be overcome gently, sweetly, by His love. Yield yourself to seek the Lord and begin to do so under milder influences than what I trust you will be made to do by some means or other. Do you not know what the Lord says concerning His people? “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.”

The deed can be done without much ado! As yet you have not lost your children. Your trade is not bad. You are not in ill health. You have every mercy surrounding you—then let these cords of love draw you. Yield while God is beckoning in mercy and speaking as a lover who woos the object of His choice! Come along with you, just as a little child does when a nurse holds out an apple, or when a mother puts out her hands and with a smiling face says, “Come to me, my child.” Hear the still small voice telling you that in the midst of your prosperity and domestic happiness, it is time to seek the Lord! Oh, if you shall have this silver blessing of earthly felicity and the golden blessing of eternal love on top of it, how rich you will be! All that you have, indeed, to this time, may be compared to so many ciphers set in a row. You have seen a child make them on a slate. They all come to nothing! But if your God comes and puts His glorious unity in front of them, oh, what riches you will have! Get your God, the sacred Integer, to add real weight and value to all you have! It is but nothing until He comes there. “It is time to seek the Lord.”

Let me argue with any that have been living a life of sin and have never come to Christ. Have you not had enough of it? May not the time past suffice you? When will you have eaten enough unsavory meat? What profit have you in it? What comfort has it brought you? What peace has it worked? Can you live on the profit of it? Could you die with sin about you and hope that it would make your pillow soft? You know that “the wages of sin is death” and, for my part, I judge the work of sin to be little better than the wages of sin. Do you not think so? And do you not think that you have long enough run risks with your soul and more than sufficiently played an awful game of hazard with immortality and Heaven and Hell? O Sirs, have you not had enough of the unprofitable works of darkness and have you not grieved the Spirit long enough? Have you not vexed the heart of Christ long enough? He has been knocking, knocking, knocking, knocking, till His head is wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night. Must He tarry still longer?

Oh, if He means to save you according to His everlasting purpose, He will come into your heart’s bedchamber if He waits till cock-crowing! But do not, I pray you, treat contemptuously your loving, tender, patient Lord! Can you make Him wait, even, for another moment? Surely, by the memories of His long-enduring love, it is time that you should seek His face! Here are some sweet words which I would gladly put into your mouths—

*“He has called, I cannot tarry,  
I have heard His voice before.  
I will leave these deadly slumbers,  
And set open wide the door.  
In the north blast He rebuked me,  
And I knew the message well.  
In the south wind now He whispers,  
And no longer I’ll rebel.  
Even now again I hear Him,  
Come, my Lord and enter in,  
How can I resist Your knocking?  
Come and cover all my sin.”*

There are certain occasions in our lives upon which there seems to be a special mark set—a sort of note bank—to make us note well that just now is a happy occasion. Tides to be taken at the flood happen in men’s lives and it is well if they are turned to profitable use.

I think, dear Friends, that it is time to seek the Lord very hopefully when you are in a place where others have sought Him and found Him! Your being in this House of Prayer is a token for good. I can bear personal witness that there is hardly a seat in this Tabernacle on which, at some time or other, there has not sat a seeking sinner who has found the Savior! If we marked these seats with golden stars, where souls were saved, you would see here many footprints of Grace—holy places which angels look on with delight! You are found in a place where God is known to do works of Grace—it is a place whose name might be called, “Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there.” In this place the Lord has brought thousands, many thousands, to the feet of Jesus!

And why not you? Why not you? The same Gospel is being preached to you and by the same voice, too, which God has made effectual to others and with the same desire that it should be made effectual to you. The preacher can truly say that it is a desire which grows on him and absorbs the whole strength of his soul—the desire that you should be saved. “If by any means I might save some.” The place is hopeful—it is a very Bethesda, a house of mercy, a hospital of healing! Why should you not now seek and find the Savior? Perhaps you are feeling in your heart, at this moment, a measure of thoughtfulness and softening—some drawings are upon you. This shows that it is time for you to seek the Lord—

*“Even at this hour He calls you!  
It is not yet too late!  
He has not closed the day of Grace,  
He has not shut the gate.  
He calls you! Hush! He calls you!  
He would not have you go  
Another step without Him  
Because He loves you so.”*

Do not trifle with your heart when it begins to open! Oh, I have known some that have come to me and said, “We were once tender and hopeful, but now we are like the man in the iron cage—we cannot feel. We are almost past concern and conviction and nothing awakens us.” Beloved Hearer, if it is not so with you, you ought to be thankful, but do not rest in your tenderness, nor think that you are any better than others—bless the mercy which still waits for you and pleads with you. When sailors go to sea, they make use of every breeze—I know they would like a brisk trade-wind to carry them along from day to day—but if no such wind arises, they are glad of any favoring breeze. If there is only a puff, or a capful, they catch at it and tack about to use every breath of it.

Now, though you may not, at this moment, be feeling the secret power of the Holy Spirit to a high degree, yet, if conscience is only a little awakened, do not let it fall asleep. If the will is only a little swayed, do not try to stiffen it. If there is only a little desire to seek the Lord, take care of that desire and let it become a hungering and a thirsting! You know what your servant does when the fire is almost out, how she kneels down and blows on the coals—how she puts her hands together and gently breathes the dying flame to life again. If you have a spark, may the Lord help you to blow it up, yes, and may His own living breath blow upon that little Grace till it becomes the master influence of your nature and like a consuming fire burns within your soul!

These are favorable moments, moments to be used before they flee, when showers of Grace are dropping upon you and the ground is soft and ready for the holy Seed! Take care that you use your opportunity well, for “it is time to seek the Lord.” And so it is, I think, when the Truth of God comes to you, personally, when you begin to feel, “There is something about the Gospel which is meant for me. I believe that God brought me to this Tabernacle tonight and He has guided the minister in His text and is helping him to bring the Word of God home to my conscience. I thought he looked at me, just now. I feel sure that he means me.” Yes, you are quite right! He does mean you and so does God mean you and thus He calls you to Himself!

Arise, He calls you! Lame, blind, dead though you are, He calls you! Oh, yield to the sacred summons while now it comes out of the excellent majesty where sits His enthroned Son, for Jesus, as well as the Father speaks to you! Come! Come at once! Come, you lingering, fainting one! Come, all you that labor and are heavy laden, for He will give you rest. “It is time to seek the Lord.” We have spoken enough about the time, if the Holy Spirit will but apply the warnings which we have uttered.

II. Let us now, in the second place, enlarge upon the peculiar work to which we are called at this time. Here is A SEARCH COMMENDED. “It is time to seek the Lord.” “Seek the Lord?” Why, He is here! “Seek the Lord?” He is everywhere! “Seek the Lord?” He needs no seeking, for in Him we live and move! Yes, but do you not see that it does not refer so much to where God is, as to where you are? You have turned your back on Him, dear Friend. If you are the person that I mean, tonight, you have been forgetting Him and so, because He has not been in your thoughts, you have, in a moral and spiritual sense, lost the Lord. He is everywhere except in your thoughts. He is not to be sought for as though He were some hidden thing to be discovered by search or ingenuity—He is to be sought after because, as far as you are concerned, you have so forgotten Him as to have lost sight of Him. “Seek the Lord.”

I hear the earnest enquirer say, “It must mean that I am now to endeavor to realize that there is a God. And that He is very near me.” Yes. “And that I am speaking to Him?” Yes. “And that He calls to me and says, ‘come to Me; be reconciled’?” Yes. All this and more is to be your finding of God as really existent to you. Begin now to live, not as an atheist who is without God, but as a Christian, who has God with him and has God within him. “Seek the Lord” means, then, that thought and love and desire should all come towards God and realize Him and so seek Him. “Seek the Lord?” asks one, “But I am sinful! If I come into His Presence, He will slay me, for He cannot look upon iniquity.” Then you must come and seek the Lord in the way in which it will be good for you to come near to Him, namely, through His dear Son!

As a sinner, you could not come to Him, or He to you, but He has been pleased that His dear Son should take upon Himself the form of a Servant and be made in the likeness of sinful flesh and “bear our sins in His own body on the tree.” Now, if you will come to Christ, God is in Christ and you will thus come to God! We may not come to God without preparation, but we may come to Christ without any preparation! We may come just as we are—at once—in all our carelessness, in all our nakedness, in all our filthiness! We shall never find God till we seek Him by the way of Jesus Christ! My sinning Brother, since the Lord has not hidden Himself in Christ, but has revealed Himself in Christ and bids you see Him in His Son, I entreat you, attend to this word of the text, “It is time to seek the Lord.”

Come and seek Him, now, by asking Him to wash you from your sin that you may find Him. Ask Him to change your whole nature that you may find Him. Ask Him to make you like Himself that you may dwell with Him. Ask Him to help you to serve Him that you may live in the light of His Countenance. Ask Him to help you to cast off every false way and to abound in His Grace, that the rain of His righteousness may come upon you and saturate your soul so that you can never lose His Presence again. “It is time to seek the Lord.” My dear Hearers, if any of you are not accustomed to hear the Gospel, but have been brought up in various forms of will-worship, let me beseech you not to think that it is of any use to seek a priest, or to seek a sacrament, or to seek anything but the Lord!

You must personally come to God, Himself, in Jesus Christ! And the text says not, “It is time to be confirmed,” or, “It is time to be baptized,” or, “It is time to come to holy communion.” No, it says, “It is time to seek the Lord.” That is the pith and core and marrow of your necessity—that your soul must seek after God and your heart must come into the arms of God as the prodigal son came into the arms of his father. Did he say, “I will arise and go unto my priest”? No, prodigal as he was, he was not so much a dupe! He said, “I will arise and go unto my father.” There was wisdom in going at once to headquarters and seeking pardon from one who had the power to give it! The prodigal had fed swine, but he had not become one of the swine, himself, or he might have gone to a father-confessor or a priest! But being, still, a man and having come to himself, he sought his father.

O Soul, I beseech you, seek no minister! Seek to no outward form or ceremony, for in the Lord, alone, is your salvation! Every remedy short of Divine aid will mock your misery. Time enough have you sought to earthly physicians and you are nothing better—go, then, to Jehovah Rophi, the Lord that heals you and you shall be made whole! You will never be cured of your inward malady by sacraments, though you should devour a mountain of sacred bread and drink an Atlantic of consecrated wine! You will still be as lost as ever, though all saints and angels should come to your rescue—unless you seek God—God in Christ Jesus. “It is time to seek the Lord.”

III. I close with a third point upon which I will be very brief—there is A PERIOD SET. How long are we to seek the Lord? “It is time to seek the Lord, till He rains righteousness upon you.” I believe that very much seeking of the Lord is based on ignorance—that there are some who really set about seeking the Lord as if they could not find Him and as if He were a long way off. This is corrected by the Apostle in those memorable words, “Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven, or who shall descend into the depths? The Word is near you.” How near you? “In your mouth.” That is how near it is. “In your mouth.”

What hinders a man’s receiving that which is in his mouth? Swallow it, man. Swallow! That is all you have to do. It is in your mouth—nothing can be nearer, surely, than to have it in your mouth. Oh, if I were dying and I had a lozenge in my mouth and I knew that it would save my life, do you think I would not suck it down? Ah, would I rest until it was down? I would not care if a critic stood by and said, “You must not eat that lozenge. You are not worthy of it.” I have got it in my mouth and your remonstrance comes too late, it is gliding down my throat. “Oh, but you must not swallow that lozenge: you are not fit to receive it.” I have got it and I defy anyone to rob me of it, for down it goes. “But you must not, really, partake of it. It may not be meant for you. Perhaps you are not in the Election of Grace.”

In vain your supposition! I have got it in my mouth and if possession is nine points of the law, it is all the points of the Gospel! I take it into my inward parts and I will never part with it. That is just the Gospel and a sweet way of putting it—“The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart.” “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” You have it, again, in our Lord’s words in His commission to His disciples, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.”

But, about this seeking. You see that there are some that forget that it is so very near them and they go seeking, but, if you seek the Lord, Soul, whatever of ignorance mingles with the search, I exhort you to persevere in seeking the Lord till He rains righteousness upon you. Seek the Lord, my dear Hearer, till you find Him! Never be satisfied with means! Rest not till you get to the end—find the Lord, or else go on seeking. Oh, stay not at Heaven’s gate—ask for an abundant entrance! Be not content with knocking, but knock louder and yet louder till the gate is opened! It is well to be near the kingdom, but it is an awful thing to be so near it and yet not to be in it. It is well to be persuaded to be a Christian, but a dreadful thing to be almost persuaded and then to stop in an undecided condition.

“Well,” you say,” “but I may, perhaps, wait a bit longer. I have waited long already and I am weary.” Suppose it to be so, is it not worth waiting for? But I tell you, your waiting is very much through your own ignorance. As I have already said, the Word is near you and you may have it tonight! Even now you may have it, for it is in your mouth. If those poor blind eyes are delivered from the scales that hide a present Savior, even now, at this moment, you may give that look of which we sing—

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

Yet, if you do not understand it, cease not to seek that light may come! Pardon will pay you abundantly when it comes. You say, “I have been pleading for months.” Then, do not waste all that you have done! Come and close with Christ and get, now, the answer to all those prayers!

Think of Columbus within three days of America, that wondrous land in which he believed. He saw few signs of it—here and there a bit of seaweed—some little tokens that there might be land ahead. But the mariners declared that they would sail no farther upon that mysterious sea. Suppose that, within three days of the shore, Columbus had turned back? Then he would have lost all his pains for lack of a few hours perseverance! And you, tonight, perhaps, within half-an-hour of unspeakable joy —you, within the next 10 minutes able to rejoice in Christ and find present salvation—will you now start back? No, by the Eternal Godhead, push on! O Spirit of the living God, push the sinner on and lead him, now, to say, “If I perish, I will perish pleading for mercy and hoping in the Grace of God by Jesus Christ.” You cannot and you shall not perish so! “It is time to seek the Lord, till He rains righteousness upon you.”

That is how long you have to seek Him. I will give you a picture and with that conclude. You know the story of Elijah when the heavens had long been deaf—a bronze concave that mocked the desires of men? He went up to the top of Carmel and he began to pray. With groans and cries and tears—with his head between his knees he used language which only God heard—and it was mighty pleading! Then he said to his servant, “Go up, now, look toward the sea.” And Gehazi went up and looked toward the sea—he gazed down there along the shoreline and up there above the Lebanon. And then he cast a wistful look around and came back and said, “There is nothing.” The Prophet, while his servant was gone, had been crying more importunately. He had been pouring out his soul to its very depths before God, saying, “I will not let You go unless You bless this thirsty land!”

A second time He said to Gehazi, “Go again.” I think I see Gehazi going and looking, but he perceives nothing. “Master,” he said, “there is nothing.” But the Prophet had still been praying and so he said, “Go, a third time.” And away went Gehazi, thinking it was a fool’s errand. He went and looked and in a moment said, “There is nothing. I told you there was nothing.” But the Prophet had still been praying while the servant went and he said to Gehazi, “Go again” for the fourth and then the fifth time. He felt, “As the Lord lives, He must hear my prayer,” and he gave himself, again, to wrestling with his Lord. Before the living God he knelt and he felt that he could not rise until the promise and the covenant had been fulfilled! Here comes Gehazi. He does not like his task at all. “Master,” he says, “I have been five times and there is nothing! Will you send me again?” “Go again, Gehazi! Go again,” said Elijah. “Go again.”

And Gehazi goes the sixth time. “Alas!” he says to himself, “I never went on such an idle set of errands before.” All along the Mediterranean Sea he looks and looks and looks again. And back he comes with the old tale, “There is nothing. There is nothing. There is nothing.” But what does Elijah say to him? “This last time while you have been gone, I have prevailed. I have believed that I have the petition which I asked and I know I have it. Go, Gehazi, go and look! I said to you, go again seven times—so go and look again.” The weary servant is in no hurry to go. The longer he is about it, the more is the likelihood there will be nothing to come of it. When he reaches Carmel’s top and casts his eyes over the sky, there is a little fleece of cloud—but it is such a tiny flake that it is not bigger than a man’s hand.

What is that to the sky? What rain can come out of a morsel of cloud to be measured by a span? He comes back and he declares, “Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” Up rises the Prophet and wraps his mantle about him! The rain is coming and he sends Gehazi in haste down to Ahab, to warn him against the nearing deluge, saying, “Prepare your chariot and get you down, that the rain stop you not.” Nobody could hear it, but Elijah had marvelous ears as he had a marvelous voice with God! He runs before Ahab’s chariot in sacred exhilaration of delight! The heavens are already beginning to turn to blackness and the first big drops are falling! Elijah has prevailed!

Now, get to your chambers tonight—you that have not found the Lord— and come not forth till you have found Him and He has given you Grace as a mighty shower! If, by the morning light, there is but a little hope and though you can only say, “God, be merciful to me a sinner,” keep the watches and continue the prayer! O Soul, though you can only cry, “Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief,” yet watch on and seek on, for the Lord will rain righteousness upon you! A deluge of mercy shall descend and your heart shall rejoice, for this is His own promise, “When the poor and needy seek water and there is none and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.” So be it unto you. Amen.

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AN URGENT NECESSITY NO. 3557

**A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 1917.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON*AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,  
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY31, 1870.**

***“It is time to seek the Lord till Hecomes and rains righteousness upon you.” [Hosea 10:12](tw://bible.*?id=28.10.12|_AUTODETECT_|).***

**HOSEA uses a great many figures taken from farming. He describe the seeking of the Lord in the former part of this verse as plowing, and sowing, and breaking up fallow ground. I suppose he intends by this to describe conviction of sin, humiliation of soul as the work that plows, the reception of the Truth of the Gospel by faith in Jesus Christ as sowing, for this introduces the Living Seed into the soul. And he here gives two reasons why this matter of seeking the Lord should be attended to at once. His first reason is the season. “ *It is time*to seek the Lord.” The second is a *very gracious expectation***that God will rain righteousness upon us. First, then, the Prophet reasons that we should seek after the Lord because it is—

I. THE TIME TO SEEK GOD.   
“It is time to seek the Lord.” I wish you to reflect, first, that we yet have time. It might have been otherwise. We might have been cut down in our sins. Many of our neighbors and acquaintances have died. Some of them, we have reason to fear, died in their iniquities and were taken away with a stroke. We, too, have passed through dangers. Some have escaped in shipwreck. Some have been in imminent peril in accidents—some of us have come into the very jaws of death in serious sickness. We might almost sing, or quite sing—   
*“Lord, and am I yet alive?   
Not in torment, not in Hell?   
Still does Your good Spirit strive   
With the chief of sinners dwell?”*We yet have time. Let no person living say he has not time, for while life lasts, hope lasts. The sentence, “Depart, you cursed,” is not yet pronounced by Christ’s lips on you. Pronounce it not on yourselves! Do not conclude your case to be hopeless and make it hopeless, but rather believe that being in the assembly of God’s people, listening to the testimony of His Grace, you are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God—and you yet have time given you to seek the Lord! The most aged need not despair! The most guilty need not conclude that their day of Grace is over! Until that iron bar shall fasten the door and you are shut in the pit of Hell forever, let not Satan persuade you that you are beyond all hope! While the Gospel note rings from the silver trumpet of gracious invitation, “He that has ears to hear let him hear,” you yet have time—time to seek the Lord!   
This time is given you *for this very purpose*. You think, perhaps, that your prolonged life is given you that you may mature your plans, that you may rectify mistakes of business, that you may accumulate more money, or perhaps you are gross enough to think that the best way of using time is to get earthly pleasure out of it—and indulge animal passions and appetites! Ah, Sirs, it is not so! To whatever use you put this talent of time, God’s long-suffering has been your salvation. By it God teaches you to repent while He permits you to live! His long-suffering is not that you may provoke Him further, but that you may cease to provoke Him! He cuts not down the tree that it may spread its useless branches and cumber the ground yet worse, but if, perhaps, being dug about a little longer, it may bring forth fruit! It is the very motive why the Intercessor pleads, “Spare it yet another year.” He spares you that you may not depart hence till you are ready to depart. He gives you space, not for sin, but for repenting opportunity! Not for perpetrating worse offenses, but for turning from your evil ways! Your time has this mark on it, if you would but see it, “Repent! I give you space. Repent! Take heed you waste it not.” There is encouragement to every unconverted person in this thought! If this time is given you to repent in, then rest assured that, repenting and believing in Jesus, you will be accepted! If the judge stands at the criminal’s door and waits, and says he waits there until he is willing to receive the pardon he grants, and if the criminal is anxious to receive the pardon, there can be no difficulty in the way! The very waiting of the judge at the door proves that he does not want to execute the sentence—only desires to see some symptom of contrition, some tokens of turning from the evil way and gives space if, perhaps, these token may become apparent. Hear you, then, oh, unconverted ones! Hear you, then, and trifle not with the space allowed you!   
It is time to seek the Lord, says the text. Surely it is *high*time! Not only *the*time, but *high*time. It is high time, you young ones, that you seek the Lord, for Satan is on the watch for you if, perhaps, your unwary footsteps may be decoyed into the paths of evil—evil which, if you are not delivered from, you will have to regret ever having trodden to life’s latest hour! Oh, if you would be kept from the snare of the fowler, you young ones, it is time you seek the Lord—high time! Now when you are leaving your mother’s roof—going away from a father’s gentle guidance, it is time to seek the Lord. I would press this on any young man here just launching into life, or that marriage, or that business he entered upon—it is time to seek the Lord! Set up God’s altar when you set up a house, and before you trade for yourself, consecrate yourself and your substance to God, who can bless you and will!   
But, oh, you that have passed now into middle life, have you spent forty years in sin? It is high time you sought the Lord! Your best days have been given to provoking Him. Will you not give the rest, such as they are, to His service? Oh, that His Spirit might compel you to do so. And you that lean upon the staff, you who have come to the verge of human life, is it not high time to seek the Lord? I see your sun going down—the sky is scarcely bright, the red rays betoken that the sun is hiding itself. Oh, before the dark, dark, endless night comes on, seek the Lord while yet He may be found! Be grateful for having been spared so long. Oh, be not so ungrateful as to use so long a life all for sin, for remember, it will be then all used for your own destruction! You have been a fool long enough! Gray hairs and foolery are not well matched. You have long enough sported on the brink of Hell—will you not start back from it? By God’s long-suffering and patience, I beseech you remember it is high time for you to seek the Lord.   
And you in whom I mark that treacherous spot upon the cheek that marks the worm beneath, and you with the preternaturally bright eyes that indicates the fire of consumption within, it is time you sought the Lord! And you whose crumbling frames, or aching bones or relaxed sinews, or trembling nerves, all betoken how weak your body is and how readily it may be crumbled back into the dust—these tokens from the Lord are upon you—it is time you sought Him! He knocks gently as yet, and gives you warning. Take heed, He will soon come and remove the house of the wicked, and the tabernacle of the ungodly, and your souls must appear before His Judgment Seat! It is high time you sought the Lord. And, oh, all of you ungodly ones who listen to my voice, and have listened to it so long, I have asked the Lord to teach me how to preach that I may somehow get at your hearts. I seem not to have learned the art as yet. May His Spirit come and give the right word with a barbed shaft that shall plow its way right through your armor and pierce its way through all the hardness of your heart until it breaks the conscience and wounds you—and compels you to cry for mercy! What? All the years at Park Street, Exeter Hall and the time at the Surrey Gardens—and ever since this Tabernacle has been built—and yet unsaved? It is time to seek the Lord! The very seats you sit on cry out against you, some of you, and I, unwilling as I am to speak it, I must be a swift witness against some of you, for to the best of my ability I have pointed you to Christ, I have warned you of danger, I have told you of your great peril, I have warned you of the terrible punishment of sin, I have entreated you to fly to Jesus! It is time, you Gospel-hardened ones, that you sought the Lord! If your lusts are gods, serve them! But decide and choose this day—and may God choose for you whom you will serve! It is high time as well as time to seek the Lord!   
Remember, too—and here is something solemn, but something sweet as well— *it is God’s time*, for these are God’s words put into the Prophet’s mouth—it is time to seek the Lord! God says, “It is time.” When God says it is time, why, then, when I come, I cannot be denied! God says, “It is time.” Then if I do not come, I provoke Him! Hear you these words, you that are dull of hearing, and you whose hearts have a thick crust! Hear you, for Jehovah speaks to you this day. “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation.” “Today”—He limits the time— “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, for if you do so, the day will come when He will deal with you as He did with His people, Israel, who, having long provoked Him, received this as His answer to their face, “He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest.” Not yet has He spoken, but He may, and that awful voice which comes from Solomon’s Proverbs may come to you. “Because I have called and you refused, I stretched out My hand and no man regarded it, I also will mock at your calamity; I will laugh when your fear comes.” “Today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation.”   
Once more only. It is time to seek the Lord, and *it is but time*. It is but a time. You have not given to you eternity in which to seek the Lord. It is *the*time, and the time is limited. It is *still*time, but *it is limited*. To some of you it is most limited. It is time to seek the Lord. The vessel lies in the harbor and the favorable wind would take her out to sea and bear her on to her port, but the sailor sleeps—the captain observes not the wind. The sails are furled. Tomorrow the wind has changed. Now he may do as he will, but he is land-locked, and there must he remain. He cannot put out to sea, for he cannot command the gale. So is it with you—there is a time which God appoints you. Tis now! Slight it and it may never come again! It is but a time. Oh, take this mercy at the flood—miss it not, I pray you. While God waits, come you, lest there should come an hour when you shall knock at His door and the voice shall be heard, “Too late, too late! You cannot enter now.” Ah, I would I had but power to put this as I should, and so that you would feel it, but, perhaps, you will feel it when I would wish you had no need to do so—I mean on your dying bed.   
The Puritans tell a story of a woman convinced of sin on her deathbed, who lived near Cambridge, who was visited by several ministers, all of whom had great skill in comforting seeking souls. When five or six of them had spoken gently and comfortingly to her, she opened her eyes upon them with a glare, and all she said was this, “Call back the time, call back the time, for otherwise I am damned!” And so she died. And there are many, I hear, who might say that. “The time is gone! The time is gone! I cannot call it back!” Oh, take it on the wing while yet it is time to seek the Lord. You know, perhaps, the story of the traveler on the prairie, when a fire in the distance could be seen. The prairie was on a blaze, and he knew that his only hope for life was to fight fire with fire. He searched for his matches. If he could make a ring around him and burn the grass so that when the fire came up, it would have nothing to feed upon, then he might escape. He found but three matches in his box. He took one and struck it with some degree of care, but, alas, before he could light the train which he had laid, the match had gone out. He took another, and this time, very tremblingly, with much of tremulous anxiety about him, struck it. There was a light—he thought he was safe, but a gust of wind blew it out. And now all depended on the last match! He would be burnt to ashes, with no help, no pity from a friend, if that match failed him. Down he falls and breathes the prayer—“God help me, God help me! Grant this may succeed.” He struck it! You may guess with what care he had laid all the grass around it, and then he struck it as though he were loath to run the terrible risk, but he praised God when he saw its success and that his life was saved!   
You have but one match left, O Sinner! Use it well—one light, one time—the time to seek the Lord. Oh, seek Him now—tonight! This moment in the pew say, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” Is that your prayer? ‘Tis well. God hear and answer it! But now I must, by your patience, speak for a little while upon the second part of the text. There is another reason given for seeking the Lord—and that is—   
II. THE BLESSED EXPECTATION.   
It is that in due time He will rain righteousness upon us! I understand by this that the plowing and the sowing are ours, but these are nothing without the heavenly rain of Grace. But God will be sure to send that in due time. In fact, our plowing and sowing are results and tokens of His Grace, and the Grace of comfort will come where the Grace of humiliation has already come. When it says, “righteousness,” I think it means to assure us that God can, in a way of righteousness, be gracious to us. Through His dear Son, who bore the punishment of our sins, God can righteously rain upon sinners. Now just a moment or two. You say you have not Grace. You say you are not what you should be. ‘Tis even so. But seek the Lord and He will rain righteousness upon you! Observe *all Divine Grace must come from Him*. Rain comes from God. He rains it. Every drop of Grace comes from Heaven. You, Sinner, can never get any Grace unless He gives it you! Remember this, and wait upon Him for it now. It must be heavenly Grace, or it will be no Grace at all. It can come to you. There are some parts on earth that never could be watered if it did not rain. Nobody would ever think of watering the hilltops. But He waters His hills from His chambers. We cannot give Grace to you—you are in such a desolate, lonely, mountainous place, but He can get to you and He will! See how it is He will rain righteousness upon you. Then, as there is a straight way for rain even to the wilderness, so is there a straight way for God’s Grace to drop into your desert heart. Rain comes Sovereignly as God wills it, where He wills it, when He wills it. And in degree and duration according to His will. So does Grace. Lift up your soul, then, to Him for it, and bow your head, feeling that you deserve it not!   
But in the metaphor of rain there is the idea of plenteousness. He will *rain*righteousness upon you. If you have no Grace, He will give you much Grace if you have great needs. He will give you great supplies. He will rain it upon you. God is not stinting in His love—He will not give you a drop or two, but He will give you a sea of mercy. “I will pour water upon him who is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.” Now is not this good reason for seeking the Lord? You cannot get Grace anywhere but from the Lord. God can give it to you very abundantly. It is in His hands to give or not as He wills. Oh, seek it. He holds the stars! He guides the clouds! He wing the tempest! Seek Him for His Grace—He will give it to you. It can come from none besides. But it will come. There is the mercy of it. And you are told in the text to seek it until it does come. Seek Him until the Grace comes! I have known a sinner cry to God once, and mercy has come immediately, but there have been many cases where souls have cried again and again, and only after a long while have they had success. I saw as I came here tonight—it all happened in a moment—I saw a little child just come home from school, I suppose. A very little child and she tapped at her mother’s door, and the mother did not come, and she did what was the best thing to do under the circumstances—cried as loud as ever she could—and her mother came to her! If you have knocked at Mercy’s door and Mercy has not come, cry for it! Oh, a groan, a tear, a cry, a sigh will quicken the steps of Mercy! God cannot linger when a sinner cries. When a sinner weeps, Christ will soon have pity on him. But, anyhow, keep on till He comes. Seek till He rains righteousness upon you.   
Elijah got the fire in prayer very soon, but he did not get the rain very soon. He had to say to his servant, “Go and look towards the sea.” There was Elijah, with his head between his knees, in mighty prayer, but not a drop of rain or sign of a cloud. “Go again, go again,” he repeated till he had commanded his servant seven times—and then there is a cloud the size of a man’s hand! Sinner, have you prayed? Pray again. Have you prayed twice? Pray again! Has it come to three times? Pray again! Has it come to four times? Pray again! Does it amount to six times? Pray again! Let there be no stint in prayer. You have kept God waiting long enough. You must not marvel if He should now tarry awhile. Pray again! Pray again! Say, “I am resolved that I will not give it up until You shall rain Your comfort, Your righteousness, Your Grace, upon me.” He will surely do it and you do not know how soon—you do not know how soon—you will get comfort. And when it comes it will make up for all delays. You know the woman, when the child is born, remembers no more the travail, for joy that a man is born into the world—and, oh, when Christ is yours, you will forget your travail in your joy and your rejoicing!   
I am thinking just now of Columbus and his crew. They had sailed long across the Atlantic, and had not found the golden land, the El Dorado, and so the sailors talked of going back, and many a scheme he had, by which he tempted them a little further on to that unknown shore! At last it came to this, they mutinied—they would go no further! They would not seek the land again—why should they drift away and be lost forever? He said, “Give me but three days, and if between now and the third day we see not the shore, then we will reverse the helm.” Within those three days there stood the fair shores of the New World before the mariners’ eyes! Suppose they had turned back the second day, and had gone home and never found it? Well, I don’t know that it would have mattered much *to those sailors*. Somebody else would have found it, but you are, perhaps, within three days now of being accepted in the Beloved—perhaps within three hours! Pray God that it may be within three minutes! And will you not go on little farther? Will you not still cry and will you not take the Gospel step, the grand step of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do, and you shall be saved! That brings you to the El Dorado, to the land of gold, to the land of mercy, to the bosom of Christ, to the safety of the blessed, to the security of the Glory that shall be revealed hereafter! Oh, Sinner, be not discouraged, but seek the Lord, for you have His promise He will be found of you!   
Some even of God’s servants have been a good while seeking and they have not found Him. When that dear martyr of Christ, Mr. Glover, lay in prison, he was in a very sad state of heart, and he said, “I love Him, and I will burn for Him, but, oh, that I had some glimpses of His face!” And his fellow sufferer who lay in prison with him used to tell him, “He will appear to you—you shall have joy.” But day after day all through that weary time spent in prison, he would constantly be saying, “Am I His? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Has He shut up the heart of His compassion?” “But,” said Glover, “if He never speak comfortably to me again, I know His Truth and I know His Gospel, and I will burn for Him. By His Grace, I will never turn away!” And the morning came on which he was to be burned—and he awoke with some heaviness of his spirit. There seemed to be no comfort in any promise to which he turned, and prayer brought no relief. And they came and put the chains on him, and they led him out. He came to where the stake was and where the firewood was and he was about to strip and put on his shirt for the burning—and suddenly he leapt up and said, “He is come! He is come! He is come! Glory be unto His name!” His friends had asked him to give some sign that his spirit had revived—and he stood and burned as though he scarcely felt the fire, singing Psalms and praying!   
And so it will be with every earnest seeker. If the looks of love have never come to you for years, you will have them yet, for never soul believed but what was safe! Some have believed, but not been comfortable, but they are safe—the comfort will come. Only seek Sinner, for He will rain righteousness on you—   
*“So I must maintain my hold,  
‘Tis the goodness makes me bold;   
I can no denialtake,   
For I plead forJesus’ sake.”*Oh, Sinner, never let go! Cling close to Christ and He cannot cast you away, for this is His promise, “Him that comes, I will in no wise cast out.” Come, then, and the Lord bless you! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *[DEUTERONOMY 32:1-39](tw://bible.*?id=5.32.1-5.32.39|_AUTODETECT_|).*

A very marvelous Chapter it is—a song and a prophecy, in which the poet-seer seems to behold the whole future spread before him as in a map—and it is so vivid to him that he describes it rather as a matter present or past, than as a thing which is yet to be. It is the story of God’s dealing His chosen and peculiar people, Israel, from the beginning to the end. The commencement is exceedingly noble.

Verses 1-3. *Give ear, O you heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill asthe dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass because Iwill publish the name of the LORD: ascribe you greatness unto our God.* All through, the song is for the

glorification of God! Not a syllable, indeed, in which man is held up to honor, but the Lord, alone, is exalted in His dealings with His people. He is the Rock. All other things are the mere cloud that hovers on the mountain’s brow. But— 4. *He is the Rock.* Immutable, eternal.   
4. *His work is perfect.* Sometimes very terrible and very mysterious, but His work is perfect,   
4. *For all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.* But as for His people, what a contrast between them and their God!   
5. *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: theyare aperverse and crooked genera- tion.* What a stoop from the God of Truth, without iniquity, to a people full of iniquity—a perverse and crooked generation! We never know so much of our own vileness as when we get a clear view of the excellency of God. What said Job? “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see You, therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”   
6. *Do you thus requitethe LORD, O foolish peopleand unwise? Is not He your Father who has bought you? Has He not made you,and established you?* Who made the Jews to be a people? Who set Israel apart to be a nation? Who, but God, who bought them with a price when they came out of Egypt and, in his fatherly care, led them through the wilderness?   
7, 8. *Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask your father, and he willshow you; your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, Heset the bounds of the people according to the number of the children ofIsrael.* God’s first point in the government of the world was His own people. Everything else was mapped out after He had set apart a place for them—a place sufficient, large, fruitful and in an admirable position, that there they might multiply and enjoy all the good things which He so freely gave them. And to this day dynasties rise and fall, kings reign or are scattered by defeat, only with this one point in God’s eye and purpose in His mind—the upholding of the Church in the world—the spread of His glorious Truth!

9-12. *For the LORD’S portion is His people; Jacob is thelot of His inheritance. He found him ina desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him,He kept him as the apple ofHis eye. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young,spreads abroad her wrings, takes them, bears them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.* This is the history of the tutoring of Israel in the wilderness.

When they came out of Egypt they were a mere mob of slaves, degenerate by the debasing influence of long bondage. They had to be trained before they were fit to be a nation. Now in all this, let us try to see ourselves. What has God worked for those of us who are His people in bringing us out from the bondage of sin? And how graciously does He this day preserve us as a man guards the apple of ‘‘his eye”? No sooner does anything come near the eye than up goes the hand instinctively to shield the eye. And let anything happen to the people of God—and the power of God is ready at once for their defense. An eagle has to teach her young eaglets to fly. She will take them on her wings, so they say, and cast them off, and let them flutter, and then dash down and come under them and bear them up again till she has taught them to use their wings. And the Lord has been doing this with many here—apparently casting them off, only that, when they fall, underneath them may be the everlasting arms. We have to be trained to faith. It is a difficult exercise for such poor creatures as we are. We are being trained for it at this day. After they had thus been tutored, they were brought into the promised land, which Moses never entered, but yet in his vision of prophecy he sees it all.

13, 14. *He made him ride on the high places of the earth, thathe might eat the increase of the fields: and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; curds from the cattle, milk of the flock, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the choicest wheat: and you did drink the pure blood of the grape.* It was a very fruitful land, abounding not merely in necessaries, but in luxuries. Palestine gave to its inhabitants

all that heart could wish, and for a long time, while they were faithful to God, they lived in the midst of plenty. 15. *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked.* “The little holy nation”—for I suppose that is the meaning of “Jeshurun.”   
It is a diminutive word—“the little religious nation waxed fat. It abounded in prosperity. It grew stout and kicked.” 15. *You are waxen fat, you are grown thick, you are covered with fatness: then he forsook God which made him, and  
lightly esteemed the Rock ofhis salvation.* Alas, alas! Alas! They set up calves in Bethel. They turned aside to Ashtoreth,   
and worshipped the Queen of Heaven!   
16, 17. *They provoked Him to jealousy withstrange gods, with abomination provoked they Him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils,* Demons—not to God.   
17. *Not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to newgods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.* There is nothing new in religion that is true. The truth is always old. But only imagine a new God! And verily we have had lately some new fashions brought up—some new styles of worship. I think they call them mediaeval. They certainly are no older than that—“new gods that newly came up, whom your fathers feared not.”   
18. *Of the Rock that begat you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten God that formed you.* Israel was nothing apart from God—a little tribe of people—nothing to be compared with the great nations of the earth. Its only reason for existence was its God. He was its center, its light, its glory, its power. They had got away from Him that formed them.   
19, 20. *And when the LORD saw it, He abhorred them,because of the provoking of His sons, and of His daughters. And He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are avery forward generation, children in whom is no faith.* There is the mischief—lack of faith. Lack of faith leads to all manner of sin. Oh, that we had a strong elastic faith to realize the unseen God and keep to purely spiritual worship, not needing symbols, signs and outward tokens—all of which are abominable in His sight, but worshipping the unseen in spirit and in truth. But the Lord said—   
21. *They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God; theyhave provokedMe to angerwith their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.* And so the idolatrous nations came and conquered Judea. One after another they trampled down the holy city and let them see that God could use the nations that they despised to be a scourge upon them!   
22-25. *For a fire is kindledin My anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Hell and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischief upon them; I will spend My arrows upon them—they shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction. I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents ofthe dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling alsowith the man of gray hairs.* Now read the story of the destruction of Israel and Judea—the overthrow of these two kingdoms—and you will see how, word for word, all this came true!   
26, 27. *I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high,and the LORD has not done all this.* God always looks out for some reason for mercy when He is dealing with His people—and He found it here—that the heathen nations would not admit that God had thus been chastening His erring people, but would begin to ascribe their victories to their own demon gods! Therefore He said He would scatter them.   
28-30. *For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?* That little people would have been victorious over all their enemies if God had still been with them, but they were defeated and scattered because they had grieved the Lord. Oh, what strength Believers might have if they would but believe! If we could but cast ourselves upon God in simple, childlike faith, we might play the Samson over again and smite our thousands! But we, too, have little faith in God, even those who have most of it—and when the time of trial comes, we also are a stiff-necked and unbelieving generation, as our fathers were!   
31-34. *For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. For their wine is of the wine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah:their grapes are grapes of gall,their clusters are bitter: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps. Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures?* What an awful text! God lays man’s sins by—seals them up among their treasures, that they should not be forgotten—and He will bring them to account.   
35, 36. *To Me belongs vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon themmake haste. For the LORD shall judge His people.* He will not always let His enemies triumph over them. He will come back to His people whom He seemed to cast away. “The Lord shall judge His people.”   
36. *And have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.* He seemed very angry, but how soon He comes back in love and tries His people over again.   
37-39. *And He shall say, Where are their gods, their rockin whom they trusted? Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me. I kill, and I make alive: I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.*

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3558 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 11.1

OUT OF EGYPT

NO. 1675

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

**“When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of  
Egypt have I called My Son.”  
Matthew 2:14, 15.**

**“When Israel was a Child, then I loved Him,  
and called My Son out of Egypt.”  
Hosea 11:1.**

EGYPT occupies a very singular position towards Israel. It was often the shelter of the seed of Abraham. Abraham, himself, went there when there was a famine in the land of his sojourn. To Egypt, Joseph was taken that he might escape from the death intended for him by his envious brothers and become the stepfather of the house of Israel. Into Egypt, as we all right well know, went the whole family of Jacob—and there they sojourned in a strange land. There Moses acquired the learning which was so useful to him. It was out of the spoils of Egypt that the furniture of the Tabernacle was made—as if to show that God intended to take out of heathen hands an offering to His own Glory—just as, afterwards, the timber of the Temple was hewn by Hiram, the Phoenician, that the Gentiles might have a share in building the Temple in token that they would, one day, be made fellow heirs with Israel.

But while Egypt was, for a while, the shelter of the house of Israel, it became, later, the house of bondage and a country fraught with danger to the very existence of the elect nation! There was a very useful purpose to be served by their going down into Egypt—that they might be consolidated into a nation and might acquire many useful arts which they could not have learned while they were wandering about in Palestine. The lesson was valuable, but it was learned in much misery. They had to smart beneath the lash and faint beneath their labor—the iron bondage entered into Israel’s soul so that an exceedingly great and bitter cry went up to Heaven. Yet, when the heaviest burdens were laid on their shoulders, the day of liberty was dawning! When the tale of bricks was doubled, Moses was born! When man had come to his extremity of persecution, then God took His opportunity of salvation and led His Israel out of Egypt in the teeth of their tyrant master!

It had been at first a Goshen to them, a place of great abundance in the Delta of the Nile, but afterwards it became a Mizraim to them, for that is the Hebrew word for Egypt, and it means a place of straits and tribulations. The point that is meant to be brought forward by the Prophet is that they were called out of Egypt, for it was not possible for them to mingle with the sons of Ham and lose their separate existence. They were on the banks of the Nile and, at first, dwelt there in much comfort, but this seductive ease was not allowed to hold them—full soon they were heavily oppressed and their existence was threatened. Yet both from the comfort of Egypt and from the captivity of Egypt they were called and, at the call of God, they came forth.

The living seed may go into strange places, but it can never be destroyed! The host of God may walk through fire, but it shall not be burned! God has made the living seed immortal and it cannot die, for it is born of God. Out of deadly lands, where every breath is disease, they shall be called by the eternal Voice. Those whom God has chosen may be cast far away, but they shall never be cast away! They may dwell among a people like the Egyptians—most superstitious and debased. A nation of whom even the heathen Juvenal made sport when he said, “Oh, happy people who grow their gods in their kitchen gardens!” They worshipped leeks, onions, all kinds of beasts and fowls and creeping things, but the children of the Lord cannot be suffered to remain among such a people, for the Lord desires to make of Israel and of all Believers, a people separated unto Himself.

Out of the midst of guilty Egypt the Lord called His people, whom He had formed for Himself, to show forth His praise. The abundance of superstition, though it was like the sea, shall not quench the spark of the Divine life in the living family of God! It shall burn on amidst the waves until the God who first enkindled it shall, by His own right hand, pluck it from among the billows and set it as a light upon a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house! Neither Egypt of old, nor Babylon, nor Rome can destroy the royal seed—out of all dangers, the Church must emerge the better for her affliction.

“Out of Egypt have I called My Son,” is a text worthy to be made a proverb, for it is true all through the history of the chosen seed. They are called out from among the surrounding race of rebels and, when the call comes, none can hold them back. It were easier to restrain the sun from rising than to hold the redeemed of the Lord in perpetual servitude! “The Breaker has gone up before them, and their King at the head of them”— who shall block up their road? God is still calling them out and until the very last of His elect shall be gathered in, it shall still stand true, “Out of Egypt”—and out of anywhere else that is like Egypt; out of the worst and vilest places; out of the places where they are held fast in bitter bondage, out of these—“have I called My Son.”

At this time I shall, first, call your attention to the text in Hosea according to the sense in which the Prophet first uttered it. He speaks of the natural seed called out from the sheltering world, for Egypt was a sheltering world to Israel, the natural seed, and they were called out of it by the Omnipotent power of God. Secondly, we shall notice the Divine Seed called out, literally, from a sheltering Egypt and brought up from it into the land of Judea, that He might be the Glory of His people Israel. Thirdly, we shall spend a little time in considering the chosen seed, those who are given unto Christ of the Father—these, also, must come out from the world, whether it is friendly or hostile. The Lord has said to them, “This is not your rest, for it is polluted.” He is saying the same today. It is still true of the spiritual seed as of our Lord Jesus and of the natural seed, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”

May the Holy Spirit be our Teacher while we handle this great subject. I. Let us think of THE NATURAL SEED of Israel as called out of Egypt, for with them this wonderful text began to be expounded. It is well worth considering, for this constituted one of the loftiest lyrics of Hebrew poetry. The deliverance of the people of God out of Egypt, “with a high hand and with an outstretched arm,” is a song which the nation never wearied of singing—and which we ought never to weary of singing, either—for at the close of all things, we and all the redeemed spirits shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb!  
The great redemption of the Exodus shall always be so eminent a type of the greater redemption upon the Cross that the two may be blended together and words that were sung concerning the first deliverance may be readily enough used as expressions of our joy in our salvation from death and Hell—  
*“From Egypt lately come,  
Where death and darkness reign,  
Seek our new, our better Home,  
Where we our rest shall gain.  
Hallelujah! We are on our way to God.”*  
While speaking upon this natural seed I want you to notice, first, that if they are to be called out of Egypt, they must first go down into Egypt. They cannot come out of it if they have not first gone into it. I do not know of anything that could have tempted them down into Egypt, for it had nothing to offer which was better than Canaan, but the fathers of the tribes were driven there by a famine which troubled the whole world. The Lord sent a man before them, even Joseph, who laid up, in store, food for the seven years of famine, and Israel went down into Egypt that they might not die, but might be cherished by Joseph, who had become lord of the land.  
The Lord may, in order to prevent His people falling into a worse evil, permit them to go into that which seems hopeful, but ultimately turns out to be a great trial to them. Suffering is infinitely preferable to sinning. The Lord may, therefore, send us sorrow to keep us from iniquity. Dear Friend, the Lord who reads your heart may know that it is absolutely necessary for you to be tried—and so, spiritually, to go down into Egypt. He may send a famine to drive you there. He may place you under great tribulations and so He may bring you down both mentally and spiritually into a sad condition where you shall sigh and cry by reason of bondage.  
Do not look upon this as a strange thing, for all God’s gold must pass through the fire! It is one of the marks of God’s elect that they are afflicted! The Lord Jesus says, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” Depend upon it that if you are one of the true seed you must go down into Egypt! The Lord said to Abraham, “Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs.” The shield of the chosen bears the emblem of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. Even if the world shelters you, it will sooner or later become to you the house of bondage— yet into that house of bondage you must go, for there is a great educational process going on in affliction to prepare us for the land which flows with milk and honey!  
Egypt is one of the early lessons. It is strangely early with some—their religious life begins with a cloudy morning and threat of storm. This will work them lasting good. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” Therefore we have, “When Israel was a child, then I loved Him and called My Son out of Egypt.” The earliest days of Israel were in Egypt; the nation, in its infancy, was called from there. While the Divine life has not yet attained to maturity, we meet with straits and troubles and have to go down into Egypt and feel the weight of the yoke upon our shoulders. This is one of God’s ways of preparing us for freedom, for he that has never tasted of the bitterness of bondage will never be able to appreciate the sweets of the liberty with which Christ makes men free. So Israel must first go down into Egypt. He descends that he may rise to greater heights!  
Note, next, that it was while in Egypt and at the worst time of their bondage in Egypt, that they received the first notification that the nation was to be called the son of God. Israel is not called a son until Moses comes to Pharaoh and says, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born: and I say unto you, Let My Son go, that He may serve Me.” God had been with Abraham and called him His friend, but I do not perceive that He called him His son, or that Abraham addressed the Lord as, “Our Father which are in Heaven.” Neither do I find similar sweet words flowing from the lips of Isaac or of Jacob—but when Israel was in bondage—then it was that the Lord revealed Israel’s adoption and openly declared, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born.”  
He scourges every son whom He receives and He receives them even while the scourge is sorely bruising them! They were a poor down-trod nation—a nation of slaves begrimed with brick-earth and bleeding beneath the lash of their taskmasters! The Egyptians must have utterly despised a people who yielded so readily to all their exactions. They looked upon them as a herd of slaves who had not the spirit to rebel, whatever cruelties they might endure. But now it is, while they are lying among the pots and their faces are stained with tears, that the Lord openly, before proud Pharaoh, owns the nation as His Son, saying, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born.” I think I see Pharaoh’s grim, sardonic smile as he seems to say, “Those slaves, those wretched brick-makers whom the lowest of my people despise—if these are Jehovah’s first-born, what care I for Him or them?”  
Learn therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters, that God is not ashamed of His children when they are in their worst estate. We are told, concerning our Lord Jesus, “For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Yes, and not when they put on their beautiful array; when the jewels are in their ears; when they are led forth with music and dancing and when they shout over Egyptian chivalry drowned in the Red Sea will they be more the Lord’s children than they are in the house of bondage! The Lord God speaks of their adoption for the first time when they are still under the oppressor and when it seems impossible that they can be rescued! The Lord speaks very plainly to the haughty Pharaoh, “Let My Son go that He may serve Me; and if you refuse to let Him go, behold I will slay your son, even your first-born.”  
Oh, but is it not a blessed thing to go down into the Egypt of tribulation if there, for the first time, we learn our adoption of the Lord? Is it not a sweet thing, even, to be under the heaviest bondage if you are, by such means, made to understand better than you ever did before what it is to be a son and a heir, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ? The first-born of every creature is He and we are the Church of the First-Born whose names are written in Heaven! The heritage of the first-born belongs to Jesus and to us in Him—and we often know this best when our heart is broken because of sin and when our troubles are overwhelming our spirit.  
“Fear not,” says He, “I will help you.” “Fear not, you worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” Yes, it was in Egyptian bondage that they received the first witness of the Spirit, that they were, as a people, the sons of God! When it became clear that they were really the sons of God, then they suffered persecution for it. A place which, as I have said, was, at first, their shelter, now became the iron furnace of oppression. Their hard labors are doubled; their male children were ordered to be cast into the river and edicts of the most intolerable kind were fulminated against them.  
Now, Brethren, Satan soon knows the man that God has acknowledged to be His son and he seeks to slay him even as Herod sought to kill Jesus. When the Man-Child was born, the Dragon knew who that Man-Child was and sought to destroy Him. He vomited forth floods to sweep Him away, until we read that the earth helped the woman and there were given to her wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished from the face of the serpent. No sooner is the child of God really acknowledged to be such, than at once the seed of the serpent will hiss about him—and if they can, will cast their venom upon him. At any rate, they will bite at his heel till God has taught him, in the name of Jesus, to break the serpent’s head.  
Rest assured that this is another mark of the election of Grace. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. In Ishmael’s case, it was seen that he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit, and so it is now. You cannot expect to pass through this Vanity Fair without exciting the jeers and sneers of the ungodly, for the Lord’s inheritance is unto him as a speckled bird—the birds round about her are against her. Every David has his Saul; every Nehemiah his Sanballat and every Mordecai his Haman.  
But now comes the crown of the text, that is, “I have called My Son out of Egypt,” and out of Egypt, Israel must come! Egypt was not Israel’s portion—it was “a land that was not theirs.” My Brothers and Sisters, we are not citizens of “the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where, also, our Lord was crucified.” The best thing in this present evil world is not your portion nor mine. Friendly Egypt, sheltering Egypt, was not Israel’s inheritance. He gave them no portion, even, in the land of Goshen by a covenant of salt. They might tarry there for a while, but out of it they must come, as it is written, “You have brought a vine out of Egypt.” The best side of the world, when it seems warmest and most tender to us, is not the place where we may lie down with comfort.  
The bosom of our God—that is the true shelter of His people—and there we must find rest. If we are dwelling in the world and are tempted to be of the world—and to take up with the riches of Egypt—we must, by Grace, be taught to cast all this behind our back, for we have not our portion in this life, neither can we have our inheritance until we enter upon the life that is to come. Jacob said on his death-bed, “Bury me not, I pray you, in Egypt.” And Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones that they should not remain in Pharaoh’s land. Even so, the saints of God are weary of the world’s dominions; they tremble like a bird out of Egypt. Not in Egypt would God reveal Himself to His people. What says He? “Come you out from among them: be you separate and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters.”  
When He called Israel His son, it is in connection with this coming out. “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.” And you and I must be fetched out from the world and all its associations—and truly severed from it—if we are ever to come to know the Lord our God. In Egypt, God was not known, but “in Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel.” His people must not permanently reside in a strange country. The land of tombs was no fit home for a living people whose God was the living God! Therefore it is written, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son” and the heathen knew it, for they said, one to another, “Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt.”  
There were many difficulties in connection with this calling of Israel out of Egypt. Perhaps one of the chief obstacles was their own wish to stay there, for, strange as it may seem, though it was a house of bondage to them, they did not wish to stir from it at first! Their spirit was broken by their sore bondage so that they did not receive Moses and Aaron as they ought to have done, but they even chided them. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the chief work of God with us is to make us willing to go out, willing, by faith, to follow Jesus—willing to count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! He did make them willing and they went out, at last, right joyfully, marching in rank like a trained army! They did not need to be driven, but hurried to escape out of the enemy’s country.  
Moreover, the Lord made them able to go, as well as willing, for it is very beautiful to think that there were no sick people in the whole nation of Israel at that time of the going out! We read—“There was not one feeble person in all their tribes.” What a splendid thing for a whole nation to have no weaklings! There was no need to carry any in the ambulance— they all went marching forth with steady foot out of the dominions of Pharaoh! O child of God, has God given you the will to get out of the bondage of the sin and the corruption of this crooked generation? He that gives you the will, will give you the power! Perhaps you are crying, “Who shall deliver me? To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not.”  
Rest assured that God, the Holy Spirit, who has given you the will, will also give you the strength—and you shall come marching out of Egypt, having eaten of the Paschal Lamb! The Lord stunned their enemies, so that they begged them to be gone and bribed them to make haste! With blow upon blow, He smote the Egyptians, till on that dreadful night, when shrieks of pain went up from every house in Egypt, the Egyptians hastened them to go. “We are all dead men,” they said, “unless you go!” Even their taskmasters urged them to immediate flight. Our God knows how to make even the wicked men of the world cast out the Christian—they cannot endure him when once his adoption is made known! They grow tired of his melancholy presence; tired of his convictions of sin and of that gloomy face which he carries about with him, and they say, “Get out, get out, we cannot endure you!” They perceive something in him which is foreign to themselves and so they thrust him out. Egypt was glad when they departed and so the world, itself, seems glad to be rid of the Lord’s elect when God’s time is come to set a difference between Israel and Egypt!  
The spiritual meaning of all this is that from under the power of sin of Satan and of the world, God will certainly call His own redeemed. They shall not abide in the land of Egypt! Sin shall not be pleasant to them! They shall not continue under Satan’s power, but they shall break his yoke from off their neck! The Lord will help them and strengthen them, so that they shall clean escape from their former slavery. With a high hand and an outstretched arm He brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt— and with that same high hand and outstretched arm He will save His own elect whom He has loved from before the foundations of the world and whom He has purchased with His most precious blood! They, too, shall sing as Israel did, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously,” in the day when God shall deliver them!  
So far we have spoken of the natural seed.  
II. Now we turn with pleasure to THE DIVINE SEED, the Man Christ Jesus. He had to be called out by an angel from the sheltering Egypt into which Joseph and His mother had fled with Him. I dare say when you have read that passage in Hosea, you have said, “I cannot see that it has anything to do with Christ.” The passage in Hosea is evidently about Israel, for God is speaking of Israel both before and after the verse. But look—the natural seed of Israel is the shell of the egg of which the Divine Seed is the life! God calls Israel His Son. Why? Because within that nation lay that Seed which, afterwards, was known as the Well-Beloved, the Son of the Highest. They were the shell and, therefore, to be preserved for the sake of the Blessed One who, according to the flesh, lay within the race!  
I do not think the Lord would have cared about the Jews more than any other nation if it had not been that in due time He was to be born of them, even He in whom is His delight, that choice One of the Father, the Son whom He loves. So when He brought His Son out of Egypt, it means, first, that He rescued the external, nominal, outward sonship. But the core, the living core within, is this Son,

his true Son of whom the Lord said, putting all others aside, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” And the passage, if I had time to show you, could not be limited to Israel, for if it had been, it would lose much of its accuracy.  
Why, do you think, the passage was made so obscure? It is confessedly obscure and anyone reading it without the spiritual teaching which Matthew received would never have perceived that Christ was going down into Egypt to fulfill that Word. I take it the reason of the obscurity was this— that its fulfillment might be of the Lord, alone. Suppose His father and mother had known these prophecies and had purposely set themselves to fulfill them? There would have existed a kind of collusion which would have beclouded the wonderful wisdom of God in bearing testimony to His Son. Mary and Joseph may have known of this prophecy, but I greatly question whether they perceived that it referred to their son, at all, or to the Son of the Highest—but now they must do the very thing that God says shall be done—without knowing that they are fulfilling Scripture!  
One of the worst things you and I can ever attempt, is to try and fulfill a prophecy. Good mistress Rebecca wanted to fulfill a prophecy and what a mess she made of it! She endeavored to make her second son the heir and, in the attempt, she brought upon him and herself a world of sorrow! Had she not better have let the prophecy alone? Surely, if a prophecy is made of God, God will see that it comes to pass. If it is a Chaldaic prophecy, a prophecy of soothsayers and magi, no doubt they will try to make their own oracle true—but the Lord, who sees the end from the beginning and ordains all things—can speak positively of the future. If any of you set up for prophets, beware of prophesying till you know that you can make it good! God does not need such petty provision—He needs no help from us—His word will surely be established! Mary and Joseph did not try to fulfill the prophecy, for they could not have understood it to mean what it meant. It was purposely put in a dark and cloudy form, but still the Lord knew what He was doing—“That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”  
Remember one thing, that all the Words of God in the Old Testament and the New refer to Christ! And what is more, all the works of God have an opened window towards Christ. Yes, I say that in the creation of the world the central thought of God was His Son, Jesus, and He made the world with a view to His death, Resurrection and glorious reign! From every gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam up to the great leviathan in the sea, the whole design of the world works toward the Seed in whom the earth is blessed! In Providence it is just the same—every event, from the fall of a leaf to the rise of a monarchy—is linked with the kingdom of Jesus! I have not time to show this, but it is so, and if you choose to think it over, you will clearly perceive it.  
God set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel—and everything that has happened, or ever shall happen in the outside world—all has a look towards the Christ and that which comes of the Christ! I love to find Jesus everywhere—not by twisting the Psalms and other Scriptures to make them speak of Christ when they do nothing of the kind, but by seeing Him where He truly is. I would not err as Cocceius did, of whom they said his greatest fault was that he found Christ everywhere, but I would far rather err in his direction than have it said of me, as of another divine of the same period, that I found Christ nowhere!  
Would it not be better to see Him where He is not than to miss Him where He is? The Pattern of the things on earth is in Heaven—is, in fact, in Jesus, the Son of God! He is the Pattern according to which the Tabernacle and the Temple were built. Yes, and the Pattern according to which this brave world was made—and worlds which are yet to be revealed. All the treasures of the wisdom of God are hidden in Christ—and in Christ they are made manifest. I do not wonder, therefore, that this passage in Hosea should point to Him! It is certain that our blessed Lord is, in the highest sense, the Son of God. “Out of Egypt have I called My Son,”  
Write the word, SON, in capitals—and it must mean Him—it cannot, with emphasis, mean anyone else! I would rather give up the idea that Hosea even thought of Israel, than think that the Holy Spirit did not intend that we should see Jesus in those memorable words, “My Son.” It came to pass that our Lord must find no room in Israel and so must go down into Egypt. There was no room for the young Child in the inn and, now, the Edomite, the child-devouring Herod, has risen and there is no room for the new-born King anywhere in Palestine! Alas, how sad a picture of the visible Church where Christ, at times, can find no room!  
What with contending sects, Pharisees and Sadducees, there would seem to be no more room for Christ in the Church, today, than there used to be. By fear of Herod, His parents are made anxious, and by angelic direction they must go down into Egypt, where Herod’s warrant would not run. Heathen Egypt will shield, while hypocritical Judea will slay! Jesus, like another Joseph, must be carried down into Egypt, that the young Child’s life may be preserved. Here He has a foretaste of His life trials and early begins His life of affliction. The King of the Jews flees from His own dominions! The Lord of All must know the heart of a stranger in the land of Egypt! The poet represents His mother as saying—  
*“Through the desert wild and dreary,  
Following tracts explored by few,  
Sad at heart, and worn, and weary,  
We, our toilsome march, pursue.  
Israel’s homes lie far behind us,  
Yet we pause not to look back,  
Lest the keen pursuer find us,  
Lest grim murder scent our track.  
Eagles o’er our heads are whirling,  
Each careering towards her nest;  
Even the wolf and fox are stealing  
To the covert of their rest.  
Every fowl and noxious creature  
Finds on earth its lair and bed  
But the infant Lord of Nature  
Has not where to lay His head.  
Yes, my Babe, sweet sleep enfolds You  
On Your fainting mother’s arm;  
God in His great love beholds You,  
Angels guard Your rest from harm.  
Earth and Hell in vain beset You,  
Kings against Your life conspire!  
But our God can ne’er forget You,  
Nor His arm that shields You, tire.”*  
Mark well, that if the Lord Jesus Christ had willed it, even though but a Babe, He might have blasted Herod as He did another Herod in later days. And He might have made him to be eaten of worms. The glorious Jehovah could have sent a legion of angels and have driven the Idumaean dynasty from off the throne, if so it had pleased Him. But no violence was used—a gentler course was chosen. When Jesus stands up to fight, He wars by nonresistance. He says, “My Kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight.” He conquers by flight rather than by fight. He taught His people, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another. And He never bid them form bands and battle with their persecutors. That is not according to Christ’s Law or example! A fighting church is the devil’s church, but a bearing and enduring Church—that is Christ’s Church.  
His parents fled with Him by night and took Him down into Egypt, that He might be sheltered there. Traditions tell us wonderful stories about what happened when Jesus went into Egypt, but as none of them are Inspired, I need not waste your time with them. The only one that might look like fact is that His parents sheltered themselves in a temple wherein idol gods were and when the Child entered, all the images fell down. Certainly, if not actually true, it is a poetical description of that which happens wherever the Holy Child puts in an appearance! Every idol god falls before Him! Down he must go, whether it is Dagon, or Baal, or Ashtaroth, or whatever the god may be called! Yes, and he that wears the triple tiara on the seven hills and calls himself the vicar of God on earth—he, too, must come down—and all his empire must sink like a millstone in the flood!  
We do not know how the young Child and Joseph and Mary lived in Egypt except that they had received gold from the Magi and that, being a carpenter, not a hedge carpenter, but one skilled in joinery and repairing wheels, Joseph could find plenty of work in Egypt where vast multitudes of Jews were already settled. Whether our Lord was carried to Alexandria or not, we cannot tell. The probability is that He was housed there, for it was the great rendezvous of the nation and the center of their learning— there the Bible had been translated into the Greek tongue—and there flourished schools of Jews much more liberal than those in Judea. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the Prince of Peace went to that region where we have most unhappily illustrated Christianity with cuts—not all of wood, nor all innocent of blood.  
But Jesus could not stay in Egypt. “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.” His parents, by a brave act of faith, went back at the command of the angel, to the Holy Land—Your land, O Immanuel! Jesus could not stay in Egypt, for He was no Egyptian! He did not come to exercise a ministry among the Egyptians. He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in His public working. Being called out of Egypt, the heavenly vision was not disobeyed. His foster-parent, Joseph, took Him back and they settled in Nazareth. Yet remember, He had been in Egypt and this was a prophecy of blessing to that land—for wherever Jesus goes, the air is sweetened!  
Every plot of land that His foot has ever trod on shall be His forever. What said God to Jacob? “The land whereon you lie will I give you.” And the same is true to Jacob’s great descendant! Jesus has slept in Egypt and Egypt is His own. God has given it to Him and His it shall be! Glory be to His blessed name!  
III. Let us turn to think of THE CHOSEN SEED that shall be brought out of Egypt. Here I would remark that this passage may be taken and should be taken, literally. God has a chosen people who shall assuredly come out of the very Egypt which now exists. It is remarkable that early in the Gospel day the Truth of God was gladly received in Egypt. Egypt became the land of saints and divines and, as it had once been the source and home of civilization, so it became an active camp for the soldiers of the Cross. Under the successors of Mohammed, all this was swept away and now the Crescent’s baneful beam falls where once the heavenly sun shed out its infinite Glory and scattered health among the sons of men.  
Egypt did turn to God and it will turn again. Let me read you this passage (Isaiah 19)—“In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of Hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Savior, and a great one, and He shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yes, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”  
So that we feel clear that our God has yet a son to call out of Egypt and He will call him. There shall be a seed to serve Him even in the midst of the down-trod people who live by the Nile floods, for God has said it. There is one passage to which I should like to refer you, because it is so full of comfort. (Jeremiah 43:12)—“And He shall array Himself with the land of Egypt”—think of that—putting it on as Joseph put on his coat of many colors! “As a shepherd puts on his garment; and He shall go forth from thence in peace.” Yet shall Christ wear, as a robe of honor, this land of Egypt! And again shall it be true, “Out of Egypt have I called My son” Let us learn from this, that out of the strangest and oddest places God will call His son. Certain Brethren among us go the lodging houses in Mint Street, Kent Street and other places. Can any good thing come out of them? Assuredly, it can, for, “Out of Egypt have I called My son.”  
Out of Thieves’ Acre and Ketch’s Warren, saints shall come! Some of you, perhaps, know of holes and corners in London where a decent person scarcely dares to be seen—do not pass by these abominable haunts, for out of such Egypts will the Lord call His sons! The worst field is often the most hopeful. Here is virgin soil, unplowed, untilled. What harvests may be won by willing workers! Oh you brave hands, thrust in the plowshare and break up this neglected soil, for thus says the Lord, “Out of Egypt have I called My son.” Many of you who live in the midst of Israel and hear the Gospel every day remain disobedient—but some from the lowest and vilest parts of the earth shall yet be called with an effectual calling— and they shall obey, for it is written—“Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”  
But we will take the text and conclude with it in a spiritual sense. All men are in Egypt, spiritually, but God calls out His own sons. Sin is like Pharaoh, a tyrant that will not yield. He will not let men go, but he shall let them go, for God says, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.” We are in a world which is the destroyer of Grace as Pharaoh was the destroyer of Israel’s little ones. You do not think a good thought but what it is laughed out of you! You scarcely catch a word of Scripture, but as soon as you get home you are compelled to forget it. Nevertheless, out of that— “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.” You shall yet be delivered! Put you your trust in Jesus Christ, for, “to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” And He will call every son of His out of Egypt.  
Perhaps you are in the dark, as the Egyptians were during the plague, or as when God turned the dark side of the pillar to Egypt. Ah, but if you are one of His—if you will but trust Jesus, which is the mark of being God’s elect—out of darkness will God call you! Out of thick Egyptian night will He fetch you and your eyes shall be made glad with the light of the Gospel of Christ! Perhaps you dwell in the midst of superstition, for the Egyptians were horribly given to superstition—but yet out of that will God call His people! I look to see priests converted! I hope to see leaders of the Gospel found among men that were once steeped to the throat in superstition! Why not? “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”  
Where did Luther come from but from the monastery? And he preached the Word of God with thunder and lightning from Heaven—and God blessed it to the emancipation of nations! He will bring others of that kind—out of all sorts of ignorance and superstition He will fetch them to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! I feel encouraged to pray for those who appear to be hopeless! I feel as if I must cry to God, “Bring them out of Egypt, Lord, the worst, the vilest.” You, here, that know what Egypt is and are in it, and know you are in it, oh, believe that the Emancipator has come! The Redeemer has appeared! With an offering of blood He has stood before God and given Egypt for a ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you! Oh, that He might win those with power whom He has bought with price! And to Him be Glory, world without end. Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1021 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 11.3

HEAVEN’S NURSE CHILDREN

NO. 1021

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

“**I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms.” Hosea 11:3.**

IF you note well the opening part of this chapter, you will find that it consists of a wonderful chain of mercies—every single line is a rare jewel, and the whole passage is a case unspeakably precious. The chapter begins with love—ancient, sovereign, electing love. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him.” When the Israelite nation was in a very low and poor estate, and was brought into slavery and subjection in Egypt, God had set His love upon it, and called it His own inheritance. Not for their numbers or greatness as a nation were they chosen, but when they were little and despised they were yet beloved of God. Distinguishing Grace had written the name of Israel upon Jehovah’s heart.

Spiritually, we who have believed are in the same favored condition, and our hearts rejoice this day at the memory of “His great love, wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” This is the riverhead, from which all the streams of mercy flow—“I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Like the golden-sanded river which had its rise in Eden, electing love branches off into many streams and waters all the garden of the Lord. This is the root from which the tree of blessing springs. “He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3, 4).

Let others say what they will, electing love will always be most precious to us. For it is the foundation blessing, the first of all favors, the mother of mercies. We nail to our mast the old flag of Free Grace, and believe with the Apostle (Eph. 1:11) that we were, “predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.” The next sweet word in the chapter is sonship—“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.”

We are, according to the inspired Apostle, “predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:5). Adoption follows hard upon the heels of election, and is another messenger of good tidings. Innumerable blessings come to us by this door. “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son.” “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He is. For we shall see Him as He is.”

Sonship with God is a dignity unspeakable, and yet it is reserved for such poor dust and ashes as we are—what shall we say concerning this? Are we not swallowed up with adoring gratitude? Unto which of the angels has He said at any time, “You are My son”? But this has been said to us! And we are thus favored above all creatures that the Lord God has made. Boundless blessings are included in sonship—it is no light thing to be a child of the Lord of Hosts, the Prince of the kings of the earth. “If a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” This opens up before us far-reaching views of present Covenant provision, and of future infinite bliss.

To be, indeed, born into the family of God is a dignity to which the descent of an imperial prince bears no more comparison than a spark in the tinder to the sun in the heavens. And, because we have in this chapter love and sonship, we see immediately after, in the same verse, calling, salvation, and deliverance—“I called My son out of Egypt.” The Lord does not leave His chosen people forever in the bondage of sin. When the day of their jubilee dawns, they go forth without price or reward, with a high hand and an outstretched arm. They cannot remain forever under guilt, nor abide heirs of wrath, even as others—out of Egypt they must come when the years are accomplished. They are His, and He will call them by His effectual Grace, and separate them to Himself.

Their calling is something more than the common and universal Gospel invitation—it is a persuasive, convincing, conquering call. Only they whom the Lord has set apart for Himself know it—“Whom He did predestinate, them He also called.” This call is like Joseph’s invitation to his venerable father to come and see him—it was accompanied by the wagons in which the old man could ride. It was not only an entreating call, but an enabling call. “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,” says the Savior. And He speaks to purpose, because He helps them to come—no, He brings them Himself—carrying them, like lost sheep, “upon His shoulders rejoicing.”

There is no violence done to the will, but it is set free, and then, being acted upon by a graciously enlightened understanding, it yields to the call, and follows Jesus. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” Israel would never have come out of Pharaoh’s country if the Lord had not fetched them. But none can say that He drove them out—no, rather, “as for His people, He led them forth like sheep.” Every step of their exodus from bondage under the Divine call was the result of Divine leading and influence. Even thus, spiritually, a peculiar but delightful stress is put upon the chosen of God, and, therefore they come out of the Egypt of sin.

The Grace to eat the paschal lamb, to strike the blood upon the lintel, and to gird up the loins and leave the land of leeks, and garlic, and onions, is given only to the heirs of the promised possession. Then we, upon the blessing of holy rearing and education, which we have in our text—“I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms,” as they do who have to teach little children to walk, supporting their tottering footsteps, and instructing them how to put one foot before the other, until they are able, at last, to run alone.

Calvin says it means, “I have led him on foot. As a child who cannot yet walk with a firm foot is, by degrees, accustomed to do so, and the nurse, or the father, or the mother, who leads him, has a regard for his infancy. So, also, have I led Israel, as much as his feet could bear.” And, as if this mercy and condescension of God, in thus comparing Himself to a woman with her babe, were not sufficient—in addition to this He becomes a physician, too—and grants healing. He says, “I healed them.” They had not only weakness that needed to be supported, and ignorance that needed to be tutored. But they had, in addition, sickness and infirmity that needed medicine. “I healed them.”

He who had carried them as Shaddai—the Lord All-Sufficient, became to them Jehovah Rophi—the Lord that Heals Them. Who shall tell how much we all owe to heavenly pharmacy? Our diseases are deep-seated and most dangerous. How happy are we in having an Omnipotent Physician, whose Word, alone, is more than a match for all our maladies. Surely we have a sickness for every day in the year, but the beloved Physician has a remedy for every complaint. Glory be unto Him who forgives all our iniquities, and heals all our diseases!

Then, as if all this were not enough, we find Him drawing them on in the paths of obedience and holiness—not with ropes and chains that would compel against their will, overhauling them roughly—but with forces suited for minds and hearts. “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.” Thus does the gracious Spirit of God work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. “The love of Christ constrains us.” “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” “The Spirit also helps our infirmities.” Thus we have in a few lines unostentatiously opened up before us a cabinet of Covenant gems rivaling those which adorned the high priest of old.

Here is a holy education for the nursling that was afraid to walk! Here is exercise of the strength which the Physician had restored. As if this had not completed it, there come unburdening and rest-giving—“I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws.” They had been like oxen, with a heavy yoke upon them, and God had come and taken the yoke away. And there they stood, as we see horses stand when they are made to rest, when the bearing-rein is loosened, and they stand at ease.

And this, God has as surely done for us, as for His ancient people. He has fulfilled that Word unto us, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your souls.” We enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding—it keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Nor is this all, for the gracious Redeemer takes care to fill His people’s mouths with good things! Therefore, He does not forget the feeding, for it is added, “I laid meat unto them.” The Lord refreshed His weary people with “food convenient for them.” As the oxen, after the yoke was removed, were fed, so God, when He had removed our yoke of guilty bondage, fed us with the finest of the wheat as He made us understand the Gospel of His Son.

The doctrines and promises of His Word are substantial meat for hungry souls. “My soul shall be satisfied with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.” Certain under-shepherds are afraid of laying too much doctrinal food before the Lord’s people, but it is

a great mistake. Truth never surfeits, though it always satisfies. The Good Shepherd does not stint His sheep, but He gives them so much that they lie down amid the exceeding plenty of the green pastures. They cannot eat it all, and they lie down in the midst of a superabundance which infinite mercy has provided.

See, then, how God’s boundless love piles mountain upon mountain— as the old classics used to say—Pelion upon Ossa, that we, up from the depths of our distress, may climb to the heights of His blessedness and enjoy the fullness of the Glory which God has treasured up for us in the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord. One is tempted, with such a preface to our text, to linger in it and to be like the man who made the porch of his house larger than the house itself! You can but be fed, and it matters not whether the barley loaves and fishes are in my basket, or whether I carry them loosely in my hand—so long as you are refreshed by them you will not quarrel with my disorderly serving.

However, I restrain my loitering heart, and proceed to the text. Here is the figure of a nurse and a child. “I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms.” Let us look at this in reference to the children of Israel. Then let us view it in reference to ourselves. Take Israel’s case first. They were in Egypt and God was about to bring them forth and make them a nation, and give them a country of their own. He began to deal with them as little children. He selected as His ambassador and as the mediator between him and them, not a man of imperious disposition, not an Elijah with fire at his beck, or a John the Baptist with an axe in his hand, but, “the man Moses, who was very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth.”

They were childish, vain, foolish—and their leader must be very gentle and full of pity. It requires a patient disposition to deal with such grownup children, for what you could bear from children, who are children in years, you cannot so well endure from those who, though they have reached the age of maturity, have not reached the age of discretion and seem as if they never would. You can teach a child of six. But who shall be tutor to a child of sixty? The great God, the Father of Israel, selected as a tutor for these grownup children the meekest man that lived, and, in so doing, He dealt tenderly with them, as a mother with her child.

Then, though He meant them ultimately and finally to come out of Egypt, He did not uproot them from their adopted land all at once, roughly and without previous loosening. No unexpected command was given them that they were at once to sever all the ties that connected them with the people of Egypt. They were not forced in an unlooked-for moment to leave the leeks, and garlic, and onions, and to go forth into the desert. But a long series of miracles was exhibited before their eyes—not only that Pharaoh’s power might be broken—but that they might be encouraged to venture themselves upon the Providence of God, and trust themselves with Him.

They ought to have been strong enough to have marched out of Egypt at once, at the first word of their leader. Had they forgotten the old Covenant which had been made with their fathers? That the Lord would give them a land that flowed with milk and honey? But they were little children and could not perform manly exploits. They needed to be taught courage, and manliness, and faith in the unseen God of their father Abraham. All those plagues which God worked in the fields of Zoan, while they had a dark side to Egypt, had a bright side to Israel. It was a “teaching them to go.” A gently persuading them to trust in God, and go forth at His call.

Yet, after having seen all Jehovah’s wonders, when at last they did take the first step, and found themselves at Succoth, and by-and-by came to Pihahiroth by the sea, they trembled like babes who totter and are ready to fall. Was it not tender mercy on the part of God that He put forth His hand and held them up, and drowned all their fears at once? They had been alarmed when they heard the whip of their taskmasters and the rattling of the war chariots behind them. But God made, as it were, with one sweep, an end of everything that need give them distress. I do not find, whatever were their foolish fears, that the children of Israel in the wilderness were ever again afraid of the Egyptians pursuing them and attempting to drive them back as slaves.

The old fear was slain at once. They had been slaves and dreaded their masters, but the strength of Egypt had been so terribly broken at the Red Sea that Israel, who before tottered, even began to dance to the music of the triumphant timbrel. Infinite tenderness removed the stumbling block out of their way, lest their infant faith should be tripped up. When they were fairly in the wilderness they were still treated as children, and they needed it. They had many sensible manifestations of the Presence of God with them.

A truly spiritual faith does not expect any manifestation to the senses. God treats us today as men compared with the way in which He nursed the Israelites. We have no pillar of Glory shining over a visible tabernacle. We have no Shekinah above a material Mercy Seat. We have now no holy places whatever. And no symbolic worship—

“*Wherever we seek Him He is found,*

*And every place is hallowed ground.”*  
Our service of the spiritual God is spiritual. We walk by faith and not by sight. We worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh.

The tribes of Israel, as being in their religious childhood, had manifestations of different kinds. They saw not God, for who shall behold the invisible? But the bright light shone between the wings of the cherubim, the Glory of the Lord at times burst forth from the tabernacle, and on an ever memorable occasion they heard a Voice speaking out of the thick darkness from the top of Sinai when the Lord came from Paran with ten thousand of His holy ones. We have not heard the Voice, neither have we seen the Glory—nor need we wish for either since we have a sure Word of Testimony—and the abiding of the Holy Spirit.

But the Lord treated the tribes in the wilderness as children—their faith and spirituality were so feeble that, like the young Church of Christ in the upper room which needed the rushing wind, and cloven tongues, and miraculous power—they were favored with signs and wonders to confirm their faith. “He taught them to go, taking them by their arms.”

Another part of this spiritual nursing which the Lord condescendingly gave to His people was their instruction by symbols. He did not give to them, as He gives to us, the clear vision of the glorious Gospel in the face of Jesus Christ. But as they were not capable of reading the plain sense, and they needed pictures in their books, He gave them many and most instructive symbols. They saw the morning and the evening lamb. How full of instruction must that double offering have been! They ate the Passover. They saw the doors besprinkled with blood—here was a sort of kindergarten school teaching for them. The high priest in his white garments, or in his glorious robes of beauty, with the Urim and Thummim glistening on his breast, the altar, the censor, the candlestick, the table of the showbread, the laver—all these were pictures in the first A B C book for children.

The gentle Father was teaching them to walk. There are some childish lovers of the first Covenant who would like to get the child’s books back again—like big babies they cry for the horn-books of infancy, and would put aside the Glory Book which God has given to His children to read in the day of the open manifestation of His Holy Spirit. We need not imitate their example. We desire not go back to the rudiments now that the Lord has revealed Himself in the Person of the Only-Begotten. Yet to Israel type and symbol was the main instruction, and in that respect the Lord taught them to walk or go.

Yes, and it was not only instruction by a few chosen symbols, but everything was a symbol to them. They were always being instructed and helped. The bread they ate was food from Heaven, and the water they drank leaped from the living Rock. They were covered from the heat by the Cloud. They were lighted at night in their encampment by the fiery Pillar— everything about them was fitted for a people that needed something tangible, something to be felt, something to be seen and perceived of the senses—a people in childhood who required to have everything represented to the eye as well as spoken to the ear.

The whole of that forty years’ journey in the wilderness was a long “teaching them to go.” They were not a people able to have formed a wellregulated state. They were no better than a mob of slaves—they were not fit for self-government. And therefore they were led about, trained, taught, educated in the space of forty years, before they were able to go, as they did at last, when the Lord settled them in Canaan. And note—and here I will not continue the story longer because there are ten thousand various ways in which we can illustrate the Truth of God—how He treated them as children even in the conquest of Canaan.

Before they came up to the country to conquer it, a pestilence had destroyed many of the people. The spies said, “It is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof.” The Lord had also sent the hornet before them— some terrible and deadly insect which had distressed and driven out the Canaanites, and, in addition to these two scourges, the fear of them and the dread of them had very much weakened their adversaries and prepared the whole land to submit to them. That marvelous passage of the Jordan, and that miraculous falling down of the walls of Jericho without their needing to strike a blow—were not these all the means of teaching them to go? Were they not thus gently led on till at last they became men enough to drive out the Canaanites and to settle in the land, and sit every man beneath his own vine and fig tree?

We will now leave the seed of Israel, and think of ourselves a while. How very graciously has the meaning of our text been fulfilled in us. The Lord has treated us as a nurse treats a little child. To begin with, the first step the child takes—its first introduction to the art of locomotion—is caused by the nurse’s holding it up. Do we not remember the first uplifting that the Lord gave to some of us? We were groveling in the dust and should have been content to be there still, but, under a gracious Word that He sent to us through the ministry, or by some other means, He lifted us up, and we began to feel that there was something better for us than to be always creeping about on the earth, or lying still in supine worldliness.

The nurse’s hand is first put out before the child thinks of walking, and the Divine power of the Holy Spirit was first exerted upon us (we being then passive under it for a while) before we felt a desire for better things. We crawled upon the earth like beasts till God taught us to stand erect in uprightness like Grace-born men. We owe all to Him who has taught us from our youth. The nurse, when the child begins to walk, soon teaches it to know its own weakness. It has a fall or two, and a few bruises and tears. But the falls are necessary to its learning to walk. We, also, had many slips and falls. Oh, how often did we resolve in the most admirable manner, but our resolutions ended in smoke?

How frequently did we make attempts in our own strength? But these were failures, till at last we said, “We must give it up,” and we were compelled to lean wholly upon our Lord. We became more active in the right way after we were weaned from our natural self-reliant activities which had been so dear to us. But we were very long in the weaning. Falls into sin are terrible things, and these are not what I speak of here. I mean those broken resolutions, and those aspirations to which we did not attain, those many disappointing tumbles which we encountered when we tried to walk. It is a part of the nurse’s art to let the child feel its weakness—and it is a part of our heavenly Father’s wisdom to let us know how feeble we are.

We are never wise till we discover that we are fools—we are never strong till we confess that we are weak. True enough are the Apostle’s words, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” The nurse regulates the child’s exertions and allows it to take a step or two at first, and only a step or two. Do we remember how tottering were our first steps? We limped very sadly. Our walking was comparable to the seeing of the man to whom men looked like trees. Our state of mind was a mixture of light and darkness. We cried, “Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief.” There were only one or two promises in God’s Word which I could get any hold of when I first came to Him.

My soul was stayed a little while on that Word, “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Only that could I grasp. I have known some who could get consolation from nothing but this sweet Word, “Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” They could believe only a little. It hardly amounted to believing—they reached as far as hoping and trusting—intermittently mixed up with a world of doubting and fearing,

but they could stir no further. Very delightful to the Christian pastor is it to see a young convert begin to take the first step or two. We have seen them fall down with doubts and fears, but we have been so pleased that they could walk even a little in the way of faith, and believe even a portion of the Word of God.

What a mercy it is that the Lord reveals to us His own Truth by slow degrees! We ought never to expect our young converts to understand the doctrine of election and to be able to split hairs in orthodoxy. It is vain to overload them with such a precious Truth as union with Christ, or so deep a doctrine as predestination. Do they know Christ as the Savior, and themselves as sinners? Well, then, do not try to make a child run! It will never walk if you do. Do not try to teach the babe gymnastics—first let it totter on and tremble forward a little way. “I have many things to say unto you,” said the Savior, “but you cannot hear them now.”

Now, had certain reputedly wise men been there they would have said, “Lord, let us hear it all! Make full proof of it all! Bring it all out—we can hear it—only try us.” But our Lord knew what was in man, and therefore He, little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, brought out the Truth—and He does so experimentally with His children still. We do not know our own depraved hearts so well at first as we do afterwards. The disease and the remedy have both of them to be more fully revealed to us by-and-by.

If we knew at the first all we shall know hereafter, we should be so overwhelmed with the abundance of the revelation that we should not be able to endure it! The Lord, therefore, lets in the Light by degrees. If a person had been long famished, and you were to find him hungry, and faint, and ready to die, your instincts would say, “Put food before him at once, and let him have all he wants.” Yet this would be a ready enough way to kill him. If you are wise, you will give him nutriment slowly, as he is able to bear it. If you have been long in the dark, and come into the light at once, your eyes smart, and you cannot bear it. You need to come to it by degrees, and thus is it with the Lord’s children.

By little and by little He introduces them into the Glory of His kingdom, preparing them for its fullness as children are prepared for their manhood. Have you not seen how the nurse will tempt the child to take a little longer walk by holding out a pleasant thing to allure it? And how often has our blessed Lord tempted us to some bolder deed of service, to something that required more faith than we had before by giving us choice signs of His Presence, and ravishing our hearts with His love?

Some of us know what it is to have seen such sweet results from our little faith that we could not but desire to try what stronger faith would do. God so rewarded the weak faith we had that we felt we must rely upon Him, and venture still further. Kindly has the Lord conducted us onward in this respect. The nurse does not let the child put too much weight upon its little legs at first, for it might be to its lasting injury. It shall have a little trial of walking—but she will put her hands under its arms and hold it up that it shall not be tried too long, lest it is strained and injured. So does our heavenly Father try our faith little by little.

When we shall have become men in Christ Jesus, we shall be tested by stronger trials, for the Lord loves to put stress upon faith. He sends forth His knights of the Cross upon desperate battles, knowing that He intends to glorify Himself in their natural weakness by granting them strength. But to the little babe He sets no such stern tasks. He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb and deals tenderly with those that are but tender. “He carries the lambs in His bosom, and does gently lead those that are with young.” Can you not look back, beloved Brothers and Sisters, to your own experience, and confirm all I have said, only feeling that you could say very much more about it if you could speak out your own heart?

The Lord has dealt with us in other respects as children, as, for instance, in not chiding us for our many mistakes. If the nurse were to scold the child for not walking as she does. If she were to be angry with it because it is not as strong as she is, the poor thing might be long before it came to walk at all. God sometimes does with His people as the artist did with Alexander when he painted him—he did not draw the scar on Alexander’s face, but placed his finger over it.

Note how the Holy Spirit describes Sarah. There was not much good in what Sarah said on that day when she lied. But she called her husband “lord,” and the Holy Spirit lights on that and mentions it to her honor. He has often accepted our poor service and given us sweetly to feel that it was so, though when we look back upon it we wonder how it could have been accepted at all. Many of us who preach the Gospel had God’s blessing on our early preaching. Our knowledge was dreadfully scant, and our ability slender.

We wonder how God could have blessed us, but He did. If He were to let us know how badly we do His work even now, we should despair, and do no more. But in His great mercy He lets the light pour on the brighter spots, and lets us see what His Spirit is doing. And so we take courage and go on, and learn to walk after all. With all our trembling, and tumbling, and falling down, we do at length learn to stand upright—and even, by His Grace, to run in His ways. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do you not feel that God has had great patience with you? Do you not wonder that He has endured you?

Could you have had so much patience with another as God has had with you? Impossible! You can hardly run alone yet, can scarcely take a step without slipping or sliding—you need still to be carried in the Everlasting Arms like babes—and yet you are persuaded that His patience will hold out till there shall be no more need of it. He will bear us as on eagle’s wings, that is, with unwearied perseverance and strength of love He will uphold us even to the end. We must remind you, however, before we leave this, that there are some respects in which the figure before us does not come up to the full point.

God has been very gracious to us, beyond what a nurse is to a child . Let us unfold this fact for a moment or two. The nurse, with the child, has not the disadvantages that God has with us—for we are full of the notion that we can walk, and thus there are two battles in our case. The first is to get us out of our bad walking, and the next is to teach us to walk rightly. It is sometimes more difficult to instruct a man who has been educated wrongly than it would have been if he knew nothing. He has both to

learn and to unlearn. So with us—we have a notion that we can do so much—until the Lord shows us without Him we can do nothing!

We are very strong in our own opinion—we are blown up with pride and self-sufficiency. And that has to be taken from us so that there is a double task for Infinite Mercy to perform—not merely to plant a tree, but to cut down the old tree and root it up—to get rid of our former way of walking, and then to teach us to walk in the Spirit, and not in the fancied energy of the flesh. Moreover, you never found a babe anxious to use stilts. But every one of us, when God’s Spirit has begun to teach us to walk, have been seeking to use crutches. “Cursed is he that trusts in man. And how many of us must have deserved that curse. For trusting in man is very, very common.

Resting on an arm of flesh seems to be the hereditary disease of God’s people. They fly first to this and then to that, but forget their true and only resting place. The simple walk of faith, trusting and leaning alone upon the Invisible, how difficult it into bring ourselves to it! We would have some favorite child to lean upon, or husband, or wife, or friend. Our abilities, or something or other that we can see and handle, shall be the golden calf which we set up and say, “These are your gods, O Israel!”

Here is a great difficulty, then, to wean us from crutches which are promoters of spiritual lameness. I have never met with a child that had any fear about the nurse’s power to hold it up. She puts her arms about it, and it trusts itself with her, leaning wholly upon her. But we appear to be afraid of leaning hard upon God—we cannot leave ourselves with Him—we don’t throw ourselves right back on the Divine bosom. Yet is there no true rest to ourselves till we do. As long as we are trying to support ourselves in some measure or degree we have not yet come to the rest of faith.

I have known people who went in the sea to learn to swim but they never dare take their feet off the bottom, and I do not see how they can swim while they also endeavor to stand on their feet. Standing and swimming cannot be managed at the same time. So there are souls that would gladly trust themselves to the goodness of God, but they cannot be content without an earthly prop. They cannot quite cast themselves upon God and trust in the stream of His abundant faithfulness. This, then, is another difficulty which is not with the nurse, but which is with our God in reference to us.

One more remark let us make, and that is that we are, many of us, most unwilling to try to walk. Though we are Believers, after a fashion, it may be said of us at this day as of those in the Savior’s time—“If the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” Why, entire portions of the Christian Church are afraid to trust God with the maintenance of their ministers and the support of their worship! They enter into an adulterous alliance with the State sooner than trust in God and rely upon the faithfulness of His people.

And as it is with large masses of the people, so is it with separate Christians. They cannot walk by faith. They must have some way or other of clinging to the flesh. Oh, for Grace to be willing to believe in God! Oh, for power to cut the moorings and have done with the signs, and the evidences, and the marks, and come to look upon Christ and His finished work—upon the Covenant, and upon the faithful God, who breaks not His promise and cannot turn away from His decree! May He who teaches us to profit make us to walk in His ways. Our prayer is like that of quaint old Quarles—

*“Great ALL IN ALL, that is my rest, my home. My way is tedious, and my steps are slow— Reach forth Your helping hand—or bid me come. I am Your child, O teach Your child to go— Conjoin Your sweet commands to my desire, And I will venture, though I fall or tire.”*

Now, why is it that mothers take so much pains in teaching their children to walk? I suppose the reason is because they are their own offspring. And the reason why the Lord has been so patient with us, and will be so still, is because we are His children, still His children, still, His children! Ah there is wondrous power in that—still His children! I was sitting at table once, and I heard a mother expatiating upon her son. She said a very great deal about him. And someone sitting near me said, “I wish that good woman would be quiet.”

I said, “What’s the matter? May she not speak of her son?” “Why,” he said, “he’s been transported. He was as bad a fellow as ever lived, and yet she always sees something wonderful in him.” So I ventured, some little time after, when I had gained her acquaintance, to say something about this son. And I remember her remark—“If there is nobody else to speak up for him, his mother always will.” Just so. She loved him so that if she could not be altogether blind to his faults, yet she would also see all that was hopeful in him.

Our blessed God does not bring into the foreground what we are, so much as what He means to make us. “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more forever.” He puts our blackness away. And He sees us as we shall be when we shall bear the image of the heavenly, and shall be like our Lord. For Christ’s sake, beholding our shield and looking upon the face of His Anointed, He loves us and goes on to instruct us still. It seems at times as if there were a conflict in the Divine bosom, and He felt He must surely give us up, but then His love rushes to the rescue, and it comes to this—

“How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.” He returns to us with such a word as this—“I have betrothed you unto Me in righteousness, and in mercy, and in judgment.” He declares that He hates putting away—“Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married unto you.” We are His own children. Oh, I have found it such a blessed thing, in my own experience, to plead before God that I am His child!

When I was racked some months ago with pain to an extreme degree so that I could no longer bear it without crying out, I asked all to go from the room and leave me alone. And then I had nothing I could say to God but this, “You are my Father and I am Your child. And You, as a Father, are tender and full of mercy. I could not bear to see my child suffer as You make me suffer. And if I saw him tormented as I am now, I would do

what I could to help him, and put my arms under him to sustain him. Will You hide Your face from me, my Father? Will You still lay on a heavy hand, and not give me a smile from Your Countenance?”

I held the Lord to that. I talked to Him as Luther would have done, and pleaded His Fatherhood in right down earnest. “Like as a father pities his children, even so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” If He is a Father, let Him show Himself a Father—so I pleaded. And I ventured to say, when I was quiet, and they came back who watched me—“I shall never have such pain again from this moment, for God has heard my prayer.” I bless God that ease came and the racking pain never returned. Faith mastered the pain by laying hold upon God in His own revealed Character—that Character in which in our dark hour we are best able to appreciate Him.

I think that is why that prayer, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” is given to us, because, when we are lowest, we can still say, “Our Father.” And when it is very dark, and we are very weak, our child-like appeal can go up, “Father, help me! Father rescue me!” He teaches us still to go, taking us by the arms, because He is our parent still. If anyone fears God may leave him, let him enquire whether a mother can forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb—for even if it is so, God will not forget His people.

He has engraved you upon the palms of His hands. There is a relationship between you and Him so familiar that it never can be forgotten—so firm that it can never be dissolved. Be of good confidence! He will teach you to go till you shall run without weariness, and walk without fainting. I would that all here had committed themselves to this good Father’s hand. I pray that they may do so. The Holy Spirit grant it, for whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 11.

SOME of our sermon readers may not be aware that MR. SPURGEON issues a monthly magazine, price 3d., entitled, The Sword and the Trowel. It is full of interesting matter, and commands a large circulation. The volume for 1871 will be ready in a few days after the First of December. Early orders for next year are requested. Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster are the Publishers.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3005 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 11.4

SILKEN CORDS

NO. 3005

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1864.

**“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.” Hosea 11:4.**

No man ever comes to God unless he is drawn. There is no better proof that man is totally depraved than that he needs to be effectually called. Man is so utterly “dead in trespasses and sins” that the same Divine Power which provided a Savior must make him willing to accept a Savior, or else he will never be saved. You see a ship upon the stocks. She is finished and complete. She cannot, however, move herself into the water. You see a tree. It is growing—it brings forth branches, leaves and fruit, but it cannot fashion itself into a ship. Now, if the finished ship can do nothing, much less the untouched log! And if the tree, which has life, can do nothing, much less that piece of timber out of which the sap has long since gone! Christ’s declaration, “Without Me you can do nothing,” is true of Believers, but it is just as true, and with a more profound emphasis, of those who have not believed in Jesus. They must be drawn, or else to God they never will come.

But many make a mistake about Divine drawings. They seem to fancy that God takes men by the hair of their heads and drags them to Heaven, whether they will or not and that when the time comes, they will, by some irresistible power, without any exercise of thought or reasoning, be compelled to be saved. Such people understand neither man nor God, for man is not to be compelled in this way. He is not a being so controlled—

*“Convince a man against his will.  
He’s of the same opinion still”*

As the old proverb says, “One man may bring a horse to water, but 20 men cannot make him drink.” So, a man may be brought to know what repentance is and to understand what Christ is, but no man can make another man lay hold upon Christ. No, God Himself does not do it by compulsion. He has respect unto man as a reasoning creature. God never acts with men as though they were blocks of wood, or senseless stones. Having made them men, He does not violate their manhood. Having determined by man to glorify Himself, He uses means to show forth His Glory—not such as are fit for beasts, or for inanimate nature, but such as are adapted to the constitution of man. My text says as much as this, “I drew them with cords”—not the cords that are fit for bulls, but, “with cords of a man”—not the cart ropes with which men would draw a cart, but the cords with which a man would draw a man and, as if to explain Himself, the Lord puts it, “I drew them with bands of love.” Love is that mighty Power which acts upon man! There must be loving appeals to the different parts of his nature, and so he shall be constrained by Sovereign Grace.

Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn—but it is equally true that God draws no man contrary to the constitution of man. His methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is and He acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that He uses, are “cords of a man.” The bands He employs are “bands of love.”

This is clear enough. Now I am about to try—and may the Lord enable me—to show you some of these cords, these bands, which the Lord fastens around the hearts of sinners. I may be the means in His hands of putting these cords around you, but I cannot pull them after they are on. It is one thing to put the rope on, but another thing to draw with all one’s might at that rope. So it may be that I shall introduce the arguments and, by the prayers of the faithful now present, God will be pleased, in His Infinite Mercy, to pull these cords and that your soul will be sweetly drawn, with full consent, with the blessed yielding of your will to come and lay hold upon eternal life!

I. First, some are drawn to Christ by seeing the happiness of true Believers.  
A true Believer is the happiest being out of Heaven. In some respects, he is superior to an angel, for he has a brighter hope and a grander destiny than even cherubim and seraphim can know. He is one with Christ, which an angel never was. He is a son of God and has the Spirit of Adoption within him, which a cherub never had. There are some Christians who show this happiness in their lives. Watch them and you will always find them cheerful. If, for a moment, a cloud should pass over their brow, it is but for a moment—and soon they rejoice again. I know such people, and glad am I to think that I ever came across their path. Wherever they go, they make sunshine. Into whatever company they come, it is as if an angel shook his wings. Let them talk when they may, it is always for the comfort of others—with kindness upon their lips and the law of love within their hearts! Many a young person, watching such Christians as these, is led to say, “I wish I were as happy, I wish I were as joyful as they are. They always have a smile upon their face.” And I do not doubt that many have been brought to lay hold on Jesus through being drawn by that band of love!  
And let me say to you, dear Friend, that this is a most fitting cord with which to draw you, for if you would know the sweets of life, if you would have peace like a river, if you would have a peace that shall be with you in the morning and go with you into your business—that shall be with you at night and close your eyes in tranquil slumber—a peace that shall enable you to live and shall strengthen you in the prospect of death—no, that shall make you sing in the midst of the black and chill stream—be a Christian! My testimony is that if I had to die like a dog. If this life were all and there were no hereafter, I would prefer to be a Christian for the joy and peace which, in this present life, godliness will afford. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” It has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. You would be happy, young man? Then do not kill your happiness. You would have a bright eye? Then do not put it out. You would rejoice with unspeakable joy? Then do not go into those places where sorrow is sure to follow your every act. Would you be happy? Come to Jesus! Let this band of love sweetly draw you.  
Another band of love—it was the one which brought me to the Savior— is the sense of the security of God’s people, as a desire to be as secure as they are. I do not know what may be the peculiarity of my constitution, but I have always loved safe things. I have not, that I know of, one grain of speculation in my nature. Safe things—things that I can see to be made of rock and that will bear the test of time—I lay hold on with eagerness. I was reasoning thus in my boyish spirit—Scripture tells me that he that believes in Christ shall never perish. Then, if I believe in Jesus, I shall be safe for time and for eternity, too! There will be no fear of my ever being in Hell. I shall run no risk as to my eternal state—that will be secure forever. I shall have the certainty that when my eyes are closed in death, I shall see the face of Christ and behold Him in Glory. Whenever I heard the Doctrine of the Final Preservation of the Saints preached, my mouth used to water and I used to long to be a child of God! When I heard the old saints sing that hymn—  
*“My name from the palms of His hands  
Eternity will not erase!  
Impressed on His heart it remains  
In marks of indelible Grace.  
Yes, I to the end shall endure  
As sure as the earnest is given!  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven”—*

my heart was as if it would leap out of this body, and I would cry to God, “Oh, that I had a part and lot in such a salvation as that!” Now, young man, what do you think of this band of love? Do you not think there is something reasonable and something powerful in it—to secure yourself against all risk of eternal ruin and that, by the Grace of God, in a moment? “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” What do you say to this? Does not this Truth of God attract you? Does not this band draw you? Lord, draw the sinner by the sweet allurement of security, and let him say, “I will lay hold on Christ tonight.”

Certain Christians will tell you that they were first drawn to Christ by the holiness of godly relatives—not so much by their happiness as by their holiness. There is an Eastern fable that a man, wishing to attract all the doves from the neighboring dovecotes into his own, took a dove and smeared her wings with sweet perfume. Away she flew and all her fellow doves observed her and, attracted by the sweet incense, flew after her and the dovecote was soon full. There are some Christians of that sort. They have had their wings smeared with the precious ointment of likeness to Jesus—and wherever they go, such is their kindness and their consistency, their gentleness and yet their honesty, their lovely spirit and yet their boldness for Jesus—that others take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus! And they say, “Where does He dwell, for I would gladly see Him and love Him, too? I am afraid I cannot attract you, Sinner, in such a charming way as that, but I would have you read the lives of godly men. Study the actions, perhaps, of your own mother. Is she dead? Then remember what she used to be. What her life of devotedness to God was. And I charge you, by the love of God, by her many prayers and tears, by the pity of her soul and the yearning of her heart towards you, let your mother’s example be one of the bands of love to draw you towards God! Lord, pull at that cord! Lord, pull at that cord! If the cord is around you and the Lord will pull at it, I shall have good hope that you will close with Christ tonight!

You see, I only show you the cord and then leave it, hoping that perhaps one or another may be taken by its power. Now for another. I believe that not a few are brought to Christ by gratitude for mercies received. The sailor has escaped from shipwreck, or, perhaps, even in the River Thames he has had many a narrow escape for his life. The sportsman has had his gun burst in his hand and yet he has been unharmed. The traveler has escaped from a terrific railway crash— himself picked out of the debris of the broken carriages unhurt. The parent has seen his children, one after another, laid upon a bed of sickness with fever, but yet they have all been spared. Or he, himself, has had loss upon loss in business, till at last it seemed as if a crash must come—but just then God interposed in a gracious Providence and a strong tide of prosperity set in! Some have thought over these things and said, “Is God so good to us, and shall we not love Him? Shall we live every day despising Him who thus tenderly watches over us and graciously provides for our needs?” O Sirs, I think this band of love ought to fall about some of you! How good God has been to you, dear Hearer! I will not tell your case out in public, but when you have sometimes talked with a friend, you have said, “How graciously has Providence dealt with me!” Give the Lord your heart, young man! Surely you can do no less for such favor as He has shown you! Mother, give Jesus your heart! He well deserves it, for He has spared it from being broken. Woman, consecrate— may the Lord help you to do it!—consecrate your heart’s warmest affections to Him who has thus generously dealt with you in Providence. He deserves it, does He not? Will you be guilty of ingratitude? Is there not something within you that says, “Stay no longer an enemy to so kind a Friend, but be reconciled to Him. Be reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” May that cord lay hold of some of you—and may God draw it and so attract you to Himself!

Persons whose characteristic is thinking rather than loving are often caught by another cord. I do not know what may be your mode of thinking of things, but it strikes me that if I had not laid hold of Christ, if anybody should meet me and say, “The religion of Christ is the most reasonable religion in the world,” I should lend him my ear for a little time and ask him to prove it to me. I have frequently caught the ears of travelers and held them fast bound when I have tried to show the entire reasonableness of the plan of salvation. God is just, that is taken for granted. If God is just, sin must be punished—that is clear. Then, how can God be just and yet not punish the sinner? That is the question and the Gospel answers that question! It declares that Christ, the Son of God, became a Man. That He stood in the place of such men as were chosen of God to be saved. These men may be known by their believing in Christ. Christ stood, then, in the place and of those whom I will now call Believers. He suffered at God’s hand everything that was due to God from them. No, He did more. Inasmuch as they were bound to keep God’s Law, but could not do it, Christ kept it for them and now, what Christ did becomes theirs by an act of faith. They trust Christ to save them. Christ’s sufferings are put in the place of their being sent to Hell and they are justly delivered from their sins. Christ’s righteousness is put in the place of their keeping the Law of God, and they are justly rewarded with a place in Paradise, as if they had themselves been perfectly holy!

Now, it strikes me that this looks reasonable enough. In everyday life we see the same thing done. A man is drawn for the militia—he pays for a substitute and he goes free. A man owes a debt. Some friend comes in and discharges the bill for him—and he is clear. The ends of justice are answered through substitution. There seems to me to be something so unique about the whole affair of God taking the place of man, and God’s suffering in man’s form for man, that Justice may by no means be marred, that my reason falls down at the feet of this great mystery, and cries, “I would have an interest in it! Lord, let me be one of those for whom Jesus died! Let me have the peace which springs from a complete Atonement worked out by Jesus Christ!” My Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could draw you with this cord, but I cannot. I can only show you this cord and tell you how well it would draw you. If you reject it, your blood shall be upon your own head. I know too well you will reject it unless the mighty hand of God shall begin to tug at that band of love and draw you to Jesus!

Far larger numbers, however, are doubtless attracted to Jesus by a sense of His exceeding great love. It is not so much the reasonableness of the Atonement, as the love of God which shines in it which seems to attract many souls. There once lived, in the city of London, a rich merchant, a man of generous spirit, a Lollard, one of those who were subjected to fines, imprisonment and even death for the Truth’s sake. Near him there lived a miserable cobbler—a poor, mean, despicable creature. The merchant, for some reason unknown, had taken a very great liking to the poor cobbler and was in the habit of giving him all his work to do and recommending him to many friends. And as this man would not always work as he should, when the merchant saw his family in any need, he would send them meat from his own table and frequently he clothed his children. Well, notwithstanding that he had acted thus— had often advanced him sums of money and had acted with great kindness—a reward was offered to anyone who would betray a Lollard, or would point out such person or persons as read the Bible, to the magistrates. The cobbler, to obtain this reward, went to the magistrates and betrayed the merchant. As God would have it, however, through some skillful advocate, the merchant escaped. He forgave—freely forgave the cobbler and never said a word to him about it. But in the streets the cobbler would always turn his head the other way and try to get out of the way of the man whom he felt he had so grievously ill-treated. Still, the merchant never altered his treatment of him, but sent him meat as usual and attended to his wife and children if they were sick, the same as before, but he never could get the cobbler to give him a good word. If he did speak, it was to abuse him.

One day, in a very narrow lane in the city—for the streets were narrow and still narrower were the lanes—the merchant saw the cobbler coming. And he thought, “Now is my time. He cannot pass me, now, without facing me.” Of course, the cobbler grew very red in the face and made up his mind that if the merchant should begin to upbraid him, he would answer him in as saucy a manner as possible. But when the merchant came close to him, he said, “I am very sorry that you shun me. I have no ill-will towards you. I would do anything for you or for your family, and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be friends with you.” The cobbler stopped and presently a moisture suffused his eyes and, soon a flood of tears poured down his cheeks, and he said, “I have been such a base wretch to you that I hated you, for I thought that you would never forgive me. I have always shunned you, but when you talk to me like this, I cannot be your enemy any longer. Pray, Sir, assure me of your forgiveness.” Forthwith, he began to fall upon his knees.

That was the way to draw him with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love! And, in a nobler sense, this is just what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. He has offered you mercy. He has proclaimed to you eternal life and you reject it. Every day He gives you of His bounties, makes you to feed at the table of His Providence and clothes you with the livery of His generosity. And yet, after all this, some of you curse Him! You break His Sabbaths. You despise His name. You are His enemies. Yet, what does He say to you? He loves you still—He follows you, not to rebuke you, but to woo you and to entreat you to come to Him and have Him for your Friend. Can you hold out against my Master’s wounds? Can you stand out against His bloody sweat? Can you resist His passion? Oh, by the name of Him who bowed His head upon the tree, who cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” can you hold out against Him? If He had not died for me, I think I must love Him for dying for other people. But He has died for you—you may know this if so you trust Him, now, with your soul, just as you are. This is the evidence that He died for you! Oh, may God enable you to trust Jesus now, drawing you with this band of love, this cord of a man!

II. There are many more cords, but my strength fails me and, therefore, I will mention but one more. The privileges which a Christian enjoys ought to draw some of you to Christ. Do you know what will take place in these aisles tonight if the Holy Spirit should lead a sinner to Christ? I will tell you. There he stands, he is as vile a sinner as walks this earth. He knows it. He is wretched. He has a burden on his back. If that man is led to look to Christ tonight, his sins will roll off from him at once! They will roll into the sepulcher of Jesus and be buried and never have a resurrection. In a moment, he will be clothed from head to foot with white raiment! The kiss of a Father’s love shall be upon his cheek and the seal of the Spirit’s witness shall be fixed upon his brow. He shall be made, tonight, a child of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. His feet shall be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. He shall be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus. He shall go to his house, not wretched, but as though he could dance for joy the whole way home! And when he gets home, it may be never so poor a cottage, but it will look brighter than it ever did before. His children he will look upon as jewels entrusted to his care, instead of being burdens, as he once said they were. His very trials he will come to thank God for, while his ordinary mercies will be sweetened and made very dear to him. The man, instead of leading a life like a Hell upon earth, will live a life like Heaven begun below—and all this shall take place in an instant!

No, that is not all! The effect of this night’s work shall tell throughout his entire life. He shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus so that, when the time shall come that his hair is gray and he lies stretched upon his bed and breathes out his life, he shall, in his last moments, look back upon a path that has been lit with the Grace of God—and look forward across the black river to an eternity in which the Glory of God shall shine forth with as great a fullness as a creature can endure! This is enough, surely, to tempt a sinner to come to Jesus! This must be a strong cord to draw him! O Man, Jesus will accept you! He will accept you now, just as you are! He has received millions like you already! Let Heaven’s music witness to the fact. Millions more like you He is still willing to receive— some of us can bear our testimony to them. Come and welcome, then, come and welcome! Never mind your rags, prodigal, a Father’s hand will take them off! Never mind your filth! Never mind having fed the swine. Come as you are! Just come now!

I hear somebody saying, “Well, I am inclined to come, but I do not know what it means to come to Christ.” To come to Christ is to trust Him. You have been trying to save yourself—do not try any more. You have been going to church, or going to chapel, and you have been trying to keep the Commandments, but you cannot keep them. No man ever did keep them and no man ever will keep them! You have been, in fact, like a prisoner who has been sentenced to hard labor—you have been walking upon the treadmill in order to get to the stars and you are not an inch higher! After all you have done, you are just where you were. Now, leave this off—have done with it. Christ kept the Law! Let His keeping it stand in the place of your keeping it. Christ suffered the anger of God—let His sufferings stand to you in the place of your sufferings. Take Him now, just as you are, and believe that He can save you—no, that He WILL save you and trust Him to do it! This is all the Gospel I have to preach. Very seldom do I finish a sermon without going over this simple matter of trusting Christ. There are some, perhaps, who enquire for something new. I cannot give it to you—I have not got anything new, but only the same old story over and over again! Trust Christ, and you are saved!

We have heard, in our church meetings, that on several occasions when, at the close of the sermon, I have merely said as much as that, it has been enough to lead sinners into life and peace and, therefore, I will keep on at it. My heart yearns to bring some of you to Christ tonight, but I know not what arguments to use with you. You surely do not wish to be damned. Surely you cannot make the calculation that the short pleasures of this world are worth an eternity of torment! But damned you must be unless you lay hold on Christ. Does not this cord draw you? Surely you want to be in Heaven. You have some desire toward that better land in the realms of the hereafter, but you cannot be there except you lay hold on Christ! Will not this cord of love draw you? Surely it would be a good thing to get rid of fear, suspense, doubt and anxiety. It would be a good thing to be able to lay your head on your pillow and say, “I do not care whether I wake or not.” To go to sea and reckon it a matter of perfect indifference whenever you reach land or not. No, sometimes the wish with us to depart preponderates over that of remaining here! Do you not wish for that? But you can never have it except by laying hold on Christ. Will not this draw you?

My dear Hearers, you whose face I look upon every Sabbath, and into whose ears this poor, dry voice has spoken so many hundreds of times, we do not wish to be parted. I know that to some of you, this is the very happiest, as well as the holiest spot you ever occupied. You love to be here. I am glad you do and I am glad to see you. I do not like to be separated from you. When any of you move to other towns, it gives me pain to miss your faces. I hope we shall not be separated in the world to come. My beloved Friends around me, who have been in Christ these many years, you also love them. We do not wish to be divided. I would like that all this ship’s company should meet on the other side of the sea. I do not know one among you that I could spare. I would not like to miss any of you who sit yonder, nor any of you who sit near—neither the youngest nor the oldest of you. Well, but we cannot meet in Heaven unless we meet in Jesus Christ! We cannot meet father, mother, pastor and friends unless we have a good hope through Jesus Christ our Lord! Will not that band of love draw you? Mother, from the railings of Heaven, a little angel-child is looking down tonight, beckoning with his finger. He is looking out for you and he is saying, “Mother, follow your baby to Heaven.” Father, your daughter charged you, as she died, to give your heart to Christ—and from her seat in Heaven her charge comes down to you with as great force as it came from her sick-bed, I trust, “Follow me, follow me to Heaven!” Friends who have gone before—godly ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus—in one chorus, say to you, “Come up here! Come up here for we, without you, cannot be made perfect.” Will not this band of love draw you? Oh, will not this cord of a man lay hold upon you and bring you to the Savior’s feet? The Lord grant that it may, but, as I have said, I can only show you the cords. It is God’s work to pull them— and they will be pulled if the saints will join in earnest prayer, invoking a blessing upon sinners. The Lord grant it, for His love’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HOSEA 11; 14.

Hosea 11:1. When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt. God’s love was very early love. He began with the nation of Israel when it was a mere handful of men in Egypt. There He multiplied them and, in due time, He called them out from among the heathen. God’s love to some of us manifested itself at a very early period of our lives when we were yet children. It is among our most joyous memories that we have known the Lord from our youth up. Happy man, happy woman, of whom God can say, as He said concerning His ancient people, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt.”

2. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. The nation of Israel did not fulfill the promise of its youth. It was not faithful to God. The people heard from the lips of Moses the command, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord,” yet they continually turned aside to the idols of the nations. Have not some of us, also, although we have been loved by God, been faithless to Him? Can we not look back, with great regret and sorrow, upon our many stumbling and backslidings? If it is so, let us repent of our sin and never repeat it.

3. I taught Ephraim also to go. Just as nurses teach children to walk— “I taught Ephraim also to go.”  
3. Taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. God has done great things for many of us who, possibly, have never noticed His hand at work on our behalf. Lives which were in great peril have been saved, yet the goodness of God has never been acknowledged by those whom He has delivered. Men have been raised up from beds of sickness, yet the great and good Healer has never been thanked for what He has done for them. Oh, how sad it is that God should do so much for us, and yet that we should not even thank Him for doing it!  
4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. As men do with the bulls that have been plowing, lifting the yoke from them, and giving them rest and food before they have to begin plowing again. So did God to Israel, and so has He done to us. He lifted from us the heavy burden of our sin and He gave us rest and heavenly food. But oh, what a poor return we have made for all the thoughtful kindness of our God! If any man here imagines that he can boast of his conduct towards his God, he does not feel as I do. Rather dear Friends, I think that we all ought to humble ourselves in the Lord’s Presence when we remember what ill returns we have made for all that He has done for us.  
5, 6. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. All the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. If men will sin, they shall suffer. And God’s people will be the first to suffer for their sins against the Lord, as He said by the mouth of the Prophet Amos, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” If a man lets other men’s children go unchastened, he will chastise his own children, if he is worthy of the name of a father. And God will do the same. He will not destroy us, but He will chasten us if we backslide from Him.  
7, 8. And My people are bent to backsliding from Me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him. How shall I give you up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver you, Israel? There seems to be a contest in the heart of God. At least that is how He describes it Himself, as though Mercy pleaded with Justice, and Love contended with Wrath— “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel?  
8. How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? “I cannot destroy you, as I destroyed the guilty cities of the plain in the days of old.”  
8. My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. O Backsliders, if God’s repentings are kindled, will not yours also be kindled? If you have left Him and yet He will not give you up, will you give Him up? Will you not return to Him? Listen to His own words.  
9. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man. What a mercy this is for us! If the Lord had been man, He would have cast us off long ago. But, as He is God, He is infinitely patient and He loves to forgive. “I am God, and not man.”  
9, 10. The Holy One in the midst of you: and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after the LORD. See what His almighty Grace will do to make these wanderers come back to Him.  
10. He shall roar like a lion: when He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. Even His roaring like a lion will only make them tremblingly come back to Him.  
11, 12. They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, says the LORD. Ephraim compasses Me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints. Hosea 14:1. O Israel, return unto the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Let anyone here who has turned aside from the Lord, hear these tender pleading words and then yield to Him who utters them! God speaks, not to condemn, but to comfort. He would gladly allure you back to Him with His gracious words of love! “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.”

2. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord. But the poor penitent cries, “Alas, Lord, I do not know what to say. So God puts in the sinner’s mouth the very words he is to utter.

2. Say unto Him. Take away all iniquity. That is where the mischief lies, in your inequity, your turning aside from the path of truth and equity. Say to the Lord, “I do not want to keep any of my iniquity. I desire to be delivered from it altogether.” “Take away all iniquity.”

2. And receive us graciously. “Lord, take us back again! According to the greatness of Your Grace, restore us to Your heart of love and let us dwell where Your children dwell. ‘Receive us graciously.’”

2. So will we render the calves of our lips. That is to say, “We will give You the sacrifice of our praises. We will speak well of Your name. If we have the calves of the stall, we will give them to You, but, in any case, we will give you the calves of our lips.”

3. Asshur shall not save us. They had been accustomed to rely either upon Assyria or upon Egypt. And one of the first signs of their real repentance was that they had given up their false dependences. So, Sinner, you must give up your self-righteousness, your ceremonialism— anything and everything in which you have trusted in place of trusting in the Lord! “Asshur shall not save us.”

3. We will not ride upon horses. In the day of battle, they had trusted in their cavalry. But now, in the time of their repentance, they cry, “We will not ride upon horses.”

3. Neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, you are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy. What a beautiful ending there is to this verse! If any of you are full of sin and full of needs, and have become like orphans who have lost everything and are utterly destitute— if you have none to provide for you, and none to care for you—come to the God of the fatherless and put your trust in Him! “For in You the fatherless finds mercy.” Then follows this gracious promise.

4. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely. Listen to the heavenly music! “I will.” “I will.” When God says, “I will,” you may depend upon it that He will do what He says He will. If you or I say, “I will,” it must be with the proviso, “If it is God’s will, I will do so-and-so.” But God is the almighty King whose least word is a sovereign mandate—“I will heal their backsliding: I will love them freely.”

4. For My anger is turned away from him. If you have come back to the Lord with true penance of heart, He is no longer angry with you, but He is ready to welcome you again.

5. I will be as the dew unto Israel. “Not as fire, not as tempest, but in gentle, yet effectual Grace, I will visit them. I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

5. He shall grow as the lily. “He shall be as beautiful and fair as the lily, though just now he was black as night.”  
5. And cast forth his roots as Lebanon. “He shall be as stable as he is beautiful. Like old Lebanon, the mighty mountain which none can shake, so shall this poor sinner be when I have visited him with My love.”  
6. His branches shall spread. “I will endow him with usefulness and influence.  
6. And his beauty shall be as the olive tree. “I will load him with fruit. He shall have the beauty that belongs to that fat and oily tree, the olive.”  
6. And his smell as Lebanon. God can make the foul, polluted sinner to become fragrant to Him. “His smell shall be as Lebanon”  
7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return. His family, his workers, his neighbors who wandered from the Lord because he wandered, shall get good from his holy influence. His restoration shall be a benediction to them! “They that dwell under his shadow shall return.”  
7. They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. All good things come to a man when God comes to him and he comes to God. Get right with God and you shall get right with all things around you—and you shall be the means of helping to put other people right.  
8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? “He will spontaneously purge himself from the evil things which he once loved. I shall not need to send the hammer to break his idols, but he shall say, out of the fullness of his own heart, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’”  
8, 9. I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise, and he should understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the LORD are right and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressor shall fall therein. Yes, they shall fall even when they are in the right ways—and I know of no falling that is worse than for men to be in the ways of religion and yet to stumble and fall even there! For, if they fall there, where will they not fall?

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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BANDS OF LOVE

NO. 934

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 5, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.”  
Hosea 11:4.**

GOD, by the mouth of His Prophet, is here expostulating with His people for their ungrateful rebellion against Him. He had not treated them in a harsh, tyrannical, overbearing manner, else there might have been some excuse for their revolt. But His rule had always been gentle, tender, and full of pity. Therefore, for them to disobey Him was the very height of wanton wickedness. The Lord had never made His people to suffer hard bondage in mortar and in brick as Pharaoh did, yet we do not find that they raised an insurrection against the Egyptian tyrant. They gave their backs to the burdens, and they bore the lash of the taskmaster without turning upon the hands which oppressed them.

But when the Lord was gracious to them and delivered them out of the house of bondage, they murmured in the wilderness, and were justly called by Moses, “rebels.” They had no such burdens to bear under the government of God as those which loaded the nations under their kings, and yet they willfully determined to have a king for themselves. No taxes were squeezed from them, no servile service was demanded at their hands. Their thank offerings and sacrifices were not ordained upon a scale of oppression. Their liberty was all but boundless—their lives were spent in peace and happiness, every man under his own vine and fig tree—none making them afraid.

Yet, since other nations bowed before the rule of despotic kings, these foolish people were not content till they had raised up between them and the Divine government a ruler who would take their daughters to be confectioners in his kitchen, and their sons to be servants in his court. God bore with their ill manners, and gave them a king in His anger. And then, even under the reign of kings, how graciously the Lord their God treated them! If it was necessary for their punishment to give them up for awhile to foreign dominion, how He soon took away the affliction when they cried unto Him!

Though they were chastised, yet—  
*“His strokes were fewer than their crimes, And lighter than their guilt.”*

The whole dealings of Jehovah with His people Israel were full of matchless tenderness. As a nursing mother with her child, so did God deal gently with His people. Yet, hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! The Lord has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Him. Did a nation ever cast away her gods, even though they were not gods? Were not the heathen faithful to their idols? But Israel was bent on backsliding—her heart was set upon idolatry, and the God of her fathers was disregarded.

Jehovah was despised, and His gentle reign and government she set herself to destroy. This was the complaint against Israel of old. As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. As men were in days of yore, so are they now. God has dealt with us who are His people in an unexampled way of loving kindness and tender mercy, and I fear that to a great extent the recompense we have rendered to Him has been very much like the ungrateful return which He received from the seed of Jacob of old.

This morning I shall ask you to think of the tender dealings of God with you, my Brothers and Sisters, that you may not be as Israel was. But that feeling the power of the Divine gentleness, you may serve your God with a perfect heart, and walk before Him as those should who have partaken of such benefits.

The first thing we shall have to consider is the Lords way of leading His people to their duty—“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.” Secondly, the Lord’s Grace in giving His people rest—“I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws.” And, thirdly, the suitable nourishment which He gives to His chosen—“I laid meat unto them.”

I. First, then, THE LORD’S WAY OF EXCITING HIS PEOPLE TO ACTION. We who have believed in Jesus Christ have passed into a new condition with regard to God. We were once, at the very best, only His subjects, and having sinned we were scarcely fit to be called subjects, but rebels, traitors—disgraced with high treason. But now, since Divine Grace has renewed us, we are not only his pardoned subjects, but what is far better, wondrous Grace has made us his Beloved sons and daughters! we are now not so much subjects of His crown as we are children of His care.

We are by Grace brought into an entirely different relationship from that of fallen nature, and we are ruled and swayed by motives and regulations altogether unknown to the unregenerate sons of men. The way in which God brings His people to serve Him is that to which I now ask your consideration. It is a way pre-eminently peculiar in its tenderness and kindness. The only cords are cords of a man, and the bands are bands of love. In the heroic days when Xerxes led his army into Greece, there was a remarkable contrast between the way in which the Persian soldiers and the Grecian warriors were urged to combat.

The unwilling hosts of Persia were driven to the conflict by blows and stripes from their officers. They were either mercenaries or cowards, and they feared close contact with their opponents. They were driven to their duty as beasts are, with rods and goads. On the other side, the armies of Greece were small, but each man was a patriot and a hero. When they marched to the conflict it was with quick and joyous step, with a martial song upon their lips—and when they neared the foe they rushed upon his ranks with an enthusiasm and a fury which nothing could withstand.

No whips were needed for the Spartan men-at-arms. Like high-spirited chargers they would have resented the touch thereof. They were drawn to battle by the cords of a man, and by the bands of patriotic love they were bound to hold their posts at all hazards. “Spartans,” would their leaders say, “your fathers disdained to number the Persians with the dogs of their flock and will you be their slaves? Say, is it not better to die as freemen than to live as slaves? What if your foes are many, yet one lion can tear in pieces a far-reaching flock of sheep. Use well your weapons this day! Avenge your slaughtered sires, and fill the courts of Shushan with confusion and lamentation!”

Such were the manly arguments which drew the Lacedaemonians and Athenians to the fight—not the whips so fit for beasts, nor the cords so suitable for cattle. This illustration may set forth the difference between the world’s service of bondage, and the Christian’s religion of love—the worldling is flogged to his duty with fear, and terror, and dread. But the Christian man is touched by motives which appeal to his highest nature—he is affected by motives so dignified as to be worthy of the sons of God. He is not driven as a beast—he is moved as a man.

Let me explain. In the first place, the Christian man never works to obtain eternal life. He knows it to be a gift and receives it as such. The unconverted man thinks that there are certain things which he ought to do and by the doing of which he will be saved. And he selfishly, if he is awakened, sets to work to perform these actions with more or less of perseverance in the hope of obtaining pardon for sin and salvation for his soul. Being a son of the bondwoman, he finds his way to Sinai.

But the Christian man knows that salvation is not the wage of service, but that life is the gift of God, the dowry bestowed on us by Sovereign Grace—and therefore he never looks for salvation from the Law. As a child of the promise, he wins the New Jerusalem by birthright and by the Covenant of Grace. Legal motives cease to affect the instructed Believer— while he was out of Christ he did, in his ignorance, seek to work out a righteousness of his own—but now he has come to Christ and seen everlasting righteousness finished and brought in. He is saved—he knows that he is saved, and he knows also that he is saved by the merits of Another.

Now, being saved, he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, not that he may save himself, but because he knows he is saved, since God Himself is working in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure. If that man is engaged as a minister of Christ he will never preach as though his salvation depended on his preaching. Let him be occupied in his trade or calling, he will not be honest and sober, conscientious and devout, because he thinks to save himself thereby. No, verily, he has turned his hope away from his own works to the work of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and therefore that motive of trying to win salvation by merit is disgusting to him.

He is so far from yielding to its power, that he utterly loathes it. Let such arguments affect the ungenerous spirits that can live for themselves, but over us it has no power. We are saved, and now being saved. Out of love to the Father and the Well-Beloved we are impelled to service.

Neither does a Christian seek to serve God with the idea that he is to keep himself in spiritual life by such service. I have heard it more or less insinuated that although we are saved at present, and have eternal life in present possession, yet all depends on our own faithfulness. And if we are not what we should be, eternal life will die out and the Divine Grace given will be withdrawn. I must confess I find in the Bible nothing of the kind, neither do I pray, nor read the Scriptures, nor attend Divine worship with the remotest idea of sustaining my own spiritual life.

The spiritual life which the Holy Spirit gives us cannot die. It is eternal as the life of God. It is a living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. A true Believer in Christ is most safe, for he can never perish, neither can any pluck him out of Christ’s hands. The dread of being driven out of the Divine family is not a motive capable of stirring his heavenly nature. He knows that because Jesus lives he shall live also. He is not forced to holiness by dread of being forsaken of his God. He does not believe such a thing to be possible. He leaves a motive so slavish to the poor sons of Hagar who, like their bondslave mother, cannot dwell with the child of promise.

As for the Christian, other and higher considerations rule him. He is drawn by the cords of a man and by the bands of love. Further, you will see the gentleness of the way in which God calls His people to duty in the fact that He is pleased to accept their service even when it is, in itself, far from being at all worthy of His smile. O my Brethren, if you and I had to be saved or to be preserved in spiritual life by our doings, then nothing but perfection in service could answer our turn. And every time we felt that what we had done was marred and imperfect we should be full of despair.

But now we know that we are already saved, and are forever safe, since nothing remains unfinished in the work which justifies us. We bring to the Lord the loving offerings of our hearts, and if they are imperfect we water with our tears those imperfections. We know that He reads our hearts and takes our works not for what they are in themselves but for what they are in Christ. He knows what we would make them if we could. He accepts them as if they were what we mean them to be. He takes the will for the deed often, and He takes the half deed often for the whole.

And when Justice would condemn the action as sinful, for it is so imperfect, the mercy of our Father accepts the action in the Beloved, because He knows what we meant it to be. And though our fault has marred it, yet He knows how our hearts sought to honor Him. Oh, it is such a blessed thing to remember that though the Law cannot accept anything but what is perfect, yet God, in the Gospel, as we come to Him as saved souls, accepts our imperfect things!

Why, there is our love! How cold it often is, and yet Jesus Christ takes pleasure in our love! Then, again, our faith, I must almost call it unbelief, it is often so weak—and yet though it is as a grain of mustard seed, Jesus accepts it, and works wonders by it. As for our poor prayers, often so broken with so many distracted thoughts in them, and so povertystricken in importunity and earnestness, yet our dear Lord takes them, washes them in His blood, adds His own merit to them, and they come up as a sweet savor before the Most High. It is delightfully encouraging to know that in our sincere but feeble service the Scripture is fulfilled—“a bruised reed shall He not break, and a smoking flax will He not quench.” Even our green ears of corn may be laid on the altar. If we cannot bring a lamb, our turtle doves and two young pigeons shall be received.

Then, further, our gracious Lord gives us promises of help in all holy exercises. Under the Law it is, “Make the bricks,” but there is no promise of straw. Under the Gospel we have help for every time of need. You know how it is written, “The Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” Our good works are rather God’s works than ours, in so far as they are good. He first of all gives us good works, and then rewards us for them, as if they were all our own. “You have worked all our works in us.” “I am like a green fir tree, from me is your fruit found.”

Yes, blessed be God, all true fruit of Grace comes from Him. Is not this a charmingly powerful motive to service? Though it is so different from the reasons which drag on the sons of men, do we not feel it to be mightily operative? The Lord will help us in the service, and render unto man according to his work. He has said, “Fear you not. For I am with you: be not dismayed. For I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

Furthermore, as if more fully to show how we are drawn with the cords of love and bands of a man, all the motives which are used to impel us to service appeal to that which is most honorable in our regenerated manhood. We have frequently heard the objection of those who oppose the Doctrines of Grace, “If I believed as you do, that all true Believers are saved, and shall never perish, I should live as I like.” Our answer is, “It is highly probable that you, as an unconverted man, would do so. But if you had received a new nature, and all your tastes were changed, matters would stand otherwise.”

For a Christian to live as he likes would be to but live an absolutely pure and perfectly holy life. The Holy Spirit implants within His people at their new birth a dignity and nobility of character to which they were utterly strangers before. And they would not, and could not, sin as once they did. They cannot sin as before because they are born of God. The things which they took pleasure in before, now seem to them groveling and despicable. They seek after higher and nobler objects. I believe that Gospel motives, if they were addressed to all mankind promiscuously, would prove a failure as much as if we tried to excite enthusiasm in all men by poetic imagery or profoundly philosophical argument.

But Gospel motives to God’s people are as nails fastened in a sure place. They are suitable, and therefore effectual. You could not hope to govern the nation by the same ruler and methods with which, as a father, you order your family. In your family it may be there is not even a rod, certainly there is no policeman, no prison, no black cap. Children are ruled by a father on a scheme essentially different from the rule of magistrates and kings. There are maxims of courts of legislature which would never be tolerated in the home of love. Just so, within the family of God there are no penal inflictions, no words of threat such as must be employed by the great King when He deals with the mass of His rebellious subjects.

You are not under the Law, else there would be judgment and curses for you. You are under Grace, and now the motives by which you are to be moved are such as might not affect others, but which, since you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, most powerfully affect you. It is a great thing for a man to feel that God does not now appeal to him as He would to an ordinary person, but that having given him a new nature, He addresses him on higher grounds. “I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

We have known of a boy in school whose conduct has been greatly improved when the master has had wisdom enough to appeal to his better qualities. When the lad has felt that his age, or superiority of position have demanded better things of him, he has yielded to the motive. In dealing with His people, the Lord appeals to their higher characteristics. He does not say to the regenerate man as He did to Adam, “Do this and you shall die.” He says to him, “He that believes in Christ shall never die. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I have loved you with an everlasting love: what, then, is your return for all this love?”

The really saved soul, overwhelmed with gratitude, exclaims, “My God, my Father, I cannot sin, I must live as You would have me, I must serve You. Such love as this touches my heart, it stirs everything that is noble that You have implanted in me. Tell me what Your will is, and whether I have to bear it or to do it, I will delight in it if You will give me allsufficient Grace.” Yes, the Lord always appeals to the higher points in the Christian’s constitution, and thus He draws us with the cords of a man, with bands of love.

Let us add that love is always the great master force in moving Christians. Terror is but little used—threats and wrath are laid aside. Gospel arguments are molded in this fashion, “The love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not from now on live unto themselves.” Jesus seems to plead, “I have made you, even you, poor defiled one, to be precious in My sight. Do you love Me? If you love Me, keep My commandments, and feed My sheep.

“I have bought you, even with My heart’s blood have I redeemed you out from among the people, and from the chief men thereof. Does not My love constrain you? Will you not give yourself to My service, to promote My Glory?” All-conquering Love is master of all our forces. He is the Commander-in-Chief of all our powers. When the love of God is manifestly shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, our duty becomes our highest delight, and the work of God our highest joy. Rutherford, speaking of how his Lord encouraged him with sweet fellowship while he was serving Him, says in his quaint way, “When my Master sends me on His errands, He often gives me a trinket for myself.”

By which he means, as sure as ever God sent him on His errands He gave him a penny for reward, as we do to boys. How often have our prayers for others returned into our own bosom? How often do we find it a blessing to bless others? Have you not found it so? You have been trying to comfort God’s people, and the comfort has been reflected upon your own soul. You watered others and thereby were watered yourself. You were trying to praise God—you were not thinking of yourself—but as you sang you obtained a blessing, your heart mounted higher and higher, and you blessed your Lord with an exhilaration of spirit you had not known before.

The praises of God’s people are poured forth, even as larks give forth their songs. They sing, not because they ought, but because they delight to sing. They fulfill their nature, and find in it their happiness. Virtue and holiness become to God’s people a delight—they take pleasure in it— sin is hateful, but holiness is lovely to them. As it will be their highest Heaven to be perfect, so now their nearest approach to Heaven is when they are by God’s Spirit sanctified and led into nearness to Christ.

Thus I have, without dwelling on the mere words, given you the sense of the first clause of the text, “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.” The impelling, urging powers that lead Christians on to consecration and holiness are never those which befit slaves or carnal minds. They are such as are worthy of the dignity of the sons of God, and they are full of tenderness, and kindness, and love. For the gentleness of God is great towards His people.

II. I shall now ask you to turn to the next sentence, and observe HOW THE LORD GIVES REST TO HIS PEOPLE—“I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.”

Sometimes a common illustration may be more forcible than a more refined comparison, and I shall give you in a moment a very homely one. The passage here means that God treated His people as farmers. When they are merciful, they treat the bullocks with which they have been plowing, gently. They lift off the yoke from them, withdraw the muzzle, and then give them their food. But our explanation of it shall be a sight more common. Out there in yonder street stand still and observe. Yonder inn is a common halting place. Watch it a moment. Here comes a huge, heavily loaded van.

Three or four steaming, panting horses have been laboriously dragging along this mountain on wheels. They are greatly in need of rest. The word is given, and the poor animals gladly stand still. Down comes the driver from his box. The reins are dropped and he proceeds to take the bits out of the poor creatures’ mouths. How pleased they seem to be to get rid of the bits which have been so long between their jaws. Nor is the rest all the horses get, they shall have a draught of water, or the well-filled nose bags shall be fitted upon them and they shall rest and feed.

I thought of this text when I looked at that sight the other day. It is the exact explanation of the text, “I was to them as they that take off the yoke from their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.” As you see wearied horses contentedly and happily take their rest and feed, you have before you precisely what the Prophet meant. God takes the bits out of His servants’ mouths, the yoke from their backs, brings them their food, and bids them feed and rest and be happy.

Let us take, then, the first point, “I was to them as they that take off the yoke.” Now, the Lord has taken off from His people a great many yokes, or the same yoke under different aspects. He has taken many bits out of their mouths. First, there was the old yoke of ceremonialism— what a burden that must have been to Believers under the Law! There was this they must not eat, and that they must not drink, and the other they must not wear. There was this to be done on one day and that to be done on another. It was always touch not, taste not, handle not, and so on. They were environed and surrounded with all sorts of legislation, and hedged in by laws about their houses, their clothes, their beds, their drinking vessels. Legislation about birds and beasts and fishes—about everything, in fact.

But now Christ has taken off that yoke from us, and “touch not, taste not, handle not,” stands as an abrogated Law. We have given to us a liberty, a freedom from every yoke of bondage—and though there are some who are for bringing in new ceremonial laws, with holy places, and holy days, and holy things, and priests, and rites, and ceremonies—and I know not what—these are the children of the bondwoman, we regard them not. Under the Law of Liberty which Christ has proclaimed, we are free, indeed—

*“Wherever we seek Him He is found, And every place is hallowed ground.”*

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused. Now it is the heart that is holy or unholy, and not the thing. What our Lord has cleansed, we count no longer common or unclean. Carnal ordinances of outward things are put away as childish things. We worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Better still, He has taken from us the yoke of the Law. Oh, do you not remember, Beloved, when you carried that yoke because you were trying to save yourselves by your own works? You supposed that if this sin were relinquished, and that virtue were pursued, you might at length grow acceptable with God. But after months and perhaps years of such attempts, you found yourself as far off from acceptance as ever—as indeed you would have been if you had lived ten thousand years—for by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.

All that the Law can do is to bring a knowledge of sin, but it is not capable of bringing acceptance with God. At that time, how the yoke of Divine Justice pressed upon you heavily! You felt you had sinned and that God must punish sin, and you did not understand that He had laid help upon One that is mighty to save. This yoke galled you very terribly, but, do you remember when He took away the yoke from you, and removed this bit from your mouth? Well does my soul remember it, when I saw Jesus put under the Law for me, that I might no more be under the Law.

When I saw Him fulfill it, and satisfy all its demands that I might be absolved—oh, what joy to perceive that I was not condemned! The Law had no more dominion over me, and I was not under the Law but under Grace! Everyone here who has believed in Jesus has received just such liberty as this—and now the Law does not alarm you, neither does your past sin make you to tremble—the Law is satisfied, your sin is pardoned, and God has given you this blessed rest, this quiet resting-place.

Further than this, you have also been delivered from the yoke of sin. Time was when we strove to be rid of sin. We had been made to see its evil nature, and we were sufficiently alarmed and awakened to see that Hell would follow upon it. Therefore we desired to escape from evil habits—but, alas, we found that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, and the leopard his spots—than we cease to do evil. Our works, though we strove to make them good, remained imperfect. The old leprosy tainted all.

Sin, like an iron net, encompassed us and held us fast. Nor could we be free, struggle as we might, until that pierced hand which took away the guilt of sin also released us from its power. By Jesus’ help habits which seemed invincible were soon overcome. Customs which bound us fast were broken as Samson snapped the green withes. We were free by the power of God’s Holy Spirit from the service of Satan and were enlisted under the banner of Christ. Oh, what freedom is this! May the Lord continue to give us more and more of it till the last link of sin’s cruel chain shall be removed and our freedom of holiness shall be complete.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope that to many of you God has also been pleased to give great rest from the yoke of care. We ought not to be burdened with cares, and yet some are so. Our Savior has bid us by the example of the fowls of Heaven, and of the lilies of the field, to leave care to our God. We are told by His servant, the Apostle, to be “careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication to make known our requests unto God.”

A minister was in a house where there were some five or six little children who were playing about and making merry noises, and their father said to the minister, “Yes, Sir, they may well be happy. These are their best days, for they have a father to care for them, they have no need to care for themselves.” When that good man went to Church next Sunday he was very much surprised to hear his minister quote his words. He said these were the good times for God’s children, for they had a Father to care for them, and they might be as free from care as little children are. Yes, when we live by faith we are just as free from care as the lambs in the field, or the birds in the woods—casting all our care on Him who cares for us. He that bore the burden of our lifelong sin way well bear the burden of our daily troubles. And He is in this respect to us as one that takes off the yoke from the jaws.

So also, I would add, has the Lord often delivered us from the yoke of fear. There is fear of death which haunts too many. Fear of coming trial alarms others. Fear of I know not what, a sort of indefinable dread comes over not a few. But when we fly to our God, all terrors, whether palpable or impalpable, are scattered like the mists before the wind. When we can but once come to God in Christ, and say, “My God, my Father, my whole trust is in You, and my heart resigns itself to You,” then straightway we can sing —

*“Should earth against my soul engage,  
And hellish darts be hurled,  
Now I can smile at Satan’s rage,  
And face a frowning world.”*

Get near to God, Believer, and you will be calm. Commune with Heaven and be at rest. The peace of God passes all understanding, and it is this which Jesus waits to give you. There is no reason why you should be heavily burdened. Return unto your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

III. And now we will take the last clause, “And I laid meat unto them.” Here we have THE NOURISHMENT WHICH THE LORD GIVES HIS PEOPLE. Humble as my illustration is, I must take you back to it, and point to the nose-bags of the horses, for the illustration is just for our country what is meant by the text. The farmer would put up his fodder to the ox when he took off the yoke. Now observe what it is that God gives His people.

First it is meat. “I laid meat unto them.” Look back on your experience, Christian—see what meat God has made you to live on. No soul ever ate a morsel more dainty than this one Substitution. I do think that this is the grandest Truth in Heaven and earth—Jesus Christ the Just One died for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It is meat to my soul. I can feed on it every day, and all the day. When some of the other Truths of God’s Word seem to be too rich for me, I can always find appetite for this, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Yes, the Lord has given us that Truth for meat.

Then take the word “Covenant,” what meat there is for His people there! He has made a Covenant with us, ordered in all things and sure. In Christ Jesus, God has entered into solemn league and compact with His people, and they are His and shall be His. There is meat for you! Every promise of God’s Word in its turn becomes meat for faith. The doctrine of election—what food is that—what butter in a lordly dish! The doctrine of the immutability of God’s purpose, and the consequent security of His saints! The doctrine of the union of God’s people with Christ, their perfection with Him, their acceptance in the Beloved. Why, here is meat that the world knows not of—meat whereof if a man eats he shall live forever. Yes, Jesus Christ Himself in His blessed Person, what food is He? His flesh and His blood, are they not meat, indeed, and drink, indeed?

But what is meant by this word in the text? “I laid meat unto them.” You see the meat God has given us, but how does He lay it unto us? Why, just as with the ox, the food was not put so low down that he could not reach it, nor so high up that he could not get at it, nor so far away that he could see it but could not feed upon it. “I laid meat unto them.” So God has a way of bringing home precious Truths to His people. He does not put it so low down that they may say, “I never experienced such trouble as that. I was never brought into such depths of soul agony as that, and therefore I cannot enjoy that Truth.”

No, He lays the meat to their experience, so that if they have never had a very deep experience, yet there shall be food convenient for them. Sometimes when I have heard a sermon, I have thought that the preacher put the food too high. I was anxious enough to get at it, but his experience was a happier one than mine, his knowledge of God’s ways more extensive than mine, and his way of putting Truth more elevated than mine—I could not reach his teaching. But you see, God does not place the fodder too high or too low, but He lays meat unto us.

Have you ever found it so? You have said, “That sermon was meant for me. That text, why the Lord seemed to have written it after my troubles happened, just to fit and suit my case.” Mark you, Brethren, the preacher may try to lay meat unto you and yet fail, for though he may think he understands your experience, he may fail to touch it. But when He that knows all things and tries the reins of the children of men—when He means to give His people a feast of fat things full of marrow—He knows how to lay the meat where they will get at it, and to give them an appetite at the same time as He gives them the meat. And their souls shall be satisfied, and their mouths shall praise Him with joyous lips. See, then, the goodness of God to you—you have been set free from bondage, the yoke is taken off your neck—and you are fed on angels’ food, satisfied with the bread of Heaven.

Now what is to come out of all this? You see I am coming back to the point I began with—all this is the way in which God is leading you to serve Him. He has set you free from the old yoke, that you may take upon you His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. He has given you food, and it is in the strength of that meal you may run in the ways of His Commandments, and serve Him with all your hearts. Do you not, as you turn over the pages of your experience, feel your love kindle, my Brethren? I hope you do. And if you do, I know you will serve God, for you cannot love Him without intending, by-and-by, and speedily, to put that love into the form of active service. You will teach better this afternoon in the school. You will do more for God today if you feel these tender thoughts of God exciting in your hearts zealous thoughts towards Him.

Three things I am anxious to say. The first is, if God has thus dealt tenderly with us, we see clearly how truly He loves us. Why does a mother love her child? There are many reasons, but one is this—because she has done so much for it. It is a strange thing, in human nature, that if anybody does you a kindness, you may forget him, and be ungrateful. But if you bestow a kindness on a person, you will love him and remember him. It is not the receiver generally that is certain to give love, it is the giver of kindness who binds himself to the other.

A mother must love her child because she has done so much for it. She has suffered, and she has cared so much that she must love it. The more you have done for a person the better you love him. Now Jesus does not love us because of anything good in us, but today He loves us because He has done so much for us. He has taken the yoke from our necks. He has laid meat unto us. He has drawn us with bands of love, and cords of a man—and having spent so much love on us—He loves us dearly. Jesus who suffered so much, is bound to us by new bonds. Calvary is not only the fruit of His love but the root of fresh love.

Another stream of love springs up at the Cross foot. “I,” says the Redeemer, “can see My groans and agonies in them.” He loves us because He has loved us. This thought ought to cheer us—God has done too much for us to let us perish—

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

Can He have loved me before the world was, and redeemed me with His own Son’s life, and yet cast me away? It cannot be—the love of God in times past is a guarantee for the continuance of that love forever and forever.

The second word is this—if God has done all this for us, come, my Brother, what do you think? Will we not try to do more in the future for Him? Shall it be that the Romanist, that the legalist, that those who serve God out of fear, do more than we? Shall they give more than we? Shall they love more than we? Shall they pay more than we? No, if there are any that should love God, we claim to take the first rank. If there are any that may suffer for Him, or that may work for Him, we feel we ought to be in the forefront. If we might make some reserve, and duty did not call, Jesus has loved our souls with love so great that we (if others do not) must give Him all. O let us prove, my Brethren, by our future zeal and consecration, that the motives which God uses, though they are gentle or strong, and though they seem to others to be but frail, yet to us are Omnipotence itself.

The last word is this—all this surely that we have been saying this morning ought to lead those who know not God to desire to know Him. What if His service is conducted not on principles of slavery but of liberty? Will you not take up His yoke? If He takes the bit from the jaws, if He it is that feeds His children and gives them rest, do you not feel drawn to Him? You who are harnessed to the heavy van of this world’s care and toil—will you not ask to have such rest as this? You who, like the laborious bullock, have been plowing to and fro in the furrows of your worldly toil seeking rest but finding none, working as the ox does for others, and scarcely having a morsel of fodder for your own mouth—come unto Jesus and He will give you rest.

Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light. O that you would seek Him this day! And if you seek Him He is to be found. He is to be found by the eye of faith that looks out of self to Him. Trust Him—that is the word—and He is yours. God grant you may exercise that trust today, each one of you, and a vision of joy and peace will open before you, the like of which, though a man should tell it to you, you would not conceive to be possible. He that believes in Jesus Christ has life eternal and has Heaven begun. May you have it now for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2447 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 11.9

“GOD, AND NOT MAN”— WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

NO. 2447

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JANUARY 12, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.” Hosea 11:9.**

THE Lord, speaking of Himself as, “God, and not man,” mentions as the special point in which He is above and beyond man, that He has greater Grace, greater long-suffering, and greater willingness to forgive— “I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.” In a thousand respects, God is greater than man! For us to enter into that theme would require a very considerable length of time, but the Lord, here, puts this Truth of God most prominently forward, that He is “God, and not man,” in that He is infinitely more forbearing, infinitely more tender, infinitely more ready to pass by offenses than any man can ever be. What men cannot do by reason of the narrowness and shallowness of their goodness, God can and will do by reason of the height and depth and length and breadth of His immeasurable love!

Note that Truth in our text and then note another. When God can find in man no reason for showing mercy to him, He still finds a reason for displaying His mercy, for He looks for it in His own heart. He does not say, “I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for he is not as bad as he might be, and there is really something hopeful about him.” No, the Lord does not let the bucket down into that dry well, but He fetches the argument for His mercy out of Himself—“For I am God.” “It is not what he is, but what I am that decides the case,” says Jehovah. “I will have mercy upon Ephraim because I am God, and not man.” Guilty one, your hope of pardon lies in the Character of God! And the more quickly and completely you recognize this fact, the better will it be for you. Do not be looking into yourself to find some reason why God should have pity upon you, for there is no reason within you but what Satan can answer and overturn!

Rather look to God—especially as God looks to Himself—for your hope lies in what He is whom you have offended. I know that He is just and holy and that this Truth, at first, condemns you. But He is also good and gracious—and this Truth of God brings joy and brightness to you! The only rays of light you can ever get must come to you from the sun. You will not find any in your own eyes, for they are blind. It is from the sun that your very power to see, as well as the light by which you can see, must come. So, God fetches His argument in favor of mercy from Himself! You have one specimen of it in that grand passage where He says, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,” drawing the reasons for the display of His mercy out of the great deeps of His own Sovereignty.

Our text reveals this as God’s reason, drawn from His own Nature, why He forgives men—“I am God, and not man.” I have known a despondent soul often turn to this great Truth the wrong side out and find in it a reason for despair rather than for hope. “Look,” says the awakened sinner, “if I had only offended against my fellow man, I would have some hope of pardon. But my sin is terrible because it is committed against high Heaven! It is with God that I have to deal and I can say with David, ‘Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.’” It is because you have to deal with God, rather than with men, that some of you think you must be shut up to despair. That mistake of yours only shows what a poor, faulty guide unbelief is, for it turns your back to the Light of God and makes you walk on in darkness! Faith, on the other hand, argues after the manner of God and says, “If I had offended against man, I could not have expected him to forgive me. If I had injured man as I have injured God, I could not have hoped to be pardoned. But since I know that God is Love and that He is infinite in Grace, I see that there is a wondrous depth of sound reasoning about this Divine declaration, ‘I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.’”

I am going to speak upon this one theme, to hammer away upon this one nail! There will be no great variety in my subject and no particular freshness of thought in considering it, but I shall dwell upon just this one Truth of God, that there is hope for guilty men! There is hope for every man, woman and child who will come and confess sin, and trust in Christ, on this ground—that He with whom we have to deal is, “God, and not man.” This I shall have to show you at considerable length and under many particulars, but the whole purpose of my discourse will be to show you the hopefulness in this great Truth of God that, as sinners, we have to deal with God, and not with men!

I. For, first, MAN CANNOT LONG FORBEAR HIS ANGER. I am not speaking, now, of certain passionate people who have no control over their tempers. Oh, dear, there are some persons whom I know whose blood seems to lie very close to the surface! It is soon up and very hot. With them it is, as men say, “a word and a blow.” But sometimes it is the blow without even waiting for the word! They are so very irritable that any little offense puts them on the defensive, or makes them ready to attack others. They cannot bear anything that annoys them. Some, because they are so little and, as the proverb truly says, “A little pot is soon hot.” And others because they think themselves so big that if anybody comes between the wind and their nobility, that person has committed an altogether unpardonable offense! Oh, dear, if we had to deal with a God who was like these men, we should have perished long, long ago!  
But our text means even more than that. The Hebrew of this passage is very significant and expressive and it might be rendered thus—“I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not the best of men.” For with even the best of men—the noble spirits who can bear a good deal more than ordinary individuals—yet there is still a point of forbearance beyond which they cannot and will not go. If you have offended them once, twice, thrice, it may be that they are patient with you and forgive you. But when the offense is repeated and the provocation is multiplied, even the best of men are apt to ask, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?” He who put that question thought that he had gone a long way when he suggested sevenfold forgiveness! But the Savior said to Peter, “I say not unto you, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.” You remember what the Apostles said when they heard this saying? They prayed, “Lord, increase our faith.” As much as to say, “It needs very great faith to be able to forgive an offender until seventy times seven.”  
We have offended against God far more often than seventy times seven, yet He has borne with us! We who are here are the living monuments of Divine Mercy and might truly write upon our brows, “Spared by the long-suffering of God,” for if He had strictly marked our sin, He must have destroyed us and if He had even dealt with any one of us who has been unfruitful, He must have said, as did the owner of the fruitless fig tree, “Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?” But here is the mercy of our case—we have to deal with the God of Patience who is long-suffering and full of pity—who is, in fact, as our text declares—“God, and not man.” This should make us bless His name continually for the great forbearance He has shown toward us. And this goodness, forbearance and long-suffering of God should lead us to repentance. We may not continue in sin because God’s Grace abounds, but His abounding Grace should make us loathe and leave sin.  
II. Next, if we had to deal, not with God, but with our fellow men, we would very often find that WHEN MEN GET INTO A LOW, NERVOUS, SENSITIVE STATE, THEY ARE USUALLY QUITE UNABLE TO BEAR WITH OTHERS. A person’s temper often depends a great deal upon the state of his health. If a man is perfectly well, sound in mind and body, he can put up with a good deal. But there are times when the head aches, or when the tooth aches, or when the heart aches, or when there is an overpowering sense of nervousness upon you—and then you know what a very little thing will put you out. “Oh, take that child away!” you cry, petulantly, “I cannot bear its noise.” That ringing bell has startled you. That cry of the vegetable seller in the street has quite irritated you and now you are in a state of mind to act the part of a tyrant!  
One who was discussing a certain trial said, “I wonder what the jurymen are having for breakfast this morning, for their food will have a good deal to do with the verdict they will give.” And, no doubt, unless a person is pretty well and in a good mental and spiritual condition, his weakness or his sensitiveness will make him deal severely with others even for a very small offense. What a mercy it is that the One with whom we have to deal is, “God and not man”! Our glorious Jehovah is never weak, impetuous, unjust, ungenerous! He is always magnanimous, kind, gracious, forbearing! He is never in such a condition that He feels ready to be irritated with His creatures, but, self-contained and self-possessed, dwelling in the eternal sublimities of His own unsullied happiness, the God over all, blessed forever, He is in that state of mind—if I may so speak of Him after the manner of men—that He is willing to pass by iniquity, transgression and sin. He is a God ready to pardon, waiting to forgive the guilty. Could you truly know Him and see how free He is from those human frailties which lie at the roots of all irritability and unwillingness to forgive offenders, you would understand what a mercy it is that He is, “God, and not man.”  
Come, poor Soul, approach your God! You have not to come before an angry judge! You have not to approach an austere person who is ready to take offense even at little things, but you are coming to the infinitelyblessed God who delights not in the death of any, but would rather that they should turn to Him and live!  
III. There is a third reason why we should rejoice that the Lord is “God, and not man. It is this—MEN ARE NOT ANXIOUS TO RECONCILE TO THEMSELVES THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED THEM IF THEY ARE PERSONS OF BAD CHARACTER.  
A man who has been injured may, in the greatness of his mind, say, “I hope that person did not realize the wrong that he was doing. I hope that he is a good man—he must surely have misunderstood the consequences of his action. He probably only made a mistake, so I am willing to see him and, frankly, to forgive him and to put the matter right as soon as possible.” But suppose that you have been grievously wronged by some mean, base individual, whose character you know to be altogether beneath contempt? I know what you say to yourself, “Well, I shall not put myself out of the way to seek him. I do not particularly care what he thinks or says about me. Perhaps it is just as well that such a person as he is should remain at a distance. I do not need his company. Let him go, he really is not worth my seeking to be reconciled to him.”  
Ah, Sirs, if God had said that concerning us, He would have spoken justly, indeed! For us, creatures of the dust, to have offended our great and glorious Creator. For us, worms of the earth, to have offended the Infinite Jehovah and to have done it willfully and continually as we have done, might well have made the Lord say, “There, let them go. If they will be My enemies, let them be My enemies. They cannot harm Me and their curses will fall on their own heads. If they speak evil of Me, what does it matter to Me while I have the songs of angels and of cherubim and seraphim? If they despise Me, what is their opinion worth, one way or the other? Let them go.”  
But, dear Friends, the Lord does not deal thus with us, for He is, “God, and not man.” What a wonder of Grace and mercy it is that He should actually desire that we should be reconciled to Him! That He should desire it with anxiety, should long for it, and that His whole heart should go forth with the desire! The Lord is not willing that we should be His enemies. He is not willing to treat us as His enemies, but, to speak after the manner of men, He is anxious to reconcile us to Himself and, therefore, He sends to us His ambassadors with tears beseeching us to be reconciled to Him! Oh, this is Godlike! This is Divine!  
IV. In addition to the points I have mentioned, I must remind you that THERE ARE SOME MEN WHO ARE WILLING TO BE RECONCILED TO THOSE WHO HAVE OFFENDED THEM IF THE OFFENDERS WILL BEG FORGIVENESS. Notice what they say—“That person has done me grievous wrong. I am quite willing to pardon him, but let him ask to be pardoned. I do not think it is my place to go after him. I am the offended person and it cannot be expected that I should humble myself before him. If he comes to me and asks forgiveness, I shall be going a great way if I do heartily forgive him. But as to being the first to move in this matter—well, it is not to be expected of me.” No, Friend, it is not to be expected that you should do so, for you are only a man. But the Lord is, “God, and not man” and, therefore, He is the first to move in the direction of the reconciliation that is to end the quarrel.  
It is the offended One, the grievously offended One, who comes to the offender and says, “Let us be friends. I will blot out this offense, I will remove this sin. Come to Me. Accept the reconciliation I am prepared to give.” I feel half inclined to stop here and to say, “Let us sing, again, the last verse of that grand hymn that we sang before prayer, and roll out the refrain in full thunder of grateful thanksgiving—  
*“‘Oh may this strange, this matchless Grace, This God-like miracle of love,  
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise,  
And all the angelic choirs above!  
Who is pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?’”*  
It is never the sinner who wants to be reconciled first. It is always God, in the freeness of His Grace, who comes to the sinner—no sinner can ever be premature with God! If you are anxious to be reconciled to God, it is He who has given you that anxiety. It is His own infinite Grace that has begun to work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, for here is seen the superiority of the Godhead to the highest and the kindest manhood—that the Lord begins the work of reconciliation by Himself— seeking out those who have offended against Him!  
V. Next, A MAN MAY BE WILLING TO BE RECONCILED IF THE OFFENDER DOES NOT REPEAT THE OFFENSE. Suppose that the offending person breaks out again with a new offense just as the reconciliation is about to be given. “There,” says the man he has offended, “I was quite willing to have overlooked the past, but look, he is up to his evil ways again! I stood prepared to give him my right hand, but he has added insult to injury! Even while we were talking about reconciliation, look what he has done—he has made a new breach! If there had been nothing between us before, he has now acted in a way that would have commenced a terrible battle between us. I cannot put up with this. You cannot reasonably expect that I should be on terms of amity with one who, again and again and again repeats the grievance—and who, having done me wrong, at the very time that I am inviting him to be reconciled, commits that wrong again! There is a limit to all things and certainly there must be a limit to the pardon that a man will give to an offender.”  
Just so, just so. I knew there was such a limit. I do not altogether blame you, I do not say much against you, but I do say much in commendation of the forgiving Grace of God! Though we sin. Though even while the sinner is repenting, there is still a measure of sin about him— and while God is forgiving and while we are receiving the forgiveness— there is still evil about us, yet He forgives! Is He not, as one said, a great Forgiver? There is not any offense so aggravated but that God is willing to forgive you if you come to Jesus Christ by faith! If you have heaped up your sins, mountain upon mountain, as the giants in the old fable were said to have piled Pelion upon Ossa, hill upon hill—if you have done even this, yet is God willing to sweep them all away and still be your Friend!  
You remember that blessed expression in the 55th of Isaiah, “He will abundantly pardon”? I cannot help ringing out those words again and again, “He will abundantly pardon! He will abundantly pardon.” I hope that the music of them may strike the ear of some poor desponding soul who will say, “That is the word for me! It must be either great mercy or no mercy at all for me, for little mercy is of no use for such a sinner as I am! I must have great mercy to pardon my great sin.” Oh, then, thank God that you have to deal with Him and not with man!  
VI. Now let me go a step further. I feel morally certain that men who are offended with their fellows—MEN WHO HAVE BEEN VERY GREATLY WRONGED, WOULD NOT PROPOSE TO GO AND LIVE WITH THOSE WHO HAVE WRONGED THEM, AND TAKE UP A POSITION OF EQUALITY WITH THEM.  
I could not expect a king, whose subjects had revolted against him, who had refused to render to him due honor and submission, who had even insulted his crown and done despite to his character, to say, “I will leave my palace and my crown, and my splendor and all that I have, and I will go and live among these rebels. I will wear their rags. I will fare as they fare and dwell in their hovels. I know that they will kill me—they will spurn me, and spit upon me and, at last they will fasten me to a cross and hang me up to die

But with the strong desire that they should be reconciled to me, I am willing to go and to be one with them.”  
Such a thing was never heard of among men! But listen. There is One who is God as well as Man, even that blessed Savior who descended from Heaven to earth, became a Man, shared our poverty, lived in the midst of our sin and, knowing that He would be despitefully treated, scorned, scourged and nailed to a Cross, yet endured all out of an excess of love which overflows to the guiltiest of the guilty even now! This was compassion worthy of a God, that the Son of the Highest should leave the perfections of Heaven to dwell here amid the infirmities and the sins of earth, as you know He did!  
VII. If such wondrous love were possible to any man, here is another thing that I cannot conceive of, that any man would say, “I have been grievously wronged by that person. The injury is a very cruel one and there is no remedy for it, but I WILL, MYSELF, BEAR THE PENALTY FOR ALL THE WRONG WHICH HAS BEEN DONE. The offender has broken the law. There is a penalty laid upon him for what he has done and which he righteously deserves to bear. It was an offense against me and he deserves to be punished for it—but I will bear the whole penalty myself.”  
We never heard any mere man say, “Here is a burglar who has broken into my house. He is to serve five years in prison for his crime, but I will offer to go to prison in order that he may be set free.” Or, “Here is a murderer doomed to die, but I will offer to suffer in his place, that he may be accounted innocent.” Such a thing was never heard of among men! But this is exactly what God has done!  
As Judge, the righteous God must punish sin. Say what you will, there is a necessity that the Judge of all the earth should do right. If you could take away the justice of God and the fact of the judgment to come, you would have stolen the linchpin from the wheels of God’s chariot! You would have marred the moral government of the universe! Sin must be punished, but the Judge, Himself, condescends to bear the penalty for the offenses committed against Himself! Mark—to bear the consequences of sin committed against His own authority and His own Person—and to bear those consequences in His own Person so that the offending one may be reconciled to Him! There never was such another tale as I am now telling you! It could not have been invented by men—it must be Divine! It has such a stamp of originality about it, that it must have come from God! It is so Divine on the very surface of it that it must be a blessed fact!  
God Himself becomes the Substitute for those who have broken His own Law and done despite to His own name and, in union with human nature, in His own body on the Cross, He bears the consequences of the sin which otherwise must have fallen upon His enemies—the guilty sons of men! It is a very amazing story, this, “old, old story of Jesus and His love.” I cannot tell it to you as I should like to tell it, but it does not so much matter how it is told. The power of it lies not in the telling of it, but in the doctrine and Truth, itself, when blessed by the Spirit of God!  
VIII. MEN WOULD NOT ENTREAT, AGAIN AND AGAIN, AN OFFENDER IF HE REFUSED THE PARDON. When a man has done all that lies in his power to make peace. When he has even suffered what he ought not to have suffered in order to produce peace with one who has offended him—suppose that after all that he comes to the offender and he says, “Let us be friends,” and the person turns on his heels and says, “I have too much to do to attend to you”? Or, suppose that he says, “I do not need any of your peace! It is nothing to me, I have other things to think of”? And suppose that this generous-hearted one should say, “But incline your ear and come to me. Hear what I have to say! Come, now, and let us reason together”? And suppose that the man says, “I need none of your reasoning! I care nothing about all this talk! I do not believe it—it is all an idle tale and I want to hear nothing of it”? And suppose that this generous person should follow him and entreat him, persuade him, implore him, plead with him—and still use a thousand arguments of loving kindness with him?  
“Ah,” you say, “that is not like man!” No, it is not. But He who deals in mercy with you is “God, and not man,” and therefore He pleads with you who have long resisted Him and begs you, even now, to listen to Him— and even now to turn to Him! Listen to His own words, “Turn you, turn you, from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” These are the pleadings of God, Himself, with men who have sinned against Him. If you pleaded for mercy at God’s feet and were importunate with Him, that would seem natural enough. But for God to plead with you and to beseech you to accept His mercy is supernatural and Divine!  
IX. Yet again, remember that MEN WOULD NOT RESTORE AN OFFENDER WITHOUT A SEASON OF PROBATION. Suppose that someone had grievously offended any one of you and that he asked your forgiveness? Do you not think that you would probably say to him, “Well, yes, I forgive you, but I—I—I—cannot forget it”? Ah, dear Friends, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off! It is a lame forgiveness and is not worth much. “But,” one says, “I need to see how this man goes on. If he is really sincerely penitent for what he has done and he acts kindly to me in the future, then I think I could believe him to be sincere and I think—I hope—I could restore him to my favor.” Ah, yes, that is because you are a man that you talk like that! But He of whom I am speaking is “God, and not man,” and His invitation to you is, “Come to Me just as you are.” The Lord will receive you and forgive you without any probation!  
There was a good old minister who said, “The Lord Jesus took me into His service without a character. He gave me a good character and He has helped me to keep it even to my old age.” Yes, He does take us without a character, so come to Him just as you are! He freely forgives and He perfectly forgets, for He says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”—a feat in which Omnipotence outdoes itself! For God to forget is impossible! Yet He does forget the sins of His people. This is one of the impossibilities that are only possible to Omnipotent Grace—it would be impossible with men, but it is possible with the Lord, for He is “God, and not man.”  
X. Yet further, MEN CANNOT FORESEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING LENIENT. One says, “I do not see what the consequences would be if a man is to behave so badly toward me as this one has done, and I am to overlook it and say nothing about it. After that, I shall have every dog barking at my heels. I really think, Sir, that you must not preach up there and tell us to forgive absolutely because you know that if you tread on a worm, it will turn. And really, there is something due to society. I cannot suffer such wrong as this and pass it by, for everybody will be doing me a similar injury and saying, ‘He is such a flat, and so soft, that he will never resent it.’”  
My good Sir, I am not going to argue with you! You are a man, so go your way among other men. But He of whom I speak is “God, and not man.” He knows precisely what the consequences of forgiving sinners will be and yet He does it! When we preach free pardon to the chief of sinners, what do you think they say in certain newspapers? Why, that we are encouraging immorality! The wise men who write for them say that our doctrine does not tend to public morality. Ah, poor dears, what do they know about morality? We do not care much about their opinion on that point, for we see well enough where true morals are. They run side by side with “Free Grace and dying love” and we intend to still preach those Truths of God albeit that there are some, and we must admit it, who will turn the Grace of God into lasciviousness! If a man means to hang himself, he is sure to find a piece of rope somewhere. And when a man means to live in sin, he can find an argument for it even in the infinite mercy of God! But we must not stop our preaching because of that. God is willing to forgive crimes of the greatest horror, sins of an intense blackness, known in their full blackness only to Him—and as for the consequences, He is well aware of what they will be.  
XI. I am going another step further. MEN WOULD NOT LOVE, ADOPT, HONOR AND ASSOCIATE WITH THE OFFENDING. “Well,” says one, “suppose I could entirely forgive everything that has been done against me? Is anything more required of me?” Could you do something else? Could you love the one who slandered you, who tried to take away your good name, who sought to injure your business and offended you in every way that he could? Could you take him into your family and make him your son, or make him heir of all that you have? Could you provide for him for life? Could you be content to make him your friend and companion? Could you trust him, do you think—actually trust him with the most precious things that you have? Could you do all that?  
“Well, Mr. Spurgeon,” says one, “it is an unreasonable thing that you are asking. You are talking quite unreasonably.” I know that I am, but that is because you are a man that it seems unreasonable to you. Yet our God goes beyond all reason, for this is exactly what He does. He takes the wretched sinner just as he is, blots out his sin and gives him to believe in Christ—and to as many as believe in Him, to them He gives power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name! More than that, He says, through His Apostle, that if children, then they are heirs—“heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” These poor miserable sinners become the objects of His daily care as they are the objects of His eternal choice! He engraves their names upon the palms of His hands. They lie on His heart and in His heart!  
“They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.” Yes, more—Christ is married to them! Oh, what condescension it is for Him to be married to those who were black as Ethiopians! There is nothing that He will not do for a pardoned sinner! There is nothing that He will withhold from a soul that, believing in Christ, has sin forgiven! You shall be with Him where He is. You shall sit on His Throne with Him. You shall reign with Him forever and ever, as surely as you come and accept His infinite Grace!  
XII. The last point is that MEN WOULD NOT TRUST ONE WHO HAD FORMERLY WRONGED THEM. I have always felt, in my own mind, that it was one of the clearest proofs that I had God’s forgiveness of my many sins when I was trusted to preach the Gospel. I should think that if a prodigal came back to his father, the old gentleman would kiss him and receive him, and rejoice greatly over him—but the next Saturday, market day, the old gentleman would say—“I cannot send young William to market—that would be putting temptation in his way. Here, John, you have always been with me—go to market and buy and sell for me, for all that I have is yours. William, you stay at home with me.” He might not let him see all that he meant, but he would say to himself, “Dear boy, he is hardly fit for that great trust. I love him, but still, I hardly dare trust him as much as that.”  
But see what my Lord did with me—when I came home to Him as a poor prodigal, He said, “Here is My Gospel, I will entrust you with it—go and preach it.” I bless His name that I have not preached anything else and I do not mean to begin to do so—  
*“Ever since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”*  
Then the Lord said to me, “I will trust you with those people at Waterbeach, at New Park Street, at the Surrey Gardens, and at the Tabernacle. Go and see what you can do to bring them to Heaven.” I do long to see souls saved as one great result of my ministry! But what an instance of my Lord’s love it is that He thus trusts me! That was one of the things that made Paul hold up his hands in astonishment—he said that he had been put in trust with the Gospel and he could not make it out. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, yet he was put in trust with the Gospel!  
O dear Heart, you who have been a drunk, or a swearer, or whatever else you have been, come and trust in Jesus! If you do, I should not wonder but that one of these days you, also, will be put in trust to preach the Gospel of Christ. “Oh,” you say, “I could never preach.” You do not know what the Grace of God can do for you and through you— and you would, anyhow, be able to tell what a wonderful Savior He was who saved you, would you not? That is the best preaching in the world— telling others what God has done for you! And I know that the burden of your testimony would be, “He is God, and not man,” and you would ask them to sing over and over again—

*“Who is a pardoning God like Thee?  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”*  
Now trust the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the way of salvation! “Look

unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Or, if you want the plan of salvation stated in full, here it is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” God grant to all of us Grace to believe in Christ and to confess our faith in Him for his dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—605, 202, 568. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**HOSEA 11.**

Verse 1. When Israel was a child. When the nation was yet young and had scarcely started on its march among the peoples of the earth— “When Israel was a child”—

1. Then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt. God’s love does not depend upon the standard of our spiritual attainments. While we are yet children in Grace, the Father’s love is set upon us, as it was upon Israel in its beginnings as a nation.

2. As they called them, so they went from them. Such was the perversity of this child-nation which, nevertheless, God loved, that though called by Jehovah, they went away and refused to obey the Divine call. The Israelites in Egypt “hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage” and, even after their great deliverance, they were constantly turning aside from the path pointed out by Moses, who bade them be faithful to their God.

2. They sacrificed unto Baalim. They offered sacrifice to many Baals, first to one and then to another, for men will readily change their idols when they know not the true God.

2, 3. And burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go. This child-nation was taught by God how to walk—  
3. Taking them by their arms. As nurses hold up their little children when, for the first time they try to stand or toddle along.  
3. But they knew not that I healed them. This was an amazing thing and it shows the great blindness of man, that he does not know his own Physician. It was so with Israel—“They knew not that I healed them.” Surely, Brothers and Sisters, it seems impossible that we should not know our Divine Healer, yet our blindness is extreme by nature and leads to many a folly.  
4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. As men do to their cattle when they have been plowing and they come to the end of the day’s work, then the bit is removed, or the yoke is lifted off the shoulder and fit fodder is provided for the cattle that they may be refreshed. This is what God did to His people Israel. He brought them out of Egypt where they had to perform hard tasks, caused them to rest from their labors and gave them both material and spiritual meat to eat. Nevertheless they were ungrateful to Him. We say that ingratitude is the worst of sins, but, alas, it is one of the most common evils and we, ourselves, are ingrates to our God!  
6. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king because they refused to return. If we try to escape from our trouble without hearing the voice of God in it, we shall run into another. If, by our own plotting and scheming, we escape from Egypt, then the Assyrian shall be our king and there is small difference between Assyria and Egypt. It is always best to take with submission the sorrow that God appoints, lest, by fleeing from the bear, the serpent bite us and so we go from bad to worse.  
6. And the sword shall abide on his cities and shall consume his branches, and devour them because of their own counsels. That is a very striking expression, “Because of their own counsels.” It should be a solemn warning to us not to follow the devices of our own heart when we see the consequences of Israel’s walking after his own way.  
7. And My people are bent to backsliding from Me. They seemed as if they must do it—as if their hearts were set upon it. They were “bent” upon it. Oh, that our bent and bias were towards holiness and not towards backsliding!

7. Though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him. See how Israel puts God away and will not hear Jehovah’s voice? Now observe the change in the chapter, for God speaks of His faithfulness even to backsliding Israel. He does not give His people up. He still yearns over them in the most tender pity and forbearance.

8. How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. And this Divine turning and repenting, remember, were toward a people who did not turn to the Lord! God turned towards a people that would not turn towards Him and His repentings were “kindled together” towards the nation that would not repent! Oh, the unspeakable, the unthinkable Grace of God! He does for us “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

9. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man. Our hope lies in the fact that God is God! Sometimes that Truth of God is a terror to men—they are distressed at the thought of the great and holy God, yet in this Truth is their only hope of salvation! The Lord says, “I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man.”

9. The Holy One in the midst of you: and I will not enter into the city. That is, the Lord says, “I will not come into it to see all its iniquities, lest in My wrath I smite and destroy it.” How tenderly does God bear with wicked men! How great is His long-suffering! How graciously He seems to close His eyes, as if He would not see that which must bring upon us swift destruction if He looked upon it in His righteous anger!

10. They shall walk after the LORD. It is a great blessing when men begin to seek the Lord whom they formerly shunned. This proves that there has been worked in them a complete change of heart.

10. He shall roar like a lion: when He shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. God’s terrible voice often makes men tremble and that is one proof of the working of His Grace in their hearts, for they tremble before Him and flee unto Him.

11, 12. They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, says the LORD. Ephraim compasses me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints. There are still some left to serve Jehovah! There is a remnant according to the Election of Grace even in the very worst of times. “Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints.” May we be found among the faithful few! Amen.

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Sermon #206 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Hos 12.10

EVERYBODY’S SERMON

NO. 206

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 25, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes.” Hosea 12:10.**

WHEN the Lord would win His people Israel from their iniquities, He did not leave a stone unturned, but gave them precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. He taught them sometimes with a rod in His hand, when He smote them with sore famine and pestilence and invasion. At other times He sought to win them with bounties, for He multiplied their corn and their wine and their oil and He laid no famine upon them. But all the teachings of His Providence were unavailing and while His hand was stretched out, still they continued to rebel against the Most High.

He hewed them by the Prophets. He sent them first one and then another. The golden-mouthed Isaiah was followed by the plaintive Jeremy. While at his heels in quick succession, there followed many far-seeing, thunder-speaking seers. But though Prophet followed Prophet in quick succession, each of them uttering the burning Words of the Most High, yet they would have none of His rebukes. They hardened their hearts and went on still in their iniquities.

Among the rest of God’s agencies for striking their attention and their conscience, was the use of similitudes. The Prophets were accustomed not only to preach, but to be themselves as signs and wonders to the people. For instance, Isaiah named his child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, that they might know that the judgment of the Lord was hastening upon them. And this child was ordained to be a sign, “for before the child shall have knowledge to cry, ‘my father and my mother,’ the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.”

On another occasion, the Lord said unto Isaiah, “Go and loose the sackcloth from off your loins and put off your shoe from your foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, “Like as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia—so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives young and old, naked and barefoot, to the shame of Egypt.”

Hosea, the Prophet, had to teach the people by a similitude. You will notice in the first chapter a most extraordinary similitude. The Lord said to him, “Go, take unto yourself a wife of whoredom; for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord,” and he did so. And

the children begotten by this marriage, were made as signs and wonders to the people. As for his first son he was to be called Jezreel, “for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.” As for his daughter, she was to be called Lo-ruhamah “for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel. But I will utterly take them away.” Thus by many significant signs, God made the people think. He made His Prophets do strange things, in order that the people might talk about what He had done and then the meaning which God would have them learn should come home more powerfully to their consciences and be the better remembered.

Now it struck me that God is every day preaching to us by similitudes. When Christ was on earth He preached in parables, and, though He is in Heaven now, He is preaching in parables today. Providence is God’s sermon. The things which we see about us are God’s thoughts and God’s words to us. And if we were but wise there is not a step that we take which we should not find to be full of mighty instruction. O you sons of men! God warns you every day by His own Word. He speaks to you by the lips of His servants, His ministers. But, besides this, by similitudes He addresses you at every turn. He leaves no stone unturned to bring His wandering children to Himself, to make the lost sheep of the house of Israel return to the fold. In addressing myself to you this morning, I shall endeavor to show how every day and every season of the year, in every place, and in every calling which you are made to exercise, God is speaking to you by similitudes.

I. EVERY DAY God speaks to you by similitudes. Let us begin with the early morning. This morning you awakened and you found yourselves unclothed and you began to array yourselves in your garments. Did not God, if you would but have heard Him, speak to you by a similitude? Did He not as much as say to you, “Sinner, what will it be when your vain dreams shall have ended, if you should wake up in eternity to find yourself naked? With what shall you array yourself? If in this life you cast away the wedding garment, the spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ, what will you do when the trump of the archangel shall awaken you from your claycold couch in the grave, when the heavens shall be blazing with lightning and the solid pillars of the earth shall quake with the terror of God’s thunder?”

How will you be able to dress yourself then? Can you confront your Maker without a covering for your nakedness? Adam dared not—can you attempt it? Will He not frightened you with His terrors? Will He not cast you to the tormentors that you may be burned up with unquenchable fire, because you did forget the clothing of your soul while you were in this place of probation?

Well, you have put on your dress and you come down to your families. And your children gather round your table for the morning meal. If you have been wise, God has been preaching to you by a similitude then—He seemed to say to you—“Sinner, to whom should a child go but to his father? And where should be his resort when he is hungry but to his father’s table?” And as you feed your children, if you had an ear to hear, the Lord was speaking to you and saying, “How willingly would I feed you! How would I give you of the bread of Heaven and cause you to eat angels’ food!

“But you have spent your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which is not. Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Did He not stand there as a Father and say, “Come My child, come to My table. The precious blood of My Son has been shed to be your drink, and He has given His body to be your bread. Why will you wander hungry and thirsty? Come to My table O, My child, for I love My children to be there and to feast upon the mercies I have provided.”

You left your home and you went to your business. I know not in what calling your time was occupied—of that we will say more before we shall have gathered up the ends of your similitudes this morning—but you spend your time in your work. And surely, Beloved, all the time that your fingers were occupied, God was speaking to your heart, if the ears of your soul had not been closed. But you were heavy and ready to slumber and could not hear His voice And when the sun was shining in high Heaven and the hour of noon was reached, might you not have lifted up your eye and remembered that if you had committed your soul to God, your path should have been as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day?

Did He not speak to you and say, “I brought the sun from the darkness of the east. I have guided him and helped him to ascend the slippery steeps of Heaven and now he stands in his zenith, like a giant that has run his race and has attained his goal. And even so will I do with you. Commit your ways unto Me and I will make you full of light, your path shall be as brightness and your life shall be as the noonday. Your sun shall not go down by day, but the days of your mourning shall be ended, for the Lord God shall be your light and your salvation.”

And the sun began to set and the shadows of evening were drawing on—and did not the Lord, then, remind you of your death? Suns have their setting and men have their graves. When the shadows of the evening were stretched out and when the darkness began to gather, did He not say to you, “O man, take heed of your eventide, for the light of the sun shall not endure forever”? There are twelve hours wherein a man shall work, but when they are past there is no work nor device in the night of that grave where we are all hastening. Work while you have the light, for the night comes wherein no man can work. Therefore, whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

Look, I say, to the sun at his setting and observe the rainbow hues of glory with which he paints the sky. Mark how he appears to increase his orb as he nears the horizon. O Man, kneel down and learn this prayer— Lord, let my dying be like the setting of the sun. Help me, if clouds and darkness are round about me, to light them up with splendor. Surround me, O my God, with a greater brightness at my death than I have shown in all my former life. If my deathbed shall be the miserable pallet, and if I expire in some lone cot, yet nevertheless, grant, O Lord, that my poverty may be gilded with the light that You shall give me, that I may exhibit the grandeur of a Christian’s departure at my dying hour.” God speaks to you, O Man, by similitude, from the rising to the setting of the sun.

And now, you have lit your candle and you sit down. Your children are about you and the Lord sends you a little preacher to preach you a sermon, if you will hear. It is a little gnat and it flies round and round about your candle and delights itself in the light thereof, till, dazzled and intoxicated, it begins to singe its wings and burn itself. You seek to put it away, but it dashes into the flame and having burned itself it can scarcely fan itself through the air again. But as soon as it has recruited its strength again, mad-like it dashes to its death and destruction.

Did not the Lord say to you, “Sinner, you are doing this also. You love the light of sin. Oh, that you were wise enough to tremble at the fire of sin, for he who delights in the sparks thereof, must be consumed in the burning!” Did not the hand seem to be like the hand of your Almighty, who would put you away from your own destruction and who rebukes and smites you by His Providence, as much as to say to you, “Poor silly Man, be not your own destruction”? And while you see, perhaps, with a little sorrow the death of the foolish insect, might not that forewarn you of your awful doom, when, after having been dazzled with the giddy round of this world’s joys, you shall at last plunge into the eternal burning and lose your soul, so madly, for nothing but the enjoyments of an hour? Does not God preach this to you?

And now it is time for you to retire to your rest. Your door is bolted and you have fast closed it. Did not that remind you of that saying, “When once the Master of the house is risen up and you shut the door, and you begin to stand without and to knock at the door saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open unto us,’ and He shall answer and say unto you, I know not who you are”? In vain shall be your knocking then, when the bars of immutable justice shall have fast closed the gates of mercy on mankind—when the hand of the Almighty Master shall have shut His children within the gates of Paradise and shall have left the thief and the robber in the cold chilly darkness—the outer darkness—where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Did He not preach to you by similitude? Even then, when your finger was on the bolt, might not His finger have been on your heart?

And at nighttime you were startled. The watchman in the street awoke you with the cry of the hour of the night, or his tramp along the street. O Man, if you had ears to hear, you might have heard in the steady tramp of the policeman the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him.” And every sound at midnight that did awaken you from your slumber and startle you upon your bed, might seem to forewarn you of that dread trump of the archangel which shall herald the coming of the Son of Man in the day He shall judge both the quick and the dead, according to my Gospel. O that you were wise, that you understood this, for all the day long, from dewy morning till the darkness of the eventide and the thick darkness of midnight, God evermore does preach to man—He preaches to him by similitudes.

II. And now we turn the current of our thoughts and observe that ALL THE YEAR round God does preach to man by similitudes. It was but a little while ago that we were sowing our seeds in our garden and scattering the corn over the broad furrows. God had sent the seedtime, to remind us that we, too, are like the ground, and that He is scattering seed in our hearts each day. And did He not say to us, “Take heed, O Man, lest you should be like the highway whereon the seed was scattered, the fowls of the air devoured it. Take heed that you are not like the ground that had its basement on a hard and arid rock, lest this seed should spring up and by-and-by should wither away when the sun arose, because it had not much depth of earth. And be you careful, O son of Man, that you are not like the ground where the seed did spring up, but the thorns sprang up and choked it. But be you like the good ground whereon the seed did fall and it brought forth fruit, some twenty, some fifty and some a hundred fold.”

We thought, when are were sowing the seed, that we expected one day to see it spring up again. Was there not a lesson for us there? Are not our actions all of them as seeds? Are not our little words like grains of mustard seed? Is not our daily conversation like a handful of the corn that we scatter over the soil? And ought we not to remember that our words shall live again, that our acts are as immortal as ourselves, that after having laid a little while in the dust to be matured, they shall certainly arise? The black deeds of sin shall bear a dismal harvest of damnation. And the right deeds which God’s grace has permitted us to do, shall, through His mercy and not through our merit, bring forth a bounteous harvest in the day when they who sow in tears slowly reap in joy. Does not seedtime preach to you, O Man, and say, “Take heed that you sow good seed in your field”?

And when the seed sprang up and the season had changed, did God cease then to preach? Ah, no. First the blade, then the ear and then the full corn in the ear, had each its homily. And when at last the harvest came, how loud the sermon which it preached to us! It said to us, “O Israel, I have set a harvest for you. Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap. He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. And he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” If you

have an opportunity to journey into the country during the next three weeks, you will, if your heart is rightly attuned, find a marvelous mass of wisdom couched in a cornfield.

Why I could not attempt for a moment to open the mighty mines of gabled treasure which are hidden there. Think, Beloved, of the joy of your harvest. How does it tell us of the joy of the redeemed if we, being saved, shall at last be carried like shocks of corn fully ripe into the garner? Look at the ear of corn when it is fully ripe and see how it bends toward the earth! It held its head erect before, but in getting ripe how humble does it become! And how does God speak to the sinner and tell him that if he would be fit for the great harvest he must drop his head and cry, “Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner.” And when we see the weeds spring up among wheat, have we not our Master’s parable over again of the tares among the wheat? And are we not reminded of the great day of division, when He shall say to the reaper, “Gather first the tares and bind them in bundles, to burn them. But gather the wheat into My barn”?

O yellow field of corn, you preach well to me, for you say to me, the minister, “Behold, the fields are ripe already to the harvest. Work yourself. And pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers into the harvest.” And it preaches well to you, you man of years, it tells you that the sickle of death is sharp and that you must soon fall—but it cheers and comforts you, for it tells you that the wheat shall be safely housed—and it bids you hope that you shall be carried to your Master’s garner to be His joy and His delight forever. Hark, then, to the rustling eloquence of the yellow harvest.

In a very little time, my Beloved, you will see the birds congregated upon the housetops in great multitudes and after they have whirled round and round and round as if they were taking their last sight of Old England, or rehearsing their supplications before they launched away, you will see them, with their leader in advance, speed across the purple sea to live in sunnier climes, while winter’s cold hand shall strip their native woods. And does not God seem to preach to you, Sinners, when these birds are taking their flight? Do you not remember how He himself puts it? “Yea, the stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times. And the turtle and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But My people know not the judgment of the Lord.”

Does He not tell us that there is a time of dark winter coming upon this world—a time of trouble, such as there has been none like it, neither shall be any more? A time when all the joys of sin shall be nipped and frostbitten and when the summer of man’s estate shall be turned into the dark winter of his disappointment? And does He not say to you, “Sinner fly away—away—away to the goodly land, where Jesus dwells! Away from self and sin! Away from the city of destruction! Away from the whirl of pleasures and from the tossing to and fro of trouble! Hasten, like a bird to its rest! Fly across the sea of repentance and faith and build your nest in the land of mercy, that when the great day of vengeance shall pass over this world, you may be safe in the clefts of the rock”?

I remember well, how once God preached to me by a similitude in the depth of winter. The earth had been black and there was scarcely a green thing or a flower to be seen. As you looked across the field, there was nothing but blackness—bare hedges and leafless trees and black, black earth, wherever you looked. On a sudden God spoke and unlocked the treasures of the snow and white flakes descended until there was no blackness to be seen—all was one sheet of dazzling whiteness. It was at that time that I was seeking the Savior and it was then I found Him. And I remember well that sermon which I saw before me—“Come now and let us reason together; though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as snow, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than wool.”

Sinner! Your heart is like that black ground. Your soul is like that black tree and hedgerow, without leaf or blossom. God’s Grace is like the white snow—it shall fall upon you till your doubting heart shall glitter in whiteness of pardon and your poor black soul shall be covered with the spotless purity of the Son of God. He seems to say to you, “Sinner, you are black, but I am ready to forgive you. I will wrap your heart in the ermine of My Son’s righteousness and with My Son’s own garments on, you shall be holy as the Holy One.”

And the wind of today, as it comes howling through the trees—many of which have been swept down—reminds us of the Spirit of the Lord, which, “blows where it wishes,” and when it pleases. And it tells us to seek earnestly after that Divine and mysterious influence, which alone can speed us on our voyage to Heaven. It shall cast down the trees of our pride and tear up by the roots the goodly cedars of our self-confidence—which shall shake our refuges of lies about our ears and make us look to Him who is the only protection from the storm—the only shelter when “the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.”

Yes, and when the heat is coming down and we hide ourselves beneath the shadow of the tree, an angel stands there and whispers, “Look upwards, Sinner, as you hide yourself from the burning rays of Sol beneath the tree. So there is One who is like the apple tree among the trees of the wood and He bids you come and take shadow beneath His branches, for He will screen you from the eternal vengeance of God and give you shelter when the fierce heat of God’s anger shall beat upon the heads of wicked men.”

III. And now again, EVERY PLACE to which you journey, every animal that you see, every spot you visit, has a sermon for you. Go into your farmyard and your ox and your ass shall preach to you. “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib. But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” The very dog at your heels may rebuke you. He follows his master—a stranger will he not follow, for he knows not the voice of a stranger—but you forsake your God and turn aside unto your

crooked ways. Look at the chicken by the side of yonder pond and let it rebuke your ingratitude. It drinks and every sip it takes it lifts its head to Heaven and thanks the Giver of the rain for the drink afforded to it—while you eat and drink—there is no blessing pronounced at your meals and no thanksgiving bestowed upon your Father for His bounty.

The very horse is checked by the bridle and the whip is for the ass. Your God has bridled you by His commandments and He has chastened, by His Providence, yet are you more obstinate than the ass or the mule. Still you will not run in His commandments, but you turn aside, willfully and wickedly following out the perversity of your own heart. Is it not so? Are not these things true of you? If you are still without God and without Christ, must not these things strike your conscience? Would not any one of them lead you to tremble before the Most High and beg of Him that He would give you a new heart and a right spirit and that no longer you might be as the beasts of the field, but might be a man full of the Divine Spirit, living in obedience to your Creator?

And in journeying, you have noticed how often the road is rough with stones and you have murmured because of the way over which you have to tread. And have you not thought that those stones were helping to make the road better and that the worst piece of road when mended with hard stones would in time become smooth and fit to travel on? And did you think how often God has mended you? How many stones of affliction He has cast upon you? How many wagon loads of warnings you have had spread out upon you, and you have been none the better, but have only grown worse? And when He comes to look on you to see whether your life has become smooth, whether the highway of your moral conduct has become more like the king’s highway of righteousness—how might He say, “Alas, I have repaired this road, but it is none the better. Let it alone until it becomes a very bog and quagmire, until he who keeps it thus ill shall have perished in it himself.”

And you have gone by the seaside and has not the sea talked to you? Inconstant as the sea are you, but you are not one-half so obedient. God keeps the sea, the mountain-waved sea, in check with a belt of sand. He spreads the sand along the seashore and even the sea observes the landmark. “Fear you not Me, says the Lord? Will you not tremble at My presence, which have placed the sand for the boundary of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it? And though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail—though they roar, yet can they not pass over it.” It is so. Let your conscience prick you. The sea obeys Him from shore to shore and yet you will not have Him to be your God, but you say, “Who is the Lord that I should fear Him? Who is Jehovah that I should acknowledge His sway?” Hear the mountains and the hills, for they have a lesson. Such is God. He abides forever, think not that He shall change.

And now, Sinner, I entreat you to open your eyes as you go home today and if nothing that I have said shall smite you, perhaps God shall put into your way something that shall give you a text, from which you may preach to yourself a sermon that never shall be forgotten. Oh, if I had but time and thought, and words, I would bring the things that are in Heaven above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth and I would set them all before you—and they should every one give their warning before they had passed from your inspection. And I know that their voice would be, “Consider the Lord your Creator and fear and serve Him, for He made you, and you have not made yourself. We obey Him and we find it is our beauty to be obedient, and our glory ever to move according to His will. And you shall find it to be the same.”

Obey Him while you may, lest haply when this life is over all these things shall rise up against you—and the stone in the street shall clamor for your condemnation. And the beam out of the wall shall bear witness against you and the beasts of the field shall be your accusers and the valley and hill shall begin to curse you. O Man, the earth is made for your warning. God would have you be saved. He has set hand-posts everywhere in nature and in Providence, pointing you the way to the City of Refuge. If you are but wise you need not miss your way. It is but your willful ignorance and your neglect that shall cause you to run on in the way of error, for God has made the way straight before you and given you every encouragement to run therein.

IV. And now, lest I should weary you, I will just notice that every man in his CALLING has a sermon preached to him.  
The farmer has a thousand sermons. I have brought them out already— let him open wide his eyes and he shall see more. He need not go an inch without hearing the songs of angels and the voice of spirits wooing him to righteousness—for all nature round about him has a tongue given to it— when man has an ear to hear.  
There are others, however, engaged in a business which allows them to see but very little of nature and yet even there God has provided them with a lesson. There is the baker who provides us with our bread. He thrusts his fuel into the oven and he causes it to glow with heat and puts bread therein. Well may he if he is an ungodly man, tremble as he stands at the oven’s mouth—for there is a text which he may well comprehend as he stands there—“For the Day comes that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble. They shall be consumed.” Men ingather them in bundles and cast them into the fire and they are burned. Out of the oven’s mouth comes a hot and burning warning—and the man’s heart might melt like wax within him if he would but regard it.  
Then see the butcher. How does the beast speak to him? He sees the lamb almost lick his knife and the bullock goes unconsciously to the slaughter. How might he think every time that he smites the unconscious animal, (who knows nothing of death), of his own doom? Are we not, all of us who are without Christ, fattening for the slaughter? Are we not more foolish than the bullock—for does not the wicked man follow his executioner—and walk after his own destroyer into the very chambers of Hell?  
When we see a drunkard pursuing his drunkenness, or an unchaste man running in the way of licentiousness, is he not as an ox going to the slaughter, until a dart smite him through the liver? Has not God sharpened His knife and made ready His axe that the fatlings of this earth may he killed, when He shall say to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, “Behold, I have made a feast of vengeance for you and you shall feast upon the blood of the slain and make yourselves drunken with the streams thereof”? Yes,, butcher, there is a lecture for you in your trade. And your business may reproach you.  
And you whose craft is to sit still all day, making shoes for our feet, the lap stone in your lap may reproach you—for your heart, perhaps—is as hard as that. Have you not been smitten as often as your lap stone and yet your heart has never been broken or melted? And what shall the Lord say to you at last, when your stony heart being still within you, He shall condemn you and cast you away because you would have none of His rebukes and would not turn at the voice of His exhortation?  
Let the brewer remember that as he brews he must drink. Let the potter tremble lest he be like a vessel marred upon the wheel. Let the printer take heed, that his life be set in heavenly type, and not in the black letter of sin. Painter, beware! For paint will not suffice—we must have unvarnished realities.  
Others of you are engaged in business where you are continually using scales and measures. Might you not often put yourselves into those scales? Might you not fancy you saw the great Judge standing by with His Gospel in one scale and you in the other, and solemnly looking down upon you, saying, “Mene, mene, tekel—you are weighed in the balances and found wanting”? Some of you use the measure and when you have measured out, you cut off the portion that your customer requires. Think of your life, too—it is to be of a certain length and every year brings the measure a little farther—and at last there come the scissors that shall clip off your life and it is done. How do you know when you are come to the last inch? What is that disease you have about you, but the first snip of the scissors? What is that trembling in your bones, that failing in your eyesight, that fleeing of your memory, that departure of your youthful vigor, but the first cut? How soon shall you be cut in two, the remnant of your days past away and your years all numbered and gone, misspent and wasted forever!  
But you say you are engaged as a servant and your occupations are diverse. Then diverse are the lectures God preaches to you. “A servant waits for his wages and the hireling fulfills his day.” There is a similitude for you, when you have fulfilled your day on earth and shall take your wages at last. Who then is your master? Are you serving Satan and the lusts of the flesh—and will you take out your wages as the hot metal of destruction? Or are you serving the fair prince Emmanuel—and shall your wages be the golden crowns of Heaven? Oh, happy are you if you serve a good master, for according to your master shall be your reward. As is your labor such shall the end be.  
Or you are one that guides the pen and from hour to hour wearily you write. Ah, Man, know that your life is a writing. When your hand is not on the pen, you are a writer still. You are always writing upon the pages of eternity. Your sins you are writing or else your holy confidence in Him that loved you. Happy shall it be for you, O writer, if your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and if that black writing of yours, in the history of your pilgrimage below, shall have been blotted out with the red blood of Christ—and you shall have written upon you the fair name of Jehovah—to stand legible forever.  
Or perhaps you are a physician or a chemist. You prescribe or prepare medicines for man’s body. God stands there by the side of your pestle and your mortar, and by the table where you write your prescriptions, and He says to you, “Man, you are sick. I can prescribe for you. The blood and righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, and applied by the Spirit, can cure your soul. I can compound a medicine for you that shall rid you of your sins and bring you to the place where the inhabitants shall no more say, ‘I am sick.’ “Will you take My medicine or will you reject it? Is it bitter to you and do you turn away from it? Come, drink My child, drink, for your life lies here. And how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?”  
Do you cast iron, or melt lead, or fuse the hard metals of the mines? Then pray that the Lord may melt your heart and cast you in the mold of the Gospel! Do you make garments for men? Oh, be careful that you find a garment for yourself forever. Are you busy in building all day long, laying the stone upon its fellow and the mortar in its crevice? Then remember you are building for eternity, too. Oh, that you may yourself be built upon a good foundation! Oh that you may build thereon, not wood, hay, or stubble—but gold, and silver, and precious stones—and things that will abide the fire! Take care, Man, lest you should be God’s scaffold, lest you should be used on earth to be a scaffolding for building His church and when His church is built you should be cast down and burned up with fire unquenchable. Take heed that you are built upon a rock and not upon the sand—and that the vermilion cement of the Savior’s precious blood unites you to the foundation of the building—and to every stone thereof.  
Art you a jeweler and do you cut your gems and polish the diamond from day to day? Would to God you would take warning from the contrast which you present to the stone on which you exercise your craft. You cut it and it glitters the more you cut it. But though you have been cut and ground, though you have had cholera and fever. and have been at death’s door many a day, you are none the brighter, but the duller, for alas! you are no diamond. You are but the pebble of the brook and in the Day when God makes up His jewels He shall not enclose you in the casket of His treasures—for you are not one of the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold. But be your situation what it may, be your calling what it may, there is a continual sermon preached to your conscience. I could that you would now from this time forth open both eyes and ears and see and hear the things that God would teach you.  
And now, dropping the similitude while the clock shall tick but a few times more, let us put the matter thus—Sinner, you are as yet without God and without Christ. You are liable to death every hour. You can not tell but that you may be in the flames of Hell before the clock shall strike ONE today. You are today, “condemned already,” because you believe not in the Son of God. And Jesus Christ says to you this day, “Oh, that you would consider your latter end!” He cries to you this morning, “How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not.”  
I entreat you, consider your ways. If it is worthwhile to make your bed in Hell, do it. If the pleasures of this world are worth being damned to all eternity for enjoying them—if Heaven is a cheat and Hell a delusion—go on in your sins. But, if there is Hell for sinners and Heaven for repenting ones, and if you must dwell a whole eternity in one place or the other, without similitude, I put a plain question to you—Are you wise in living as you do, without thought—careless and godless?  
Would you ask now the way of salvation? It is simply this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” He died. He rose again. You are to believe Him to be saved. You are to believe that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. But, more than that, believing that to be a fact, you are to cast your soul upon that fact and trust to Him, sink or swim.  
Spirit of God! Help us each to do this and by similitude, or by Providence, or by Your Prophets, bring us each to Yourself and save us eternally and unto You shall be the glory.

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÷Hos 13.10

THEOCRACY

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A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 23, 1877.

**“I will be your King.” “You are my King, O God.” Hosea 13:10. Psalm 44:4.**

THOSE of you who were present, this morning, will remember that I preached upon the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ and that I earnestly entreated my hearers to submit themselves to His Kingly authority. [Ser

mon #1375, Volume 23—“NOW THEN, DO IT”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at

http://www.spurgeongems.org .] I hope that many who were with us felt that an Almighty force was operating upon them, making them willing to surrender themselves to the control of the great King of kings. I dwelt, then, mainly upon the need of decision for Christ and upon our duty to yield ourselves up wholly to Him. That is the human side of the question and is, by no means, to be kept in the background, but, on this occasion I want to speak to you upon the privilege of having Christ for our King and upon the graciousness of Christ in allowing Himself to be our King and permitting us to become His subjects. My purpose, at this time, is rather to set forth what God does for us in this matter than what He demands of us. To me it seems inexpressibly beautiful that while we are, in one place, bid to “kiss the Son” and accept Him as our King, we have, in another portion of Scripture, such a delightful declaration as this, “I will be your King.” It is always interesting to trace great rivers to their sources. You usually find that their springs lie far up among the mountains and, if you trace back to their springs certain practical subjects that you find in the Word of God, you get to the eternal hills of Everlasting Love!

I am going, first, to run away from my text and to take another. If you look in the 10th verse of the 13th Chapter of Hosea, which contains our text, you will see these words near the end of the verse—“Give me a King.” So, our first head is the need of nature. Then, in the second part of my discourse, I shall keep strictly to my first text—“I will be your King.” That is the answer of Grace. And then, thirdly, we shall go back to the 44th Psalm, and at the 4th verse we shall find the acknowledgment of faith—“You are my King, O God.” That is our program—may we be helped by the Spirit to carry it out and may we be able, in our hearts, to go from step to step all through!

I. First, then, we are to consider THE NEED OF NATURE—“Give me a king.”  
Man was once happy in Eden, for God was his King. But when he cast off his allegiance to God and became a rebel and a traitor, then he lost both his Paradise and his peace. Ever since then, man has, morally and spiritually, needed a king—and the deep groaning of the natural man is, “Give me a king.”  
Now, first, this is the cry of weakness. Man finds himself to be a poor puny creature and he feels that he needs to look up to someone greater, stronger, wiser, more enduring than himself. There are some plants that cannot grow much unless they can get something stronger than themselves to which they can cling and around which they can twine. You may, perhaps, have seen them when they have been away from a wall or a tree, stretching out their tendrils and seeking for something to climb upon. And if they do not find it, they fall to the ground till, in the damp weather, their leaves grow wet and rot—and the plant is in a sickly state in which it can barely exist. Such is human nature. It is a trailing thing and it gladly would be a climbing thing, and a clinging thing. In some persons, this trait is very conspicuous. They are always needing somebody to whom they can cling—and this tendency is the source of the greatest possible danger and sorrow to them. They select wrong objects for their love and trust and, consequently, they are betrayed, they are disappointed and they sadly learn the meaning of that text, “Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.” That is the result when this clinging tendency is wrongly used, but many people have this tendency. Man is weak and he knows that he is weak and, therefore, he cries, “‘Give me a king’— someone who will guide me, direct me, govern me, rule me, take care of me.”  
Besides being the cry of weakness, it is also, oftentimes, the sigh of distress. In the 9th verse of this Chapter, we read, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.” Then follows my first text, “I will be your King.” Do you see the connection of the two passages? A King is promised to them because they had destroyed themselves. When a man feels that he has destroyed himself, brought himself down to destruction by his sin and folly, then he, too, cries, “Give me a king.” He needs help that he may be brought up out of his sad condition. When a soul is really convinced of its sin and made to see that it is brought under the sentence of God’s righteous Law, it naturally cries out for something, or someone, that can give it the help which it does not find in itself. And this craving is often the cause of our being duped—for a socalled “priest” comes in and he says, “I can help you. I am ordained of God to rescue you from destruction.” Many people are willing to trust in anything that has certain robes upon it, but, for my part, I will trust neither in chasubles, nor albs, nor stoles, nor any decorations or dresses, whether they are on linen-horses or on men-milliners!  
What can there be in man, or in his clothes, that can be of help to his fellow man in such a case as this? Besides, God has not entrusted such a ministry as that to any man! God has bid His servants preach the Gospel—and that Gospel conveys help, light and power to all who believe it— but as for forms and ceremonies, musical performances, ornate ritual, masses and the like, they are sheer deceptions through and through! Trust not the weight of a feather to them—much less your souls! But again I remind you that there is in man a craving which makes him long for someone who can rescue him from destruction—and the mercy is that God meets that craving by setting before us His dear Son, who is Prophet, Priest and King! Prophet to reveal to us the mind of God. Priest to cleanse us by His own blood and to make us acceptable to His Father. And King to rule and control us and bring us into conformity to His own will. I know that cry right well and for years I sent it up from the very depths of my soul, “‘Give me a king,’ one who is wise enough, strong enough and willing enough to help my soul in its greatest extremity.”  
Further, dear Friends, if sinners were wise, this would also be the prayer of thoughtfulness. I will suppose that I am addressing a young man to whom God has given a wise and understanding heart. He has passed his majority and is just about to leave his father’s roof. And he now feels that everything must depend upon himself and his own character. He cannot depend upon others as he has done in the past. Now, if he is a wise young man, he will say to God, “Give me a King,” for he will know from observation, I hope, rather than from experience, that anarchy in the soul is a truly terrible thing. There have been men of great talents, who, it seems to me, in the Providence of God, have been permitted to live on purpose to show what a man is when there is no King in his soul—when every passion that rules him, leads the mob of his faculties to tumult and revolt. If his thirst said, “Drink,” the man drank till he was drunk! If his natural appetite and taste said to him, “Gratify us,” he gratified them even though, thereby, he plunged into all manner of licentiousness and excess!  
There have been men, I say again, of great talents, who have blazed in the moral firmament like meteors and have astonished many with the brilliance, yet luridness, of their light—yet their influence has been baleful to the nation and mischievous to all men except those who learned from them not to try to govern their own passions in their own strength. To let all the powers within us be without a supreme Ruler is the most terrible thing that can happen to any man! Young man, never believe that it can be for your good to follow the leading of your own evil passions. No, it is in restraining yourself that your welfare and your happiness will lie, not in throwing the reins upon the neck of carnal desires, but in reining in these fiery steeds and keeping them well in hand. And, to do that, you need to pray, “Give me a King.”  
It is a dreadful thing to lead an aimless life. I know no person, in the whole world, who is more wretched than a man who has no true objective in life. His father, perhaps, left him all the wealth that he could desire and now the sole occupation of his being is to kill time—and to dig its grave and his own, also—as quickly as he can! He does not live to benefit others, he has no high and noble objective as his guiding star—he simply squanders his time till it is all gone. Now that is the most miserable man I know. A man who is toiling hard to bring up a large family may be, and very often is, among the happiest of men. A man who has an objective in life, especially if it is an unselfish one and who strains all his faculties in order that he may attain it, is sure to be happy! Possibly happier while he is pursuing that goal, than after he has attained it. Trying to win a race warms a man and produces in him joy, the joy of activity, the joy of competition and, often, the joy of success. But there are some young men who start out in life intending to do nothing and they do it very thoroughly—they are great consumers of bread, meat, wine and such-like things, but, beyond that, I know not what is to be said about them! Such poor, aimless beings are always unhappy. They pretend to be merry and they make a great noise which is supposed to imply joy, but it is only like “the crackling of thorns under a pot.” They know nothing of what substantial pleasure means. I would as gladly never have been born as live without an objective and, long ago, I said, “‘Give me a King.’ Give me something to live for, something to die for, something that commands all my faculties and wakens up all my powers, something that stirs my spirit and makes a man of me. ‘Give me a King.’ I must have a King, or else what is life worth to me?”  
Any thoughtful man will also have noticed that selfishness, if it controls our life, is a mean thing. Look over there! Do not tell me that Soand-So is a man—tell me that he is one of a herd of swine greedily devouring all that he can grasp. He simply lives that he may be rich, that he may be famous, that he may be called respectable—he lives only for himself. His soul is so small that it is trooped up within his own ribs. His heart, if he has one, is so cramped that it never goes out on behalf of others, but only beats one tune and that is, “Take care of Number One.” That is a wretched kind of life and any thoughtful young man must say, “I don’t want to live like that, ‘Give me a King.’ Let me keep clear of all selfishness. I do not want to be under the sway of the tyrant, Self. Let me have something that will rule and govern me. Give me a constitutional monarchy. Give me someone who is worthy to have the control of my whole life.”  
I recollect that the thoughts which passed through my mind, when I was starting in life, were something like these. I distrusted self-guidance, for I saw how unsafe it was. I have told you before that I knew one who was at school with me, who used to be held up as a pattern and example to me, such a good boy, such an excellent young man. He came to London and within a few weeks, London was too much for him—I saw him come home in disgrace, his employer would not have such a fellow in his house! I then said to myself, “That may be my experience if I trust to myself. I should not like to begin life, away from home, in disgrace, to continue it in dishonor and to die with everybody feeling that it was a relief to the world when I was gone.” So I said to myself, “By what means can I ensure my character? Can I get a guarantee that I shall be kept?” And when I turned to this blessed Book and found that the Lord Jesus Christ had promised to keep those who committed themselves unto Him, I accepted Him upon this ground, as well as upon others, that He was able to keep that which I had committed unto Him until the Great Day of His appearing. In that sense, my prayer was, “‘Give me a King,’ somebody who will take charge of me, care for me and protect me.” And I believe that such a cry as that is a very wise one for any young man to utter— and also for anyone else who has not yet acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as King.  
Once more concerning this cry of nature, it often comes up as the result of experience. Ah, how little do we learn except as we go to the school of Dame Experience, who raps us on the knuckles very hard! When a man discovers, to his surprise, that he has played the fool—as soon as he becomes wiser, he says, “Give me a King.” How many a man, who has made shipwreck of his life and has only discovered it when he has been upon the rocks, has at last cried, “Oh, that some strength greater than my own had saved me from this ruin!” I have known men, when they have been under a sense of danger, when they have seen death approaching, begin to cry, “‘Give me a King’—one who can fight the last enemy for me, one who can ensure my safety when I pass through the Valley of Death Shade.”  
This experience, too, sometimes makes a man feel the weight of responsibility. He says, “How can I bear it?” And he wants someone who is his superior, someone who will tell him what to do so that, when he does it, the responsibility will no longer be with himself. Have not many of you who are without Christ felt a desire to have somebody with whom you could leave your responsibilities? Well, this is just what the Christian finds in Christ—that he can bring all the difficulties in his life to his great Lord and King, and leave them there—and find in his King, when he obeys Him, the promise that in obedience shall be the path of safety. It is a blessed thing to have such a King! When we have once yielded ourselves to Him, our care is ended and we are at peace.  
So much about the need of nature.  
II. Now, secondly, and but briefly, I have to speak upon THE ANSWER OF GRACE—“I will be your King.” Listen to this short sentence, you who are longing for a Master-Spirit to rule your spirits—“I will be your King.”  
Notice the condescension of this promise. Here is a ruined Kingdom— “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help. I will be your King.” Who will care to wear the battered crown of a desolate kingdom, whose metropolis is destroyed and whose land is sown with salt? The great Lord and King of Mercy says, “I will. Lost and ruined as you are, I will accept the monarchy of your soul. I will be your King. You have had many lords who have had dominion over you, yet I will be your King. And I know those pretenders are yet alive and seek to set up their old claims over you and to get the mastery over you again. It is an uneasy throne, yet I will occupy it. I will be your King. Besides this, you are very unruly subjects. In this Kingdom there are many thoughts, forgings and lusting that are in rebellion against Me, yet I will be your King. Many disloyal subjects are there within My town of Mansoul, yet I will be the Prince of it and drive out all the followers of Diabolus. Enemies are threatening on the right hand and on the left, and whoever becomes king must carry on a long and serious war, yet I will take this crown of thorns and wear it—I will be your King.” Is not this wonderful condescension on God’s part? Do not you, Beloved, feel ready to spring up and say, “Blessed Lord, if You will be our King, we will gladly be Your subjects, rejoicing that we may have such a King as You”?  
Notice next, how suitable and satisfactory such a King as this is to be! If a man must have a king and yet can have his choice as to which

king shall be his, it is well for him to have the One whom Wisdom, itself, would select, for there is none to equal Him! He is a King who is able to subdue the whole territory of our nature through His Almighty power by which He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. O blessed King, we are glad to have You to rule over us and to have our stubborn and rebellious passions brought under the power of Your Grace! This gracious King is in every way worthy to rule over us. Think, Beloved, what your God is, what your Savior is. Ought He not to be King over you? Yes, verily, then let us set Him up on a glorious high throne and let us rejoice that we can bow down before One whom it is an honor to obey! What wisdom He has to govern us aright! Fools should not be kings, but Infinite Wisdom is fully qualified to rule us altogether! Then, what perfect goodness there is in the Lord Jesus Christ! What unspeakable goodness in the Divine Father and in the ever-blessed Spirit! Happy are the people whose King is the Lord of Hosts! Besides, think what love He has shown to His subjects! Behold His head, His hands, His feet! Look upon the spear-mark in His side, for it was by those wounds that He bought us! Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to be crowned as our King and to receive the loyal homage of our hearts—  
*“Let Him be crowned with majesty  
Who bowed His head to death.  
And be His honors sounded high  
By all things that have breath!  
Jesus, our Lord, how wondrous great  
Is Your exalted name!  
The glories of Your heavenly state  
Let the whole earth proclaim.”*  
So, it is a proof of Infinite Condescension, on God’s part, for Him to say, “I will be your King,” and we realize what a suitable King He is for us and how satisfactory it is for us to have such a blessed Master and Lord!  
Then, Brothers and Sisters, how unspeakably consoling it is that the Lord should be our King! I say, “consoling,” for who could feel unsafe or uneasy when Jehovah becomes his King? If the Eternal and Invincible God becomes our King, what foe can harm us? His shield can protect us from all the arrows that fly by night or by day! How consolatory it is for us to submit to such a God—no longer to stand up in opposition to Him, but to lie down at His feet as His loyal subjects—no longer to have a will and a way of our own, but to submit unreservedly to the will of God, to lie passive in His hands and let Him be our King! Have you ever experienced this kind of consolation in a time of deep affliction or bereavement? You have lost the delight of your heart, the joy of your eyes, the dearest one you ever had—and you have somewhat rebelled. In that rebellion has been the very bitterness of your grief, but you have said, “The Lord has done it. He is my King, so He has the right to do with me just as He wills.” That is the great source of your consolation—you never get relief from the anguish of your spirit till you see Jesus as your crowned King and only Lord and lay your hand upon your mouth and, in the silence of your soul say, ‘It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.”  
And, oftentimes, this same precious Truth has consoled you when you have been in great difficulties and embarrassments. I often sing to my Lord those lines by F. T. Faber—  
*“When obstacles and trials seem  
Like prison walls to be,  
I do the little I can do,  
And leave the rest to Thee.  
And when it seems no chance nor change From grief can set me free,  
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,  
And patiently waits on Thee.”*  
I do not know a stronger force in all the world than utter helplessness— for that is the end of all care. Many and many a time I have tried till my head has ached, to work out a problem in Church government, but have not discovered the solution—I could not see any way out of it. So I have just done as a schoolboy would who shuts up the two parts of his slate and puts it on the shelf. I have said to myself, “I will never have anything more to do with the matter, but will leave it for the Lord to solve.” And I have found that the proposition has been worked out for me in due time.  
So, dear Friends, your strength is to sit still and to feel that you have a King who can settle all your difficulties! When the servant at the door is puzzled by the many questions that are put to her, she says, if she is wise, “I cannot answer you, but I will go and ask my master.” And when she has received the message from her master, she has no further trouble about the matter—she simply says, “I have told you what my master says. If you do not like it, I cannot help that, for I am only his messenger.” That is the way to end all controversy! A young man, or anyone else who has a number of questions put to him by various persons, will be wise if he says, “Well, I have searched my Bible and found what the King says about these points. If that does not satisfy you, I am sure I cannot. Your quarrel is no longer with me, but with my Master—you must settle the matter with Him.” This is a blessed consolation! It gives joy to the spirit to have God for your King. No man is so free, no man is so happy as he who loyally bows before the King of kings—to serve God is to reign! He who has God for his King, is, himself, a king!  
Further, think how gloriously inspiring it is to have God as our King. I should not like to be a soldier in the armies of certain kings whom I might mention. If I were in their service, I would try to run away as soon as I could, for I would feel ashamed to have anything to do with them. If you were a soldier in the army of some little, mean, beggarly tyrant, I think that you would be glad to leave your regimentals at home whenever you could. It is strange that any man could be found to fight for some of the miserable miscreants who have been found in the ranks of kings. But, with Alexander as leader, every Greek became a hero! He was so great a warrior that each man in his army felt that he was, himself, great. Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ becomes our King, it is most inspiring to us, for He leads us on to fight with sin, to fight with selfishness, to overcome evil by love and to conquer hate by kindness! It is a grand thing to serve the King whose fights are all of that sort and to have Him for a King who never shirked a battle, but who was always to the front, the bravest of the brave!  
It is grand, even, to unloose the laces of His shoes. To be trodden on by Him would be a high honor. To do anything, however little, in His cause, makes us feel ourselves elevated! My dear young Friend, if you have God in Christ Jesus to be your King, your life will be sublime! With Him for your Example, with His Grace to lead you on, you shall continually rise higher and yet still higher until even your common life shall be made sublime! Oh, blessed, blessed, blessed, thrice blessed, is everyone to whom Jesus Christ is King and Lord! If we are linked with Him, we are ready either to live or to die!  
III. Now turn with me to my second text, which you will find in the 44th Psalm, and the 4th verse—“You are my King, O God.” That is THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FAITH.  
Let me just pause a moment and ask each one of you here, “Can you say that?” Can you say that, my Brother? Can you say that, my Sister? At the close of this morning’s service, we sang—  
*“‘Tis done, the real transaction’s done! I am my Lord’s, and He is mine,”*  
and it was noticed by careful observers that there were some persons in the congregation who did not sing that verse. They shut their mouths quite firmly while others around them were singing. I was glad that they were honest enough to do so and that they would not sing what they could not truthfully sing. At the same time, I was very sorry that their honesty compelled them to make such a silent confession of their lack of subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not your King, then? He is your Creator, but not your King? He is your Preserver, but not your King? He will be the Judge of the quick and the dead, yet He is not your King? He is the one and only Savior of the lost, yet He is not your King? Sadly, sorrowfully, let this thought eat into your spirit, “Then, I am a rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ.” For He is, lawfully and rightly, your King—and you are a traitor, for your heart plots against Him! Remember, also, that if you die without accepting Him as your King, there is a text which I scarcely dare to quote, yet I must—and, as I do so, let it fall like fiery hail upon your spirit—“But those My enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me.” God grant that none of you may ever know what that terrible verse means!  
But now, having given you that word of warning, I ask you to think of the blessedness of having the Lord to be your King. If you look at this 44thPsalm, you will see that when God is our King, we may confidently expect to enter upon our inheritance in the skies—“You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them.” That is to say, each one of the tribes that entered Canaan under Joshua, obtained its proper portion in the Covenant-given land of promise. And we who are under the leadership of King Jesus, the true Joshua, the one and only Savior, shall win the heritage above—and each one of us shall stand in his lot at the end of the days, blessed forever and ever in our portion in the heavenly Canaan!  
Notice, next, that, if the Lord is our King, we may expect help in the time of trouble. Read the whole of verse four— “You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.” If ever you are in poverty. If ever you are in sickness. If ever you are under slander and reproach, if ever your spirit is depressed—if ever family trials affect you, if ever the clouds in your sky are heavy and the days are dark—you may go to your King and tell Him all and expect Him to “command deliverances” for you, for, if He is your King, He will see you through, bear you up and make what appears to be evil to work for your good and cause your troubles to prove to be the best of blessings to you! Who would not have such a King as this?  
Next, notice that if the Lord is our King, we should repose entirely in Him, as the Psalmist says, “For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.” What a mercy it is to be able to put up your weapons away—to feel that there is Another who fights for you—to have done with care, worry, distress and just to feel that you have left everything with Jesus your King! If He cannot do it, then it must be left undone. Oh, it is blessed to feel that you have put the affairs of your soul into your King’s hands and that you have left the whole of them with Him, in the utmost confidence! Who would not have a King upon whom it is perfectly safe to rely?  
More than this, he who has God for his King knows that he is saved. Read the 7th verse—“But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us.” He who acknowledges Christ as his Lord and Master knows that he is saved. His salvation is not a thing that is to be accomplished tomorrow—it is done now. It is not a privilege to be enjoyed only in the last few moments of our life, but it is to be enjoyed now, for our King has covered us with the garments of salvation! “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” even now. Our salvation is finished! Our great Messiah said so on the Cross and He spoke the Truth. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”  
And, last of all, he who takes Christ to be his King has cause for great joy and rejoicing. In the 8th verse, the Psalmist says, “In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever.” He who has Christ for his King need never be ashamed of his Monarch, or of his Monarch’s livery, or of his Monarch’s laws, or of his Monarch’s friends. He may, rather, adopt the high strain of boasting in his God and triumphing in Him all the day long.  
So I end by repeating the question I asked earlier in my discourse— can each of you say, “You are my King, O God”? If not, what is your position with regard to Him? If you do not acknowledge Him as your King, you are a rebel! Yet, if you are ready to acknowledge that fact, you come under the act of amnesty which is available for regicides—for you rebels are just that, and even Deicides in having conspired to put the King of Glory to death by your sin—and you shall have even this high crime of God-killing blotted out from the King’s records! You shall be just as though you had never sinned at all if you are willing to take Christ to be your King and Savior! “Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”  
Will you have Him? I mean, the Son of God, who was also the Son of Mary. I mean the Man of Nazareth, who is also very God of very God. Trust to the Atonement which flowed from His wounds! Accept the power which God has given to Him, for all power in Heaven and in earth is given to Him! God has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. Only trust Him! Cast your souls upon Him! Yield yourselves to His sway! Repent of your sin! If you lay hold upon His perfect righteousness at once, the guilt of the past is gone and you shall be admitted into the full privileges appertaining to citizens of the heavenly Kingdom and subjects of the great King of kings! I trust that even before this service closes, some of you will say. “By the Grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I yield myself to Jesus, my Lord and King, to be His loyal subject and faithful servant forever and ever.” God grant it, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 44:1-8; PSALM 45.**

Psalm 44:1. We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us what work You did in their days, in the times of old. Now Israel was restored to Canaan and the Canaanite and Perizzite were driven out, that God’s chosen people might occupy their appointed place.

2, 3. How You did drive out the heathen with Your hand, and planted them: how You did afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your Countenance, because You did favor them. They did use their own arm and sword but, for all that, it was God who won the victory for them. It was His might that made them brave and a consciousness of His gracious purpose that made them strong, so that they routed all their foes until, from Dan to Beersheba, the land was all their own.

4-6. You are my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through You will we push down our enemies: through Your name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. See how the lesson from ancient history was turned to practical account in the Psalmist’s own experience? “As our forefathers were delivered, not by their own bow or sword, but by the right hand of the Most High, so I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.” Brothers and Sisters, let us always labor to reproduce in ourselves, by God’s Grace, the best experiences of His saints. Wherever we see the hand of the Lord displayed in others of His people, let us pray that the same hand may be manifested to us and in us.

7, 8. But You have saved us from our enemies, and have put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise Your name forever. Selah.

Psalm 45:1. My heart is overflowing with a good thing: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. You know what King is referred to here, it is He of whom the Psalmist said, in the 4th verse of the previous Psalm, “You are my King, O God.” “I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.”

1, 2. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the children of men. The Psalmist writes as if he had been actually looking upon Him. Faith has a wonderful realizing power—and when the soul is deeply meditative, it seems to be full of eyes—“‘You are fairer than the children of men.’ Though You are one of them, yet You are fairer than all the rest of them. There is a beauty about You, O Lord, that is not to be perceived in the brightest and best of the sons of Adam!”

2-5. Grace is poured into Your lips: therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty, with Your Glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness, and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under You. There is no other conqueror who is equal to Christ, whether He smites with His sword, His foes who are near at hand, or shoots His arrows from His bow at those who are far away. Whether the Gospel is preached to us who have long heard it, or is proclaimed to the heathen in distant lands, it has the same Almighty Power in it to work the glorious purposes of God’s Grace.

6, 7. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter. You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. Note the connection here between God and Man—the very same Person who is addressed as God, is also spoken of as anointed by God above His fellows. God and yet Man are You, O blessed Jesus Christ! You are very God of very God, yet just as truly Man, the God-Man, the Mediator between God and man!

8-10. All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. King’s daughters were among Your honorable women: at Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider. Listen, each one of you who are a part of this matchless bride of Christ, you who are part of her whom Christ has looked upon with infinite and eternal love— “Hearken, O daughter, and consider,”

10. And incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father’s house. God’s message to His people in the world, today, is just what it was when the Spirit bade Paul write to the Corinthians, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord almighty.”

11. So shall the king greatly desire your beauty: for He is your lord; and worship Him. Our Savior is our King and He must be both loved and adored—“He is your Lord; and worship Him.”

12. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor. When Christ’s Church really has her Lord in the midst of her, and when she is strong in the power of His might, there will never be any lack of wealth for the carrying on of His cause—“Even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor.”

13. The King’s daughter is all glorious within. Other daughters are often far too glorious without, but that is the best beauty which is inward. “The King’s daughter is all glorious within.”

13-16. Her clothing is of worked gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto You. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King’s palace. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children. We often see the hoary head laid low, and the ripe saint taken home to Heaven—but the ranks of Christ’s retinue are not thereby thinned, for the sons shall stand in the place of their fathers. God be thanked for this cheering promise! “Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children,”

16, 17. Whom You may make princes in all the earth. I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever.

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÷Hos 13.5

THE PROSPEROUS MAN’S REMINDER

NO. 1441

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 27, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.**

**Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the cage of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.” Hosea 13:5-8.**

OUR text will lead me at this time to speak upon the perils of prosperity and, as those who are prospering in worldly circumstances make up a comparatively slender portion of any congregation, the sermon must mainly aim at a small class. Still, it is my duty to speak to these, for every word of Scriptural warning should have its tongue in a complete ministry and every condition of soul must be duly met by a watchful pastor. May the Holy Spirit enable me to make full proof of my ministry by declaring the whole counsel of God to all characters. Suffer me, however, to observe that if the subject should seem to take a narrow range, it is in your power to alter it very rapidly, for, while those who are prospering will kindly take note of the voice of God’s Word to themselves, those of you who are not prospering may be profited by becoming the more contented with your lowly lot since it will be plain to you that had you succeeded in life you might have fallen into the sins denounced in our text.

It may be that you would never have known the holy joy and sacred peace which you now possess if you had been allowed to climb to those heights of wealth which you have longed to reach. God, who knows your frame knew that you were not able to bear the trial of prosperity and, therefore, He has kept you where you are—more safe and more happy, though less enriched. Another class of persons may have enjoyed fair weather in times past, but now a cloud has come over them and they are troubled. Possibly they may be taught by our discourse to say, each one to himself, “God has taken me not so much out of the sunlight as out of the furnace. He saw that evils were generated by my success which would have caused me solemn injury and so He has removed me out of their reach. He has transplanted me out of the glare of the sunlight and set me in a place more shaded but more suited to my spiritual growth.”

There may also be some present who are eagerly aspiring after great things and these may learn a lesson of sobriety. A desire to rise is laudable, but the winged horse needs to be well bitted and reined lest it fly away with its rider. Some spirits are dissatisfied with moderate success— they pine to reach the front ranks and to climb to the high places of the earth. Ambition has become the star of their life—perhaps I had better say the will-o’-the-wisp of their folly! Let them learn from this morning’s Word

of God that all is not gold that glitters, that outward prosperity does not make men truly prosper and that there is a way of growing rich without being rich towards God.

Another word remains to be said before I proceed further—Hosea speaks of Ephraim, or Israel, the kingdom of the 10 tribes—we may profitably view that people as a type of ourselves. Israel represents the Church and yet not altogether the true spiritual Church of God. They were not all Israel that were of Israel, for they were a seed according to the flesh and, therefore, they were a mixed multitude and represent, rather, the professing Christian world than the elect Christian Church. Now, I must take the text as I find it and use it for those to whom it can fairly be applied, namely, general Christendom, the nominal people of God. For this reason the lines of distinction, this morning, between God’s regenerated people and mere professors will be but faintly drawn in my address. It must be so, for I shall be speaking upon a Truth of God which relates to a mixed people—and you must be the more careful—in self-examination, so that each one may take home that which belongs to him.

I speak to all Israel this morning, whether they are of Israel in spirit or not—I speak to all the professing people of God, to all who meet with them at any time for public worship, or are numbered with them by general repute. “He that has ears to hear, let him hear,” and may the Holy Spirit bless the hearing! And now to our discourse.

I. The first subject suggested by the text is MEMORIES OF ADVERSITY. The Lord says to many of us, “I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.” Carefully consider this by taking a review of the past. Have you risen in the world? Have your circumstances changed? Have you been raised up from a sick bed, or delivered from depths of anxiety? Are your circumstances now happily abounding in good things and blessed with the temporal favor of God? I ask you to look back upon the way by which the Lord’s hand has led you. Look back upon your early trials and the mercy which sustained you under them.

To some of the prosperous their early difficulties were very severe, comparable even to the great drought of the wilderness. They were so unhappy and so bereft of all comfort that it may be said of them that they sought water and there was none and their tongue failed for thirst. Thirst is one of the most terrible ills that can happen to men and such were the needs and anxieties of many a man’s early days. They rendered existence misery and life itself a perpetual death! The children of Israel went three days without water—they came to wells where they expected to drink and found them brackish so that they could not drink of them. Do not many of the Lord’s people remember when things were very scant with them— when even the necessities of life were scarcely to be had—when they sought friends for help but were disappointed?

They were driven to their wits’ end, their little store began to run out and they counted out their last few pence almost as men sell their lives. Ah, those were wilderness days, indeed! So, also, were those weeks which we spent upon a bed of sickness, when at night we cried, “Would God it were morning,” and when daylight came the garish sun fatigued us and we wished it were evening that we might sleep again! Perhaps neither of these were our particular trial, but we were distracted with many cares and knew not on whom to depend for advice. We could not see our way; the thread of our life was tangled thread and we were sorely perplexed in the attempt to unravel it. Often we held our poor head with both our hands and felt as if we should lose our reason if fresh distractions assailed us. It was a land of great drought, a wilderness infested with serpents and scorpions.

Do not let us forget that we traversed that desert road. Surely it is not difficult for us to refresh our memories upon that subject, for we usually retain a vivid recollection of our sorrows and that vivid recollection I would now make use of to cause the past to live again before you. The good point about those times was the fact that you did think of God. Why, then you went to Him for every meal and depended upon Him from hour to hour as much as the Israelites depended upon Him for the daily manna! The crust was hard but it was sweet, for the Lord gave it to you. Do you not remember when everything in business seemed as if it must go to pieces—one large house failed on the one side and another firm tottered at the other? Your own case was hazardous; it seemed the turn of a hair whether you would be bankrupt or not. Ah, you remember it, now, and you acknowledge that you then turned to God in real earnest, for you had nowhere else to turn! What times of prayer you had then! How sweet was that passage of Scripture which came like a prophecy to your heart! How you prized the prayers of God’s people who cried to the Lord for you!

Or was it sickness which tried you? Ah, then you remember how you turned your face to the wall and, like Hezekiah, you sought the Lord with tears, pleading to be raised up again. The bitterness of pain made you cry, “My Father, help, strengthen and relieve me.” Those were the times when you felt that you could not live without God. If there had been no God to go to, you would have been driven to desperation! So, though you did not know Him as you would wish to know Him, yet there was a God for you just as there was a God for Israel when the chosen tribes went through the wilderness and saw His glorious marches in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by might! God was manifest to your spirit then, yes, and what is better, He knew you! How beautiful are the words, “I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.”

He was not ashamed to acknowledge you, then, and to have dealings with you. Those poor prayers of yours, which you would not have prayed at all if it had not been for your stern necessity, were, nevertheless, answered by Him and He heard you and comforted you in a very wonderful way! Looking back, you can see how He delivered you. It is true no manna dropped from Heaven, yet your daily bread was given and you were amazed and felt as thankful as if it had fallen from the skies! It is true no rock of flint gave forth a stream for you to drink, yet help came from people from whom you expected it as little as you would hope to see a fountain leap from a flinty rock! Somehow, by the hand of the Lord, you were sustained in trouble and ultimately delivered out of it. The scene is marvelous in retrospect and unless you believed that God’s hand was in it, it would remain to you a perfect riddle—you feel that the only way of explaining your life is to believe in the everlasting hand of the Almighty.

He helped you and your losses turned to gains. The burden which you thought would crush you was readily carried! The draught which was thought to be deadly turned out to be medicinal! You have now left the famine of the wilderness for plenty and ease—you have all that your heart can wish and your mouth is satisfied with good things! Do not, however, forget for a moment how the Lord knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. Looking back upon that time, you see nothing that you can now boast of, because it was not so much that you knew God as that He knew you! You prayed and believed after a sort, but it was very poor praying and very weak believing—yet the mercy of the Lord was great and He knew you.

He knew your whereabouts, He knew your temptations, He knew your weaknesses, He knew your needs, yes, and He knew how to meet the time of your need to the very tick of the clock. If He had waited five minutes later in relieving you, it would have been too late, but He was punctual in His tenderness! He never is before His time—He never is too late. He helped you marvelously, though you were ready to faint at one time and at other times were full of worldliness, murmuring and rebellion! In looking back, you feel compelled to say, “He knew me in the land of drought, but as for me, even then I walked not faithfully before Him, but there were wanderings of my heart, even as in the case of Israel, who made a calf at Horeb and bowed before it, defiling even that holy place, the mountain of the Lord, where Jehovah had revealed Himself.” The Lord knew us, blessed be His name, when we were in a desert land, in the howling wilderness and His knowledge showed itself in practical help!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, have you forgotten the loving kindness of the Lord in the cloudy and dark day? If you have, He has not. Often in Scripture the Lord speaks of Israel’s early days. He says, “I remember you, the love of your espousals when you went after Me into the wilderness,” as much as to say, “I remember you when you were a young Christian and how you were willing to suffer the loss of all things for My name’s sake. I remember when you were poor and blessed My name for every morsel of bread which I gave you. I remember when you lived in the poor little cottage in the back street and how you cried unto Me for help in your deep poverty and praised Me with tears standing in your eyes when your bread and your water were handed out to you.” The Lord remembers a thousand things which we forget.

The receiver seldom remembers the gift as long as the giver does. Ingratitude is a grievous fault, but it is sadly common and forgetfulness grows out of it. Yet it seems inevitable that the doer of kindness has a better memory than the receiver of it! Our children forget what we did for them when they were little, but the mother cannot fail to remember all she suffered for her baby—neither does she forget the anxiety and care with which, in her tenderness, she brought her child through its varied sicknesses. The Lord remembers all that He has done for us and He now, by the Word of His servant, recalls it to our thoughts, saying, “I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.”

Now, therefore, let us remember it also. Assuredly to have received special mercy from God in time of sorrow should bind us with cords of gratitude! Do we not feel the force of the obligation? I will not delay you with even a word upon that subject because your pure minds need but to be stirred up by way of remembrance and you will be filled with thankfulness to the Lord who helped you so graciously. Should it not also lead us to great humility when we remember what we were? How dare we be proud—we whom God lifted from the dunghill? He made David a king, and He reminded him of the time when he followed the ewes great with young, to pick up their lambs like any other common shepherd boy! What if he did become great in Israel, yet once the sum total of his possessions was a staff, a wallet and a sling.

Some of us had no more when we began life. This should make us humble and it will be well to mingle the humility and the gratitude together and sing like Hannah of old—“The Lord makes poor and makes rich: He brings low and lifts up. He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s and He has set the world upon them.” All this I bring before you now, my Brothers and Sisters, and I wish that, as with the wand of a magician, I could make the past march before your very eyes! Then were the days of scanty bread but abundant thankfulness; of few changes of raiment but many cries unto the Lord; of little gold but much Grace, of small incomes but large cries of praise and zeal!

Then you drank not the wine of indulgence, nor anointed yourselves with the oil of luxury, but yet the Lord knew you and made your spirit glad. Necessity often drove you to your knees in prayer and prompt answers turned your hearts to praise and your soul was refreshed! Let it not now be said, “Of the rock that begat you, you are unmindful and have forgotten God that formed you.”

II. We must now enter upon a sadder subject and, with the memories of adversity fresh upon us, consider THE TENDENCIES OF PROSPERITY. I hope, beloved Friends, that many of you have, through Divine Grace, proved superior to these tendencies and have been able to swim against the stream. If so, you will, beyond all others, be aware that such tendencies exist, for you have had to resist them with no small effort. I fear, on the other hand, that I should be a flatterer if I professed to hope that all of you have so escaped. In so large a number of professed Christians as we have here, we dare not hope that all have escaped unhurt from the furnace of worldly prosperity. At least the smell of the fire lingers upon some of us. Let us, with much searching of heart, look to the text and then judge ourselves. And the more so if Providence has dealt bountifully with us.

We read in our text, “According to their pasture, so were they filled,” that is to say, the Israelites became earthly-minded. They were filled according to their pasture and not according to their God. They satisfied themselves with temporal goods and asked for nothing more. They lived upon their possessions, not above them. They made a god of their goods— they filled their desires and their affections with the good things of this life and knew nothing of the fullness of God. They entered into Canaan where

they ate the fat and drank the sweet and there they settled down, content without the higher blessings of Divine Grace. They did not need their God, for now they were neither dependent on the manna nor on the stream which leaped from the Rock. If God had been their pasture, it would have been well to have been filled according to their pasture—but foolishly they tried to live on bread alone and the Word of God was despised.

Alas, this is an evil into which many fall! They increase in riches and they set their hearts upon the riches instead of the Giver of the riches. Permit me, dear Friends, to recall your hearts to your first love and to the highest and best things. Know you not that God usually gives the most of earthly wealth to those for whom He has no love? Those who are masters of earth’s treasures are seldom the favorites of Heaven! It is a wonder when an Ethiopian treasurer is baptized, or a Joseph of Arimathea confesses himself a disciple of Jesus! Gold and the Gospel usually go different ways. Those who roll in wealth seldom rest in God. How many among the princes of the earth are also heirs of Heaven?

Is it not true that not many of the great men after the flesh are chosen? Worldly possessions are evidently lightly esteemed of God, for He gives little of them to His children—and the most of them He casts out at the feet of worldlings as men cast husks into the trough for swine! Do not, therefore, set a high price on that which the Lord lightly esteems! Your Lord and Master had none of the world’s goods. Jesus had not where to lay His head! Do not, therefore, covet what He despised. Remember, again, that the quality of earthly things is very inferior and altogether unworthy of the love of an immortal soul. What is there in broad acres to satisfy the heart? What is there in bonds, mortgages, debentures, gold and silver to stay a soul when it faints, or to make a spirit rejoice when it is heavy?

Earthly gear has its uses, advantages and benefits, otherwise we could not ask you to be thankful for it. Wealth is a thing to be grateful for, since it may be turned to admirable account for God’s Glory, but the tendency will be for you to think too much of it and if you do, I would remind you that you are coming down from the position which a Christian ought to occupy and are acting like a man of the world who has his portion in this life. A child of God should continually say, “Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire beside You.” It will never do for you to dote upon your property. What? Are you going to dethrone your God and set up wealth in His place? Then in what do you differ from the Israelites who bowed before a calf of gold and said, “These are your gods, O Israel”? Far be it from us to sin in that fashion, but let us love the Lord for His mercies—and the more we have of them the more let us be devoted to His fear!

Remember, again, that earthly things ought not to be too highly esteemed, for they may vanish from our sight. How many instances of this have happened around us of late! The Lord have pity upon the many who have had grievously to suffer by the misconduct of others. Truly in their case riches have taken to themselves wings and those who ought to have held the birds have been among the first to cause their flight! Hundreds were, yesterday, in comfortable circumstances and are today deprived of all and know not where the matter will end. You, perhaps, say, “The same could not happen to me. I have no shares in a bank. My liabilities are all limited—I cannot lose my property.” How do you know? No man, till his last hour, is beyond the reach of those calamities which are common to men! There was never a garment which moth could not eat, or time devour—nor is there gold or silver in human coffers which the thief could not steal somehow or other—in spite of iron safes, legal documents, sound investments and experienced prudence! Riches are but as the mist of the morning, or the smoke from the chimney. They will certainly perish in the using—take care that you do not perish with them!

Once more, remember that even if wealth does not fly away, you may soon lose all power to enjoy it. What is the value of a thousand a year to a man who is paralyzed? To one who lies upon his back from morning till night, of what use is the park and the estate which he cannot see? To one who has to be confined to his chamber, of what use is it that he has the means of traveling round the world? The Lord can take away from a man his taste and of what use are his dainties, then? His eyesight, and of what value are his works of art? His hearing, and of what use are the daughters of music? The Lord can leave us the apparent blessing and yet the soul of it may have gone with the power to enjoy it! Moreover, how soon must you leave these temporal comforts! The day must come when you must bid farewell to house and garden, children and friends and all that you possess—and, “Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” must be the end of you as well as of the poorest man that ever begged his bread! Do not, therefore, set your heart upon these toys, nor let your mind be filled by them, for if you do, you have already met with one of the most serious of the evils which haunt a successful life.

The next peril is that of greediness, for, according to the text, these people were filled twice. “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled.” Their fullness is mentioned twice. They were not satisfied with being filled—they must be filled again. What numbers of persons there are who, when they were in their low estate, thought if they could ever amass a certain sum they would be perfectly satisfied? But when they reached that point, they laughed at their own folly! “Oh,” they said, “if I might double, or triple, or multiply it ten-fold, then I should reckon that I had enough of this world and I would begin to think of eternal matters.” But even when they reach that ten-fold height they are not one whit more content—they still long for something more.

They are like men who drink sea water to quench their thirst—they become still more thirsty. The danger of worldly wealth lies in this, that a man at last gets to be nothing better than an ox yoked to the plow clogged with thick clay. Like a horse harnessed to a chariot, the more there is attached to such a man, the heavier his toil. Instead of gaining greater enjoyment, many a rich man only accumulates heavier care as his fortune increases. In the case of those in the text, they cared only for themselves—“they were filled—they were filled.” They never thought of consecrating their substance to God. No, it was retained for filling themselves. They thought not of blessing the name of God for enabling them to get wealth, nor of making every mercy to be a wing upon which the grateful

soul would soar on high.

No, their whole mind was given to filling and being filled again. There was no living above it all. They lived for it; they lived by it and lived under it like moles burrowing in the earth. “They were filled, they were filled.” Alas for those who can be filled with this poor earth! They will have no portion in the world to come, for they have received their good things and their turn will come to dwell with that rich man of whom our Lord spoke who went from faring sumptuously to suffering eternally!

What came next? They were filled and their heart was exalted. This is that of which the Lord warned His people in Deuteronomy 8:12- 14. “Lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built good houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” As for those in our text, they were rich and felt that they were somebodies. When they were in the wilderness, in the land of drought, their God was everything— but now they were filled and they were swollen with self-importance! Their bags were full, their barns were bursting, their lands were far-reaching and, therefore, they thought highly of themselves as if a man could be measured by the acre, or reckoned up in pounds, shillings and pence.

“A man’s a man for a’ that,” said the homely poet, when he sang of those who have neither rank nor money. Many men are swollen by the meat they feed on and poisoned by their mercies till they are bloated with arrogance and begin to despise their fellows. Children of God whom they were once pleased to associate with, are now, “so very vulgar.” They despise those who are much better than themselves—more prayerful and more holy—and they leave their company to go into society as if the children of God were not the best society under Heaven! Alas, some professors choose their company not by rules of Grace, but of wealth! The saints have not so much corn and wine and oil, nor can they ride so high a horse as the prosperous sinners and, therefore, the base-born professor turns his back on them. Poor Lazarus, whom once they would have honored, now lies at their gate full of sores for dogs to lick! They value not the people of God for their character, but because they are poor, they speak lightly of them.

When the deceitfulness of riches works its way, there is no longer any walking humbly with God, nor simple dependence upon Him. There is little or no prizing of Grace and seeking after it as for hidden treasure—are not the barns full—and is that not enough? And now the spiritual worship of God becomes too plain and commonplace and something more pleasing to the eye and to the flesh must be sought after. The Israelite only saw the Temple on certain days of the year and then the main sight was a sacrifice—and so the great ones asked for something more pompous, more impressive to the eyes—hence came the oxen set up at Dan and Bethel with services most pompous and performances most abundant!

Today, also, the simple worshippers of the unseen God carry on a worship which is too bare and unadorned! There is nothing aesthetic about it and, therefore, the great ones must go off to the national religion even as Ephraim did in the days of Jeroboam—for there they can have dainty dresses, fine music, the smell of incense and all that can charm the tastes! Besides, do not all the rest of the wealthy of the land go that way? Hence we see men forsake their former associates, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage. Their hearts are exalted by their prosperity and God and His people and His Truth may all go. Better far that riches had never come near them! Examples are close at hand.

And what next? It is further written, “They have forgotten Me.” Their God was forgotten, even Him to whom they owed all things! Ah, they would talk much about Him in their humble days, when they met with those that thought upon His name! But now there is not a word for God. Then they spoke often, one to another. But now God is seldom mentioned, for He is not much known in fashionable society! The Lord Jesus is seldom spoken of, for how should the carpenter’s Son be the theme of polite conversation? I am not saying that this is the case with anyone here present, but as this is the tendency of prosperity, I should not wonder if some of you are yielding to it!

Therefore, awaken yourselves to escape the evil—to forget that only God is fullness and that outward possessions are emptiness apart from Him! The tendency of the outward possession is to make us forget that it is only the shell and God must be the kernel of all true comfort and delight. Prosperous men are apt to forget that they will find out, very soon, how much they need the Lord. While the prosperous man is looking over his accounts and storing up his gold, he may dare to forget God, but when he comes to himself and repents of his worldliness, he will have to creep to Jesus’ feet like the poorest servant on his farm! If saved from his idolatry of money, he will have to cry unto the Lord to manifest Himself to him even as He did when he could scarcely find himself with bread from day to day!

It will not do, my Brothers and Sisters, for us to exalt ourselves and act as if we were independent of God, for our very being rests on His will and we are nothings and nobodies! It would not do for the successful preacher to pride himself upon the number of his congregation or upon the power which he wields over men’s minds, for, after all, he is nothing but a poor sinner spared through the compassion of God and pardoned through Jesus Christ, even as others! Humble gratitude is the only safe and right and happy condition of the mind in prosperity. Now, have you not seen, even if you have not felt it in yourself, that many persons who prosper in the world forsake religion altogether? While they were in humble circumstances, one had hope for them, but now they seem quite out of reach of sanctifying influences.

Have you not seen others grow cold and worldly? I will not ask if you have felt this declension in yourselves, but have you not noticed it in others? They used to be at every Prayer Meeting, but now they cannot find time! They worked hard in the Sunday school, but now their energies are overtaxed with doing nothing! Now that they have much more opportunity of serving God and more to serve Him with than they ever had before, they do less than in their humbler times! Do you not know some—may it not be so with yourselves—who do not walk so near to God, now, as they

used to do? Barefooted they kept the way of the Lord—but in velvet slippers they go astray! Richer times have come for them, but they are not happier because they are further off from God! Is not this very grievous and will it not provoke the Lord?

I will ask you one question. Can you find in the Word of God one instance of a man of God who was injured by his troubles? Do they not all, like Job, come out of the furnace of affliction much profited? Let me then ask another question. Is it not almost a rule with us, though it ought not to be, that our prosperity is our loss? David, when hunted like a partridge on the mountains, glorified the Lord his God! But David, when he lived in a palace, sinned again and again, so that the Holy Spirit draws a distinction between his earlier and his latter life, for it is written of Jehoshaphat that he walked before the Lord in the first ways of his father, David. Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, was not proof against prosperity. He had all he could desire and then his earthly loves stole away his heart.

Take one case which will give both sides of the matter. See Hezekiah with Sennacherib’s letter, spreading it before the Lord in faith—he is, then, an example in history—a man of God to be envied for his prayers of faith. He is far fallen when his realm is at peace and his riches are multiplied, for he becomes vainglorious and displays to the Babylonian ambassadors all his treasures and provokes the Lord his God! Brothers and Sisters, I wish you great prosperity, but far more do I wish you great Grace that you may carry a full cup with a steady hand! There is need to pray for men who are going up hill lest they fall upon their high places. In our low estate Grace will surely be given, for the Lord pities us! But when we are rising, we have double need to pray, for God resists the proud!

III. Under the third head we must consider VISITATIONS OF RETRIBUTION. Ingratitude to God, of the kind I have described, is sure to bring with it, in the case of the Believer, heavy chastisements and in the case of the unbeliever, sure and overwhelming punishments! Now please notice what the Lord says, “Therefore I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the cage of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.”

In the case of men who have prospered in this world and turned aside from God, it often happens that fierce trials come upon them such as are here described under the figure of a lion, a leopard, a bear and a wild beast. In the case of the Israelite nation, this prophecy was singularly fulfilled, for, according to the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel, nations comparable to the lion, the leopard, the bear and the wild beast, namely the Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman empires all dealt with the Jews and brought them into subjection. I do not lay any stress upon that, as though I were interpreting prophecy, but it is very amazing that those four beasts mentioned here should be the very four afterwards mentioned in the visions of Daniel!

I prefer to take the metaphorical meaning. We are here taught that as God visited His people, Israel, with stroke upon stroke and made His great wrath to be known, so has He often done against backsliding believers. God is a shepherd to His people to guard them from the lion, but when His people depart from Him, He Himself becomes as a lion to them! I have seen rich professors with God against them. I have seen the man multiplying wealth and multiplying sorrow! His sons have grown up to vice and profligacy, using their father’s wealth to indulge their passions, till the old man has been ready to tear his hair in anguish. His own children have been as lions to him! Have we never known such persons, too, living entirely to themselves? They have become the victims of wretched manias which have made them believe themselves to be poor while surrounded with luxury!

Such despondencies are worse than a bear robbed of her whelps. Have we not known millionaires haunted with the dread of sudden disaster as though God would leap upon them like a leopard? Men have been struck down with depression of spirit so that they could not rejoice in anything— they seemed to be torn by their own thoughts, as by wild beasts—and yet they had more than heart could wish! When the Lord had multiplied mercies around them they had not used them for His Glory, but only filled themselves with them and, therefore, the Lord visited them in anger for their selfish ingratitude. It is often a great mercy when God sends these heavy trials, for if they befall His own children, it is by such trials that He drives them home to Himself! The lions roar them back to Christ and the leopards and the bears drive them home to their old standing so that they return unto their Savior and Jesus is again precious to them.

But sometimes these wild beasts are of a spiritual character. Doubts, fears, horrors come forth from the Lord against the backsliders in heart. The Lord, who was all gentleness, kindness and love to them, now seems to have become their enemy! This is sadly the case with any of us when we forget God. We turn to His Word and it threatens us! We get to our knees and we cannot pray! Thoughts of our past sins haunt us. We have no peace with God, no rest day nor night! God lets loose all the wild beasts upon us and we cannot escape, they tear and maul us. Ah, He knew us in the land of drought and then He multiplied our mercies—but we went away from Him and became cold of heart and it is, therefore, no wonder that now He withdraws His consolations and sends furious convictions to hunt us down.

It is God’s way of saving us, making our very destructions to be the means of our salvation, by driving us out of ourselves. Our God will not suffer His people to build their nests here. You may be sure of that! We are not of the earth, neither will our heavenly Father suffer us to be filled with the earth. If He has ordained us to eternal life by Christ Jesus, He will drive us out of the haunts of deadly selfishness by lions, by bears, by leopards, by wild beasts, or by some means or other and He will fetch us to Himself. Did you notice one passage here in this threat where the Lord speaks of the trouble as coming terribly home to His people’s hearts? “I will rend the cage of their heart.” That is to say, He will tear that which encloses and shuts up their heart. When a man loves the world it shuts up his heart, blocks it all round and leaves no room for God. It is a great blessing when God rends the cage of a man’s heart and opens it once again to the entrance of the Truth of God. It is a sweet thing to have the heart opened as Lydia’s was, by the sacred key of love—but when we forget God and backslide—the keyhole is stuffed up and the key will not work.

The heart suffers from fatty degeneration until it might almost be said of the children of God even as of worldlings, “Their heart is as fat as grease.” There is no getting at them, no making them feel—they have but little life, little love, little zeal for God and, therefore, the Lord sends these lions, leopards and bears and they rage and rend until at last they tear the cage of the heart. Then the man undergoes a death of despair—but what a mercy it is that the Lord raises him up, by-and-by, to the life of hope, even as a little further down in this chapter we read those precious Words of God, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.” The Lord brings up His poor dead child, again, and gives him life and joy and then he truly lives in the service of his Lord.

Now, Sinners, if, after God has been very gracious to you, you will not learn the lesson of His love, but refuse Christ, you will be given up to destruction! And as for lions, leopards, bears, or worms that never die and fires that never can be quenched, these are only faint emblems of the woe which will come upon you because you have refused the Lord! As for you who are Believers, He will not utterly destroy you, but if you turn aside from Him you will make a rod for yourselves and let loose bears and lions which the Lord would have kept caged if you had walked near to Him. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes his enemies to be at peace with him” so that the beasts of the field and the stones of the field are at league with the man that is living near to God. But if you walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to you and He will call for His lions and beasts of prey, that they may trouble and molest you! He will give you water that you die not for thirst, but it shall be the water of bitterness! And He will give you bread to eat, that you faint not, but it shall be mingled with ashes till your soul shall abhor its ingratitude and turn unto the Lord.

If I had time I would have spoken upon a fourth head, but I can do no more than say that close upon the text there are —INTIMATIONS OF MERCY. See what intimations of mercy there are in the next verse. “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help.” There is help for the wanderer and help for the man who has grieved His God! Read also these Words of God, with which the next chapter opens, and may the Holy Spirit help you to carry them out, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.”

The Lord fulfill those Words for Jesus’ sake. Amen.  
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÷Hos 13.6

FORGETTING GOD

NO. 2975

A SERMON  
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**“Therefore have they forgotten Me.”  
Hosea 13:6.**

Our text reminds us that God does take notice of what men do, or of what they do not do. Here He complains—and there is a kind of mournful plaintiveness about His words—“Therefore have they forgotten Me.” It is not a matter of indifference to God whether men remember Him or not. It seemed to be a subject of surprise to David that God should think of man, for He wrote, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained, what is man, that You are mindful of him?” Yet God is mindful of man and it grieves Him that man is not mindful of Him! It would not disturb our minds if one tiny ant should forget or ignore us, yet we did not create it, and we have not the claims upon it that God has upon us. Yet, little though we are—and so insignificant that the ant, itself, is a great thing in comparison with us if we reckon what we are in comparison with God—it seems that He does want us to remember Him, to think of Him and to trust, love and serve Him. And when we do not, He is vexed and grieved. At least, speaking after the manner of men, we are taught to believe that it pains Him at His heart, so that He cries out by the mouth of His servant, the Prophet, “They have forgotten Me—their Maker, their best Friend and their greatest Helper.”

I am afraid, dear Friends, that the accusation in our text may be brought against a very large number of us. Certainly it can be laid to the charge of all those who have lived without thinking of God and who have never turned to Him with repentance and faith and who, consequently, are still strangers to Him. How many such people there are, God alone can accurately compute! The great mass of our fellow creatures would come under that category. But, worst of all, among the Lord’s own people there are, alas, some against whom this accusation can be brought! They have forgotten their God—not absolutely, so as to be utterly and altogether like the thoughtless sinner—yet very sadly and grievously, so that God, Himself, complains of them, “They have forgotten Me.” For, mark you, if God observes what ordinary men do, much more does He take notice of what His own people do! An unkind word from a stranger may have a very slight effect upon us, but if such a word should come from the lips of one whom we love it would cut us to the quick! We could put up with a thousand things from those who are mere acquaintances, but from a beloved child, or from the wife of our bosom—such a thing would be very hard to bear. Remember, O Christian, that ancient declaration, “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” Because He loves us so much, He is in that very proportion, jealous, for the greatest jealousy grows out of limitless love. And the Lord our God who bought us with the heart’s blood of His dear Son, counts us so dear to Him that a wandering thought in our mind becomes a crime against Him—and the giving up of any part of our heart to love of the world, or of self, or sin, or Satan, or any other of His rivals—becomes to Him a cause of grief and sadness. If there are any children of God here—and I fear there may be many—who have grown cold in heart and who have wandered from the Lord, I hope the text will come like a lament from Him who hung upon the Cross of Calvary, “Therefore have they forgotten Me. Therefore have they forgotten Me.”

I. I am going to call your attention, first, to THE TIME WHEN THIS SIN WAS COMMITTED. “Therefore,” says the Lord, “have they forgotten Me.” When was that? If we ascertain that, we shall also find out when we ought to be most upon our guard against falling into a similar sin.

It appears, dear Friends, to have been when the Israelites had come out of the wilderness into Canaan—when they had escaped from troubles and had come into an easy condition, for so the context reads—“I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.” It is a very sorrowful fact that in this case the greater God’s goodness was to His people, the less was their gratitude to Him—just in proportion as He was kind to them, they were cold to Him. These people had been delivered from excessive toil. In Egypt they had been a nation of slaves. And in the wilderness they had been for 40 years pilgrims with weary feet. They seldom tarried long in any place, but backwards and forwards across that “waste howling wilderness” they marched almost continuously. And concerning all that time, God says, “I did know you in the wilderness.” He knew them, morning by morning, as the manna fell. He knew them when the quails came on swift wings to bring them flesh to eat. He knew them when the morning and evening lambs were offered in sacrifice for them, sinners as they were all the while they were in the wilderness, and He says, “I did know you then.” So, Brothers and Sisters, it has happened to some men that when they have had hard times, long hours and stern labor, they have managed to be up in the morning early to get a quiet season of communion with God and, though they scarcely could have been thought capable of doing it, for they worked so hard, yet they could find leisure to teach a few children in the Sunday school, or to distribute tracts, or to speak a word for Christ at an open-air service! They had very hard bondage in their daily occupation, yet whenever there was a weeknight service, they always managed to get there. They were very apt out of sheer weariness because they had been toiling so hard during the day, to fall asleep when they sat down in the pew—still, they said that half a loaf was better than no bread—and they were glad to get a message from any of the Lord’s servants in those trying days.

But, dear Friends, you remember that in due time the children of Israel came to Canaan. Then there was no more marching to and fro in the wilderness for them! They found houses built ready for them to occupy and they could sit, every man, under his own vine and under his own fig tree—and then it was that the Lord said, “They were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten Me.” It is just the same with the man who used to come to the House of God Sundays and weeknights, though he was sorely weary with his heavy work. He now has what men call, “an easy berth,” and has very little to do, so, being no longer a poor galley slave tugging at the oar, you might have thought that he would have given more time to God’s service and have become one of the most industrious Christians living! But instead he does not do as much, now, as he used to do with the little bits of time which his hard toil allowed him! Ah, Brothers, when you get into smooth and easy places, then is the time when you should be most anxious, lest of you, as of the Israelites, the Lord should have to say, “Therefore have they forgotten Me.” I would gladly wish for every one of you that you may be able to earn your daily bread without any excessive labor. I would that every man who has to toil beyond due and reasonable hours, were delivered from such semi-slavery. Yet I know that there are many who make an ill use of any leisure that they get and some who are not nearly as fervent in the cause of God, now that they have leisure, as they used to be before they were so privileged!

These Israelites, also, were now delivered from the pressure of urgent needs. At the very beginning of their wilderness journey, they had to go for three days without water. “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.” They cried to Moses, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to the Lord and soon the bitter waters were made sweet. Before long, they had eaten up all that they had brought with them out of the land of Egypt—and they murmured, again, and then the Lord gave them a daily supply of manna—their bread dropped from the sky morning by morning! But now that they have got into Canaan, that have broad fields that are very fruitful, they reap abundant harvests, their barns are full to bursting and the hillsides are clad with vines, olive trees, fig trees and all manner of dainties! Instead of having to gather one day’s food at a time, they have many months’ supplies laid up in store. Some of them became very rich but, alas, it was of them that the Lord had to say, “According to their pasture, so were they filled...therefore have they forgotten Me.” You surely have known or heard of men and women who have loved the Lord when in poverty—or, at least, who have seemed to do so—and who were very fervent and active while they had to look up to the Lord from day to day and pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” But, in the order of God’s Providential dealings, they have been lifted up into another station in life. You would naturally have supposed that they would have loved the Lord more and have done more for His cause—and laid themselves out with a greater willingness for His service—but, instead of that, it has been the very reverse with them! When they were financially poor, they were spiritually rich—but now that they are financially rich, they are spiritually poor! As they have gone up temporally, they have gone down spiritually. Their barn has become full, but their heart has become empty! Their wine press has overflowed, but the joy of the Lord has departed from them. It is a sad, sad thing wherever this happens. Sadly, some of us know that it often happens. Let it not be so with any of you, Beloved.

Then, again, these Israelites had become very self-indulgent. They enjoyed themselves and lived only for pleasure. And they despised everybody who would not or could not do the same. Being “rich and increased with goods,” they looked down upon those who were not rich and, worse than that, they began to forget their God. O my Brothers and Sisters, I have often looked upon them who have been in sore trouble and I have wished that, by some magic touch, I could lift the daughters of sorrow out of their sad state! But I have lived long enough to feel that if I could do it, I would deliberately stay my hand until I had consulted with Infinite Wisdom to know whether it would be for their good or not. If it were in my power to lift the cross from every Brother and every Sister’s shoulders here and to give all of you your heart’s desire, I would not do so, however much I might feel prompted to do it! As I often see how the plant that bloomed in the shade is burnt up in the sunshine—and how some natures have never yielded the sweetest perfume except in grief’s sad dripping-well—when I perceive that some of God’s saints never seem to honor Him when they are lifted up into high places—I feel that you and I had better be satisfied to let the Lord put His people wherever He pleases and keep them on “short commons,” sometimes, and even chasten them every morning, as the Psalmist says was done to him. Perhaps some of them, if the Lord did not make them cry every morning, would make themselves cry twice as much before night—and if He did not afflict them, they would very soon bring far worse afflictions upon themselves by falling into some great sin.

I think I know the reason why God does not trust some of us with the bright eyes and the elastic step which He bestows upon others. I think I can see why He does not give some of us more prominent positions in His Church and greater influence among the works for Him. I think I can tell why that Sister is lame and that Brother is blind—why that one hangs her harp upon the willows and that other toils amid continual poverty. It is because God will not risk all His ships on the roughest sea. He has constructed some of His vessels so that they can stand the storm—and these He sends away into the thick of the tempest—but His little ships He keeps nearer the shore. Some of His seamen see less of His wonders in the deep because they are not able to bear the sight as others can. I think it is so and, certainly, this is true—that seasons of prosperity, of any sort, are seasons of great trial to Christians. According to our text, it was at the time of their prosperity that the Israelites forgot their God.

II. Now, secondly, let me indicate THE PROGRESS OF THIS EVIL WHENEVER IT HAPPENS TO A MAN.  
It has happened that some men have lived all their lives forgetting God. It may be that some of you who are here at this service have never really thought of God—you have forgotten all about Him. A gentleman was walking down a country road one Sabbath morning and he met a man with a cartload of hay. He was asked by the man who was driving the cart whether he had seen two lads on in front. “Yes,” said the gentleman, “I have, and I think they are the boys of a father with a short memory, are they not?” He said he did not know whether it was so or not, but they were his lads. “Well,” said the gentleman, “I thought that you were their father and that you had a short memory, for you do not seem to have recollected that there is a text of Scripture which says, ‘Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.’” That short memory concerning the Sabbath affects a great many people concerning everything else that is good. Some of you, I fear, have such short memories that you have never even recollected the God who made you. You have eaten just as the cattle eat and you have drunk as they drink—but you have never blessed the Giver of the unnumbered mercies that you have received—any more than the cattle have done! Some of you go on from morning to night without any recognition of God. There are hundreds of men who might be compared— as Rowland Hill did once compare them—to hogs under an oak. “They eat the acorns,” he said, “but they never look up and thank the oak.” They live in this world and feed upon the bounties which God has provided for them, yet they have no thought of Him! It is His air that they breathe and it is by His power that they exhale the air—they could not exist for a single moment if it were not for Him—yet He is not in any of their thoughts! If God were blotted out of the universe—if such a thing could be, that He should no longer exist, but that they could still exist— they certainly would not be grieved. Possibly they would feel all the easier in their mind because there would be no judgment to come and no punishment for all their evil.  
Ah, my Friend, you must be in a very bad plight if you think you can get on better without God than with Him! If your boy were to say concerning you, “I wish I might never see my father again”—if that little child who eats at your table every day, whom you clothed but the other day with new garments—if he were to say, “I never want to speak to my father again—I wish he were dead!”—there must be something radically wrong in that child! His morals must be thoroughly bad. Even if nobody has ever found him out in deceiving or lying, I am sure, from that one fact, that he is a bad boy. Now, my Friend, even if I cannot point to any sinful act of yours, I am sure that there must be something very wrong with you if you have lived in this world all these years without thinking of God!  
If I am invited to go and stay with a friend in the country and I simply see his beautiful park and his fine gardens, and indoors I have all that I need in the way of refreshment during the day and a comfortable bed at night, but my host never puts in an appearance—and I do not know whether he is anywhere about the premises—I do not enjoy my visit. I came down to see him, so I cannot be content with seeing his park and his gardens, and so on. I say to the servants, “Where is your master? I came down here to pay a visit to him and I cannot find any pleasure here unless I see him.” And, dear Friends, I feel just like that with regard to my God. When I look at this beautiful world which He has made—and it is a beautiful world, after all, let who will speak against it—I always feel that I need to see Him who made it. Even our lovely gardens which seem to me to be a thousand times more beautiful than all the vineyards of the Continent, would give me no pleasure in looking at them unless I could always realize that God is there. The sea itself—the wide and open sea— what is it if there is no God to rule its waves and to speak in its storms? I must see traces of God in everything that happens! But some of you have lived all this while and God’s cry concerning you—over hill and dale, up and down the street, in the house where you live, across the table at which you eat, and over the pillow on which you sleep—is, “They have forgotten Me. I have made them, kept them alive and blessed them in a thousand ways, yet they have forgotten Me!—Me, of whom they ought first to have thought, for it was essential with them that they should first have thought of Me—and through not thinking of Me, they have bred within themselves all manner of evil.” O unconverted people, I wish you could put yourselves in God’s place for a few minutes and just think how you would feel if others had treated you as you have treated Him! Let the sharp arrows of conviction stick fast in your conscience as you realize that you have acted in a mean, dastardly, ungenerous, ungrateful way towards your God—the tender, loving, gracious Creator, Preserver and Friend of men!  
But, now, turning to you Christian people, I want to ask of the progress of this evil in you. I will show you how it often works. When God prospers you in business, takes away sickness and removes causes of sorrow, it sometimes happens that the evil of forgetting God begins with an almost imperceptible alienation of heart from Him. You do not notice it. You would be very grieved if you did, but your heart begins to grow cold and the love to your Lord that once burned in your soul is not as fervent as it used to be. And this condition of spirit very speedily shows itself in increasing fondness for worldly things. To have riches may be a blessing to you, but for the riches to have you will be a great curse to you. There are some who have abundance of temporal things given to them and they make a good use of them, so they may be thankful for them. But there are others who are carried away by these temporal things which thus become the source of all sorts of calamities. A man may have a fine house and a beautiful garden and he may be thankful for them—so far, so good—but he may fall into the sin of making a Heaven of that house and garden—and so they will be the cause of sin. He may be wealthy and that will be a good thing if he uses his money rightly. But, by-and-by, he may begin to feel that the one thing worth living for is to have money— and that will be an evil. If you have acquired a certain amount of money and you feel that you are a person of importance simply because you have so much wealth, you are putting earthly things into the place which God alone should occupy. As old Master Brooks says, it is as when a husband, whose wife used to dote upon him, has given her rings, chains and other ornaments—and now that she has them, she dotes over them and forgets him! It is very sad when this is the case and it is often so with some who profess to be the Lord’s. If we accept His gifts as tokens of love from Him and see Him in them, than they are helpful and not hurtful. But when we get to thinking of them, and not of Him, then they become mischievous to us.  
This is an evil which continually grows, for this man who is beginning to mind earthly things, keeps on indulging himself. He takes more of what he calls pleasure than he used to do and, indulging himself thus, he gets into a wrong state for prayer, for searching the Bible, for attending the means of Grace. And the more he enjoys this world, the less does he think of the next world. As the things that are seen eat like a canker into him, the things that are unseen seem to lose their power over him. If he still attends the place where he went before to hear the Gospel, he says that the minister does not preach as he used to do, and the singing is not as lively as it used to be. Other Christian people say that they cannot see any difference at all, but he can. You know, dear Friends, what is very often the difference between one dinner and another. It is not the fault of the cook—it is the need of an appetite. Here are some Brothers and Sisters who have lost their spiritual appetite. They cannot eat this and they cannot eat that, and they cannot eat the other. They have lost their appetite, that is the reason. “To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet,” says Solomon, but this man, who has prospered in the world and has had much enjoyment in it, is now beginning to lose all relish even for those very spiritual things that were once the delight of his soul! So he begins to drop off coming to the House of God and gradually declines, first a little in this way, and then in that. He has more money, now, than he used to have, so it takes him a longer time to count it. He has more business than he used to have and it takes more time to look after it. He cannot come to weeknight services and if, on the Lord’s-Day, for appearance sake, he does not cease going to the place of prayer, he carries his ledger with him in his carriage—metaphorically, if not literally! There is many a man who comes into his pew with acres of land hanging to his boots. And there is many a woman who sits there in a fine new dress—not only the one she has on, but the other one that is to be made up on Monday!  
It is sad when worldly things then get into the soul and come right into God’s House. Why, the preacher himself knows what it is to find a thousand distracting thoughts come to his mind while he is addressing you! And, therefore, he knows that they must come to your minds while you are listening to the Word of the Lord. Thus it happens that in one thing after another, the love of God and His Word withers—and the love of the world grows. By-and-by, family prayer gets pushed into a corner— very short and not very sweet. And private prayer hardly knows where to find a place for the sole of its feet. Private prayer, as there are none but yourselves to note its observance, is a very convenient place for retrenchment. You want to save time, as you have so much to do and, therefore, you snip off a piece here, and another piece there, and who but God is the wiser? You do not perceive any very great difference, for your conscience is getting seared. So, by degrees, a Christian who is declining in spiritual things, gives up private prayer—not altogether, perhaps, but the sweetness and the enjoyment of it depart as he trifles with it, instead of entering into the holy exercise with all his heart and soul.  
In some professing Christians, this declension goes still further. At last they give up all religious profession. I wonder whether there are any here who once declared and probably believed that he was a Christian, but who has now given up even the name of Christian? If so, my Friend, one of two things is true concerning you—either you never were converted at all, and so have been a mere professor, or else, if you ever were truly converted, you will have to come back. As surely as ever the Lord looked upon you with an eye of love, you must come back to Him, for, after He has once set His seal upon you, He cannot and will not let you go! Oh, that you would come back to Him now! You will have to come back, poor wandering sheep, for you belong to the Good Shepherd who will not lose one of His flock! Wayward as you are, He will have you with Him and if you will not come back to Him when He calls you, He has some rough dogs that will worry you back! But back from the paths of sin you must come—and I pray God that you may come back right speedily and so once more enjoy the blessings of peace with Him! I sometimes pass persons who used to sit in these pews and who were, I thought, ardent Christians. Even now some of them have respect for me, but I fear that they have none for my Master. If I get anywhere near them, they slink away, for fear I should speak to them. I wish they had as much anxiety about the grief they have caused my Lord as they have about any grief they may have caused me. May God grant, through His Sovereign Grace, that all of us who have professed to be His, may be preserved, lest—

*“When any turn from Zion’s way  
(Alas, what numbers do!)”—*  
we also should turn away, as we shall certainly do unless His Grace shall hold us fast!

III. Now, thirdly, and very briefly, a few words about THE PECULIAR EVIL OF THIS SAD CONDITION—“They have forgotten Me”  
It is so grossly ungrateful that every Christian who realizes that he is apt to slide into such a condition should, at once bestir himself and watch against it. What? Shall I love the Lord less because He gives me more? Shall I set the gifts which His goodness bestows upon me, upon His Throne and let them be idols to deprive Him of my heart’s love and worship? If I do this, surely I shall be worse than the brute beasts! God grant, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we may be ashamed of such a condition as this and flee from it!  
Remember that if any of us do begin to set our hearts upon the things of this world, whatever we gain, we must be losers. The man who has scarcely a rag to cover him, but who delights in God, may be the beau ideal of a happy man. But the man who is robed in purple and who calls an empire his own—and who has forgotten his God—is to me the model of misery mocked by majesty! God save you from being able to delight yourselves in anything but your God! May He put so much bitterness into every other cup that you will be compelled to take the cup of salvation and, calling upon the name of the Lord, to drink only of that! You will be dreadful and eternal losers, whatever else you gain, if you lose the Lord!  
If you forget God, you who are indeed His children—and I am speaking only to such people just now—it is a terrible thing for you to be led into a condition in which you forget your Heavenly Father. If there were a wife who was very poor, but who, as long as she was poor, clung to her husband and found all her delight in his love, but who, when they became rich, no longer cared for him, it would be wretched riches that could burn away her heart from him who ought to possess it all! If I love my brother and find great comfort in fellowship with him, but I should suddenly get to be so great that I should not know my brother—what a miserable being I would be! Many a man does not know his own relations when he begins to get rich. He thinks he is somebody of importance, but really he is a big nobody—a very great and dreadful nobody! And when a man, just because God prospers him, does not know Jesus Christ, his great elder Brother, and gets to be ashamed of mixing with God’s poor people who go to the little Ebenezer Chapel or of being seen with those poor commonplace sort of Christians who try to follow the Lamb where ever He goes—he is a poor, poor specimen of a man, much less of a Christian! God give us minds and hearts quickened by His Grace, that will enable us to live above all such meanness as that!  
A sad part of the wretchedness of this condition is that it involves so much trifling with God. If we have forgotten God, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have forgotten the many deliverances we have had in the days that are past. We have forgotten the wiping away of our tears of sorrow. Worse still, we have forgotten the precious blood of Jesus that spoke peace to our soul. And we have forgotten the Holy Spirit who came into our hearts and gave us joy and rest in Jesus Christ. And if we have forgotten God, we have forgotten His gracious promises which are yet to be fulfilled, and the glorious Covenant of His Grace, ordered in all things and sure, on which our hopes of Heaven are based! We have also forgotten His claims upon us—forgotten that we are His children, His beloved, His elect, His redeemed! We have forgotten all that and we are living in such a condition that we are trifling even with His threats! He has threatened that He will chasten us and we seem to make light of His threats and to defy His chastisements. We must have gotten into a state that is piteous and lamentable to the last degree if we can live from day to day in forgetfulness of God!  
IV. I will say no more about this sad decline, but finish my discourse by telling you HOW THIS EVIL CAN BE CURED.  
If any of us, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, are suffering from this dreadful decline, it is a good help towards its being cured when we see the mischief of it. When a man has this sad condition pointed out to him and the Spirit of God enables him to see it, that is a great help towards lifting him out of it. But I think that the best thing for us all to do is, just for the moment, to sink all differences and not ask any questions about whether we are saints or sinners—whether we ever did love the Lord, or whether we did not—and let us all go straight away to the Cross, just as if we had never gone there before. By nature, and by practice, too, we are all guilty and we all deserve to be cast into Hell—the best of us as well as the worst. So let us all go where the Savior carried the great load of sin upon Himself and bore the consequences that He might set us free from it forever. Let us look up to Him and, by faith, view the flowing of the blood from those many wounds that He received on our behalf. Let us look into that dear face of His—the image of matchless misery and majesty combined! Let us note the crown of thorns and the marks of ignominy and shame that cruel men put upon Him. Let us hear Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And, as we see Him die, let us believe in Him again, or believe in Him for the first time.  
My Savior, my Redeemer, wherever I may have wandered, I come back to You. My soul believes in You, trusts You, hangs all her hopes for time and eternity upon You. Will You not speak peace and pardon to my guilty spirit? Ah, if you come to Him with such a confession and cry as this, you will get your love back. The best place to get it back is the place where it was born. It was born at the Cross and you will get it back if you go to the Cross, just as you went at first, and stand there, with this as your soul’s confession of faith—  
*“I the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me.”*  
I cannot say more except just this—if God is prospering you, keep very close to the Cross. Do you not see that if the richer you get and the more often you go to the Cross, it will be safe for you to be trusted with wealth? Take care to sanctify everything that God gives you by giving Him His proper portion and do not use your own portion till you have given Him His. Then, if you look at every blessing as coming to you by the way of the Cross, and say, “Jesus Christ has sent me this, for— *“‘There’s never a gift His hand bestows  
But cost His heart a groan’”—*  
if you receive everything as through Him and then desire to use everything for Him, you may be as rich as the Rothschilds and yet you may be as gracious as the Apostle Paul! You might have all the world given you, and yet, for all that, it would not hurt you. If you had as much of God as you had of gold, God would see that the gold was safe in your hands. He would trust us with prosperity if He saw that all our prosperity only bound us more closely and more completely to the Cross of His dear Son. So, if any of you have forgotten Him, conclude this evening’s service by coming to the Cross. And thus Father, Son and Holy Spirit shall get glory from you. May it be so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: HOSEA 13:1-9.

Hosea was full of complaints against the people of God, for in his day they had very sadly wandered from the Lord. They had even forgotten Him. In Hosea’s prophecy we have the plaintive voice of a loving God chiding His backsliding children.

Hosea 13:1. When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel, but when he offended in Baal, he died. A modest, humble, trembling heart is often by far the sounder heart, but when we begin to sin and to sin boastfully, and to wrap ourselves about with the robe of self-complacency, then is death very near to us! “When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.”

2. And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the word of the craftsmen: they say of them, let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. When Jeroboam became king of the new Kingdom of Israel—in order to prevent his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship God in Solomon’s temple—he started two shrines at Dan and Bethel and there he set up what Holy Scripture calls in derision, “calves.” I suppose that his idea was to make images of a bull, the emblem of power, intending them to be the symbol of the Divine Being and that the people still intended to worship God, but to worship Him under the image of a bull. It is the same in Roman Catholicism to this day—the worship of God, the worship of Christ, by means of crucifixes, and emblems and symbols of various kinds. But when men once begin that kind of idolatry, there is no knowing where they will stop, for the worship of God through the medium of symbols soon grows into the worship of other gods, saints, “blessed virgins” and I know not what besides! They are pretty sure to be set up when once people begin to make use of outward and visible emblems of the Deity. So it was with these ancient Israelites. From worshipping the bull, which was meant to be a type of the Omnipotent God, they went on to the worshipping of “molten images of their silver and idols according to their own understanding.” Brothers and Sisters, let us take warning from these idolaters and always keep to the simplicity of worship ordained by God in His Word. However comely and beautiful, or grand and imposing and, consequently, fascinating, any form of idolatry may be to some minds, let us utterly despise it if it is not according to the mind of God and the teaching of His Spirit as revealed in His Word.

3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. Those who will have gods of their own making shall have but a brief enjoyment of them. He who truly worships the Everlasting God shall have an everlasting blessing! But he who worships gods that he has made himself—mere objects of this mortal day—shall have but a short day of it. He shall be as the early dew which glistens brightly, but is soon gone—or as the morning cloud which is banished by the rising of the sun.

4, 5. Yet I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but Me: for there is no Savior beside Me. I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. The Israelites drew near to God when they needed bread and water in the wilderness. God says, “I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.” And the Lord might say to His people nowadays, “I did know you when you were very sick, when you were very poor, when you were in great trouble. You sought Me then—how is it that you are trying to do without Me now?”

6-8. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten Me. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will tear open the rib cage of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. When men forget God they may expect that they will meet with some terrible judgments. And especially God’s own people will find this to be the case with them if they forget the Lord. Our God is a very jealous God and when His children will set their hearts on other objects instead of upon Him, He will take care to embitter those objects of their affection to them—He will make their idols to be loathed by them. If God did not love us very much, He would think little of our faults, but just because He loves us so much, He cannot bear that any part of our heart’s affection should go away from Him. So, if He sees that we deal unfaithfully with Him, He will make us realize that sin is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing. His anger against us will be like that of a bear that is robbed of her whelps, or of a lion or leopard leaping upon his prey.

9. O Israel, you have destroyed yourself: but in Me is your help. “You have gone away from Me, but I will bring you back again. You have destroyed yourself by your sin, but I will restore you to My favor by My Grace. You may look within yourself for causes of repentance, but you must not look to yourself for the means of restoration. You must look to Me, your Savior and your God.” So this verse teaches us “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷Hos 13.9

SELF-DESTROYED, YET SAVED

NO. 2425

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, AUGUST 11, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 11, 1887.

**“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.” Hosea 13:9.**

IT would be a very important subject for our meditation if we kept to the text and thought upon its great Truth of God—that the ruin of man is altogether of himself and the salvation of man is altogether of God. These two statements, I believe, comprehend the main points of a sound theology. There have been divisions in the Church over these points where there ought not to have been any. The Calvinist has said and said right bravely, that salvation is of Grace alone. And the Arminian has said and said most truthfully, that damnation is of man’s will, alone, and as the result of man’s sin, and of that only. Then they have fallen out with one another. The fact is, they had, each one, laid hold of a Truth of God, and if they could have put their heads together and accepted both Truths, it might have been greatly for the advantage of the Church of Christ! These two doctrines are like tram lines that you can travel on with safety and comfort, these parallel lines—ruin, of man; restoration, of God. Sin, of man’s will; salvation, of God’s will. Reprobation, of man’s demerit; election, of God’s free and Sovereign Grace. The sinner lost in Hell through himself, alone, the saint lifted up to Heaven wholly and alone by the power and Grace of God!

Get those two Truths of God thoroughly engraved upon your heart and you will then hold comprehensively the great Truths of Scripture. You will not need to crowd them into one narrow system of theology, but you will have a sort of duplicate system which will contain, as far as the mind of man, being finite, can contain—the great Truths revealed by the Infinite God. I am not, however, at this time going so much into the doctrinal point as to try and make use of my text for practical soul-saving purposes.

You notice in this text, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself,” how God comes to close terms with men. He speaks, calling the persons addressed by name, “O Israel,” and then He uses a singular pronoun, “you have destroyed yourself.” It is something like Nelson’s way of fighting. When he came alongside the enemy, he brought his ship as close as he could, and then sent in a devastating broadside from stem to stern! So does this text—it seems to get alongside of the man, puts its guns right close up to him, and then discharges its volley—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”

There is nothing said here that is at all flattering—“you have destroyed yourself.” God bids a man look at himself as a blighted, blasted, ruined thing when He tells him that he is a self-destroyer! He has done it all! He has no need to ask, as Jesus did, “Who slew all these?” Your own red right hand has done it! O you guilty sinner, you have ruined yourself! See how plainly God speaks, how He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet, and with His storm of hail sweeps away all refuges of lies—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”

But though He does not flatter, observe that the Lord does not conclude His address to the sinner by leaving him in despair, for the second part of the text is, “In Me is your help.” We should never so preach the Law as to show only the naked sword of Divine Justice—the sweet invitations and promises of the Gospel must come in after the dreadful verdict of judgement! Let the thunders roll, let the lightning set the heavens on fire, but conclude not till some silver drops have fallen and a shower of mercy has refreshed the thirsty earth! No, God will not have us preach only the Law and its terrors, but the Gospel must also be brought into our message—“You have destroyed yourself, O Israel: there is no concealing from you that grim and terrible fact. But in Me is your help: there is no keeping back from you that cheering and blessed information!” When these two things work together, breeding self-despair and hope in God, this is the way by which eternal life is worked in the souls of men!

I am going to speak, then, of those two themes and first, here is a sad fact—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” Secondly, here is a hopeful assurance—“In Me is your help.” And, before I finish, I wish to notice, in the third place, an instructive warning which is given by this text as you read it in the Revised Version—“It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your Help.” It is a warning to men not to fight against their own salvation, or contend against the only Helper who can aid them to any purpose!

I. First, then, here is A SAD FACT—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”  
Now, dear Friends, I believe that there is a message here to every one of us. The text speaks in tones of thunder to each unconverted person and says, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” But if any child of God has lost his first love, his joy, his comfort—if he has become a backslider—if he has fallen into a sad, melancholy condition, he has done it himself and the text tells him so! “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” If there is about any of us that which we have to mourn over by reason of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, the text puts its finger on the sore, and says, “you have destroyed yourself! You have, yourself, done all this mischief.”  
But, addressing myself mainly to those who do not as yet know the Lord, I want you, dear Friends, to notice that this sad fact stared Israel in the face—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” He could see it, he could feel it, he could not escape from knowing it, for this was the singular fact—that God Himself seemed to have turned against him. I read you, just now, those seventh and eighth verses where God says, “I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will tear open their rib cage, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.”  
It happens to some men, as it has happened to many who have come under my observation, that they have gone on pleasantly in sin for a time, till, all of a sudden, the hand of God has gone out against them. They have been smitten with sickness—those same strong young fellows who never had any sickness and who thought that they could indulge their passions to the utmost without fear—have been, all of a sudden, laid low. Perhaps the hand of God has gone out against them in business. They were prospering. They added field to field. They could afford to spend money freely in various ways, but, by-and-by, the stream of business began to run low and then to dry up altogether! What they attempted did not prosper however hard they labored. They rose up early, they sat up late, they ate the bread of carefulness—but all went amiss with them. Whatever they did seemed to have a blight upon it. Truly, God met them as a lion and as a bear bereaved of her whelps!  
At such a time as this, the man begins to see that there must be something wrong with him. He did not know it, before—perhaps he even thought that his prosperity was a proof that God was not angry with him! And he went on from sin to sin and said within himself, “Why, I do not suffer even as Christian people do! Surely, I must be right, after all, for I increase in riches and my eyes stand out with fatness.” Oh, if you are one of God’s chosen, there will come to you a day of darkness in which you shall not see your way along the road of sin! God will hedge up your path with thorns and dig deep ditches in your way—and you shall stumble and fall—and then shall you say, “I perceive that something is amiss with me. I see that I am on the wrong track. Oh, how shall I escape, how shall I get onto the right road?”  
I say, again, when a man is in that condition, as Israel was in my text, then his sad state stares him in the face! You cannot convince the worldling that he is in an evil case when he is living without God and yet prospering! Oh, no—he is satisfied as long as he gets the things of this world—what cares he for the world to come? Therefore, one of the first means that God uses to awaken men from the dangerous slumber of their natural estate is to go to war with them and to be like one who is cruel to them—that He may tear them away from themselves and from their follies.  
Notice, next, that while this grief stared them in the face, it was attributed to themselves, it lay at their own door—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” There is always hope for a man when he knows this and confesses this. The worst of it is that, by nature, we lay our ruin at anybody’s door but our own! “It was all the fault of our family environment—how can we help it? It was God’s purpose, or it was the devil’s temptation.” We put the saddle anywhere but on the right horse! We will not accept this great and certain Truth, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” Now, you can be sure of this, O Man, that the sin which will ruin you is your own sin! That for which you will suffer, that for which you do suffer is the sin which you, yourself, have committed—the evil which you have willfully committed! There are some to whom this Truth of God has a special reference. Let me see whether I can identify them.  
There are some of us who went into sin without any previous training whatever! Some of us were born of Christian parents and our earliest days were spent in a holy circle. We heard no evil language, we saw no evil example, we cannot remember anything that was wrong that crossed our path as children. Yet we went astray from childhood unto youth, pursuing evil as eagerly as did the children of the vicious! Wherever this is the case, does not the text come home with great sharpness, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself”? You cannot say, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” You have eaten the sour grapes, yourselves, and set your own teeth on edge! Perhaps some, here, are the children of Christian ministers and they know where they spent last night—I do not. Perhaps some, here, were borne and trained by mothers whose purity was most exemplary—but they, themselves, though they never had an evil example, have plunged into sin as naturally as the young crocodile takes to the Nile! This is, with an emphasis, for a man to destroy himself!  
So there are some who are not the victims of temptation, but they have deliberately gone into sin. I feel great pity for some that, from their peculiar constitution, seem as if their very flesh led their soul into mischief—from their birth they appeared to have a tendency towards such and such evils. We do not excuse these guilty ones, but, at the same time, are they as blameworthy as others who, without any particular pressure from outside or from within, nevertheless deliberately sin? Oh, my dear Friends, if you can sit down and look at sin coolly, and calculate and turn it over, and then, after weighing it in the scales, can go after it, then I must say, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” Yours was wanton, deliberate mischief! Who shall justify you before the bar of God at the great Judgment Day?  
There are some who have to take a great deal of plotting and planning in order to be able to manage to sin at all. Their surroundings are such that they seem to be shielded and guarded against iniquities which are natural enough to others. They have to dodge the inspection of the household. They have to practice as many tricks to escape the eyes of wife or daughter as the burglar does when he tries to break into the house at night. Now, what shall I say of such who put all their wits to work to damn their souls—and are far more busy to ruin themselves than the greatest schemers and merchants are for a fortune? Yet there are many such and of these we have to say emphatically, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”  
Yes, and I have even seen them act thus against warnings given them with tears, warnings which have brought tears to their own eyes! They have pushed through the most loving obstacles downward to the Pit as if resolved to perish! And they have sinned against enlightenment, for Mr. Conscience has flashed his bull’s-eye lantern in their eyes. They have stood, for a time, astonished at themselves, and have felt that they could not sin thus, yet they have soon said that they would—and they have pushed good Mr. Conscience to one side—and still pursued the downward track. Oh, this is terrible! When a man acts thus, we must say of him, “you have destroyed yourself.”  
Some will act thus distinctly against Providence. When God has stepped in their path and blocked them out of one sin, they have edged about, and gone to another! And when they could not effect their purpose. When it seemed as if the very earth and the stars in their courses would fight against them in their pursuit of sin, they have selected another road as if to baffle the God of mercy and destroy themselves whether He would let them do so or not! I am giving a terrible description, but I am painting sinners exactly as they are—I know I am! There are some here who will recognize their own portraits if they have any eyes left—“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”  
Further, notice that in the text, God, Himself, reminds the sinner of this sad fact! Ought he not to have known it without being told of it? Yes, he should. Might he not have discovered it by listening to the Prophets who would have told him so? Assuredly he should! But God, Himself, breaks through all reserve and comes to this guilty sinner—and says to him, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself. See what has come of your iniquity? Did I not tell you it would be so? Look, and see for yourself.” It is not a man like yourself who tells you that it is so, but God who knows! God who never exaggerates! He tells you that you have destroyed yourself!  
O my dear Hearer, it may be that while I am speaking to you in truth and soberness about this weighty matter, God, Himself, is speaking through my lips! Indeed, it is so! It is the Lord who says to you, “you have destroyed yourself; you have destroyed your innocence, you have destroyed your righteousness, you have destroyed your tenderness, you have well-near destroyed your conscience, you have destroyed your hopes, you have destroyed your best years, you have destroyed your usefulness, and now you have brought yourself to death’s dark door—

*“‘Buried in sorrow and in sin.”*

God Himself can say no less than this to you, “you have destroyed yourself.” God who loves men. God the tender-hearted and the generous. God who says, “How can I give you up?” Even He is forced to give this solemn verdict, “O Israel, you have not only hurt yourself, and wounded yourself, but you have damned yourself, you have destroyed yourself, you have ruined yourself! Your last hope is put out, like the last flicker of the candle, and you are left in the dark.”

It may be that some here will confess the truth of this fact. If so, bow your heads—solemnly bow before the living God and acknowledge that it is so, “Yes, I have destroyed myself.” It will be a bitter, bitter moment, and yet it will be the best moment you have ever lived, in which you sob out this confession, “O God, I have destroyed myself!” How I wish that I could make men act thus, but I cannot. We try to preach the Truth of God with all the earnestness we possess, but we cannot get the Truth into our hearer’s soul! On such a sultry night as this, you sit and listen to me with as much attention as you can in the closeness of the atmosphere, but O ungodly one, if this Truth of God really entered your heart, I question whether you would be able to keep your seat! It would fill you with an inward anguish and you would be ready to cry aloud, “What shall I do, what shall I do, for I have ruined myself?” If you could see the pit that yawns for you. If you saw the chasm that is just before you— your foot is even now well-near over a bottomless gulf, yet you do not perceive it—if you did perceive it, it would be another matter for me to preach, and for you to hear this message, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself!”

II. I am very happy to be permitted by my text to now change my strain, praying that what has been already said may have its due effect and prepare the way for this more pleasing note. Here is, secondly, A HOPEFUL ASSURANCE—“But in Me is your help.”

Notice that this assurance came at a very fit time. Just when the manwas made to know that he had destroyed himself, then it was that God said to him, “But in Me is your help.” What is the use of a Savior when you do not need saving? The point is to have a Savior when you are lost! And this is the glory of Christ, that He is a timely Redeemer who does not redeem those who are not slaves, but ransoms us when we are sold under sin! You will never know the Gospel till you have known the Law. If you have not felt the crushing power of the first sentence of my text, “you have destroyed yourself,” you will not care for the cheering note that makes up the second sentence, “In Me is your help.” Remember that when you have sinned—it is then that Christ washes you from sin. When you are lost, it is then that Christ saves you and if you are now full of sin, it is now that Christ can begin to bless you! If you now feel so leprous that there is not a sound spot in you, it is now that Christ can come and heal you!

“Oh!” you say, “if I did not feel as I now do, I think that Christ could heal me.” He can heal you as you now feel, or as you do not feel—for if you are in such a condition that you do not even feel, but are brought to acknowledge that death has seized you, and seems to have petrified your very heart—yet where you are, and as you are, Christ is an all-sufficient Savior for you! If you have gone down seven pairs of stairs into the dungeon where the light never comes, yet Jesus can come to you, even there, and set you free at once! I do not know where to pick words strong enough to make this Truth of God quite plain and emphatic—it is not your goodness that makes you fit for Christ—it is your badness in which Christ shall be glorified by delivering you from it! The need may never be so great, but Christ can meet it! The distress may be never so urgent, but Christ can come and remove it! So, then, this assurance was hopeful because it came at a fit time. When Israel was destroyed, then God was his help!

Notice, next, that it came as a contrast to their condition—“you have destroyed yourself.” Yes, yes, “but—but in Me is your help.” “You have destroyed yourself. You can not save yourself. You have destroyed yourself, that is true, but then I have come, not to destroy you—not to do the work which you have done—you have done that effectually enough. There is no need for Me to come in and do more destroying. I have come to undo the work that you have done. I have come to give you a better righteousness than the one you have lost. I have come to give you a tenderness of heart far better than any you had by nature. I am come to give you a new heart and a right spirit. I am come to work in you, again, all that you have destroyed! Yes, and to work in you something better than you have destroyed—to make you a new man in Christ Jesus. In Me is your help.” What a contrast is this to the condition of the one who has destroyed himself!

Observe, also, that this assurance comes from God, Himself—“In Me is your help.” O Soul, I wish that I could make you turn your eyes, once and for all, away from yourself and all that comes of yourself, for you will never get help there! I would have you look to God, to God in Christ Jesus, to God the Holy Spirit, to God the Divine Father—for if ever there is help for such an one as you are, that help must be in God! As an old friend said to me yesterday, “Nothing will do for you and me but Grace.” I said to him, “Yes, and that won’t do unless it is the Grace of God.” It must be God’s own Grace, redeeming us from all iniquity and working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, or else we can never be saved! But then God tells us that we can be saved, for though He says that we have destroyed ourselves, He adds, “But in Me is your help.”

Sitting in the pew, over yonder, is one who says, “Oh, but I am full of the most accursed sin!” I know that you are, but God is full of the most blessed mercy and in Him is your help! “Oh, but I am all failure, and shortcoming, and unrighteousness!” Yes, but God is all righteousness, and Grace, and faithfulness—and there is where your hope lies! “Oh, but I am powerless! I can do nothing!” I know that and I would have you know it—but the Lord is almighty and He can do everything! Cast yourself upon Him! This is faith—to go out of yourself to God, to get away from all this hampering mass of rottenness, this ruin, this destruction, the fallen manhood of the flesh and the self-confidence that grows like a fungus out of it—and come to the eternal God who is pure holiness—and rest in Him as He reveals Himself in the Person of His dear Son!

“I know,” says one, “that there is help in God.” You know something, but you do not yet know everything, for the text says, “In Me is your help.” Not only for Mary and for Thomas, but help for you. “In Me is your help.” “Surely,” exclaims one, “it does not mean me, for I am a destroyed one.” I tell you that it means exactly you, for this help is for the destroyed one—“You have destroyed yourself, but in Me is your help.” “Possibly there may be help for So-and-So, who has a good natural disposition and has never gone astray as I have gone.” That may be. I do not know anything about him, but I have to deal with one, now, who has no good natural disposition and nothing whatever to recommend him. I have to deal with you, you destroyed one, you who are like an old ruin, broken and cast down, inhabited by moles and bats, a foul and filthy thing! You stand in the darkness, there, and it is Christ who comes to rebuild such as you are and make a Temple for Himself out of even you! I see you black and foul, not worthy to be picked off a dunghill, and it is such as you are that the splendor of Almighty Love has chosen, that in you, in all your rottenness and abomination, the glory of His Grace may be manifested by making something out of you though you are nothing—making a glorious righteousness to cover you though you are naked—and your very righteousnesses are but as filthy rags!

“O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.” Bury him! Bury the dead out of our sight! Cast him into the pit! “No,” says Mercy, “stop that dreadful procession! Let the bearers stand still. Christ comes to this dead young man and He says, ‘you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.’” Look, the dead man lives! I see him sit upright! He is delivered to his mother and God is glorified in the resurrection of the dead. “You have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.”

What do you say, Sinner? Will you have this help? “Have it?” you ask. “Have it? Yes, but I am not worthy.” Now, away with that nonsense! Have I not told you that the Lord comes to bless you not because of you worthiness, but because of His Grace? “What am I to do to have it?” You have nothing to do but take it! He freely gives it to you! “But surely there is something expected of me.” You are a fool if you expect anything of yourself but sin! All your expectation of good must be from God! You may expect great things of God, and then there will be great things worked in you, but what you have to do now is just to accept the infinite mercy of God and submit to Him as the clay on the wheel yields to the hand of the potter, that He may mold and fashion you, and make you to be a vessel of mercy fitted for His use.

God bless these words of mine to the salvation of some of you! I travail in birth for you till Christ is formed in you. I remember times when, if I had heard such an assuring word as this, when I was burdened with guilt and full of fears, I think I would have leaped forward to lay hold upon it! And if there are any such here, this message should be as though a rift were made in the clouds to let them see into Heaven. “In Me is your help,” says Christ on yonder eternal Throne! “In Me is your help,” says the Father in the splendor of His Glory! “In Me is your help,” says the Spirit who, like a dove, is hovering here, waiting to enter into some heart and work His gracious will!

III. I close with what I mentioned to you, the rendering of the Revised Version, which has much to be said in its favor. This gives us AN INSTRUCTIVE WARNING—“It is your destruction, O Israel, that you are against Me, against your help.”

Dear Friends, do not any of you fight against your only true Helper? Is not this a dreadful thing for anyone to do? We sometimes say of a man, “Now, you are standing in your own light. You know that it is only yourself that is hindering yourself.” We say this to the drunk who is earning good wages, and yet spending so much of his money in poisoning himself. We say to him, “You cannot keep on like this. You are ruining your health, you are robbing your family, you cannot prosper while you act thus, you are standing in your own light.” It is a very sad thing when this is the fact concerning a man’s temporal prosperity, but what shall I say of a man when he is his own soul’s destroyer, when he stands in the way of his own joy and peace through believing?

Let me close by beseeching you not to stand in your own light, any of you, or to act in antagonism to your only Helper. “How can we do that?” says one. Well, first, by disbelieving the Gospel. I have seen some do this very foolishly. I heard one say, the other day, “Well now, that is a very precious Gospel. I think, somehow, that I could believe it if it were not so good as it is, but it seems too good to be true!” Well, if you keep on with that kind of talk, you will be very foolish, you will be standing in your own light! Suppose somebody were to come to your house and say to you, “You know such a mansion.” “Yes.” “You know that it has a beautiful park around it.” “Yes.” “Well, I have brought you the title-deeds of that estate. I am going to make you a present of it.”

Perhaps you would smile and say, “There are a great many practical jokes being played nowadays, and I suppose this is one of them.” But suppose that this person said, “No, this is a reality, it is no joke, it is a fact. Here are the title-deeds of this estate made out in your name.” Suppose that, month after month, you said, “It is too good to be true”? You would be very unwise. I think that if it were said to me, I would go and see, for I would say, “There are so many strange things that happen, nowadays, that one begins to expect the unexpected and, at any rate, I would sooner be made a fool of by being led to believe something more than is true, than I would make a fool of myself by not believing what is really true!”

If you were shut up in a prison, condemned to die tomorrow morning, and expected that at eight o’clock you would be hanged by the neck till you were dead—if someone stood at the prison door and said to you, “Here is a free pardon for you,” I can imagine your saying, “Don’t tantalize me. It is too good to be true!” But if you actually went out to be hanged, refusing the pardon because you thought that it was too good to be true—well, I do not know what I would say of you. The Gospel cannot be too good to be true! Whatever God says must be grandly good! It must be divinely, infinitely good! Do you believe it? Do not quarrel with God’s mercy because it is so great! Little mercy could not serve your turn. Therefore, do not cry out against it because it is so great, but come and accept it cheerfully, and say, “God be thanked for it! I will gladly receive this great favor which He so freely presents to me.”

Then, do not fight against God by trifling with His mercy. How often are persons impressed and awakened, yet they go straight into some silly or even wicked company! It is a terrible thing for some people that on the Sabbath they are often rendered serious by what they hear, and then on the weekday they go into amusements which distract them from better things and lead them on to evil things. And so the good Word of God is forgotten. Their goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew. What have any of you to do with mirth while you are unsaved? What have you to do with sightseeing till you have seen your Savior? There is not a moment you ought to waste, not an hour that you can spare, till you have found Christ and are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

Lastly, I pray you, do not fight against your best Friend, or contend against your only Helper by hardening your hearts. Ask to have them softened. Better still, whether hardened or softened, obey that blessed Gospel precept, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Remember how He, Himself, puts the matter, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Or as Paul put it, “If you shall confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart, man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.” Obey the heavenly message! Pause not, hesitate not, but hasten to obey the voice of Christ! And when this is done, then you shall find that despite your self-destruction, help enough was laid up in God even for you—and you shall sing forever to the praise of His Free and Sovereign Grace.

The Lord bless you, and this simple testimony of mine, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HOSEA 13:1-14.**

Verse 1. When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel. When we are little in our own esteem. When we are full of fears concerning ourselves. When we dare not think of boasting, then it is that we grow! “When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel.”

1. But when he offended in Baal, he died. It is when, like Ephraim, we turn aside to other gods, when our heart goes astray from the Lord, that there is death—death to our joys, death to our confidence, death to our usefulness. No one knows what destruction there is, even in the least sin, to the most joyful Believer. It is like the hot breath of the Sirocco which scorches up every green thing. If, before this terrible blast, everything is like Eden, behind it all is as a desert. Let us read the whole verse again that we may lay to heart the lesson it teaches us. “When Ephraim spoke trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.”

2. And now they sin more and more. That is the usual way of sin—it is a growing evil—its course is downhill.  
2. And have made there molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. Their idolatry was such that they were not satisfied with the bulls that were set on high as images, but they had little imitations of these which they wore upon their persons, just as Romanists wear small crucifixes or crosses. These they carried about with them for their own private worship. Oh, what a tendency there is in sin to multiply itself! The idolaters were not satisfied with bowing the knee to false gods, but they said, “Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.” Superstition goes from one evil to another—there is no end to it! You may begin with what you call moderate Ritualism, but where you will end I cannot tell. Some go beyond the superstitions of Popery, itself! The only safe way is to worship the Lord our God and serve Him, alone, and purge out the idols from among us.  
3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. If they make idols their gods, they shall be like their idols! Idols are but for a day—what is there in them of endurance? What is there in them of power? “They that make them are like unto them, so is everyone that trusts in them.” If we trust in anything that we can see. If we trust in anything but God, then our hope shall be “as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passes away,” and we, ourselves, shall be like the chaff that is driven from the threshing floor by a whirlwind, or like the smoke driven out of the chimney by the blast!  
4. Yet I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt, and you shall know no god but Me: for there is no Savior beside Me. Now here is the wickedness of idolatry—that we have so good a God and yet must look after another! Here is the sin of trusting to an arm of flesh—that we have an almighty arm to lean upon and instead of doing so, we begin to look to a poor arm that has not strength enough to support itself, much less to support us! Are any of you children of God forgetting your God? Is your faith turning away from the great Invisible and the sure promises of His Word? Are you looking to the creature? Beware of it, I pray you! Whenever you do that, you are making a rod for your own back! If you forsake the Lord, to whom will you go?  
5. I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. Look back upon days of your trouble, when God was very near to you. Do you not remember when He was everything to you? When you were poor, when you were sick, when you were despised, God knew you, then, yet now you sing—  
**“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still!”**  
6. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me. What a terrible verse this is! After they had been filled, they turned away from the God that filled them! When they were poor and despised, then He was all to them! But afterwards, when, by His Providence, they grew rich and increased in goods, then they forgot their God. I have often seen it thus. It is a grievous evil under the sun. I have seen the man rejoicing in God, earnest and devout while he has been afflicted and poor. God has prospered him and then he has turned his back upon sacred things and made the world his joy. Is not this a horrible sin, a gross evil? I well remember one who used to steal into this House of Prayer on Thursday nights, glad to escape, a while, from the persecution in his own home. He had a hard time of it to be a Christian at all, but he came to be the possessor of his father’s estates and he has now no care for these things! He is a fashionable gentleman, now—he who once was glad enough to mix with even the poorest of God’s people and to find comfort among them! It is a sad thing when it is so and when the Lord has to say to any, “I did know you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me.”  
7, 8. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and I will tear open their rib cage, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. For God is jealous and most jealous of those whom He loves best! He cannot endure that we should treat Him thus—He means to have our love by some means—and if He cannot have it by gentleness, He will have it by sterner methods. If the Lord has chosen you, He will sooner be to you as a leopard and a lion than He will suffer you to live without Him. You must, you shall find your all in Him!  
9, 10. O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help. I will be your King. If you have shifted Me from the Throne and set up an usurper, I will come and be your King even now.  
10. Where is any other that may save you in all your cities? To whom else can you look? Where else can you find peace?  
10. And your judges of whom you said, Give me a king and princes? What is the good of them? Have they not all turned out to be a delusion?  
11, 12. I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in my wrath. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid. How sadly true this is! Sin seems to be bound up in our very nature. It is hard to find it—it is hidden away and when we discover some of it, and it is purged away— there is still more to be found! As hidden treasure may lie in a house for many a day and not be seen, so are there stores of corruption that seem hidden away in our nature, and are not easily discovered. What a gracious God we have to deal with, or else He would have swept us away long ago!  
13, 14. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. I will ransom them from the power of the grave. Oh, what great promises we get driven, like piles, into the marshes of our sin to make a foundation for God’s Grace! Here, when the Lord says that we have destroyed ourselves and He notes all the blackness of our depravity, then He comes in with this gracious word, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave.” You who believe in Jesus shall not die! No, not even the deadly force of sin shall hold you in your grave! There is a resurrection for the dead. There is a spiritual resurrection for you, Believers! When you mourn your death and cry, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” the Lord will answer you, “I will ransom you from the power of the grave.”  
14. I will redeem them from death: O Death, I will be your plagues; O Grave, I will be your destruction: repentance shall be hid from My eyes. Lord, work this quickening in Your people, tonight, and let us live in the fullness of Your Divine Love, and so anticipate the day when our bodies, also, shall be raised by Your glorious power!

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÷Hos 13.14

CONSOLATION FROM RESURRECTION

NO. 2046

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be your plagues;  
O grave, I will be your destruction: repentance shall be hid from My eyes.” Hosea 13:14.**

THIS verse stands in the midst of a long line of threats. Like a rock of mercy, it rises in the midst of a sea of wrath. Hence many critics have felt bound to see in it a continuation of threat. I am quite content to accept the united authority of the Authorized and the Revised Versions, and to believe that the mind of the Holy Spirit is fairly expressed in the grand old Bible of our fathers. I regard our text as a promise overflowing with delight.

While it does stand as a rock apart, this gracious Word is far from being the only one in the book of the Prophet Hosea. In the torrent bed of this Prophet’s denunciations we find dust of the gold of promise. Hosea, in his style is jerky and abrupt—he says exactly what you do not think he is going to say. The Holy Spirit, speaking through him, interjects promises in the midst of threats, in wrath remembering mercy. If any should think that this passage is exceptional, let them read the rest of Hosea’s prophecy. Let them pause for a minute over the eleventh chapter, resting at the eighth verse—

“How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of my anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man.” Where was ever greater tenderness than this? When you get to the twelfth chapter, at the ninth verse, a still small voice is heard in the midst of the thunder—“I that am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt will yet make you to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.”

The fourteenth chapter is all of love and mercy—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God. For you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.” Hear the gracious Word, verse four—“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.” So that our text, in its Christian interpretation, is not contrary to the general method of this prophecy. To find it here is very surprising. But it is after the manner of the Holy Spirit, when speaking by the Prophet Hosea.  
Israel was coming to its very worst. The people were to be carried to

Babylon and from there to be scattered to the ends of the earth. Yet the Lord, in His great love, lets them know that this was not to be a final and entire destruction. He would not utterly cast away the people whom He did foreknow, nor allow death to hold them in bondage forever. He would open their graves and bring them out and make them to know Jehovah. Therefore, He drops in this Word of promise when it was least expected.

I. I shall ask you this morning, first, to CONSIDER THE FACT WHICH IS HERE USED AS A FIGURE. The resurrection of the dead is here employed as a figure of that which the Lord was about to do for His people. At one time salvation from sin is called a creation and creation is a fact. Here it is resurrection from the dead and that also is sure to be accomplished in due time—we have the first fruits of it already. Brethren, there will be a special resurrection for those who are in Christ Jesus. “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”

But for the members of the body of Christ there is a resurrection from among the dead. These are the many that sleep in the dust of the earth who shall awake to everlasting life (Daniel 12:2). They rise because they are one with Christ in His resurrection. His resurrection is the proof and the guarantee that they also shall rise in the day of His appearing. “If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin. But the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom. 8:10). Their bodies, which were redeemed as truly as their souls, is left during this life under mortgage to nature.

Therefore they suffer pain and weakness and ultimate death and decay—but their bodies, I say, being a part of the purchase of the precious blood, shall be raised again from the dead. That which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power. That which is covered with dishonor by the very fact of death and decay shall be raised in splendor, made like unto the glorious body of Christ. This is no poetic fiction but a literal matter of fact, even as was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We hear our Redeemer say, “Your brother shall rise again,” and we accept it literally. Our dear ones whom we have laid in the grave shall come again from the land of the enemy. Concerning ourselves, also, we believe, as we just sang—

*“Sweet Truth to me,  
I shall arise,  
And with these eyes  
My Savior see.”*

We accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead as the Revelation of Christianity. The immortality of the soul was seen before the appearing of our Lord in a dim and cloudy manner. But the resurrection of the dead was not discoverable by the light of nature and when it was at first preached, men called the preacher a “babbler.” They could not understand that such a thing could be. The philosophy of human nature rejected the resurrection, and rejects it still. Only by the Revelation of Christ do we know that the dead shall rise again.

This resurrection is connected with redemption—“I will ransom them from the power of the grave.” A ransom is the paying of a price for something. There was a price paid for us, to deliver us from the death which is the desert of sin. You know who paid it and how He paid it. Remember how He opened wide His hands and poured forth more than gold. Remember how His side was pierced by the spear, that the deep mines of His life—wealth—might be emptied out for us. Jesus our Lord has paid the ransom price.

Now are we “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). Another word is used in the parallel sentence of our text—“I will redeem them from death.” It refers to the redemption of an inheritance by the next-of-kin. “I know that my Redeemer lives” is the ground of Job’s confidence as to his resurrection and justification. My next-of-kin, to whom the right of redemption belonged in equity, has stepped in and has fully redeemed both my soul and my body. What a blessed Truth of God is this, that the ransom of the body is paid so that this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality!

Though the body remains for a while subject to vanity, yet the term of this subjection will soon run out, the ransom being already paid. Regeneration has liberated the soul and resurrection will do the like for the body before long. The margin has it, “I will ransom them from the hand of the grave: I will redeem them from death.” O Beloved, we come into the grave’s hand, as it were, and firm is the grip of the sepulcher. But our God says, “I will redeem them from the hand of the grave.” The grave holds the bones of the saints as with the grasp of an iron hand. But the redemption of our Lord Jesus will open the giant fist and set the prisoners free. Glory be to God for the sure hope of resurrection!

No mass of stone, nor superincumbent clay shall keep down these bodies of ours when our Savior’s angels shall “their golden trumpets sound.” Beloved, there remains nothing due upon the estate of our bodies for which they can be detained in the dust when the Lord Jesus comes to awaken them from their long sleep. They shall freely rise to be reunited with the disembodied but happy spirits to which they belong. We look for a resurrection from among the dead. “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power” (Rev. 20:5, 6).

This, according to our text, is worked entirely by Divine power. It must be so. For how could the dead contribute to their own lives? How can bodies which have been dissolved in the sepulcher reconstruct themselves? Here you have in the text the Divine Personality asserting itself four times—“I will ransom them,” “I will redeem them.” “O death, I will be your plagues.” “O grave, I will be your destruction.” Here we have “I will” four times. Who but He that made can re-make? But all things are possible to the Creator. We have heard many objections raised to the doctrine of the resurrection. Let them object as long as they please.

Grant us a God and nothing is impossible or even difficult. With a God who can work miracles nothing becomes incredible. Whatsoever the eternal God decrees concerning the resurrection of His elect He will readily

accomplish. For He is abundantly sufficient for it. What a triumph will the resurrection be for the Lord God! He has been pleased to give the special honor of it to His own dear Son. By the risen Christ we shall be raised again from the dead. We shall sing hallelujahs to Him that was slain. He by death has destroyed death and by His resurrection has torn away the gates of the grave. This is our Lord’s doings and we adore Him because of it.

Observe, next, that by the resurrection, death itself is transformed and totally overcome. He says, “O death, I will be your plagues,” as if death were personified and then itself plagued—its own arrows of pestilence being shot into itself. Beloved, death no longer kills but rather admits to a larger life. It no more destroys but rather it perfects—I mean not of itself but through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is no longer death to die. It is no longer punishment to the Believer but a dismissal from banishment.

You that are in your sins will die in your sins, and to you, death is death, indeed. But to the child of God, death is so altered that he who has the power of death, that is, the devil, is sore vexed. He is plagued by seeing the joy with which the Believer dies. It is a grand thing to see a man dying full of life—the river of his mortal life comes to an end but only by widening into the ocean of the Glory-life above. Satan gloated over the mischief which he had worked by death. But lo, it is through death that Jesus has destroyed him and delivered His people.

God makes His dying people to be like the sun, which never seems so large as when it sets. All the glories of midday are eclipsed by the marvels of sunset. Watch the west! See how the clouds are mountains of gold and the skies are seas of fire. All the tapestries of Heaven are hung out to welcome the returning hero of the day to its rest beyond the western sea. So does the dying saint light up his dying chamber with heavenly splendor as he sets upon this world to shine in another. Thus the Lord plagues death, leaving the monster powerless to harm or even terrify the Believer.

As for the sepulcher, it is destroyed. “O grave, I will be your destruction.” No grave shall detain one of the redeemed. The tomb is— *“No more a morgue, to fence  
The relics of lost innocence;  
A place of ruin and decay  
The imprisoning stone is rolled away.”*

The grave is our bedchamber, which our Lord Himself has furnished for us by leaving in it His own grave clothes. It is a retiring-room whose odor is most sweet to love. For—

*“There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,*

*And left a blessed perfume.”*  
Death, you are not death! Grave, you are no grave! The names remain, but the nature of the things has altered altogether.

To close this first subject—this resurrection will abolish death and every possibility of it in the future. I notice that certain persons, in their anxiety to suck the meaning out of the word “everlasting,” so as to avoid everlasting punishment, have questioned the everlasting nature of Heaven. They have even gone the length of hinting that they are not quite clear that if Believers get to Heaven they will always remain there. Yes, and this is what it comes to. Nothing is safe from these revolutionists. They would tear away every Covenant blessing from the children of God in their zeal to make the punishment of sin a trifle.

To do honor to their own intellect, they would sacrifice the eternal blessedness of those washed by the blood of Christ! But it is not so. Jesus has said—“Because I live, you shall live also.” As long as Christ lives we must live—as long as Christ is in Heaven we must be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory. So long as God is God His children, partakers of the Divine nature, must live forever and be forever blessed. Raised from the dead and taken up to Christ’s right hand we shall henceforth fear no second death. When sun and moon grow dim with age and earth’s blue skies are rolled up like a worn-out vesture, we shall enjoy an age like the years of God’s right hand, like His own eternity. The great I AM shall be the bliss of every soul whom Christ has redeemed from the grave and this shall know no end.

To this the Lord sets His seal. Do you want to see the red wax and the Divine impression on it? Look at the close of the text, “Repentance shall be hid from My eyes.” There does Jehovah declare His unalterable decree—it must and shall be even so. That His saints shall rise from the dead is the immutable decree of God. In all this, let us rejoice. Our future is bright with glory. These things are revealed to faith but they are not to be seen of the eye, nor even conceived in the heart, nor pictured by the imagination—

*“I know not, oh,  
I know not, what joys await us there!  
What radiance of glory!  
What bliss beyond compare!”*

This much, however, we do know, that there is to be a rising for us, even as our Lord has risen and we shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness. Constantly in Scripture is this resurrection used as the figure of God’s delivering and blessing His people. And especially as the figure of regeneration or the giving of a new and spiritual life to those who were by nature dead in trespasses and sins. I intend to use it so in our next line of thought.

II. In the second place, IN THESE WORDS LIE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO LOOK FOR DELIVERANCE OUT OF GREAT TROUBLES. The encouragement comes in this way—God, who will surely raise His people from the dead by His own power, can and will as surely raise them from every kind of trouble and apparent destruction. If there can be any comparison of ease with omnipotence, it must be easier to raise Job from his dunghill, than to raise Job from his grave. If God, therefore, shall restore us from the sepulcher, He can certainly restore us from sickness, from poverty, from slander, from depression of spirit, from despair. That is clear—who shall doubt it?  
God will delight to work the work of our deliverance. If He takes pleasure in raising a dead body, He will assuredly take pleasure in raising from their distresses those in whom He delights. The Lord rejoices in our joy. He does not afflict willingly but He blesses us joyfully. Therefore, we may rest assured that He will turn again, and have compassion, and raise us up from our despondency.

The ends and designs for which the Lord afflicts us are very gracious and we may expect that He will end the affliction when those designs are accomplished. When the Lord puts us into the furnace it is to refine us. And as soon as the dross is consumed He will bring forth the pure gold. He puts us under chastisement for our profit. And when that profit is accomplished, He will break the rod. We may assuredly expect that He who brings up dead bodies from the grave will bring His distressed people up from their troubles, when those troubles have worked their lasting good.

And now, to come to the text, we must traverse the same ground again—this deliverance comes through redemption. Beloved, He that redeemed Israel from all iniquity will also redeem Israel from all his troubles. That redemption price of the Lord covers every necessity of His people and supplies every mercy that they will need between here and Heaven. Do not, therefore, doubt or despair, because your troubles seem as if they would slay you, for the Angel who has redeemed your body from death will redeem you from all evil. He that will bring your body from the grave will love you up from the pit of trouble, even when you are ready to perish.

Redemption covers all and secures from every danger. He that died for you, lives for you and cares for you. You shall be supplied, not only with Divine Grace and glory but with food and raiment. “Your bread shall be given you; your waters shall be sure.” Oh, rest in the Lord; especially confide in the redemption of Jesus. Let the precious blood speak peace to you. For if He has bought your soul, He has bought all that goes with it and all that is needed for this life as well as the next. As well our temporal as our eternal concerns come under the protection of the blood, The Paschal lamb, whose sprinkled blood shielded the house wherein the Israelite was sheltered, also became to him food for his journey. He who provides Heaven will provide all necessaries on the road there.

This deliverance will also be God’s work. I have shown you that it was so in resurrection, concerning which the great “I will” is so prominent in the text. Now, if you are in great trouble, do not run to friends and acquaintances, nor reckon up your own strength—but make direct resort to God who quickens the dead. He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus is He that can and will deliver you. He will raise up your mortal body without the help of man or of angel. And He can, apart from created strength, upraise you from your present woe. He is the God of salvation and unto Him belong the issues from death. His name is Shaddai— God All-Sufficient—trust Him fully.

When He made the heavens, who was there to help Him? What aid does He need in rescuing His servants? Oh, learn to wait only upon the Lord! Do not think that I am talking mere words. No—trust in God must be real and practical and it must be simple and unmixed. “My Soul, wait only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.” Oh, how sweet it is to rest on God’s bare arm! Long have I known what it is to trust in God and at the same time to repose on the help of many friends. But now I know what it is to rest in Him unmoved when forsaken of many. I cling to that dear arm and find it all the help I need.

And now I will henceforth abide in my confidence in that lone arm. And should deserters all return and ten thousand friends rally to my side, I will not spare them a particle of my reliance but still cry, “My Soul, wait only upon God.” Behold the great hero of the conflict with the powers of darkness treads the winepress alone and of the people there is none with Him—let us associate none with Him in our faith. If you rest on God, alone, as the Rock of your salvation, you need never fear. Often does the Lord afflict us to this end, even as Paul says, “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raises the dead.”

When the Lord delivers His people, His work is singularly complete, for He triumphantly turns evil into good. We shall yet exult over that which now casts us down. That which threatened to kill us shall increase our life and we shall hear our Lord say to it, “O death, I will be your plagues; O grave, I will be your destruction.” He will turn mourning into dancing, loss into gain, sorrows into joys. He will enrich you by your impoverishment. He will make you strong out of weakness. He will give you health by means of sickness. And fullness by emptying you.

Does the Adversary threaten to destroy you? You shall be more than a conqueror. Are you led away in bonds? You shall lead your captivity captive. Those who seek your ruin will unconsciously be doing the best thing that could be done for you. Their malice shall bruise your spices and cause their aroma to flow out. He that by shameful death wins greater glory, shall by your afflictions increase your greatness and comfort you on every side. The Lord will not only prevent the powers of evil from doing you harm but He will cause you to damage their empire by your patience. You shall be the plague of Satan and the destroyer of his strongholds. That which seemed to be the death and burial of your hope shall be the overthrow of your fears.

The Lord will do this so completely that He will make you sing concerning it. In the book of Hosea the Lord declared a fact in plain language. But when the work was done, the Lord, by His servant Paul, made it into a song for His chosen in that famous chapter of the Corinthians—“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” Let us catch the spirit of this lyric and translate it thus! “O poverty, where is your penury? O sickness, where is your misery? O weakness, where is your loss? O slander, where is your sting?” We shall before long look back upon all our afflictions with gladness and bless the Lord for them as for our chief blessings.  
We may yet feel like that great saint who, when he recovered from sickness, cried, “Take me back to my sick bed again, for there have I enjoyed such fellowship with Christ as I never knew before.” We may yet have to say, as certain saints of the Church of Scotland said, “Oh, that we were meeting among the moors and the hills once more. For never had the bride of Christ such fellowship with the Bridegroom as when she met Him in secret places.” The Lord knows how to lift us high by that which cast us low and to make Psalms for our stringed instruments out of the dirges which drowned our music. The God of the resurrection has delivered, does deliver, and will deliver His people.

III. Time fails me and therefore I must hurry on, else I had loved to linger and expand. SEE HERE A DECLARATION THAT GOD WILL SAVE HIS CHOSEN FROM THEIR DEATH IN SIN. He that will raise our bodies from the grave will, according to His Everlasting Covenant, raise His chosen from their death in sin.

This must be so. If the Lord did not raise His people’s souls from their death in sin, a resurrection of their bodies would be a curse rather than a blessing. Resurrection will be no benefit to those who die unregenerate. My Hearers, you will all rise from the grave. But I fear that some of you will rise to shame and everlasting contempt. That is an awful passage which I quoted just now from the Book of Daniel—think much of it. Therefore since God will not have His people rise to shame and everlasting contempt He will make their souls to rise first into newness of holy life. This regeneration must come to all of you, if you are to be partakers of the glory of Christ hereafter. You must be quickened, though you were dead in trespasses and sins. That fact suggests a question to each heart—have you received the Divine life?

If you are, indeed, made alive unto God, you will agree with me that this resurrection comes to us entirely through redemption. There is no quickening a dead soul, except by the process here described—“I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death.” Did the Law of God, when you heard it, ever quicken you? No, it slew you. “When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” It made your death more apparent to you but it brought you no life. Did the eloquence of men, or human persuasion ever raise you from spiritual death?

You listened to it and you listened but you listened in vain. You were moved with human affections but these human affections passed away like the morning dew. Beloved, life only came to you when you received Christ Jesus, your Redeemer. Well do I remember when I first looked unto Him and lived! The life and the look came together. There is no receiving eternal life apart from believing in Him who is the Life. There is no life except by looking unto Jesus. Your uplifted eye must be fixed on the uplifted Savior crucified as the redemption of His people—life only comes to us through His redeeming death.

God Himself only makes us live by Christ Jesus. He is the Life. You cannot yourself create life. Nor can you renew it, except by coming to your Lord’s dear wounds again. Oh, that we could dwell on Calvary! Oh, that we never turned our eyes away from the Cross! Let me be crucified with Christ so as never to part from perpetual, conscious union with Him. In Him we died unto sin, in Him we were redeemed from death and the curse and in Him we live forever. Our resurrection from spiritual death is always connected with the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins.

You will follow me in this also—quickening is always the Lord’s work. Here He may repeat the “I will” of the text all the four times. We spoke of resurrection as solely the work of God—so must the implantation of spiritual life be the work of the Spirit of God and of Him alone. Never let us dream that we can make ourselves alive unto God or that we can quicken our unconverted friends. You could not make the simplest insect—how could you make a new heart and a right spirit? This is the finger of God— no, this needs the arm of God, as it is written—“to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The full power of God is needed to beget faith’s life within the soul of man.

Further, keep up the parallel between regeneration and resurrection as seen in the text and notice that whenever the Lord raises His dear ones from the dead and makes them live, it is a great plague to death. He that has the power of death must often be grievously annoyed when he sees a dead sinner begin to live unto God. “I did reckon on him,” says he. “I wrapped him up in the cerements of drunkenness, I shut him up in the dark sepulcher of ignorance. And yet he is alive!” “I did reckon on the debauched man,” says he, “I saw him rotting in lasciviousness. He was so far gone in lust that he was given over by his friends. But my great enemy, Jesus Christ, has come here and made even the corrupt to live!”

Again and again the Adversary has to feel that Christ is his plague and that He will be his destruction. When Jesus raises men from the dead He shows who is Master and makes the Adversary know that his dominion is soon to fall. As in his lifetime on earth the Lord overcame both the devil and death by a word, even so it is now and His name is thereby greatly glorified. Those who are made alive, how greatly do they plague the enemy of souls when they begin to talk aloud of Free Grace and dying love? When black sinners show themselves washed in the blood of the lamb, when lips that used to curse, begin to sing hallelujahs and tongues that talked infidelity, begin to proclaim the testimony of the true faith, how the Prince of Darkness is afflicted! How the sepulchers of sin are destroyed!

Right well does the poet say—  
*“Satan rages at his loss,  
And hates the doctrine of the Cross.”*

This work once done is an abiding work. I point again to the seal at the bottom of the text. “Repentance shall be hid from My eyes.” God resolves that they shall live for He has redeemed them and His redemption price is too precious to be wasted. He has ransomed them from the grave and they shall never return to their grim prison again. They shall live to plague Satan but they shall not live to be overcome by him. What the Lord has done

He will not suffer sin, death or Hell to undo. Nothing shall lead Him to repent of His design, or turn from the purpose of His heart.

Jesus lifts His hand and says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” Man’s work is superficial and therefore soon disappears. All that nature spins, nature unravels—all that is woven in the loom of human excitement will be rent to pieces by the hand of time and trial. But surely I know that what God does He does forever and it stands fast without a change. Oh, that He would this morning come and quicken dead souls! Pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that it may be so!

The Lord will do as He wills. Does He not say, “I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion”? Oh, that He would have compassion on this great congregation at this moment and give them life! We heard the cry of human weakness just now when our sister was taken in a fit. I doubt not that our Lord heard it, too, and pitied the bodily infirmity—how much more will He hear the voice of our spiritual need and have pity upon our death in sin!

IV. What little time you can yet afford me, I will use in stating THAT HERE WE HAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT THE LORD CAN DELIVER FROM ANY OTHER FORM OF DEATH. I ask you now to think of a few matters very briefly.

The Jews—as an organized nationality are dead. They are a people scattered and divided under the whole Heaven. Truly might they say, as in the Prophet Ezekiel, “Our bones are dried and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.” We have no instance in history of a nation dying and coming to life again. Assyria, Babylon, these had their day and they failed and passed away. Where are they now? Can these empires live again? Persia, Greece, Rome—these vast dominions died morally and then they ceased to be a living power. Can they ever be restored? Impossible.

But because her God lives, Israel can never die. Israel will be a nation, yet again, and a glorious one. Restored to her own land and rejoicing in her own Messiah, who is “the glory of His people Israel,” it shall be seen that the Lord has not cast off His people. It seems impossible. Our missions are, to a large extent, a failure. They become the ridicule of the ungodly because so little success attends them. Yet shall all Israel be saved. Shall not their restoration be as life from the dead? It shall. And because it will be like life from the dead, He that will raise dead bodies will raise poor Israel yet. The seed of faithful Abraham, who believed God that He could raise up Isaac from the dead, shall be raised out of their low estate. A nation of priests shall they be unto Him who of old made them the keepers of His oracles. O lovers of the seed of Abraham, be comforted concerning them.

In the next place, suppose the Church at large should decline to a spiritual death—and I am sure it does so just now—what then? The faults which are now so apparent may only be the beginning of worse evils. Brethren are prophesying that the Jesuits will ruin us and others that Rationalism will eat out the heart of the Church. I think both these sets of prophets have a good deal to say for themselves. The signs of the times are much with them. But suppose error should become rampant in all our Churches, as it may. Suppose those who bear testimony should grow fewer and their voices should be less and less regarded, as they may be.

Suppose at last the true Church of Christ should scarcely be discoverable and that men should bury it and dance a courtly dance upon its grave and say, “We have done with these believers in atonement. We have done with these troublesome evangelical doctrines.” What then? The Truth will rise again. The eternal Gospel will burst her sepulcher. “Vain the watch, the stone, the seal.” Let us take comfort in the fact that God, who will raise the dead, will also raise up buried Truth and incarnate it again in a living Church, even though the world should exult that both doctrine and Church are down among the dead.

Some of you, perhaps, from the country, may happen to belong to Churches which have come near to death’s door. That which is true of the Church at large is true of any individual Church. Have faith in God. He can trim the expiring lamp. Even to Laodicea, which He spewed out of His mouth, the Lord came, knocking at the door. They talk about shutting the doors of the Chapel. Has it come to that? Prayer Meetings, are they given up? Gospel preaching, have you almost forgotten the joyful sound? The Sunday school, has that become a farce? Does everything seem dead? Cry to the living God. Do not say to yourself, “Can these dry bones live?” They can, if the living God intervenes.

God, who made Ezekiel see the dry bones stand up as a great army, can make you see it. Be of good confidence. Have hope for Zion, for the Lord will restore her in answer to your cries. Take pleasure in her stones and favor her dust, for the time to favor her, yes, the set time has come. “When the Lord shall build up Zion He will appear in His Glory.” Suppose I am now speaking to some child of God, who says, “I can believe all this. But, alas, I feel dead myself.” We do sometimes faint and are full of fears and cry, “Will the Lord cast us off forever? And will He be favorable no more?”

We trust we do really love the Lord. But we get very dull at times and cry out—  
*“Dear Lord and shall we always live  
At this poor, dying rate—  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And Yours to us so great?”*

We feel as if we could not pray. There is no singing in us. And we feel as if we could not feel. At times we are so dull and stupid that we cannot think ourselves to be enlightened of the Lord at all. For my own part, “I am more brutish than any man” at times, in my own esteem.

Be our case as it may, let not faith waver because feelings change. When you are down in the dumps remember that as the Lord will raise your dead body He can certainly revive your fainting heart. Trust in Him to restore your soul. This very morning, I hope, is ordained to be a resurrection morning to you. Before you leave this House of Prayer I hope the silver trumpet of the Gospel will be heard like the trumpet of the resurrection and you will say to yourself, “I will leave my grave, for I live unto God.” By God’s Grace, leave the vaults and come into the upper air of trust and thanksgiving.

A man, finding himself imbedded in the snow, discovered, to his horror, that he could not move his feet, for they were frozen. Nor his hands, for they were stiff with cold. He would have given himself up, therefore, as certainly doomed to die, but he found that he could speak and here was hope. His tongue was not frozen so he began to call aloud. And he did not call long before helpers came and dug him out and thawed him back to life. If you cannot do anything else, my dear Friend, do cry aloud. Cry, “O God, help me! O Lord quicken me!”

Do any of you say, “Well, I never get into so sad a state. I am always lively”? I am very glad to hear it, if it is true. But I have heard that the statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral are never afflicted with rheumatism. And the reason is because they have no life. I am just a little afraid that you also may have no changes and no fears because you have no spiritual life. God knows whether it is so or not. Look to it. I would sooner have the rheumatism and be alive than be without pain and be a statue. The most painful life is preferable to the stillest death.

But O you dying saints of God—you poor, fainting, perishing Believers—take hope this morning, for the Holy Spirit will revive you, even as Jesus says, “He that lives and believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

Lastly, let us have that same hope about our unconverted friends. We want to see them born again during this week of special services. Let us begin by knowing what they are and what is their condition. Do not say, “I hope my boy will be saved, because I do not see much evil in him.” Your boy is as spiritually dead by nature as anybody else’s boy. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” And however good your flesh may be, it is only flesh and only flesh has come of it.

I beg you to regard every soul that is not begotten unto God as being dead in sin, else you will not go to the bottom of things and you will not go the right way to work. Next, go to the Lord and Giver of life and say, “Lord, I cannot make this dear child live. I cannot bring my unconverted husband to You. I will do all I can by teaching, persuasion and example. But O my Lord, I look to You to give the spark of Divine life.”

Go to God with your anxiety for dead souls and cry, “Lord, quicken them!” In dependence upon the Spirit of God, preach the Gospel which is the vehicle of Divine life and you shall see them live. Have faith about those who are laid on your heart. God grant your faith a full and speedy reward, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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÷Hos 14.1

THE JOYOUS RETURN

NO. 2192

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 1, 1891, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless find mercy.” Hosea 14:1-3.**

We are in the last chapter of the book of the Prophet Hosea. Throughout the book there has been thunder—sometimes a low rumbling, as of a distant tempest—sometimes peal on peal, as of a storm immediately overhead. And now the tempest has gathered all its force. Here it culminates. You expect the bolt of Heaven to destroy. Lo, instead thereof, a silver shower of mercy! The gentle drops come down plenteously and you hear them fall upon the tender herb like soft and low music. God does not say, “O Israel, depart accursed!” But instead thereof, in dulcet tones He cries, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” In the midst of wrath He remembers mercy—

*“When God’s right arm is bared for war,*

*And thunders clothe His cloudy car,”*  
even then He stays His uplifted hand, reins in the steeds of vengeance, and holds communion with Grace—“for His mercy endures forever,” and, “judgment is His strange work.”

To use another figure—the whole book of Hosea is like a great trial wherein witnesses have appeared against the accused and the arguments and excuses of the guilty have been answered and baffled. All has been heard for them and much, very much, against them—and the convicted stand at the bar to hear their sentence. Behold the Judge, instead of putting on the black cap to pronounce doom of death, stretches out His hands to the condemned and, in tones of pity, cries, “O Israel, return”!

This is a wonderful chapter to be at the end of such a book. I had never expected, from such a prickly shrub, to gather so fair a flower, so sweet a fruit! But so it is—where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound! No chapter in the Bible can be more rich in mercy than this last of Hosea and yet no chapter in the Bible might, in the natural order of things, have been more terrible in judgement! Where we looked for the blackness of darkness, behold a noontide of light!

While I am preaching from such a text, I feel the need of special help from the Holy Spirit. I lift up my heart for it. Will you not, my Brothers and Sisters, pray for me, that my Hearers may not only hear my voice, but may perceive the inward voice of God speaking to their hearts? The Lord Himself is the speaker of the text—it is Jehovah who says, “O Israel, return.” May many of you hear the voice of God and in that voice perceive an over-powering Omnipotence which shall turn your thoughts and souls into the right way, making you willing in the day of His power!

I ask you to consider, first, the call to come to God—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” And, secondly, the argument for coming—“For you have fallen by your iniquity.” Thirdly, we shall dwell upon the help in coming which the Lord gives to those who are willing to obey. He says, “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” In conclusion, we shall pray to see in many the coming by this help. May my unconverted Hearers return unto the Lord, and know the power of His restoring Grace!

I. First, notice THE CALL TO COME—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” Oh, that the call may be made effectual this day!  
It is a very instructive call, for it tells the sinner exactly what he has to do. Return—that is, reverse your course! The course you have taken is the opposite of that which you ought to have taken. Therefore, come back. You have gone from God—come back to God! You have been prayerless— begin to pray! You have been hardened—yield to the Word. You have been full of quibbling—believe even as a little child! Bring forth fruits meet for repentance and not the fruits of obstinate persistence in evil. To many there could be no better direction in spiritual morals than this word, “Return.” Do what you have not done—leave undone what you have been doing! Reverse the original. Take the other track! “Return!” is but a single word, but that word is full of meaning. There is to be a change, a total change, a coming back to God.  
The word is also instructive because it says, Return unto the Lord.” Do not only look to God, but return to Him. Arise and go to your Father. Do not think about it, but do it! Do not return part of the way to this and to that good custom and salutary habit, but come right back to the Lord and rest not till you feel that you are in His arms. It is of no use for the prodigal to say, “I will arise,” unless he adds, “and go to my father.” It is of no use his quitting one far-off country for another! But it must be said of him, “And he arose and came to his father.” The best direction we can give to many a sinner is—Reverse your course of life and let your reversed course of life lead you to God, Himself. How surely will he need the abounding Grace of God for such a work as this! Virgil’s lines are true— *“The gates of Hell are open night and day. Smooth the descent and easy is the way.  
But to return and seek the upper skies,  
In this the task and mighty labor lies.”*  
The call is very practical. It does not ask for sentiment, but for action— “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” Do not, as I have said before, merely think of it, but resolutely and thoughtfully return! Do not speculate about when you will do it—let it be done now! Procrastinate no longer— quit halting and hesitating, once and for all. Cease to count the loss or the gain of it, but take the decisive step—“O Israel, return.”  
I cannot help reminding you that this instructive and practical exhortation is also a very pathetic call. The “O,” with which it commences is not used as an oratorical embellishment. Loving entreaty breathes in it. He who speaks is in earnest and pleads with all His heart. It is God, Himself, who says, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” It is not a chill command—cold and sharp, like the sword of the Lord in the day of doom. But, albeit, it has all the force of a command—it is a warm and tender entreaty from the lips of Love—“O Israel, return.” In that, “O,” I seem to hear at once the weeping of the Lord Jesus, the sounding of the heart of the great Father and the grieving of the Holy Spirit, “O Israel, return” is a sorrowful, tender, gentle, wooing voice which I beseech you to regard. Possibly some of you may have had to plead with one of your own children who has been very willful and has threatened to do that which would have been exceedingly injurious to him. You have said, “Oh, do not so, my Son! Oh, do not so, my Daughter!” And you have thrown your soul into your pleading. Even thus does God, with sacred pathos, with love welling up from the depth of His heart, plead with every sinner before me! And He words the pleading thus—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.”  
I would remind you, also, that, pathetic as it is, it is a Divine call. “O Israel, return!” Who says it? The Prophet? Yes, but more than the Prophet— He who pleads is the Prophet’s God. The first motion towards reconciliation is never from the sinner, but always from God. The sinner does not cry, “O Lord, my God, permit me to return”—no, but the Lord, Himself, who watches the wandering one and sees him falling to his ruin, cries out, in the freeness of His Grace, “O Israel, return!” What matters it to the Lord though a man should even plunge down to Hell? The Lord will be glorious, though the rebel perishes! The Lord has no need of men. Yet the Lord thinks much of wandering men and longs for their return. Out of the freeness and riches of His love, He calls them to Himself. He swears by His own life that He wills not the death of the sinner, but that he turn to Him and live. Because of His spontaneous love and pity, He cries, plaintively, “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” Listen, then, my Hearers! If it were my call, you might refuse it with small blame—but it is God’s call— shall your Maker call in vain? Will you add to all your sin, the turning of your back upon the God of Love? Shall Jehovah cry in pity to your souls and cry in vain? God grant it be not so! Here from this text, which, once written, remains, there sounds out of the eternal deep of boundless mercy this cry of Divine Grace—“O Israel, return unto the Lord your God!”  
And so I will say no more about this call except that it is evidently a very gracious one. He puts it so, “Return unto the Lord your God.” If you, O Sinner, will return to the Lord, He will be your God! He will enter into covenant with you. He will give Himself over to you to be yours. Henceforth you shall have a property in Jehovah and all the wealth of His infinite Nature shall be yours. You shall be able to say, “This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.” That man has made a great speech who has truly said, “God is mine.” There is more in calling God our God than if we could hold the title-deeds of both the Indies, or claim possession of the stars! God, in the infinity of His Grace, declares, “I will be their God.”  
I cannot preach as I would. Who can compass such a theme as this? Oh, that you were wise, that you knew what was good for you! Then would you answer to this call. O Sinner, how I wish that you were delivered from your madness! Then you would no longer turn your back upon your own blessedness, nor would you any longer reject the Lord your God to your own confusion. Your present course will lead you down to utter and entire destruction —therefore, pause, I pray you! No, I say more! Do not stay where you are, but return, return at once! See you not what a welcome God will give you? He says not, “Return unto your Judge,” but, “Return unto your God.” It is not written, “Return like an escaped prisoner to your jailer, return to the whip and to the stocks,” but, “Return unto the Lord your God.” This God shall be your exceeding joy! Albeit I cannot put my soul into such words as I could wish, I am sure that men who are wise and prudent will think upon these things and will be led to seek after the Lord, from whom all blessings flow. I remember how, when I perceived the freeness and preciousness of the Gospel, I ran towards it, being drawn that way by a strong desire for that which promised such great things to me! May many a man and woman out of the present company say, “I will answer to the Divine entreaty. Jehovah bids me return and return I will”!  
II. Secondly, I beg you to notice THE ARGUMENT FOR COMING. “Return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity.” What a wonderful argument is this! You are in an evil plight through sin, therefore return to the Lord your God. “But,” says one, “I was afraid I might not come because I had fallen.” See how your fear is anticipated? The case is reversed and your having fallen is made by the Lord into an argument why you should return to Him! “I am broken-down,” says one. “I have fallen so badly that I shall never be worth a penny for any good work.” Yet the Lord cries, “Return, for you have fallen.” I hear one moaning, “I am broken to pieces by sin—I am like an old pot that has fallen on the stones. I am useless.” For that very reason the Lord of Mercy bids you return! “Return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen.” What ingenuity of mercy there is in the heart of God! See, He takes away the reason for despair and makes an argument for hope out of it! Because you are thus fallen, you have need to return—and God considers your need, not your merit! Because you are fallen, God’s pity invites you to return. Use the word, “fallen,” literally. If you are a fallen man, return! If you are a fallen woman—return! Why is it that the word, “fallen,” has a force in reference to woman which it has not in regard to man? Surely a fallen man is as sad a sight as a fallen woman! But whether male or female, here is the argument for your returning to God—“You have fallen; therefore return.” I pray you, yield to so gracious a plea!  
Dear Friends, the argument is also this—the cause of your evil plight is sin. “You have fallen by your iniquity.” Sin is the root of the mischief. Do not say, “I was fated to be so.” “You have fallen by your iniquity.” It is true that you have fallen in Adam, but you have also fallen by your own actual sin, and you have enough to do to confess your own act and deed. Your own willful omissions and commissions have ruined you! You are wounded, but your own hand has given the injurious stab. “You have fallen by your iniquity”—blame no one or nothing else! That you are an unbeliever is your own fault—you will not come to Christ that you might have life. The way you follow is the way of your own choice—in which you follow the imaginations and devices of your own heart. All the misery of your present estate is due to yourself. “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself”! Feel that it is so and confess it before God, taking to yourself shame and confusion of face.  
The only remedy for your evil case is to come back to God. If you have fallen by your iniquity, you must be set free from this iniquity—but you cannot free yourself. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” You have lain in the lye of evil till you are dyed ingrain with the scarlet of iniquity—and the color cannot be taken out except by a miracle of Divine Grace! Only God can take away the spots from the leopard, and the blackness from the Ethiopian, and the crimson from the deep-dyed wool! The Lord and only the Lord can work these marvels. Therefore you are called upon to “return unto the Lord your God,” for your only hope of restoration lies in God, Himself!  
Your guilt should not make you hesitate, for the Lord knows all about it, and His invitation shows that He does so. He says, “Return; for you have fallen.” O my Hearer, have you tried to hide that fall? Are you sitting here and trying to forget your ruin? The Lord does not forget it and does not wish you to forget it! He sets it before your mind and bids you come to Him as a fallen person. The Lord Jesus Christ receives sinners as sinners. He does not want them to change their character and then come, but they are to come to Him for a change! Come simply as sinners—not as awakened sinners, or sensible sinners, or sinners with some other good qualification. As sinners come to Him who has come to save sinners! The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins—He never gave Himself for our righteousness and, therefore, He would have us come to Him in all our defilement. Come in your evil habits, your guilt, your condemnation, your spiritual death and your corruption! Come just as you are. He delights in mercy— leave space for mercy to work. “Return,” He says, “for you have fallen by your iniquity.”  
If you are in the worst case that any mortal was in, you have the best possible Helper to whom you are to return. If you go to Gilead for balm for your wound, you would turn that way in vain, for to the question, “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” the answer is, of course, there is neither balm nor physician there, or else the hurt of the daughter of My people would long ago have been healed. You have gone enough to Gilead, now go to God! Human sources of help must fail you and for that very reason we would persuade you to turn to God. There is no physician in Gilead, therefore, come along with you to Him whose touch is better than balm, who is, Himself, the health of souls. The very hem of His garment overflows with power, so that a touch will heal you!  
Jesus has but to cast an eye on the most guilty and forlorn, and they live. Yes, if they do but cast an eye on Him, they receive eternal life! A legion of devils will flee at His word. Oh, what a blessing it is that there is such a mighty Savior! If anybody here perishes, it is not because the Savior is not able to save him. If any man here shall die in his sin, it can only be accounted for by the Savior’s declaration, “If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” How intensely do I pray that you may return to God, urged by these reasons, namely, that you are helplessly, hopelessly lost— and Christ is a mighty Savior—on whom your help is laid! I would that for this reason you would come to Him, even this very day! He will receive you even now, for He has said it—“He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”  
III. Now let us see how our gracious God meets us and provides for us THE HELP IN COMING.  
The Lord helps our ignorance and our fear. He gives us direction as to what to bring. Read the second verse. “Ah!” says the sinner, “I do not know what to take with me in approaching the Most High. I have no bullocks, no lambs, no incense. In my hand there is no price of money or merit.” The answer is, “Take with you words.” Your heart is right; you are longing for salvation; you need not say, “How shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” “Take with you words”—you have plenty of them. The heart must be there, first, and then nothing more is asked than, “words.” Cheap enough is this offering! Leaves of the forest are not so easy to come at. This is simple enough—He that has a tongue can bring words!  
O man and woman, whatever else you cannot bring, you can bring words, for, indeed, you have multiplied words to sin! The Lord helping you to return, you need not hesitate for need of an offering, since He says, “Take with you words.” This is but another version of our grand hymn— *“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Your Cross I cling.  
Naked, come to You for dress,  
Helpless, look to You for Grace.  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—  
Wash me, Jesus, or I die!”*  
And then, the Lord helps the coming sinner by a direction as to where to turn. “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.” “I need to see the minister,” says one. Turn to the Lord! “I desire to converse with a man of God.” Turn to the Lord! We read in the book of Job, “To which of the saints will you turn?” My answer would be—Sinner, turn to the sinner’s Friend and leave the saints alone! If you would be saved, turn not to Peter, nor James, nor John—but turn to Him whom all these call, “Master and Lord!” “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.” Have you been in the habit of turning to a man who is called a priest? I pray you, do so no longer, for there is now but one sin-atoning Priest, and He is the Lord Jesus! Have you turned to ceremonies? Do you look for rest in sacraments? You look that way in vain, for they are not the way of salvation! Turn, rather, to the Lord as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus! Take with you words and turn to the Lord, Himself. Against Him you have sinned—to Him make confession. You need that His anger should be turned away. Seek, then, a free forgiveness from Him! It is His love that you need—go to Him for it and He will receive you graciously—and love you freely!  
A further help is this. The Lord helps us to return to Him by giving a direction how to pray. A minister said to me last Thursday evening what I have often felt to be true—“We had need make coming to Christ very plain, for many people are so ignorant that they almost need to have the words of confession and faith put into their mouths. They need somebody to kneel down, side by side with them, and utter the very words that they should speak unto the Lord.” There is much more truth in this statement than inexperienced persons may think. So here the Lord does, as it were, put the words into the sinner’s mouth. “Take with you words, and say unto Him.” He says the words, that the sinner may make them His own, and say them after Him! In this condescending style He teaches the returning sinner how to pray. What a gracious God He is!  
Suppose a case. A great king has been grievously offended by a rebellious subject, but in kindness of

heart he wills to be reconciled. He invites the rebel to sue for pardon. He replies, “O King, I would gladly be forgiven, but how can I properly approach your offended majesty? I am anxious to present such a petition as you can accept, but I know not how to draw it up.” Suppose this great king were to say, “I will draw up the petition for you”? What confidence the supplicant would feel in presenting the petition! He brings to the king his own words! He prays the prayer he is bid to pray! By the very fact of drawing up the petition, the monarch pledged himself to grant it!  
O my Hearer, the Lord puts it into your mouth to say this morning, “Take away all iniquity.” May you find it in your heart to pray in that fashion! That prayer is best which is offered in God’s own way and is of God’s own prompting! May you present such a prayer at once!  
Here I find two sentences of petition. The first is—“Take away all iniquity.” Follow me and try to pray this prayer, “O You that takes away the sin of the world, take away all my iniquity. It is great, but pardon it, I pray You, for You did bear our sins in Your own body on the tree. By Your precious blood, wash away all my iniquity! Let me know that You have carried my transgression away, even as the scapegoat carried the sins of Israel into the wilderness of forgetfulness. Take away all iniquity by an act of pardon, I beseech You. Take it away, also, in another sense—Lord, take it out of my heart; take it out of my life.”  
Dear Seekers, I pray you, do not look on one sin and say, “Lord, spare it!” Do not wish to have one sin left, but cry, “Take it away! Take it away! Take away all iniquity. However sweet, or fascinating, or deeply seated, Lord, take away all iniquity. If I have been given to the intoxicating cup, take it away! If I have been the slave of greed, take it away! If I have been subject to passion, or pride, or lustfulness, take it away! Whatever is my besetting sin, ‘take away all iniquity’!” Do you wish to have one fair sin spared? It will be your ruin! Hew in pieces that Agag sin that comes so delicately. Let your cry be, “Take it away!” The taking away of it may cost you a right hand or a right eye, but still, shrink not, but cry, “Take away all iniquity.” Have done with it all. It will be of no use to give up one poison. If you take another poison, it will kill you. All sin must go, or else all hope is gone! Return to God, but it must be with a prayer which shows that you and your sins have fallen out, never to be reconciled.  
The next petition is, “Receive us graciously.” Confess that a kind reception of you by God must be of Grace alone. Nothing but Divine Grace can open a door for our returning. Sinners cannot be received of the Lord on any other terms but those of mercy. We would not ask to be dealt with according to our merits, but we thank the Lord that He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. As to our sins, we cannot answer Him one of a thousand. The Lord must receive us graciously or reject us righteously. Are we not glad that sinners can be received in the name of Grace and find a welcome in the tender mercy of our God? Offer, then, this petition, “Receive us graciously.” I am not merely content to talk to you about these gracious words—I want every soul here to use them in personal prayer. Oh, that the Lord would touch all lips, by His Grace, and lead them to say from the heart—“Lord, receive me. I return to You. Take away all iniquity and take me to Yourself! Receive me as a subject of Your Kingdom. Receive me, by Your Grace, into Your home of love. Receive me into the family of Your redeemed on earth and then receive me into Your mansion in Heaven. ‘Receive us graciously.’”  
These are two sweet petitions and they are fitly framed together. May the Holy Spirit constrain every heart to present them! May these be the words which every one of you shall take with him in returning to the Lord!  
One sentence of promise follows these two of petition—“So will we render the calves of our lips.” What are the “calves of our lips”? They are sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving! Yonder are the calves of the stall which men bring in sacrifice—they are struck down and they die at the altar. God does not ask us for bullocks which have horns and hoofs! He takes no pleasure in the blood of calves, or of goats. He desires a broken heart, true faith and humble love—these live at the altar. “Whoso offers praise, glorifies God.” Let us bring Him our best thoughts, our best expressions, our best testimonies, our heartiest praises! These are not calves of our stalls, but, “calves of our lips.” Let our gratitude be a living sacrifice and our conduct a constant testimony to the goodness of God. I think we can say, this morning—at least, I can—“Lord, if You will spare me, I will speak for You.” I must do so during the rest of my life, or else I shall have to change my ways and habits. I was thinking, as I came along this morning, that it is somewhere about 40 years since I first opened my mouth to preach for Christ and I can still say what I have often said— *“Ever since by faith I saw the stream  
His flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”*  
Is there not some young man here who will begin at once to take up this service for the next 40 years? I wonder what young man it is that I may lay hands upon for Jesus? And some Christian woman—no, she is not a Christian, yet, but I call her such, for she is going to be—I am only anticipating a little—will she not now become a Christian and straightaway render unto the Lord Jesus the calves of her lips, by bearing her testimony to her family and among her acquaintances? Who will consecrate himself, this day, unto the Lord? While you cry to God for mercy as to the past, resolve that if you are saved, you will confess His name and so offer Him the calves of your lips! The Lord claims your hearts, first, and your lips next! You must confess Christ before men! Salvation is promised to a confessed faith—always remember that—“He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Faith should be confessed in God’s own way, by Baptism, and to that faith the promise is specially given.  
Though I doubt not that some may be saved who do not make an open avowal of their faith, yet the promise runs as I have quoted it and I would not have you willfully forget the command implied in it. “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in Heaven”—so says the Lord Jesus. It is no more than His due, that we should take up our cross and follow Him. It is but a small thing, that if we trust in His name, we should bear His name! So you see, the Lord puts into our mouths, this morning, this resolve, that we will praise Him. “So will we render the calves of our lips.”  
Now come three sentences of renunciation—“Ashur shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods.” First, the natural, legal trust, so much esteemed among men, must go. Israel always used to fall back upon Assyria. If Egypt threatened the people, or if any other nation oppressed them, they sent a present to the King of Assyria to come and deliver them. But now they cry, “Ashur shall not save us!” The popular trust of the world is in self-righteousness in its various forms. You were going to be saved by your own repentance, reformation and future well-doing—but of this you must say—“Ashur shall not save us.” Are you trusting in sacraments? Give up so vain a confidence! They are not meant to save, but to instruct those who are already saved! Are you trusting in your hereditary godliness, your birthright religion? Away with so poor a foundation! Are you trusting in your prayers, your giving to the poor, your attendance on sermons, your honesty, your good nature? Set these on one side, and cry, “Ashur shall not save us!” All confidences must go except Jesus Christ, whom God has laid in Zion for a foundation stone. On Him must we build and on no other, for, “Ashur shall not save us.”  
But, next, they gave up all carnal confidence of their own—“neither will we ride upon horses.” The kings of Israel were forbidden to multiply horses because they were not used in commerce, but only for military purposes, and Jehovah would not have His people rely upon these creatures. Egypt might glory in horse and chariot, but Israel must not do so. Hence we find pious Hezekiah keeping this Law so strictly that Rabshakeh reviled him by offering to send 2,000 horses if he could set riders upon them. When we come to God, we must quit all trust in ourselves of every sort—in our tears, our prayers, our moral life, our excellent instincts—or anything else. “Some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” It may be you have fine horses of morality and religiousness; you have many virtues upon which you think you might fairly depend—give up these trusts! Have you been lately trotting out your horses before your own family and saying to your wife, “I am not like many men. I never drink too much, neither do I treat my household unkindly”? Put away these horses! You cannot come to God riding in pride. Say, “We will not ride upon horses.” Put away every confidence in yourself, in whatever fashion it appears.  
One more stroke of renunciation remains. Down must go the gods of our former estate. He that would come to the true God must have done with the false gods! If we have been living for any objectives but the Glory of God, we must do away with those objectives. If we have been paying religious reverence to anything but God, Himself, we must do away with it. “Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods.” It seems strange that men should ever have said such a thing, but since they have said it, they must say it no more. God help everyone here to now make a complete renunciation of everything which usurps the place of God! Whether it is an object of trust, reverence, desire, fear, or love, we must cast it down and worship only God. He says to us, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” In the work of salvation, the work of our hands is out of court! Only God must be glorified.  
The words close with one sentence of faith. My time fails me, and I cannot dwell upon it at length. “In You the fatherless find mercy.” Dear orphan boys below me, here is a word for you! Remember it and love God because it is true—“In You the fatherless find mercy.” God is the Father of the fatherless! Now, if God receives the fatherless, who have none to take care of them, and He becomes their God, we may be encouraged to come to Him, even in the most forlorn condition. Does God keep open house for those who have no home? Then I will go to Him! Does God take up those whom father and mother have forsaken? Then will I put my trust in Him! I saw on a board this morning words announcing that an asylum was to be built on a plot of ground for a class of persons who are described in three terrible words—HELPLESS, HOMELESS, HOPELESS. These are the kind of people that God receives—to them He gives His mercy! Are you helpless? He will help you! Are you homeless? He will house you! Are you hopeless? He is the Hope of those who have no other confidence. Come, then, to Him at once!  
IV. This last word should induce sinners to return to God and then we shall see before our eyes THE COMING BY THIS HELP. You that are great, good, full and inwardly strong, you will not return to God. You that are nothing and less than nothing—you that are fallen in your own sight, you that cannot help yourselves—you are likely to come! I pray that you may come at once. I have set before you an open door that no man can shut— will you not enter? Come to my Lord this day! Come, now, and say, “Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.” May God help us to be doing this rather than talking and hearing about it!  
Let us come to God, for He will help us to come. You see He helps us by giving us words, but as He never helps men to be hypocrites, He will also help us to feel the words! He who gives us words to speak, will give us Divine Grace to speak them sincerely. Are not these words the true desires of your hearts? On your knees, when you get home, pour them out before God. In your pews while you are here, present these petitions in silence. Say, “Take away all iniquity, receive me graciously: so will I render the calves of my lips.” The Lord’s help will suffice, not only to teach us the manner of praying, but to give us the desire, the faith, the love, the resolve which make up this prayer!  
Let your coming to the Lord be decisive and actual. You have meant it for years and yet nothing has been done. Some of you have been hearing me preach, now, for a quarter of a century! Think of that! I met, the other day, with one who heard me at New Park Street—and, at last, by our Master’s Grace, he has come out to confess his Lord after more than 30 years! Slow work this! Better late than never! Come, my Friends, are you going to stick in the mud forever? Will you lie outside the wicket-gate throughout another year? God grant you may cry right now, “Take away all iniquity: receive us graciously!”  
Oh, that this might be the universal cry of all my audience at this hour! The text is not written as for one, but for many. “Take with you words.” The first verse is in the singular and speaks of, “you.” But the second is in the plural and speaks of, “us.” It is not, “Take away all iniquity; receive me graciously”—but—“receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us.” Come along with you, then, the whole company of you who desire salvation! I call upon you who are sitting in this first gallery all around me! I call upon the dense mass in the area below! I call upon you who sit in the upper gallery! Oh, that we might all join in one common return unto the Lord! Let us call this day, “The day of the joyous return.” “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up.” Who says, “No”? What? Will you choose your own destruction and persevere in the way of sin? I hope you will all say, “Yes,” and that the Holy Spirit will lead you to carry out the resolve.  
The special call is to the fallen—“Return; for you have fallen.” Come, you fallen ones, come and welcome! It is to the wandering, for to such is the command appropriate, which says, “Return.”—  
*“Return, O wanderer, to your home!  
Your Father calls for you.  
No longer now an exile roam  
In guilt and misery—  
Return! Return!”*  
The call is to the forlorn and destitute— “In You the fatherless find mercy.” You that are fallen, far off, fatherless and forlorn, come at once to God in Jesus Christ! Come now! Come! Come! Come! See how the Lord meets you! Read the fourth verse—I could almost kiss the lines as I gaze on them—“I will heal their backsliding.” Come, sick one, here is healing for you. “I will love them freely.” Come, unlovely one, here is love for you! “My anger is turned away from him”—though you have felt His wrath burning in your souls, it is gone forever! “I will be as the dew unto Israel”—before this service is quite over, some drops of dew shall have fallen upon your parched spirits and shall sparkle in your bosoms like diamonds glittering in the sun!  
These later verses speak as if the gracious work were done. They describe a scene most bright, full of color and rich with perfume—as an accomplished fact! The chapter begins with an exhortation, but it runs into description, as if the people really had come and God had met them and had blessed them exceedingly! Lord, make it so at this very moment! May it not be merely that I have preached and that these people have listened most encouragingly, but may men be really saved through Your Grace! The Lord’s people have been praying all the while, “God bless Your servant”—and now I shall look for fruit from this first of March!  
The Lord grant that this March may come in like a lamb to many of you! May the lion go out of you! May a heavenly wind spring up and blow across this city and bring soul-healing with it! In this hope, I bid you again, “Come to Jesus.” Jesus says, “If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely.” The Lord gather you all into the arms of His Grace, for His Son’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 13 and 14.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 589, 600. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #1695 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 14.3

THE ORPHAN’S FATHER

NO. 1695

**DELIVERED AT THE THURSDAY EVENING LECTURE, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For in You the fatherless finds mercy.”  
Hosea 14:3.**

THE Lord God of Israel, the one only living and true God, has this for a special mark of His Character, that in Him the fatherless finds mercy. “A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation.” False gods of the heathen are usually notable for their supposed power or cunning, or even for their wickedness, falsehood, lustfulness and cruelty. But our God, who made the heavens, is the Thrice Holy One. He is the Holy God and He is also full of love. Indeed, it is not only His name and His character, but His very Nature, for “God is Love.” Among the acts which exhibit His love is this—that He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed and, especially takes under His wings the defenseless ones—such as the widow and the fatherless.

This is very notable if you look into the subject in connection with Holy Scripture. We see this soon after the giving of the Law. We have the Law in the 20th chapter of Exodus—and in the 22nd chapter of the same book, close upon the heels of the Law—you have God’s Word concerning the fatherless. Listen to Jehovah’s words—they are strong and forceful— there is a thunder about their sound. “You shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If you afflict them in anywise, and they cry at all unto Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” These are the words of that Jehovah who spoke the Ten Commandments on Sinai! See how very near to the heart of our God lies the cause of the widow and the fatherless.

The Lord gave the Law a second time in the book of Deuteronomy. If you turn to the 10th chapter of that book, at the 17th verse, you will find such a statute as this—“For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regards not persons, nor takes reward: He does execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.” Those are two strong and striking proofs of the fact that the cause of the fatherless lies near to the heart of God! Laws were made on their behalf and among the rest was the institution of tithes. I have read some amazing statements upon the Divine right of tithes. It seems to be established in the minds of some that if God gave the tithes to Levi, He must, therefore, have given them to Episcopalian ministers—an inference which I fail to see! I should just as soon draw the inference that He had given them to Baptist ministers! Certainly it would be no more illogical! The idea of our being priests, or Levites, in order to get compulsory tithes, would be too abhorrent to be entertained for a moment! But while I have often seen the Divine right of tithes stated and argued, I have never heard it urged that the tithes should go to those for whom God set them apart under the legal dispensation!

Now, if you will turn to Scripture, you will find that the tithe of all the produce of the land was to be given to the Levite, to the stranger, to the widow and to the fatherless—and whenever tithes come to be properly distributed, if there is any Divine right in it at all—it will most certainly be given to the widow and the fatherless! We should agree to its being given, in part, to the Levite when he turns up, but as we do not know who the Levite is, at present, we may keep his portion in abeyance till he appears! But the widow and the fatherless are still here among us! The poor shall never cease out of the land—and as the institution of the tithe was as much for them as it was for the tribe of Levi, let them have their share!

The tribe of Levi had certain rights because, while the other tribes had, each one, a portion, that tribe had no inheritance and, therefore, took out its share in having a part of the tithe and certain cities to dwell in. Read Deuteronomy 14:29—“And the Levite, (because he has no part nor inheritance with you), and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within your gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.” I do not know that Episcopalian clergymen have given up their earthly inheritances any more than Non-Conformist ministers. And I cannot, therefore, see that they have the Levite’s claim—but I see clearly the right of the widow and the fatherless—and I pray that the day may come when they will get their share of what is undoubtedly theirs, if it is anybody’s at all!

Another ordinance was made about the widow and the fatherless— that when the people gathered in the harvest, if they omitted a sheaf of corn, they were never to go back for it, but were to leave it for the widow and the fatherless. “When you cut down your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” In gathering in the corn, the field was not raked, but all that fell was left to the widow and the fatherless. It was expressly commanded that when they gathered the grapes they were never to gather a second time, but were to leave the bunches to be ripened for the widow and the fatherless. “When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.”

Nobody was forgotten in the Divine rule when Jehovah was King in Israel; but special mention was continually being made of these two classes—the widow and the fatherless—and the poor strangers that happened to be within Israel’s gates. “You shall be kind to the stranger,” said the Lord, “because you were a stranger in the land of Egypt, and you know the heart of a stranger.” I call your special attention to this, and beg you to look through Scripture and see how, again and again, God calls upon His people to take care of the widow and the fatherless. Job, that upright man whom God accepted, denied for himself the charge that he had ever forgotten the widow and the fatherless. And you know how, under the New Testament, it is written, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

It is established, then, that God, even the God of Israel, is One in whom the fatherless finds mercy! Let us take care of them, too. “Be you imitators of God as dear children,” and select as the objects of your charity those whom God specially cares for. This, however, is not my subject at this time. I wish you to become, yourselves, objects of the Divine charity by coming to God as orphans and putting yourselves under His protection, that you, like the fatherless, may find mercy at His hands! If we are sad at heart, troubled in spirit, full of needs, full of wants and trials, let us be encouraged to come to God because in Him the fatherless find mercy! First, here is encouragement. Secondly, here is encouragement as to what to do. And, thirdly, here is encouragement as to what to expect.

I. First, here is ENCOURAGEMENT. Here is encouragement, though such as none spy out but needy ones. You notice that the people who said, “In You the fatherless finds mercy,” are the people who had fallen by their iniquity and who were bid to return unto the Lord, saying, “Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.” They were a people who renounced all self-confidence, and cried out, “Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods.” They were a people with whom God’s Holy Spirit had so dealt that they were stripped of their pride and made conscious of their guilt. Then it was that they spied out this precious fact, that in God the fatherless finds mercy!

A tear in the eye is a fine thing to clear it. He that never saw his sin has never seen the mercy of God. David never sang of the loving kindness and tender mercies of God so well as in that 51st Psalm, when he mourned his great sin. A broken-hearted sinner has a sort of instinct for finding out the tender points in God’s Character. The ungodly man who is self-satisfied and has never been made to know the truth about his condition, often likens God to an austere man, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not harvested. But once let the man know his guilt and mourn it, and then he looks with all his eyes to God to spy out mercy in Him—and he is the man who delights to learn that God is merciful to the fatherless. This becomes a fountain of hope to him.

Have I here any sin-stricken sinner? Are you desponding and despairing? Did you come here feeling that there could be no mercy for you? Catch at this word. “In You the fatherless finds mercy.” He is a merciful God; He is tender, kind, considerate. He evidently looks after the helpless and hopeless. He is the patron of those whom others desert. Widows without friends, the fatherless without protectors—these are the care of God. May you not hope that He will care for you? May you not, in the depth of your sin and brokenness of heart, come to Him and say, “O Lord, I hear You are the Friend of the friendless, be a Friend to me”? It looks like a candle put in the window of your father’s house to guide you home through the darkness. May God help you to see it—but I know that you will not care to see it if there is not a tear in your eyes, for none but the needy perceive this gracious Truth of God.

This encouragement is, moreover, one which is a strong inducement to cast away all other confidences. If God is the Friend of the fatherless, He may be a Friend to me! Would it not be well for me to trust Him and leave off trusting those other things that I have relied upon? You see how the text runs, “Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.” These were their great trust and confidence! And then they go on to say— “Neither will we worship false gods, for we can see that the true God is kind, kind to the fatherless ones and, therefore, we may come and trust Him.” When a man gets some little hope, then he says to himself, “I will even venture to look to the Lord.” When the prodigal son in the far-off country had spent all his living, what was it that brought him back? Why, it was this thought— “How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare!” This made him resolve to go home again.

I know what the devil will do—he will tell you that there is no mercy for you. He is an old liar! There is abundant mercy for the greatest sinner! What does the devil know about it? He never sought mercy and he has never had any and never will have any, for he will never seek it! But for you, poor Soul, there is bread enough and to spare in your Father’s house, so why do you perish with hunger? Why not arise and go to your Father? If God is the Father of the fatherless, this should induce us to hasten to Him and rest in Him. “May I trust in Jesus Christ?” asks one. “May I?” Of course you may! It is a sin if you do not and, indeed, the chief and most ruinous of sins!

Many of you are trusting in your sacraments and your priests, or in your good works and your prayers, or your own feelings because you think that you may not trust Christ. But you may! For He who takes the fatherless under His blessed wings invites you to come to Him. “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If He had ever repulsed one, He might repulse you. But since the fatherless find mercy in Him—and all that come to Him find mercy in Him— come along with you and trust in the Merciful One at once! Furthermore, there is much encouragement in my text because it gives us a clear look into the heart of God. I always like to see how a man treats children. You learn a great deal about a man when you see that.

Some men abhor children and almost wish that they could exterminate them. As to the fatherless children they say, “Let them go to the workhouse—we cannot be troubled with them.” The gentle-hearted one never sees a little child in need without feeling the utmost pity. I feel more sorry for a suffering child than even for a man or a woman. Adults have a measure of a power to help themselves, but if there is poverty in the house, the little one may pine away, but it cannot get relief. Little boys and girls have suffered much in this great city when their parents’ home has been desolated by poverty, frequently caused by drink and other sins. Who knows the sufferings of the little ones when father dies? I confess it touches my heart that little children should suffer as they do. When men are wicked, one is almost thankful that there should be poverty following their sin to whip them out of it—but these lambs—what have they done? Any tender heart feels this. Is not this a wonderful text which lets us gaze into the heart of God while we read, “In You the fatherless finds mercy”?

Great God, the seraphim adore You! Angels, day without night, in serried ranks stand waiting to do Your bidding! Your voice is the thunder and the glance of Your eye is the lightning. At Your bidding kings die, dynasties decay, empires are blotted out and yet, You care for little children and widows! It is very beautiful to me. I feel as if I could trust Him all the better for that and come with my daily burden and daily cares— yes, and my sins, too—and feel sure that He will not refuse me! This is the Father of Jesus, I am sure of it! Oh, how like the Son is to the Father, for if the Father is thus the children’s Patron, what think you of the Son and of His likeness to His Father when He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven”? Does not this encourage you to come, as you see the heart of God laid bare in the blessed statement of the text, “In you the fatherless finds mercy”?

There is this encouragement, too, that our cases are like those of the widow and the fatherless. The orphan has no father, no helper, no means of sustenance. And you, my Hearer, are in that state, without God. If there is no God, you have no father. If you have no God to trust to, you have no protector and you are undone! There is no light for you if God is not your light, no hope for you if Christ is not your hope. Do you feel that? Well, then, you are an orphan—you are a fatherless one. Come along, for Jesus has said, “I will not leave you orphans. I will come unto you.” Come to Him, and look up into the face of the orphan’s Father and say, I plead that word of Yours, “In You the fatherless finds mercy.”

Lord, let me find mercy, for my case runs parallel with theirs! If there is a heart here that needs encouraging, it will spell out my meaning. But if you do not need it, and some of you do not, for you are fine fellows, full of your own righteousness, then I have nothing to say to you but this, “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

II. Secondly, for every poor, needy sinner here is ENCOURAGEMENT AS TO WHAT TO DO. First, if you want to find salvation, tonight, take the text as a sort of spiritual guidebook and plead your need! Do not say anything about your merits—the less said about them the better. Your position is like that of the Irish servant who said, when asked for his character references, that the gentleman at his last place told him he would do better without his character than with it. You are just in that case, only that you will be asked for your character references and the best thing you can do is to say, “My character is as bad as it can be”— and then plead for mercy.

“Lord,” it says in the text, “in You the fatherless finds mercy.” It does not say that they are good and holy, but simply that they are fatherless. It does not say that they find rewards, but that they find mercy. “Lord, that is all I have to say to You. I am in need—I am in awful need—and because I am such a sinner, it makes my need all the worse, for that is where my need lies. I need righteousness; I need a new heart; I need a right spirit. I need a total change. I need everything, for I have nothing but sin and misery. O Lord, I only urge that as You help the fatherless, simply and only because they are needy, I pray You save me, irrespective of my character, for my need is great.”

The next lesson for you is this—be sure to take a hold of this text by the handle and ask for mercy. “In You the fatherless finds”—what? Finds mercy! Mercy is the handle of the text! When you go to God, ask for mercy, not for justice. A mother once went to the Emperor Napoleon to ask for mercy for her son. He had committed some breach of the French Law and the emperor replied, “Madam, this is the second time the boy has offended. Justice requires that he should die,” She answered, “Sire, I did not come to ask for justice. I beg for mercy.” He answered, “He does not deserve mercy.” “Sire,” she said, “it would not be mercy if he deserved it. I ask for mercy.” When she put it in that way, the emperor replied, “Well, then, I will have mercy.”

My unsaved Hearer, you deserve to be in Hell tonight! It is of the Lord’s mercy that you are not consumed. Do not dream of asking for justice, for justice will be your ruin—but get a hold of this word, “Lord, I ask for mercy”—and if something whispers, “Why, you have been a hardened sinner,” say, “Lord, it is true. But, Lord, I ask for mercy.” “But you have been a backslider.” Reply, “Lord, that I have, but I ask for mercy on that account.” “But you have resisted and rejected Grace.” “Lord, that is true. And I shall need all the more mercy because of that.” “But there is nothing in you to argue for forgiveness.” Say, “Lord, I know there is not, and that is why I ask for mercy. I put it wholly on that ground. Display Your mercy in me, I beseech You.” That is the way to plead! Mind you keep to it. That is the straight way. You will get Heaven, too, for you will get Christ, too, since His mercy endures forever! “In you the fatherless finds mercy.”

Learn another lesson, you that need to get peace with God, at once, and I hope that some of you do. Cast your sin, trial and sorrow upon God. The text says, “In You the fatherless finds mercy,” so the business of the fatherless ones is to come to God and just look to Him for mercy— and that is your business! Do not, I charge you, look to anybody else but the living God to help you. It is a snare, and a horrible one, for people to trust to priests! And I will say, in addition to that, to trust to ministers, to trust to any man whatever! I have known persons, when they have heard an address and have been impressed, to say, “Oh, I shall find Christ in the enquiry room!” That enquiry room may be a snare to you if you talk thus!

You need to speak to the man who preached to you, do you? Do not speak to him—go directly to Jesus! “But I wish to see that good man who spoke to me the other day.” Very well, so you may, by-and-by, but mind you, do not put that good man or that good woman in the place of Christ! The text says, “In You the fatherless finds mercy,” and it is in Christ, and in Him, alone, that mercy is to be found! Go directly and distinctly to Jesus and, by the help of His Spirit, you can do that while sitting in the pew! God is everywhere. Let your spirit be conscious that God is present and now let your heart speak to Him. To Him confess your sin—do not pour that rubbish into the ear of mortal man! To God lay bare your heart and to Him, alone! It is not a fit sight for any human being. Tell the Lord Jesus all your needs and woes—and He will help you—for in the Son of God is the help of the sons of men!

Oh, that I knew how to speak these things, but they will surely go home to those who are in spiritual need! You that are not in need—you that are good, you that are self-righteous—will see nothing in the text for you. No, and there was not meant to be, for the Lord has a people that He will draw unto Himself—and these people are known by this—that they are weary of themselves. God’s chosen people exercise the natural art of the weak, namely, clinging. They are made to feel their poverty and their need. And then, when they hear of the fullness of Christ, they hasten to lay hold on Him. Have you never noticed how the plants that God has made weak are all endowed with a natural faculty for clinging? One of the first things that the vine does is to put forth its tendrils for something to cling to. The hop, the wood vine, the sweet pea—they all have a little hook ready to lay hold on a support.

Now, if God is about to bless you at this hour, you have a little tendril that is being put out to find something to lay hold of—and as the gardener carefully puts his stick for the sweet pea, or as the farmer puts his pole for the hop, I have tried to set my text in your way. I would set the blessed Lord before you and say, “In Him the fatherless finds mercy, cling to Him! Cling to Him! It is your life to do it. Cling firmly!” The limpet by the seashore can do little, but it can cling! And so it does cling and very firmly, too. That is the one thing you can do, poor Sinner, and I pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to do it at once! God help you at this moment to cling to Christ! And if you do, you are saved, yes, saved at once! In Him the fatherless finds mercy. Cling to Him and you shall find mercy, too!

III. Now, lastly, here is ENCOURAGEMENT AS TO WHAT TO EXPECT OF GOD. “In You the fatherless finds mercy.” What do the fatherless expect of us when we stand in God’s place for them? When we take them into our Orphanage and try to be as a father to them? What do they expect of us? Well, I do not know that the younger ones have intellect enough to know all they expect, but they expect everything! They expect all that they need and, though they do not quite know what they need, they leave it to us. They believe that all will be found that they require. I like a poor Christian who does not know all he needs, but yet knows that his God will supply all his needs. He trusts Jesus for all. He trusts his heavenly Father as a child—he does not know what he may require today, or require in the unknown future—but then his heavenly Father knows and he leaves it all to Him.

As our orphan boys grow older, however, they begin to have a perception of their needs, and they trust that they shall have everything provided which their own fathers would have provided for them, and more, perhaps. So is it with us when we come to the great Father. We say—All that I would provide for my children, if I had everything, and could give them all that wisdom could desire, my God will provide for me, for He will be a Father to me. If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, much more shall He, who has taken you into His family, though you once were fatherless, give all good things to you. You shall have food and raiment sufficient for this life. You shall have protection, guidance, instruction and tender affection.

You shall have a touch or two of the rod every now and then, and that is among your choice mercies! But you shall also have all the cherishing of His sweet love and, by-and-by, when you are fit for it, He will take you Home from school and you shall see His face—and you shall live forever in His House above, where the many mansions are. Oh, if you come and put yourselves, by a simple faith, into the blessed custody and keeping of God, He will admit you into His Salvation Orphanage and He will take care of you! And you shall find Him a better Father than you will be to your own children—a better Father than the best of fathers could ever be to the best beloved of sons!

“I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” I will not say more, but I should like to leave John’s choice sentence as my last word. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” Blessed be Your name, O Lord, that we, also, have been led of Your Spirit to prove that in You the fatherless finds mercy!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #501 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Hos 14.4

GRACE ABOUNDING

NO. 501

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will love them freely.”  
Hosea 14:4.**

THIS sentence is a body of Divinity in miniature. He who understands its meaning is a theologian, and he who can dive into its fullness is a true Master in Divinity. “I will love them freely,” is a condensation of the glorious message of salvation which was delivered to us in Christ Jesus our Redeemer. The sense hinges upon the word “freely.” “I will love them freely.” Here is the glorious, the suitable, the Divine way by which love streams from Heaven to earth. It is, indeed, the only way in which God can love such as we are. It may be that He can love angels because of their goodness. But He could not love us for that reason. The only manner in which love can come from God to fallen creatures is expressed in the word “freely.” Here we have spontaneous love flowing forth to those who neither deserved it, purchased it, nor sought after it.

Since the word “freely” is the very keynote of the text, we must observe its common meaning among men. We use the word “freely” for that which is given without money and without price. It is opposed to all idea of bargaining, to all acceptance of an equivalent, or that which might be construed into an equivalent. A man is said to give freely when he bestows his charity on applicants simply on the ground of their poverty, hoping for nothing to gain. A man distributes freely, when, without asking any compensation, he finds it more blessed to give than to receive.

Now God’s love comes to men all free and unbought—without our having merit to deserve—or money to procure it. I know it is written, “Come, buy wine and milk,” but is it not added, “Without money and without price”? “I will love them freely.” That is, “I will not accept their works in barter for My love. I will not receive their love as a recompense for Mine. I will love them, all unworthy and sinful though they are.”

Men give “freely” when there is no inducement. A great many presents of late have been given to the Princess of Wales, and it is well and good. But the position of the Princess is such that we do not view it as any great liberality to subscribe to a diamond necklace, since those who give are honored by her acceptance. Now the freeness of God’s love is shown in this—that the objects of it are utterly unworthy, can confer no honor, and have no position to be an inducement to bless them. The Lord loves them freely.

Some persons are very generous to their own relations, but here, again, they can hardly be said to be free, because the tie of blood constrains them. Their own children, their own brother, their own sister—if men will

not be generous here, they must be mean through and through. But the generosity of our God is commended to us in that He loved His enemies, and while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for us. The word “freely” is “exceedingly broad” when used in reference to God’s love to men. He selects those who have not the shadow of a claim upon Him, and sets them among the children of His heart.

We use the word “freely,” when a favor is conferred without its being sought. It can hardly be said that our king in the old histories pardoned the citizens of Calais freely when his Queen had first to prostrate herself before him, and with many tears to induce him to be merciful. He was gracious, but he was not free in his grace. When a person has been long dogged by a beggar in the streets, though he may turn round and give liberally to be rid of the clamorous applicant, he does not give “freely.”

Remember, with regard to God, that His Grace to man was utterly unsought. He does give Divine Grace to those who seek it, but none would ever seek that Grace unless unsought Grace had first been bestowed. Sovereign Grace waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. The love of God goes forth to men when they have no thought after Him— when they are hastening after all manner of sin and wantonness. He loves them freely, and as the effect of that love, they then begin to seek His face. But it is not our seeking, our prayers, our tears, which incline the Lord to love us. God loves us at first most freely, without any entreaties or beseeching—and then we come both to entreat and to beseech His favor.

That which comes without any exertion on our part comes to us “freely.” The rulers dug the well, and as they dug it, they sang, “Spring up, O well!” In such a case, where a well must be dug with much labor, the water can hardly be described as rising freely. But yonder, in the laughing valley, the spring gushes from the hillside and lavishes its crystal torrent among the shining pebbles. Man pierced not the fountain, he bored not the channel, for, long before he was born, or ever the weary pilgrim bowed himself to its cooling stream, it had leaped on its joyous way right freely. And it will do so, as long as the moon endures, freely, freely, freely. Such is the Grace of God.

No labor of man procures it. No effort of man can add to it. God is good from the simple necessity of His Nature. God is Love simply because it is His Essence to be so. He pours forth His love in plenteous streams to undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving objects—simply because He, “will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.

If you ask an illustration of the word “freely,” I point to yonder sun. How freely he scatters his life-giving beams. Precious as gold are his rays, but he scatters them like the dust. He sows the earth with orient pearls and bejewels it with emerald and ruby and sapphire—and all most freely. You and I forget to pray for the sun’s light, but it comes at its appointed season. Yes, on that blasphemer who curses God, the day arises, and the sunlight warms him as much as the most obedient child of the heavenly Father. That sunbeam falls upon the farm of the miser, and upon the field of the churl.

That sun bids the grain of the wicked expand in its genial warmth, and produces its harvest. That sun shines into the house of the adulterer, into the face of the murderer, and the cell of the thief. No matter how sinful man may be, yet the light of day descends upon him unasked for, and unsought. Such is the Grace of God—where it comes, it comes not because it is sought, or deserved, but simply from the goodness of the heart of God, which, like the sun, blesses as it wills.

Mark the gentle winds of Heaven—the breath of God to revive the languishing—the soft breezes. See the sick man at the seaside, drinking in health from the breezes of the salt sea. Those lungs may heave to utter the lascivious song, but the healing wind is not restrained. Whether it is breast of saint or sinner, yet that wind ceases not from any. So in gracious visitations. God waits not till man is good before He sends the heavenly wind, with healing beneath its wings. Even as He pleases, so it blows, and to the most undeserving it comes.

Observe the rain which drops from Heaven. It falls upon the desert as well as upon the fertile field. It drops upon the rock, that will refuse its fertilizing moisture, as well as upon the soil that opens its gaping mouth to drink it in with gratitude. Look, it falls upon the hard streets of the populous city—where it is not required, and where men will even curse it for coming! And it falls not more freely where the sweet flowers have been panting for it, and the withering leaves have been rustling forth their prayers. Such is the Grace of God. It does not visit us because we ask it, much less because we deserve it.

But as God wills it, and the bottles of Heaven are unstopped, so God wills it, and Divine Grace descends. No matter how vile, black, foul, and godless men may be, He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. That free, rich, overflowing goodness of His can make the very worst, and least, deserving the objects of His best and choicest love. Understand me. Let me not leave this point till I have well defined its meaning. I mean this, dear Friends—when God says, “I will love them freely,” He means that no prayers, no tears, no good works, no almsgivings are an inducement to Him to love men.

No, not only nothing, in themselves, but nothing anywhere else was the cause of His love to them. Not even the blood of Christ. Not even the groans and tears of His beloved Son. These are the fruits of His love, not the cause of it. He does not love because Christ died—Christ died because the Father loved. Remember that this fountain of love has its spring in itself, not in you, nor in me, but only in the Father’s own gracious, infinite heart of goodness. “I will love them freely”—spontaneously, without any motive ab extra, but entirely because I choose to do it.

In the text we have two great doctrines. I will announce the first one, and establish it. And then I will endeavor to apply it.  
I. The first great doctrine is this, that THERE IS NOTHING IN MAN TO ATTRACT THE LOVE OF GOD TO HIM.

We have to establish this doctrine, and our first argument is found in the origin of that love. The love of God to man existed before there was any man. He loved His chosen people before any of them had been created. No, before the world had been made upon which man dwells, He had set His heart upon His beloved and ordained them unto eternal life. The love of God, therefore, existed before there was any good thing in man. And if you tell me that God loved men because of the foresight of some good thing in them, I reply to that, that the same thing cannot be both cause and effect.

Now it is quite certain that any virtue which there may be in any man is the result of God’s Grace. If it is the result of Divine Grace, it cannot be the cause of Divine Grace. It is utterly impossible that an effect should have existed before a cause. But God’s love existed before man’s goodness, therefore that goodness cannot be a cause. Brethren, the doctrine of the antiquity of Divine love is engraved as with the point of a diamond upon the very forehead of Revelation.

When the children were not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, the purpose of election still stood—while we were yet like clay in the mass of creatureship, and God had power to make of the same lump a vessel to honor or a vessel to dishonor—He chose to make His people vessels unto honor. This could not possibly have been because of any good thing in them, for they, themselves, were not, much less their goodness. Our Savior’s words—“Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight,” reveal not only the sovereignty, but the freeness of Divine affection.

Do you not know, dear Friends, in the second place, that the whole plan of Divine goodness is entirely opposed to the old Covenant of Works? Paul is very strong on this point—he expressly tells us that if it is of Grace, it cannot be of works. And if it is of works, it cannot be of Divine Grace—the two having no possibility of commingling. Our God, speaking by the Prophet, says, “Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them.”

The Covenant of Grace is as wide as the poles asunder from the Covenant of Works. Now the tenor of the Covenant of Works is this—“This do and you shall live.” If, then, we do the thing which the Covenant of Works requires of us, we live—and we live as the result of our own doing. But the very opposite must be the case in the Covenant of Grace. It can never be as the result of anything we do that we are saved under that Covenant, or else the two are the same, or at least similar. Whereas, the whole Bible through, they are set in contradistinction, the one against the other, as arranged upon opposite principles, and acting from different springs.

Oh, you who think that anything in you can make God love you, stand at the foot of Sinai and learn the only thing that can lead God to accept man on the ground of Law is perfect obedience. Read the Ten Commandments through, and see if you can keep one of them in the fullness of its spirit. And I am sure you will be compelled to cry out—“Your commandment is exceedingly broad. Great God, I have sinned.” And yet if you would stand on the footing of what you are, you must take the whole ten, and you must keep them throughout an entire life—never failing in the slightest point—or else abhorred of God you must certainly be.

The Covenant of Grace does not speak on that wise at all. It views man as guilty, and having nothing to merit. And it says, “I will, I will, I will.” It says not, “If they will,” but “I will, and they shall. “I will sprinkle pure water upon them, and they shall be clean. And from all their iniquities I will cleanse them.” That Covenant does not look upon man as innocent, but as guilty. “When I passed by, I saw them in their blood, and I said, Live. Yes, when I saw them in their blood I said, Live.”

The first covenant was a contract—“Do this, and I will do that.” But the next has not the shadow of a bargain in it. It is—“I will bless you, and I will continue to bless you. Though you abound in transgressions, yet I will continue to bless till I make you perfect, and bring you to My glory at the last.” It cannot be, then, that there is anything in man that makes God love him, because the whole plan of the Covenant is opposed to that of works.

Thirdly, the substance of God’s love—the substance of the Covenant which springs from God’s love—clearly proves that it cannot be man’s goodness which makes God love him. If you should tell me that there was something so good in man that, therefore, God gave him bread to eat, and raiment to put on, I might believe you. If you tell me that man’s excellence constrained the Lord to put the breath into his nostrils, and to give him the comforts of this life, I might yield to you.

But I see yonder God Himself made Man. I see that God, that Man, at last fastened to the Cross. I see Him on the tree expiring in agonies unknown. I hear his awful shriek—“Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani.” I see the dreadful sacrifice of God’s only-begotten Son, who was not spared, but freely delivered up for us all—and I feel certain that it would be nothing short of blasphemy if I should admit that man could ever deserve such a gift as the death of Christ.

The very angels in Heaven with an eternity of obedience, could never have deserved so great a gift as Christ in the flesh, dying for them. And oh, shall we, who are all over foul and defiled—shall we look to that dear Cross and say, “I deserved that Savior”? Brethren, this were the height of infernal arrogance—let it be far from us. Let us rather feel that we could not deserve such love as this, and that if God loves us so as to give His Son for us, it must be from some hidden motive in His own will—it cannot be because of any good thing in us.

Further, if you will remember the objects of God’s love, as well as the substance of it, you will soon see that it could not be anything in them which constrains God to love them. Who are the objects of God’s love? Are they Pharisees, the men who fast twice in the week and pay tithes of all they possess? No, no, no! Are they the moralists who, touching the Law, are blameless, and walk in all the observances of their religion without a

slip?

No. The publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of Heaven before they do. Who are they who are the chosen of God? Let the whole tribe now in Heaven speak for themselves, and they will say, “We have washed our robes, (they needed it, they were black), and we have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Appeal to any of the saints on earth, and they will tell you that they never could perceive any good thing in themselves. I have searched my own heart—I hope with some degree of earnestness— and so far from finding any reason in myself why God should love me, I can find a thousand reasons why He should destroy me, and drive me forever from His Presence.

The best thoughts we have are defiled with sin. Our very faith is mixed with unbelief. The most noble devotion which we ever paid to God is far inferior to His desserts, and is marred with infirmity and fault. Remember that many of those who are the true servants of God were once the very worst servants of Satan. Does it not surprise you that men who were the companions of the harlot are now saints of the Most High? The drunkard, the blasphemer, the man who defied man’s laws as well as God’s—such were some of us—but we are washed, we are cleansed, we are sanctified.

I never did meet, and I never expect to meet with any saved soul that would ever, for a moment, tolerate the thought of there being any goodness in itself to merit God’s esteem. No! Vile and full of sin I am, and if You have mercy on me, O God, it is because You will, for I merit none. Further, we are constantly informed in Scripture that the love of God and the fruit of the love of God are gifts. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.”

Now, if the Lord stands bargaining with you and with me, and says, “I will give you this if—if—if—,” then He does not love freely. But if, on the other hand, it is simply, purely, and only a gift bestowed as such, not for any recompense afterwards to be given—then the gift is a pure gift. It is a true gift, and so the text is warranted in saying, “I will love them freely.” Now, the gift of God is eternal life, and dear Friends, if you and I ever get it, we must obtain it as a free gift from God—by no means as wages which we have earned—for our poor earnings will bring us death. Only God’s gift can yield us life.

Everywhere throughout the Word, the Lord’s love is greatly and wonderfully commended. We are told that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways. If the Lord loved men for some loveliness in them, there would be nothing wonderful in it—you and I can do the same. I hope I can love a man who possesses moral excellence. You feel, each of you, that if a man’s conduct towards you is grateful and good, you cannot but love him, or if you do not, it becomes a fault on your part.

With reverence let me say it—if there is something good in man, it is no wonder that God should love him. It would be unjust if He did not. If naturally in man there is any virtue. If there is any praise, if there is any commendable repentance, or any acceptable faith—man ought to be loved. This is not a thing to amaze the ages, nor to set the angels singing, nor to move the mountains and hills in astonishment. But for God to love a man who is evil all over—to love him when there is every reason for hating him—when there is not a trace of goodness in him—oh, this is enough to make the rocks break their silence, and the hills burst forth into music!

This is the first doctrine. I cannot preach upon it as I would this morning, for my voice is very weak, and the pain of speaking distracts my mind. But it matters not how I preach upon it, for the subject itself is so exceedingly full of comfort to a really awakened soul, that it needs no garnishing of mine—choice dainties need no skill in the carver—their own lusciousness secures them rich acceptance.

But what is the practical use of it? To you who are going about to establish your own righteousness, here is a deathblow to your works and carnal trust. God will not love you meritoriously. God will love you freely. Why do you go about, then, spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? You may boast as you will, but you will have to come to God on a par with the worst of the worst. When you do come, you will have to be accepted—you that are the best of men—on the same terms as if you had been the foulest of the foul.

Therefore go not about, busy not yourselves with all this fancied righteousness—but come to Jesus as you are! Come now, without any works of yours, for you must so come or not at all. God has said, “I will love them freely,” and depend upon it, He will never love you in any other way. You may think you are toiling to Heaven, when you shall be only tunneling your way through mountains of self-righteousness down to the depths of Hell.

This doctrine offers comfort to those who do not feel fit to come to Christ. Do you not perceive that the text is a deathblow to all sorts of fitness? “I will love them freely.” Now if there is any fitness necessary in you before God will love you, then He does not love you freely—at least this would be a mitigation and a drawback to the freeness of it. But it is, “I will love you freely.” You say “Lord, but my heart is so hard.” “I will love you freely.” “But I do not feel my need of Christ as I could wish.” “I will not love you because you feel your need. I will love you freely.”

“But I do not feel that softening of spirit that I would desire.” Remember, the softening of spirit is not a condition—there are no conditions. The Covenant of Grace has no conditionality whatever. These are the unconditional, sure mercies of David—so that you, without any fitness—may come and venture upon the promise of God which was made to you in Christ Jesus, when He said, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” No fitness is wanted—“I will love them freely.”

Sweep all that lumber and rubbish out of the way! Oh, for Grace in your hearts to know that the Grace of God is free—is free to you without preparation, without fitness, without money and without price! Nor does the practical use of our doctrine end here. There are some of you who say, “I feel this morning that I am so unworthy. I can well believe that God will bless my mother. That Christ will pity my sister. I can understand how

yonder souls can be saved, but I cannot understand how I can be. I am so unworthy.” “I will love them freely.” Oh, does not that meet your case?

If you were the most unworthy of all created beings. If you had aggravated your sin till you had become the foulest and most vile of all sinners, yet, “I will love them freely,” puts the worst on an equal basis with the best! It sets you, that are the devil’s castaways, on a par with the most hopeful. There is no reason for God’s love in any man. If there is none in you, you are no worse off than the best of men—for there is none in them. The Grace and love of God can come as freely to you as they can to those that have long been seeking them, for “I am found of them that sought Me not.”

Yet once more here. I think this subject invites backsliders to return. Indeed, the text was specially written for such—“I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely.” Here is a son who ran away from home. He enlisted as a soldier. He behaved so badly in his regiment that he had to be drummed out of it. He has been living in a foreign country in so vicious a way that he has reduced his body by disease. His back is covered with rags. His character is that of the vagrant and felon. When he went away, he did it on purpose—to vex his father’s heart. And he has brought his mother’s gray hairs, with sorrow, to the grave.

One day the young lad receives a letter full of love. His father writes— “Return to me, my Son. I will forgive you all. I will love you freely.” Now, if this letter had said—“If you will humble yourself so much, I will love you. If you will come back and make me such-and-such promises, I will love you.” If it had said, “If you will behave yourself for the future, I will love you”—I can suppose the young man’s proud nature rising. But surely this kindness will melt him. Methinks the generosity of the invitation will at once break his heart, and he will say, “I will offend no longer, I will return at once.”

Backslider, without any condition you are invited to return! “I am married unto you,” says the Lord. If Jesus ever did love you, He has never left off loving you. You may have left off attending to the means of Divine Grace—you may have been very slack at private prayer—but if you ever were a child of God, you are a child of God, still, and He cries “How can I give you up? How can I set you as Adnah? How can I make you as Zeboin? My repentings are kindled together. I am God, and not man. I will return unto him in mercy.”

Return, Backslider, and seek your injured Father’s face. I think I hear a murmur somewhere—“Well, this is very, very, very Antinomian doctrine.” Yes, Objector, it is such doctrine as you will want one day. It is the only doctrine which can meet the case of really awakened sinners. “God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.”

II. Since it is written. “I will love them freely,” we believe that NOTHING IN MAN CAN BE AN EFFECTUAL BAR TO GOD’S LOVE.

This is the same doctrine put in another shape. Nothing in man can be the cause of God’s love, so nothing in man can be an effectual hindrance to God’s love—I mean such an effectual hindrance as to prevent God from loving man. How shall I prove it? If there is anything in any man which can be a bar to God’s Grace, then this would have been an effectual hindrance to its coming to any of the human race.

All men were in the loins of Adam, and if there were a bar in you to God’s love, that would have been in Adam—consequently, being in Adam, it would have been a block to God’s love to the race altogether. If there is some sin in you, I say, which can effectually prevent God from showing Divine Grace to you, then that was in Adam, seeing you were in the loins of Adam. And it would, therefore, have been an effectual hindrance to God’s Grace from the race in any of its members.

Seeing God’s Grace found no barriers over which it could not leap, no floodgates which it could not burst, no mountains it could not overtop, I am persuaded there is nothing in you why God should not show His Grace to you. Besides, one would think that if there is a bar in any, it would have prevented the salvation of those who are undoubtedly saved. Mention any sin you like, and I will assure you upon Divine authority that men have committed such sins and have yet been saved.

Talk of a deed that has blackened the man’s character forever—that deed of foul adultery and murder. Yet that did not stop God’s love from flowing to David. And even if you have gone that length, and I suppose there is no person here who has gone farther—even that cannot prevent Divine love from lighting upon you. As God does not love because there is excellence, so He does not refuse to love because there is sin. Let me select the case of Manasseh. He shed innocent blood very much. He bowed before idols.

What was worse, he made his children to pass through the fire to the son of Hinnon, put his own child to death as a sacrifice to the false God, and yet for all that, God’s love laid hold upon him, and Manasseh became a bright star in Heaven, though once as vile as the lost in Hell. If there is anything in you, then, that makes you think God cannot love you, I reply, Impossible! Surely your sins do not exceed those of the chief of sinners— Paul says he was the chief of sinners and he meant it. He spoke by Inspiration and there is no doubt he was.

Now if the biggest of sinners has passed through the strait gate, there must be room for the next biggest. If the greatest sinner in the world has been saved, then there is a possibility for you and for me—for we cannot be such great sinners as the very chief of sinners. But I will dare to say that even if we were, even if we could exceed Paul—even that could be no barrier. Man’s sin, to say the most of it, is but the act of a finite creature— God’s Grace is the act of Infinite goodness. God forbid that I should depreciate your offenses, they are loathsome, they are hellish in themselves.

Still they are only a creature’s deeds, the deeds of a worm that today is, and tomorrow is crushed. But the Divine Grace, the love and the pity of God—oh, these are infinite, eternal, everlasting, boundless, matchless, quenchless, unconquerable—and therefore the Grace of God can overcome and prove itself mightier than your guilt and sin! There is no bar, then, or else there would have been a bar in the case of others.

Would it not mar the sovereignty of God if there should be a man in whom there was something that would effectually prevent God’s love from flowing to him? Then it would not be, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” No, it would be, “I will have mercy on those I can have mercy on. But there is such-and-such a man—I cannot have mercy on him, for he has gone too far.” No, glory be to God for that sentence—“I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy.” The devil may say, “What? On that man, on that man! He has gone too far.” “Ah, but,” says God, “if I will it, he has not gone too far. I will have mercy on him.”

I do not know that I ever felt more the boundless sovereignty of the Grace of God than when I looked that text in the face and saw it—not, “I will have mercy on those that are willing to have it.” Or , “I will have mercy on penitents.” No—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” And so, if God wills to save you, there can be no bar to it—or else that would be a marring and a limiting of the Sovereignty of God.

Would not this be a great slur cast upon the Grace of God? Suppose I could find out a sinner so vile that Jesus Christ could not reach him? Why, then the devils in Hell would take him through their streets as a trophy! They would say, “This man was more than a match for God. His sin was too great for God’s Grace.” What says the Apostle? “Where sin abounded,” that is you, poor Sinner! “Where sin abounded.” What sins you plunged into last night, and on other black occasions!

“Where sin abounded”—what? Condemnation? Hopeless despair? No, “Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.” I think I see the conflict in the great arena of the universe. Man piles a mountain of sin, but God will match it, and He raises a loftier mountain of Divine Grace. Man heaps up a still larger hill of sin—but the Lord overtops it with ten times more Grace. And so the contest continues, till at last the mighty God plucks up the mountains by the roots and buries man’s sin beneath them as a fly might be buried beneath an Alp. Abundant sin is no barrier to the superabundant Grace of God.

And then, dear Friends, would it not detract glory from the Gospel, if it could be proved that there was some man in whom the Gospel could not work its way? Suppose that the Gospel, which is, “worthy of all acceptation,” could not meet certain cases. Suppose I picked out twelve men who were so diseased that the Gospel remedy could not meet their case? Oh, then I think I should stop my mouth from all glorying in the Cross. I could no more say with the Apostle, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” for then it would not be the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

No, it would be the power of God to all except that dozen! But oh, as often as I come into this pulpit, it gives me joy to know that I have a Gospel to preach which is suitable to every case. A friend told me the other day that many notorious characters stole in at times. Thank God for that! “Ah,” said some, “but they come only to laugh.” Never mind. Thank God if they come. “Oh, but they will make mockery of the Gospel.” No, the Lord knows how to turn mockers into weepers. Let us hope for the worst, and labor for the most hopeless.

The love of God has provided means to meet the most extreme case . They are twofold. The power of Christ and the power of the Spirit. Do you tell me that sin is a barrier? I answer, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleans from all sin.” The atonement of Christ is capable of removing from men all sorts, sizes, and dyes of iniquity. “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.”

“Ah,” cries one, “man’s hard-heartedness stands in the way of God’s love.” Beloved, the Holy Spirit is ready to meet the case of the hard heart. “Limit not the Holy One of Israel.” Is anything too hard for the Lord? You tell me that unbelief is a bar. I answer “No,” for cannot the Holy Spirit make the unbelieving believe? Yes, if the Holy Spirit once comes into effectual contact with the most unbelieving and obstinate spirit, it must believe at once. Look at the jailer, a few minutes ago he had been putting Paul in the stocks. What, what, what, what is this that comes over him? “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe,” says the Apostle, and he does believe, and becomes as pliant as a child.

Away with the men who think that man is master over God! If He willed to stop, at this moment, the most bloody persecutor, the most filthy and licentious man—if He willed to turn the blackest-hearted atheist into one of the most brilliant of saints—there is nothing in His way to stop Him. In a moment, Omnipotent love can do it. The means are provided, both in the blood of Christ for cleansing, and in the power of the Spirit for renewing the inner man. Therefore, I say it is established, beyond doubt, that there is nothing in man which can conquer Divine love.

“What is the practical use of this,” says one. The practical use of this is to set the gate of mercy wide open. I like always to preach sermons which leave the door of mercy on the jar for the worst of sinners—but this morning I set it wide open. A man has dropped in here who has been thinking for years, “I gave myself up to sin in my youth, and I have gone astray ever since—there is no hope for me.” I tell you, Soul, all that you have ever done is no bar to God’s love to you—for He does not love you because of anything good in you.

That which is black in you cannot prevent His loving you, if He so wills it. I tell you what I would have you do. I have seen those like you come to the foot of the Cross and they have said—

*“Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To You whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come.”*

If you in your soul can now trust the love of God in Christ, you are saved!

No matter whoever you may be, you are saved this morning, and you shall go out of this house a regenerate soul—for, by God’s Grace, you have believed in Jesus—therefore the love of God is come to you! All your past life

is forgotten and forgiven. All your past ingratitude, and blasphemy, and sin, are cast into the depths of the sea. And, as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed your transgressions from you.

I have known the time when, if I had heard the sermon of this morning, faint and feeble though it is, I should have danced for joy. I feel an intense inward satisfaction and delight while preaching it, for I believe it is the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Christ died not for the righteous, but for sinners! He gave Himself for our sins and not for our righteousness. This old Lutheran doctrine—justification by faith in Christ—this grand doctrine which shook old Rome to her very foundations, methinks must give poor sinners comfort and peace.

I know that many will see nothing in it. Of course none but the sick see any value in the healing medicine. I know there are some here who will think the sermon is not for them. Oh, may the Spirit of God make some accept this comfort. But they will not, unless the Spirit of God makes them. Too many of us are like foolish patients who will not take the physician’s medicine—and he has need to hold us and thrust it down before we will take it. This is how the Lord deals with many—not against their will— but yet against their will as it used to be. He gives them the medicine of His Divine Grace and makes them whole.

To sum up all in one. What I mean is this—there have straggled in here, this morning, the poor working man, the struggling mechanic, the young vain dresser, the man who leads a fast life, the wretch who leads a coarse life, the woman, perhaps, who has gone far astray. I mean to say to such—you are lost—but the Son of Man is come to seek and to save you. I say to you, sons and daughters of moral parents, who are not converted but perhaps feel yourselves even worse than the immoral—I say to you that you are not past hope yet.

God will love you freely, and this is how His love is preached to you— “Whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.” Come as you are! God will accept you as you are! Come as you are, without any preparation or fitness! Come as you are, and where the Cross is lifted high with the bleeding Son of God upon it, fall flat on your face, accepting the love manifested there, willingly receiving this day the Divine Grace which God willingly and freely gives.

As sinners, without any qualification! As sinners, as undeserving sinners, my Lord will receive you graciously and love you freely! Amen. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #920 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

BACKSLIDING HEALED

NO. 920

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will heal their backsliding.”  
Hosea 14:4.**

WHICH rings with the more sonorous voice, the knell, “their backsliding,” or the marriage peal, “I will heal”? All through the Scripture records there is revealed a vehement contest between man’s sin and God’s Grace—each of them striving to become more abundant than the other. Sin, like a dragon, pours forth floods from its mouth, and God’s mercy, as a shoreless ocean, rolls in greater majesty. Sin abounds, so that none can measure its heinousness or power. But where sin abounds Grace does much more abound. In the text sin abounds—“their backsliding.” There is a comprehensiveness in that word, a dreadful abyss of iniquity. But Grace abounds yet more, “I will heal their backsliding.” Here is a height and depth of Grace like the God from whom it came—incomprehensible and infinite!

I shall ask you, this morning, in order that we may get the full measure of benefit which this text may bestow upon us, under the teaching of God’s Spirit, first, to notice the words of the text one by one. Secondly, to consider the blessing of the text. And then, thirdly, if we are led of the Holy Spirit, let us not leave this House of Prayer till we have gained the realization of the text.

I. First, then, let us take THE WORDS OF THE TEXT, “I will heal their backsliding.” We shall call your attention first, to a word of humiliation, “backsliding.” The very sound of it ought to arouse our spirits. And the consciousness of having fallen into it should make us lay our mouths in their dust, and confess that we are unclean. Backsliding is among God’s people very common. Not common, perhaps, in its highest degree—God forbid it should be—but in its earlier forms. From its commencement in backsliding—of thought, and heart—on to backsliding in act, I fear the disease is so rife among the people of God that there is scarcely one of us who has not at some time or other suffered from it.

And I fear that the most of us might confess, if we judged our own hearts rightly, that in some measure we are backsliding even now. The proper condition for a child of God is walking in the light as Christ is in the light, and so having fellowship with Jesus. Our right condition, and our only safe standing is to abide in Him, and to have His Words and Himself abiding in us. But too often we follow afar off—we are living in very limited and remote fellowship with our Redeemer. These things ought not to be. There is no necessity that they should be, but alas! Alas! Alas! Search the whole Church through, and you shall find them in multitudes, and in some you shall perceive signs of the most sorrowful decay through an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Think, Beloved, each one of you who are Christ’s, how much you may have backslidden of late. Have you not become lax in prayer? You maintain the habit of it, and you could not give that up, but you have not that power in prayer you once had. You still read the Word, but maybe the Scripture is not so sweet to you as it was before. You come now to the Communion Table—you have not learned to forsake the assembling of yourselves together there. But oh, the face of the King, in His beauty! Have you seen that as you once did? Perhaps you are still doing a little for His cause, but are you doing what you once did or all you might do?

Instead of going on unto perfection, is not your growth stunted? Must you not confess that you are not a runner towards Heaven so much as a loiterer in the road there? Do these accusations evoke no confessions? I fear the most of us, if we came to search, would have to say, “I do remember when the love of my espousals was upon me, and my heart was warm with love to Christ. But now, alas! How slow are my passions in moving towards Him! O that I could feel once again the glow of my first love, and that my spirit did rejoice in Him as on the day of my conversion.”

I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, if you have to make such acknowledgments, whether you would have believed such things of yourselves when you first came to Christ? If a Prophet had told me that I should be so ungrateful to the dear Lover of my soul, I should have said, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?” Bought with His precious blood, and delivered from going down to the pit in those younger days of our attachment, we thought we should evermore closer and closer cleave to our Deliverer. No sacrifice appeared too great, no duty too irksome, if Jesus did but command it.

Yes, we have sorrowfully failed in many respects, and have need to, with deepest sorrow of heart, confess our backsliding and bemoan ourselves before God. But I will not dwell longer upon that word. Such lamentations may end when the heart grows tender. If we see sin sufficiently to make us bewail it, we may then look away from it, for the next word which we shall consider is a word of consolation—“heal.” “I will heal their backsliding.” There is consolation in the very fact that the Lord, here, looks upon the grievous sin of backsliding under the image of a disease.

It is not said, “I will pardon their backsliding,” that is included in the term, but “I will heal” it—as though He said, “My poor people, I do remember that they are but dust. They are liable to a thousand temptations through the Fall, and they soon go astray. But I will not treat them as though they were rebels, I will look upon them as patients—and they shall look upon Me as a physician.” Why there is consolation in the very fact that God should condescend, for Jesus’ sake, thus to look upon our loathsome, abominable, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sin as being, not so much a condemning iniquity in His sight, but as a disease upon which He looks, pitying us that we should endure the power of it.

And then observe—having looked at backsliding as a disease, He does not say, “I will put this diseased one away.” Under the legal dispensation he who had leprosy, or any contagious disease, must be put without the camp, but it is not here said, “I will banish them for their backsliding.” O my dear Friends, if we had been put out of God’s Church, if we had never been suffered again to come to His Table, we confess we have richly deserved to have it so, but it is not so written here. It is not, “I will put them in quarantine. I will expel them out of the goodly land, and from among My people.” No—“I will heal their backsliding.”

Nor does He say, “I will destroy them, because of their backsliding.” Some will have it that God’s people may sin, partially and finally, so as never to be the Lord’s Beloved again. They say they can sin themselves out of the Covenant. But we have not so learned Christ, neither have we so understood the Fatherhood of our God—

*“Whom once He loves, He never leaves,*

*But loves them to the end.”*  
“The gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” on His part towards His people. “The God of Israel says He hates putting away.” No, it is not, “I will strike their names out of the Book of Life.” It is not, “I will disinherit them, seeing they have proved unfaithful to Me,” but, “I will heal their backsliding.” That is to say, whatever their sin may have been I will overcome it, I will drive it out, I will restore them to their first condition of health. I will do more, I will so heal them that one day without spot or wrinkle or any such thing they shall see their Father’s face.” A word of consolation!

The next is a word of majesty. It is the first word of the text, “I will heal their backsliding.” “I.” It is Jehovah Himself who here speaks, the Omnipotent, to whom nothing is difficult. The All-Wise, to whom nothing is secret. He has not promised that their backsliding shall be healed by unknown means, but that He, Himself, will heal it. Suppose He had said, “I will let them alone, and see to what their backsliding will turn. It may be, perhaps, after a period it will work out all its venom, and the wound will be cured.” No, my Brethren, had we been left to ourselves, our wounds have become corrupt, and our spirit would have utterly perished. We have gone astray like lost sheep, and one of the ways in which lost sheep go astray is this—they never think of returning. The shepherd must seek them, or else they will wander further and further from home.

Note well that the Lord does not say in the text, “My Word shall heal their backsliding,” or, “I will send My minister to heal their backsliding.” He does graciously use His Word—it is His ordained means of blessing His people—and He condescendingly employs His ministers, unworthy though they are, to do much service for His children. But after all, it is neither the Word nor the minister that can do anything—only when the Lord puts His hand to the work is it done effectually. “I will heal their backsliding.”

Just as Jesus, Himself, going among the sick folk scattered healing here and there, and made yonder lame man leap as a hart, and yonder dumb tongue to sing, opened blind eyes, drove out fevers and chased away devils—even so it is Your touch, Immanuel—it is Your Presence, You Savior of sinners, that does heal us of all our sins. He Himself took our sicknesses, and therefore He knows how to deliver us from them. Is not His name Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that heals you? And has He not said, “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell there shall be forgiven their iniquity”?

It is Jehovah that says it! Then rest assured the work will be done. Has

He said, and shall He not do it? It is Jehovah that says it! However desperate our soul is in sickness, it shall be recovered. For is anything too hard for the Lord? “I will heal their backsliding.” Blessed be His name!

When you and I feel our backsliding, if it had been said that the backsliding should be healed by any ordinary means, we should have replied, “Not mine. No, Lord, mine is a case beyond all others, hopeless, helpless, incurable.” But when it is said, “I will heal,” how it takes away all power to be unbelieving, for what cannot the Lord do?

What diseases cannot He chase away? He can speak even to the dead and make them live! Therefore let us have hope in Him, for however far we may have gone, and however broken our heart may be concerning it, He can bind up all our wounds and make each broken bone to sing—and this shall be the song—“Lord, who is like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and remembering not the backslidings of your people?” Thus we have had three out of the five words of the text—one for our humiliation. The second for our consolation. And the third for our adoration, since it reveals the majesty of God.

Another word is in the text, which I shall venture to lift up out of the background in which it dwells ordinarily, “I will heal their backsliding.” Here is a word of certainty. “I will”—“I will heal their backsliding.” But why will He heal? Why does He say so positively that He “will”? Here is no perhaps. No perhaps. The men in Nineveh went to God with nothing to encourage them, but, “who can tell?” But the children of God come to Him with “shalls” and “wills” to plead. I pray you, Backslider, if you desire to return to the Lord this morning, observe the certainty of the text, and plead it. God who says “I will,” is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.

If He says, “I will,” you can say, “Lord, fulfill this word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” But why will God heal His people? He will because He has assumed the office of physician, and for a physician to fail in his attempts reflects upon him no honor. Every patient that the physician loses is so much loss to the fame of his skill. “I will heal their backsliding,” says God. “I have undertaken to save them, and I will go through with it. I have made with them in Christ a Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and I will not suffer one of these, My little ones, to perish, and I will heal their backsliding.”

Are they not His children? Now, if a physician failed to exercise his skill on a stranger, yet surely he will not upon his own child! There is nothing in the whole compass of pharmacy that the child should not have. There is nothing in all the art of surgery which the surgeon would not exercise upon his own beloved child if he has need of it. Of ALL His children the Divine Father says, “I will heal their backsliding.”

Beloved, we have cost our God too dear for Him to suffer us to perish, and perish we must without healing—therefore He will heal us. On every child of God the Father sees the marks of the Redeemer’s blood. Every heir of Heaven carries about with him mementoes that touch the Father’s soul, for He remembers well the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and the groans and cries of the Well-Beloved. You who believe in Jesus cost too much—He cannot let you die. The Lord has loved you too long to let you perish, for before the foundation of the world His heart went out towards His chosen. From of old His delights were with the sons of men.

Before you were fashioned and curiously worked in the lower parts of the earth, you lived in the heart of God, and lay upon the bosom of your Redeemer with Whom, even then, you were accounted as one in the Covenant of Grace. “I will heal their backsliding.” No disease shall slay them, no sin shall fester in them so as to destroy them. I, Jehovah, who have chosen them, who have redeemed them and called them by My Grace, I will heal them.” Heaven and earth may pass away, but this Word shall not pass away. Oh, the blessed certainty of the Divine Word!

There is yet a fifth word in the text, and that is a word of personality. “I will heal their backsliding.” That is to say, the backsliding, first, of all His Israel. He is speaking of Israel. “I will heal their backsliding”—His own peculiar people—His own elect ones. He Himself shall and will heal them. He will not suffer one of them to become sick with sin that it shall be fatal to them. That we may know whether we share in this promise we may judge from other words which precede the text. Those of whom He spoke were willing to come to Him and say, “Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, and love us freely.”

If there is any man here who desires to be forgiven for Christ’s name’s sake because of the Free Grace of God. If there is any here bemoaning his iniquity and desirous to return unto his God. If there is any soul who now sincerely closes in with God’s way of salvation, and would gladly find deliverance from every sin—such a man may be assured that he is one of those of whom God has said, “I will heal their backsliding.”

Do you hate your backsliding? Do you, like David, cry, “against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight, that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge”? Do your sins pain you? Have they become a very plague to your heart? Oh, then He will heal your backslidings! Are you earnest in prayer? Do you cry out that He would have pity upon you? Can you weep the penitential tear? Has He looked on you as He looked on Peter, and can you go out and weep bitterly, if not with actual drops that distil externally from the eyes, yet with inward drops that fall within from the still of the heart?

If so, He that breaks hearts always means to heal them. He never yet gave a wounded and a contrite spirit but what He was sure, before long to bring to it a better balm than Gilead ever knew, and to let the blood of Jesus speak better things than that of Abel, even peace eternally within that wounded spirit. “Their backsliding”—take the word and turn it to the singular and make it in the first person—say, “Lord, heal my backslidings! Heal those I know not of, ‘cleanse You me from secret faults.’ I do know some of them, and I mourn them. Deliver Your servant as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.” So you see the text has a meaning in every one of its words. I have drawn already five lessons from the five words which it contains.

II. But we pass on to try and bring out more clearly THE BLESSING OF THE TEXT. “I will heal their backsliding.” That blessing must be measured, first, by the evil from which it delivers “backsliding.” Backsliding is treated as a disease. Let us speak awhile upon that fact. Let us say, concerning backsliding, that it is one of the most dangerous things into

which a child of God can fall. It endangers all present joy. It greatly injures usefulness. And it imperils the future. No professing Christian falls into the great open sin all at once—much backsliding has gone before.

See the tree blown down by the strong winds. Nine times out of ten, if you look carefully at it, you will see that insects have been at work at it years before, and rotted it. And, therefore, when at last the trial came, it only consummated what had long been going on. When, some years ago, many of our greatest commercial houses suddenly collapsed, and bankruptcies were so terribly frequent, you do not imagine that they lost their money all in a day! In the investigation of their accounts it was proved in many cases that ten, or even twenty years before, the firms began to go back in the world.

Little by little, as a rule, backsliding leads on to overt apostasy and sin. No, no—so mature a servant of the devil as Judas is not produced all at once. It takes time to educate a man for the scorner’s seat. Take care, therefore, of backsliding because of what it leads to. If you begin to slip on the side of a mountain of ice, the first slip may not hurt if you can stop and slide no further. But, alas, you cannot so regulate sin! When your feet begin to slide, the rate of their descent increases, and the difficulty of arresting this motion is incessantly becoming greater. It is dangerous to backslide in any degree—for we know not to what it may lead.

It is a defiling thing to backslide, for a man cannot lose the intensity of his love to Christ and holiness without becoming thereby worldly and impure in heart. You cannot be less in prayer without being less like God. Sin is quite certain to seek a dwelling for himself in any heart where the Spirit of God is not actually present. Let your God withdraw His manifest fellowship, and sin is sure to come in to fill up the vacuum. Backsliding mars the whiteness of the righteousness of saints and blots their beauty. And as it is defiling, so is it contagious. One Believer cannot be living a life of little Grace without weakening those Believers who come into contact with him.

I know some holy men (I wish to be more like they) who are a blessing to all with whom they converse. Wherever they are, like an Oriental perfume, they spread a fragrance all around. Their lives are like the star in the east which led men to Christ. Their graciousness reminds us of the blessing of Asher, whose promise was that he should dip his foot in oil— for wherever they go they leave the tokens of the unction of the Holy One behind them. But the dark side to this picture is the fact that if we decline in Grace, our backsliding has a down-dragging tendency on others. The whole army is impeded by the lagging of a single regiment.

The old naturalists used to speak of a creature they called a remora, which they believed could fasten with its suckers upon a sailing vessel and hinder its progress. Backsliding Christians are just such remoras to the good ship of the Church, they are barnacles upon her, and impede her voyage—

*“One sickly sheep infects the flock,*

*And weakens all the rest.”*  
When there is a parliamentary train crawling along in front, even the limited express mail is hindered. When one professor acts in a worldly, careless, indifferent, or covetous spirit, he encourages others to do the same—and the example soon multiplies itself.

I wish I could make you see what a backslider is. I am afraid I cannot, but a simple illustration may help you. Do you remember that fine, athletic young man who was for years among us, and was almost envied for his robust health and remarkable vigor? Exertion was to him a pleasure. He rejoiced as a strong man to run a race. Strong as an oak, upright as a palm tree, and comely as a cedar—you had but to see him to admire him. Alas, we miss him from his usual seat, and his place of daily service knows him no more. He cannot mix in our assemblies, and never will again. He rises very late in the day, and the slightest motion is labor to him. He has a horrible deep-seated cough, and he is reduced to a skeleton.

His cheeks are sunken. There is a peculiar brightness of the eyes, but, with the exception of that, there is nothing about him that reminds you of what he was. And, if you should take a stranger to see him, you would say, “You cannot imagine what that young man used to be.” His mother weeps to think that this is her son, once the image of manly power. It pains her inmost heart to know that this is certainly her boy, her once strong and healthy boy. Yet he is not dead—no, but it is grievous to see how near death he has come, and with what difficulty he breathes. How weak are his lips, how languid is his pulse, how small his appetite!

The strong man is now weaker than a little child. In fact, man as he is, his father has to take him in his arms and carry him up and down stairs, for he cannot otherwise come out of his chamber. Here is a sadly truthful picture of what a Christian may become in spirit. He may suffer spiritual consumption, and decline from weakness to weakness till life barely retains its hold. He shall not die—for his life is bid with Christ in God. But he may gradually backslide until he is weak as water, and full of doubts and fears, and a thousand ills. The backslider has no strength for service. He renders nothing to the Church, but rather requires other Christians to watch, and help, and tend him.

He wants comforts and cordials, but from them all he has little or no enjoyment—he lives, blessed be God, he lives—but it is a struggling, unhappy, meager life. His religion gives him little rapture and very much anxiety. Few are the promises that he feeds upon, and many are the threats that haunt him. He will be saved, yet so as by fire. God forbid that you or I should run the frightful risks that backsliders run who thus walk wide of Jesus Christ and dwell far below the elevated region where spiritual health is sustained. May our souls prosper and be in health. And may we follow the Lord fully and evermore abide in Him.

What a mercy it is that, while we have to give such a distressing description of what backsliding leads to, we can turn to the text and find it written, “I will heal their backsliding”! Consumption, when it once comes to be really consumption, is, beyond all doubt, utterly incurable by ordinary medicine. And, though many remedies may assist the sufferer and prolong life, yet, as a rule, consumption is the herald of death. And so backsliding is quite incurable by any human means, and would be the forerunner of total apostasy were it not for Divine Grace. When a man’s heart begins to fall from God—like a stone falling from a tower, it descends at an ever-increasing ratio—and none can call it back again to the place from which it fell. Or stop it in midair, except that Divine Hand which can suspend the laws of gravity, arrest the course of sin, and restore the falling one to his place.

“I will heal their backslidings.” I understand, then, the glory of this blessing to lie in this—that though backsliding is of all things most dangerous, most defiling and injurious, and in itself most deadly—yet falling into it, you need not despair. On the contrary, if we have fallen into it, listen hopefully to the Voice which says, “Return, O backsliding children,” backed up as it is by the promise, “I will heal their backsliding.”

That we may see this blessing in a still clearer light, let us notice the healing itself. What is the healing of backsliding? It may be said to lie in two things, namely, forgiveness of its sin, and release from its power. That eminent man of God, Bishop Reynolds, who has written upon the last two chapters of Hosea, says there is a fourfold healing of backsliding, and I think he is correct. First, as we have said, backsliding is healed when all the sin of it is forgiven. Dwell on that a minute. You have been a backslider. Perhaps you are so now, but God, even the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, can purge you with hyssop, and you shall be clean!

Your leprosy shall depart and your flesh shall become fresh as a little child. “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins.” Oh, the blessedness of this! If sin returns upon you, child of God, that Fountain filled with blood, which washed you once, has by no means lost its power. You may wash again, Backslider.

The Mercy Seat is not removed, nor is the permission to approach it revoked. My heart delights to think I may go to Jesus as a sinner, if I cannot as a saint. I want a Savior now as much as ever I did. I want new pardon for new sin. I thank the Master for having taught us to say every day, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Even those who can say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” with a full assurance begotten in them by the filial spirit of Divine Grace, yet have need to ask that sin may be forgiven. We want daily pardon, and we shall have it. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The next fact of healing is the removal of all the injurious effects which sin has caused. A man does not backslide without feeling a tendency to go further into sin—contamination is sure to ensue. Backsliding deprives a Christian of many of his privileges. It hides the face of Christ. It darkens the Sun of Righteousness, or rather blinds our eyes to His brightness. It robs us of all present joys. It grieves the Holy Spirit and causes Him to withdraw from us in a measure. Now when it is said, “I will heal their backsliding,” it means this—“I will take away from them all the pollution which their sin has caused, all the injury which their sin has done to their moral and spiritual nature. I will give back to them all that they lost by giving way to evil.”

But, “I will heal their backsliding” means thirdly, “I will take away those judgments which I have sent upon them in consequence of their backsliding.” The Ephraimites were subject to invasions by cruel tyrants because they had revolted from the Lord, but as soon as they repented, God took away the oppressors and so healed their wounds. Now you, perhaps, dear Brother and Sister, have been a long while under the rod, and you have said, “Lord, when will You comfort me?” Perhaps His answer is, “I will comfort you when you have fully confessed your wanderings, and forsaken your idols.” Hear that rod and Him that has appointed it. Many a child of God suffers long series of losses and crosses, the cause of which will be found in the fact that he has not fully turned to the hand that smote him.

The Lord will bring His people back. And if one blow does not do it, they shall have another. And if that is not enough, they shall be smitten with many stripes till at last, with weeping and lamentations, they shall return unto the Lord their God. You know not how many temporal griefs would vanish away like smoke before the wind if your heart were but more humble before the Most High. “I will heal their backsliding,” that is, “I will take away the temporal chastisement with which I have visited them.”

Then, again, the fourth kind of healing is the restoration of lost comfort. Instead of the despondency which the Believer feels, when, day and night the hand of God is heavy upon him, he shall yet rejoice in the Lord. God’s children always have to smart for sin. If they were ungodly they might sin and enjoy the sweet of their stolen waters. But if they are in very deed the Lord’s own people, smart must follow sin. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

Hear how David cries out, how hoarse his voice is in that fifty-first Psalm, and all through those seven Penitential Psalms how he dips every verse in the brine of his repentance! He did not find it a profitable or a harmless thing to commit unrighteousness. And so, Brethren, you and I, if we are God’s children, will be sure to find that backsliding is a root that bears gall and wormwood. Yet, after his mournful confession and deep soul travail, David received the consolation of God, and his tongue sang aloud of God’s righteousness.

He said, “Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation.” And God did restore it, and the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice. This is conclusive healing of our backsliding—when we receive beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. Do not believe, O penitent wanderers, that His mercy is gone forever. He is ever mindful of His Covenant, and He will restore your souls, and lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. My Brothers and Sisters, if the sin is once drowned, your sorrow shall be assuaged. If you remove the cause, the effect shall follow. Did you once leap like David before the ark, or like Miriam dance to the timbrel of triumph? And have your knees grown stiff, and do your hands hang down through sin?

May the Lord help you to break off your sin by righteousness, and the weak hands shall be strengthened, and the feeble knees shall be confirmed. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing—for the Lord will again say unto your soul, “I am your salvation.” Your Sun may seem to have gone down, but unto you that fear the Lord He shall arise with healing beneath His wings. Only return unto the Lord, and He will restore to you “the years which the locust has eaten,” for He has said it, and He will make it good in its fullest extent—“I will heal their backsliding.”

Now, Brethren, consider the mode in which this backsliding is healed, for that is part of the mercy. It very frequently happens that by Divine Grace the healing of backsliding is brought about in God’s Providence by severe afflictions. The previous chapters to this one all go to show how God can act as a lion or a leopard, or as a bear robbed of her whelps, when His people wander into sin. But I shall not dwell on that point, only I would say that the severest trial that ever happens to you, if it brings you to your God, is a surpassing blessing. I would not, and I dare not, pray that the Lord would keep me from all future affliction and pain.

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your word.” This is true of all Believers. The Cross is our best earthly heritage. Whenever we imagine that we have won the crown we should remember that it would be an unseasonable mercy, for this is not a palace, but a battlefield. But when we feel the Cross it is a seasonable blessing, suitable for followers of the Crucified. “In the world you shall have tribulation.”

The connection of the text leads me to remark that our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus heals our backslidings, as a usual rule, by presenting to our minds a fresh sense of His great love. The next sentence seems to say that, “I will love them freely.” I never find that my heart is so moved to return unto her rest as when she feels that the Lord has dealt bountifully with her. When I remember that I am still His child, my soul cries, “I will seek again my Father’s love.” If I believed the doctrine of the final falling of the saints, I fear I should feel no motive urging me to return unto my Lord. I fear I should feel the hardening effect of slavish fear, and like Hagar, flee into the wilderness.

If the prodigal son had once suspected that he was disinherited and was no more a child, he would have given up all thoughts of return. And though he confessed that he was not worthy to be called a son, yet he knew he was a son, and so back he came, and his father received him. We are willing to confess that to cast us away would be just, as we are considered in ourselves. But the fact that He has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow draws us with invisible but invincible bonds back to our Lord.

Yes, oftentimes the child of God, when he is cold in heart, has been revived and refreshed by some such thoughts as these—“He is still faithful to me, though I am faithless to Him. Jesus bought me with His blood, and He will not lose me. In His Heaven I shall dwell, notwithstanding all this unworthiness of mine. O my Heart, how can you be so like an iceberg to Him when He has loved you despite your innumerable faults? How can you give your eternal Benefactor so base a return?”

The great furnace of Christ’s love sends out sparks which fall into our hearts, and then they also begin to glow—  
*“Depth of mercy, can there be  
Mercy yet reserved for me?  
Can my God His wrath forbear?  
Me, the chief of sinners spare?”*

Does He bid me return to Him, and does He say, “I am married unto you?” “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?” Oh, then, while God’s heart of mercy is moved, our repentings are kindled, our soul melts while our Beloved speaks! Our stony heart is like the rock which gushed with water. The mountains flow down at His Presence! As when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil.

We feel revenge against sin, and sacred jealousy is aroused. Then we return unto our first Husband, and our first love! With weeping and with supplications we return, and with desire we desire Him in the night—

*“Love, mighty love, our soul subdues;  
We fly into our Savior’s arms;  
Her former vow our heart renews,  
Ravished afresh with mercy’s charms.  
Love is the cord that draws us home,  
The bond which holds our spirit fast;  
Forbids us over again to roam,  
And captivates us to the last.”*

It sometimes happens that the healing of our backsliding is as sudden as it is gracious. When we awoke this morning we were all startled to find how suddenly the ground had been covered with snow. I should not wonder when we leave this place if we shall be almost as much startled to find how soon the snow has disappeared under the rapid thaw.

The Lord who casts forth His ice like morsels can cause His wind to blow so that the waters flow. Have you ever found it so in the little world within? Your heart has been dull and dead, and by a word Jesus has quickened you! “Or ever you were aware, your soul made you like the chariots of Amminadib.” Blessed be God, His cures can be worked in a moment! He can raise His children from their graves of backsliding and redeem them from death. Pray that so glorious a work may be worked in you, my dear Brother or Sister. Let me pause awhile to give you space to breathe the prayer—

*“Come, Lord, on wings of flaming love,  
My spirit to upraise;  
Fly like the lightning from above,  
And fill my soul with praise.”*

Even if restoration from backsliding be gradual, Brethren, as sometimes it is—and attended with much mourning and much sorrow—yet is the blessing still so choice that no words of mine can ever express its value. And so I leave it with your hearts to do what my lips cannot.

III. The third point was to be THE REALIZATION OF THE BLESSING of the text, but our time is gone. Therefore let me hope that you have already obtained it, or will not rest till you have.  
If you would be savingly and thoroughly revived from backsliding, earnestly desire it. “O Israel, return unto the Lord your God.” Set your face towards God. Resolve upon obtaining renewal by His Grace. Then next make a confession of your fault. “You have fallen by your iniquity.” Acknowledge your grievous fault and be humbled for it. It is a mark that God is recovering a soul when it is deeply, penitential, humbled. I have noticed that whenever any who have been excommunicated from this Church have been restored, in every case they have walked in lowliness, and won all our hearts by their contrition and little esteem of themselves.

Whenever those who have grievously transgressed apply to be received again, and at the same time complain of the sentence of the Church, and of the conduct of the members, I feel that I dare not advise my Brethren to loose them from the sentence. For if they were really penitent, they would find no fault with others, but with many tears would lament their own shortcomings. It is one mark of Grace when the backslider puts his finger on his mouth as to the fault of his Brethren, feeling, “It is not for me to say a word against any, I am so involved in fault myself, that I dare not throw a stone.”

If you would have your backsliding healed, be much in prayer. “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.” Backsliding begins in forsaking prayer, and recovery will begin in renewing supplication. If you would be recovered, cast away your false confidence. “ Ashur shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses.” Turn Mr. Carnal Security out of doors—he is your enemy and God’s enemy—be rid of him! Renounce your idols—“We will not say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods.” You cannot recover from backsliding while you love any child or friend inordinately, or while anything stands in your heart before Christ. You will never be right while your money holds an undue position in your minds, or while your position in society is more precious to you than Christ. Away with your idols, or they will cry, “Away with Christ.” Either give them up, or give up hope.

Lastly, return again by simple faith to God in Christ, remembering that in Him the fatherless find mercy. If you are like an orphan, having none to help or to provide for you, and feel your spiritual destitution, then, in confidence in the abounding Grace of God, return to Him and live. O Brethren, let us all seek to get nearer to Christ! Let us all take the eagle’s motto, “Higher, higher, higher.” Soar yet beyond. Let us seek to attain what we have not as yet known. And as for the things which remain, let us hold them fast that no man take our crown. “What we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”

Let us not decline from our first love, but rather, “not as though we had already attained, either were already perfect,” let us forget the things which are behind, and press forward to that which is before, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. The Lord bless His Church richly, and send His dew upon Israel. And make us all to grow in Divine Grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For His name’s sake we ask and expect it. Amen.

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÷Hos 14.5

GRACE REVIVING ISRAEL

NO. 342

DELIVERED AT TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD CHAPEL, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

**“I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow  
shall return; they shall revive as the  
corn and grow as the vine. The  
scent thereof shall be as  
the wine of Lebanon.”  
Hosea 14:5, 6, 7.**

In reading this passage, does it ever fail to charm you? How full of beauty and how full of poetry it is! Every word is a figure. Fair flowers that adorn and corn that enriches the fields. The olive tree and the vine. The scent of the wine of Lebanon and all rich things are here gathered and clustered together, to set forth the beauty of Israel under the reviving influences of God’s favor. And as this one portion of Sacred Writ is full of poetry, the like holds good of all the Word of God. There is no book so poetic in its character as the Book of Inspiration.

We had rather, for poetry’s sake, lose all the books that have ever been written by all the poets that ever lived, than lose the sacred Scriptures. Yes, if a collection could be made of all the gems of all the noted books— could they all be bound into one volume—there could not be found so many beauties as lie here. Some of them are hidden and others of them are manifest in this most blessed volume of Divine Revelation. Altogether apart from the sublimity of the matters treated and the glory of the doctrines, the style itself is enough to make the book precious to every reader.

It is a wondrous book. It is the book of God—yes, as Herbert says, “The god of books.” It is a book full of stars. Every page blazes with light, from almost every sentence there beams forth some beautiful metaphor, some glorious figure.

In expounding the words of the text, we shall observe, first, the promise of Divine Grace made to Israel, notwithstanding, Israel’s sin—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” Secondly, the influences of Divine Grace, sweetly set forth in different metaphors. And thirdly, the elect of Divine Grace upon those around—“they that dwell under his shadow shall return. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

I. Here is A PROMISE OF GRACE MADE TO THE CHRISTIAN—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” I need not remind you that the Christian, (under the similitude of Israel, as I shall presently show you), is here compared to a plant. But this plant cannot be watered by any water that is to be found on earth, a plant which needs heavenly watering, even the dew from above.

Hypocrites may be watered by natural religion. Formalists may get their supply from the wells and springs of earth. But the Christian is a plant which can only be supported by dew from Heaven. He feels that though the river of Egypt might be turned to his roots, he could not grow. Though all the water in its floods and though the ocean itself might be brought to irrigate him, yet he could get no genial moisture, no true growing power, from all that could be had on earth. He needs to have his dew from Heaven.

“Well,” says God to Israel, “you are of yourself dewless and sapless and motionless and you have no moisture. You can not obtain any of your own, nor can mortals give it you. But stand still where I have planted you and I will water you every moment. I, the Lord will keep you, I will be as the dew unto you.” That Eastern figure, dew—for it is essentially Eastern and not so well to be understood in this country—has in it several beauties.

You will notice, first of all, that Divine Grace, like the dew, often comes down imperceptibly into man’s heart. When did the dew tell us that it was about to fall? Who ever heard the footsteps of the dew coming down upon the meadow grass? Who ever knew when it was descending? We see it when it has fallen. But who saw it come? And so with Christianity—it is very often imperceptible in its operations.

True, it is sometimes like the rattling hail, pelting on the windows—the sinner knows when it comes by stormy convictions and by troubled feelings within. But quite as often, the work of Divine Grace in man’s heart is like the “still small voice,” which few hear and of which even the man, himself, is partially unconscious. He may not be, as to its operation perhaps, but as to its nature—feeling that there is something in his heart, though not positively sure that it really comes from God. Christian! Despise not spiritual things because you hear them not. Much that God does, He does in silence.

There is a plant which bursts with the sound of a trumpet. But full many a flower called beautiful, opens in silence and no man hears the sound thereof. There are some Christians who seem bound to make a noise in the world—they were made for that purpose. But there are far more who have to blush unseen—whose glory it is not to “waste their sweetness”—though to perfume “the desert air,” and to make it sing and blossom like the garden of the Lord. Beloved, you may perhaps fancy that you have not Divine Grace because it has not come upon you in terrible excitements and in awful convictions. I beseech you, do not distrust the power of Divine Grace because it has stolen imperceptibly into your hearts. Mark the promise—“I will be as the dew unto Israel,”

Again—if the dew is sometimes imperceptible, it is always sufficient. If God waters the earth with dew, foolish would be the man who should go afterwards to water after his Maker. And God’s Divine Grace, when it comes upon a man’s heart, is all-sufficient. What He gives unto Israel, His own chosen people, is always enough for them. They sometimes think they want something more. They never really do, and what else they want, or think they want, is better for them still to want. God is sufficient.

And the dew, too, when it is required, is constant. God may, if He pleases, withhold the dew, that He may make a nation fear before Him. But He usually sends the dew in its appointed time and each morning beholds the pearly drops shed forth from the hand of God. And so, Christian, God will be your dew. As you want Divine Grace—so shall you find it—

*“All needful grace will God bestow,  
And crown that grace with glory too;  
He gives us all things and withholds  
No real good from upright souls.”*

But it is superfluous for me to tell you what is the meaning of this figure. You all know it ten times better than I do, or at least you ought, for I am sure this text has been preached many times and you are always hearing the metaphor used.

Like many of God’s metaphors it is so simple, so glorious, it arrests our attention at first sight—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” Instead of explaining, therefore, allow me to question you concerning it. Are you, my dear Friends, of the number here mentioned who belong to Israel? You ask me what is meant by Israel. I reply that historically Israel means God’s elect, His chosen ones—“Israel have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” But as you cannot tell that you are God’s elect, except by signs and wonders, I must tell you another meaning of Israel—Israel means a man of prayer.

The name of “Israel” was given to Jacob, because he “wrestled with the angel and prevailed.” Are you a man of prayer? Come now, answer the question, each one of you, for yourselves. Are you men of prayer and women of prayer? Alas, some of you may use a form of prayer, but it has no life in it. You ask, do I object to forms of prayer? I answer, no. I believe that sometimes forms of prayer, molded according to the mind of the Spirit, are offered up with the vital breath of the same Spirit of God. Far be it from me to say that because you use a form of prayer, therefore you do not pray at all.

This, however, I remind you, your form of prayer is merely a vehicle that moves not except as it is drawn. Of itself it is like a steam engine, motionless till the furnace is heated. Or rather, it is like the carriage which is drawn by the steam engine, being linked thereto with chains. A form of prayer is a heavy material thing which prayer has to drag after it. It is no help to prayer, but rather a burden to it. There may be prayer with the huge cumbrous thing called the form attached but the form is distinct in every sense from the power. The prayer is the spirit, the life, the desire, the wish, the agonizing panting with God to obtain the blessing.

I ask you not whether you use a form of prayer, or whether you utter extemporaneous prayers. You may speak extemporaneously in prayer and talk as much nonsense, yes, and a great deal more than you would if you used a prescribed form. You may avoid formality and become frivolous. It is not uttering spontaneous words that is prayer any more than repeating a litany. But I ask you, do you pray? If you are prayerless, then you have no right to call yourselves God’s elect. God’s people are a praying people. They are an Israel, a wrestling race. And only unto them the promise is made—“I will be unto them as the dew unto Israel.”

Yet one more hint—Israel may represent those who have chosen a better portion—who have given up the mess of pottage—who have sold that to “the men whose portion is in this life,” and are looking to the recompense in another world. Are you, my Hearer, one of those who is content with a mess of pottage? Is it enough for you if your dish is filled with dainty meat, your wine-cup full, your income steady and your back clothed with goodly raiment? And do you then care nothing for the things to come? Is your whole soul set on the things of earth?

Then I warn you—though you may talk about being elect, you are none of God’s elect unless you have set yours affections on things above and not on things on the earth. If you are trying to make the best of things in this world, rejecting, or even slighting that one object which ought to be your primary concern—to make the best of the next world and do not leave this in God’s hand for Him to take care of—you are none of His. Unless you have renounced the pottage and taken Christ to be your all and Heaven your portion, you have no well-founded hope and you have no right to take this promise to yourself—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

But you who abhor the world, you who spend your time in prayer—you may take this to yourself. And in your most barren and dry moments, you may urge this at the Mercy Seat—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.”

II. THE INFLUENCES OF DIVINE GRACE IN THE SOUL ARE HERE SET FORTH IN METAPHOR—“I will be as the dew unto Israel.” What is the effect? Although grace is imperceptible in its coming, it is discernible enough in its fruits.

The very first effect of Divine Grace in the heart is that it makes us grow upward. We shall “grow as the lily.” This refers to the daffodil lily, which on a sudden, in a night, will spring up. There may have been no lilies at all in a field, but after a shower of rain, the lilies may be seen springing up everywhere and the ground will appear perfectly covered with their yellow hue. Mark, that is what Divine Grace does in a man’s soul. Wherever Divine Grace comes, its first operation is to make us grow up. It is a remarkable fact, that young Christians grow upward faster than any other Christians. They grow upward in their flaming love, mighty zeal, ardent hopes and longing expectations.

Sometimes, indeed, our old friends step in and say, “Ah, young man, you are growing a great deal too fast. You are springing too rapidly upward. You will have a bitter frost to nip you a little presently.” Very well, that is true enough. But that frost will come quite soon enough, without any of your frosty breath going before it. Let the young grow when they can. Do not give them a piercing nip with your frozen fingers. Let them thrive while they can. You may tell us we shall hurt our constitutions and by-and-by we shall not be so zealous. Nevertheless, let us alone till our constitutions are hurt, suffer us to be zealous while we can.

You know very well, with all your prudence, you would give a king’s ransom if you could tomorrow have your juvenile ardor over again. And yet you quarrel with us because we grow upward. Why it is the effect of Divine Grace to grow upwards. The very first thing that Divine Grace does for us is to make us grow upward in love. Oh, what sweet love that is that we have in the early morning of life!

There is not a Prayer Meeting, but we are there. There is not a lecture, but oh, how sweet it is to us! There is scarce a good deed to be done, but we must be engaged in it. We are so earnest, we are growing so fast. “They shall grow as the lily.” That is the promise. So when you see the promise fulfilled, my dear aged friends, do not be peevish or rebuke the young people because they grow up and flourish in the courts of the Lord’s house.

There is a second effect. After they have been growing upward, they have to grow downward. While “he shall grow as the lily,” he shall, “cast forth his roots as Lebanon,” also. God will not have His people all flower and foliage. He wants them also to take deep root and throw out strong fibers. After a few years, when we have been growing up in ardent piety, it usually happens that some doubt crosses the mind, or some affliction comes, which, if it does not chill our ardor, yet sometimes checks our energy and we do not grow so fast as we should. Well, what is the effect? Are we really hurt or injured thereby?

I think not. Growing down is quite as good as growing up. I will not say it is better. The most blessed growth in Divine Grace is to be growing up and growing down—to be rooted in humility and yet growing up in zeal. But usually the two do not come together. Sometimes we grow up and at other times we grow down. We are such poor mortals—we cannot attend to two things at once. As sure as ever we take to shooting up, the devil comes and tries to prevent us from growing down. And if we are growing down, he generally tries to keep us from growing up.

Well, if we cannot do two things at once, what a mercy it is that we can do one at a time, by God’s grace! After having grown up, the Christian grows down—“he casts forth his roots as Lebanon.” That is, he gets less in his own esteem. He was nothing once, but he now begins to be less than nothing. He thought humbly of himself before. But now he thinks worse of himself than ever he did—if you ask him, now, what is his character— although he said he was, “a poor sinner and nothing at all” before, now he will tell you that he thinks he is the poorest of sinners, for he has not grown one atom the richer all the time he has served his Lord. He is still poor in spirit and perhaps poorer than ever he was. Blessed is it to grow downward!

And let me remind you, my dear Friends, that growing downward is a very excellent thing to promote stability. Perhaps that is the exact meaning of the passage. When we are first brought to God, we are like the lily, wafted about by the wind. Afterwards we grow downwards and become firm. I am fully convinced that the prevailing lack of this age is not so much in respect to growing upwards as growing downwards. Whenever I look abroad on the aggregate assemblies of religious people, I am obliged to hold a large number of my hearers in supreme contempt.

Are you not one day crowding to hear me preach what I think the Truth of God is, and another day cramming a place where a man is preaching the very opposite to what I hold to be true? The fact is, some of you have no idea of what fundamental Truth in theology is. The popular cry is for liberality of sentiment and if a man happens to say a hard word against anything he thinks essentially wrong, he is accounted a bigot at once.

Many of you shrink from the imputation of bigotry, as if it were more awful than heresy in regard to the faith.

You would as soon be called a common informer as be called a bigot. I beseech you, do not be appalled at a taunt. Do not be a bigot, but do not be ashamed of being called one. A man ought to have stable principles and not be ever shifting about from one set of opinions to another. He ought not to be hearing a Calvinistic minister in the morning and saying, that is good—and then going in the evening to hear an Arminian minister and saying, that is good, too.

We are often told by some ministers in their drawing rooms that God will not ask in the Day of Judgment what a man believed, for if his life has been correct, it will not much matter what doctrines he held. I am at a loss for the authority on which they base such laxness. I wonder who told them that was the Truth of God. I have read my Bible through and I have never found a text that could absolve my judgment from its allegiance to my Maker. I hold that to believe wrongly is equally as great a sin in the sight of Heaven as to act wrongly. Error is a crime before God and though there is liberty of conscience, so far as man and man are concerned, there is no liberty of conscience with God. You are not free to believe the Truth of God, or to believe error—whichever you prefer at the time.

You are bound to believe what God says is Truth. And on your soul’s peril is it, that you believe two things that are contrary, or confound the positive and the negative, where faith is the evidence of justification and unbelief the seal of a sinner’s doom. Methinks God will say to you at last, “Man, I gave you brains. I endowed you with reason. How could you suppose yourself less responsible for the use of your brains than for the use of your tongue?” One man says, “Yes.” Another says “No.” And because it is the fashion to call out, “Liberality, liberality, liberality,” you do assent to both and joining the crowd you are sincere in neither.

You ought rather to say, “I believe that what I hold is true and if I did not, I should not avow it and believing it to be true, I cannot hold that the opposite is true, nor can I be continually going to hear one doctrine at one time and another at another. My conscience demands that I distinguish between things that differ.”

My dear Friends, do try to grow down. Strive to get a good hold of the rocky doctrines of Free Grace. Do not give them up—keep fast hold of them. When you believe a thing upon genuine conviction, do not shrink from the avowal, because an ill name is applied to it. Say rather—

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

Well, what next? After a Christian has become confirmed in his doctrine and has received the Truth of God in the love of it, what next? Why the next thing is, he makes a profession. “His branches shall spread.” He has been a lily straight up, with no branches at all. But now his roots have struck deep into the ground, like the cedars of Lebanon. And the next thing he does is to send forth branches. He says, “I am a Christian. I cannot keep it a secret, I must let somebody know I am a child of God.” He goes to a Prayer Meeting and he is asked to pray. There is one branch spread.

He goes to join a Church. There is another branch. He sits down to the Lord’s Supper—there is another branch. And so the little lily, which was at first but a tiny plant, now grows into a tree and his branches spread. That is a blessed effect of Divine Grace, believe me, when it leads you to come forth from your obscurity and let the world know what you are. I have no patience with some of you who talk about being secret Christians. I should think a man a deserter if he were to say, “Well, I am a soldier, but I do not want anybody to know it.” I should think that he did not belong to one of our good regiments surely, or he would not be ashamed of his colors.

But there are many nowadays that you scarcely know whether they are Christians or not. Shall I tell you why? The awful fact is that they are NOT Christians. “No man lights a candle and puts it under a bushel.” You know what the consequence would be if he did—it would burn a hole through so sure as it was a candle. And no man can have Divine Grace in his heart and keep it a secret. I am sure it must come out. It is one of the things that cannot be concealed. You shall not tell me you can walk into worldly company and never let it be known that you are a Christian—hat you can live for months in a house and keep it a secret that a Christian is living there.

If that is the case, I tell you the angels do not know it. For it is not a fact. He that is a child of God will be discovered—his conduct will be different from the rest of men. “Your speech betrays you,” said the maid to Peter. And our speech will betray us, if we are Christ’s disciples. I beseech you, let me stir you up, my young Friends, to make a more open profession of your faith. The Savior has done much for you. Do not be ashamed of Him, I implore you, but begin to make a profession of Christ Jesus, your Lord.

Having joined the Church and made a profession, what is the next effect of Divine Grace for the Believer, then? Why it is to make him beautiful as “the olive-tree.” The most beautiful thing in the world is a Christian. Shall I tell you what kind of beauty he has? His beauty is the beauty of an olive tree. And that consists, first, in its fruitfulness. The most beautiful olive tree a man can grow is the one that bears the most. And the most beautiful Christian in the Church is the one that abounds most in good works.

Besides, the olive is an evergreen and so is the Christian. He has an olive-green beauty. He has a beauty which does not fade away, as it does from other trees, but lives forever. Ah, my Friends, we sometimes put one of our members before others because of his wealth and at times we show a little partiality to another because of his eloquence and to another because of his talents—but I take it that God ranks us all according to our fruitfulness. The most beautiful tree in a garden is the one that bears the most fruit—and there is a promise given to a Christian that after his branches have spread, his beauty shall be as the olive tree. That is, he shall grow and be laden with fruit.

The olive tree, I have told you before, is evergreen. And so is the beauty of the Christian. Alas for the beautiful Christians we have in some of our places of worship on Sunday! Glorious Christians! Oh, if they could be packed up and sent to Heaven just as they are, or provided their appearances were true indications of their state, what a blessed thing it would be! But alas, alas, on the Monday they have not the same sort of dress they had on Sunday and therefore they have not the same kind of actions. Oh, dear Friends, there is so much more Sunday religion in these days!

Now, I like a Monday religion and a Tuesday religion and a Wednesday religion and a Thursday religion and a Friday religion and a Saturday religion. I do not think the religion of the pulpit, or the religion of the pen, is to be relied upon. I think it is the religion of a draper’s shop, the religion of a corn exchange, religion in a house, religion in the street and the religion of a fireside, that proves us to be God’s children. But how would some of you come off if you were weighed in these balances? Fine fellows, with your feathers on, on Sunday. But poor creatures when you are in your undress, in your religious casual attire on Monday! You are not well arrayed then. But ah, if you were Christians, you would be always well arrayed—yes, you would be always beautiful as the olive tree.

Again, “His smell shall be as Lebanon.” Now, I take it, the smell means the report which will go out concerning a man. As you walk up Lebanon, it is said that the flowers of the aromatic herbs there cast up a most delicious perfume. You need not touch a flower—you can smell it at a distance. And so with the true Christian. Without seeking for it, he will obtain a blessed name among his Brethren and some name also among the world. “His beauty shall be as the olive tree.” Once more, “His smell shall be as Lebanon.”

Did you ever know a flower at all concerned about its odor, or about what people would think of it? Did you ever hear a rose have a lawsuit with a thorn, because the thorn said the rose did not smell sweetly? No, certainly not. The rose went silently on, casting up its perfume and left Mr. Thorn alone. Now, at times, with all ministers and with all Christians, there will be all manner of reports and hard sayings. But I have found a great gain by letting the fellows alone. When they are tired, they will have done, I dare say. And I am sure they will not much hurt us. If there is anything amiss in us, we are much obliged to them and we will try and mend it.

But if they have lied about us, it is a satisfaction to us, as far as we are concerned, to know that they are liars and we pray God that they may not have a portion in “the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.” Beloved, you never need to be very much concerned what men say of your character—only take care that in the midst of reproach you are without guile or guilt. Live, live, live—that is the way to beat all slanderers and all calumniators. Keep straight on with what you think is right and in due time your light shall burst forth as the morning and your brightness as the sun in His strength. “His beauty shall be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon.” Wherever the Christian goes he will cast a perfume about him. And when he is gone, he will leave some savor behind which will be remembered.

III. Thus far we have spoken concerning the benefits of Divine Grace to the Christian himself—more briefly I will now address you CONCERNING THE BENEFITS OF DIVINE GRACE TO OTHERS.

The text says, “they that dwell under his shadow shall return.” I am sure, my dear Friends, if you have Christian principles in your heart, you will not like a selfish religion. Though you will hold it to be a duty continually to examine yourself and to see that you also are sound in the faith, you will not confine your religion to yourself. You may perhaps take the maxim that Christianity should begin at home, but you will never think of improving on it by thinking that it ought to end there.

I like an expansive religion. I should not like to attend a Chapel where all the preaching was meant for me—where all I heard comforted me. I should not like to go where there was not a scrap for me, but all for my Brethren. Nor where there was not something for the poor sinner. I could not afford to attend a place where I should always hear that which was exclusively for the saint, or exclusively for the sinner. If a man left half his congregation without a word, I should doubt whether he would give me the right one. But there are some people so selfish that, provided they go to Heaven, it is enough—they are in the Covenant. They are the dear people of God—generally dear at any price. A peculiar people—awfully peculiar they are, certainly—they are so different from other people—there is no doubt about that.

They say it is equal whether God ordains man’s life or man’s death. They would sit still to hear men damned and I do believe they would sing a song over Hell itself and hail its jubilee. They seem to have no feeling for anyone but themselves. They have dried the heart out of them by some cunning sleight of hand. They have taken away the marrow from the bones of godliness and wrapped themselves entirely up in self. But true Christianity will be expansive and care for others.

Come, then, you men of generous hearts, you of glowing charity—here is a promise for you—you have some who dwell under your shadow. Are you a minister? Your people sit under your shadow on the Sabbath. Are you a father? Your children come and dwell under your shadow. Are you a master? Your workmen dwell under your shadow. You have often prayed for their salvation. You have often yearned for the conversion of their souls. Mother! You have often pleaded for the deliverance of a daughter from her sin. “They that dwell under his shadow shall return.” If you want to do good to your neighbors and to bring them to Christ, put your own heart much upon the Savior. The more of Christ a man has, the more useful will he be in his day.

If you were to look at all the ministers that have been useful, you will not find they were distinguished by great talent so much as by great grace. God can bless a poor unsophisticated countryman to the salvation of hundreds if he has Divine Grace—and a man ever so learned may preach in vain, with great periods and stupendous sentences, if he has not Divine Grace. Seek, then, to prove that promise—“I will be as the dew unto Israel,” and so doing, you will get this other promise fulfilled—“They that dwell under your shadow shall return, shall revive as the corn and

grow as the vine—the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

I have no time to dwell upon these points—“they shall revive as the corn,” or “they shall return.” But I must just make a remark upon that sweet thought—“they shall grow as the vine.” We will transplant the Eastern metaphor into Western soil. Vines, with us, grow up by the side of walls, they could not grow up themselves if there were not some prop against which they could lean for support. Now, I have often thought this is an explanation of that text—“Train up a child in the way he should go.”

Try all you can by God’s grace to train up your child like you would a vine. And here is the promise. “It shall grow as the vine.” Oh, I have thought, what a pretty sight it is to see an aged Christian, who, in his youth, was a Sunday-School teacher, still a member of the Church and there are nine or ten young men in the Church, perhaps, and they walk up and down the Chapel and go and talk to him and comfort him. Do you not see how that is?

Why, when the young man was a strong oak, he let those pieces of ivy grow around him. And those young Christians entwined and grew around him like the vine and now he has become an old man the wind would come and blow the oak down. But the ivy that is twisted around it shields him from the blast and keeps him upright. So with aged Christians, when they have served their God well in their day and generation they shall have comforts from others who have grown around them like the vine and shall be sheltered by them in their old age.

May those of us who are young always seek to cheer the aged! Let us never despise them. Let us try as much as we can to grow around them, that we may tower upwards by their means and that they may be comforted by our adherence. “They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine.”

Lastly, “The scent thereof shall be as Lebanon.” The Christian man shall not allow others to grow up by him—unless by a godly conversation he shall spread the sweetness of perfume wherever he goes. I know some dear saints of the Lord who, if they come to my house for five minutes, leave a refreshing savor behind them for five weeks. They come and talk to me of the things of the kingdom and I have not forgotten their sweet influence on my spirit for a long time after they have gone.

It is said of the wine of Lebanon, that if you pour some into a glass the flavor of it will remain for a long time after the wine is gone. And you know of old wine casks, that it is long before the taste of the wine departs out of them. So with the old Christian. He has got a savory conversation. He talks of the things of the kingdom and leaves a perfume behind him which lasts for weeks afterwards and you say, “Oh, how I wish that man of God would come to my house again. What a sweet savor there was about him!”

This is not the case with everyone. Many of you, when you go and see your friends, sit and tittle tattle all the afternoon and on the Lord’s Day you break the Sabbath as much as if you had sought diversion in the park, although you cry out so much against those who go there. How many there are who utterly waste their time by unprofitable chat in their own houses! Let me solemnly warn you concerning this—“They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another”—not about one another. When you meet together, there is too little talk about Christ Jesus, the glory of His kingdom and the greatness of His power. Ministers come in for their share of fulsome praise or offensive scandal, but Brethren, these things ought not to be.

Beloved, if you are true Christians—that is the point—you will leave a scent behind you in your conversation. And when you are dead, there will still be a sweet savor left. Ah, there was good old wine in this pulpit once. There was good old wine in this House of God once and I can see the stains of it here now. Yes, there is the perfume of holy Whitfield in this place tonight—I am sure there is. I can fancy his shade looking down this evening upon this hallowed spot. I am sure he rejoices to see the multitude keeping the Sabbath here. And there is to me, somehow, a kind of solemn awe throughout this place. I wonder how I dared to come here, to stand where he once stood, “whose shoes latchet I am unworthy to unloose.”

Oh, dear Friends, it is something to leave a scent behind you as long as he has done. You may all do it in a measure. In one of Whitfield’s sermons, (I like to read them continually, for I can find none like them), he speaks of some young man who said, “I will not live in my old father’s house, for there is not a chair or a table there but smells of his piety.” That is what you should endeavor to do, to make your house so smell of piety, that a wicked man cannot stop in it. To make it so holy, that without obtrusively telling your sentiments, it should make ungodly men uncomfortable in it.

You should so live that your name in your private circles, if not elsewhere, may be mentioned with honor and it may be said of you, “Ah, he was one who reflected his Master’s image and who sought to adorn the doctrine of God his Savior in all things.”

I may have spoken to you in what you may think an odd style tonight, but I have spoken earnestly. Right on I never pretend to preach to you eloquently, but I have only thrown out thoughts I wish you to remember, and God grant that you may find them to your profit.

But I am well aware that I am preaching to a great many who know nothing about the things of which I have been speaking. What shall I say to them? Oh, my dear Hearers, I should like to strike beneath the floor of this pulpit and get Whitfield to rise up and preach to you for five minutes. How he would plead with you! How he would stretch forth his hands, the tears rolling down his cheeks and how he would cry out in his usual impassioned manner, “Come, Sinners, come. God help you to come to Jesus Christ!” And then he would go on to tell you how the heart of Christ is big enough to take big sinners in and how the blackest and the filthiest—the devil’s castaways even—are welcome to Christ.

And I think I see him pressing the poor convicted sinners into the fold. I think I see him doing as the angels did with Lot, taking them by the shoulders and saying, “Run, run, for your life! look not behind you, stay not in all the plain!” I cannot do it as he could. But, nevertheless, if these lips had the language which the heart would speak, I would plead with you for Jesus’ sake, that you would be reconciled to God. I have, I trust, some here who are crying for a Savior. They feel they want Him. God has brought them to this state where they feel their need of Him.   
Sinner! If you want Christ, Christ wants you. If you have a desire after Christ, Christ has a desire after you. What are you doing? Say, poor Soul, will you take Christ just as He is? Come! Throw out all *your* righteousness. Come! Pack up all your goodness and cast it out of doors. Take Jesus, Jesus only, to be your salvation. And I tell you, though you are black as night and filthy as a demon, while you are yet in the land of the living, if you do now take Christ as your Savior, that Christ will be enough for you, enough to clothe you, enough to purge you, enough to perfect you and enough to land you safely in Heaven.   
But if you are self-righteous, I have no Gospel for you except this—   
***“Not the righteous, not the righteous.   
Sinners, Jesus, came to save.”***Sinners, of all sorts and sizes! Sinners black, sinners blacker, sinners blackest! Sinners filthy, sinners filthier, sinners filthiest! Sinners bad, sinners worse, sinners worst! All you who can take to yourselves the name of sinners! All of you who can subscribe to that title! I, in God’s name, preach to you that, “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.”   
And if by faith and prayer you are enabled to come to Him this night, there is not a sinner who feels his need of a Savior who may not this night have that Savior. God has given Him first and He will not deny Him second. He who is freely proclaimed in revelation, is freely commended to you in ministration—   
***“True relief and true repentance,   
Every grace that brings you near.   
Without money,   
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***Oh, God, save souls! O God! Save souls! Amen! Amen!

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÷Hos 14.6

THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 17, 1879.

**“His beauty shall be as the olive tree.”  
Hosea 14:6.**

[This Sermon was one of several preached by Mr. Spurgeon after various visits to the Riviera. He had intended to prepare a volume upon the olive, but illness and the pressure of other work prevented. He had revised nearly half of the manuscript of this discourse and the revision of the remainder has followed as closely as possible the lines laid down by him.]

OUR present objective will be to bring out the resemblance in point of beauty between the godly man and the olive tree. But please note that the parallel does not hold good of all who profess and call themselves Christians—it is only true of those whose backsliding has been healed— to whom the Lord has been as a refreshing dew. It is the Believer in a healthy, growing and useful condition whose beauty is “as the olive tree.”

Things of beauty were evidently intended to be gazed upon. God created beauty on purpose that it might enchain our eyes, rivet our attention and command our thoughts. Whether it is the beauty of a tree or the beauty of a man, it was meant to be a joy forever, but this it cannot be if it is left unnoticed. Beautiful objects are intended to be thought upon and spoken of—and we shall not be doing ill if we now consider and commend a Christian. We shall be doing no dishonor to the Master if we admire the disciple, if we confess, at the very outset, that our whole intent is not to magnify Believers, but to glorify God in them. There is no beauty in anything which charms our eyes but what the Creator has put upon it and, assuredly, there is no spiritual beauty about any man but what the Holy Spirit has worked in him, “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” If the olive tree is beautiful, we are not so doting as to fall down and worship it! And if a man is made comely by the Grace of God, we do not worship the man, but we praise the Lord on his behalf! Glory be to God who has done such marvelous things for poor human nature that he has made it lovely—so lovely that even He, Himself, beholds a beauty in it, for remember that the text is not only the word of a Prophet, but the word of Jehovah, Himself, who says, “I will be as the dew unto Israel...and his beauty shall be as the olive tree.”

Having spent many months under the olive trees of the Riviera, my soul has them still in remembrance. From morning till sunset I have rested in the peaceful groves—at one time basking in the sunshine, and soon seeking the shade to escape the heat of the sun which gave to the invalid, summer in the months of winter! The very color of the olive tree rests the eyes. I delight in its emerald gray, its silver green, its unique foliage—and the song of the birds which sing among its branches refreshes the ears! As I have looked upon the olive trees and thought of them over and over again, my mind has sought for matter whereby I might edify the people of God. My observations have always been made with that desire. And as I now present them to my readers, it is with many prayers that they may minister Divine Grace to those who read them.

I. The Believer in a healthy spiritual state, refreshed by the Holy Spirit as with the dew of Heaven, has a beauty like that of the olive tree in this respect, that IT IS A BEAUTY WHICH GROWS UPON YOU.

Louis Figuier, in his, “ Vegetable World,” says peremptorily, “The olive is of a sober grayish green aspect and without beauty, having a rugged stunted aspect.” We object to this verdict, but we freely admit that at first sight, there is little or nothing attractive about the olive tree. We have even heard persons pronounce it an unsightly tree which has quite disappointed them. We were sure that they had never sought its company and conversed with it hour after hour as we have done, or they would not have spoken so slightingly of what we have found, “a gracious tree for fruit, for leaf, for flower.” Truth to tell, it is not the most shapely of the sons of the forest. And though the trees, as we are told in Jotham’s parable, sought it for a king, it does not, like Saul, lift its head above its fellows. Neither does it, like Absalom, claim to be praised beyond all others for comeliness. It is not a tree which would at once strike the beholder with admiration, like some giant oak, or lofty elm—nor charm him with its elegance, like a weeping willow—nor astonish him with its grandeur, like a cedar of Lebanon. In order to perceive its beauty, you must linger a little. You must look and look again! And then, if you do not at last feel a deep respect for the olive, and a quiet delight in its beauty, it must be because you are not of a thoughtful spirit, or else because you have little poetry in your soul. The more familiar you become with the olive tree, the more will you take pleasure in it!

Now all this is also abundantly true of the lively Christian who is full of the Grace of God. He may not at first charm you. Your prejudices may lead you to avoid, if not to oppose him. He appears to be somewhat singular and, perhaps, rugged. He differs materially from the rest of mankind, for he does not run with the multitude—and you are apt to think that his singularity is an affectation. Possibly, at first, he is somewhat cold and distant in his manner towards you. That is the way of many Christians until they know those to whom they are speaking, for they do not wish to cast their pearls before swine. As you watch them, you will perhaps, at first sight, see more of their imperfections than of their virtues—it being a habit with them not to parade their own attainments either by wearing professional phylacteries or by sounding a trumpet before them. They often put their worst foot foremost out of the very desire not to be seen of men in any Pharisaic fashion. Persevere, however, in observing the spiritual man and you will surely see much that is beautiful about him. Look and look again and, perhaps in time you will come to admire as an excellence that which you now think to be a defect! Be not in a hurry—the best things are not usually glittering and superficial in their attractions. A Christian is assuredly the noblest work of God! In Heaven, itself, there stands nothing superior in the way of a creature to a man of God! And on earth there is nothing that can match him. Watch, therefore, the believer in Jesus, for his moral beauty will repay your study.

The olive grove is, to my mind, supremely lovely when the sun darts his beams through it in long slants of brightness so that you see here a golden lane of light, and there a mass of silver shadows directly beneath the trees. I do not know anything that charms me more than to look into the spotted shadow and light created by the irregular planting of a forest of olive trees! They are all the more delightful because of their disorder and the varied dark and bright hues which meet the eyes and gratify them with their exquisite checkered work. In like manner, when Christians enjoy the Light of God’s Countenance and it is sunny weather with them, then will you see their beauty if you have true spiritual insight! When their faith is flourishing and their hope is beaming—then their love is full of freshness and the joy of the Lord flashes on them—then, if you have a spiritual eye for such beauty as angels care to gaze upon, you will wish to be numbered with good men and to mingle in their sacred society!

Perhaps the finest idea of the beauty of olive trees is obtained when you see them in a mass. Stand upon the open common at Bordighera and look beneath you towards Ventimille and Mentone, marking where the mountains shelve to the sea and all their sides are clothed with olive groves—and you will clap your hands with delight! Before you is a very sea of olives, with billowy waves of silver brightness reaching as far as the eyes can see—with here and there a stately palm rising up above them all. Even thus, when we shall be privileged to look upon the entire Church of God gathered in one countless multitude at the last, what a sight it will be! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing out before the Lord and the mountains and the hills shall join their rapturous song. What a sight will that complete Church be to the pure eyes of holy men when they see all the trees of the Lord’s right hand planting standing together in one glorious garden far excelling Eden before the Fall! Yes, the perfection of the Church of God and of each individual member of it will be seen at the last when the separated ones shall be gathered together in one great general assembly and the beauty of holiness shall be over them all! Till then, let us always believe that Christians are lovely objects to look upon. Some seek the company of the rich and the great, but it is cold comfort that any will gain from mere rank and birth. Some delight in the society of the witty, but their sparks, though they glitter for a moment, are too soon extinguished to minister comfort to mourning spirits. Some delight to associate with those who are highly esteemed among men, but surely, he is wiser who selects his companions from those who are precious in the sight of the Lord! O Beloved, whatever others may say of the people of God, and of the Church of God, let us each one say—

*“There my best friends, my kindred, dwell, There God my Savior reigns.”*

There, then, is the first point of resemblance between the beauty of a Christian and the beauty of the olive tree. It grows upon you—the more you are with the excellent of the earth, the more will you delight in them!

II. Secondly, in both the case of the olive tree and of the Christian, IT IS A BEAUTY OF A VERY SOBER KIND.  
The color of the olive foliage is a gray green or, if you will, an emerald drab. I do not quite know how to speak of it, but would remind you that it belongs to the same family as the ash and is of somewhat similar color, only of a lighter green—one side of the leaf being much paler than the other. I have heard giddy people observe that the olive groves are very dreary. These are the ladies and gentlemen who prefer the fashionable esplanades where they can display their finery—or the deadly gambling saloons of Monte Carlo where they can ruin others, or be themselves ruined! Everyone to his taste—ours lies in another direction! In an olive grove, where all sounds are hushed but the singing of birds, I prefer to sit the whole day with a good book, or even without one, and muse the hours away and feel a deep serenity of soul akin to the everlasting rest. Truly, good Lord—  
*“The calm retreat, the silent shade  
With prayer and praise agree,  
And seem by Your kind bounty made  
For those that worship Thee.”*  
If you want to see true beauty, you will find it in the olive gardens, but it will be of a serious quiet type—not the luxurious beauty of the orange or the lemon with their apples of gold, nor that of the goodly cedar with its regal dignity, nor even of the stalwart oak with its glory of strength! Much less of the flowers of spring which in the land of the olive rival the hues of the rainbow—but an unobtrusive, calm, rugged beauty, dearest to those who seek restfulness of heart and shrink from “the madding crowd’s ignoble strife!”  
Thus far the true Believer and olive are like to the letter. There is nothing showy about him, but much that is serious and reposeful. He has thought of things and gone to the root of the matter. He has sorrowed under the burden of sin and the delight he has known in being delivered from it is a deep mysterious joy. His happiness does not display itself like the anemones and wild tulips which grow in such profusion on the terraces of Mentone, but it is content with more subdued tints which will last when flowers and their comeliness will be forgotten! The true Christian is not always smiling—he can laugh as every honest man can and should—but he is not a constant giggler and hunter after childish merriment as many are. His is real, substantial, thoughtful happiness which can bear the test of meditation and examination. He can give a reason for the hope that is in him. He does not need to dance and fiddle in order to enjoy himself. His joy is made of nobler stuff. It is such merriment as angels have when they see prodigal sons returning and rejoice before the Father’s face! Give me the quiet delight of the genuine Christian. Oh, that some professors had more of it! Not so fast, good Friend, take your joy more calmly! Not quite so much fire and fury—pause for a little thought at least now and then. If you go too fast, today, you will be out of breath before tomorrow! You are so very joyful, disappointment, I fear, will tame you into despondency! “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” Believe and act according to the common-sense guidance of faith and go calmly through the world as God enables you, for if you do, you will have the beauty of the olive tree—and what more would you have?  
III. Thirdly, the beauty of the olive and the beauty of the Christian are alike in this respect, they are ever-abiding. You saw yonder plane or beech, a few months ago, adorned with luxuriant foliage. But there came a chilly blast and the leaves began to fall—and when you passed the other day, the tree was like a vessel in a storm under bare poles—not a green leaf was to be seen! In these wintry days you will see the trees lifting their naked arms into the frosty air as if they longed to be clothed once more. Not so the olive! Its leaf is always green and its branch never bare. No wintry wind ever strips its boughs and though it looks more full of foliage at some periods than at others, yet it always seems well clad and in flourishing condition! Perpetually it clothes the bare hills as with the downy feathers of the dove’s breast and knows no nakedness. Such is the true Christian—he is evermore as a green olive tree in the courts of the Lord. You shall find him not always alike, happy, but always blessed! Not always alike, restful, but still at peace! Not always alike, useful, but still fruitful—always rejoicing in a blest estate such that even at his worst, he would not change with the proudest sons of earth! His branches may be at times disturbed and tossed about, but his heart is not troubled, nor his joy taken from him! At bottom, he still believes in God, rests in the Covenant promises and rejoices in Christ Jesus!  
Many professors know nothing of this constancy of joy. They rejoice for a season and then lose their first love. Like the deciduous tree which puts on its greenery in the early spring, but is stripped in winter, so do they lose their zeal, love, earnestness and joy. This is not as it should be with you who profess to be God’s children! This is not having the dew of the Lord upon you! Final perseverance is the test of vital godliness! To continue in the Truth, grounded and settled—to abide in Christ Jesus, to constantly bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—this it is to be a Christian! Constancy is the beauty and glory of a Christian. We all like the man of whom we can say that we know where to find him, but there are some whom we never know where we can find them. And if we did, they would not be worth finding. He is the man who really adorns his profession who is consistent and persistent, who abides steadfastly in the Truth which he has received and is not “carried about with every wind of Doctrine.” The Lord grant unto us the Grace to have a perpetual spiritual health which shall be our beauty, just as constant greenery is the beauty of the olive tree!  
IV. Let us now notice, in the fourth place, that the beauty of the Christian is like that of the olive tree IN ITS DELIGHTFUL VARIETY.  
Each season, each day and, I might almost say, each hour, the olive presents a new aspect.  
I have recently watched olive trees almost every day for three months and they always appeared somewhat different, varying in color and tint as the day was cloudless, overcast, or decidedly wet. Even the position of the sun caused a change in their appearance! And a little wind turning up the silver side of the leaves presented a new phase of beauty. After a shower of rain, the green appeared predominant, but on a hot and dusty day, the gray was in the ascendant. In the evening, they sometimes seemed dark or drab. And another time they wore a silvery sheen. Like certain other colors which vary with the light, the tint of the olive leaf is peculiar in yielding to its surroundings. I cannot describe it, for it seems as if it follows the mood of Nature and blends it with its own. I do not think I am very fanciful, but it seemed to me that this tree was in wonderful sympathy with the weather, the sun, the sky, the clouds, the morning and the evening!  
Even thus, Believers in Christ Jesus, if they are the right kind of Believers, when you come to know them, have peculiar lights and shades and differences of mood and temperament—but in each variation there is beauty. The true Christian is a Christian in all his moods and, therefore, is worthy of careful observation. When he is brightly happy, see how Grace sobers him! And when he has a heavy heart, see how that same Grace brightens his spirit. Watch him in the world and see how unworldly he is—observe him in the midst of his Brothers and Sisters and note how unreserved he is, even as a child is at home. On his knees or at his work in the house of God or in his own house, in controversy or in communion, at rest or in labor, he is always the same! Yet you constantly see a new phase of his character and scarcely know which one pleases you the most. There are sometimes strange lights glowing around Christian character and if you study the biographies of the godly, or watch the living saints, you will continually find fresh charms in them. I am old enough to be weary with observing the imperfections of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ—I prefer to spy out their excellences and to take delight in them. I find it better to think too well of God’s people than to think too ill of them—and better to commend them and to help them by commending them, than to censure them and dispirit them by the censure. Do you the same! You will see some beauty even about the feeblest of God’s own people if you will but watch them long enough—and especially if you will study the lives of the saints given to us in the Inspired Word—you will not fail to see lights and shades which are only new forms of the same “beauty of holiness.”  
The olive tree changes with the seasons. Just before I left Mentone, it had put forth new shoots and slender branches which drooped like the boughs of the weeping willow. In a few weeks, that same olive will be covered with a vast multitude of flowers—little white stars, countless in number—somewhat like the flowers of the lilac. Near each leaf, they tell me, there is a bunch of blossoms with a host of very tiny flowers. The whole tree becomes one great mass of bloom and whitens the ground with a snowfall of flowers. A very lovely sight is the olive tree in bloom! I do not doubt, however, that the peasants like best to see the fruit. The brown beads of the ripened olive have a beauty, too, and when these are gone, the foliage is still attractive. It does not matter to an olive tree whether it is spring, summer, autumn, or winter—it is a thing of beauty and joy all the year round and every day of the year! And such is the Christian when the dew of the Lord is upon him! He has his changes, but he does not lose his beauty, though men do not always have the eyes to perceive it.  
Look at David, especially as he is revealed to us in the Book of Psalms. There you see him like a green olive tree in the courts of the Lord. Look at the blossoms of joy that are on him, covering him with a beauteous garment of praise! When you read the 103rd Psalm and similar joyous odes, he seems to be smothered with the delicious bloom which yields a most pleasing perfume of thanksgiving! Watch him at another time, when he is putting forth the green shoots of holy desire—his heart thirsting after God as the panting hart thirsts for the water brooks, his inmost soul longing to drink a deep draught of the Divine Grace that comes from the Most High! Then see him at another time when, as an old man, his fruit grows ripe and you observe his rich experience full of unction, bearing fruit unto the Lord. Everywhere David is beautiful, except when he sins— and so are all those who seek to follow David’s Lord and make Him their All-in-All.  
Some Christians seem to be always the same. I wish I could always be the same by being always at my best, but it is very bad to always be the same at your worst! And I know some professors who appear to be just like that. They have a faulty string in their harp, yet they always want to play on that string whenever we are with them! Indeed, they seem to think that that particular string of theirs is the one upon which we all ought to play. And if our harp strings do not happen to be faulty like theirs, they fancy that our harp can scarcely be right—that our spot is not the spot of God’s children. Yet you know that if one child in your family happens to have a defect somewhere or other, you would not think it essential or desirable that all of your children should have the same defect! It is well that they should all have the family likeness, but there is no need that there should be a family deformity peculiar to them all! Yet some Christians seem to think that there is such a need. I hardly think that many Christians are always at their worse, though, in another sense, I hope some are, because if they are ever worse than I have seen them, they must be bad, indeed! But I do wish we could all be always as we are at our best—only then I would wish that we could be something even better than that and keep on advancing “till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Yet it may be that these varying modes of feeling and ways of looking at things are, after all, as far as they are not sinful, the various parts that help to make up the complete beauty of the Christian character!  
V. Now, fifthly, (I hope you will not be wearied with so many divisions. I cannot help having them, for the olive tree has so many branches)— another point of resemblance between the olive and the genuine, lively, healthy Christian—and another point of beauty in each case is INDIVIDUALITY.  
I think no one ever saw two olive trees that were exactly alike. They are wondrously varied. The twists and turns of the branches, the singular way in which they grow down where you think they never can grow and the equally remarkable way in which they do not grow where you think they should—the curious shapes and the shapeless shapes that they take, I cannot describe to you—it would be necessary for you to see them to understand what I mean. Sometimes some of the branches seem as if they were turned to serpents, coiling themselves around the bigger branches. The olive trees always appear to me to be in an agony— twisting and turning like one in excruciating pain as if they remembered the griefs and woes of Him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood when He agonized beneath the shade of the olives in Gethsemane!  
The trunk of the olive is often split into many separate parts and each part seems to be full of vitality. You scarcely ever see one that appears to be entire—they are rent and torn as though sundered by volcanic eruptions—and they are turned into all manner of shapes so that no one of them is like its fellows! Here and there one sees a young tree that seems, for a while, to have a definite shape and to grow up in some sort of comely form. But you see another by its side, still smaller, which has not grown three feet above the ground before it takes a twist and goes down again, and then comes up again, once more, forming letters something like a W, or an S, or a V, but never reaching the shape that you would have thought it might have done!  
This individuality in the olive tree is a part of the charm of the olive grove. And so it is among Christians. There are certain sets of professing Christians about who are very much of one type. You must have noticed them if you have gone about with your eyes open. There is a Methodist type, a Particular Baptist type, a Bible Christian type, a Church of England type and many others. Somehow or other, they are cut and trimmed according to certain prescribed rules and regulations—like the lines of little olive trees that we pass on our way to Mentone which have nothing of the grandeur and glory of the beautiful olive groves with which we are familiar. The more we get out of this attempt at securing uniformity, the better will it be for us and for the whole Church of God! Egyptian art laid down certain laws that had to be kept—the nose must bear such-andsuch a proportion to the mouth, and the eye must be of just such-andsuch a form and so on—and, therefore, Egyptian art remained forever where it was. True art knows that there must be individuality and that no rule can be made of universal application!  
It is so among Christians. Here is one man who is naturally of a cheerful spirit, yet he condemns himself because he does not mourn like his sorrowful Brother over yonder. But, my dear Friend, God did not intend you to be like he is! Here is another Brother who is naturally of a very desponding spirit and he often blames himself because he has not the exhilaration that he sees manifested in others. My dear Friend, you were not to be as they are and it is no use for you to try to imitate them! Be yourself, for that will be much better! I have sometimes compared myself with my fellow Christians until I have felt not only humbled, which is a good thing, but I have been despondent, which is a bad thing! I have found that the better plan is to remember that in a great house there are many different kinds of vessels and they are not all of the same size or shape because they are not all to be put to the same use! In a large garden there are various orders of flowers, but they are not all of the same color, neither do all exhale the same perfume, neither do their seeds, when they come to perfection, all assume the same form! So is it among Christians—there are some who sing sweet, solemn melodies with a strain of despondency always running through their matchless music, for to me it seems the sweetest of all harmonies. There are others who are more like the lark. As they sing, they soar! The Countess of Huntingdon was a singer of this sort and, therefore, she sang—  
*“Teach me some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above.”*  
Well, shall I chide the lark because it is not a nightingale, or the linnet because it sings not like the canary or the goldfinch? No, let every bird have its own distinct note. Let every flower have its own special hue. Let every tree have its own peculiar form and let all the Lord’s people grow as they are guided by the Divine Nature that is in them! And then one shall grow in this shape and another shall grow in that style, and others shall grow differently from either

of them! Although there is not one olive tree that is exactly like another, yet all the olives are olives and you never mistake them for any other tree. And, in like manner, though no one Christian is exactly like another in all respects, yet they are all Christians and you should not be able to mistake them for worldlings! The allimportant matter is not that you should be like I, or that I should be like you, but that both of us should be like Christ! “Ah, but then,” you say, “we shall be like each other, shall we not?” No. It is strange, but it is quite true that Christians may be like Christ and yet very little like each other. There may be a thousand minor diversities in the imitators of the one great Exemplar—and the individuality of everyone of them shall be as definite as the identity of the whole of them as followers of Christ!  
VI. Sixthly, much of the beauty of an olive tree and much of the beauty of a Christian is found in the fact that THE OLIVE TREE IS FULL OF LIFE, AND SO IS THE CHRISTIAN.  
In the olive, it seems to be always a struggling life. It is true that it is full of life, but as you get a glimpse of some olive trees, you say to yourself, “That tree must have had a hard time of it.” The gnarled and knotted old trunk is split up just as if an axe had been driven through it. You can see the white wood inside and on the surface the rugged bark appears in places as if it were rotten, yet you find that it is still alive. Then you see the branches that grow out of these various divisions of the trunk, twisting, twirling and wriggling in and out as if they lived in perpetual agony, for they have to draw oil out of the flinty rock. It would involve much hard labor for men to accomplish that task, yet the olive tree is continually doing it, yielding the precious oil which not only makes the face of man to shine, but which supplies him with food and light the whole year round! This the olive tree often does in a sterile soil where there appears to be no nourishment for it whatever. It seems as if the olive tree, though always in an agony, is always full of life. It is not an easy matter to kill an olive tree—even if you hew it down, yet leave the stump, or a portion of its roots in the ground—it will begin to sprout and grow again. If you let the tree stand for a thousand years or more, it will still bring forth fruit in old age! And when it is, at last, worn out and decayed, its children will have grown up into a fruitful grove all around it!  
The olive must live and it will live! And, to my mind, it is one of the beauties of the olive tree that under the sternest circumstances, it seems invincibly to live. And that is also the glory of a true Christian. He must live and will live. The Grace of God within him will enable him to live when men would think he must die. Persecute him, but the axe, or the stake, or even the lions have no terrors for him. Try to crush the Church of Christ and the more you try to crush it, the more it will live and flourish! Seek to exterminate the Christians and in the futile attempt you shall multiply them like the stars of the sky or the sands of the seashore! There is no way of killing the Life of God when it is once implanted in the heart of a Believer in Jesus! All the devils in Hell, if they set all their demoniacal powers to work to blow out the feeblest light that ever glowed in a Christian’s heart, could not put it out even if they took an age to do it! The Christian must live, must grow and must bring forth fruit unto God! I love, therefore, to study the lives of Believers and to watch the struggles of the saints of God. You may study this conflict in your own heart and see how the Divine Life within you struggles on under affliction, adversity, trial and temptation—but conquers all! You may watch it also in your fellow Christians who are poor and despised, who have to suffer much sickness, pain, weakness and who, perhaps, are bed-ridden year after year—yet you will see how the Divine Life still lives and triumphs over all obstacles! Is there not a wondrous beauty in it upon which we delight to look and for which we praise God with all our hearts?  
VII. Now, seventhly—and coming to the number of perfection, we come to that which the olive tree might well regard as its greatest beauty, namely, ITS FRUITFULNESS. “Oh, yes!” the peasant says, “the olive is a beautiful tree, for it bears its berries full of oil and the olive crop is the best crop that can possibly be grown.” There is no known root or seed that can be grown by the most skillful farming that can produce anything like so much return in a year as the olive does with little or no labor from its proprietor! It simply stands still and makes him rich. When he eats his bread, he uses no butter or animal fat as we do, but he spreads a little olive oil upon it and so is nourished by it. When he lights his lamp at night, he does not use the pungent petroleum that we burn—but he takes some good sweet olive oil and so gets all the light he needs! Mosquitoes and other insects sting him, or he has some irritation of his skin and he anoints his flesh with oil and obtains immediate relief. When he is sick, or his body is wounded, he anoints himself with oil and it proves to be one of the best medicines in the world! And, at any rate, it is not so disagreeable as some of the medicines of modern invention. If he is working a machine, the olive oil helps to prevent both the danger and the discomfort caused by the friction. In fact, the man puts the tree to so many uses that he says it is a lovely tree because its fruitfulness helps him in so many ways.  
In like manner, the most beautiful Christian in the world is the most fruitful one. Our old proverb is true, “Handsome is that handsome does” and, in the sight of God, those who do the most good works and who thus most glorify their Father who is in Heaven, are the most lovely of all Christians. It is not every Christian who is lovely in this way, but if you have the “dew” of which this Chapter speaks, if the roots of your spiritual nature are refreshed by the river of the Water of Life and if, by blessed fellowship with God and the entire consecration of your body, soul and spirit to Him, you bring forth an abundance of fruit unto God, then you have the beauty of the olive tree whose greatest glory is its fruitfulness!  
You may, perhaps, have stood in an orchard in the autumn when the apples are getting rosy red and are weighing down the boughs, so that they would break if the owner did not prop them up. Or you may have been in a cottager’s garden and he has said to you, “Look at that tree, Sir. Ain’t it a beauty?” Possibly you had not been thinking of the beauty of the tree, for you were admiring some of the lovely flowers that were growing at your feet—but the cottager does not care much about them— but he does care about those apples which are so abundant. After a good look at the tree so well laden with ruddy-cheeked fruit, you agree with him, for there is a practical beauty in the tree’s fruitfulness. Try to have that beauty, dear Friends! To be commended for the eloquent way in which you speak, or for the elegant way in which you dress, or for the admirable way in which you practice deportment is praise that is empty as the wind! But to be useful in your day and generation—to glorify God by doing something to benefit your fellow creatures, instructing the ignorant, helping the poor and needy, bringing the lost and erring ones to the feet of Jesus—this is a practical kind of beauty that is worth having! Let your beauty in this respect, be as the olive tree.  
VIII. Eighthly, THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE OFTEN LIES IN ITS PROGENY.  
The writer of the 128th Psalm says of the man who fears the Lord and walks in His ways, “Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house: your children like olive plants round about your table.” If you have ever been in the olive groves you must frequently have noticed around the parent olive tree, two, three, four, sometimes as many as eight, ten, or 12 little trees all growing up from the old root—some of them also beginning to bear fruit and standing there ready, when the old tree in the middle is taken away—to do all they can to supply its place. I have occasionally seen an olive tree felled and the white trunk left flat like a table, with several little trees growing all around it—and that sight seemed to bring the text I just quoted very vividly to my mind, “your children like olive plants round about your table.” May your children, Beloved, be like young olive trees springing up around your table to bring forth fruit unto God when you have done with fruit-bearing! Or even like the old and young olive trees, may you all be fruitful together! It is to me a very beautiful sight to see a godly man succeeded by gracious sons and daughters. It is a privilege beyond comparison, a delight beyond description to see those whom you have nursed and nurtured come under the nurture and admonition of the Lord and be so taught in His ways as to become true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ! The aged Apostle John wrote, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in Truth.” Do not you, dear parents, desire this joy for yourselves? I believe you will have it if the dew of the Lord is upon your souls.  
I have frequently heard it said that many children of professing Christian parents do not turn out well. How is this? We know that Solomon said, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Now I do not wish to say anything unkind or too severe, but I have noticed that in many such cases the children have not been trained up in the way they should go! The father was a very good man—so people said—yet he never had family prayer! How could he train up his children aright without it? No prayer in the family? Why, the training of a tree on a wall requires that you should have some shreds of cloth and some nails so as to fasten securely every little branch or shoot as it comes out! And I call family prayers our shreds and nails to help to train up our boys and girls as they begin to grow. Besides, if a professing Christian finds his children turning out ungodly, let him ask himself this question, “Did I ever personally pray with my sons? Did I ever personally plead with my daughters? Have I been loving and kind in my conduct towards my children?” If you cannot say, “Yes,” to these and similar questions, then you did not train your child up in the way he should go!  
I verily believe that there are many fathers who make religion nauseous to their children. A young man said to me, “My father is a good man, but he will never let his children have any sport or mirth, and he condemns everybody who indulges in anything of the kind. His religion consists in saying, You shall not! You shall not! You shall not! You shall not!” Well, that may be Mosaic, but according to the religion of Jesus Christ, there is something else beside the negative! There is a positive joy and a real delight in true religion—and where that is set before our young people in a proper spirit, we may expect that God’s Grace will bring them to desire the same joy and delight for themselves! We have proved that God often gives us the happiness of seeing that instead of the fathers, shall be the children whom He makes princes in the earth. He who loved Abraham loved Isaac, and loved Jacob, and loved Joseph, and loved Ephraim and Manasseh, for although Grace does not run in the blood, it often runs side by side with it. And when you once get God to be Friend of your family, it is not easy to get Him out of it. If His Grace calls the father, is it not likely to also call the son, and the grandson, and the children’s children’s children—not only unto the third and fourth generation, but as long as the earth remains? Yes, blessed be His name, it shall be so and this is one of the beauties of the life of a Christian—that his beauty is perpetuated through his progeny as he stands like an old olive tree with the young olives growing up around him and so “his beauty shall be as the olive tree.”  
IX. Now, ninthly, I must remind you that THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE SOMETIMES SUFFERS DECREASE.  
At Mentone, I went up a valley between the mountains and I came to an olive garden which certainly did not charm me by its beauty. The natives had been lopping the olives and they had cut them most mercilessly, hacking away huge branches here and there and leaving the poor trees standing there piteously lifting up their mutilated arms to Heaven as though they were imploring someone to take pity upon them and deliver them from their present wrenched condition! Why had they been lopped and cut about like that? Simply because some of the branches had ceased to yield fruit, so they had to be cut away. And then, where one old branch was cut off, there might come five or six smaller branches, all of which would, in due season, bear olive berries! So all that cutting and hacking and hewing was intended to improve the olive and make it much more beautiful by making it far more fruitful than it would otherwise have been.  
Christians do not look very pretty when they are thus lopped. You had better not come to see some of us when we are full of aches and pains, when the brain is so weary that we cannot think, when the breath is short and the throat is so dry that we cannot sing the high praises of our God! Do not say concerning any of your dear relatives who are very, very ill, “I cannot see much that is Christlike about them.” Ah, dear Friend, they are under the rod and about the only thing a child can do when he is under the rod, is to cry! At least that is what I used to do when I was under the rod and I suppose that is what most of you would do under similar circumstances—there is not much else that seems in season then. The olive certainly does not look very lovely when it is being lopped, but remember this text, “Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” So, then, you may expect to find fruit afterwards, and you may expect to see the beauty of the Christian afterwards, and not while they are under the pruning process. “Father!” said a child, “Did you not cut those fruit trees this morning?” “Yes, my Child, I did.” “Why did you cut them, Father?” “To make them bring forth more fruit.” “I thought so, Father, so, after dinner I ran down the garden to see if they had brought forth fruit, but there is not a single pear or apple on any of them.” “No, dear Child,” replied the father, “it is not immediately after the cutting that the fruit comes. We must wait till its proper season, and then I hope we shall see it.” You all know how to interpret that little parable! Do not expect to see the full results of sickness and trial immediately, but believe that in due time they will be seen.  
X. Lastly, dear Friends, to me the very choicest beauty of the olive grove is that IT ALWAYS REMINDS ME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.  
This is also the point in which every Christian who has the dew of the Lord upon him has a beauty like that of the olive tree, namely, that he reminds those about him of his Master! They take note of him that he has been with Jesus. When you are under the olives, you cannot help thinking of Gethsemane, of the dark night in the garden, of the disciples asleep, and of our Savior, Himself, in an agony of grief. A poetess sweetly sings—  
*“But you, pale olive, in your branches lie Far deeper spells than Prophet groves of old Can ever enshrine. I could not hear you sigh To the wind’s faintest whisper, or behold One shiver of your leaves dim silvery green Without high thoughts and solemn of that scene When in the Garden the Redeemer prayed. When pale stars looked upon His fainting head And angels ministering in silent dread  
Trembled, perchance, within your trembling shade.”*Well, just as all right-minded people would be sure to think of Christ when under the olive groves, so ought we to compel men, whether they are right-minded or not, to think of the Lord Jesus Christ when they come into association with ourselves! Not because we are always talking about religion, but because we are always practicing it. And as frequently as we can, adding suitable verbal expression to the practical testimony of our lives—speaking and singing of our Beloved Lord whose name should never long be off our tongue!  
We should so act when we are provoked, bearing it so gently that observers should be compelled to say, “How Christlike they are!” We should, when offended, so readily, so truthfully, so thoroughly forgive the offenders that if they do not say, they should at least feel, “How Christlike they are!” We should be so unselfish, so generous, so anxious to serve others and to please them rather than ourselves. We should be so kind in our judgment, so truthful, so tender, so upright, so calm, so strong, so brave and yet so free from all Phariseeism and affectation that men should not have to look at us long before they would be obliged to say, “They have been with Jesus. They never learned that lesson anywhere but at the feet of the Crucified.”  
The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and give you faith in Jesus! And then, by His Spirit, impart to you all this beauty of which I have spoken—and a great deal more of which no tongue can adequately speak— even the beauty of holiness—and so your beauty shall be as the olive tree! God grant it for His dear Son’s sake! Amen and Amen.

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÷Hos 14.8

IDOLS ABOLISHED

NO. 1339

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” Hosea 14:8.

IDOLATRY was the great sin of the 10 tribes represented by Ephraim. Indeed, it is the sin of the entire human race! When we speak of idolatry we need not think of blocks of wood and stone and men bowing down before them, for our native land swarms with idolaters. Neither need you go into the streets to find them. Stay where you are and look into your own hearts—you will find idols there. This is the one easily besetting sin of our nature—to turn aside from the living God and to make unto ourselves idols in some fashion or another. The essence of idolatry is this—to love anything better than God, to trust anything more than God, to wish to have a god other than we have, or to have some signs and wonders by which we may see Him, some outward symbol or manifestation that can be seen with the eyes or heard with the ears rather than to rest in an invisible God and believe the faithful promise of Him whom eye has not seen nor ear heard.

In some form or other this great sin is the main mischief in the heart of man. And even in saved men this is one of the developments of remaining corruption. We may very easily make an idol of anything and in many different ways. No doubt many mothers and fathers make idols of their children. And so many husbands and wives idolize each other and we may even make idols of ministers, even as there were idol shepherds of old. Equally is it certain that many a thoughtful man makes an idol of his intellect. Many another makes an idol of his gold, or even of that little home wherein he enjoys so much content. The ignorant papist holds up his crucifix and worships that—and that is one of his idols.

But men who are better instructed often take the Bible and read it and, failing to get through the letter into the spirit, they trust in the mere act of Scripture reading and make even the Word of God, itself, to become an idol to them through their resting in a mere creed, or in Bible reading— not pressing through it to spiritual hearty worship of God, Himself. Anything, however holy, which comes between us and the personal dealing of our soul with God, as He is revealed in Christ Jesus by faith and love and hope, becomes an idol to us!

There are idols of all sorts, more or less intrinsically valuable. Just as in material substances one idol is made of wood, another of stone, another of silver and another of gold so that these idols differ in value and yet they are all idols, so may men, according to their different grades of mind, make an idol of this or of that or of the other, every man according to his own fancy. Many of these idols may, in themselves, be considered

good enough—but when they are made into idols they are none the better for that—a golden idol is just as obnoxious to God as a wooden one! And so the dearest and best thing on earth, if it is allowed to come between us and God, as an idol, becomes an abomination in the sight of the Most High.

O Brothers and Sisters, when you cannot trust the Providence of God, but feel as if you must have something of visible substance to lean upon, you idolize your savings, or the money you covet! When you cannot take the bare promise of God and dare not risk everything for God, but need something over and above the Word of God to rest in, you idolize your own selfishness! When you must have marks and signs and evidences of the things which God has plainly declared—and will not believe God unless you have corroborative proof—you are playing the idolater’s part! Yet human nature continually craves for more than God All-Sufficient because it is so carnal that it will not trust the Invisible One. It is, therefore, a supreme work of Grace when God brings any man to say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” I ask your attention to four points.

I. And the first is this—I want you to notice THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THIS PREDICTION. “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” God speaks of Ephraim as if Ephraim would do and must do what He declared it should do. “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” But who was this Ephraim? If we look at him as an individual, he represents the 10 tribes of Israel at the time when they were wedded to strange gods. Ephraim is a man and, therefore, he has a will of his own. He is a depraved man and, therefore, he has an obstinate will. And yet God speaks about Ephraim as positively as if he had no will, and states that he shall say, “What have I to do any more with idols?”

It would be very difficult to say what the wind will do—very hard to say what the waves will do. But man’s will is more changeable and uncontrollable than the winds and the waves! Yet God speaks as if Ephraim were absolutely in His hands and He tells us what Ephraim shall say, and, in fact, what Ephraim shall feel. It is wonderful—is it not?—that God, who knows the inconstancy and willfulness of humans, thus speaks about the mind of man and declares what he shall say and what he shall feel?

Now, in all this it is to be observed that there is no violation of the human will. Men are not blocks of wood, nor lumps of unconscious clay! God has made man a creature that wills and determines and judges for himself and He deals with him as such. There are persons who seem to fancy that whenever we speak of God as being Omnipotent in the realm of mind and speak of His declaring what men shall do and feel, that we, therefore, deny free agency. By no manner of means! We are never prepared, for the sake of one Truth of God, to deny another! And we do as heartily believe in free agency as we do in predestination!

It has never been our custom to murder one Truth of God in order to make room for another! There is room enough for two Truths of God in the mind of the man who is willing to become as a little child. Yes, there is room in a teachable heart for 50 Truths of God to live without contention! God treats men as men and as intelligent creatures. Having granted them power of judgment and will, He treats them as such, and He does not use that force upon the soul which it would be legitimate to use upon a piece of metal if it had to be bored or to be melted! Nor does He even use such force as it is legitimate to use upon “an ox and an ass which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.”

No, no! Under Heaven there is no man whose will God has ever violated! He has made the saved man’s will all the freer by the constraints which Grace has put upon it! Grace does not enchain the will, but frees the will! And when a man sincerely says, “What have I to do any more with idols?” though that speech is totally contrary to all the intent of his former life, yet he says it with the full consent of his heart! No, he never said anything more willingly than he says this, when God, by Divine power has, “made him willing in the day of His power!” I wonder whether you are able to grasp, dear Brothers and Sisters, and lay hold of these two great Truths of God—first, that man is made a creature responsible for all his actions, and a free agent so constituted that God, Himself, will not violate that free agency!

And yet this other Truth of God which we will maintain with all boldness—that God is as Omnipotent in the region of mind and free agency as He is in the realm of mere matter! He looks upon the hills and they smoke. He touches the earth and it trembles. The sea obeys Him and pauses where He bids it stay. Yes, earthquake and tempest are entirely under His control! Nobody who believes in an Omnipotent God doubts these things. But it is equally true that God enlightens the dark understanding with a flash of His Spirit. It is true that God removes the iron sinew of the obstinate will. As to the affections—when the heart is like stone, cold, dead, heavy, immovable—He has a way of turning the stone to flesh. He can do what He wills with men and when His Spirit puts forth all His power, though men may resist, yet there is a point beyond which resistance absolutely ceases and the soul is led in joyful captivity to the conquering Spirit of the blessed God!

Now, somebody will again say, “But how do you make this consistent? You now talk contrary to the statements you made before.” No, my dear Brother, I do not. They are both true—man is free, yet God is a Sovereign in the world of free minds—working His own way and speaking, thus, positively, without if or but or an. Don’t you know that He will have His will and man’s will shall willingly bow to His will, for He alone is Lord? Let me read you God’s wills, God’s wonderful wills, as they stand in this chapter, “I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely for My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?”

God speaks about men as if they were absolutely puppets in His hands and yet, at the same time, in other places He puts them upon their personal responsibility—both the doctrines are true! It is not yours or mine to ask how they are to be reconciled, much less to cast either of the Truths of God away! But let us hold them both fast, for these two shall be a clue through many a mystery of intricate doctrine and lead us into the light of God on many a dark saying. I rejoice to hear the almighty Lord speak thus divinely of what man shall do! And I adore the amazing wisdom and power which can rule over free agents!

II. But now, secondly, in our text we see A MARVELLOUS CHANGE. “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” Who is this Ephraim? Why, if you read the book of Hosea through you will find him turning up continually. Ephraim—Who was he? Who is this that says, “What have I to do any more with idols?” I will tell you. It is that same Ephraim of whom the Lord had said, “Leave him alone: he is given unto idols.” This is different talk, is it not? At one time he is “glued” to his idols, for that is the word used in the original—glued to them as if he was stuck to them and could not get away at all.

But here he is saying, “What have I to do any more with them?” What a change it is! Is that the same man? Yes, the same man. But mark what the Grace of God has done for him. See, also, how resolute he is. He speaks plainly and positively, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Is this the same man that we read of in a former chapter, “Ephraim is a silly dove without heart”? Yes, he was “a silly dove without heart,” but now, this same Ephraim, is saying, “What have I to do any more with idols?” He is speaking as if he had received a new, enlightened, bold and decided heart! This is a change, is it not?

The man who was glued to his idols and full of vacillation whenever better things came before him, is now clean separated from his former trusts and made to hate them! He no longer vacillates and hesitates, but takes his stand and asks with glorious promptitude, “What have I to do any more with idols?” It is a great change! And it is such a great change as many of us have undergone! And it is such a change as everybody here must undergo or else they shall never see the face of God with acceptance! Conversion, which is the first fruit of regeneration, makes such a difference in a man that it is as though he had been dead and buried and were now raised from the dead into newness of life! It is as much a change as if the man were destroyed and then were made a new creature in Christ Jesus!

I wonder whether you have all felt such a change as this? I sometimes meet with persons who claim to be Christians and Believers and all that, but they have never experienced any change that they can remember from their babyhood. Well, dear Friend, there must have been such a change if you are a Christian! I will not say that you ought to know the day and the hour, but, depend upon it, if you are now what you were when you were born, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! If there has not been a turning, you are going the wrong way! Every man must be turned from the way in which father Adam set his face, for our face is towards sin and destruction, and we must be turned right round so as to have our faces towards holiness and everlasting life.

Where there is not such a turning, there is the most solemn cause for heart-searching, humiliation and for the seeking of salvation! Have you undergone a great transformation? The necessity for it is no fantasy of mine, remember. It is that most solemn word of the New Testament—“You must be born again.” There must be a complete and total change in you, so that the things you once loved you come to hate and the things you hated you are made to love—as great a change as there was in Ephraim who was formerly glued to his idols and then came to abhor them!

I pray you all search and see whether such a difference has been made in your hearts by the Holy Spirit—for a mistake here will be fatal. If you have never undergone such a renewing, let the prayer be breathed that the Holy Spirit may now renew you in the spirit of your mind. And if you hope that such a change has taken place upon you, then may God grant it may be a real abiding conversion, so that you may remain in Grace and go from strength to strength till the idols are utterly abolished and your whole nature shall become the temple of the living God! Thus, we have two remarks—a sovereign prediction and a marvelous change.

III. Thirdly, there is in our text AN IMPLIED CONFESSION. “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” “Any more with idols?” Then, Ephraim, you have had a good deal to do with idols up till now? “Yes,” he says, with tears in his eyes, “that I have.” Hypocrites mean less than their language expresses, but true penitents mean much more than their bare words can convey. The confession of the text is all the more hearty because it is tacit and, as it were, slips out unintentionally. Listen earnestly dear Hearers, for, perhaps, some of you may be worshipping idols now.

We will go into the temple of your heart and see whether we can find a false god there. I go into one heart and, as I look up, I see a gigantic idol! It is gilded all over and clothed in shining robes! Its eyes seem to be jewels and its forehead is “as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.” It is a very lovely idol to look upon. Come not too close, do not examine too severely, nor so much as dream of looking inside the hollow sham! Within it you will find all manner of rottenness and filthiness, but the outside of the idol is adorned with the greatest art and skill—and you may even become enamored by it as you stand and gaze upon it! What is its name? Its name is self-righteousness!

Well do I remember when I used to worship this image which my own hands had made till one morning my god had his head broken off and, byand-by, I found his hands were gone. And soon I found that the worm was devouring it and my god that I worshipped and trusted in turned out to be a heap of dross and dung—and I had thought it to be a mass of solid gold with eyes of diamonds! Alas, there are many men to whom no such revelation has been given. Their idol is still in first-rate condition. True, perhaps, at Christmas time it gets a little out of order and they feel that they did not quite behave as they ought when the bottle went round so freely—

but they have called in the goldsmith to overlay the idol with new gold and gild the chipped places afresh!

Have they not been to church since then? Did they not go on Christmas morning to a place of worship and make it all right? Have they not repeated extra prayers and given a little more away to charity? So they have furbished their god up again and he looks very respectable! Ah, it is easy to tinker him up, my Brothers and Sisters, until the Ark of the Lord comes in! And then all the smiths in the world cannot keep this god erect! If the Gospel of Jesus Christ once enters into the soul, then, straightway, this wonderful god begins to bow himself and, like Dagon, who was broken before the Ark of the Lord, self-righteousness is dashed to pieces!

But there are thousands all over this world who worship this god and I will tell you how they pray to it. They say, “God, I thank you that I am not as other men are,” and so on—not exactly in the Pharisee’s language, but after the same style. “Lord, I thank you that I pay everybody 20 shillings in the pound and have brought up my children respectably. God, I thank you that I have been a regular church-going or chapel-going man all my life. God, I thank you that I am not a swearer, nor yet a drunk, nor anything of that kind. I am far better than most people and if I do not get to Heaven it will be very bad for my neighbors, for they are not half as good as I am!”

In this manner is this monstrous deity adored! I am not speaking of what is done in Hindustan, but of an idolatry very fashionable in England! The god of self-righteousness is lord paramount in millions of hearts! Oh, that every worshipper of that god may be led to say, “What have I to do any more with this abominable idol?” Another sort of god I have seen in the human heart is the idol of darling sin. A person not long ago said— “Well, I suppose there is a good deal in religion, but, you see, I am on the turf and I could not leave it. How could I? I could not, of course, become a Christian, and yet be known to be a betting man.” Yes, the betting ring was his god. The running horse is as favorite a deity as were the calves of Bethel.

Another man says, “Yes, yes. I should be glad to be a Christian, but, you see, I love the bottle. I must occasionally enjoy a drop too much. Not often, you know, but now and then at convivial meetings, holidays and bonfire nights. A man must be drunk sometimes, must he not? And where’s the harm? I could not give it up.” They do not say so in actual words, but that is what they mean, thousands of them! They must still keep Bacchus for their god and offer him their sacrifices. And, ah, what sacrifices they make! How they ruin health and destroy life, itself, beggar their children, make their wives wretched—and all to worship this dunghill god of drink!

Others have some other darling sin. I need not mention all. In fact I could not, for the cheek of modesty would tingle if we were to mention certain of the vices which men and women feel that they could not cease from. They would gladly be saved in their sins, but not from their sins. They would worship God after a fashion, but the first place must be given to this darling lust of theirs. O Sir, I care not what idol it is, but if there is anything in this world that you love better than Christ, you can never see the face of God with joy! If there is any sin that you would persevere in, I beseech you change your mind about it and cut it off though it is a right hand! Pluck it out though it is a right eye! It were better for you to enter into life maimed and with one eye than having both hands and both eyes to be cast into Hell fire! Darling sins must be renounced if Christ is to be enjoyed!

Behold how idolaters disagree—one adores righteous self and another worships sinful self—but both idols must be utterly abolished! In some men’s hearts I see the love of pleasure. That god is seated on the throne of many hearts. They are overcome, not so much by the grosser sins, as by their natural levity and trifling. They cannot think. They do not want to think. They say they are, “dull,” if they have to be quiet for awhile. They like to be always amused, gratified, excited. Now, there is a measure of recreation which is as good as medicine to both body and soul. And there are proper recreations to be had. God has provided innocent pleasures and we shall do well to accept them with gratitude from our heavenly Father.

But to be a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God is to be dead while you live! To make your belly your god, to live to eat and drink, to be just meat-digesters and wine-strainers, to be living here merely to enjoy yourself— butterflies flitting from flower to flower, gathering no honey, but merely seeking pleasure—this is evil! Sirs, this is a god that will not be worshipped by one who knows the love of the real God, for his god is his pleasure and pleasure is not his god. He casts aside, full often, things that he might otherwise have allowed himself to enjoy, that he may honor and glorify his Savior the more.

Many worship the golden calf. They indulge no vice and pursue no pleasure except their one vice and their one pleasure which is their greed of gold. If you want to awaken all their energies, jingle a guinea near them! This they pursue as the hounds pursue the fox, never resting. They fear they will be poor when they are old. They make themselves poor when they are young. And, lest they should be starved at last, they starve themselves to the last! We have known some to whom honor, love, uprightness, integrity, religion have all been nothing whatever, so long as gain could be had by sacrificing them. The great fabric of their fortune has rolled along, like the car of Juggernaut, crushing everything that has been in its way.

Widows might weep and orphans might lament. The groans of those whom they oppressed might go up to Heaven and the iniquities which they have perpetrated might go before them unto judgment—but it was nothing to them. They were adding field to field and house to house and getting richer and richer—they lived for that and for that they seemed content to die. O God, convert the man who worships gold! Milton, you know, describes the demon of greed as—

*“Mammon the least erected spirit that fell*

***From Heaven, for even in Heaven  
His looks and thoughts  
Were always downward bent, admiring more The riches of Heaven’s pavement, trodden gold, Than anything Divine or holy else enjoyed In vision Beatific.”***

This vice is very degrading and well does Milton place Mammon in Hell and say—  
*“Let none admire  
That riches grow in Hell.  
That soil may best  
Deserve the precious bane.”*  
Now, when the Lord delivers a man from the power of the devil, he cries, “What have I to do any more with making wealth my idol?” He grows content, becomes the Lord’s steward and uses his substance in the service of Jesus.  
We must go round these temples as quickly as we can and not stop long in any one of them, for they are not very sweet—some in the temple of their hearts have set up unlawful attachments. They form connections which are forbidden by the Word of God. For instance, I have known some who profess to be Christians—God knows whether they ever were or not— who have put altogether out of court the command of our Lord not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. They have followed the dictates of the flesh by joining in marriage with the ungodly. It is a dreadful thing to be married to one from whom you know you must be soon separated forever—one who loves not God and, therefore, can never be your companion in Heaven!  
If that is your case, already, your prayers should day and night go up to Heaven for the partner of your bosom, that he or she may be brought to Christ. But for any young person willfully to form such a tie is to set up an idol in the place of God! Weeping and wailing will come of it before long! Any form of love which divides the heart from Jesus is idolatry and, alas, I fear the idols are as many as the trees of the field! Lord, remove them far from us! A great number of persons worship an idol called the praise of men. They speak after this fashion, “Oh, yes, you are right enough, but, you see, I could not do it.” Well, why not? “Why, I do not know what my uncle would say about it, or I could not tell how my wife would like it. I am not sure if my grandfather would be pleased with me.” The fear of relatives and the dread of public opinion hold many in mental and moral bondage—and the fear of men holds many more. I pity those who dare not do what they believe to be right! It seems to me to be the grandest of all liberties, the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free! The liberty to do and dare anything which conscience commands in His name. But numbers of people have to ask other people to allow them to breathe, to allow them to think, to allow them to believe anything! And there is nothing they are so frightened of as Mrs. Grundy. The little society in which they live is all in all to them. What will So-and-So think of it? The working man dares not go to a place of worship because the carpenters in the shop would be down upon him. The men that work with him would be saying to him, “Halloa! What? Are you one of those Methodist fellows?” Many men who are six feet high are cowards and are afraid of some little body half their height! They are afraid that some worthless fellow would make a joke at their expense—and to be joked at seems to be something dreadful! O poor souls! Poor souls! All the jokes they are likely to get will be very lukewarm water compared with the scalding hot cauldron into which some of us have been plunged into year after year—when we could not speak a word without having it misinterpreted—and could not utter a sentence without being belied! Yet they shrink from their little persecutions as if they were a great martyr!  
We are alive, after all the assaults which were made upon us, and not much the worse for them—and so will you be, too, dear Friends—if you have the heart and the courage to do and dare for the Lord Jesus Christ! This idol of the fear of man devours thousands of souls! This is a bloodthirsty idol! It is as cruel as any of the idols of the Hindus—this “fear of man which brings a snare.” Some of you know that you are altogether mean in spirit and dare not do what you know you ought to do for fear somebody or other should make a remark about how strange and how odd you are. God help you to have done with that idol!  
Thus we have considered the implied confession that we have had most evil dealings with idols.  
IV. The last point is to be THE RESOLUTE QUESTION, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Let us put it this way, “What have I to do any more with them? I have had enough to do with them. What have my sins done for me, already?” Brothers and Sisters, look at what sin has done for us and all our race! It made that beautiful Eden, which was our garden of delight, to be a wilderness! It has made us to be the children of toil and sorrow! What has sin done for us? It has stripped us of our beauty! It has put us away from God! It has set the flaming cherubim with the drawn sword to keep us back from coming near to God as long as we live in sin. Sin has wounded us, spoiled us, killed us, corrupted us! Sin has brought disease into the world and dug the grave and bred the worm. O Sin, you are the mother of all the griefs and groans and sighs and tears that ever befell men and women in this world! O wretched Sin, what have we to do any more with you? We have had more than enough of you! And have not you and I, personally, had quite enough to do with our idols? I had enough to do with my self-righteousness, I do boldly say, for, oh, how I loathe to think that I should ever have been such a fool as to think that there was anything good in me—to think that I could ever have dreamed of coming before God with a righteousness of my own!  
Oh, how I abhor the thought! God forbid for one single moment that I should ever be other than ashamed of having boasted in anything that I could do, or feel, or be! Do you not feel yourselves humiliated at the remembrance of such pride and presumption? What have you to do any more with the idol of righteous self? Nothing! We can never bow down before that any more! With regard to other idols, have you not smarted enough about them? The convert who was once a drunk will say, “I have had enough to do with the cup of intoxication. Who has woe? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. The men of strength to mingle strong drink.” The winebibber has had enough to do with that. He has paid heavy smart money and now he has done with rioting and excess forever.  
The man who has plunged into vice will often have to say, “It has injured me in body, mind and estate. What more can I have to do with it?” “Ah,” said one to me the other day, “when I lived in sin it was so expensive that it will take me years to recover what I have wasted upon the devil and myself. I am not the man for the service of God that I could have been if it had not been for that.” Ah, we have all had enough of it—more than enough of it! There is no cup of sin, however sweet it was in the day of our unregeneracy, but we feel that we want no more of it—not even with all its beaded bubbles sparkling on the brim when it moves itself right. We are sick of it—sick to the death and the very name of it causes nausea in our soul. What have I to do any more with idols when I consider what idols have done for me?  
But there is another view of it. “What have I to do any more with idols?” Do you see? Can you bear to look upon that strange sight yonder—three crosses set upon a hill. And on the center one a wondrous Man, in fearful agony, nailed to the wood. If you look at Him you will see that there is such a mixture of majesty in His misery that you discover Him, at once, to be your Lord! Lo, it is the Bridegroom of your soul—your heart’s best Beloved! And He is nailed up there like a felon hanged to die! Who nailed Him there? Who nailed Him there, I say? Where is the hammer? Where did the nails come from? Who nailed Him there?  
And the answer is—Our idols nailed Him there! Our sins pierced His heart! Ah, then, what have I to do any more with them? If I had a favorite knife and with it a murderer had killed my wife, do you think I would use it at my table or carry it about with me? Away with the accursed thing! How I should loathe the very sight of it! And sin has murdered Christ! Our idols have put our Lord to death! Stand at the foot of the Cross and see His murdered, mangled body, bleeding with its five great wounds and you will say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” The vinegar and gall, the bloody sweat and death pangs have divorced my soul from all its ancient loves and wedded my heart forever to the Well-Beloved, even the King of kings! “What have I to do any more with idols?”  
Nothing separates a man from sin like a sense of the love and the sufferings of Jesus! Redeeming Grace and dying love—these ring the deathknells of our lusts and idols—  
*“Soon as faith the Lord can see,  
Bleeding on a Cross for me,  
Quick my idols all depart,  
Jesus gets and fills my heart!”*  
Now, you may remember, again, that we must have no more to do with idols, for the same sins which put our Lord to death will put us to death if they can. O child of God, you never sin without injuring yourself! The smallest sin that ever creeps into your heart is a robber seeking to kill and to destroy! You never profited by sin and never can. No, it is poison, deadly poison to your spirit. Do not, therefore, tolerate it for an instant. What have you to do with it? You know it is to be evil, only evil, and that continually. You know that it injures your faith, destroys your enjoyment, withers up your peace, weakens you in prayer, prevents your example being beneficial to others—and for all these reasons what have you to do any more with idols?  
Moreover, what have you to do any more with idols, now that you are a child of God—now that you are an heir of Heaven? A poor boy sits down and plays with bits of mud in the street and makes dirt pies with his little friends. One day there comes up a king’s messenger who has discovered that this is a lost child from the palace! The child is taken home and washed. He is clothed in royal apparel and is told that he is a prince and that he is heir to a kingdom! Will he go back and play with the dirty boys in the street, again, and be a gutter-child, a street Arab? No, not he! He will be trained to something nobler and more befitting his position. And though you and I once loved the sin that others love and found amusement where others find it, we have now, by faith, received power to become the sons of God! We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ! What have we to do any more with idols? What manner of people ought we to be whom the Lord has adopted into the royal family of Heaven? Within a few months some of us will be in Heaven—perhaps within a few weeks. What have we to do with idols? Even while we are here, the Lord has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. What have we to do any more with idols? This day are we accepted in the Beloved, the elect of God, justified by faith—our names are engraved on the palms of Jesus’ hands! What have we to do any more with idols? Truly, the question answers itself. We have nothing to do with them except to loathe them! And whenever they are set up in our hearts, even for a moment, we are to break them down by the power of the Eternal Spirit.  
Now Beloved, if God has worked a great work in you and changed your hearts so that the idols you once worshipped you now detest, I would ask you to keep away from the idols all you can. If you have nothing to do with them, do not go into the places where they are held in honor. “What have I to do any more with idols?” If I knew that a street was infected with smallpox, I should not go out of my way to ride down it! I had rather go round about to avoid the plague. Let it be so with your once darling sin! Get as far away from it as you can, even as you would keep clear of a leper! You have nothing more to do with idols, therefore do not enter their temples or make a league with their worshippers.  
It is an old Rabbinical tradition with regard to the Nazarites that as they were not to drink wine so they were bid not eat the grape, nor go through a vineyard. The old proverb was, “O Nazarite, go about, go about, but go not through a vineyard lest you be tempted to eat of the grape and afterwards to drink of the juice thereof.” There is a great spiritual and moral lesson here for us. Keep as far away from sin as ever you can! If you have learned to say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” avoid the very appearance of evil and all those communications which corrupt good manners.  
The ale house, the dancing saloon and the theater are not for you. I loathe to hear Christian people say, “What do you think of this-and-that foolish amusement? Do you think I might go as far as that?” Well, my dear Friend, if you enjoy anything that has any filth in it, I question whether you know anything about the love of God at all! You remember Rowland Hill’s observation to the person who said he liked to go the theater. The person said, “Well, you know, Mr. Hill, I am a member of the Church. And I do not go to the theater often. I only go once or twice a year, just for a treat.”  
“Ah,” said Mr. Hill, “you are a great deal worse than I thought you were! Suppose it were reported commonly that Mr. Hill fed on carrion and was very fond of eating rotten meat. And suppose somebody came to me and said, ‘I hear, Mr. Hill, that you are very fond of eating carrion.’ ‘Oh, no,’ I say, ‘Not at all. I do not regularly feed on it, I only eat a dish of it once or twice a year for a treat!’ Then everybody would say, ‘You are fonder of it than we thought. For if poor creatures have to eat it every day because they cannot get anything better, their taste is not so corrupt as yours who turn away from wholesome food and find rottenness to be a dainty dish.’” If you can find your pleasure and delight where sin of the worst kind is always very near at hand, where religion would be out of place and where Christ, your Master, would not be expected to come, you have not learned to say with Ephraim, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Run away from anything which has the least taint of sin and may God help you to do so even to the end! Is this in order that you may be saved? God forbid! I am only speaking to you who are saved already!  
If you are not saved, the first thing is to have a renewed heart by faith in Jesus Christ! And after that we lay no bondage on you and exact no tax from you by way of duty—but it will be your joy, your delight, your privilege—to keep near to your Master and to say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” God bless you for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THE GREAT CHANGE

NO. 2474

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 19, 1896. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1886.

**“Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found.”  
Hosea 14:8.**

THIS passage is in very vivid contrast to what Ephraim had previously said, as it is recorded in the early part of Hosea’s prophecy. If you turn to the second chapter, and the fifth verse, you will find this same Ephraim saying, “I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.” These lovers were the idol gods and Ephraim was determined to go after them, for she ascribed to them her various comforts, her bread and her water, her wool and her flax, her oil and her drink. So desperately set was this Ephraim upon going after her idols that God had much ado to drag her away from them, for that second chapter continues, “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them.”

So, you see, this people had been desperately set upon following after idols, yet, before the prophecy is ended, we find this same Ephraim saying, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” What a change the Grace of God works in the heart! It reverses the action of the entire machinery of our being. It puts, “No,” for, “Yes,” and, “Yes,” for, “No.” It is a radical change—that which we hated, we come to love—and that which we loved, we come to hate. Whereas we said, concerning this and that, “I will,” and, “I shall,” the Grace of God makes us change our note and we say, “I will not, by God’s Grace. I will not act as I said I would, for what have I to do anymore with idols?”

At the beginning of this discourse, I would like to put to each one whom I am addressing this question, “Have you, my Friend, ever experienced this great and total change?” Remember, if you have not, it is imperatively necessary that you should if you desire to be numbered among the Lord’s people. “You must be born again,” and this being born again is not the evolving of some good thing out of you that is already there, but hidden away, but the putting into you of something which is not there! It is the quickening of you from your death in sin. It is a change in you as great as was worked upon the Person of our Lord Jesus when, after lying dead in the grave, He was brought to life. Nothing short of this new birth, this resurrection, this thorough, total, radical change will make you fit to enter Heaven! You have no right to expect that you will ever stand within yon gates of pearl unless you have been created anew in Christ Jesus! He that sits on the Throne of God says, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He must make you new, or else into the new Kingdom where there is a new Heaven and a new earth, you can never come! No, you cannot even see that Kingdom, for our Lord’s words are as true, today, as when He said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Let that searching thought remain with you and try yourselves by it.

But now I shall take you at once to the words of the text, that we may think of the change which was worked upon Israel, or Ephraim. We will consider, first, the character of this change—“Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?” Then, secondly, let us note the cause of this change. And thirdly, the effect of this change.

I. First, then, we are to consider THE CHARACTER OF THIS CHANGE. Ephraim had been drunk with her idolatry. The Israelites were never content with idols of one sort—they went to Moab, to Egypt, to Philistia, to Assyria, to the Hittites and to any other ites—to borrow idols. They in

troduced fresh idols from distant countries. They were never satisfied with the number of their images, yet now, when God has effectually worked upon their hearts, they say, one voice speaking for all, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

Notice, that this change was a very hearty and spontaneous one. Ephraim did not say, “I should like to worship idols, yet I dare not.” She did not say, “I should like to set up engraved images, but I must not.” On the contrary, she, herself, said, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” I wish that some people whom I might mention understood what conversion means. They say to us, “So you do not attend the theater—what a denial it must be to you!” It is nothing of the kind, for we never have a wish or a desire to go there. What have we, the twice-born, to do with these vain things of the world?” Oh, but the drunk’s cup—it must be a very great piece of self-denial to you to forego it!” On the contrary, it is loathsome to us! We have come to feel as if the most nauseous medicine that could be mixed would be sweeter to us than that cup! What have we to do anymore with idols?

So, each thing that is evil becomes to the real convert a disgusting and distasteful thing. He does not say, “Oh, how I should like it! How I long for it! What a hungering I have after it!” If he detects in himself the least hankering after evil of any kind, he cries out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But as far as the work of God’s Spirit has been worked upon him, he has a thorough hearty severance and divorce from those things which he once loved. He has as great a horror of them as once he had a desire for them. Now he sings—

*“Let worldly minds the world pursue,*

***It has no charms for me.  
Once I admired its trifles, too,  
But Grace has set me free.  
Its pleasures now no longer pleases,  
No more content affords.  
Far from my heart are joys like these,  
Now I have seen the Lord!  
As by the light of opening day  
The stars are all concealed,  
So earthly pleasures fade away,  
When Jesus is revealed.”***

I say again, the change is a very spontaneous and hearty one. Ephraim shall herself freely say, “What have I to do anymore with idols? I have done with those things and I am glad to have done with them. Oh, that I had done with them once and for all!” I asked a convert, this last week, a question which, perhaps, I have asked a dozen others, “My dear Brother, are you perfect?” “No, Sir,” each one has said, “I am not.” Then when I have enquired, “Would you not like to be perfect?” the answer in every case has been, “Yes, indeed I would. It would be Heaven on earth if I could but be perfectly holy. Oh, that I were clean rid of sin!” So we sing, with Cowper—

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

Let the idols go! Smash them all up, break them in pieces like potters’ vessels! If there is a lust, if there is a passion, if there is a joy, if there is a desire that is not according to the mind of God, away with it! We cannot endure the evil thing and want to get rid of it. Ephraim shall say, and shall say it cheerfully, spontaneously, heartily, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

Observe, also, that this change is the work of God’s effectual Grace. Notice the wording of the text—“Ephraim shall say.” It is God who says, “Ephraim shall say.” Perhaps you ask me, “Did you not say that Ephraim said this voluntarily, spontaneously, with all her heart and of her own free will?” Yes, that is so. But the Holy Spirit, without violating the freedom of man’s will, is the Master of that will! There used to be great wars and fights among Christian people about free will and Free Grace. And when I read the reports of those controversies, I am struck with the great amount of the Truth of God that was spoken on both sides. When I hear a man stoutly affirm that if there is any good thing, it is all of the Grace of God, I know that it is so. But when another declares that man is a free agent and that if he acts virtuously at all, his free will must consent to it and that this condition is essential to the very making of virtue, is not that also true? Certainly it is! And why should we not believe both?

Ephraim cheerfully says, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” And yet, at the back of that is the great mysterious energy and work of the Holy Spirit bringing to pass the eternal purpose and decree of God so that they are fulfilled! For God to work His will with mere materialism, with dead blocks of wood or stone, with rivers or with tempests is but ordinary Omnipotence! But for God to leave men absolutely free and responsible agents and never to interfere with the freedom of their agency, and yet for Him to accomplish His eternal purposes concerning them to every jot and tittle, this is, if I may so say, Omnipotent Omnipotence! This is almighty power carried to a climax! It is just so with the Grace of God—we spontaneously quit our sin—but it is because almighty Grace is working within us to will and to do of God’s own good pleasure! “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?” because God, in His effectual Grace, has weaned her from her idols!

Notice next, dear Friends, that this change is always a very personal one. Ephraim says, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” She does not say, “What have the nations to do with idols?” That would be a wise question, but, as a rule, national or general religion does not amount to much. We say with Mr. Bunyan, “Those are generals, Man, come to particulars.” Believe all the Truth of God with the general company of those who hold it, but mind that you come to particulars and say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Do not ask, “What has my mother to do with idols? What has my brother to do with idols? What has my neighbor to do with idols?” but, “What have I to do with idols?” If all other men go into sin, I must not. I ask each believing one to whom I am speaking to feel, “God has done so much for me that I must turn away from sin. To me, willful wickedness would be a horrible thing. I must quit all iniquity. Whatever all the rest of the world may do, I must not go with the multitude to do evil—I must loathe it and leave it. ‘As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ ‘Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?’” Abhor selfishness and egotism, but, at the same time, be very personal and individual about your own religion! You were born alone and you will die alone—and you have need to be born again individually and personally. And it must come to a personal transaction between yourself and God, so that you can, for yourself, say, as we did in our singing—

*“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done— I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine!  
High Heaven that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”*

“What have I to do anymore with idols?” The change here implied must be spontaneous and hearty. It must be the result of Divine Grace and it must be personal.

And then, dear Friends, it must also be a truly repentant change— “What have I to do anymore with idols?” There is, in that question, a confession that the speaker has had to do with idols! Let the time past suffice us to have worked the will of the flesh. Brother, if you are resolved to serve God, through His Grace, yet before you begin that service, remember how you have, in the past, served the devil! Quit not your old ways without many a tear of regret and many a blush of deep humiliation, for whatever you may do in the future, you cannot undo the past. Your wasted time, your injured faculties, your angered God, your friends you influenced for evil by your example—you cannot blot out all these— therefore, at least stay a while and shed penitent tears over the graves of your dead sins and ask your God to help you to feel that you have had enough of your evil ways, sin and neglect. Say, “What have I to do anymore with idols? I have had far too much to do with them already. O Satan, O Self, O World, I have served you all too long and now, my God, with deep regret for all the past, I turn my face to You!”

This change must also be, dear Friends, life-long. Notice two words in our text, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Where the Grace of God really converts a man, he is not converted merely for the next quarter of a year, with the possibility of afterwards falling from Grace. That is a human conversion which can always come to an end! But if God converts you, you can never be unconverted! As conversion is the work of the Spirit of God, it is clear that it must need the same power to undo it as first did it. He who has made you a Christian will keep you a Christian! And unless a stronger than He shall come in and undo His work, you shall never go back to your old idols!—

*“Where God begins His gracious work,  
That work He will complete,  
For round the objects of His love,  
All power and mercy meet.  
Man may repent him of his work,  
And fail in his intent;  
God is above the power of change,  
He never can repent.  
Each object of His love is sure  
To reach the heavenly goal,  
For neither sin nor Satan can  
Destroy the blood-washed soul.”*

Oh, how I love to preach this glorious doctrine of everlasting salvation! The salvation that only carries you a little bit of the way to Heaven, I never thought worthy of my acceptance. I would not have it as a gift and I never thought it worth preaching to you. I remember hearing one of the revival preachers say that there are some who go on the road to Heaven and just take a ticket to the next station. Then they get out and take a new ticket and rush back to the train! And so they keep on. “But,” said the man, “when I started, I took a ticket all the way through.” That is the way to travel to Heaven! When you start, get a ticket all the way through! Listen to these words of Christ, “My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me and I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” Listen, also, to these words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria—“Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” O my Brothers and Sisters, God does not play at saving men, first doing the work and then undoing it! If He saves you, you are saved! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” There is the Gospel which we are sent to preach to you so that, when once converted, truly converted, you will say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”

Perhaps someone asks, “Yes, but do not some professors go back and yet you say that if men, after making a profession of religion, live in sin, they shall be saved?” Certainly we say nothing of the kind! We say, on the contrary, that if truly converted they will not live in sin, but if the work of Grace is worked in them, they will be kept from sin. Or if they shall, through sudden temptation, fall, they shall be speedily restored— weeping and sighing they shall be brought back to the good way. We never said that men could live in sin and yet go to Heaven! That were damnable talk, not fit for a Christian to utter! But he who is truly saved is saved once and for all and he can say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Throughout the rest of his life he will have done with them, he will have quit them. He will burn his bridges behind him, never to go back to the country which he has quit once and for all. This is a salvation worth having! Therefore, I pray you, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be a partaker of it!

Yet once more, notice that this is a very thorough change—“What have I to do anymore with idols?” O you who have done with idols, remember that you are also done with the idol temples, you are done with the false priests, you are done with the so-called “sacred thread” and other idolatrous tokens! You are done with everything pertaining to idolatry! You who once were drunks have done forever with the public-house and the drunk’s cup! You who once were lascivious, if the Grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with fornication, what have you to do with any kind of uncleanness? You who were, before, dishonest, if the Grace of God has changed you, what have you to do with the tricks of trade? What have you to do with fraudulent bankruptcies? What have you to do with cheating and lying? Let each true Believer cry, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” Be gone, sin and Satan, bag and baggage! What has a man, who is bought with the blood of Christ, to do anymore with idols? He quits them once and for all, by God’s good Grace!

I find that the rest of my text would take up far too much time for me to expound it fully, so I shall have to content myself with the second division of the subject.

II. This was to be, you will remember, THE CAUSE OF THIS GREAT CHANGE.  
The first cause of this change is the Grace received. In the previous part of the chapter, we find the Lord saying, “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.” Then our text naturally follows, “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?” We cannot get you to give up sin, however earnestly we may exhort you to forsake it, but if, by God’s Grace, you receive Christ as your Savior, then you will abandon sin as a natural consequence! What is the best way to keep chaff out of a bushel measure? Fill it full of wheat! And when the heart of a man is full of Christ, there will be no room for the world, the flesh or the devil! These evil things cannot find an entrance where Christ has full possession. When God is as the dew of our soul and we receive freely of His Grace, then we do not need telling, urging and driving, but we at once say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”  
Another cause of this great change lies in our perception of the beauties of the Lord. I do not quite know whether what I am going to say is the exact teaching of the text, but I think it is. It is very difficult, sometimes, in these prophecies, to know who is speaking. There are often dialogues and the dialogues are not always so clearly marked that we can tell who is the speaker. I have always thought, when I have read this chapter, that it was the Lord who said, “I have heard him, and observed him,” but on thinking the passage over very carefully, I am not quite sure that it is so. Let me give you another version, which I met with in two verses by an unknown poet, and then see whether this is not the meaning of the passage—  
*“I have heard Him and observed Him,  
Seen His beauty rich and rare,  
Seen His majesty and glory,  
And His Grace beyond compare.  
What have I to do with idols,  
When such visions fill my eyes?  
How be occupied with shadows  
When the Substance passes by?”*  
Does the text mean, then, “I will have nothing more to do with idols, for I have heard my God and I have observed Him? I have heard Christ speak and I have observed the excellence of His Character”? This much I know—whether that is the teaching of this passage, or not—nothing weans the heart from idols like a sight of Christ! O you worldly Christians, who are getting to be so fond of this world, I am sure that you have not seen your Master lately! If you had, the world would sink in your esteem. O you who are beginning to be fond of human wisdom, you cannot have heard Him speak of late, or else He would be made of God to you, wisdom—and everything else would be folly! O you who are seeking to live for self and for earthly gain, your heads have not been lately pillowed on the Savior’s bosom! You have not recently looked into those dear eyes which are more radiant than the glories of the morning! You cannot have known the fragrance of those garments which smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, or you would never be enamored by this poor, foul, unsavory world!  
“I have heard Him, and observed Him—what have I to do anymore with idols?” “I have heard Him say, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.’ I have observed Him go up to the Cross and lay down His life for me—‘what have I to do anymore with idols?’” When you, as the bride of Christ, love your first Husband as you should love Him, then your wanderings will be at an end. When all your heart goes after the Well-Beloved and He enraptures you with manifestations of His love and of His Grace, then will you say, “What have I to do with idols—I, so favored, so enriched with Divine blessings, who am on the road to Heaven, who am so soon to see the face of Him I love—what have I to do with idols?”  
That seems to me to be a grand meaning perfectly consistent with earnest Christian experience, so I leave it with you. This great change, then, is worked in us by the Grace of God and by a sight of the true beauties of our Lord.  
But now, taking the text as it is generally understood, you will get another meaning. One cause for this great change is the sense of answered prayer: Ephraim shall say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” And God says of Ephraim, “I have heard him.” I remember, even as a child, God hearing my prayer. I cannot tell you what it was about, it may have been concerning a mere trifle, but to me, as a child, it was as important as the greatest prayer that Solomon ever offered for himself! God heard my prayer and it was thus early established in my mind that the Lord was God. And afterwards, when I came really to know Him—for, like the child Samuel, I did not then know the Lord, I only felt after Him in prayer—afterwards, when I came to cry to Him intelligently, I had this prayer answered and that petition granted, and many a time since then. I am only speaking what any of you who know the Lord could also say— many a time since then He has answered my requests. I cannot tell you all about this matter. There is many a secret between me and my dear Lord. This very week I have had a love-token from Him which, if I could tell you about it, would make your eyes wonder and fill with tears! I asked and I received, as manifestly as if I had spoken to my brother in the flesh and he had said, “Yes, there, take all you need.”  
Well now, I always find that, in proportion as I am conscious that God is hearing my prayers, my heart says, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” If I can have from my God whatever I ask for, why need I cringe and bow my knee to men? If I have but to go to God and wait upon Him and He will give me the desire of my heart, what have I to do with fretting, fuming and being anxious? What have I to do with idols? If there is everything in Christ and that everything is to be had for the asking, what have I to do with idols? It is wonderful how you are weaned from the dry breasts of the world when you can drink in all that your soul desires from the living God! If God, the Jehovah of Hosts, is no more to you than the gods of the heathen, or the gods of the men of the world, why, then, you will have to do with idols! But if your God is the God that hears prayer and if you live in His Presence and speak to Him—and He speaks to you. If you keep up perpetual communion with Him so that God can say to you, “I have heard him and observed him”—then I am sure that you will also say—“What have I to do anymore with idols?”  
If I am addressing any poor soul that has been craving mercy from God, one who has been crying for months to God to give him forgiveness through Jesus Christ, why, dear Heart, if you will only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall get all that you are asking—you shall receive peace, pardon, joy and rest! And then you will say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?”  
“Oh,” says one, “my dear Sir, I have been trying to overcome sin and I cannot!” I know you cannot, but if you begin by receiving Christ, by praying to God and getting the answer, then you will be able to say, “What have I to do anymore with idols?” You want to first wash yourself and then come to the Fountain. That will not do! You must come, black as you are, and wash and be cleansed. You want to get rich spiritually and then come to God to enrich you. No! You must come to Him, poor! Come without anything of your own, just as you are, and trust the boundless mercy of God in Christ Jesus! He will give you all you need and then you will say, “What have I to do anymore with idols, for God has heard me, and He does observe my soul?”  
You see, then, some of the ways in which this very great and wonderful change is worked. I have had to omit many other points on which I meant to speak, but I pray that this change may be worked in each of you. Do not wait to have the change worked and then come to God, but come to God for it! If you have a broken heart, come to Christ with it! But if you have not a broken heart, come to Christ to break your heart! If you feel your sin, come to Christ to have it forgiven, but if you do not feel your sin, come to Christ that you may be made to feel it! If there is any good thing in you, thank God for it, and come to Him for more. But if there is no good thing whatever in you, come without any good thing and let Christ begin at the very beginning with you, in all your emptiness, need, spiritual beggary and loathsomeness! Come to Him just as you are, for He still says, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” May His sweet Spirit graciously attract each of you till you shall be drawn to Him and so drawn from your idols! And to Him shall be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 34; HOSEA 14.**

Psalm 34:1. I will bless the LORD at all times. “At dark times and bright times when I am alone, and when I am in company. When I feel like doing it and when I do not feel like doing it. ‘I will bless the Lord at all times.’”

1. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. “I will not only feel it in my heart, but I will give expression to it with my mouth. Those who do not care for this blessed employment may leave it alone, but as for me, ‘His praise shall continually be in my mouth.’”

2. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. “I will ride the high horse when I begin to talk of the goodness of God—‘My soul shall make her boast in the Lord’—and whereas boasters are generally very vexatious to humble-minded people, this kind of boasting shall please them. ‘The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.’”

3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, I cannot perform this happy service alone! It is too much for me all by myself. This bunch of grapes is too heavy to be carried by one. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

4. I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. Should not the prayer-hearing God be praised? If He hears the cries of His people, should He not also hear the praises of His people? It is not one, only, to whom God has thus listened, but many can say with the Psalmist, “I sought the Lord, and He heard me.”

5, 6. They looked to Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. It is God’s delight to hear the cry of poor men! Sometimes He passes by the rich and great, and gives heed to the poor and desolate. It is our need that has the loudest cry with God—if our necessities are urgent, our prayer will be powerful.

7. The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them. God’s children are always attended like princes—legions of angels form their bodyguard. The Angel of the Lord and companies of holy angels with Him pitch their celestial tents round about them that fear God!

8. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him. Try Him, dear Friends, and prove for yourselves how good and gracious He is—“O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.”—

*“Oh, make but trial of His love!  
Experience will decide  
How blest are they, and only they,  
Who in His truth confide!”*

9. O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. He will supply all their wants. You need not fear for anything else when you once fear God.

10. The young lions lack, and suffer hunger. They are strong, fierce, crafty and unscrupulous, yet they still suffer hunger—  
10. But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. Though they are neither cruel, nor cunning, nor strong, “they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” What a promise for you to plead in prayer, dear Friends! If you are in any need, do not hesitate, but by an act of faith take this gracious Word of God and plead it with the promisekeeping God! “Have You not said that, ‘they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing’? Then, Lord, do as You have said.”  
11-13. Come, you children, hearken to me. I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile. He who can manage his tongue can manage his whole body, for the tongue is the rudder of the ship. And if that is properly held, the vessel will be rightly steered. If you would escape the quicksands and the rocks, look well to your tongue! Keep it from evil, that it speaks neither blasphemy against God nor slander against your fellow men. And keep your lips from guile, that is, from deceit, from double meanings, from saying one thing and meaning another, or making other people think that you mean another—an art all too well understood in these days. God make us plain-speaking men, who say what we mean, and mean what we say! When, by the Grace of God, we are taught to do this, we have learned a good lesson.  
14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. If it runs away from you, run after it. Never run into or after a quarrel, but always run after peace—“Seek peace, and pursue it.”  
15. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The Lord is always watching them and He is always listening that He may hear everything they say, especially when they cry to Him.  
16. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. He will not only destroy the wicked, but He will blot out the very memory of them! They may become great and famous in their wickedness, but they shall not be kept in memory, as the righteous are. As Solomon says, “The name of the wicked shall rot.”  
17, 18. The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit. Men do not care for broken hearts, but God does. “Give me a sound heart and a brave heart,” says man. “Give me a broken and a contrite heart,” says the Lord. If you have such a heart as that, be not afraid to draw near to your God, through Jesus Christ, for He is already near you!  
19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all. Many who read this verse admit that the first part of it is true—“Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Yes, but the latter clause is also true—“but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” Do not omit either portion of the passage, for one part is as true as the other!  
20. He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken. God’s people shall suffer no real, lasting, vital injury. You may have flesh wounds, but as to the bones of your spirit, as it were, the solid part of it, “not one of them is broken.”  
21. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. They shall want nothing else to make an end of them but their own sins—“Evil shall slay the wicked.”  
22. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate. Now we are going to read the last chapter of the Book of the Prophet Hosea, the first of the minor Prophets. Hosea 14:1. O Israel, return to the LORD your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. When we fall by sin, we must regain our comfort by going back to the place where we lost it. “Return to the Lord your God for you have fallen by your iniquity.” Then, to help us return, God, through His servant, actually makes a prayer for us.

2. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord. “What words am I to take?” asks the poor convicted sinner. “I cannot put words together.” Here are the words put into your mouth—

2. Say to Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Come with humble confession, come with sincere repentance, come with earnest supplication, come trusting to the Grace of God, come bringing your heart with you and rendering it to God as a living sacrifice!

3. Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless finds mercy. If you come to God to be saved, you must bring no other savior with you! What an encouragement is given to us to come to God! He calls Himself the Father of the fatherless. O you whose soul is orphaned, you who are left disconsolate in a world of grief, come to Him in whom the fatherless find mercy, for so shall you find mercy!

4, 5. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew to Israel. “Swiftly and mysteriously will I come and refresh him.”

5. He shall grow as the lily. Quickly, beautifully—  
5. And cast forth his roots as Lebanon. He shall be as permanent as he is fair, like a cedar as well as like a lily.  
6. His branches shall spread. The dew of the Lord imparts influence to men—it gives them, as it were, branches, with which they cast a wide shadow.  
6. And his beauty shall be as the olive tree. The beauty of fruitfulness. God grant all of us this beauty!  
6. And his smell as Lebanon. Oh, to stand in holy repute among men, so that there is a fragrance going forth from us, like the sweet odors from the wild thyme and other products of Mount Lebanon!  
7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. When God blesses men, He also blesses those round about them. Your children, your servants, your neighbors shall all be the better if the Grace of God comes to you. So may it be!  
8, 9. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From Me is your fruit found. Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—377, 657, 658.  
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PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #557 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WHERE TO FIND FRUIT

NO. 557

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“From Me is your fruit found.” Hosea 14:8.**

**THE text has a double significance. It may indicate the fruit upon which we feed, or the fruit which we are enabled to produce. If it shall mean the first, there is much of comfort in it. The Lord has compared Himself, in His condescending mercy, to a green fir tree in the sentence which precedes the text. The fir tree in the East yields a most goodly shade. Neither the burning heat of the sun nor the drops of pouring rain can pass through the dense foliage and therefore it affords a welcome shelter to the traveler. But shade is not enough for a man—he requires food—and the fir tree fails in that respect, for it yields no repast for the hungry.**

**To complete the picture, therefore, when the Lord deigns to compare Himself to a green fir tree, He adds, “From Me is your fruit found.” Our gracious God is like a fir tree for shade, but like the apple tree among the trees of the woods for fruit. We sit under His shadow with great delight and His fruit is sweet to our taste. Living souls must have food to feed upon, or however well housed they would be comparable to the king of Israel in the besieged city of Samaria. He sat in his palace of ivory, he wore his mantle of purple and placed the crown of gold upon his head. But what good was his splendor when neither barn floor nor winepress could relieve his hunger?**

**In vain are all other blessings if the soul receives no nourishment from on high! Jesus must not only be our *life*, but the Bread of Heaven by which that life is sustained. Glory be to His name! He is All in All to His people—we may gather fruit from Him which shall satisfy the cravings of the soul. According to Master Trapp, some read this passage, “In Me is your fruit ready.” Certain it is that at all times, whenever we approach God, we shall find in Him a ready supply for every need.**

**The best of trees have fruit on them only at appointed seasons. Who is so unreasonable as to look for fruit upon the peach or the plum at this season of the year? No drooping boughs beckon us to partake of their ripening crops, for Winter’s cold still nips the buds. But our God has fruit at *all* times—the Tree of Life yields its fruit every month. No! Every day and every hour, for He is “a very present help in time of trouble.” Another translator reads the passage, “In Me your fruit is enough.” Whatever may be the accuracy of the translation, the sentiment, itself, is most correct. In God there is enough for all His people.**

**And well there may be, since in Him there is infinity. “I have enough, my Brother,” said Esau when he met Jacob— “I have all things,” said Jacob in reply. None but the Believer can say, “I have all things,” and therefore only he can be sure of having enough. Ishmael had his bottle of water and went away into the wilderness. But it is written that Isaac abode *by the well*—how happy is the soul which has learned how to live by the well of his faithful God! For the water will be spent in the bottle, but the water will never be spent in the well. Christian, remember the all-sufficiency of your God! Let that ancient name, “El Shaddai”—God All-Sufficient—sound like music in your ears!**

**As some translate it, “The many-breasted God,” yielding from Himself the sustenance of all His creatures. As we find the text translated, we have it, “From Me is your fruit found,” but the particle “from” does not mean *apart* from, but *out of me*. And to prevent misunderstanding, I shall not err if I read it in, for this is the force of the word in this place. The text speaks of fruit being found, implying, perhaps, that we must look for it—not because there is little, or here and there a cluster, like the grape-gleanings of Abiezer—but because the Lord will be enquired of by the house of Israel and would exercise our faith by making us search for the needed benefit.**

**It is of essential service to us to make us *seek*, and therefore we have the promise of *finding* to excite our diligence. Christian, look up longingly! Is your spirit hungering? Look up to your God now with intense desire! Come before Him with earnest, vehement pleadings, and you shall find in your God whatever your heart desires. Mark that little word “your.” As if the Lord had said, “It is yours already. I have freely given it. It is your fruit. I bear it, but I bear it for *you*. Every golden apple, every luscious cluster, I will bestow on you. You can not ask Me for anything which I have not given you. For behold, I have given you My Son and, ‘in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.’ ”**

**Believer, have you not learned the sweet logic of the beloved disciple, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” In the Everlasting Covenant God has made over—not only all created things—but Himself unto His people. “I will be their God and they shall be My people.” “God, even our God,” says the Psalmist. Is not that a delightful expression, “Even our God”? And so, as God is your own, His fruit is your own. Every outgoing of power, every outflow of love is yours already. “In Him is your fruit found.”**

**Surely this word “your” is as a little golden cup filled with a rare cordial—he who drinks of it shall forget his misery and remember his poverty no more. Let us not fail then, dearly Beloved, to receive boldly that which is our own by Covenant engagement and faithful promise. What do you want this morning? Surely out of the “twelve manner of fruits” there shall be something which will suit your necessities! Stand not back through shame or fear, but come boldly to the Throne of the heavenly Grace. Thus much for the first sense of the text.**

**But we do not intend to use the words in that signification this morning. We think that understanding the text the other way—“From Me is that fruit found which Grace produces *in*** you”—it will be a very fitting sequel to the sermon of last Sunday morning. You will recollect we spoke upon the withering of the fig tree which mocked the Savior with its leaves but yielded Him no fruit.

There may be some who were alarmed under that sermon and even Believers who were shaken by it. Such anxieties will do none of us any hurt, especially if they lead us to pant after fruitfulness. Our text, following upon the other, will direct earnest seekers where to find fruit. There are three sorts of preachers, all useful in their way, the doctrinal, the experimental and the practical. We will try to blend the three this morning and so handle the words doctrinally, experimentally and practically.

**I.** First. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT. The doctrine of the text is twofold. First, that the Believer’s fruit is his own—it is called “your fruit.” Secondly, that though it is the Believer’s own, yet it proceeds entirely from his God.   
**1.** The first doctrine is that true fruit is a Believer’s own. You will think this a very trite remark, but it is one which needs to be made in these days for there are certain persons who talk of man as if he were not a thinking, intelligent, free agent. They forget his will, judgment, reason and affections—they leave out of their consideration everything, in fact, which constitutes the man, and then speak of the operations of Grace as though they were manual works upon wood or stone.   
For what I can see, according to their way of talking, the Grace of God might just as well have produced holiness in monkeys as in men, for men are generally represented as merely passive existences to be moved by them to gratitude, or repentance, or faith, as horses are groomed in a stable or led out to be exercised. Be it never forgotten that our God deals with men as intelligent beings, having will and reason and all the other powers which make man a responsible creature. He does not ignore our manhood when He converts us by His Grace. He uses *means* fitted for our constitution as men, “I drew them with the cords of love, with the bands of a man.”   
Good works are a Believer’s own. It were an ill thing for him if they were not! To what could we compare him but to those dead sticks with fruits tied on them which women sell to little children? A sorry picture for a branch of Christ’s vine! The Believer produces fruit from his own inner self when Grace has renewed him. And if his holiness were not really the outgrowth of his new heart and his renewed nature it would be no sign of spiritual life. It is not fruit *tied* on us, but fruit *growing* out of us which proves us to be engrafted into Christ.   
True fruit is the Believer’s own because he wills, through Divine Grace, to do good works. If I performed what looked like a good work against my will, I do not see how it could be truly a good work as far as the doer is concerned. If a man could be compelled to virtue while his heart staggered away to sin, would he not be really transgressing? There is a gracious willingness towards the right thing bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. No, there is not only a *will* to holiness, but a *desire* after it. The true Christian longs after holiness and usefulness. He hungers and thirsts to do the will of his Father who is in Heaven.   
Like his Lord in some measure, it is to him his meat and his drink to do the will of Him who sent him. He can say, “The zeal of Your house has eaten me up.” He is constrained, but mark, it is not a physical constraint, for “the love of Christ constrains us.” So you see, Beloved, good works are a Believer’s own because he is willing to do them and desires to perform them. They are his own, again, because he actually does them. The Holy Spirit does not repent, nor feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked, nor preach the Gospel. He gives *us* Grace to do all these, but we ourselves do them.   
If the poor are fed, it must be by these hands. If souls are edified, it must be by these lips. We do not fold our arms and shut our mouths and then bring forth fruit unto God. We do not find ourselves taken up by the hair of our head as the Prophet Habakkuk was said to have been, according to the Apocrypha, and so carried away whether we will or not, to perform a deed of charity. All Glory be to the Holy Spirit, but He is *not* glorified by making Him appear to be a physical force instead of the great *spiritual* Worker.  
We do, my Brethren, bring forth fruit which is properly our own when we consider ways of usefulness, meditate methods of working, plan designs of good, act out deeds of mercy, persevere in labor and continue in service before God. I will tell you why I am absolutely sure a Believer’s works are his own, namely, because he grieves over them. The best works he ever performs he feels are his own because they are imperfect. If there is anything good in them, he ascribes it wholly to the fact that they proceeded from God. But, inasmuch as there is something imperfect in them, he is obliged to say, “Ah, yes, this is *my* fruit. If it had been God’s fruit, independent of me, it would have been *perfect*. But inasmuch as it is *imperfect*, I am compelled to see that I had a hand in it. The stream was clear enough as it came from the Fountain, but flowing through the wooden spout of *my* nature, it is become in some measure defiled and so far, at least, is mine.”   
Dear Friends, the whole analogy of fruit bearing must show to you that the Christian does bring forth fruit unto God—real fruit from his inner self. And if any of you think that you are going to attain to holiness by simply being passive, you are wonderfully mistaken. If you imagine you will be a Pilgrim by sitting down at the wicket gate, or be carried in a sedan chair to Glory, you will find yourselves left behind. No, we must fight if we would win! We must travel if we would reach the Celestial City! We must wrestle and fight and *pray*.   
The Word of God does say, “It is God that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure,” but it does not stop there, it bids us for this very reason, “Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” The passive first, but then the *active*. We must lie as dead at Jehovah’s feet to be quickened, but being quickened, what then? Why then we walk in holiness and in the fear of God! We are first of all made trees of the Lord’s right-hand planting and we receive Grace from Him. And then through His Grace, we ourselves do really bring forth fruit. The Truth of God is clear enough— prove by your energetic strivings that you understand it.   
**2.** The essential part of the doctrine lies here—that all a Believer’s fruit proceeds from his God and that in several senses from the Divine purpose. If you are holy, it is because He has called you to holiness. If you have good works they come to you, according to the word of the Apostle concerning good works, “which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”   
When you see a costly vase which is the admiration of all eyes, you know that whatever of beauty there is in that vessel was originally in the artist’s plan. If you have examined his sketches you have seen every elegant line and every graceful figure. Even so, Beloved, if you have been sanctified it is according to the eternal design which was settled in Grace and wisdom before the skies were formed. All our fruit springs from our God as to *calling*. You were dead in trespasses and sins. There were no good works in you by nature and there never would have been, except that He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in your heart to give you the knowledge of God and then to turn you from dead works to serve the living and true God. You owe everything to your calling.   
The tree which is loaded with fruit owes its fruit, first of all, to its having been chosen to be in the garden. And next, to its having been planted there. In our case, had we been left to grow in the wide wilderness we should have brought forth no fruit unto God. But He took us up out of the place of barrenness and put us in the rich soil which Jesus had watered with His own bloody sweat, and therefore we bring forth fruit. Our fruit is found from God as to *union*. The fruit of the branch is really traceable to the root. Cut the connection and the branch dies and no fruit is hereafter produced.   
By virtue of our union with Christ we bring forth fruit. Every branch of grapes has been first in the *root*. It has passed through the stem and flowed through the sap vessels and fashioned itself externally into fruit, but it was *first* internal in the *stem*. So also every good work was *first in Christ* and then was brought forth in us. O Christian, prize this precious doctrine of union to Christ! Hold it firmly because it is the source of every atom of fruitfulness which you can ever hope to know. If you were not joined to Jesus Christ no fruit could ever be in you. Our fruit comes from God and from God alone, as to Providence.   
When the dewdrops fall from Heaven, each one may whisper to the tree and say, “From me is your fruit found.” When the cloud looks down from on high and is about to distil its liquid treasure, it may thunder to the earth beneath, “From me is your fruit found.” And the bright sun above all others, as he paints the cheek of the apple, or swells the berries of the cluster, may well say to all the trees of the garden, “From me is your fruit found.” The fruit owes much to the root—that is essential to fruitfulness—but it owes very much, also, to external care.   
Beloved, how much we owe to God’s Grace in Providence! We are great debtors to His common Providences in that He makes all things work together for good. But His Grace-Providence, in which He provides us constantly with quickening, teaching, correction, consolation, strength, or whatever else we want—to this we owe our all of usefulness or virtue. Our fruit is found in God as to the matter of farming.  
The knife which the gardener takes from his pocket might talk to the tree and say, “Much of your fruit is found in me. You would not yield such an abundance if it were not for my sharp edge. I make you bleed a little as I take away your superfluous shoots, but you had not such goodly clusters if it were not of me.” So is it, Christian, with that pruning which the Lord gives to you. “My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”   
Thus the text may be read in very many ways. They will all come to one—that we have nothing, except as we receive it from above. “What have you which you have not received?” I may say, to conclude this head, that all our fruit is found in God, because He will, having been the Author of it, get all the Glory of it. Of all our spiritual life He shall have the praise, for it is all due to Him and if He gives us a crown at the last we will cast it at His feet.   
Brethren, you know this doctrine well enough without my enlarging upon it. You know how constantly Scripture teaches us that we can do nothing without Christ. We can sin. We can ruin our own souls. We can bring forth the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah—but anything which is lovely and honest and of good repute must come from Him who is glorious in working. You have no question or quibble about this. “You has He quickened.” You trace your life to Him.   
You does He quicken day by day. You owe the *continuance* of your life to Him. You know as a matter of doctrine that, “in Him we live and move and have our being,” and that, “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” I need not confirm this doctrine—no argument is required. You have never erred from the Truth in this respect. You could not be Christians if you did, for I hold this to be a fundamental Truth, in all godliness, that salvation from first to last is of the Lord. Salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Let us heartily praise Him whose workmanship we are.   
**II.** We come now to THE EXPERIENCE. Experimentally we have proof that all our fruit is in God. Let me remind you of your experience when you were the servants of the flesh. What fruit had you in those days? What repentance did your natural mind bring forth? What faith in Christ did your unrenewed soul ever beget or foster? What love to God ever stirred your carnal heart? What affection for the brotherhood possessed your alienated spirit? You must say that at that time you were without God, and without hope, and certainly without fruit. “What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?” A painful remembrance of your former estate compels you to feel the Truth of the Lord’s Word, “In Me is your fruit found.”   
Again, when the Law began to work in your heart and you were in a state of bondage, having enough of Light to see your darkness and enough of Life to mourn your death—what fruit had you, then, when you were under the Law? The Law told you what you should do—did it enable you to do anything? The Ten Commandments set before you a perfect rule—but was it not “weak through the flesh”? You had a very clear perception of the Justice and Righteousness of God—did the perception reconcile you to justice or to holiness?   
Let me ask you, did the Law of God ever make you love Him? Did the awakenings of your conscience which proceeded from it ever lead you to trust in Jesus Christ? They may have been overruled to this purpose, but the Law works wrath and as long as you were under it, it rather produced sin in you than righteousness. Such was Paul’s experience, “When the commandment came, sin revived and I died, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet.” As a child might never care to run into the street, but being told not to do it, he straightway does it by reason of the perversity of his nature—just so it is with us by nature.  
The forbidden thing our flesh lusts after. All the enmity of carnal nature is provoked to yet greater sin by the Law. That which should have been a bit, becomes a spur. Cold water quenches fire and yet when poured on lime, produces a vehement heat. So the Law acts contrary to its own nature by reason of the depravity of the human heart. Thus were you, my Brethren, led by a very sorrowful experience to feel that from Christ must come your fruit. For none could be produced by the efforts of the flesh backed up by the most earnest resolution and most devout prayer and driven onward by the whip of the Law.   
A sweeter experience has proved this to you. When did you begin to bear fruit? It was when you came to Christ and cast yourselves on the great Atonement and rested on the finished righteousness. Ah, what fruit you had then! Do you remember those early days? Did not your faith and love, and zeal form a garden of nuts, an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits? Then, indeed, the vine flourished! The tender grape appeared, the pomegranates budded forth and the beds of spices gave forth their smell. Have you declined since then? Even if you have, I charge you to remember that time of love.   
Jesus remembers it, for He says, “I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me into the wilderness.” He recollects that time of the singing of birds when the voice of the turtle was heard in your land. Would God this were with you forever! He has not forgotten it—do not *you* forget it—but seek to enjoy it still. Your fruit began, you know it did, when you came to Jesus Christ!   
My Brethren, when have you been the most fruitless? This is another part of experience. Has not it been when you have lived farthest from the Lord Jesus Christ? When you have slackened in prayer, when you have departed somewhat from the simplicity of your faith? When your graces engrossed your attention instead of your Lord? When you said, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved,” and forgot where your strength lies? Has not it been, then, that your fruit has ceased?   
Some of us know that we have nothing out of Christ by terrible soul-emptying and humblings of heart before the Lord. Brethren, it is no pleasant thing to be clean emptied out. But such times have happened to some of us, when we have felt that if one prayer would save us, if the Holy Spirit did not aid us, we were damned. If one good thought would take us to Heaven, we could not reach it. The vileness of our heart has been so clear before our eyes that had not it been that there was a mighty God to trust, we should have given up in despair—   
***“How seldom do I rise to God,   
Or taste the joys above!   
Corruption presses down my faith,   
And chills my flaming love.   
When smiling mercy courts my soul   
With all its heavenly charms,   
This stubborn, this relentless thing,   
Would thrust it from my arms.”***In such seasons we do well to cry, “Quicken You me, O Lord, according to Your word.” Then you feel that to will is present with you, but how to perform that which is good, you find not. It is a very easy thing for me to exhort you, but sometimes I do not find it very easy to do *myself* what I exhort *you* to do. And there are times with us, dear Friends, when, though we know our interest in Christ, we are wretched under a deep sense of the creature’s fickleness, sinfulness and death. Our moan is, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” When you have seen the utter emptiness of all creature confidence, then you have been able to say, “From Him all my fruit *must* be found, for no fruit can ever come from *me*.”   
We shall find from Scripture, I am sure, and let our past experience confirm it, that the more we depend upon the Grace of God in Christ Jesus and wait upon the Holy Spirit, pleading that His influences may operate in our hearts, the more we shall bring forth fruit unto God. If I could bear fruit without my God, I would loathe the accursed thing, for it would be the fruit of pride—the fruit of an arrogant setting up of one’s self in independence of the Creator. No! The Lord deliver us from all faith, all hope, all love which does not spring from Himself! May we have none of our own manufactured graces about us.   
May we have nothing but that which is minted in Heaven and is therefore made of the pure metal. May we have no Grace, pray no prayer, do no works, serve God in nothing except as we depend upon His strength and receive His Spirit. Any experience which comes short of a knowledge that we must get all from God is a deceiving experience. But if you have been brought to find everything in Him, Beloved, this is a mark of a child of God. Cultivate a spirit of deep humiliation before the Most High! Seek to know more your nothingness, and to prove more the Omnipotence of the eternal God.   
There are two books I have tried to read, but I have not got through the first page yet. The first is the book of my own ignorance and emptiness and nothingness—what a great book is that! It will take us all our lives to read it, and I question whether Methuselah ever got to the last page. There is another book I must read, or else the first volume will drive me mad—it is the book of God’s All-Sufficiency. I have not got through the first word of that, much less the first page. But reading the two together, I would spend all my days. This is Heaven’s own literature, the wisdom which comes from above.   
Less than nothing I can boast and yet, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” Having nothing yet possessing all things. “Black as the tents of Kedar,” yet fair as the curtains of Solomon—dark as Hell’s most profound night and yet, “Fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.”   
**III.** We now arrive at the PRACTICAL POINT.   
**1.** First then, dear Friends, let us look to Jesus Christ for fruit in the same way in which we first looked to Him for shade. That sounds like something you have heard a great many times before. Very well, but have you really understood it? To give an illustration—you want to overcome an angry temper. You are given to outbursts of passion—you try to overcome that. How do you begin? It is very possible there are even Believers here who have never tried the right way.   
How did I get salvation? I came to Jesus just as I was and I trusted Him to save me. Can I kill my angry temper in the same way? It is the *only* way in which I can ever kill it! I must go to Christ with it and say to Him, “Lord, I trust You to deliver me from it.” This is the only deathblow it will ever receive. Are you covetous? Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil as long as you like, but if it is your besetting sin you will never be delivered from it in any way but the Cross.   
Take it to Christ. Tell Him, “Lord, I have trusted You and Your name is Jesus—‘You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins’—Lord, this is one of my sins. Save me from it!” Do not take Jesus Christ with the blood only and without the water—that is to have only half a Christ. Pray to be forgiven, but ask also to be *sanctified*. Sing with Toplady—   
***“Let the water and the blood,   
From Your riven side which flowed,   
Be of sin the double cure,   
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”***I know what some of you do. You go to Christ for forgiveness and then you go to the Law for power to fight your sins. “O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth? Tell me, did you receive faith by the Law, or by the operation of Grace? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?” The only weapon to fight sin with is the spear which pierced Christ’s side. Nothing can kill the viperous brood of Hell but drops of Jesus’ precious blood! Take your sins to Christ’s Cross, Sir, for the old man can only be crucified *there*—we are crucified with Him—we are buried with Him.   
If I am dead to the world, I must be dead with Him and if I rise again to newness of life, I must rise in Him. Ordinances are nothing without Christ as means of mortification. Baptism is nothing, except as we are buried with Him in Baptism unto death. The Lord’s Supper is nothing, except as we eat His flesh and drink His blood and have communion with Him. And your prayers and your repentances and your tears—the whole of them put together—are not worth a farthing apart from Him. Every flower which grows in your garden will wither and the sooner it is blasted and withered the better for you—only the rose of Sharon will bloom in Heaven. “None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good,” or helpless *saints* either. You must overcome by the blood of the Lamb.   
**2.** Another practical observation is this—let us cultivate those Graces most which bring us most to Christ, for these will be the most fruitful. Let me look well to my *faith.* Let me see that I keep it purely stayed on Him, having no supplementary confidence, but resting wholly and absolutely upon the finished work of my Lord. Let me see to my *love*. Let my Lord be to me altogether lovely. Lord, help me to sing, “My Beloved is mine and I am His.” Sometimes graciously enable me to sing, “He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love. His left hand is under my head and His right hand does embrace me.”  
Faith and love are the great fruit-bearers. A gardener says, “There is such-and-such a twig, I must not cut that off because it is to the young wood that I am looking for my summer fruits.” So he takes care of it. There is, Believer, a growing faith and growing love to which you must look as the fruit-bearing shoots, because they pre-eminently link your soul to Christ and most evidently have communion with Him. Cultivate those things which lead you most to Him.   
**3.** A third practical piece of advice. Be most in those engagements which you have experimentally proven to draw you nearest to Christ, because it is from Him that all your fruits proceed. Any holy exercise which will bring you to Him will help you to bear fruit. Do you find prayer the channel of Jesus’ manifestations? Do you find yourself profited in the public means of Grace? Is it the breaking of bread which we love to celebrate every Sunday, which is most precious to you? If so, wherever Jesus Christ lays bare His heart to you, there be found. And if there is any one means of Grace which has been more rich to you than another, use it with the greatest perseverance. Use them all, dear Friends, do not neglect any, but especially use those most which bring you nearest to your Lord.   
**4.** Lastly, let none of us—whether we are the Lord’s people or not—let none of us ever insult Christ by thinking that we are to bring fruit to Him as a recommendation to His love. “From Me is your fruit found.” Now there may be some saint here who has lost his evidences and he dares not approach the Throne of Grace as he used to, because, he says, “I have sinned—I must produce fresh fruit before I dare come.” My dear Friend! My dear Friend! Bring fruit to Christ? How can you talk in so legal a fashion?   
All the fruit you ever will have, you must first get *from* Him! Come to Him as you are and get your fruit out of Him. Never suppose that you must bring Christ a present or else you must not come to Him. He does not want your money! If He takes it He will give it back to you in your sack’s mouth. He will receive your fruit as an *offering*, but never as a reconciliation. There are those here this morning who are not converted as yet. They are saying, “I dare not seek the Lord, I dare not trust Christ. I know the Gospel is trust Christ and you are saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned. But I must not trust Him, I am a drunkard, I have been a swearer, I am a Sunday-breaker, I will wait until I am better and *then* I will come to Christ.”   
Why how can you talk like this? “*From* Him is your fruit found.” If there is any fruit, you must come to Jesus Christ *for* it! Am I, if I am poor and ragged, am I to buy a new coat before I may beg a garment? What a strange proposal that I should do for *myself* what Christ came to do! How can that be reasonable? If I saw a man standing outside the baths and wash houses and he should say, “Well really, I’ve just come home from my work and am as black as a sweep, but I dare not go into those baths until I have washed my face first,” I should say, “How foolish! It is in the bath that your washing is to be found.”   
There is no fitness needed for Christ but that which is *in* Christ—*nothing* needed in *you*—*everything* is in Him! To use the old proverb, “Why carry coals to Newcastle?” Who would think it a profitable business for our London merchants, in the cold winter time, when the price of coal is very high, to charter all the ships they can and send them laden with coals to Newcastle? If they did so, you would think them mad! And yet there are many sinners penniless, comfortless, with no good thing of their own who want to bring good works to Jesus! This is carrying coals to Newcastle with a vengeance.   
Oh, folly! Folly! Folly! Go with your ship all black and empty—sail up the harbor and the pit’s mouth will soon yield to you an abundance of precious store. Go to Jesus as you are! Do you want faith today? Repentance? Grace? Go to Christ for it! Go to Him, resting on Him, dependent on Him, believing that He is ready to save you, to begin, to carry on and finish your salvation!   
He will be as good as you ever believe Him to be and infinitely better. If you can believe Him princely enough to put all your sins away and to cover you with His righteousness, He will do it! Never man thought too well of Christ. If you can get a big thought of Christ, you big Sinner—if you can believe on the eternal Son of the eternal Father, who once poured out His blood in streams on Calvary—you are secure. God help you. Amen.

÷Joe 2.8

ORDER IS HEAVEN’S FIRST LAW  
NO. 2976

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1906. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path.” Joel 2:8.

THOSE who have been able to observe the marching of an army of locusts have been amazed beyond measure with the marvelous regularity of their advance. Agur, who must surely have seen them, says, “The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.” The wonder is that creatures comparatively so insignificant in size, and so low down in the scale of intelligence, should maintain such more than martial order, both in their long flights and in their devouring marches. The ablest commanding officers would be at their wits’ end if ordered to marshal a multitude numbering even a thousandth, or perhaps a millionth part of the countless hordes of these destructive marauders and yet, by instinct, the locust soldiery can and do keep rank better than the most veteran regiments of the line, as I can personally testify, from having seen miles of them in one of the Italian valleys. “They shall march everyone on his ways,” says the Prophet, “and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path.”

I. As I considered this remarkable fact in insect life, my meditations led me to note THE ORDER WHICH REIGNS, not only among locusts, but THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF GOD’S WORLD. And then I said within myself—After this fashion should there be order and arrangement in the Christian Church. God has trained His great insect army and among them order reigns, but this is no exception to the general rule, for all the hosts of God are marshaled in rank and file and are never left to be a disorganized mob of forces. From the most minute to the most magnificent, all creatures feel the sway of order and they well observe the laws imposed by their Creator!

Look up to the heavens and observe the innumerable stars that glisten there so plenteously that numeration fails. Looked at through the telescope, stars are so abundant that the heavens appear to be covered with dust of gold and yet we have no record that one of these bodies has ever interfered with the orbit of its fellow sphere, or if such a catastrophe has ever been permitted, it has been part of the all-comprehending scheme. The majestic orbs move, each one in its own orbit, and all in perfect harmony. Even the aberrations, as we call them, are nothing but the result of regular law and the astronomer finds that he can calculate them with the greatest possible accuracy. There are no irregularities, discords, or failures among the constellations! And if to the student of the heavens such should appear to be the case, he has but more fully to master the universal law and he discovers, with astonishment, that every eccentricity is a necessary incident in a system grander than he had thought. Mere amateurs in astronomy talked of irregularities, but Newton and Kepler found a mathematical precision manifest in all. At no point need we be afraid that the universe will be thrown out of gear! If a man had placed innumerable wheels in a machine, there would be, in due time, a breakdown somewhere. Oil would be needed here, a cog would be broken there, a band would be snapped in this place, or a piston would be immovable there—but God’s great machine of the universe, whose wheels are so high that the sublime Ezekiel, when he saw them, felt that they were terrible, has continued to revolve these many thousands, perhaps millions of years, and has never yet been stopped for cleaning or repair because God has impressed upon every atom of it the most docile spirit of submission—and His powerful hands are at work every instant amidst the machinery giving force to His laws.

Nor is it so in the coarser inanimate forms of matter only, but the same law holds good with the whole animal creation. Not locusts alone, but the fish of the sea and the birds of the air all observe their Maker’s bidding and both live and move according to rule and order, all forming portions of the perfect circle struck out by the Divine compasses. What a wonderful thing it is that mighty streams of fish should come, during certain seasons, from the North and swim near enough to our coasts to afford our citizens so large a portion of their daily food! If there is complaining in our streets, there need not be, for extended fisheries could supply all the inhabitants of Britain, even if they were multiplied a hundred times, and yet there would be no perceptible declining in the teeming population of all the sea, for God has so arranged it that there shall be most of those kinds which are most required for food. But what a marvel that at the fixed period, the unguided fish should migrate in such countless shoals and should return again, in due season, to their old abodes among the Arctic waves!

Mark, too, how every tribe of animals is necessary to all the rest. So beautiful is the order of Nature that we cannot wantonly destroy a race of little birds without suffering from their removal. When the small birds were killed in France by the peasantry, who supposed that they ate the corn, the caterpillars came and devoured the crops. Man made a defect in an otherwise perfect circle—he took away one of the wheels which God had made and the machine did not work perfectly. But leave it alone and no jars or grindings will occur, for all animals know their time and place and fulfill the end of their being. You spoil the harmony of Nature’s concert if even the sparrow’s chirrup is unheard. The stork and the crane fly at God’s bidding, the swallow and the martin know their pathway— the prowling beasts and ravenous birds, as well as the domestic cattle, all hold their own in Nature’s arrangements. Like the bejeweled breastplate of the high priest, Nature is full of gems, each one in its setting—and the glory is marred if one is lacking. Be assured that the wild ass and coney, leviathan and behemoth, eagle and dove, gnat and lizard are all arranged for the highest good and are beautiful in their season. “Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path.”

Rising a little higher, there is also order in the Providence of God. When you view the great world of human history, it looks like a skein of thread much twisted and tangled. When you study it, you see nations rise and fall, like boiling waves of a foaming sea. You read of horrible wars, wantonly commenced and wickedly continued. The human race seems to have destroyed its sons without a motive. Men rush upon each other with all the fury of fiends and tear each other like wolves—and yet they eat not that which they have killed! The history of mankind appears at first sight to argue the absence of God. We ask, “How is this? We expected to find, if God were in Providence, something more orderly and regular than we see here. Instead of a grand volume from a master-pen, we see words flung together without apparent connection. We expected to find a sublime poem, such as angels might love to read, but all this is confusion, void and unintelligible—strokes and dashes without meaning to us.” Yes, my Brothers and Sisters, and so it is. But we are little children and do not yet understand God’s hieroglyphics! We write in large text and have not the transcript of the celestial shorthand. Our limited field of vision only lets us see a brick or two of the great house— and straightway we begin to criticize the infinite Architect and His work. After all, supposing this world to have existed six thousand years, what is that? In God’s sight, it is but as a day, or as yesterday when it has passed. We see but one thread of history, a raveling of life, and then we vainly fancy that we can form a fair judgment of the tapestry curiously fashioned by the finger of the Lord!

Coming down from these great things to ourselves, depend upon it that all the events in our own little lives are marching straight on to a gracious consummation. You, child of God, sometimes say, “What can be the design of this cross? What can be meant by that bereavement? Why am I perplexed by this dilemma? Why is this difficulty piled like a barricade across my path? Well, you know not now, but you shall know hereafter! Meanwhile, settle it firmly in your faith that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Your affliction does not jostle your prosperity, but promotes it. Your losses do not cause your loss—they really increase your true riches! Onward still, laden with untold blessings, every event is marching for the righteous and for the humble spirit. God has His way in the whirlwind and the clouds are the dust of His feet. Only be patient and wait upon Him with childlike confidence and the day shall come when you shall wonder, and be astonished, that there should have been such order in your life when you thought it was all confusion—such love when you thought it unkindness, such gentleness when you thought it severity, such wisdom when you were wicked enough to impugn the rightness of your God! Brothers and Sisters, the events of our history march on as rightly as a victorious legion under a skillful Leader. Do not let us arraign the wisdom of that which happens to us, or fancy that we could order our affairs in better style. Our good and ill, our joy and grief, all keep their places. “Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path.”

II. But we must rise still higher. We have come from the world of matter to the world of living creatures and up to the world of intellectual beings—NOW LET US THINK OF GOD HIMSELF.

We may say of all His attributes that “neither does one thrust another, but each one walks in his path.” Let us be careful at any time in thinking of God, that we indulge not in reflections upon one attribute to the forgetting of the rest. Many Christians are much soured in their disposition by considering God only in the light of Sovereignty. Now, that He is a Sovereign, is a great, deep, mysterious, but also most blessed Truth of God, and we would defend Divine Sovereignty with all our might against all comers. But, at the same time, absolute Sovereignty is not the only attribute of God and those who keep their eyes fixed upon that, to the exclusion of all other qualities and prerogatives, get an ill-balanced idea of God—and very likely they fall into errors of doctrine and, still more likely, they become hardhearted towards their fellow men and forget that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but desires rather that they should turn unto Him and live.

On the other hand, many injure their minds very greatly by reflecting solely upon the one thought of God, that He is good. It is a blessed Truth that He is good and benevolent, and full of compassion—and Holy Scripture tells us that “the Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works.” God forbid that we should seek to diminish the kindness of God, or think lightly of it, “for His mercy endures forever.” Yet some look at that one emerald ray as though it were the whole of the spectrum! They gaze upon one star and regard it as the Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, all in one. And, alas, worse results follow, for they are tempted to think sin to be a mere trifle since they ignore the Justice and Sovereignty of God. They so exclude God’s righteousness and vengeance from their minds so that when they hear of Hell, and of the wrath that will come upon the impenitent, they shudder with inward unbelief and try to doubt it—and, perhaps, manage to find texts of Scripture which look as if they helped them in their perverted and jaundiced view of the Most High! They think they are glorifying God, but they are really dishonoring Him, for God is no more altogether Mercy than He is altogether Sovereignty! And He is no more altogether Sovereignty than He is altogether Mercy. The fact is that every glory meets in God! All that is good, excellent and great may be found in Him in complete perfection. God would have you so to think of Him, for, in the Atonement, which is His grandest Revelation of Himself, He has been pleased to show you—

*“How Grace and Justice strangely join;  
Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,  
To make the choicest blessings yours.”*

This leads me one step further to observe that the same order is perceptible in the Doctrines of the Word of God. Doctrines, which look as if they contradicted each other, are nevertheless fully agreed. It is the defect in our mental vision which makes separate Truths of God appear to cross each other’s orbit, for it is certain that the Truths of Scripture do not thrust each other, but each one goes on in its own path. Perhaps the fiercest of fights has been waged over the great fact that salvation is of Grace and the equally certain fact that man is responsible to God under the Gospel, and that, if he perishes, his ruin lies at his own door—and is not to be charged upon God in any sense whatever. This has been the arena in which intellectual gladiators have fought with each other age after age. If they had stood side by side and fought the common enemy, they would have done good service, for I believe in my soul that they both hold some Truth and that either of them will hold error unless he will yield something to his rival. There are some who read the Bible and try to systematize it according to rigid logical creeds, but I dare not follow their method and I feel content to let people say, “How inconsistent he is with himself!” The only thing that would grieve me would be inconsistency with the Word of God! As far as I know this Book, I have endeavored, in my ministry, to preach to you not a part of the Truth of God, but the whole counsel of God—but I cannot harmonize it, nor am I anxious to do so. I am sure all Truth is harmonious and to my ear the harmony is clear enough—but I cannot give you a complete score of the music, or mark the harmonies on the gamut—I must leave the Chief Musician to do that.

You have heard of the two travelers who met opposite the statue of Minerva and one of them remarked, “What a glorious golden shield Minerva has!” The other said, “No, it is bronze.” They argued with one another. They drew their swords, they slew each other and, as they fell dying, they each looked up and the one who said the shield was made of bronze discovered that it had a golden side to it—and the other, who was so bold in affirming that it was gold—found that it also had a bronze side. The shield was made of two different metals and the combatants had not either of them seen both sides. It is just so with the Truth of God—it is many-sided and full of variety. Grand three-fold lines run through it—it is one yet three, like the Godhead! Perhaps you and I have only seen two of the lines—many persons refuse to see more than one— and there may be a third yet to be discovered, which shall reconcile the apparently antagonistic two, when our eye shall be clarified by the baptism in the last river and we shall ascend the Hill of the Lord to read the Truth of God in the light of the Celestial City!

However, it is clear that salvation is altogether of Grace and equally clear that if any man perishes, it is not for lack of invitations on God’s side—honest invitations to come to Christ. We hear our Master saying, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Some friends are so afraid of that text that they generally quote it “weary and heavy laden,” which is not the true reading—the laboring ones are invited to Jesus! Many such invitations did Christ give, yet did He not also say, “No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him”? Amid the soft rain of tenderness we hear the thundering of those solemn Truths of God—“So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.” “Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens.” As we listen to that thunder, we bow to the Sovereignty of God yet, amid the pauses, we hear the Master say, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely,” and we also hear Him say, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled.” Let us believe both sets of Truths and not oppose ourselves to friends who hold either the one or the other, but seek to bring them to believe both— for as the Bible is true, they are, both of them, the Truths of the living God! Observation leads me to think that those persons who are willing to hold the whole of revealed Truth, are generally Christians of a more active spirit and more desirous for the conversion of souls than those who contract their minds and only hold some one or two great theological dogmas. If we will but lay aside our Chinese shoes and allow our feet to grow as they should, we shall find it far better walking on the road to Heaven—and we shall be more ready for any work which our Master may call us to do!

III. Now we turn to THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.  
Dear Friends, you and I who have entered into the Kingdom of Grace and have received a life which the worldling cannot understand, (for the carnal mind knows nothing of the spiritual life), must remember that our thoughts, graces, and actions ought all to keep their proper position so that it may be said of them, “Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path.”  
As to our thoughts, we ought to endeavor, as God shall teach us by His Spirit, to keep our thoughts of God’s Word in their due harmony. Some Brothers and Sisters, for instance, are altogether doctrinal in their inclinations. Doctrinal study is admirable—may God send us much of it! Yet doctrine is not all that we are taught in the Sacred Word. There are also duties and promises—why despise these? Then again, other professors of religion are altogether of a practical turn and, while they value James, they depreciate Paul. They do not like an expository sermon, they cannot endure it! But if you give them a precept, they rejoice greatly. They are quite right as far as they go. The Lord send us much more practical Christianity! But this is not all. There are others who are altogether experimental and some of these will hear no sermon unless it treats upon the corruption of the human heart, or upon the dark frames of the child of God. Others will have no experience but the bright side—you must always preach to them out of the Canticles, inditing the good matter concerning the sweet love of Christ towards His spouse.  
Now, each of these forms of preaching is good in its season, but he who would keep close to the Scriptures and preserve completeness in his thoughts must weigh well the doctrine and seek to get a clear view of the Covenant of Grace and the economy of salvation. He must study the precepts and ask the Holy Spirit to give him the fleshy heart upon which those precepts may be written as upon living tablets. And then he must watch his experience, mourning over inbred sin, but also rejoicing in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, through whose blood we have the victory.  
We must endeavor, as much as possible, to exercise our thoughts upon all the subjects which God has given us to think upon in His Word and has applied to our hearts by the workings of the Holy Spirit. Where this is done, we shall avoid one thought thrusting another, and each will go in its own path. I have heard of doctrinal preachers who hated the very sound of the word, “duty.’’ I have also heard the practical Brother declare that he detested “election” while the experimental Brother has affirmed that the doctrinal preacher was merely “a dead-letter man.” Oh, what naughty words for God’s children to use to describe one another— bitter sentences which they only use because they know so little! Shame upon us that we say, “I am of Paul” and, “I am of Apollos” and, “I am of Cephas,” for all these are ours to profit by if we are Christ’s! Learn from the doctrinal, learn from the practical, learn from the experimental! Blend the whole together and let not one thrust another, but allow each to go straight on in its own path!  
The same should hold good in the graces which we cultivate. The Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to put, by His Holy Spirit, into the hearts of those whom He has saved, certain lovely and precious things, but it is not always easy to get these in due harmony. For instance, I know a Brother who is very faithful. He does not mind telling you of your faults, but then, he is not affectionate in spirit—and so he never warns you of your infirmities in a way that does you good. Now, if that Brother could get affection to balance his fidelity, what an admirable man he would make! I remember well another Brother who was all affection and nothing else. He was so affectionate as to be effeminate and I, poor rough creature as I am, could never bear the sight of him. He always reminded me of a pot of molasses and his office appeared to be the anointing of everybody he met. If he could but have mixed a little fidelity with his sweetness, he would have been a much better and stronger man. Secker says that Christianity ought, first, “to make a man more of a man and then, more than a man”—and so it would if we sought, by the power of the Spirit, to cultivate all the graces!  
The beauty of the human countenance does not consist exclusively in having bright eyes—no, the fine eyes help, but all the other features of the face must balance it. A man may have the finest possible forehead and yet he may be extremely ugly because his other features are out of proportion—so it is with character. Character must have all the graces, but all the graces in harmony. Take, for instance, the virtue of meekness. It is a lovely thing to be of a meek and quiet spirit, but then, my Brothers and Sisters, how could reforms ever be worked if all were so meek that they could not speak out against error? Where would you find your Luthers and your Calvins? Meekness must be balanced by the virtue which is its compensating quality, namely, courage. Affection must be strengthened by fidelity. A man must be patient under affliction, but he is not to be so patient as to be idle. He must couple energy with his patience, in order to manifest a practical faith. When we have each of these, we shall be what Paul and James call, “perfect.” Then shall we have come to be “entire, needing nothing,” having reached “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Christian men should be menChristians. If your child should have a rapid growth in its arms, but not in its legs, or if its legs should lengthen, but not its arms, what a strange being it would be! What a monster! It is the growth of each limb in proportion that brings a man to perfection. So, my Brothers and Sisters, when our heads grow faster than our hearts, it is an ill sign—yet how many know a great deal more than they feel, and criticize much more than they believe! It is also an evil thing when a man’s tongue grows bigger than his head—when he has more to say than he knows or does— when, like Mr. Talkative, he can talk about the road to Heaven, but makes no progress on it!  
The same proportions and balancing should be found in our Christian duties. This is too large and difficult a subject to go fully into, now, but we will have a word or two about it. A man is not in his outward action a complete Christian because he is attentive to one duty, for God would have His people attend to all. It will sometimes be a question with you as to how much time should be given to private devotion, how much to family worship and how much to worship—and you may easily make great mistakes here. I recollect a Brother, a very excellent man, too, who was always at Prayer Meetings and public services, but, unfortunately, being always away from home, his family was so neglected that the sons grew up, one after another, to be the most precocious specimens of depravity that the parish could exhibit! We thought and we hinted as much to our Brother that if he would be at home, sometimes, to teach the children, whose mother was as neglectful of them as the father was— and so the mischief became doubled—he would be far more in the path of duty than in attending public services to the neglect of family piety. I only wish he had been able to see the propriety of our advice, for he has had to smart for his folly. It is not often that a man’s private devotions obtrude in this way, but I know one professor who used to spend so long a period in private prayer that he neglected his business and also the assembling of himself with God’s people. It was, indeed, an unusual vice, but it came to be quite a sin in his case. This last is a very unusual fault and one that I could almost excuse because it is so unusual—but I recommend far more strongly the careful thinking of how much time is due to God in the closet, how much at the family altar, how much at the Prayer Meeting and how much to the weeknight services—for we must give to each according to its due proportion.  
Again, the difficulty will often occur to you, my Brothers and Sisters, as to how much is due to diligence in business and how much to fervency in spirit. No one can draw the line for another. Each one must judge for himself, but this must be the law—“Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk everyone in his path.” There may be a season in which you may lawfully give all the hours of the day to business. Your business may require it and there are times with commercial men when to go to weekday services would be almost insanity—they must keep to their work, or else there will become a failure—and then the name of Christ will be evilly spoken of. There will be times, too, with workingmen, when if they were to insist upon coming to the Monday evening Prayer Meeting, or to the Thursday night lecture, they would be altogether out of the path of duty—there is a demand for labor just at some particular time and they must obey the call—and they are in the path of duty in so doing. I am afraid that there are not many who fail in that way, but crowds who err in the opposite direction. Some will keep the shop open so late that there is no time for family prayer! Others will confine their servants so strictly that they can never get out on weeknights to hear a sermon. It does not strike the employer’s mind that some of the young people would perhaps like to be at the Prayer Meeting on Monday night, nor will the employer be there himself. Now, I cannot say to you, you must give so much time to God and so much to the business—you yourself must ask God the Holy Spirit to guide you! But remember, you must not let one thrust another. It is a good saying of an old Divine, “Never bring to God one duty stained with the blood of another.” As much as lies in you, give to each distinct duty its due proportion.  
There is a still greater difficulty with regard to the arrangement of distinct duties when they are likely to run counter to one another. Here is a servant—his master expects him, after he has entered into an engagement with him, to do such-and-such unnecessary work on the Sabbath. The

oung man says, “No, I cannot do that. It is clearly unscriptural and I must obey God rather than man.” But there are certain things which come somewhere between the necessary and the unnecessary—and the servant may properly enquire, “What is my duty?” You must settle it carefully within your own mind. Have you any sordid or selfish motive for deciding in any particular way? If so, be very cautious how you decide, but seek the Lord’s Glory, and the Lord’s Glory, alone, and say, “While I am, as a servant, to serve man, yet I am the Lord’s free man and I must walk both as a servant and the Lord’s free man, and not forget either.”  
Sometimes the matter of the conduct of children towards parents has come under our notice. A harsh parent has said, “My children shall not carry out their religious convictions.” In such cases we have had to occasionally recommend the child to wait until he has grown a little older. At other times, we have bid the child break through the parent’s evil command, since we cannot hold that the parent can have any right to make his child disobey God. In the matter of the child’s religion—when it is able to judge for itself—it is as free as its parents and has a right to choose for itself. And while the parent should seek intelligently to guide it, coercion must never be tried. If the parent is ungodly, the child is free from all obedience to wicked commands and must then act in obedience to a higher Parent, and to a greater Law, namely, the Law of God. The same happens, at times, with regard to the husband and the wife. Of course, a good wife continually wishes to do that which will please her husband and she is happy to be subservient to him as far as may be. But when it comes to a point of conscience and the two relations clash, the relations of the Heavenly Bridegroom and the earthly husband—it is not always easy to decide upon a fitting course of action. But we may at least be certain that we must not be actuated by selfishness, nor by a desire to avoid persecution, nor to please men—we must stand on the side of honesty to God, fealty to the King of kings and a regard for the Truth as it is in Jesus. Do try, if it is possible, and I believe it is possible in every case, to harmonize all your relationships, so that neither one of them shall thrust another, but each shall walk in its own path.  
IV. So, Brothers and Sisters, my concluding remark shall be that as this is to be true in the little commonwealth of the heart and the home— IT OUGHT TO ALSO BE TRUE OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE.  
It is a great blessing when the members of the church do not thrust one another, but everyone goes in his own path. There are different orders of workers and these must cooperate. Alas, workers in a Sunday school do not always agree with one another. Then, workers in Sunday schools are not always so fond of workers in Ragged schools as they might be and, perhaps, the workers in Ragged schools may sometimes look down with coldness upon the distributors of tracts. It should never be so. We are like the different members of the body and the eye must not say to the foot, “I have no need of you,” neither must the hand say to the ear, “I have no need of you.” Every man must work according to the gift of the Holy Spirit. When a man steps out of his proper office into another, he makes a great mistake, both for himself and for the Church at large—and when one Brother envies another and picks holes in his coat, and finds fault with his service, he needs to hear that Inspired question, “Who are you that judges another man’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls.” I pray all the bands of workers to maintain a holy unanimity, being of one accord, minding the same thing, provoking one another to nothing but love and good works, striving for nothing except that they together may promote the Glory of the Lord Jesus!  
And as it is true in any one church with regard to the laborers, so it should be also with regard to the different ranks and classes of Christians. The rich should never say, “We do not want so many poor in the church,” neither should the poor man say, “Our minister favors the wealthy—there is more thought of the rich than there is of the poor.” There is just as much fault on one side as there is on the other in these things. While we sometimes find the purse-proud man looking down on the poor, it quite as often happens that the poor man takes umbrage where there is no need for it and is much more wicked in his jealousies than the other in his purse-pride. Let it never be so among Christians, but let the Brother of high degree rejoice that he is exalted and the poor that he is brought low! We need both and cannot do without either—and having both in the church, neither should one thrust another, but each should go in his own path.  
So with the educated and the uneducated. I have been saddened, oftentimes, when I have heard a sneer against a Brother who cannot speak grammatically. The Brother who can speak grammatically, perhaps, does not try to speak at all—and yet he sneers at the other and says, “Well, really, I wonder that such fellows should preach! What is the good of them?” Now, until you have done better than he does, do not find fault with him! God uses him, so surely you ought not to despise him! The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, that the learned and educated minister is necessary and useful—we have no right to sneer at those who have gone through a College and earned a high degree of learning, for they are useful. But on the other hand, who among us hears of such men as Richard Weaver and Mr. Carter, and others who are laboring among the poor and dares to despise them? If I might have my choice, I should prefer to work with them rather than with the fine-spun gentlemen, but still, every man in his own order, each man after his own fashion—let the one take his position and the other take his position—and never say a jealous or an angry word of each other, neither let one thrust another, but each one go straight on in his own path.  
So it ought to be with all our churches. In this great city of London, there is no excuse for anything like jealousy among the various Christian churches. If we were to build as many places of worship as would reach, set side by side, from here to London Bridge, on both sides of the road and without a single house or shop in all the distance—and if we were to put Gospel preachers into them all, I believe they could all be filled without any of them being a hindrance to another—for the millions in this city are so enormous that there is no chance of our being jostled by one another! We are like fishermen in the deep sea. Because there are a hundred boats, they need not, any of them, come off the worse. If there were 50,000 boats, they could all be full where the fish are so abundant. Perhaps you say, “I hear Mr. So-and-So, and what a dear man he is!” Very likely he is, but so is somebody else. It would be a great pity if everybody could hear only one man. It would be a very sad thing if everybody wanted to come to the Tabernacle, for we cannot make it any bigger than it is—and it would be a very wretched thing if everybody wanted to go somewhere else, for then we should have an empty house! But now, each one listening according as his own spiritual taste may guide him, or as his spiritual appetite may dictate to him, we are formed into different communities which prosper individually, but which would glorify God much more if all disunion were cast aside and if we sought each other’s good, profit and edification.  
And so, to conclude, it ought to be with the different denominations. I sometimes think that these will continue forever. They are of no hurt to the Church of God, but a great blessing, for some of them take up one point of the Truth of God which is neglected and others take up another—and so, between them all, the whole of the Truth of God is brought out! And it seems to me that the Church of Christ is even more one than if all the various sections were brought together into one grand ecclesiastical corporation, for this would, probably, feed some ambitious person’s vanity and raise up another dynasty of priestcraft, like the old Babylon of Rome! Perhaps it is quite as well as it is, but let each body of Christians keep to its own work and not sneer at the work of others. Let all feel, “We have this to do, and we will do it in the name of God.” Let each body of Christians try to correct its neighbor in its errors and mistakes, but let each work hand in hand and stand foot to foot in the common battle and the common service, for, O my Brothers and Sisters, the time will come when our little narrow jealousies will all melt away like the hoar frost when the sun arises! When the King shall come in His Glory, or we are carried to the other side of the stream of death and see beyond the curtain which parts us from the invisible world, we shall look with very different eyes upon some things which seem so important now! We shall then see that God has forbidden us to glory in anything but the Cross of Christ and that the one thing necessary, after all, to contend for was, “By Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”  
Now, may the Lord help us to go straight on in our own paths, not one thrusting another, but all working together for God. And if there are any among us who are not converted, let me remind them that they are out of order—and let me tell them what comes of that. When a man sets himself in opposition to God’s Laws, they crush him as surely as he is there! Throw yourself from the Monument and the law of gravitation will not be suspended to save you. Even so, if you are out of order with God, there is no help for it—and your destruction is certain if you remain opposed to Him. Oh, that you may be led, by Divine Grace, to get into order with God—to be reconciled unto God by the death of His Son! He tells you the way to get into order. It is this—simply trust Jesus! That is the way to rectify all errors. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! May God bless us all with that salvation, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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TRUTH STRANGER THAN FICTION  
NO. 2081

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY EVENING, MAY 30, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten.” Joel 2:25.**

LOST years can never be restored literally. Time once past is gone forever. Let no man make any mistake about this or trifle with the present moment under any notion that the flying hour will ever wing its way back to him. As well call back the north wind or fill again the emptied rain cloud, or put back into their quiver the arrows of the lord of day. As well bid the river which has hastened onward to the sea bring back its rolling floods, as imagine that the years that have once gone can ever be restored to us. It will strike you at once that the locusts did not eat the years—the locusts ate the fruits of the years’ labor—the harvests of the fields.

So the meaning of the restoration of the years must be the restoration of those fruits and of those harvests which the locusts consumed. You cannot have back your time. But there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give back to you the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours. It is a pity that they should have been eaten by your folly and negligence. But if they have been so, be not hopeless concerning them. “All things are possible to him that believes.” There is a power which is beyond all things and can work great marvels.

Who can make the all-devouring locust restore his prey? No man, by wisdom or power, can recover what has been utterly destroyed. God alone can do for you what seems impossible. And here is the promise of His Grace—“I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten.” By giving to His repentant people larger harvests than the land could naturally yield, God could give back to them, as it were, all they would have had if the locusts had never come. And God can restore your life which has up to now been blighted and eaten up with the locust and sin, by giving you Divine Grace in the present and in the future. He can yet make it complete and blessed and useful to His praise and glory. It is a great wonder— but Jehovah is a God of wonders and in the kingdom of His Grace miracles are common things.

We shall go into this subject, which I think will be very interesting to those here present who have wasted years to mourn over, since they have up to now done nothing for God, nor even for themselves. The locust has eaten everything. The prospect of recovering the wreckage of a life must be full of interest to them.  
I. I shall first speak upon locust-eaten years. YEARS WHICH THE LOCUST HAS EATEN—what sort of years are these?

First and darkest of all, there are the dead years of sin, of reprobation, impenitence and unbelief. Those years without God and without Christ. Those years without life as to spiritual things! What a condition to be in! Oh, how many, many years have some passed in this horrible state! We, all of us—those of us with whom God has dealt very graciously—always feel sorry that even our most early days should have been spent in sin. I was brought to know the Lord when I was fifteen years of age and I have often said that I could wish I had known Him fifteen years before. Oh, that one could, from the very earliest openings of one’s eyes have seen the light of the Eternal!

Oh, that the first pulsing of life had been with Jesus! Oh, that the first flowing of the blood had been consecrated with the life of God within the soul! But yet I fear there are very many to whom the idea of conversion in boyhood and youth seems almost too good to be true. They have now reached thirty, forty, fifty years of age, and are still unregenerate, unrenewed. I could weep over you! We frequently meet with people older, still, whose many years have all been graceless, locust-eaten years. Ah me, how sad to be old and unsaved—feeble with age and yet without strength unto God!

Now remember. That eating of the locust—that devouring of everything by the caterpillars, meant a laborious year, because that year the people plowed and sowed and watched their crops, and their labor was all in vain. So, he that does nothing for God and has no spiritual blessing, still has to work and to labor. None toil harder than those who are the slaves of lust, pleasure, self and Satan. These people often labor as in the very fire. The way of transgressors is hard. They have to toil and slave and tug and strive. The yoke of the world is not easy and its burden is not light. And nothing comes of it. This is the gall of the bitterness. One does not mind working when there is a good reward for it. But to plow and sow and then to reap nothing because the locust has eaten it! This is misery.

The wage sweetens the toil. But when the wage is death, the toil is horrible. Yet this is the way of unregenerate men—they spend years in laborious rebellion and the harvest is not after their desire. They toil under the impulse of some strong desire and their desire perishes. They work, they slave—but nothing comes of it. It is a year of labor but it is labor in vain.

The locust year was particularly a year of great disappointment. The people looked for a harvest. In fact, they seemed to see it spring up and then it was devoured before their eyes. Even so, the ungodly man—the man who has no faith in Christ—is often charmed with the prospect of a happiness which he never reaches. A little more and he will be content. He gets a little more. And this increases his thirst for yet another draught from the golden cup. Run as we may when the heart shoots with its farreaching bow, still the arrows are beyond us. The student must know a little more. The ambitious must climb a little higher upon the ladder of honor and then he will be at ease. He learns, he reaches the honor—but the ease is still as distant as ever—perhaps it is even further off.

Earth’s cups, when they seem most sweet, only hold salt water which beget a growing thirst. We swallow the horse-leech when we drain the chalice at the feasts of this world and an insatiable craving follows. The locust-eaten years of sin are years of labor and years of bitter disappointment.

And, alas, they are fruitless years. O Sirs, what have some of you ever done in this world? I heard of one who had made a half a million pounds of money and he died. A Christian man said, “Now, I call that man’s life a dead failure. What has he done? He has accumulated what he could not enjoy. He has scraped it together and he has made no use of it whatever.” Such persons remind me of crows who will hoard, I know not what—all kinds of treasures and trash. And what do they do but hide them in a hole behind the door? They cannot do anything with them. They have no sense to use them—whether they steal the abbot’s ring or a bit of wire, it is all the same to them. And to misers what can be the difference between a thousand pounds or a thousand pins, since they use neither? Alas, many have the power to get, but have not the faculty to use what they have gotten. Their years are eaten with the locust.

Think again—are there not numbers of men that are just living strainers of bread and meat and beer and that is all that you can say of them? They go to and fro in the world but if they were tied neck and heels together and flung into the Atlantic nobody would miss them, except perhaps the poor wife and children who would be more comfortable without them than with them. I speak not too severely, for we meet with many such persons who are nature’s blot—creation’s blank. These are clouds without rain, wells without water—the wrapping and packing of what should have been useful lives. Why have they burdened the earth at all?

Others who are decent, respectable and quiet people—what does their whole life come to? It is like some of those sponge plants which appear very large when you have them in your hand but you can compress them into the tenth part of nothing. Are not many mere blown-up appearances? It is a biggish sort of life—especially when the man himself describes it. But if it comes to the reality of it, the good that is done is nothing. God is not glorified, broken hearts are not healed, holiness is not extended— nothing is in the whole performance but the very reverse of what should have been. It is a drawback rather than an addition to that which is good in the world.

What an awful thing for a man to have lived to be forty-five and to have done nothing! If we will not spare a fruitless tree in the orchard, which, year after year has brought forth nothing—if we quite understand the justice of the verdict, “Cut it down. Why cumbers it the ground?”—surely such a sharp sentence followed up by a swift blow of the axe, might go out against many here present! For up to now they have been wasters, cumberers, doing nothing worth the doing. The locust has eaten up every year that they have plowed and sown. Nothing has come of the whole of their lives. Yet, listen to me—if you are led by Divine Grace to confess your sin

and turn unto the Lord your God and “rend your hearts and not your garments”—even to you God can restore the years which the locust has eaten! I beseech you, hear this marvelous promise. And think of it and do not miss it from want of effort.

Now, very briefly let me mention that there is another sense in which the text can be used. There are some whose years have been eaten by the locust through great sorrow, depression and disappointment. They remember those happy springtide days when they greatly rejoiced in God. But for some reason they dropped their confidence and lost their hope. Their sky was darkened and the wintry winds of despair howled around them. I am grieved for dear friends on whom the chill of long depression has fallen with terrible power. I frequently meet with these sons and daughters of melancholy and my sorrow is that I am so often unable to deal wisely with them.

It has been my privilege in many cases to be the bearer of comfort but in the very act my own soul has often been heavily burdened. Very precious children of God may fall into the Slough of Doubt. Diamonds may be hidden away in dark mines. Some of God’s rarest pearls lie deep in the dark waters. Now you that are thus losing year after year and sighing—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?”*

do not lose all heart about it. Prisoners who have been confined till it almost seemed that the moss would grow on their eyelids have yet been set free. Do not utterly despair, for here stands this gracious promise—“I will restore unto you the years which the locust has eaten.” God can give you back all those years of sorrow and you shall yet be the better for them.

You shall have to thank God for all this sadness of heart. It is a strange story that I tell you. Perhaps you will not believe me tonight, but you shall live to see it true—God will grind sunlight for you out of your black nights—in the oven of affliction Divine Grace will prepare the bread of delight. I said this to a friend with whom I have often conversed—an earnest Christian woman who for three years had defied all attempts to comfort her. We had prayed with her. Her godly, gracious husband, a minister of Christ, had laid out his heart to cheer her but she had refused to be comforted.

And yet to my great joy, the other day I received a letter saying, “The Lord has opened the gates of my dungeon. My captivity has ended. And though I am sick in body, that does not matter, for I am restored in spirit.” Yes, the Lord can loose the captives and He does it. There are dear children of God who have been ten or twenty years the victims of despair to whom, nevertheless, this promise has, in the fullness of time, been sweetly fulfilled, “I will restore unto you the years which the locust has eaten.”

And now, having given you those two versions of the text, let me give you another. I speak of those whose years have been wasted by their being in a low state of Grace. Many Christians are barely Christians. We may not be judges of our Brethren. But if some professors are Christians, it is in a very small way. They remind me of the answer given by the American boy when he went to Sunday school and the teacher asked him, “Is your mother a Christian?” “Yes, Sir,” he said, “she is a Christian.” “Is your father a Christian?” The boy answered, “Well, Sir, he may be a Christian but he has not worked at it much lately.”

We know quite a company of that kind—perhaps they fear the Lord but they have not worked at it much. Their religion has no practical power over them. Salvation is not by works. But when a man is saved, then straightway he begins, by God’s Grace, to work for the Lord. And therefore where nothing is done for Jesus we are apt to fear that nothing has been done by Jesus. There are talkers around us whose years are eaten up by the locust of idleness, the worm of worldliness, the worm of frivolous amusement. They seem to be like Hosea’s “silly dove” without heart. I do not judge them—but I look at them with pitying wonder. How can they be content to be such useless things? How can they be satisfied to be so neutral, so double-minded, when all around them the stern conflict rages?

I wish they would give us a little more evidence upon which to judge whether they are for us or for our enemies. They attend a place of worship. They come to a Prayer Meeting once in twelve months if any friend calls in and asks them to do so. They are glad that there is a Sunday school connected with the Church—they do not know what it is doing. They have never entered it. They love their minister but do not contribute to his maintenance. They admire the Doctrines of Grace but never attempt to spread them. In fact they spend their time in diligently doing nothing and in quietly wearing the cloak of a profession which has nothing in it.

Well, now, dear Friend, this is a wretched kind of thing. If you are a Christian, be a Christian. Let your heart be warm towards holy things or else let them alone. Cold meats are well enough but cold religion is the sickliest diet upon which a man can live. Serve up religion hot, Sir, or not at all! If it grows lukewarm, neither God nor man will have it. For Jesus, who is both God and Man, has said, “I will spit you out of My mouth.” He cannot endure it, who is the most patient of all beings.

The years which the locust has eaten in some professors are far too many. And I would earnestly exhort any Brother or Sister here who has had the locusts at him for a long time—remember the promise stands, if you will avail yourself of it, “I will restore unto you the years that the locust has eaten.” It is high time that you saw to it, for your case is a bad one. It is ill to be trading so ill, when a merchandise so precious as time is being lost.

Once more only, lest by these varied instances I should weary you. There are some in whom their years have been eaten up by the locusts in a worse way than that of mere idleness, namely, by the sin of open backsliding. This is one of the plagues of the Church of God. Alas, for the many who did run well but have suddenly stopped and run no longer in

the Divine road! This is our frequent sorrow, even to heartbreak. We believe in the perseverance of the saints but many are not saints and therefore do not persevere.

Nominal saints exhibit no final perseverance. Saints who have only the name of saints last but for a time and then die away. In too many, the life of God rather lingers, than grows—their religion is so very weak that they exhibit the signs of disease rather than of health. They wander away from their Lord and Master because they do not sufficiently feel His attractive power. Oh, that the Lord would be gracious in restoring such wanderers! Do I address any who have almost given up attendance on the means of Divine Grace? I know you have no comfort in such a course. I am sure, if you are a child of God, you cannot be happy in the world—you cannot be content while leaving Christ, but are in a miserable way.

Grace has spoiled you for the world and it is of no use your attempting to get comfort out of it. Your only hope of happiness lies Godward. You must come back. You must come back to the good old way. Do not linger, but return at once. Every hour that you linger the locusts are eating up every green and fruitful thing within your spirit—why give the Destroyer so much space? You are doing no good. You are getting no good. Why remain as you are? You are doing mischief. You are grieving the Spirit of God—wake up from so deplorable a state. You are not winning souls but you are ruining souls by your inconsistency.

God have mercy upon you! Come, and receive His restoring mercy. He will not cast you away but He bids me say to you that if you turn to Him according to the teaching of this chapter, He will yet restore to you the years that the locust has eaten. It is a great wonder. But you shall see it— if you will seek the Lord yet again. So much then about locust-eaten years, for I want to get at a happier subject.

II. What does God say? “I will restore unto you the years that the locust has eaten.” This is our second head—LOCUST-EATEN YEARS RESTORED.

Notice, this is Divine Work, “I will restore unto you the years that the locust has eaten.” You cannot get them back. Nobody can give them back to you. But the Omnipotent Jehovah says, “I will restore them to you.” Can you believe that? All things are possible with God. Those dead years, those doleful years, those desponding years, those idle years, those backsliding years—all the harvests of them, God can give them back to you. Look away from yourself and trust in the miracle-working God while you hear this word of promise, “I will restore unto you the years which the locust has eaten.”

But notice that this restoration follows upon a true and genuine repentance. Let me read the Words of the Lord to you and you listen to them and obey. “Therefore also now, says the Lord, turn you even to Me with all your heart and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning: and rend your heart and not your garments and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and repents Him of the evil. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar and let them say, Spare Your people, O Lord and give not Your heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people.”

Repent, then. This is the great teaching and operation of the Gospel at its commencement upon the heart. “Repent and be baptized everyone of you,” is its first cry from the wilderness. “Turn you every man from his evil ways.” “Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?” To go on in impenitence is to miss the blessing of my text. To go on in spiritual deadness—to go on in backsliding—will never bring the restoration of lost years. But he that shall genuinely confess his sin—shall heartily hate it and shall turn unto God through Jesus Christ, trusting in the precious blood of His atonement—shall receive the unspeakably precious benediction of the Lord, the Restorer. Such a man shall plead this promise with God and have it graciously fulfilled—“I will restore unto you the years that the locust has eaten.” It is a very remarkable promise but you see to whom it is given.

Yet linger a moment over this mystery of love. Picture the spirits of evil, year after year, bearing away from the fields of human life all their harvests. Where have they borne the precious products? Ask where has the fire carried the forests it has devoured? Or where has the flood borne away the navies it has swallowed up? To call back these harvests would be a task which only madness could attempt. Fly, swift-winged angels! But you cannot overtake the spoilers—neither could your eyes of fire detect the caverns in which the robbers have stored their wealth. The fruits of wasted years are gone, gone past hope. Yet, behold, the Lord who called light out of darkness and will yet bring forth life from the tomb, declares that these long-lost spoils shall be restored!

And shall it not be done? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Does not the very difficulty, yes, impossibility of the enterprise make it the more worthy of the Almighty? Here is a marvelous thing and here is, therefore, a work fit for Him who does great marvels. To him that believes all things are possible and this also is among the “all things.” Never was a fairy tale more strange, or a dream of Arabian nights more romantic. Yet here it stands in sober words and many a time in solid fact these words have been true. When we come into the region where the Lord works, we come at once into contact with miracles and walk in the midst of marvels. Then as we see Grace upon Divine Grace, we have to cry, “O world of wonders! I can say no less.”

This promise is only fulfilled by the exceeding Grace of God. And it shall be my business for a minute to show you how the Grace of God works it out. We take, for instance, a man or a woman who has been living for many years in known sin. Those years have all been wasted. How can God give us back the fruit of those wasted years? He can. He can. See that woman? She is a sinner, a common sinner of the town. She has spent her days and her nights in wantonness. She comes into the room where the

Savior lies reclining at the dinner table and His feet are not far from the door. She bears a choice box of ointment. She has, besides that, eyes full of tears and she stands behind Him weeping.

She washes His feet with those tears. She loosens the luxuriant tresses of her head, those nets in which she had entangled many a living soul and she bows down and wipes those feet which with her tears she washed. While she kisses them with her lips, she wipes them with her hair. Now, that woman, in that day, had through Grace restored to her the years which the locust had eaten. Who shall dare to say that she stands second to anybody in the service of her Lord and Master? She loves much because she has had much forgiven. And though I say not that the greatness of her sin could ever be an advantage, yet I do say that the greatness of her love that springs out of the greatness of her Lord’s forgiveness did put her in the very front rank of those who served and loved Him.

She had been last but mighty Grace placed her among the first and she has never lost that leading position. And you, too, my Hearer, though you may have been so many years a sinner, can yet be so transformed as to overtake the saints. God can give you such a true repentance, such a burning love, such an enthusiastic consecration that during the rest of your days you shall make up for all those wasted years. The prey shall be taken from the mighty—years seized by evil shall be dragged back from the devil’s den. And all the memory and outcome of them transformed by the action of Divine Grace and gratitude shall be laid as treasure at your Redeemer’s feet. By giving you a deeper love, a more tense passion, a fuller consecration on account of the greatness of your sin, the Lord can restore to you the years that the locust has eaten. Did Paul lose those years in which he was a persecutor and injurious? Did not his quickened pace and his deeper self-knowledge make all the after years of his life ten times more full of power for good?

I will suppose the locust has eaten many years by your being in great sorrow—and I believe that the Lord can easily make up to you that grievous loss. The wear and fret of grief are very great but there is a remedy. Have I not seen some that have passed through years of deep soul distress who have been all their lifetime much the better for it? They have been more able to sympathize with poor, tried saints. They have had a truer, deeper, richer experience. And, as a rule, they have known the Gospel of Christ better and they have had a more tender love to Him who brought them up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay.

Personally I have been much the gainer by my sad hours and my sick days. I reckoned those times lost in which I was unfit for service. But I think I was in error—for I perceive that the fields which have lain fallow repay the unfertile season sevenfold when the bearing time returns. Do not think, dear children of God, if you have been for years in despondency that it need turn out to be a total loss to you. It is a great evil and mischief. But God can restore to you the years that the locust has eaten. Your ills may become wells of comfort for others. The Lord can bring so much good out of the evil, so much light out of the darkness, so much joy out of the sorrow that you shall one day say, “I thank God that I was shut up in Doubting Castle. I thank God I did sink in the deep mire where there was no standing for He has restored to me the years that the locust has eaten.”

And if, again, the locust has eaten up your years through your being cold and indifferent and idle, God can recover you from this sad mischief. He will grant you Divine Grace to repent bitterly of this great sin. For a great sin it is to lose a moment which should be used for Jesus. But yet, if the Lord shall visit you with an intense hatred of such idleness and sting you into action and at the same time draw you by the cords of love into full consecration, you will, perhaps, by redoubled zeal, recover the lost seasons. Oh, that God would make it so with those who up to now have sadly loitered in the race! Oh, that our smoldering logs would become flaming firebrands! Oh, that our sluggards could be aroused into enthusiasts!

I have known men living orderly and regular lives for many years and yet they have done nothing for their Lord. Such sober people move on and on and on and on. But they make little progress. Steady, steady, steady, steady, jog—trot—life has no fire in it for them and they know no reason for ardor. They never get out of breath with zeal. They never exhaust themselves with excitement. They accomplish little from want of fire. I have known a great many Christians about whom I have never had any fear of their being consumed by their vehemence. They are such proper people that even if the Lord Himself were to come they would never cry “Hosanna!” in the street. They are never warmed into anything like enthusiasm—as soon hope to warm a marble statue.

These are the folks who, after a while, grow negligent and the locusts eat up the years of their regularity and all the gains of their sobriety. I am sorry, indeed, to hear of a broken reputation, or a profession openly disgraced. But what a mercy it is when, even by this terrible means, dead professors are driven to turn to God with full purpose of heart! When these, who slept in all the chill propriety of spiritual death are aroused to seek the Lord penitently, we see no more of their dull commonplace. If restored by a renewal of spiritual strength before they have openly declined into sin, the change is equally manifest.

Now they must fly like the wind, though before they could only creep like the snail. They must do everything at a great heat with all their heart and soul and strength. A month or so of such quickened, intense work full often effects more result than years of slow, feeble, formal routine. Oh, to live while we live! Once fully charged with the Divine Power we can achieve as much in a day as before we performed in a year! If you, as a preacher, come back to God and get the Holy Spirit to anoint you, one sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit will be worth ten thousand preached without it.

If you, as a worker, go to your Sunday school class with a Divine Anointing resting upon you, there will be more children brought to Christ by a little of your living, loving, teaching than ever would have been by whole years of your unspiritual talk. Thus the Lord God can, by His endowing us with greater power and firing us with fuller zeal restore to us the years that the locust has eaten. The strong swimmer will soon recover the space through which he has drifted—when omnipotence is in every stroke the man is soon back to his right place, and before long he is ahead of where he would have been.

Do not invite the locusts to come, I pray you, in the hope of getting back that which they devour. No! No! No—a thousand times NO! We do not want the locusts at all—we cannot endure sin, or doubt, or trifling. We want every year to be fruitful—fruitful with a hundred-fold increase. But if the evils have come, let us turn to God with penitence and faith and He can yet restore to us the losses they have caused.

I think I said, also, that in certain cases the locust has eaten up much of the fruit of life through backslidings. Many are in this case. But if they will return from their backslidings, the Lord can give them back whatever they have lost. I have known persons backsliding very sorrowfully, very much to the grief of the Church. But God has visited them in Divine Grace and brought them back and they have been better men afterwards. Yes, I venture to say, even better men than before they actually offended. I have not been thankful for their open offense. But I have been very thankful for their restoration and for the humility and other graces which have been the result of their bitter experience.

They used to be very top-lofty once, but now they carry no flags and banners. Such grand fellows they were! But after their wandering, when they came back, they were willing to be in the rear rank and to do commonplace work. They were once very reserved—you could not get near them. But now they value a kind word and return a loving salutation very gratefully. They are now more like their Brethren and more willing to be on a level with them, and yet their religion is a great deal deeper and more sincere. They do not carry so much sail—but they have more cargo.

I have known some that, at first conversion, have not been very clear in the Gospel but who have been made evangelical by their discoveries of their own need of mercy. They could not spell the word “grace.” They began with a “G” but they very soon went on with an “F,” till it spelt very much like “free will” before they had done with it. But after they have learned their weaknesses—after they have fallen into serious fault and God has restored them—or after they have passed through deep depression, they have sung a new song. In the school of repentance they have learned to spell. They began to write the word “free,” but they went on from free, not to “will,” but to “grace” and there it stood in capitals, “FREE GRACE.”

By coming to know themselves they came also to understand what Divine Grace meant and they began to read their title written in the blood of Christ, instead of reading it in themselves. And they became clearer in their divinity and truer in their faith than ever they were before. I do not want you to know the locusts of backsliding but if they have ever come and you have been eaten up by them, I pray that God may restore to you the years that the locust has eaten. I want you to lay hold of this promise and go home and plead with God that it may be fulfilled to you so that the rest of your life may be so bright and so clear, with the light of the Spirit of God, that as much as possible, you may make up for lost time. God grant that your desire may be fulfilled!

III. I have done when I have said just a word or two upon a third point. Here are locust-eaten years and here are those locust-eaten years restored—and now, WHAT IS TO COME OF IT? If God restores to us the years that the locust has eaten, He has done a great deal for us. But notice that He is able to do more and will do it, for what does He say? He says, in the twenty-sixth verse, “And you shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that has dealt wondrously with you: and My people shall never be ashamed.”

What a promise! You half-starved professors—you that are moping and mourning—who rise from the tables of the world unsatisfied—devoured with a griping hunger! If you turn to God with full purpose of heart He will fill you with heavenly bread and give you as real enjoyment as ever He gave to the best of His people. You, too, shall have your mouth satisfied with good things and your youth shall be renewed like the eagle’s. The Lord does nothing by halves—if He receives a prodigal back, He does not send him down into the kitchen to be fed with broken victuals—He receives him into the best parlor and puts on him the best robe and kills for him the fatted calf.

O you cast-down and troubled ones, you do not know how near you are to joy! O sad Hearts, the morning is breaking in the east for you! You are heavy tonight. And well you may be! You know your sin and that may well make you mourn. But ring the bells of Heaven, the sinner is repenting! And if he turns with repentance to God, the richest joy, the choicest Covenant blessings that belong only to the chosen family shall be his portion at once! Is it not written, “You shall eat in plenty and shall be satisfied and shall praise the name of the Lord”?

What shall come of it? Why this shall come of it—that you who have had the most to mourn over shall be among the loudest singers. You shall praise the name of the Lord your God that has dealt wondrously with you. You will cry, with tears running down your cheeks, “Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin?” I was a sinner up to the neck in filth. A despairing soul shut up in the blackest darkness. But He has washed me and He has brought me out into the light and put a new song into my mouth. He is a glorious God—this God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I pray you may have intense enjoyment of His marvelous Grace and may pour forth your whole souls in His praise.

Next, you shall have most clear and sweet communion with God. Hear what the Prophet further says, “And you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I am the Lord your God and none else and My people shall never be ashamed.” Wonderful! Wonderful that a far-off outcast sinner should know his Covenant God and should say, “He is my God,” and should enter into fellowship with Him and should enjoy all the privileges

of a friend of God. Wonderful that all his fear should be gone and that he should, instead, be full of holy confidence and have a right to hold up his head and never be ashamed! It shall be so, dear Hearer. True repentance shall bring rest to you. Only trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and your fellowship shall be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ henceforth and evermore.

And then, best of all, the anointing shall come upon you. You remember how the chapter goes on to say that God would pour out His spirit upon all flesh so that even the handmaiden and the servant, the very least of the people of God, should be moved by the Spirit of God to speak in God’s name and should be enabled to realize things which before had been deemed mere visions and dreams? I hope that the Lord has some here, at this hour, who did not know Him when they came within these walls, who, at this time, shall be called by His Grace and before long shall begin to tell to others what the Lord has done for them.

O Lord, find ministers among these miserable sinners! Raise up for yourself witnesses from among these careless youths! I think I see the angel even now, and hear the voice from off the Throne, crying, “Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?” Oh, that one of the seraphims might take from off the altar the live coal and touch some unclean lip and inflame some cold heart and make the purified man to answer, “Here am I, send me.” Then shall you be sent to tell abroad the riches of the Divine Grace of which you have tasted—the freeness of the love which has been manifested to you. May the Lord grant it!

May the locusts all be blown away by a strong north wind and never darken the air again! May these wasted years all be given back to you and may you become the Lord’s living, loving servants from this time forth. Oh for the highest form of spiritual life! Oh for the greatest possible usefulness! Oh for grace to fill out our poor shriveled lives till they arrive at a heavenly fullness! Oh for the sacred breath of God to fill out all the canvas of our capacity! Lord, the sail flaps. The boat scarcely moves. We lie becalmed in indolence! Send us a breeze, my God! Grant us the wind of Your Spirit to fill out every sail that by Your Grace we may fly over the waves. Amen.

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WONDERS  
NO. 1098

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 23, 1873, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And praise the name of the Lord your God, that has dealt wondrously with you.”  
Joel 2:26.**

**IN the case which is particularly mentioned in this chapter, the nation of Israel had very grievously gone astray and therefore they were visited by a very remarkable chastisement. An unusual plague of locusts devoured all the fruit of the field and the people were vexed with a sore famine. The day of the Lord was very terrible and none of them could abide it. The Prophet Joel was commissioned to exhort them to repentance and if, indeed, they listened to his earnest entreaties their later history was bright with mercy. By God’s good hand upon them, they were brought to repentance—they wept and cried to God and then the same God who with His left hand had been wondrous in chastisement, was, with His right hand, equally wonderful in blessing and enriching them.**

**He loaded their floors with wheat and made their vats to overflow with wine and oil. He restored unto them the years which the locust had eaten, so that they ate in plenty and were satisfied and praised the name of the Lord, who had dealt wondrously with them. He dealt with then by way of wonders when He smote them and by way of wonders when He returned to them in mercy. It was no unusual thing for the nation of Israel to meet with wonders—they were cradled in prodigies, they grew up amid miracles, they dwelt among marvels—the history of the favored tribes is a long list of miracles.**

**Do you not remember how the Lord brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, what marvelous things He did among the sons of Ham and what wonders He worked in the fields of Zoan? By wonders they were led out of Egypt and brought through the Red Sea, upon whose shore they sang triumphantly, “Who is like unto You O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” Their course in the great howling wilderness for 40 years was a march of wonders!**

**When the manna dropped from Heaven and the water leaped from the Rock, the Lord dealt wondrously with them. There was not a single day of the 40 years which did not open and close with wonders—the day was shaded by the cloudy pillar and the night glowed with the light of the fiery cloud! Nor when the desert journey was over did God’s wonders cease. The river was divided before them. What ailed you, O Jordan, that you were driven back? They entered into their land and began its conquest by a wonder, for the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground—and they continued its conquest by the same marvelous power, for mighty kings fled before them and the sun and the moon stood still while they smote the hostile armies!**

**When they had driven out the Canaanites and were established in the land of promise, they sinned greatly, but what wonders of deliverance God worked for them when they cried to Him in their trouble! You have but to remember the names of Gideon and of Barak, of Jephtha and of Samson and you see before you wonder after wonder! The Lord dealt wondrously with them! In all this the Israelites were a type of true Believers, for with all His chosen ones the Lord has dealt wondrously. We frequently hear the complaint that we live in an age of dullness—we have no adventures now and events are few. Happy are we that it is so, for it has been well said—“Blessed are the times which have no history.”**

**If peace and prosperity are commonplace, long may the commonplace continue! But, indeed, no thoughtful man’s life is uninteresting or barren of marvels. A life real and earnest cannot be devoid of memorable occurrences. He who thinks so must either be unspiritual or he must be oblivious of his own inner history—he must be like the tribes in the wilderness, of whom it is written, “They forget the works of the Lord, and the wonders which He has showed them.” Foolish people run to fiction for wonders, but gracious men can tell far greater wonders, upon which the words, “NO FICTION,” might be written in capital letters.**

**The wonders which we can speak of far surpass the inventions of imagination—when we recount them we may appear unto men to dream, but in very truth no dreamer could dream after such a fashion! Speak of “Arabian Nights,” English days and nights have far exceeded them in marvel! “God does great things past finding out, and wonders without number.” I have seen a volume entitled, “The World of Wonders,” and another named, “Ten Thousand Wonderful Things.” The Believer is within *himself* a world of wonders and his life reveals 10,000 wonderful things. Mysteries, riddles, paradoxes and miracles make up Christian experience!**

**God has dealt wondrously with us! Of these wonders I shall try and speak at this time, according to that precept of David—“Talk you of all His wondrous works,” and I shall dwell upon them after the following manner—first, we shall testify that God’s dealings toward us have been full of wonder and lead us to praise Him as Jehovah, our God. Secondly, we shall remark that because of this, we ought to look for wonders in the future, and if I may speak so paradoxically, it should not be wonderful to us to see wonders. And, then, thirdly, we shall close by observing that in a future state we shall yet more clearly see that Jehovah has dealt wondrously with us.**

I. **THE LORD’S DEALINGS WITH US UP TILL NOW HAVE BEEN FULL OF WONDER AND LEAD US TO PRAISE HIM. Let us speak of what we know and have tasted and handled. The Lord has dealt wonderfully toward us. Begin at the beginning. It was no small wonder that He should love us before the earth was. There were many other things to exercise Jehovah’s thought besides thinking upon man—“What is man, that You are mindful of him?” And if He must think of man there were many kinds of thoughts that the Lord might have had towards man besides thoughts of love. Yet the Lord was mindful of us and though we are poor and needy, the Lord thinks upon us.**

**“How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them!” Why were they thoughts of love? Admiring gratitude gives us the only reply. And if they must be thoughts of love, yet it is a wonder of wonders that they should be thoughts of love to *me*! Each Christian will feel it to be so in his own personal case—“Why did Divine love settle itself upon *me*?” Well might we say of our God what David said of Jonathan, “Your love to me was wonderful.” The song of the Virgin may be upon each one of our lips, “He has put down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted them of low degree.” He has thought of us who were inconsiderable, while the great ones of the earth have been passed by.**

**Eternal love in its sovereignty is a marvel and comes from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. That Divine love should have continued faithful notwithstanding our unworthiness of it and the provocations by which we have tried it, is another wonder! The immutability of His counsel calls for adoring wonder. Has there been a day since we have been responsible for our actions in which we have not tested the faithfulness of God by our transgressions? The children of Israel for 40 years provoked God in the wilderness—were they not most sadly the prototypes of ourselves? Yet never, never has the Lord paused or changed in His love. As it is said of our blessed Redeemer, “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” And so is it true that the “Father Himself loves you,” and rests in His love.**

**If the Divine love is, in itself, a wonder, Brothers and Sisters, it is equally a wonder that, in consequence of this love, God should enter into Covenant with us. He has promised us a thousand mercies and He has engaged Himself to the performance of those promises in a remarkable way which increases the consolation of the promise. He has given us His oath—“I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn unto David, My servant.” Now, by David is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, and God has entered into covenant with us in the Person of the Son of David—a covenant ordered in all things and sure, confirmed by oath, and sealed by blood—by which He has bound Himself, by His own word and oath, that in blessing, He will bless us and glorify His Son in us.**

**Behold and wonder—the Infinite enters into covenant with the finite—the Holy engages Himself to sinners! We well may sit before the Lord as David did, in astonishment, and then say from our heart of hearts, “Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that You have brought me up to now?” It is equally wonderful that a part of the Covenant should run thus—“I will be a Father unto them, and they shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty.” If God wanted sons, beside the Only-Begotten, He might have chosen yon bright seraphs who outshine the sun! Why did He look here, upon this ant hill, to elect a seed out of such ants as we are? Why did He come down in the Person of His Son to make a match with our frail humanity?**

**O, matchless Grace, that God should adopt for His children those who were heirs of wrath even as others! Behold, of these stones He has not only raised up children unto Abraham, but unto Himself also—“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” Beloved, let us admire and wonder, that being His sons and daughters, the Lord should stake His honor upon the bringing of us securely to Heaven. For in the Covenant He has pledged all His attributes for His people’s security. He cannot be a glorious God unless His people ultimately are a glorified people! He cannot be true unless His people are kept to the end, for He has pledged His honor for their safety.**

**Jesus has said, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands.” Yes, the Lord Himself has declared that, “Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God’s Word shall not fail. Sun and moon shall cease their shining, but He will not alter the thing which has gone forth from His lips. Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He spoken, and shall He not make it good? By shifting the kaleidoscope we shall get another view of the same matchless wonders. The Lord has acted wondrously for us. Having loved us and covenanted with us, He gave us His Only-Begotten Son to be born in our nature and, in that nature, to suffer even unto death!**

**I will not attempt to show you that this is a wonder. I believe that the angels, though they have known of the Incarnation nearly these 1,900 years, have never ceased from astonishment for one single moment. That God, the Word, should be made flesh and should dwell among us and that He, at last, should bleed and die, excels everything that is wonderful besides! That Jesus Christ, the King of kings, should be a Servant of servants! That He who wrapped the earth in the swaddling bands of ocean and spread upon the firmament its vesture of blue should gird Himself with a towel and wash His disciples’ feet, is, beyond measure, a wonder!**

**Yet this sacred office He is virtually fulfilling every day in His perpetual intercession for His people and in all His acts of love towards them. This is, indeed, dealing wondrously with us! In the gift of the Lord Jesus we have obtained pardon, justification, sanctification and eternal life—all of which contain a mine of wonders! Perhaps to penitent hearts the chief of all these is the forgiveness of sin and of such sins as ours—**

*“Great God of wonders!   
All Your ways   
Are matchless, God-like, and Divine!   
But the fair glories of Your Grace   
More God-like and unrivalled shine.   
Who is a pardoning God like You?   
Or who has Grace so rich and free?   
In wonder lost, with trembling joy   
We take the pardon of our God   
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye   
A pardon bought with Jesus’ blood   
Who is a pardoning God like You?   
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”*

**Having given us His Son, the Lord has also, in Him, given us all things!**

**I put these things into words and sum them up, but, indeed, there is an ocean of thought in every syllable I utter, for the Lord has given us this world and worlds to come! He has given us earth and Heaven! He has given us time and eternity! “All are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” Believer, there is nothing in Providence but what is yours, for, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” That which looks like evil is good to you and the good has a goodness in it which you do not yet perceive—an inner core of excellent mercy which will be opened up for you in due time through the abounding wisdom of God.**

**Walk now abroad like Abraham of old and lift up your eyes to the north and to the south, and to the east and to the west, for all this has God given you in giving you His Son! He has dealt wondrously with us in this respect. He has made the angels to be our servitors, glad to wait upon us and to bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against a stone. Making the angels to be our servants, He has made the angels’ home to be our home, only He has brightened it with special glory for us. It is not written that many mansions are prepared especially for angels, but Jesus our Lord has gone before to prepare a place for us, made ready especially for our delight. Has He not said it—“I go to prepare a place for you?” To crown all, He has not given us merely the angels of Heaven, and Heaven itself, and Jesus to prepare a place for us, but He has given us Himself to be our God, for, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul,” and He has confirmed it—“I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” He has dealt wondrously for us, then.**

**Beloved, I shall now ask you to look at your own experience a little, you that know the Lord, when I remind you that the Lord has worked wonders in us. A little while ago we were dead. He made us live! We were loathsome lepers and He made us whole! We were blind and He gave us sight! We were lame and He made us leap! We were prisoners and He set us free! We were condemned and He justified us by His Grace! Marvelous were the changes which He worked in us—we marveled while we felt them! We wondered to feel the hardness of our heart removed! Years ago, nothing could move us, neither terrors nor love could stir us, but the Lord came and smote us as Moses smote the rock and straightway the waters of penitence gushed out—no, the rock itself became a standing pool!**

**What a change the Grace of God makes in the matter of repentance! The very man who was like adamant one day, becomes like wax the next. And he who never cared for God, nor wept for sin, loathes and abhors himself in the deepest and most humble contrition! Then, blessed be God, another wonderful change comes over him, for the man whom you saw broken in heart for sin, unable to derive a grain of comfort from anything around him, all of a sudden believes on the name of Jesus as it is brought home with power to his soul by the Holy Spirit! And straightway he wipes his eyes and his mourning is turned to dancing! He becomes supremely happy through faith and breaks forth with such songs as this—**

*“I will praise You every day,   
Now Your anger’s turned away;   
Comfortable thoughts arise,   
From the bleeding Sacrifice.”*

**Have not your souls, at times, been as hard and cold as marble and yet all of a sudden they have dissolved as ice melts in the sun? Has not your soul been tossed up and down like the Atlantic in a rage and yet been suddenly made smooth as a “molten looking glass” by God’s wondrous hands? Your experience within you, I am sure, is a verification of the statement that Jehovah your “God has dealt wondrously with you.” What wonderful conflicts our souls have known! What wonderful victories we have won through Divine Grace! Immortal sins, as they seemed to be, have received their deadly wound—unconquerable lusts have been made to bite the dust. Our victories shall never be forgotten, but the crown of them shall be put upon the head of Him who enabled us to be more than conquerors.**

**And what wonderful Revelations God has granted to us! Has He not full often poured a flood of light upon a Truth we saw but dimly before and made our spirit leap for joy? He has opened our eyes to behold wondrous things out of His Law. Why, I bear witness that sometimes when my Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, has been revealed in my soul, I have been unable to collect my thoughts of joy, much less to put them into language that should make them intelligible to other people, for the glory and the beauty are transcendent, and the love and the fellowship of Christ are transporting, ecstatic, ravishing—they bear the soul away!**

**These wonders of Revelation bring with them wonders of consolation. Have we not seen Christians dying full of life? Have we not seen them sinking in body, but soaring in soul—sick, weak, feeble, panting for their breath—and yet full of glory, ready to burst with the near wine of the kingdom that has been poured into their frail vessels? Have we not heard some of them sing between their groans such songs as only God’s sweet love could have taught them? The angels could sing no sweeter songs and assuredly they know no sweeter themes! Yes, Beloved, our inner experience has been full of wonders. We have committed terrible sins and suffered awful sorrows, but we have received wonderful pardons and enjoyed wonderful raptures!**

**We have passed through bloody fights, but we have gained wonderful victories! Black has been our darkness, but we have seen marvelous light! Coleridge has said, “that in wonder all philosophy begins, in wonder it ends, and wonder fills the inner space.” Truly I may say the same of all vital godliness! Another has said that, “the wise man only wonders once in his life, but that is always.” The same may be affirmed of the man made wise unto salvation! It may be true that our first wonder is born of ignorance and, at any rate, much of ignorance mingles surprise with it. But certainly, afterwards, our wonder becomes the parent of adoration. We wonder when we grow in Grace, not because we do not know, but we wonder at what we do know of amazing love and Grace.**

**Our little children look up to the stars and think them little pinholes in the sky and they say—***“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,*

*How I wonder what you are.”***But when the astronomer fits his glass to his eye and peers upon those mighty orbs, he says with greater truth, “How I wonder what you are!” Man’s wonder grows with his knowledge! As he wades into the river of wisdom he is less and less able to keep the foothold of calm reason and is more and more liable to be lifted up and carried off his feet by the current. It is so with Christian experience—the more we know of God, the more wonderful His dealings to us appear.**

**Now, Beloved, I must ask you, once again, to consider that, as the Lord has dealt wondrously towards us, wondrously for us, and wondrously in us, so He has also dealt wondrously *by*** us. What a field of battle, what a throne of victory the person of a poor child of God often becomes! Why, in this narrow plot of human clay, this little Isle of Man, this United Kingdom of soul and body, the powers of Heaven and Hell have mustered all their armies on many a day for conflict and God and His Grace and Truth have fought with Satan in our hearts, and, blessed be God, on that battlefield God has won many a victory over the allied armies of the world, the flesh and the devil!

In the plains of Mansoul, Michael and his angels have fought against the dragon and his angels—and the old dragon has been defeated and led captive. We have been garrisoned against besieging sins, delivered by force of heavenly arms from the power of our corruptions and brought forth by Sovereign Grace to delight in the Lord our God. When we get to Heaven we shall be “men wondered at,” set for signs and wonders forever, immortal witnesses of boundless Grace! We shall publish abroad, in the celestial streets, the “deeds of infinite love,” to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places should be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Will they not—the angels—say to one another, “Here are men and women who were tempted in a thousand ways, who carried about with them bodies of sin and death, who were tried with all sorts of afflictions and passed through much tribulation—but see what they are! See how God has triumphed in them! See how He has defeated the Evil One and overcome the powers of evil—for these tempted ones have come through great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! There is not one in whom God has been defeated! There is not one in whom the eternal purpose has failed! There is not one in whom electing love has been baffled! There is not one in whom the power of Christ’s blood has been ineffectual! There is not one unto whom the Spirit came without winning a complete victory! Let us praise our God anew and sing—‘Worthy is the Lamb.’ ”

Our God has also worked wondrously by some of us, fulfilling His promise, “the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.” His strength has been perfect in our weakness. There be some among us whose lips have fed many and yet they confess themselves to be emptiness itself—their word has brought life to the dead, yet in themselves they have no might—they have scattered the King’s enemies although they are by nature weak as water. God’s ministers are but trumpets of rams’ horns, yet when God has blown through them the blast has made the walls of Jericho to rock, and reel, and even fall to the ground! They are but lamps enclosed in earthen pitchers and yet by them Midian has been routed. Glory be to the name of Jehovah our God for this!

Thus you see God has done wondrously by us. Praise Him! Praise Him! Shall we pause and sing a Psalm of praise now? Our time would fail for that, but O, you people, praise Him! O you that know His wonders praise Him! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed out of the hand of the enemy! Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and bless the name of the Lord—“You shall bless Jehovah your God, for He has dealt wondrously with you.”—

*“Let the redeemed of the Lord  
The wonders of His Grace record   
How great His works! How kind His ways!   
Let every tongue pronounce His praise.”*

II. Our second and practical point is this—THEREFORE WE OUGHT TO EXPECT WONDERS. I shall but be able to give hints here. Do you labor this morning, any of you, under a horrible sense of your sinfulness? Do you seem, to yourselves, to be the blackest of all unpardoned souls, the nearest to being damned, already, of all living beings? Do you think that it would be the greatest wonder that was ever worked since the world began if you were saved?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I have a most precious thought to drop into your ear (may the Holy Spirit drop it into your heart)—“The Lord is a God of wonders: He only does wondrous things.” He delights to find in our sin and misery, room and opportunity for wonders of Grace. Cast yourself upon the mercy of our matchless God and He will make you as much a wonder of Grace as you have been a wonder of sin! Possibly some are saying, “I do not *feel* my sin as I should. I wish I did. I feel stupid and insensible—if I feel anything, it is only a sort of regret that I do not feel at all.”

My dear Brothers and Sisters, you will be a wonder, too, if God quickens you and makes you tender of heart. In you, too, He finds room for Divine Grace. He quickens the dead. He kills and makes alive. He wounds and He heals. Cry to the Lord to make you sensitive through His wounding and killing work. If your heart is cold as ice, ask Him to melt it, for it is written, “He sends out His Word and melts them.” Is it not promised in His own Covenant, “I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh?” The Lord of Love delights to work these transformations!

Do you feel dreadfully depressed in spirit? Have you been long so? Are you one of those who mourn without the light of the sun? Would it not be a great marvel if you should become one of the happiest of God’s people? It would. Therefore I believe you will be, for God delights to work wonders. Out of the innermost prison He can bring His servants. He made Paul and Silas sing in the inner dungeon and then he brought them out! He can make you sing now and bring you out into clear full liberty, and that on a sudden and today—“The Lord looses the prisoners; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises them that He bowed down.” The prisoners of the Lord shall not be prisoners forever. There is a jail delivery coming and they shall leap for joy.

Are you lying at death’s door? Do you cry like Heman, “My soul is full of troubles and my life draws near unto the grave”? Perhaps you are sick in body. Possibly you are distracted in mind and you are ready to die—and therefore you think that it is all over with you. What a desperate case yours seems! It would be a wonderful thing if you should yet obtain light and comfort, would it not? Again, let me remind you that if it would be wonderful, it is all the more *probable* with the Lord. He is full of compassion and He delights in mercy! The Lord heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. Wonderful are His ways of consoling His mourners—great is His wisdom and prudence in devising ways to bring back His banished ones. Therefore, ascribe you greatness unto our God and look for much mercy. Believe in God for boundless loving kindnesses.

If I preached a little Christ for little sinners, some of you would be wise to go somewhere else. But since I have Divine warrant for preaching a great Savior for great sinners who is able to help us through great difficulties, and to overcome great sins—why, He is the very Savior for you! O, bless Him and love Him! Trust Him and He will work wonders in your spirit. Possibly I speak this morning to one who has desperately backslidden. It is years ago since you knew the Truth and you have, by your sins, fastened upon your soul fetters of iron. Well, the Lord whom you have grieved is full of compassion and can take those fetters off! Yes, He can break the gates of brass and cut in sunder the bars of iron. Wonders of deliverance can the Lord work for His imprisoned children!

“Ah,” cries another, “but my case is merely a commonplace one! There is nothing remarkable about *me*.” My dear Friend, would not it be a wonderful thing if God were to save such a commonplace and insignificant person as you are? Well, rest in Him! Trust in Him and there shall be wonderful works worked for you, also—you shall be one of the men wondered at—in whom God’s Grace shall be fully revealed. Let me say in one word, if there is anything about any of you, Beloved, at this time which seems to render your salvation difficult and even impossible. If there is anything in your case that renders it hopeless and desperate—whether it be in your temporals or your spirituals—I would recommend you go with your case to the God of Wonders and see whether or not He does not, before long, make you say, “The Lord has dealt wondrously with me.”

To sinners who believe in Jesus, salvation is promised! And they shall have it! And to saints who trust in the Lord, deliverance is promised—and delivered they must be! God will work 10,000 wonders and He will never allow His promise to fall to the ground! I would earnestly remind all God’s servants that we ought to expect wonderful answers to prayer and we should pray as if we expected the God of Wonders to hear us. We ought to expect, in times of trouble, to see wonderful deliverances! If we seem quite shut up, we should then be sure of escaping, for it would be a wonder if we did, and therefore God will work it. We have grounds for expecting wonderful consolations if we are about to endure great troubles. We should look for wonderful joys between here and Heaven—we ought to be on our watchtower looking for wonderful discoveries of Christ’s beauties and His love. In fact we should always be looking for wonders and should wonder if wonders do not happen!

In the Church we are permitted to expect wonders. We are too much in the habit of going to the assembly for worship and sitting down and hearing sermons—and if half-a-dozen are converted we are astonished—but we ought to expect *thousands* to be converted! If the Church ever has faith enough to *expect* great things, she will *see* great things. When the Church falls upon dark times and error mars her beauty, we may expect God to work wonders to purify and exalt her. In the darkest medieval times God found His witnesses—and when the light threatened to die out, then Luther came—a man raised up of God, and a train of glorious men followed behind him. Never tremble, never despair, never be afraid. “The God of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

Why, Brothers and Sisters, we worship the God of wonders, “Who only does wondrous things.” We have a Savior of wonders! Is not His name called The Wonderful? And did not Stephen say of Him, “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by signs and *wonders*”? Then the Holy Spirit also works wonders! He came at first with rushing wind and cloven tongues and miraculous gifts—and even now His wonders have not ceased—they have only become *spiritual*, instead of physical! But the Spirit of God is working mightily! I bear my own personal witness that God has worked wonders for us, far beyond all human ability—wonders which we could not perform—no, wonders that we did not deserve!

What is more, He has worked wonders that we could not have expected. And what is more, wonders that we could not have imagined! What is more, wonders which even now that they have happened we cannot comprehend! And I may add, wonders which throughout eternity we shall never be able to praise God sufficiently for, though we spend our whole existence in wondering and adoring the wonder-working God! “How great are His signs! How mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion from generation to generation.”

III. Our last remark is this, that IN THE FUTURE STATE THESE WONDERS WILL BECOME MANIFEST TO US. If we were to read our Bibles attentively, we should be astonished to find how much there is about Heaven in them and how, after all, it is not true that we have mere gleams and glimpses. Studiously investigated, the Word of God tells us wondrous things concerning the world to come. Beloved, we shall, in the better land, wonder more than we do here, for we shall there understand far more than we do now and shall have clearer views and wider prospects.

Our present capacities are narrow. There is scant room within our mind for great things. But in yon bright world the veil shall be taken off and we shall know even as we are known, seeing no more in part and through a glass darkly— in the heavenly mansions our growing knowledge will excite in us increasing wonder—and we shall sing, there, the praise of Him who has dealt wondrously with us. I believe the poet was right when he said—

*“And sing with wonder and surprise*

*Your loving kin dness in the skies.”*In the abodes of endless bliss we shall see what we escaped. We shall look down from Abraham’s bosom and see the sinner afar off in torment! It will be a dreadful sight, but O, with what hearts of gratitude shall we bless redeeming Love, knowing, each one of us, that were it not for Divine Grace that fate so desperate had been ours!

In the Heaven of perfect holiness we shall know the true character of sin. When we shall see the brightness of God’s Glory and the splendor of His holiness, sin will appear in all its hideousness and we shall adore that matchless Mercy which pardoned us. And we shall bless the precious blood which cleansed us though we had been defiled with such pollution. We think we praise God for forgiving our iniquities, and no doubt we do, in some measure, but, compared with the blessing that saints in Heaven render to God for deliverance from sin, our praise is as nothing! We do not know sin as they know it—we do not understand its blackness as they perceive it. Up in Heaven, too, we shall see our life as a whole and we shall see God’s dealings with us on earth as a whole. A great many matters which now appear mysterious and complex concerning which we can only walk by faith, for our reason is baffled, will be so clear to us as to excite joyous songs in Heaven.

“Now I see why I was laid aside when I wanted to be busy in God’s work. Now I see why that dear child, whom I hoped to have had spared to me as a stay for my old age, was taken away. Now I understand why my business was suffered to fail. Now I comprehend why that foul mouth was allowed to be opened against me. Now I comprehend why I was assailed with inward fears and was allowed to go tremblingly all my days.” Such will be our confessions when the day dawns and the shadows flee away. Then we shall say and sing—“He has dealt wondrously with us.” We shall feel that the best was done for us that even Eternal Wisdom could devise and we shall bless the name of the Lord. Reflect a moment, dear Friends and see further reasons for everlasting wondering. In Heaven we shall see what God has lifted us up to be. We talk of being sons of God. Did we ever realize that? We speak of Heaven being ours—but do we know what we mean by that language? Truly, “it does not yet appear what we shall be,” neither has eye seen nor ear heard the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

When we shall stand on the sea of glass and hear the harpers and join their endless music. When we shall see Him who laid down His life for us—yes, *see* Him as He is—when we shall behold the Lamb of God, who by His bowing to death, lifted us up from our deadly fall. When we shall see Him, who by stripping Himself of His royalties robed us with splendors—we shall be amazed, astounded and overwhelmed with wonder! Above all, when we shall see God Himself, what will be our wonder!

When our minds shall be able to behold the Infinite Jehovah and hear His voice. When we shall be brought to speak with God similarly and bow before that Throne whose brightness today would blind us if we could gaze upon it. When we shall know Him who fills all in all, I will not say we shall be amazed to think He loved us, there is no need to say that—I will not say we shall be filled with astonishment to think He ever saved us! I need not say that—but that He should permit us to be His sons and daughters and should, at such an expense, bring us to dwell with Him forever and make us partakers of His own Nature, one with His own Son—this will plunge us in adoring wonder forever and we shall, “praise the name of Jehovah our God, who has dealt wondrously with us.”

I beg you to begin the music here. I long, myself, to spend my time perpetually in adoring the God of wonders! I want, Brothers and Sisters, that we should rise above the spirit of discontent, the spirit that finds fault and mourns, and moans, and laments, and makes Massahs and Meribahs by which to provoke the Lord our God. Let it not be said of us, “They soon forget His wonders,” but let us go on singing unto Him, “who only does wondrous things,” speaking to one another of all His wondrous works and in our souls day by day and hour by hour admiring our God, world without end. Amen.

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ONE MORE CAST OF THE GREAT NET

NO. 1931

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1886,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 14, 1886.

**“And it shall come to pass that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said,  
and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”  
Joel 2:32.**

I THOUGHT within myself, “What shall be the topic for the last sermon before I depart to my quiet resting place?” Perhaps my sermons for the last day of this long stretch of work may be my last, altogether, for life is very frail. When I hear of first one and then another in strong health being suddenly taken away, I am made to know the uncertainty of life in my own case. It were wiser to trust a spider’s web than the life of man! Brothers and Sisters, we live on the brink of eternity and had need behave ourselves as men who will soon face its realities. We may have to do so far sooner than we think. So I said within myself, “Shall I feed the flock of God in the rich pastures of choice promise?” Truly it would have been well to have done so, but then I thought of the stray sheep—must I not go after them? The 99 are not in the wilderness and, therefore, I shall not be leaving them in any danger. They are well folded and the Chief Shepherd will not forget them. God has given them to have life in themselves and the green pastures are with them in plenty—they can afford to be left alone better than the perishing ones. But as for the wandering ones, can I leave them among the wilds and wolves? I have tried to bring them to the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls, but they have not yet returned—how can I forget them? How can I endure to think of their being lost forever?

So I thought I would go out once more after the lost ones hoping that the Lord would help me to find them, even now, and bring them to Himself! I earnestly ask your prayers that a very simple Gospel address may be blessed by God to the immediate conversion of those among us who have long halted and are hesitating even unto this day. I could not have chosen for such a purpose a more suitable text—it is one of the broadest declarations of Gospel doctrine that can be found in Holy Scripture.

I shall handle it in the plainest manner. In a book of practical surgery, you do not look for figures of speech—all is plain as a pikestaff—such will my sermon be. I hand out the Bread of Heaven and you do not expect poetry from a bakery!

When the Apostle Peter was preaching what I may call the inauguration sermon of the evangelical era, he could do no better than go to Joel for his text. See the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. He explained the wonders of the Pentecost by a reference to this prophetic passage. When Paul, in his famous Epistle to the Romans, would set out the Gospel in all its plainness, he could not do better than quote in his 10th chapter, at the 13th verse, this same text—“For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” If Apostles found this passage so suitable for the expression and confirmation of their Gospel message, what can I do but follow their wise example? How greatly do I hope that a blessing will rest upon all here present while I preach upon this precious portion of Scripture—even as a blessing rested upon the motley crowd in Jerusalem when Peter spoke to them! The same Spirit is with us and His sacred power is not in the least diminished. Why should He not convert 3,000 now, as He did on that occasion? If there is a failure, it will not arise from Him, but from ourselves.

Look at the connection of our text in Joel and you will find that it is preceded by terrible warnings—“I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the coming of the Lord.” Nor is this all! This broad Gospel statement is followed by words of equal dread. “Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.” It was true of the Prophets as of the Apostles that, knowing the terrors of the Lord, they persuaded men. They were not ashamed to use fear as a powerful motive with mankind. By the Prophet Joel, the diamond of our text is placed in a black setting and its brilliance is thereby enhanced. As a lamp is all the more valued when the night is dark, so is the Gospel all the more precious when men see their misery without it! To remove from men’s minds the salutary fear of punishment for sin is to draw up the floodgates of iniquity. He who does this is a traitor to society. If men are not warned of the anger of God against iniquity, they will take license to riot in evil.

Certain modern teachers pretend that they are so delicate that if they believed in the Scriptural Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, they could never smile again. Poor sufferers! One is therefore led to suppose that they are persons of superior piety who are so deeply in love with the souls of men that they weep over them day and night and labor to bring them to repentance. We should expect to see, in them, a perpetual agony for the good of their fellows since they judge themselves to be so qualified to instruct others in the art of compassion! But, my Brothers and Sisters, we have not been able to discover in these sensitive persons any very hallowed sympathy with the ungodly—no, we have heard of their having communion with the worldly in their sports rather than in their sorrow for sin!

I have not seen in these men who forswear the use of the terrors of the Lord any remarkable powers of attracting men to Jesus by love. I have not noted any special zeal in them for the conversion of men, either by tender arguments, or by any other means. I question if they believe in conversion at all! On the other hand, the seraphic Evangelists who have journeyed around the earth to preach the Gospel and have worn themselves down with evangelical earnestness, are, in all cases, men who feel the pressure of the wrath to come. These, though sneered at by the superfine delicates, have shown a tender love to which their judges are strangers!

He who speaks honestly concerning the judgment to come is the man of the most tender heart. He who pleads with sinners, even to tears, usually does so because he believes that they will be everlastingly ruined unless they repent. I do not believe that this modern zeal to conceal the Justice of God and hide the punishment of sin is accompanied by an overflowing compassion for souls. I fear that, on the contrary, it is little other than an incidental form of a flippant unbelief which treats all doctrines of God’s Word as antiquated notions deserving to be jested at by men of advanced views. My brethren, the love of Jesus did not prevent His warning men of future woe! He cried aloud, amid a flood of tears, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together!” And He did not withhold the dreadful fact—“Your house is left unto you desolate.” The knowledge of the coming destruction of the city awakened His sympathy and He showed His pity, not by concealing the dreadful future, but by warning men of it!

I venture to say that, so far as I have observed, no man ever preaches the Gospel at all unless he has a deep and solemn conviction that sin will be punished in a future state in a manner most just and terrible. Preachers gradually get further and further away from the Gospel and its atoning Sacrifice, in proportion as they delude themselves with the idea that, after all, sin is a small matter and its punishment a questionable severity. Those, also, who look for a future opportunity for the impenitent may well consider it to be of small consequence whether men believe in Jesus, or remain in unbelief. Such a taking of things easy cannot suggest itself to me, for I believe in everlasting punishment! O my Hearers, if you do not flee to Jesus, you will be eternally lost and this urges me to entreat you to be saved! That blood and fire, that darkening sun and crimsoned moon of which Joel speaks, awaken me to exhort you to seek deliverance! That Great White Throne and the dread sentence of Him that shall sit upon it, when He shall say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” all move me to persuade you to flee to Jesus! Therefore it is my delight to come to you with a free, broad, blessed Gospel promise, in the earnest hope that those of you who are now in danger may at once escape for your lives and flee from the wrath to come!

With that preface I come to the handling of my text, moved by a burning desire that God may bless it. First notice that it contains a glorious proclamation—“It shall come to pass that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” But this is accompanied with an instructive declaration, to which we shall give a measure of attention as time permits—“In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”

I. Listen, first, to THE GLORIOUS PROCLAMATION. As we have no time to spare, we will proceed at once to our theme.  
The blessing proclaimed in our text is precious—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered,” or “shall be saved.” Salvation is a very comprehensive blessing. It is, in fact, a constellation of favors—a mass of mercies condensed into a word. It is a gift which reaches from the door of Hell to the gate of Heaven. The salvation which we have to preach to you at this time is salvation from sin in all senses of that term. It is a diamond with many facets. You who dread the eternal consequences of iniquity will be glad to learn that there is salvation from the punishment of sin—complete and eternal salvation! This is no small matter to a soul crushed beneath a consciousness of guilt and the certainty that the necessary consequences of sin must be overwhelming. The results of sin are not to be thought of without trembling. Verily, dismay may well take hold of the stoutest heart while reflecting upon the judgment to come. We preach salvation from the unutterable woe which follows on the heels of sin. Whatever may be the terrors of that tremendous day, for which all other days were made, we proclaim, in God’s name, salvation from them all!  
Whatever may be the gloom of that bottomless abyss into which the guilty shall sink forever, we are enabled to proclaim complete deliverance from that endless fall—salvation for every soul that believes in Jesus Christ the Lord! No form of accusation shall be drawn up against the Believer. No sentence of condemnation shall ever be uttered against Him. Salvation sends the prisoner out of court completely cleared. All the penal consequences of all sin shall be turned aside from all who, by Divine Grace, are led to call upon the name of the Lord!  
Salvation also delivers from the guilt of sin. The Lord is able to justify the ungodly so that he shall be numbered with the righteous. Through the blood of Jesus, He makes the filthy whiter than the snow!  
He will not merely put away the sin itself, but all the defilement that has come of it to your moral manhood. O my Hearer, all the injury which you have already inflicted upon yourself by sin, the Lord can repair! Sin, even if it led to no penal consequences, is a disease which destroys the beauty of your manhood and makes us loathsome in the eyes of God—yes, and shocking to the view of our own conscience when we see ourselves by the light of God’s Spirit in the glass of His Word. O you on whose foreheads the leprosy is white, we preach perfect healing for you, a salvation which shall renovate your nature and make your flesh even as the flesh of a little child—as Naaman’s was when he came up from the washing, having been obedient to the prophetic command. Brothers and Sisters, the salvation of the Lord removes every injurious result of sin upon heart and mind. Is not this a joy?  
We also preach salvation from the power of sin. Sin finds a nest in the carnal nature, but it hides there as a thief. It shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under Law, but under Grace! O you slaves, whose fetters clank in your ears—at this moment you may be free! Whether the bonds are those of drunkenness, or licentiousness, or worldliness, or despair, the Lord looses the prisoners! Jesus has come to break the manacles from your wrists, the fetters from your feet. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed. He has come to set you free for holiness, for purity, for peace, for love. He will bless you with newness of life—He will cause Grace to reign in you unto eternal life. Salvation from the power of evil is a gift worthy of God! This is the salvation that we preach—we proclaim immediate deliverance from the curse of sin, present rescue from the power of sin and ultimate freedom from the very being of sin! To every man born of woman is this salvation proclaimed, provided they will obey the Gospel command which says—look unto Christ and live. “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Happy herald who has such a proclamation to make! The blessing is incalculably precious.  
Further, notice, in the next place, that the time of this proclamation is present, for Peter tells us that the time spoken of by the Prophet Joel began at Pentecost. When the rushing, mighty wind was heard, and the flaming tongues sat upon the disciples’ heads, then was the Gospel dispensation opened in all its freeness. The Holy Spirit, who then came down to earth, has never returned! He is still in the midst of the Church, not working physical wonders, but performing moral and spiritual miracles in our midst, even to this day! Today, through His power, full remission is preached to every repenting sinner. Today is complete salvation promised to everyone that believes in Jesus. This day the promise stands true, “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”  
I put aside as altogether unscriptural the notion that the day of Grace is past for any man who will call upon the name of the Lord. If you will call, you shall be heard, be the day what it may! Yes, though it goes to the 11th hour. The day of Grace is never past to any soul that lives, as long as it is willing to believe in Jesus! I am not told to go and say there is Grace for men up to a certain point and beyond that point there is none! No, there is no limit set to the willingness or ability of Christ to save those who call upon His name! Who dares to limit the Holy One of Israel in the deeds of His Grace? As long as faith is possible, salvation is possible. I have my Master’s order to preach the Gospel to every creature. He has said to His servants, “As many as you shall find, bid to the marriage.” We are bound to say to everyone, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” Whether you are a child of 10, or a man of 50, I have the same message for you! If you have lived to be a hundred, the Gospel promise still holds good, despite the lapse of years. The times of your ignorance God has winked at, but He now commands all men everywhere to repent! He graciously declares of all who seek Him, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” Day of Grace past, indeed! It is a whisper of Satan! Have nothing to do with that lie, for the Savior still bids you come to Him and live! Even at the ebb of life He cries, “Come now, and let us reason together.”—  
*“Life is the time to seek His face—  
Through life He freely gives His Grace,  
And while that lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return.”*  
Whoever returns to the Father’s house shall find a glad reception. If this very day, this 14th of November, you call upon the Lord, you shall be saved! God speaks by my mouth to you at this moment and declares that today, if you will hear His voice, your soul shall live! The proverb says, “there is no time like time present,” and it speaks the truth. The present moment is the best moment in your possession! What other moment have you? Whoever, at this passing hour, calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is a Gospel well worth the preaching—blessed are our ears that we hear the joyful sound!  
Next, notice that as the gift is precious and the time is present, so the range of this proclamation is promising. It is full of good cheer to all who hear me this day. “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Whoever! I am afraid lest anything I should say to express the width of this word should only narrow it—just as the man who tries to explain eternity always makes it seem much shorter than we thought it to be and so defeats his own purpose. “Whoever.” There is, in this word, no fence, or ditch, or boundary line. You are out upon the open mountains of Grace. In riding through Switzerland you will find gates put up here and there along the road, for no reason that I could see but to tax and worry travelers—many of the limits which are set to the Gospel proclamation answer no other purpose! Down with these toll bars on the road to Heaven! We cannot and dare not discourage any man from calling on the name of the Lord! The promise is to you and to your children—but it is also to all “that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” In this matter there is no difference between Jew and Gentile! “Whoever” includes the slum people, even the poorest of the poor, but it does not exclude the carriage people, not even the richest of the rich! “Whoever” beckons to the educated and looks favorably upon the cultured and the refined—but, none the less, it invites the illiterate to whom all learning is an unattainable mystery. “Whoever” has a finger for babes and an arm for old men! It has an eye for the quick and a smile for the dull!  
Young men and maidens, “whoever” offers its embrace to you! Good and bad, honorable or disreputable, this “whoever” speaks to you all with equal truth! Kings and queens may find room in it and so may thieves and beggars. Peers and paupers sit on one seat in this word! “Whoever” has a special voice for you, my Hearer! Do you answer, “But I am an oddity”? “Whoever” includes all the oddities! I always have a warm side towards odd, eccentric, out-of-the-way people because I am one, myself, at least so I am often said to be! I am deeply thankful for this blessed text, for if I am a lot unmentioned in any other, I know that this includes me—I am beyond all question under the shade of “whoever!” No end of odd people come to the Tabernacle, or read my sermons, but they are all within the range of “whoever.”  
“Alas!” cries one, “I am dreadfully desponding, I am too low-spirited to be intended by the promise of Grace!” Are you? I do not believe it! “Whoever” goes to the very depths of despair and up to the heights of Glory! “Alas!” murmurs another, “I am not sad enough on account of my sin. I am of too frivolous a nature!” Very likely, but, “whoever.” includes you—if you call on the Lord, you shall be saved! You may go round the whole Tabernacle this morning and “whoever” will include all the thousands in it! After that you may hasten down the streets and tramp from end to end of London’s mighty area and never find one left out! You may then take a tourist’s ticket and travel through Europe, Africa and Asia till you have even traversed China and Japan! You may sweep the southern seas and search Australia—and then come home by way of San Francisco—and in all that circular tour you will not have met man, woman, or child, whether white, or black, or red, or yellow, or blue, or green, but what is encompassed by the circle of this word, “whoever.” “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” I hope I have not diminished the range of the text! Certainly I have not intended to do so. Mind that none of you shut the door in your own faces. I want each one to come in and find salvation at once. I beseech you do not forget to come to Jesus, yourself. Come, for you may come, you should come, you must come— *“None are excluded therefore but those  
Who do themselves exclude!  
Welcome the learned and polite,  
The ignorant and rude.  
While Grace most freely saves the prince,  
The poor may take their share!  
No mortal has a just pretense  
To perish in despair.”*  
There is the text—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered,” or, “saved.” Believe it and obey it. It is a gracious gift—take it and be rich forever!  
Furthermore, the requirement is very plain. “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord.” You do not need a library to explain to you how you can be saved. Here it is—“Call on the name of the Lord.” This is “The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven.” You will not need to go to the Sorbonne at Paris, nor to the University of Oxford to be tutored in the art of finding salvation. Believe and live! Is not that plain enough? “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” What does calling upon the name of the Lord mean? To call on the name of the Lord means, first, to believe in God as He reveals Himself in Scripture. His Revelation of Himself is His “name.” If you make a god of your own, you have no promise that he will save you—on the contrary, if you make him, he will be good for nothing, for he will be less than yourself! If you are now willing to come to the light and see the Lord as He displays Himself in His own Word, then you shall know a great God and a Savior. You are not merely to believe in a god, but in the living and true God—in Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If you accept Him as being what He states Himself to be, in Him you shall find salvation!  
The pity of it is that the most of people in these days worship a god of their own invention. They do not make an image of clay, or of gold, but they construct a deity in their minds according to their own thoughts. They proudly judge as to what God ought to be and they will not receive God as He really is. What is this but a god-making as gross as that which is performed by the heathen? What can be more wicked than to attempt to imagine a better god than the one true and living God? As the deity of your fancy has no existence, I would not recommend you to trust in him. There is one living and true God and that living God has revealed Himself in the two Books of the Old and New Testament. In these He is more clearly seen than in His works of creation or of Providence. In this God you must trust—and if you trust Him, He will not deceive you. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”  
If you trust in “thought,” or, “progress,” or any other deity of your own making, you will perish! But if you rely upon the living God, He will not, cannot, forsake you. Trust in Father, Son and Holy Spirit and you shall be delivered! “He that believes on Him shall not be confounded.” A simple, child-like trust in God as He reveals Himself in His Word and especially as He unveils Himself in the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ will save you! In the Lord Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily—trust in Him and you are saved.  
To call on the name of the Lord also means to pray. That is the idea which naturally

arises to the mind at the first sound of the word. You are lost in the woods. What are you to do? You are to call for help. “O God, hear my cry! Deliver me, for my trust is in You!” If I compare you to a wandering sheep, what can you do? You cannot find your way back to the fold—the brambles hold you fast and tear your flesh. Well, you can bleat and thus call for the Shepherd! Prayer—real, sincere, believing prayer will never fail! The Lord has said, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you.”  
I recollect, in the time of my soul-trouble, how I lived on this text for months! It only looks like a lozenge, but it is made of the essence of meat and it will sustain life for many a day. Try the power of it. “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” I said to myself—“I do call on His name and I will continue to call on His name. Yes, if I perish, I will pray and perish only there!” Nor did I call upon the Lord in vain supplication. He heard me and saved me! Blessed be His holy name! Praying, believing, trusting—none can fail of salvation. The requirement is very plain—“Trust and pray.”  
And when you have done this, then remember that to call upon the name of the Lord means, also, to confess that name. We read in the Old Testament, “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” Not that they then first prayed, but they then began to meet together avowedly to worship Jehovah. They came out from among men and named the sacred name as that of their God and Lord—declaring that whatever others did, they would serve Him. The Lord requires all saved ones to do this. You must confess that the Lord is your God and Jesus is your Savior. You must say, “This God is our God forever and ever.” Our Lord put it, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Paul says, “With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” You must, in some way or other, confess your faith—and the best way is that which the Lord has, Himself, ordained, saying, “Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” No longer wishing to live without God, no longer trusting to what you can see, hear and do, you must, from this day on, place your whole reliance upon God, alone, and acknowledge the Lord as your God and Father. No man doing this shall be left to perish! Out of temporal and eternal troubles you shall be delivered. God will help you all your life long if you trust Him. “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust, His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” Whoever trusts, prays and avows Himself to be on the Lord’s side, shall be saved!  
This requirement is simple enough and I do not see what less could be asked of any man. Would you have a man saved who will not trust his God? Would you have a man forgiven who will not obey his Lord? Has Christ come into the world to pardon our sin and save us while we continue in rebellion? God forbid! His Grace is manifested to make us loyal to God in everything and walk before the Lord in the land of the living! This, also, the Holy Spirit works in us to will and to do.  
I will spend a minute or two in reminding you that, as the requirement is plain, so the assurance of blessing is positive. “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered,” or, “saved.” In this there are no provisos and maybes. The text is not a bare hope, but a solemn assertion! If you believe, poor Soul, though you are altogether a mass of sin, you shall be saved! Do you not see how sure it is? God, who cannot lie, pledges His Word to you—risk your soul on it! Indeed, there is no risk. The only hope I have this day is in the promise of my faithful God which He makes to those who call upon His name. I dare not rest anywhere else, but on His bare Word. I gladly venture my eternal all. How can it be that a sincere trust in God’s own promise can ever be rejected by the Lord? Sitting by the bedside of a dying man who was resting in Christ even as I am, I said to myself—Suppose we, who trust alone in Jesus, should perish, what then? Why, it would be to the everlasting dishonor of the Lord in whom we trusted! We would lose our souls, certainly, but He would lose His honor! Think of one of us being able to say in Hell, “I trusted in the boasted Savior’s aid and rested myself on God, and yet I am lost.” Sirs, Heaven itself would be darkened and the crown jewels of God would lose their luster if that could once be the case! But it cannot be! If you trust in the Lord God Almighty, He will save you as surely as He is God! No one shall ever think better of God than He is. Open your mouth as wide as you will and He will fill it.  
And now, to wind up as to the proclamation—remember that although it is so far-reaching as to embrace a wide world of Believers, yet it is a personal message to you at this hour. “Whoever” includes yourself and if you see it from the right angle, it peculiarly looks at you. You, calling upon God, shall be saved—you, even you! Friend, I do not know your name, nor do I need to know it, but I mean this word for you. You shall be saved if you call upon the name of the Lord. “Ah!” you say, “I wish my name was written down in the Bible.” Would it comfort you at all? If it were written in the Scripture, “Charles Haddon Spurgeon shall be saved,” I am afraid I should not get much comfort out of the promise, for I should go home and fetch out the London Directory and see if there was not another person of that name, or very similar to it! How much worse would it be for the Smiths and the Browns! No, my Brothers and Sisters, do not ask to see your name in the Inspired volume, but be content with what you do see, namely, your character! When the Scripture says, “Whoever,” you cannot shut yourself out of that! Since it is written, “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” call on that name and grasp the blessing! Despair, itself, can scarcely evade the comfort of this blessed text! O Holy Spirit, the Comforter, seal it upon each heart!  
But perhaps you have not called upon the name of the Lord. Then begin at once. Cry, “Lord, have mercy upon me!” and cry after that sort immediately. If you have never prayed, pray now! May God the Holy Spirit lead you to call upon the name of the Lord at this exact moment, without waiting to go home, or to get into another room! Though you have never believed in the Lord Jesus before, believe in Him now! If this is the first breath of faith that you have ever breathed, the promise is as sure to you as it is to those of us who have known the Lord these 40 years. “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” is a word to a careless fellow who has never prayed in his life!  
O my Hearer, the text speaks to you! How I wish I could get at you, take you by the hand and hold you till I had made you think! I remember when Mr. Richard Weaver preached at Park Street Chapel, in his younger days. He came down from the pulpit and ran over the pews to get at the people that he might speak to them individually and say, “you,” and, “you,” and, “you.” I am not nimble enough on my legs to do that, and I do not think I would try it if I were younger! But I wish I could, somehow or other, come to each one of you and press home these glad tidings of great joy. You, my dear old Friend, it means you! You, young woman, over there to the right, it means you! You, dear child, sitting with your grandmother, it means you! “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” O Lord, bless this word to every unconverted person to whom it comes!  
II. I could almost wish to close with this soft music, but I dare not maim a text. I will deal with the second part of it with exceeding brevity, but I dare not silence it altogether. The second portion of the text contains AN INSTRUCTIVE DECLARATION. “It shall come to pass that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” That was abundantly fulfilled at Pentecost, for on that day a great multitude believed, were baptized and were saved—thus those who called on the name of the Lord were delivered. But listen, “In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance.” This, also, was literally true—the first preaching of the Gospel was to the Jews at Jerusalem itself! Salvation came to mount Zion and to the city of the great King! The fountain for sin and for uncleanness was opened at Jerusalem!  
There is something about that fact which strikes me very solemnly this morning, for though this deliverance came to some, yet the city was totally destroyed. The Kingdom of Heaven came near them, but they put it away and they were overthrown with a fearful destruction. The Jews had long been outwardly the Lord’s chosen people, but in a measure He had cast them off, for the Romans ruled the land and they, in their willful blindness, crucified their King. The favored nation nailed the Messiah to the tree—and yet to Jerusalem sinners, salvation was first preached! Salvation was of the Jews and by Jews it was brought to us Gentiles. Sad calamity that they should bring us life and yet, as a nation, sink down to spiritual death!  
Notice that the Prophet says, “In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said.” He promised deliverance and He sent it according to His Word—if they would not have it—He sent it as He said and their blood was on their own heads when they refused it. The Lord went to the full length of His mercy in sending salvation to those leaders of iniquity who, with wicked hands, had crucified their own Messiah!  
As a result of the Lord’s goodness, a remnant was saved. Notice it, “and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” A remnant did call upon the Lord and live! Those 11 that stood up at Pentecost and bore witness to the Resurrection were all Jews! And those who met in the upper room, when the Holy Spirit came down, were Jews—this was the remnant. But the solemn thought is that it was only a remnant of God’s favored people. Centuries of visitations, Prophets, miracles—and only a remnant saved! God’s Shekinah shining out among them and yet only a remnant obedient! The very Christ of God born of their nation and yet only a remnant saved! To this day we utter the Truth of God when we sing— *“You chosen seed of Israel’s race,  
A remnant weak and small.”*  
The Jewish Church is a very insignificant portion of the Jewish people. The Apostle tells us that “at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of Grace.” And Isaiah says, “Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” Poor Israel, poor Israel! Most favored for many an age and yet only a remnant brought to call upon the saving Lord! Many come from distant lands and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God—but the children of the kingdom are cast out into outer darkness—all but a mere remnant!  
To my mind it is most instructive to notice that even that remnant never called upon the name of the Lord until the Lord called upon them— “The remnant whom the Lord shall call.” We, all of us, need a miracle of Grace to make us perform the simple act of calling upon God! This was manifestly true in the case of Israel, for as a nation it rejected Jesus of Nazareth and only a few were converted by the power of the Holy Spirit. But whether Jews or Greeks, we are similarly depraved—and unless effectual calling shall call us out of our natural state—the very last thing that we shall ever do will be to come to Jesus and to rest in Him! Unhappy condition, to refuse the highest good!  
Believing Jews are a remnant to this day and only here and there is one called by Grace. You say, “What have we to do with that?” We have much to do with it! Let us pray for our Lord’s own countrymen! Let us labor for them! This, also, let us do—let us learn from their fall. O you that are children of godly parents, you that habitually attend places of worship, you who sit in this House of Prayer year after year—you are much in the same position as Israel of old! Yours are the outward privileges—will you reject the hopes which they set before you? My fear is lest you should get so accustomed to hearing the Gospel that you should think that mere hearing is enough! I tremble lest you should grow so habituated to the externals of religion that you should be dead to all the internal parts of it and only a remnant of you should be saved! Think of the multitudes in England who hear the Gospel and of the comparatively few who are called by Grace to come and believe in Jesus Christ. It is sorrowful to think of the breadth of Gospel Grace and the narrowness of man’s acceptance of it.  
The feast is great! The guests are few! I see an ocean of mercy without a shore and on it there floats an ark wherein but few are saved. Shall it always be so? Oh, come, and receive the gift of Free Grace! Alas, I see men sunk in the darkness of unbelief and only a remnant rising to the light of faith! Altogether, in this London, out of four or five millions, we have not half a million at worship at any one time! Out of that half million, how many do you think are real Christians? Truly, it is still a remnant. Oh, that you and I may be of that remnant!  
Let us further pray the Lord to gather in the multitude and so to accomplish speedily the number of His elect. Oh, that He would not only magnify the Sovereignty of His Grace, but reveal the largeness of it! Oh, that He would give the well-beloved Jesus to see of the travail of His soul till He is satisfied! O Lord, the oxen and the fatlings are killed, and all things are ready—let it not be again reported that those who are bidden are not worthy! Or, if it is so, enable us to go out into the highways and hedges and compel the outcasts to come in, that the wedding may be furnished with guests! Go forth, you messengers of Christ, into all the world! Rise up, my Brothers, from this service, and go forth, everyone of you, to call in as many as you find—yes, to compel them to come in! May the Lord cause that in London and in Britain there may be deliverance—yes, may His salvation be made known unto the ends of the earth! Amen.

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A FREE GRACE PROMISE  
NO. 2082

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, MAY 5, 1888. BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING,  
OCTOBER 11, 1888.

**“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”  
Joel 2:32.**

VENGEANCE was in full career. The armies of Divine justice had been called forth for war—“They shall run like mighty men. They shall climb the wall like men of war.” They had invaded and devastated the land and turned the land from being like the garden of Eden into a desolate wilderness. All faces gathered blackness—the people were “much pained.” The sun itself was dim, the moon was dark and the stars withdrew themselves—the earth quaked and the heavens trembled. At such a dreadful time—when we might least have expected it, between the peals of thunder and the flashes of lightning—was heard this gentle word, “It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

Let us carefully read the passage—“And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” In the worst times that can ever happen there is still salvation for men! When day turns to night and life becomes death, when the staff of life is broken and the hope of man has fled, there still remains in God, in the Person of His dear Son, deliverance to all those who will call upon the name of the Lord.

We do not know what is to happen—reading the roll of the future we prophesy dark things. But still this light shall always shine between the rifts of the cloud—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

This passage was selected by the Apostle at Pentecost to be set in its place as a sort of morning star of Gospel times. When the Spirit was poured out upon the servants and the handmaids and sons and daughters began to prophesy, it was clear that the wondrous time had come which had been foretold so long before. Then Peter, as he preached his memorable sermon, told the people, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He thus gave a fuller and yet more evangelical meaning to the word “delivered.” “Whosoever shall call on the name of the

Lord shall be delivered”—from sin, death and Hell—shall, in fact, be so delivered as to be in Divine language, “saved”—saved from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin. Saved from the wrath to come.

These Gospel times are still the happy days in which “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” In this year of Divine Grace we have reached a day and an hour in which “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” To you at this moment is this salvation sent. The dispensation of immediate acceptance proclaimed at Pentecost has never ceased—its fullness of blessing has grown rather than diminished. The sacred promise stands in all its certainty, fullness and freeness—it has lost none of its breadth and length—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

I have nothing to do tonight but to tell you again the old, old story of infinite mercy come to meet infinite sin—of FREE GRACE come to lead free will into a better line of things—of God Himself appearing to undo man’s ruin worked by man and to lift him up by a great deliverance. May the Holy Spirit graciously aid me while I shall talk to you very simply.

I. First, THERE IS SOMETHING ALWAYS NEEDED. That something is deliverance, or “salvation.” It is always wanted. It is the requisite of man wherever man is found. As long as there are men on the face of the earth there will always be a need of salvation. I could wish that some of you had the instructive schooling which I received last Tuesday when I was visiting enquirers. I had a very happy time in seeing a very large number of persons who had joyfully put their trust in Christ. But among them were some who could not trust. Poor Hearts, conscious of sin, though they did not think they were—these seemed bound hand and foot, shut up in the prison of despair and darkened in heart.  
I tell you I felt dismayed as they baffled me—I felt a fool as they refused to be comforted. I could do nothing for them so far as argument and persuasion were concerned. I could pray with them—I could also set them praying and they did pray. But they were cases in which, unless the arm of God were revealed, I was as powerless with them as when a man stands weeping over the body of his dead wife.

Dear Friends, while we mingle only with those who are saved, we forget how much need there is still of Divine salvation. If we could go through London—into its dens and slums—we should think very differently of human need from what we do when we simply come from our own quiet domestic circle and step into our pew and hear a sermon. The world is sick and dying. The world is corrupt and rotten. The world is a ship in which the water is rising fast and the vessel is going down into the deep of destruction. God’s salvation is wanted as much today as when the Holy Spirit preached it in Noah’s day to the spirits in prison. God must step in and bring deliverance or there remains no hope.

Some want deliverance from present trouble. If you are in this need tonight through very sore distress, I invite you to take my text as your guide and believe that “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” Depend upon it—in any form of distress—physical, mental, or whatever it may be, prayer is wonderfully available. “Call upon Me,” says God, “in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” If you are so down at the heel that your foot is on the bare pavement. If you have come to this place in bodily sickness and feel as if you should die on the seat in which you sit. If there be no physician to help you and no friend to stretch out a generous hand, I beseech you call upon God!

You have come to the end of men. You are now at the beginning of God. See whether your Maker will forget you. See whether the great, generous heart of God does not still beat tenderly towards the sorrowful and the afflicted. If I saw you lying wounded on a battlefield, bleeding to death, I would say, “Call upon God.” If I knew that you had not a house to go to but must walk these streets all night, I would say, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” I will take the text in the broadest sense and bid you, no, command you to test your good and gracious God in the day of your calamity.

This is true whenever you come into a position of deep personal distress, even though it should not be of a physical kind. When you do not know how to act but are bewildered and at your wits end—when wave of trouble has followed wave of trouble till you are like the sailor in the storm who reels to and fro and staggers like a drunken man—if now you cannot help yourself because your spirit sinks and your mind fails—call upon God, call upon God, call upon God! Lost child in the woods, with the night fog thickening about you, ready to lie down and die—call upon your Father! Call upon God, you distracted one. For, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

In the Last Great Day, when all secrets are known it will seem ridiculous that persons took to writing tales and romances. For the real stories of what God has done for those who cry to Him are infinitely more surprising. If men and women could but tell in simple, natural language, how God has come to their rescue in the hour of imminent distress, they would set the harps of Heaven a-ringing with new melodies and the hearts of saints on earth a-glowing with new love to God for His wonderful kindness to the children of men! Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness! Oh that we could abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness to ourselves in the night of our weeping!

The text holds good concerning deliverance from future troubles. What is to happen in the amazing future, we do not know. Some try to startle and alarm you with prophecies of what will soon happen. I would warn you, concerning these to be well upon your guard. Take small heed of what they say. Whatever is to happen according to the Word of God—if the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood—if God shall show great wonders in the heavens and the earth—blood and fire and pillars of smoke—remember that though you will then assuredly want deliverance, deliverance will still be near at hand. The text seems to be put in a startling connection in order to advise us that when the worst and most terrible convulsions shall occur, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The star Wormwood may fall but we shall be saved if we call upon the name of the Lord. Plagues may be poured out, trumpets may sound and judgments may follow one another as quickly as the plagues of Egypt but, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” When the need of deliverance shall apparently increase, the abundance of salvation shall increase with it. Fear not the direst of all wars, the bitterest of all famines, the deadliest of all plagues—if we call upon the Lord, He has pledged to deliver us. This word of promise meets the most terrible of possibilities with a sure salvation.

Yes, and when you come to die, when to you the sun has turned into darkness and the moon into blood, this text assures deliverance in the last dread hour. Call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be saved! Amid the pains of death and the gloom of departure you shall enjoy a glorious visitation which shall turn darkness into light and sorrow into joy. When you wake up amid the realities of the eternal future, there will be nothing for you to dread in resurrection, or in judgment, or in the yawning mouth of Hell. If you have called upon the name of the Lord you shall be delivered. Though the unpardoned are thrust down to the depth of woe, and the righteous scarcely are saved, yet you who have called upon the name of the Lord must be delivered. The promise stands firm. Whatever may be hidden in the great roll of the future, God cannot deny Himself— He will deliver those who call upon His name.

What is needed, then, is salvation. And I do think, beloved Brethren, that you and I who preach the Word and long to save souls must very often go over this grand old Truth of God about salvation to the guilty— deliverance to all who call upon the name of the Lord. Sometimes we talk to friends about the higher life, about attaining to very high degrees of sanctity. And all this is very proper and very good. But still the great fundamental Truth of God is, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” We urge our friends to be sound in doctrine and to know what they do know and to understand the revealed will of God. And very proper is this also. But still, first and foremost, this is the elementary, allimportant truth—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

To this old foundation truth we come back for comfort. I sometimes rejoice in God and joy in the God of my salvation and spread my wings and mount up into communion with the heavenlies. But still there are other seasons when I hide my head in darkness and then I am very glad of such a broad, gracious promise as this—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” I find that my sweetest, happiest, safest state is as a poor, guilty, helpless sinner calling upon the name of the Lord and receiving mercy at His hands as one who deserves nothing but His wrath. Then I dare hang the weight of my soul on such a sure promise as this, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Get where you may, however high your experience. Be what you may, however great your usefulness—you will always want to come back to the same ground upon which the poorest and weakest of hearts must stand and claim to be saved by almighty Grace—through simply calling upon the name of the Lord. Thus have I said enough upon what is always needed—this deliverance, this salvation.

II. Now, secondly, let us attentively observe THE WAY IN WHICH THIS DELIVERANCE IS TO BE HAD. Help us, Blessed Spirit, in this our meditation. It is to be had, according to the text, by calling upon the name of the Lord.

Is not the most obvious sense of this language prayer? Are we not brought to the Lord by a prayer which trusts in God—by a prayer which asks God to give the deliverance that is needed and expects to have it from the Lord as a gift of Divine Grace? It amounts to much the same thing as that other word, “Believe and live.” For how shall they call on Him of whom they have not heard? And if they have heard, yet vain is their calling if they have not believed as well as heard. But to “call on the name of the Lord,” is briefly to pray a believing prayer—to cry to God for His help and to leave yourself in His hands. This is very simple, is it not? There is no cumbersome machinery here, nothing complex and mysterious.

No priestly help is wanted except the help of that great High Priest who intercedes for us within the veil. A poor, broken heart pours its distress into the ear of God and calls upon Him to fulfill His promise of help in the time of need—that is all. Thank God nothing more is mentioned in our text. The promise is—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

What a suitable way of salvation it is to those who feel that they can do nothing! Ah, dear Hearts! If we had to preach to them a very difficult and elaborate salvation they would perish. They have not the mind, some of them, to follow our directions if they were at all intricate. And they have not enough hope to venture upon anything that looks at all difficult. But if it is true that, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” this method is simple and available and they easily understand it. He can pray to God who can do nothing else. Thank God he need not want to do anything else. For if he can call for help, he gets deliverance—and in that deliverance he gets all that he will ever want between this place and Heaven. He has called upon the name of the Lord, and all that is deficient in him will be supplied for time and for eternity. He will be delivered, not only now, but throughout all the future of his life until he sees the face of God in Glory everlasting!

The text, however, contains within it a measure of specific instruction— the prayer must be to the true God. “Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.” There is something distinctive here. For one would call on Baal, another would call on Ashtaroth and a third on Moloch. But these would not be saved. The promise is especial—“Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.” You know that triune name, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit”?—Call upon it! You know how the name of Jehovah is set forth most conspicuously in the Person of the Lord Jesus?—call upon Him!

Call upon the true God. Call upon no idol, call on no Virgin Mary, no saint, dead or living. Call on no image. Call on no impression of your mind! Call upon the living God—call upon Him who reveals Himself in the Bible—call upon Him who manifests Himself in the Person of His dear Son. For whosoever shall call upon this God shall be saved. You may call upon the idols but they will not hear you—“Ears have they, but they hear not. Eyes have they, but they see not.” You may not call upon men, for they are all sinners like yourselves. Priests cannot help their most zealous admirers. But, “Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.” Mind, then, it is not the mere repetition of a prayer as a sort of charm, or a piece of religious witchcraft—you must make a direct address to GOD, an appeal to the Most High to help you in your time of need. In presenting true prayer to the true God you shall be delivered.

Moreover, the prayer should be intelligently presented. We read, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord.” Now, by the word “name” we understand the Person, the Character of the Lord. The more, then, you know about the Lord and the better you know His name, the more intelligently will you call upon that name. If you know His power, you will call upon that power to help you. If you know His mercy, you will call upon Him in His Grace to save you. If you know His wisdom, you feel that He knows your difficulties and can help you through them. If you understand His immutability, you will call upon Him as the same God who has saved other sinners, to come and save you. It will be well, therefore, for you to study the Scriptures much and to pray the Lord to make Himself known to you that you may know Him. In proportion to your acquaintance with Him, will you with greater confidence be able to call upon His name.

But, little as you may know, call on Him according to the little you do know. Cast yourself upon Him, whether your trouble tonight be external or internal. But especially if it is internal, if it is the trouble of sin—if it is the burden of guilt, if it is a load of horror and fear because of wrath to come—call upon the name of the Lord, for you shall be delivered. There stands His promise. It is not, “He may be delivered,” but he “shall be.” Note well the everlasting “shall” of God—irrevocable, unalterable, unquestionable, irresistible. His promise stands eternally the same. Has He said and shall He not do it? “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

This way of salvation—calling upon the name of the Lord—glorifies God. He asks nothing of you but that you ask everything of Him. You are the beggar and He is the Benefactor. You are in the trouble and He is the Deliverer. All you have to do is to trust Him and beg of Him. This is easy enough. This puts the matter into the hands of the Lord and takes it out of your hands. Do you like the plan? Put it in practice immediately! It will prove itself gloriously effectual.

Dear Friends, I speak to some whom I know to be now present who are under severe trial. You dare not look up. You seem to have given up. At any rate you have given yourself up. And yet, I pray you, call upon the name of the Lord. You cannot perish praying—no one has ever done so. If you could perish praying, you would be a new wonder in the universe! A praying soul in Hell is an utter impossibility. A man calling on God and rejected of God—the supposition is not to be endured! “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” God Himself must lie, He must quit His nature, forfeit His claim to mercy, destroy His character of love if He were to let a poor sinner call upon His name and yet refuse to hear him.

There will come a day but that is not now—there will come a day in the next state when He will say, “I called but you refused.” But it is not so now. While there is life there is hope. “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart,” but call upon God at once. For this warrant of Divine Grace runs through all the regions of mortality, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

I remember a time when if I had heard a sermon on this subject, putting it plainly to me, I should have leaped into comfort and light in a single moment. Is it not such a time with you? I thought I must do something, I must be something, I must in some way prepare myself for the mercy of God. I did not know that a calling upon God, a trusting myself in His hands an invocation of His sacred name would bring me to Christ the Savior. But so it stands and happy, indeed, was I when I found it out. Heaven is given away. Salvation may be had for the asking. I hope that many a captive heart here will at once leap to loose his chains and cry, “It is even so. If God has said it, it must be true. There it is—in His own Word. I have called upon Him and I must be delivered.”

III. Now I come to notice, in the third place, THE PEOPLE TO WHOM THIS PROMISE AND THIS DELIVERANCE WILL BE GIVEN. “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

According to the connection, the people had been greatly afflicted— afflicted beyond all precedent, afflicted to the very brink of despair. But the Lord said, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Go down to the hospital. You may select, if you please, the hospital which deals with the effects of vice. In that house of misery you may stand at each bed and say, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” You may then hasten to every door of every prison cell, yes, even at the grating of the condemned cell—there lie men and women given up to death—and you may with safety say to each one, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

I know what the Pharisees will say—“If you preach this, men will go on in sin.” It has always been so—that the great mercy of God has been turned by some into a reason for continuing in sin. But God (and this is the wonder of it) has never restricted His mercy because of that! It must have been a terrible provocation of Almighty Grace when men perverted His mercy into an excuse for sin. But the Lord has never taken even the edges off His mercy because men have misused it—He has still made it stand out bright and clear—“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Still He cries, “Turn and live.” “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts—and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He

will abundantly pardon.”

Undimmed is that brave sun that shines on the foulest dunghills of vice. Trust Christ and live. Call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be pardoned—yes, you shall be rescued from the bondage of your sin and be made a new creature, a child of God, a member of the family of His Grace. The most afflicted and the most afflicted by sin are met with by this gracious promise, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Yes, but there were some, according to Joel, who had the Spirit of God poured out upon them. What about them? Were they saved by that? Oh no! Those who had the Spirit of God so that they dreamed dreams and saw visions—they still had to come to the palace of mercy, by His Grace, by this same gate of believing prayer—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Ah, poor Souls! You say to yourselves, “If we were deacons of Churches, if we were pastors, oh, then we should be saved!” You do not know anything about it—Church officers are no more saved by their office than you are by being without office. We owe nothing to our official position in this matter of salvation—in fact we may owe our damnation to our official standing unless we look well to our ways.

Pastors and officers of Churches have no preference over you plain folks. I assure you I am quite happy to take your hand, whoever you may be, and come to Christ on the same footing as yourself—

*“Nothing in my hand I bring,*

*Simply to Your Cross I cling.”*  
Often, when I have been cheering up a poor sinner and urging him to believe in Christ, I have thought, “Well, if he will not drink this cup of comfort, I will even drink it up myself.” I assure you I need it as much as those to whom I carry it. I have been as big a sinner as any of you, and therefore I take the promise to myself. The Divine cordial shall not be lost—I will accept it.

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn, and faint and sick, and full of sin—and I trusted Him on my own account and found peace—peace on the same ground as my text sets before all of you. If I drink of this consolation, you may drink it, too. The miracle of this cup is that fifty may drink and yet it is just as full as ever. There is no restriction in the word “Whosoever.” You maidens that have the Spirit of God upon you, and you old men that dream—it is neither the Spirit of God nor the dreaming that will save you—but your calling on the sacred name. It is, “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Also, there were some upon whom the Spirit of God did not fall. They did not speak with tongues, nor prophesy the future, nor work miracles. But though they did none of these marvels, yet it stood true to them, too— “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” What? Though no supernatural gift was bestowed, though they saw no vision and could not speak with tongues—they called upon the name of the Lord and they were saved! There is the same way of salvation for the little as well as for the great, for the poorest and most obscure as well as for those that are strong in faith and lead the hosts of God to the battle.

But some were terribly afraid. I should think that a good many must have been sadly alarmed when there were in the earth blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood— but, afraid as they were—if they called upon the name of the Lord, they were delivered. Now, Mrs. Much-Afraid, what do you say to that? Mr. Ready-to-Halt! Did I hear your crutches sounding in the aisle just now, or was it an umbrella? Never mind. If you call upon the name of the Lord, you shall be saved. You that are so feeble in mind, so weak, so wounded that you hardly dare to trust—still it is written for your sakes also— “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

“Ah,” says another, “but I am worse than that. I have no good feelings. I would give all that I have to own a broken heart. I wish I could even feel despair but I am hard as a stone.” I have been told that sorrowful story many times and it almost always happens that those who most mourn their want of feeling are those who feel most acutely. Their hearts are like hardened steel, so they say. But it is not true. And even if it were true, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Do you think that the Lord wants you to give yourself a new heart first and then He will save you? My dear Soul, you are saved when you have a new heart and you do not need Him to save you then, since you are already saved.

“Oh, but I must get good feelings!” Must you? Where are you going for them? Are you to rake the dunghill of your depraved nature to find good feelings there? Come without any good feeling. Come just as you are. Come, you that are like a frozen iceberg, that have nothing about you whatever but that which chills and repels! Come and call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be saved. “Wonders of Grace to God belong.” It is not a small Gospel that He has sent us to preach to small sinners but ours is a great Gospel for great sinners. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

“Ah, well!” says one, “I cannot think it is meant for me, for I am nobody.” Nobody, are you? I have a great love for nobodies. I am worried with somebodies and the worst somebody in the world is my own somebody. How I wish I could always turn my own somebody out and keep company with none but nobodies! Then I should make Jesus Everybody. Nobody, where are you? You are the very person that I am sent to look after. If there is nothing of you, there shall be all the more of Christ. If you are not only empty but cracked and broken, if you are done for, destroyed, ruined, utterly crushed and broken—to YOU is this word of salvation sent——“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

I have set the gate wide open. If it were the wrong track, all the sheep would go through. But as it is the right road, I may set the gate open as long as I will but yet the sheep will shun it unless You, Great Shepherd, shall go around the field tonight and lead them in. Take up in Your own arms some sheep that You have purchased long ago with Your dear heart’s blood—take him upon Your gracious shoulders, rejoicing as You

do it, and place him within the field where the good pasture grows.

IV. I want you to dwell for a minute upon THE BLESSING ITSELF. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” I need not say much about it because I have already expounded it. It is a very good rule when a man makes you a promise to understand it in the narrowest sense. It is fair to him that you should do so. Let him interpret it liberally if he pleases. But he is actually bound to give you no more than the bare terms of his promise will imply.

Now, it is a rule which all God’s people may well practice, always to understand God’s promises in the largest possible sense. If the words will bear a bigger construction than at the first sight they naturally suggest to you, you may put the larger construction upon them. “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think.” God never draws a line in His promise, that He may go barely up to it. But it is with the great God as it was with His dear Son, who, though He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet spent the greater part of His time in Galilee, which was called, “Galilee of the Gentiles.”

He went to the very verge of Canaan to find out a Canaanite woman, that He might give her a blessing. You may put the biggest and most liberal sense, then, on such a text as this, for Peter did so. The New Testament is likely to give a broader sense to Old Testament words. And it does so most rightly—for God loves us to treat His Words with the breadth of faith. Come, then, if you are the subject of the judgments of God. If you believe that God’s hand has visited you on account of sin, call upon Him and He will deliver you both from the judgment and from the guilt that brought the judgment—from the sin and from that which follows the sin. He will help you to escape. Try Him now, I beseech you.

And if your case should be different—if you are already a child of God and you are in trouble and that trouble eats into your spirit and causes you daily wear of spirit and tear of heart—call upon the Lord. He can take away from you the fret and the trouble, too. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.” You may have to bear the trouble, but it shall be so transformed as to be rather a blessing than an evil—and you shall fall in love with your Cross since the nature of it has changed by God’s Grace.

If sin is the great cause of your present trouble and that sin has brought you into bondage to evil habits. If you have been a drunkard and do not know how to learn sobriety. If you have been unchaste and have become entangled in vicious connections—call upon God and He can break you away from the sin and set you free from all its entanglements. He can cut you loose tonight with the great sword of His Grace and make you a free man. I tell you, that though you should be like a poor sheep between the jaws of a lion, ready to be devoured immediately by the monster, God can come and pluck you out from between the lion’s jaws. The prey shall be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Only call upon the name of the Lord! Call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be delivered.

Yes, and I repeat what I said just now. If you have come under the power of disease, if you are near to death, if already death has written his name legibly upon your body and you are afraid of death and Hell—call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be delivered at this last moment. Even now, when the pit gapes wide for you and like Korah, Dathan and Abiram you are ready to go down alive into it—call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be delivered.

If I were telling you what I had made up, or hammered out of my own brain, I could not expect you to believe me. But as this Book is inspired, and as Joel spoke in the name of God, and as the Apostles spoke in the name of Jehovah, this is the very Truth of the God that made the heavens and the earth. “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

V. In conclusion, I must remind you of one mournful thought. Let me warn you OF THE SADLY COMMON NEGLECT OF THIS BLESSING. You would think that everybody would call upon the name of the Lord. But read the text, “For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said.” It shall be there as the Lord has said. Will they not have it then? Notice—“And in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” It seems to shrivel me up altogether, that word “remnant.” What? Will they not come? Are they madmen? Will they not come? No, only a remnant. And even that remnant will not call upon the name of the Lord until first God calls them by His Grace.

This is almost as great a wonder as the love which so graciously invites them. Could even devils behave worse? If they were invited to call upon God and be saved, would they refuse? Unhappy business! The way is plain but “few there are that find it.” After all the preaching and all the invitations and the illimitable breadth of the promise—the only ones save are contained—“in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.” Is not our text a generous invitation? The setting open of the door, yes, the lifting of the door from off its hinges that it never might be shut? And yet “broad is the gate and wide is the way that leads to destruction and many there are that go in thereat.”

There they come, streams of them, hurrying impatiently, rushing down to death and Hell—yes, eagerly panting, hurrying, dashing against one another to descend to that awful gulf from which there is no return! No missionaries are wanted, no ministers are needed to plead with men to go to Hell. No books of persuasion are wanted to urge them to rush onward to eternal ruin. They rush to be lost—they are eager to be destroyed! As when the wild Bison of the prairie hasten onward in their madness, until they come to a great gulf and then rush down headlong—a waterfall of life leaping to death—so is it with the sons of men! They choose their own delusions and covet their own damnations and that without end. And so this is all that Sovereign Mercy rescues after all—a remnant—and that remnant only because the arm of the Lord is revealed and a miraculous

power exerted upon their wills.

This is the misery of it—that the guilty are not willing to be parted from their sins. They will not seek that which alone is their life, their joy, their salvation. They prefer Hell to Heaven, sin to holiness. Never spoke the Master a word which observation more clearly proves than when He said, “You will not come to Me, that you might have life.” You will attend your Chapels, but you will not call on the Lord. Jesus cries, “You search the Scriptures. For in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which testify of Me. But you will not come to Me, that you might have life.” You will do anything rather than come to Jesus. You stop short of calling upon Him.

O my dear Hearers, do not let it be so with you! Many of you are saved. I beseech you intercede for those who are not saved. Oh, that the unconverted among you may be moved to pray. Before you leave this place, breathe an earnest prayer to God, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner. Lord, I need to be saved. Save me. I call upon Your name.” Join with me in prayer at this moment, I entreat you. Join with me while I put words into your mouths and speak them on your behalf—“Lord, I am guilty. I deserve Your wrath. Lord I cannot save myself. Lord, I would have a new heart and a right spirit, but what can I do? Lord, I can do nothing! Come and work in me to will and to do of Your good pleasure—

*‘You alone have power, I know,  
To save a wretch like me.  
To whom, or where should I go  
If I should turn from You?’*

“Lord, I now, by Your grace, from my very soul call upon Your name. Trembling, yet believing, I cast myself wholly upon You. O Lord I trust the blood and righteousness of Your dear Son. I trust Your mercy and Your love and Your power as they are revealed in Him. I dare to lay hold upon this Word of Yours that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Lord, save me tonight, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

**Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Joel 2:11-32.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK”—282, 544, 275.  
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PERFECT CLEANSING  
NO. 379

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1861, DELIVERED BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” Joel 3:21.**

SOME think that this text has reference to the blood of the persecuted and martyred Israel. God had by terrible judgments avenged Himself of the different nations who had carried His people captive and according to some expositors, in this verse He threatens to make His vengeance complete. If there is any blood which still cries from the ground, if there are any martyrs whose murders have not been punished upon their persecutors, God vows that He will cleanse their blood which He had not as yet cleansed.

We shall however, this morning, take the text in a more simple and I think after a more spiritual sort. It is a great Truth which lies at the foundation of the Gospel system that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleans us from all sin. When a man is washed in the sacred laver which is filled with the blood of the atonement, he is not partially cleansed, but he is thoroughly cleansed. Not so much as the shadow of a spot remains upon the blood-washed. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

If that cleansing were partial it were unavailing. If it left but one sin still upon us in the sight of God it would have no power to save. It is only because when once applied by the Holy Spirit and received by faith it makes a total and complete cleansing from all past guilt that it is of any use whatever to the poor trembling conscience of the distressed sinner. Let us lay it down, then, in our own minds as a settled fact which neither our experience nor any of the teachings of many heretics shall make us let go—that he who by faith lays hold on Christ has his blood cleansed in that same hour and all his iniquities are put away.

But in what light, then, are we to understand the text? For it says, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” Well, this may refer perhaps to the uncalled among God’s elect. They are not as yet cleansed. Their faith has not as yet descended into the sacred pool of blood. They still stand in their iniquities and in their transgressions, unconscious of their lost estate and now God gives an absolute promise to the rest of His chosen that they shall in due time be brought in. They shall repent. “A new heart also will I give them and a right spirit will I put within them and I will sprinkle pure water upon them and they shall be clean. From all their iniquities and from all their transgressions will I cleanse them.”

It is not a matter of doubt as to whether the uncalled as yet shall or shall not be saved. If God has chosen them, He will call them, for whom He did predestinate, “them He also called and whom He called, them He also justified.” This stands as a part of the Divine decree and as an absolute promise uttered by the lip of Divine sovereignty. “As for the rest of My elect as yet unwashed, as yet unsaved from all their iniquities, I will

cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.”

But I think I shall only be speaking the mind of the Spirit, if I say this is not the first meaning of the text. I shall confine myself this morning to two thoughts which I think very naturally arise out of it. There are two senses in which Believers in Christ have blood which as yet has not been cleansed and to these two senses our text has especial reference.

First, there remains still on the minds of some of the regenerate a certain consciousness of sin—their conscience has not been thoroughly purged from dead works. And secondly, it is an undoubted fact, that in the nature even of the regenerate, there still remains the black drop of the old depraved blood which needs to be cleansed away and which according to this promise shall soon be removed.

I. We shall commence with the first sense—GUILT UPON THE CONSCIENCE.  
The promise is given to Believers who have any guilt still remaining upon their troubled consciences, “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” If our faith were what it should be, we should know that there is no condemnation against the man that believes in Christ. If our faith were always simple and had a clear eye to look alone to the Savior we should always view ourselves as being in the sight of God accepted in the Beloved. But our faith partakes of the frailty of our nature. It is often trembling. It sometimes staggers at the promise and then in such moods and in such hours there comes upon the conscience a sense of sin to a greater or less degree.  
The soul is still justified, but doubts its justification. It is still accepted but that acceptance is not so clearly read by its eye as to be to it a matter of certainty and a cause of joy. Now, Brethren, I think I can soon prove that very many of us have some guilt remaining upon our conscience. Let me ask you in the first place what is it that makes us doubt our eternal salvation? We have believed in Christ—

*“Our hope is fixed on nothing less,  
than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,”*

and yet we doubt. We have come to the Cross—we look to it as being all our salvation and all our desire, yet we are troubled at heart—dark suspicions flit across our soul and we ask, “If it is so, why am I thus?”

Now what does this indicate but that there is some guilt still remaining on our conscience? If we knew ourselves to be what we really are, if we are Believers, guiltless, innocent, pure, clean in every way, do you think we should have any doubt of our salvation? If we could look upon ourselves in Christ as being without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—and that is what we are if we believe in Him—do you think there would be a shadow of a shade of suspicion as to our eternal salvation? No. It is because the conscience knows some secret stain—because the black fingerprints of sin are not completely washed out—that we fear lest after all sin should involve punishment and punishment should cast us into Hell. Oh that this blood upon the conscience were cleansed away and we should never, never doubt again!

And then again, let me ask you, are there not times when you think very harshly of God? You think, perhaps, that He deals severely with you, that He will not deliver you out of this seventh trouble, that He will let you sink at last and perish in the deep waters, where the floods shall overflow you. You come to think of Him, not as a tender Father, but as, to say the least of it, a severe Taskmaster. You come to think that one of these dark days He will shut His eye of love, withdraw His hand of power and suspend the sympathies of His heart. Do you suppose you would have any of these thoughts of God if you knew yourself to be perfectly cleansed by Him?

No, you would say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away and blessed be the name of the Lord.” You would be willing to leave everything in His hands BUT the dark thought that there is sin in you and that God is punishing you for that sin—that in that chastisement there is mixed something penal—that in the smiting of the Father’s rod there is something of the severity of the Judge’s hand betrays the fact that your conscience is not thoroughly cleansed from sin. If it were, you would know that every affliction was but love, that every blow was but another form of a caress, that your troubles were not punishments, but chastisements. Not penal inflictions, but the loving deeds of a tender Father who longed to make you perfect like Himself.

Still further—why is it that so many of us dare not indulge in close access to our God? We pray, but it is often to a distant God, as to one who stands upon a mountain beyond our reach! How few of us come like a child to his Father and lay hold on God as one who is near to us by ties of Divine affinity. The most of Christians, I fear, are outer-court worshippers. They stand in the place of the priests, but they never come to stand where the high priest stood, within the veil. Luther was a man who used familiarities with God and if some of us had heard Luther praying we should have been shocked—“Oh,” we should have said, “how dare he talk thus with God?” But Luther knew that he was completely justified, that there was no sin on him and therefore he did not tremble when he stood near to the Holy, the Perfect and the Just.

If I know that there is no sin remaining, but that all has been washed away, why need I fear? I may go the Throne of God and cry, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Not God, for He has justified, nor Christ, for He has died.” Once let the soul have perfect peace through believing in its perfect purity in Christ and the nearness of our access will be perfectly wonderful. The boldness of our fellowship will make us look with wonder and even Christians will be astonished that we dare to indulge in such a holy familiarity with God and talk so plainly with our Father—with our Friend. There is guilt still upon the conscience of many professors and it is proved by the fact that they fear to have a near approach to God.

How frequently does this lurking evil betray itself in another form! There is a promise before you—an exceeding great and precious promise. Why do you not lay hold upon it? Why not receive it in all its length and breadth and call it your own? “Oh,” you say, “but I am so unworthy. How shall I take such a promise? I, so unbelieving, so ungrateful, so unheavenly, how can I think that such a promise is made to me? It is too good, too great for such an one as I am.” Do you not perceive that when you say, “unworthy,” you are acting as though you were under the Covenant of Works, instead of being under the Covenant of Grace?  
What has your worthiness to do with it, or your unworthiness either?

God did not choose you for your worthiness—Christ did not purchase you from your goodness. The Holy Spirit did not call you because of your excellencies, nor will you be saved because of any inherent virtue in you. You betray at once, I say, the sad fact that there is some consciousness of evil still remaining upon you. Oh, if your heart knew itself to be wholly purged from dead works and freed from sin, you could walk at large.

If no more a criminal, but absolved, pardoned and acquitted, you have leave to roam throughout all the rooms of your Father’s palace and to take hold upon all your Father’s riches as His heir. Yes—joint-heir with Christ. You never need to stagger at the promise because of its greatness. You can account it all the more true because its greatness proves that it came from a great God who has great faithfulness and great power to fulfill. Precious, precious promise, “I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.” I will make your conscience yet so pure of sin that you can take the promise and believe it to be all your own.

Yet once more—there is another fact which demonstrates at once that the conscience of some believers is not totally purged from sin. Why is my Sister yonder afraid to die? Why does my Brother there tremble when he knows that he carries a disease about him which may on a sudden launch him into eternity? My Brother, if you will probe that fear of yours to the bottom you will find the old venom of some guilt upon the conscience still. Let us suppose that the promise of the text is fulfilled in you and that you know today that there is no sin against you in God’s Book—that you feel today that you are perfectly freed from the consequences and the guilt of sin through the Substitution of Christ.

I defy you to be afraid of dying after that. The two things could not stand together. Sin is the sting of death and the strength of sin is the Law. But when sin is removed, what is it but a serpent without its fangs, a thing which a child may play with and not that a man must tremble at? What? When the dragon’s teeth are broken and we know it, shall we be afraid? When death is no more the gate of gloom, but the portal of the skies and we know it, shall we tremble then? God forbid that I should allow the thought! No. Perfectly pardoned, with a conscience recognizing and rejoicing in that perfect pardon, all fears of death would be impossible.

There would even be a longing and a thirsting after death, not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life. We should have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better! Do not think, my Brethren, after the five reasons which I have given, that any of you would be willing to say, “I am guiltless there.” We have guilt, many of us, still upon our conscience, because we at times doubt our salvation. Often we have harsh thoughts of God. We sometimes neglect to approach near to the mercy seat. We often tremble to take the promise at the full. We are afraid of dying. All these prove that the blood is not entirely cleansed from off the conscience.

Having thus proved the necessity of the promise, let us sit still a moment, chew the cud of meditation, put the promise into our mouth and taste its preciousness. Great God! You will yet by Your grace take from my conscience and the conscience of all Your people every stain of sin. And what then, Beloved? What then? Let these thoughts charm you. When once the last stain of sin is removed, then you will never have a doubt. You will triumph in full assurance. Who can doubt when sin is washed away? It shall not be partly day and partly night with you when this promise is fulfilled.

Your night shall be turned into day and the light of your day shall be as though there were seven suns. You shall sing with Toplady—

*“My name from the palm of His hands  
Eternity cannot erase;  
Impressed on His heart it remains  
In marks of indelible grace.”*

You shall know that Heaven might sooner pass away than your soul be imperiled. That for us the very Throne of God is a security of life. Because He lives you must live also and because He reigns you must reign with Him. I pray that promise over till I have it fulfilled to me, because I know that in that hour all my doubts shall be brought out to execution, shall be hung on Haman’s gallows and shall never trouble me any more.

And what next, Beloved, if this promise is fulfilled? Why, then, we shall praise the Lord with gladness. No more harsh thoughts of Him! Our life shall be one Psalm. We shall sing in our hearts and sing with our lips and each day shall be a note, when sin is pardoned—

*“How sweet the song there’s none can say, But those whose sins are washed away  
Who feel the same within.”*

I believe that the shouts of angels are not so glorious as will be the songs of the redeemed, because those songs shall warble from blood-washed lips. Oh, cannot you and I sing! We cannot get our praise out as we should. It is too big for expression when once we know beyond hesitation or suspicion that every sin is gone and can say, “Great God, I am clean. Through Jesus’ blood I am clean.”

But more than this—to put each point in opposition to those evil things which prove sin to be still on your conscience, let it be removed and what nearness to God will you have? Holy souls must come together, there is a mutual attraction between a holy God and a holy being. It were impossible for a perfect being to be far removed from Him who is perfection’s self and once let you and I know our perfect justification in Christ and far from God we could not live. Just as the needle seeks its pole, so should we seek our God. As the dove flies to the dovecot, so would our perfect spirit fly to the bosom of a perfect God. It were impossible for us to be far from God when purity has covered us and the righteousness of Jesus is plainly seen and then, my Brethren, enjoying this nearness of access to God we should never be afraid to take the promise.

Adam, I think, never trembled to pluck the pomegranate or to crush the grape. He was a perfect man and he knew that the bounties of God’s Providence in Eden’s garden were his own. And when you and I are perfectly justified and our conscience knows it we shall take God’s mercies with a thankful hand. We shall lay hold upon His promises with a firm grasp. The sin that made us tremble to lay hold being all withdrawn we shall take the promise with a grip that death and Hell can never loose and say, “It is mine, for I am cleansed in Christ.”

Then no fear of death will ever disturb us. Our cleansed spirit will not dread the Jordan, but long to pass through its streams. The fetter of sin broken, we shall never fear the loss of liberty. If the great enemy, Sin, has been conquered, we shall not feel the little enemy, Death. If the Hell

within us has been quenched, we shall know that there can be no Hell without for us. We shall long for evening to undress, that we may rest with God and having on the wedding garment we shall be ready to enter into the marriage supper with shouts and joy—with a heart full of thanksgiving! O Lord, fulfill unto us this Your promise whereon You have caused us to hope and from our conscience cleanse that blood-guiltiness which as yet has not been cleansed and so will we praise and magnify You forever and ever!

But secondly, I think the text has perhaps a yet more pointed bearing upon our sanctification than upon our justification. It is thrice blessed to live daily and continually under a system of grace which gives a perfect deliverance from the guilt of sin. But this can never be separated from the desire to know the dispensation in its deliverance from the power of sin. If any man hopes to be saved from punishment and yet to hold with sin as his friend, that man’s hope is a delusion. The Lord Jesus came into the world to save His people from their sins, not in their sins. He who breaks the chain kills the tyrant master. When you and I are delivered from the taskmaster’s lash, we must be delivered from the taskmaster’s labor—but it is a fact that God’s people though perfectly justified and clean—are none of them here on earth perfectly sanctified.

All dreams about perfect sanctification here are dreams, indeed. In fact, I find upon conversing with those Brethren who believe in perfection, that they only mean this—that men may come into such a state of grace that the spirit of God will keep them from the cross of sin and they shall finally persevere. I believe the perfection of the Wesleyan is nothing more than the justification of a Calvinist. He makes a mistake in the use of terms. If he were put to a school of a good theologian, he would speak more plainly what he meant and we should find that we did not differ.

In the sense many Wesleyans use the term “perfect,” I do not hesitate to say that I know thousands of perfect men, completely justified men, whose lives outwardly are free from any sin which the world could detect and men whose private conversation is such, that if it were matched by any man, you would scarcely detect any flaw against which a worldling might exclaim. But my dear Friends, I think you and I, knowing a little about ourselves, are ready frankly to confess that there is much blood in us that is not yet cleansed.

The corruption of the flesh remains even in the regenerate. Let me in a sorrowful spirit show some of those signs which prove to us the indwelling of sin. Sometimes our old nature betrays us into great and sudden sin. Have you a hasty temper? Have you ever risen in the morning and prayed to have it subdued and you have gone on and everything has been as smooth as possible? But suddenly a squall has come and before you knew it you had lost your balance and had been carried away by the winds. I don’t think I ever grieved one-millionth part as much from any hurt my feelings ever had for another man, as I have done when I have hurt another man’s feelings. Another man may hurt me as much as he likes, I defy him to hurt me now, but when I have been betrayed into a hasty word in reply, I have often felt more sadness of spirit than I could tell. And yet each of us knows that with the very best intentions, resolving against this evil nature of ours, there are seasons when suddenly it overwhelms us and takes us by storm.

Perhaps, however, your temptation is of another class, not with temper, but with some other frailty of your minds. Oh, have we not sometimes tossed on our beds sleepless because our eyes would not shut for they were bursting with tears? We have done that which our soul hated. We have said, “I would sooner have lost my right hand than have said what I have said, or have done what I have done. Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” If any of you can live without sin, I wish I knew your secret. If you can at all times maintain the same purity of heart, the same loveliness of disposition, the same charity of carriage, the same holiness of bearing, I would to God that I, too, might sit where you have sat to learn the lesson which you have learnt so well.

But I half suspect you have not seen yourself as you should have seen yourself, or else you would scarcely venture to boast of such proficiency in the Gospel school. But my brethren, when our old evil nature does not throw us into the ditch and muddied us from head to foot, yet how every day it stains us! That everyday sin. That sin which gets into the closet, that evil which creeps into our very bed, which has a chair for itself at all our tables. That evil which goes with us into the market, haunts us in the street, follows us into the family, sits at the fireside, or goes with us into the throng—that evil which penetrates the house of God, gets into the Church meeting, follows us even in prayer and in praise and tries to spoil all that we do.

Oh, I am sure if you have watched yourself with but half an eye, you must feel that in those daily acts which the ungodly call “trifles,” but which you know to be solemn things, there are signs that there is blood in you which has not been cleansed. How often does this evil come upon us so as to disable us when we need the most spiritual strength! There is the angel and I would wrestle with him, but sin has cut my sinew and I cannot wrestle as I could. There is the Throne and I would sing, but sin has made my voice hoarse and my spirit dull. The strings of my harp are loose, so that I cannot send forth music as I would. There are sinners to be saved. My heart will not melt with compassion, my eyes will not flow with tears. There are many to be addressed in the ministry, but sin takes away our power to plead for God as we would. We can’t be Baxters. We can’t feel that soul-moving compassion for the redemption of sinners which we would feel.

Have not you, each of you, felt that if you did not hate sin for anything else, you must hate it because it would not let you serve God and serve His Church as you could desire? When you want to be Davids, in comes Satan. He steals your sling and your stone. When you would be like Jael, sin mislays the hammer and hides away the nail. When you would smite the Philistines with the ox-goad of Shamgar, there may be the ox-goad but you have not strength or courage to wield it. Sin! Sin! You accursed thing, you have desecrated the house of God, you have climbed the sacred heights of Zion. You have spit your venom upon the burnt offerings of David’s self. Yes, you have gone up to Tabor’s summit and when we have been rapt and transfigured, even then we have heard the moving of your wings and the dark shadow of your evil influence has crept over our spirits. Oh we have plenty of reasons in our best frames as well as in our

worst to confess that there is blood in us that is not as yet cleansed.

More arguments you do not want, but if you wanted one more I might give it you in this. Why do we ever doubt our God? Some men make light of doubts as though they were little sins. To doubt God is the most damnable of crimes. There is no iniquity which has in it a greater blackness of rebellion against God than mistrustful thoughts of His goodness and His faithfulness. Unbelief stabs at every attribute of God. Pride does but smite His crown. Lust does but tread upon the pure whiteness of His garment. But unbelief would snatch from His hand His scepter—from His head His crown—no, it would shake the very foundation of the Throne itself.

Now why is it that we ever doubt God? We have no cause to doubt Him. He has never been ungenerous or unkind. The only answer we can give is that we have still an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. There is still the house of Saul within our coasts. There is still the old Adam, still the deadly principle which needs to be cut up root and branch and to be eradicated totally. And so may God cleanse in us the blood which He has not cleansed.

II. Having thus endeavored to prove that there is blood in us in the matter of sanctification which is not cleansed, I take the promise just as we find it and read it through again. “For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed. For the Lord dwells in Zion.” So then, one of these days, there will be no propensity to sin left in any one of God’s people. Then it is true, after all, that perfection is possible and is attainable, for it is guaranteed to us in that verse! And God will as surely give what He promises, as He has greatly given what He promised in the old time.

It is a great doctrine of the Christian religion which ought always to be kept prominent, that everyone who believes in Christ, by believing, receives a promise of being totally set free from the indwelling of sin in his nature. But how is this to be done? There is a great dispute about progressive sanctification. Some of us take one view of it and some another. I will endeavor to give you mine. And first the purging of true nature will not be done in the Antinomian way, by calling good evil and evil good. That theory, as I have heard it expounded by some, is something like this—let a child of God do what he will, what was sin in another man, is no sin in him. That is to say, in other terms, that darkness in a child of God is light—that bitter in a child of God is sweet. That injustice—what would be injustice in another man—is justice in him. What would make another man a rogue, still leaves him honest.

If any of you believe such villainous blasphemy as that, the sooner you drive it out of your mind the better. There is a dreadful woe against that man who removes his neighbor’s landmark—how much more against the man who, under pretense of Gospel teaching, would sap the foundations which divide morality from immorality and righteousness from vice. Sin, in a child of God, is sin—as damnable a sin as it would have been in the most accursed of the profane. The reason why it does not destroy you is not because it has ceased to be a deadly poison itself, but because of the grace of God which has given Christ to be the propitiation for our sins, which is a most blessed antidote.

Neither is the way in which the blood of Believers is cleansed, as some say, by the changing of their old nature. The old nature never did change and never will. Old Adam, ever since he fell, was earthly, sensual, devilish. He will be the same as long as we live, depend on it. Brethren, the common experience of Christians proves that their nature does not get any better. You know how our aged friends pray at the prayer meeting. They generally ask that the young may be kept in the slippery paths of youth. I do not hesitate to say that the paths of youth, though slippery, are not more slippery than those of old age.

Look at Scriptural history! Who were the great sinners mentioned there in the Church of Christ? Not a solitary young man is there mentioned as having disgraced his profession. See David. While he was a young man, he stood. ‘Twas in his declining years that he committed that great sin with Bathsheba. I do not read of Noah that he was ever drunken as a young man. It was when he was old and his children were all grown about him that he fell into that iniquity. Was Peter a lad? Was Judas a child? No. Bible history goes to show this, that if there is one period of human life more dangerous than another. it is when men think themselves to be out of danger—dreaming that their nature is improved.

Ask the venerable men to speak for themselves. It ill becomes the youth to bring an accusation against the hoary head. But let them be their own witnesses. They will tell you that the fires they have seen to tremble in ashes are still as full of power to devour as they were when they blazed up in the first flames of early youth. They will assure you—for I know and often hear their testimony, that they need as much to be kept by the aid of Divine grace at the age of seventy, as they did at seventeen—that at eighty, they will become, unless grace keeps them, as fit fuel for the flame as they might have done at eight-and-twenty. Oh, yes, my Brethren, ask the Church and they will tell you that the fiction of the old nature getting better is a fiction without a foot to stand upon. They will tell you that old Adam always is and always will be an enemy to the Cross of Christ, the friend of ill and the hater of all that is good.

And yet once again—the way in which God cleanses our blood is not by making the new nature any better. Believers are partakers of the Divine nature. That Divine nature as Divine cannot be improved. The new principle which God implants in regeneration is as good as it can be. It is a seed we are told. That seed which cannot sin because it is born of God. The old nature cannot be good. The new nature cannot be bad. The new nature can by no means sin, for it is a spark of the Divine purity. It can by no means fall, for it has in it immortality and life of perfection.

“But,” you say to me, “how then, how then is our blood to be purged?” You have perceived in yourself that daily these two principles come into collision. The old Adam wants his way, the new Adam will have his way. They fight, they struggle, they are contrary the one to the other. We are afflicted, we mourn and weep, “When we would do good, evil is present with us.” How to will we find, but how to perform we find not. The evil that we would not, that we do and the good that we would do, we often do not. So then we find a law in our members warring against the law of our members. This will go on to the last and on your dying bed it may be you will have as sore a conflict as you ever had while you were in health.

John Knox said his sharpest spiritual struggle was his last. The old nature said to him, “John Knox, you have never feared the face of man, you have worked a great work in Scotland, you have some merits of your own.”

And the new nature said, “No, John Knox, you must be saved as a sinner resting simply on the merits of Christ and it was as much as the new nature could do to tread out the last spark of the self-righteousness of the old Adam. But it did, by God’s grace and blessed be God, it shall be done in each of us and in the last moment when we leave our body, we shall leave our sin behind. When we shall leave off this mortal coil, the dust that is in the garment shall be shaken off, too. When we are disembodied, we shall be disembodied of the body, of this death of sin.

When we stand in Heaven, we shall bear the image of the heavenly and cease to bear the image of the earthy. We shall be changed, we shall be made like unto the quickening Spirit and no more be merely as the living soul. We shall receive our second nature in all its fullness, while the first and fallen nature shall be shaken off and done with and put away as filthy rags—only fit for the destroying dunghill—and we shall be clean. “I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.”

Brethren, I was dreaming, dreaming of what would be the consequence if now our blood could be cleansed. We are assembled here as a mighty congregation. Oh, if the minister’s blood were wholly cleansed! A perfect minister! What a pulpit! What a power! What a very incarnation of the love of Christ would there be! No fear of discord then. The shepherd’s presence in the midst of his flock would surely prevent all divisions. No hard words would ever come from his lip. All would be kindness, sympathy and Christ-like affection. And what preaching! What exhortations to Christians! What solemn earnestness and what pleading with sinners! What tearful eyes! What a melting heart! What moving periods! What rousing thunders! What cheering syllables of consolation!

Oh God, I would Your promise were fulfilled to me! “I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed.” And what a consequence if the deacons and elders had their blood cleansed, too! No mistakes then. We are fallible now because we are sinful men. What priests of the flock! What overseers of God’s house! What examples to you all! What pillars of light! What flaming torches of devotion! How they would be like the horses of Pharaoh’s chariot, glorious as they were strong and strong as they would be pure. Oh, would that the prayer were fulfilled in them, “I will cleanse their blood which is not cleansed.”

And what a Church we should be! Perfect members, freed from sin! No denominations would break up into sections. There would be no denominations. Christ would be the one Head and there would be no party names. A perfect Believer! What a power would he be against the darkness and the iniquity of this vast city! A perfect Church! What joy! What peace! We only need this, we sometimes think, to make a millennium. But indeed, it would not make a millennium. It would make an Aceldama. For the world would be in arms to put to death the perfect ones as they did Christ. It is only Christ’s coming that can make a millennium. And when He shall come with power as well as purity, with reigning sovereignty as well as with wooing love, then shall the Church have her Sabbath and it shall be said, Hallelujah! the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ!”

But as I was dreaming, I thought how different everything would be if our blood were wholly cleansed. How sweet would be the bread upon our tables! Is it scant and is there little of it? What blessed contentment would there be to impart to it a manna-like flavor! Is our house ill-furnished, narrow and ill-ventilated? If grace were in our hearts to perfection would not that very hovel become a palace and the dungeon itself glitter with the gems of Paradise? How different would our trials be! How light! How light! How easily should we endure them! How different our joys—not flashes in the pan, meteors that are and are gone, but as suns shining both by day and night!

Oh, if we were perfect, what a different world this would look. We should not be standing on our dignity towards our Brethren, we should not be cut up because we were not enough respected. We should not be troubling ourselves because we were not made much of and fussed over. Perfect men would hate such as that and be ready to be the least among saints that they might so become the greatest of all. Oh, if we were perfect what forbearance we should have! What forbearance towards the imperfect ones. Hard words we could afford to smile at. Dark sentences—we should be deaf to them and the sharpest cuts of sarcasm would only just touch our armor to blunt theirs.

With the perfect, this would be a new world, indeed, and if perfect, how new would Heaven seem to be to us. There would be rents in the firmament through which we should see the Glory of God. There would be windows without curtains or blinds to shut out the vision of angels and of the King of kings. A perfect eye would see through clouds and mists and see God Himself and all the glories of the court. And how different would Hell itself seem to a perfect man. How awful and tremendous! What thoughts would he have of the sin which had dug the pit and of the iniquity which piled the fuel and of the justice which like a stream of fire had kindled it.

Let us but mount to perfection and we come to the highest degree of intellectual and spiritual attainment. We should not be what we are blind, deaf, dumb, halt, weak, dead—we should be full of all that life can mean. A quickened eye, a purified pulse would surely bring forth perfection in

every other faculty— *“O happy hour, O blest abode!  
I shall be near and like my God;  
And death and Hell no more annoy  
The solid pleasure of my joy.”*

Hasten this, oh God, hasten it in Your own time.

Well now—there is one of you who says, “Well, I shall never get there— perfection is too high for me. No, Sir, I can never think that I shall be perfectly free from sin.” You shall be though and that for these reasons. First, Christ purposes to do it. He loves His Church and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a perfect Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. That is His purpose and He’ll do it. But, next, the Spirit has engaged to do it. He has come into this world like purifying rain. He has come to take the flint away that would not be refined and put into your soul a new and heavenly mind.

Now what Jesus purposes and what the Spirit works can surely be accomplished. Beside that, Heaven requires it. “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles.” You must be perfect, then, to enter there. More than this, God’s honor needs it. Unless He utterly destroys the works of the devil, His honor is not perfect. If He does not make you completely free from all sin of every kind, then Christ has not completed His work and, “It is finished!” was but an empty brag. His honor requires it.

Put your hand upon that promise and say, “His promise certifies it.” I cannot see how. I can scarcely tell why. It seems impossible. My soul can scarcely get the thought into its mind. But, great God! With my finger this day upon that promise I do believe that You will cleanse my blood which You have not cleansed and I shall at length be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, accepted in the Beloved.

Now, Brethren, how shall I conclude except with a practical exhortation? What then? If it is promised to us that the old nature shall thus be removed and we shall be purged, what then? Why, then, let us struggle against our corruption poor soldiers feel that it is of no use, then they are only too glad to hear the trumpet sound a retreat. But when they are confident of victory, how they draw their swords, how they hasten to the struggle, how they weary not of the fight! Even now today my soul takes hold upon her sword. Sin, death and Hell I defy you, for I shall bear the palm as surely as I bear the sword. I shall wear the crown as certainly as I agonized unto death. Struggle with yourselves, strive daily to get the mastery of your passions. The victory is sure. Let no discouragement weaken you. “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,” for He is able to give you the victory through Jesus Christ your Lord.

And what next? Why, today pray against your corruptions more than ever you have done. You have got a promise to plead. Take it, salt it with your tears. Lay it upon the altar—put your hands upon the horns of the altar and say—“Great God, I will not rise, I will not let You go until I know by Divine assurance that this promise shall be fulfilled to me.” So shall you go forth to your daily struggle with temptation wearing a smile upon your face and smoothing those wrinkles on your brow. Sorrow does not become the man who has so rich a promise. Be glad! The joy of the Lord shall be your strength. You shall at last win the victory!

Sinner! He that believes in Christ may claim this text for himself. Do you Believe? Then this text is yours as well as mine and shall be fulfilled to everyone of us today and in the last day and in day without days in glory everlasting. Amen.

÷Amo 2.13

THE LOADED WAGON  
NO. 466

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is  
pressed that is full of sheaves.”  
Amos 2:13.**

THE other Sunday morning we went into the corn fields to glean with Boaz and Ruth. And I trust that many of the timid and faint-hearted were encouraged to partake of the handfuls which are let fall on purpose for them by the order of our generous Lord. We go, today, to the gate of the harvest field with another object—to see the wagon piled up aloft with many sheaves, come creaking forth—making ruts as the toiling horses drag it from the field. We come with gratitude to God, thanking Him for the harvest, blessing Him for so much of favorable weather and praying Him to continue the same till the last shock of corn shall be brought in and the farmers everywhere shall shout the “Harvest Home.”

What a picture is a wagon loaded with corn for you and of me, as loaded with God’s mercies! From our cradle up till now, every day has added a sheaf. What more could He do for us than He has done? He has daily loaded us with benefits. Despite the sad affliction in the North, we are nationally a favored people. Both in Providence and in gracious privilege, He has blessed us above all people that are upon the face of the earth. While other countries have been crushed by tyrants, ravaged by war, or left in the thick darkness of superstition, we are free—we are blessed with the light of Heaven—we have the Gospel in our streets, the Bible in our houses, and the Sunday as our choicest heritage.

O England! You are like a farm wagon creaking under the mercies of God! Brothers and Sisters, we are each of us like the cart that is pressed down because it is full of sheaves. The innumerable mercies of God are piled upon us high as the mountains, nor can our memory recount the tokens of the tenderness and loving kindness of the Most High. Let us adore His goodness and yield Him our cheerful gratitude.

Alas—and how many times shall I repeat that pathetic interjection— alas! alas! Alas—that such a metaphor should be capable of another reading? That while God loads us with mercy, we should load Him with sin? While He continually heaps on sheaf after sheaf of favor, we also add iniquity unto iniquity, till the weight of our sin becomes intolerable to the Most High, and He cries out by reason of the burden, saying, “I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.”

Our text begins with a “Behold!” and well it may. “Beholds” are put in the Bible as sometimes a hand is put in the margin of old books, to indicate to the reader something worthy of notice. Or, again, “Beholds” are

put in the Scriptures as signs are put out in front of houses of business to attract attention. There is something new, something important, something deeply impressive and worthy of attention, wherever we see a “Behold” in Sacred Scripture. I see this “Behold” standing as it were, like a maiden upon the steps of the house of Wisdom, crying, “Turn in here, O you that are wise, and listen to the voice of God while He speaks to you.”

Let us open our eyes that we may see. Let us fix both our eyes intently that we may “behold,” and may God make a way through our eyes and ears to our heart—so that deep repentance and self-abhorrence may take hold upon us—because of our evil conduct towards our gracious God.

Now, it is to be understood, dear Friends, before we proceed farther, that our text is but a figure, since God is not to be oppressed by man. All the sin that man can commit can never disturb the serenity of His perfections, nor cause so much as a wave upon the sea of His everlasting calm. He does but speak to us after the manner of man and bring down the sublimities and mysteries of Heaven to the feebleness and ignorance of earth. He talks to us as a great father may talk to his little child, and He uses images which are rather adapted to human frailty than to Divine infinity.

Just, then, as a cart has the axles bent and—to use an old Saxon word—as the wheels “screak” under the excessive load, so the Lord says that under the load of human guilt He is pressed down, until He cries out, because He can bear no longer the iniquity of those that offend Him. We shall now turn to the first point, this morning. O that the Holy Spirit may make it pointed to our consciences!

I. The first and most apparent truth in the text is, that SIN IS VERY GRIEVOUS AND BURDENSOME TO GOD.  
Be astonished, O heavens and be amazed, O earth, that God should speak of being pressed and weighed down! I do not read anywhere so much as half a suggestion that the whole burden of creation is any weight to the Host High. “He takes up the isles as a very little thing.” “He weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in balances.” Neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor all the ponderous orbs which His Omnipotence has created, cost Him any labor whatever in their sustenance. The heathens might picture Atlas as stooping beneath the tremendous load of the world—but the eternal God, who bears up the pillars of the universe, “faints not, neither is He weary.”  
Nor do I find even the most distant approach to a suggestion, that Providence fatigues its Lord. He watches both by night and day. His power goes forth every moment. It is He who brings forth Mazzaroth in his season and guides Arcturus with his sons. He bears up the foundations of the earth! And He holds the cornerstone thereof. He causes the dayspring to know its place, and sets a boundary to darkness and the shadow of death. All things are supported by the power of His hand, and there is nothing without Him. If He withdrew His might, back to annihilation must all things go.  
Just as in a moment, foam subsides into the wave that bears it, and is lost forever, so would the universe depart if the eternal God did not daily sustain it. Nor has this incessant working diminished His strength, nor is there any failing or thought of failing. He does all things, and when they are done they are as nothing in His sight. But strange, oh, passing strange, marvelous, miraculous among miracles, sin burdens God, though the world cannot! And iniquity presses the Most High, though the whole tremendous load of Providence is as the small dust of the balance.  
Ah, you careless men, sons of Adam, you think sin a trifle. And as for you, you sons of Belial, you count it sport and say, “He regards not. He sees not. How does God know? And if He knows, He cares not for our sins.” Learn from the Book of God that so far is this from being the truth, that your sins are a grief to Him, a burden and a load to Him, till, like a cart that is pressed down with sheaves, so is He pressed down by human guilt.  
I think this will be very clear if we meditate for a moment upon what sin is, and what sin does. Sin is the great despoiler of all God’s works. It was sin that turned an archangel into an archfiend, and angels of light into spirits of evil. It was sin that looked on Eden and withered every leaf in its garden and blasted all its flowers. Before sin had come, the Creator said of the newly made earth, “It is very good.” But when sin had entered, it grieved God at His very heart that He had made such a creature as man. Nothing can despoil the beauty in which God delights so much as sin, for sin mars His image and erases His superscription.  
Moreover, sin makes God’s creatures unhappy, and shall He not, therefore, abhor it? God never designed that any creature that He made should be miserable. He made the creatures on purpose that they should be glad. He gave the birds their songs, the flowers their perfume, the air its balm. He gave to nature the smiling sun, and even to night its coronet of stars, for He intended that smiles should be His perpetual worship, and that joy should be the atmosphere which His creatures breathed. But sin has made God’s favorite creature a wretch, brought down His most glorious offspring, made in His own image, to become naked and poor and miserable and lost.  
Therefore God hates sin and is pressed down under it, because it makes the objects of His love unhappy at their heart. All the unhappiness that we have this morning comes directly or indirectly from sin. Iniquity is the mother of every human pang. Oh, how well may God hate it when He sees His own dearly beloved children made to wear furrows on their brow and tears in their eyes, because of this vile, this abominable thing called sin.  
Moreover, remember, Beloved, that sin attacks God in all His attributes. Sin attacks Him on His Throne and stabs at His existence. What is sin, Sinner? Is it not an insult to God’s wisdom? God bids you do His will. When you do the contrary it is because you do as much as say, “I know best what is good for me.” You do in effect declare that infinite wisdom is in error, and that you, the creature of a day, can judge better then your God what shall be the path of happiness for you. Sin impugns His goodness. By sin you actually declare that God has denied you that which would make you happy, which is not the part of a good, tender, and loving Father.  
A generous God denies nothing to His creatures but that which is harmful. But inasmuch as you think sin to be pleasant and profitable, you cast a slur upon the benevolence and loving kindness of God. And when He is such a God, so full of tenderness that His very name is “Love,” this is no slight burden to His holy soul, to feel when He perceives you think you could do better for yourself than He is willing to do—and that He has cruelly robbed you of pleasure and denied you that which would be for your good. Sin cuts at the Lord’s wisdom with one hand and at His goodness with the other.  
And see, sin also abuses the mercy of God. When you, as many of you have done, sin with the higher hand because of His long-suffering towards you—when, because you have no sickness, no losses, no crosses, therefore you spend your time in revelry and obstinate rebellion—what is this but taking the mercy which was meant for your good and turning it into mischief? It is no small grief to the loving Father to see His substance spent with harlots in riotous living. I tell you it is no slight thing to the Father of the prodigal to see Him wish to fill his belly with the husks the swine eat. This touches Him at the very quick. He cannot endure it, that His children should be thus degraded as to turn even the mercy which would woo them to repentance, into a ground why they should sin the more against Him.  
Besides, let me remind the careless and impenitent this morning, that every sin is a defiance of Divine power. In effect it is lifting your puny fists against the majesty of Heaven and defying God to destroy you. Every time you sin, you know that sin will lead to your soul’s destruction. If, then, you beard the Omniscient One even to His face, and while under the hand that can crush you, you dare to revolt and to transgress, you do as much as dare and defy the Lord to prove whether He can maintain His Law or not. Is this a slight thing, that a worm, the creature of a day, should defy the God of Ages, the God that fills and upholds all things by the Word of His power?  
Well may He be weary when He has to bear with such provocations and insults as these! Mention what attribute you will, and sin has blotted it. Speak of God in any relationship you choose, and sin has cast a slur upon Him. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. In every view of it, it must be offensive to the Most High. Sinner, do you know that every act of disobedience to God’s Law is virtually an act of high treason? What do you do but seek to be God yourself, your own master, your own lord? Every time you swerve from His will, it is to put your will into its place. It is to make yourself a God and to undeify the Most High.  
And is this a little offense, to snatch from His brow the crown and from His hand the scepter? I tell you it is such an act that Heaven itself could not stand unless it were resented. And if this crime were suffered to go unpunished, the wheels of Heaven’s commonwealth would be taken from their axles and the whole frame of nature would be unhinged. Such a treason against God shall certainly be punished.  
And to crown all, sin is an onslaught upon God Himself, for every sinner is an atheist at heart. Let his religious profession be what it may, he has said in his heart, “No God.” He wishes that there were no Law and no Supreme Ruler. He desires that God might be forgotten. God is not in all his thoughts. Is this a trifle? To be a deicide? To slay God? To desire to put Him out of His own world? For the creature to declare war against the God that made him and to wish that God might cease to be—is this a thing to be winked at? Can the Most High hear it and not be pressed down beneath its weight?  
Ah, I pray you do not think that I would make a needless outcry against sin and disobedience. It is not in the power of human imagination to exaggerate the evil of sin, nor will it ever be possible for mortal lips, though they should be touched like those of Elijah, with a live coal from off the altar, to thunder out the ten-thousandth part of the enormity of the least sin against God. Think, dear Friends! We are His creatures and yet we will not do His will! We are fed by Him. The breath in our nostrils He gives to us, and yet we spend that breath in murmuring and in rebellion.  
Once more, we are always in the sight of our Omniscient God, and yet the Presence of God is not enough to compel us to obedience. Surely, if a man should insult the law in the very presence of the lawgiver—if the king were insulted to his face—that were not to be tolerated. But this is your case and mine. We must confess, “Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight.” And we must remember that we are doing all this and we know what we are doing. We are not sinning like the Hottentot. We are not pulling God’s Law to pieces like some blind New Zealander.  
We, in England, sin against extraordinary light and sevenfold knowledge. And is this a light thing? Can you expect that God shall wink at us and pass by such offenses as these? Oh that these lips had language, that this heart could burn for once! If I could declare the horrible infamy of sin it would make the blood chill in even a haughty Pharaoh’s veins, and proud Nebuchadnezzar might bow his head in fear. It is a horrible thing, indeed, to have rebelled against the Most High. God have mercy upon His servants and forgive them.  
This is our first point but I cannot teach it to you. Only God can teach it by His Spirit. O that the Holy Spirit may make you feel that sin is exceedingly sinful, because it is grievous and burdensome to God.  
II. Secondly, SOME SINS ARE MORE ESPECIALLY GRIEVOUS TO GOD. The connection of our text will help you to see the force of this observation. There is no such thing as a little sin, but still, there are degrees of guilt, and it were folly to say that a sinful thought has in it the same extent of evil as a sinful act. A filthy imagination is sinful—wholly sinful and greatly sinful—but still the act has attained a higher degree of provocation.  
Now, there are sins that especially provoke God. In the connection of the text we read that licentiousness does this. The people seem, from the 7th verse, to have gone to a very high degree of fornication and lecherousness. This sin is not uncommon in our day. Let our midnight streets and our divorce courts be the witness. Perhaps the saddest proof that society is far from pure is found in the fact that seducers and fornicators, if they are but gentlemen, may enter respectable society. Brand the miscreants, I say. If the woman is shut out as a harlot, what shall be done unto the lustful maker and cherisher of harlots? If Hell burns hotter at one time than another, it is for those who make what should have been a temple of the Holy Spirit into an instrument of rebellion against both man and God.  
Oppression, too, according to the text, is another great sin. The Prophet speaks of selling the poor for a pair of shoes. And there are such who would grind the widow and the orphan to the last extreme and make their laborers toil for nothing. How many business men we have who never knew what “hearts of mercy” were? Men form themselves into societies, and then exact an outrageous usury upon loans from the unhappy men who fall into their hands. Cunning legal quibbles and crafty evasions of just debts often amount to heavy oppression and are sure to bring down the anger of the Most High.  
Then again, it seems that idolatry and blasphemy are most certainly offensive to Him and have a high degree of heinousness. He says that they drank the wine of false gods, so if any man set up his belly as his god, or his gold, or his wealth, and lives to these, instead of living to the Most High, he has offended by idolatry.  
Especially is blasphemy a God-provoking sin. For blasphemy there is no excuse. As George Herbert says, “Lust and wine plead a pleasure. There is gain to be pleaded for avarice, but the cheap swearer from his open sluice lets his soul run for nothing.” There is nothing gained by it. There can be no pleasure in cursing—blasting one’s limbs and damning one’s soul—this must be offending for offending’s sake, and therefore this is a high and crying sin. God does pardon it, He is willing to pardon it now—but it nevertheless weighs upon His heart and He cannot suffer it to go unpunished unless it be repented of.  
Some sins make the Lord very weary of man. Now, I do not know who you are, many of you this morning, but I have no doubt there are some among you to whom this word may be a personal accusation. Do I address the lecherous, or the oppressive, or the swearer? Do I address the profane? Ah, Soul, what a mercy God has borne with you for so long. The time will come, however, when He will say, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries,” and how easily will He cast you off and appoint you an awful destruction.  
Again, while some sins are thus grievous to God for their peculiar heinousness, many men are especially obnoxious to God because of the length of their sin. That gray-headed man—how many times has he provoked the Most High? Why, those who are but lads have cause to count their years, and apply their hearts unto wisdom because of the length of time they have lived in rebellion. But what shall I say of you that have been half a century in open war against God—and some of you sixty, seventy—what if I said near upon eighty years? Ah, you have had eighty years of mercies and eighty years of forgetfulness. Eighty years of bounty, and eighty years of ingratitude and insult! O God, well may You be wearied by the length and number of man’s sins!  
Furthermore, God takes special note and feels a special weariness of sin that is mixed with obstinacy. Oh, how obstinate some men are! They will be damned. There is no helping them. They seem as if they would leap the Alps to reach perdition, and swim through seas of fire that they may destroy their own souls. I might tell you cases of men that have been sore sick of fever, malaria, and cholera. They have recovered from all—but have only recovered their health to return to their wallowing in the mire.  
Some of them have had such troubles in business, thick and threefold. They were once in respectable circumstances, but they spent their living riotously and they became poor. They still struggle on in sin. They are growing poorer still—most of their clothes have gone to the pawn shop. But they will not turn from the gin shop and the haunt of vice. Another child is dead! Ah, has that man yonder a dead child at home? And the wife is sick and nothing but starvation looks the family in the face!  
But they have gone on still

with a high hand and an outstretched arm. This is obstinacy, indeed. Sinner! God will let you have your own way one of these days, and that way will be your everlasting ruin. But God is weary of all here who have thus set themselves to do mischief, and who against warnings, and invitations and entreaties, and light, and knowledge, have determined to go on in sin.  
The context seems to tell us that ingratitude is intensely burdensome to God. He tells the people how He brought them up out of Egypt. How He cast out the Amorites. How He raised up their sons for Prophets and their young men for Nazarites. And yet they rebelled against Him! Oh, dear Friends, this was one of the things that pricked my heart when I first came to God as a guilty sinner—not so much the peculiar heinousness of my outward life, as the peculiar mercies that I had enjoyed. How many of us have been detestably ungrateful! What a life has our life been!  
Oh, how generous God has been. Why there are some of us who never had a want. All our wants have been supplied. God has never cast us into poverty, nor left us to infamy, nor given us up to evil example. He has kept us moral, and made us love His House even when we did not love Him. And all this He has done year after year. What poor returns have we made! To you, His people, what joy He has given, what deliverances, what love, what comfort, what bliss—and yet after all this, to think that we should sin to His very face! Oh, well may He be as a cart that is pressed down, that is full of sheaves!  
O my Hearers, I know I address some to whom this may come home very pointedly. What? When you were nearly drowned, were you snatched from the jaws of death? What? Were you rescued from sickness? Were you blessed with that godly mother, and did that companion plead with you? Have you a tender conscience? Do you feel that you cannot sin as others do, for something checks you? All this is God’s love. But if you will still rebel against Him, despite all this, well may He arise in His wrath and shake Himself in His hot displeasure. He will not always strive with man. Justice shall soon have its day.  
Let me observe, before I leave this point, that it seems from our text that the Lord is so pressed, that He even cries out. Just as the cart, when laden with the sheaves, groans under the weight, so the Lord cries out under the load of sin. Have you ever heard those accents? “Hear, O hearers and give, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me.” Hear again— “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways. For why will you die, O house of Israel?” Better still, hear it from the lips of Christ, softened down to our own ears—“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets and stone them which are sent unto you. How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not!”  
Sinner, God is cut to the heart by your sin! Your Creator grieves over that which you laugh at. Your Creator cries out in His Spirit concerning that which you think to be a trifle. “O do not this abominable thing which I hate!” For God’s sake do it not! We often say “for God’s sake,” without knowing what we mean. But here, see what it means—for the sake of God—that you grieve not your Creator—that you cause not the Eternal One, Himself, to cry out against you. Cease you, cease you, “from your evil ways. For why will you die, O house of Israel?” I now leave those two points to pass on very briefly to the next.  
III. While it is true that sin is grievous to the Lord, it magnifies His mercy when we see that HE BEARS THE LOAD. As the cart is not said to break, but is only pressed, so is He pressed, and yet He bears. That hymn we sung just before the sermon has more in it than hard hearts will feel— *“Lord and am I yet afire,  
Not in torments, not in Hell?  
Still does Your good Spirit strive—  
With the chief of sinners dwell?  
Tell it unto sinners, tell,  
I am, I am out of Hell.”*  
If you and I were in God’s place, should we have borne it? No, within a week we should have burned the universe with fire, or trod it to powder beneath our feet. If God were like modern lawgivers—and here I find no fault with them, for the law of a commonwealth must be unyielding—but if the Law of Heaven were as swift to punish as the law of man, where would we be? I do not find you rising up to plead for the man who murdered his children, and from some fancied injury shot his fellow man. We seem to say by a unanimous verdict, “The wretch is guilty, let him be punished.”  
What a universal howl has been going up this week against an offender who once stood fair in the midst of us, but who turned aside long ago unto iniquity. What man pleads for him? Who stands up and says, “Let William Roupell go unpunished”? Yet, here is God, and here are we whose offenses are ten times more heinous against God than any man’s offenses can be against man—and yet He spares us. Remember, He has all the while full power to punish. He has but to wish and it is done—to lift His finger and we are crushed before Him.  
How many servants wait around Him ready to do His bidding? As the Roman consul went out, attended by his lictors carrying the axe, so God is ever attended by His executioners, who are ready to fulfill His sentence. A stone, a tile from the roof of the house, a thunderbolt, a puff of wind, a grain of dust, a broken blood vessel, and it is over—and you are dead and in the hands of an angry God. Indeed, the Lord has to hold in the followers of His wrath and restrain the servants of His anger, for the heavens cry, “Why should we cover that wretch’s head?” Earth asks, “Why should I yield a harvest to the sinner’s plow?” The lightning and thunder say, “Let us smite the rebel,” and the seas roar upon the sinner, desiring him as their prey.  
There is no greater proof of the Omnipotence of God, than His longsuffering. It shows the greatest possible power for God to be able to control Himself, to be able to keep in an anger which naturally must boil, and restrain a fury which else must burn. Sinner, yet He bears with you. The angels have been astonished at it—they thought He would strike. But yet He bears with you. Have you ever seen a patient man insulted? He has been met in the street by a villain who insults him before a mob of boys. He bears it. The fellow spits in his face. He bears it still. Now he strikes him. He endures it quietly.  
“Give him a charge,” says one. “No,” says he, “I forgive him all.” The fellow knocks him down and rolls him in the ditch, but he bears it still. Yes, and when he rises all covered with mire, he says, “If there is anything that I can do to befriend you, I will do it now.” Just at that moment the wretch is arrested by a sheriff’s officer for debt. The man who has been insulted takes out his purse and pays the debt and says, “Now you may go free.” Look! The wretch spits in his face after that!  
Now you say “Let him feel what you can do. Let the law have its way with him.” Is there any room for patience now? So would it have been with man. It has not been so with God. We have done much worse than this and He has acted much more nobly. And still, I say, He bears it all. Though like the cart, He is pressed under the load of sheaves, yet like the cart the axle does not break. He bears the load. He bears with impenitent sinners still.  
IV. And this brings me now to pass over to the fourth head, on which I would have your deepest attention. Many here present, I fear, have never repented of sin. You have never seen it in the light of grieving God, or else methinks you would not wish to grieve Him. But, perhaps some of you feel how evil a thing rebellion is, but you want to know how you can get rid of it.  
This is our fourth head. Not only does God still bear with sin, but GOD, IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON, DID BEAR AND TAKE AWAY SIN. These words might have deep meaning if uttered by the lips of Jesus, “I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.” Here stood the great problem. God must punish sin, and yet He would have mercy. How could it be? Lo! Jesus comes to be the Substitute far all who trust Him. See how they pile on Him the sheaves of human sin! There are MY sheaves of sin*—  
“My soul looks back to see,  
The burden You did bear,  
When hanging on the cursed tree,  
And hopes her guilt was there.”*  
Here are your sheaves, my Hearer—the sheaves of all His chosen, the sins of all who shall believe in Him! “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Yes, the Scripture has it, “He is the propitiation for our sin and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” There they lie, heaps on heaps, till He is pressed down like the wagon that groans as it moves along. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” See Him, He did “sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.” “He that eats bread with Me has lifted up His heel against Me.”  
They sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, a goodly price did they value Him. Nevertheless, He is taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare His generation? Herod mocks Him and makes nothing of Him. Pilate jeers Him. They have smitten the Prince of Judah upon the cheek. “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” They have tied Him to the pillar. They are beating Him with rods, not this time forty stripes save one—there is no “save one” with Him, for the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and “with His stripes we are healed.”  
Look at Him, like a cart pressed down with sheaves He goes through the streets of Jerusalem. Well may you weep, you daughters of Jerusalem, though He bids you dry your tears. They hoot Him as He walks along bowed beneath the load of His own Cross which was the emblem of your sin and mine. They have brought Him to Golgotha. They throw Him on His back, they stretch out His hands and His feet. The accursed iron penetrates the most tender parts of His body, where most of the nerves congregate. They lift up the Cross. O bleeding Savior! Your time of woe is come! They dash it into the socket with rough hands, the nails are tearing through His hands and feet.  
He hangs in extremity, for God has forsaken Him. His enemies persecute and take Him, for there is none to deliver Him. They mock His nakedness. They point at His agonies. They look and stare upon Him with ribald jests. They insult His griefs and make puns upon His prayers. He is now, indeed, a worm and no man, crushed till you can scarcely think that there is Divinity within. The fever gets hold upon Him. His tongue is dried up like a potsherd and He cries, “I thirst!” Vinegar is all they yield Him.  
The sun refuses to shine and the thick midnight darkness of that awful midday, is a fitting emblem of the tenfold midnight of his soul. Out of that thick horror He cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Then, indeed, was He pressed down! Oh, there was never sorrow like unto His sorrow. All human griefs found a reservoir in His heart, and all the punishment of human guilt spent itself upon His body and His soul. Oh, shall sin ever be a trifle to us? Shall I laugh at that which made Him groan? Shall I toy and dally with that which stabbed Him to the heart?  
Sinner, will you not give up your sins for the sake of Him who quivered for sin? “Oh,” you say, “yes, if I could believe that He suffered for my sake.” Will you trust your soul in His hands this morning? Do you do so? Then He died for you and took your guilt and carried all your sorrows, and you may go free, for God is satisfied, and you are absolved. Christ was burdened that you might be lightened. He was pressed with your sheaves, that you might find deliverance. I wish I could talk of my precious Master as He might speak of Himself. Or as John might speak, who saw Him and bore witness. He could tell in plaintive tones of the sorrows of the Man of Calvary. But such as I have, I give you. O that God would give you with it the power, the Divine Grace, the blessed compulsion to believe on Jesus, to believe on Jesus NOW!  
V. For if not, and here is our last point, God will bear the load for a little while. But if Christ has not borne it for you and for me, then THAT SAME LOAD WILL CRUSH US FOREVER AND EVER.  
I find that my text is translated by many learned men in a different way from the version before us—“I will press you as a cart that is full of sheaves presses your place.” That is, just as a heavily loaded wagon pressed into the poor Eastern roads, and left there deep furrows—furrows you would hardly think of in a land where we understand road making so well. Just as deep ridges and ruts were cut into the Eastern roads by the loaded wagons, so will I crush you, says God, with the load of your sin.  
This is to be your doom, my Hearer, if you are out of Christ. Does it need me to enlarge upon this terror? I think not. It only needs that you should make a personal application of the threat! Divide yourselves now. Divide yourselves, I say! Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Then the threat is not yours. But if you believe not, whether you are standing in yonder aisle, or up there in those far-off galleries, I do advise you listen to me now, as if you were the only person here—a Christless soul must be a damned soul—a spirit that believes not in Christ is condemned already, because it believes not.  
How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? Thus says the Lord unto you, “Consider your ways.” By time, by eternity, by life, by death, by Heaven, by Hell, I plead with you—believe in Him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto Him. But if you believe not that Christ is He, you shall die in your sins. After death the judgment! Oh, the judgment, the thundering trumpet, the multitudes, the crowds. The books, the Great White Throne, the, “Come, you blessed,” the “Depart, you cursed”! After judgment—to a soul that is out of Christ—Hell!  
Who among us, who among US shall abide with the devouring flame? Who among US, who among US shall dwell with the everlasting burnings? I pray that none of us may. But we must unless we fly to Christ. Oh, I beseech you, my dear Hearer, fly to Jesus! I may never see your face again. Your eyes may never look into mine—but I shake my garments of your blood, if you believe not in Christ this morning. My tears entreat you, my lips would woo you. There is mercy for you! God has had patience with you. Let His long-suffering lead you to repentance. He wills not the death of any, but had rather that they should turn unto Him and live.  
And this turning is simply this—trust Jesus with your soul, and He shall take your sin and you shall stand accepted in the Beloved. Will you? No, I know you will not—unless the Spirit of God shall constrain you. But at the least, if you will not, it shall not be for want of pleading and entreating. Come, it is mercy’s welcome hour. I pray you, come! Jesus with pierced hands invites you, though you have rejected Him. You have stood against Him long—He knocks again—His undefeated, unconquerable love defies your wickedness and will have you.  
Sinner, will you have Him or not? “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” God help you to come, God make you come, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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COMMUNION WITH CHRIST—A BAPTIZING SERMON  
NO. 2668

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 1, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1858.

**“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” Amos 3:3.**

THE expression, “walking together,” is often used in Scripture as a figure for communion. “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Communion, if it is thorough and entire, implies activity. It is not merely contemplation, it is action and, therefore, inasmuch as walking is an active exercise, and walking with a man is communion with him, active communion with him, we see how walking comes to be the picture of true communion with Christ. An old Puritan said, “It does not say that Enoch returned to God and then left Him, but he ‘walked with God.’” All his journey through, he had God for his Companion and lived in perpetual fellowship with his Maker.

There is also another idea contained in the term, “walking together.” It is not only activity, but continuance. So, true communion with Christ is not a mere spasm—not just an excitement of ecstasy—but if it is the work of the Holy Spirit and if it is enjoyed by the healthful soul, it will be a continual thing.

It also implies progress, for, in walking together, we do not lift up our feet and put them down in the same place, but we proceed nearer to our journey’s end. And he that has true communion with Christ is making progress. It is true that Christ can go no further towards excellence, for He has already attained perfection, but the nearer we get to that perfection, the more fellowship we have with Jesus—and unless we progress, unless we seek to be more childlike in faith, more instructed in knowledge and more diligent in service—unless we seek to have more zeal and fervency, we shall find that, in so standing still, we lose the Presence of the Master, for it is only by following on with the Lord that we continue to walk with Him. It will, therefore, very readily strike you how walking with a person is an excellent figure for communion with him and how the term, “walking with God,” is the best expression for fellowship with God. Hence, our text implies by its very form that two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. And it teaches us, therefore, that unless we are agreed with Christ, we cannot attain to the sweet state of communion with Him.  
We, shall, first, notice the agreement here mentioned. We shall, secondly, try to notice the necessity for this agreement. And then, thirdly, we shall ask all Christians to seek after this agreement with Christ that they may have full communion with Him.

I am not addressing myself so much to the world outside as to the Church within. When we are preaching the Gospel of salvation, we preach that to the world. But communion is like the Holy of Holies! Salvation, itself, seems to be but as the court of the priests, but communion is the Innermost Place, that which is within the veil, and into that none but the Christian can be allowed to enter.

I. First, then, Christian, we shall endeavor to show you WHAT IS THE AGREEMENT which must exist between your Lord and yourself before you can walk with Him. We will do this in a very simple way. We shall keep to the figure and we shall see that there are certain things necessary to enable one person to walk with another.

First, then, it is quite certain that if we would walk with Christ, we must walk in the same path. Two men cannot walk together if one turns his head in one direction and the other turns his head the opposite way. If one should turn to the right and the other to the left, they cannot walk together, although they may arrive at the same end by different roads, but they cannot walk together unless they walk along the same road. It is true that they can have a little conversation even if they are some yards apart, but if one walks on one side of the road, and the other on the other, we would think that their communion was rather distant and their love rather cold. But, the nearer they walk on precisely the same road, the more are they enabled to hold fellowship with one another.

Now, child of God, albeit you cannot be saved by your good works, and your salvation does not depend upon your works, remember that your communion does! It is impossible for you to have fellowship with Christ unless you are obedient to His commands. Let a Christian err and he will be pierced with many sorrows. Let the child of God forsake the way of God, let him, as, alas, we oftentimes do, go down by the stile to By-Path Meadow, and he will not have his Master go down By-Path Meadow with him! If we will be self-willed and choose our own path, we must go our own path alone. If, for some seeming pleasure, or some fancied gain, instead of following the fiery cloudy pillar, we follow the will-o’-the-wisp of our own desires, we shall have to go alone, and in the dark, too! Christ will go with us anywhere where duty calls us. If duty should call us into the burning fiery furnace, the Son of Man will be there. If it should lead us into the lions’ den, He will be there to shut the lions’ mouths. He would not have gone there with Daniel if Daniel had sought, by neglect of duty, to avoid the threatened destruction. Although the Lord would go with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego even into the heat of the burning fiery furnace, yet, if they had bowed down to the image, He would not have gone with them. “If you walk contrary to Me,” says the Lord, “I will walk contrary to you.”

Here I must guard what I have said lest I should be misunderstood. I do not mean that Christ forsakes His people so as to destroy them—but He forsakes them so as to take away their communion with Himself. For again I repeat that, although salvation does not depend upon good works, communion has this dependence—and cannot be enjoyed between Christ and the soul that is full of sin. A man may have much sin about him and yet be a saved man. And much of frailty and imperfection cleaves to us all. But if we are living in sin. If we are, in anyway whatever, breaking the commands of God—to the extent of our sin there will be just that extent of separation between our souls and Christ. Sin may not kill us, but it will make us sick. It will take Christ’s right hand from under our heads. Take care, therefore, Christian, that you walk in the steps of your Master. Strive to be obedient to His Law. Live righteously, soberly and godly in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Be you like Caleb, who followed the Lord fully. Endeavor in every way to learn His will and then to do it. In all your Lord’s appointed ways, pursue your journey. Remember all His ordinances, and perform His every precept. Resign yourself to His every dispensation. Be you not as the horse or mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle lest they come near to you—but be you guided by the Lord’s own eye. Run in the way of His commandments and you shall find them a delightful road! This is the first point—those who walk together must go the same way.

Further, in going the same way, they must go with the same motive. Two persons may be going the same way, but suppose they are going for very opposite reasons? There is a lawyer walking side by side with the man whom he is going to fleece. Let the poor man know that he is to be robbed at the end of his journey and there will not be any communion between the two travelers! Suppose two men are going together and one is about to bring an action against the other—there will not be any communion between them. Suppose they are going to fight with each other— there will not be any communion between them. Suppose the two are going to the same election, intending to vote for opposite candidates—they will not be likely to hold very sweet conversation with one another, albeit they may go in the same way. So, it is necessary that we should not only go in the same road, but with the same motive.

Perhaps you ask, “Is it possible that we can go with Christ in the same road, but yet not with the same motive?” Certainly, it is. You see a man who appears to be quite as holy as a Christian. He seems to be as obedient to the Lord as the man who really follows the Master. As for ceremonies, he is the very first to observe them. As for the duties of morality, he attends to them most scrupulously. But ask him why he does all this and he says it is because he desires to save his soul by it. Immediately, he and Christ are at arms’ length! Christ calls such an one an antichrist and they are sworn enemies. You are trying to save yourself, are you? Then you are to be a savior, while Christ is a Savior? Then you and He are at enmity! But if you are traveling on this road to be saved by Grace, desiring to show forth your thanks with your lips and in your life, then you do not wish to rob Christ’s kingly or priestly office of any of its dignity. You do not desire to set yourself up as another king in Zion. But if you are walking in this road with a motive contrary to Christ, you cannot hold any communion with Him.

There is very blessed communion with Christ to be enjoyed in the Lord’s Supper, but if anyone comes to the Lord’s Table merely with the thought that it may do him good and save his soul, there is no communion with Christ for him because that is not Christ’s objective. And it is the same with Baptism. That ordinance is a blessed means of communion with Christ in His death and burial, but if anyone desires to be baptized, supposing that the observance of the ordinance will save his soul, then there is no communion! If anyone attaches more to the act than Christ has commanded and, therefore, makes it our duty to fulfill it—the moment a man supposes any efficacy in the water and in the body being buried therein—then the communion ceases, for unless we come to anything with Christ’s motive, or with a motive which is congenial to Christ’s heart, we are not capable of walking with Him. Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed, not only in the way they walk, but also in the objective with which they walk in that way.

Once again, two persons may walk the same road, they may walk with the same purpose and yet they may not be able to speak to each other unless they travel the same pace. If one person shall travel home very swiftly, tonight, and another, who lives in the same house, goes creeping home very slowly, perhaps they will go down the same streets, yet they will say nothing to one another because one will be at home long before the other. So we must agree in the pace at which we travel. Why is it that many Christians hold no fellowship with Jesus? It is because they travel to Heaven so slowly that the Lord Jesus leaves them behind! They are so lukewarm, so cold, so indifferent—they have so little zeal, so little love— they have so little true desire to glorify God that the swift heart of Jesus cannot be restrained to tarry with them.

“Oh,” says one, “I travel as fast as I can, but I am only a poor feeble creature! I often creep when I see others run and, when I do run, I often see others flying.” Beloved, Christ does not measure your walking by the speed at which you go. If your desire is slack, the Lord Jesus will leave you and travel on before you—and you will probably find the whip of affliction behind you goading your soul to travel more swiftly! John Bunyan has a good picture. He says, “if you send a servant for medicines and he goes as fast as he can, perhaps he rides on a sorry jade of a horse and he cannot make it go fast. But the master does not measure the pace by the rate at which the horse goes, but by the rate at which the servant wishes the horse to go, and he says, ‘That man would go fast if he could. If you put him on a horse that had some mettle in him, he would be back and bring the medicines.’”

So is it with our poor flesh and blood. It is an ill pace at which we can ever go with such a sorry thing to ride on—but the Lord Jesus measures our pace, not by the actual distance traversed, but by our desires! When he sees us kicking and spurring, as it were, in prayer, pulling at the rein, and toiling to make our poor flesh and blood rise to something like devotion and zeal, He accepts the will for the deed and He keeps company even with us who are such poor disciples. But let our desires be cold, let us become lazy, let us do little or nothing for Christ—what wonder if the Lord Jesus says, “This man observes not My Words and keeps not My sayings. I will not sup with him and he shall not sup with Me. I will give him enough comfort to keep him alive. I will give him enough spiritual food to keep his soul from actually starving, but I will put him on a poor diet until he turns to Me with full purpose of heart. And then I will take him to My bosom and show him My love.”

There is one more thing. You can suppose two persons traveling on the same road with the same intentions and at the same pace, yet they do not walk together so as to hold any fellowship with each other because they do not like each other. Where there is no love (and that, perhaps, is the fullest meaning of the text), there can be no communion. Unless two are agreed in heart, they cannot walk together. You know some of our very excellent Hyper-Calvinistic friends. Now, suppose one of them meets an Arminian—you cannot suppose for an instant that there could be any conversation between them unless it were some jangling and abuse of each other. Suppose some good strict Baptist Brother speaks to us, who have more enlarged principles. He smites us with his heavy weapons and cuts us down for the great sin of loving all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and welcoming to the Lord’s Table all whom we believe the Lord has received. But, so far as communion is concerned, our Brother would be obliged to go on the other side of the road. There must be, he thinks, a little distinction and a little difference kept up, for the honor of his own views. And we know that there are some Brethren who have a peculiar obnoxiousness of temper—they seem to be covered with bristles and sharp quills to prick and annoy any and every person who happens to come in their way. You cannot commune with them. It is impossible for you to walk in the same road with them, for you would feel it better to hold your peace all the way because they would be sure to misunderstand what you said. There must be an agreement in heart, an agreement in opinion, or otherwise two cannot walk together.

O Believer, have you agreement of heart with the Lord Jesus? Do you love Christ and do you think a great deal of Him? Do you ever seek to magnify Him and speak well of His name? Do you think Him the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely? And do you feel that He also has a good opinion of you? Has He said to you, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you”? Has He spoken soft words to your heart which have caused you to think that His heart of compassion has yearned over you? Ah, then, communion is easy with you and your Lord, for your two souls are bound up in the same bundle of life and, therefore, it is possible for you and Christ to walk together! Are you and He of the same opinion? Are Christ’s Words your doctrine? Have You been taught to give up all divinity except that which came from Jesus? Can you say of Him, “He is my only Rabbi, my only Teacher in the Law and the Gospel. At His feet, with Mary, I could sit and receive His Words and believe all that He has uttered to be the very Truth of God”? If so, Believer, communion between you and Christ is easy, for, when two agree in thought, intention, way and affection, then they can walk together.

I have taken so much time for this first point that the other two must be very briefly hinted at.  
II. The second point was to be THE NECESSITY FOR THIS AGREEMENT.  
First, Christ will not walk with us unless we are agreed with Him because if He did so, it would be a slur upon His own honor. No, more than that, it would be a denial of His own Nature! Should Christ come into concord with Belial? Should He make Himself free and communicative with those who indulge the lusts of the flesh and who disobey His commands? It would look ill if the King’s Son should walk arm in arm with traitors! We should not think it a good sign if we saw the highest in the land herding with the lowest. Christ keeps good company and if we do not have our hearts purified by the Holy Spirit, He will not come to us at all. He will not abide even with His own children so long as they harbor sin. Invite the devil into the front parlor of your heart, and Christ will not come. No, it would be a derogation of His own dignity, an insult to His own Character to do so. Give your heart up to the indulgence of some ambitious desire and you cannot insult the Savior by inviting Him to come to you. In our own houses we do not invite two persons who are at enmity, and is it likely that Christ will come where sin is reigning, or pampered, or indulged? No, Brothers and Sisters, He knows there is sin in the best human heart, but, as long as it is kept down and as long as He sees that our desires are to overturn it, He will come there. But when He sees sin petted and fed in the place which ought to be His own palace. When He sees self-righteousness and self-security harbored there, He says, “I will not return until they have repented of their sin.”  
There is another reason why you cannot commune with Christ unless you are in agreement with Him and that is because you, yourselves, are incapable of it. Unless your soul is in agreement with Christ. Unless, in motive, aim and will, you are, as far as possible, like your Master, you cannot rise to the dignity of fellowship with Him! Fellowship with Christ is a high privilege—no man can attain to it as long as he indulges evil purposes, or low desires. The heart must be assimilated to the likeness of Christ. It must be cleansed and renewed by the Holy Spirit, or else it loses its wings and is unable to mount to the high places of the earth where Christ shows His people His love.  
There is another reason why Christ will not commune with us unless we are agreed with Him, namely, for our own good. Christ cannot and will not hold sweet fellowship with His people unless they are in harmony with Him. If Christians swerve from Christ’s path and backslide from His ways—and Christ were still to indulge them with love feasts—they would not realize their sin and would still continue in it. Let a father indulge the erring child with all the usual display of his affection. Let him put away the rod. Let him never use a harsh word at all, but treat the sinning one with the same love as another who is dutiful and obedient—how is it to be expected that the child would ever forsake its faults? If Christ should give the same love, the same enjoyments in sin and after sin, as He does in duty and after duty, His people would scarcely recognize their sins and they would continue in them. But just as the Lord is pleased to make pain the tell-tale of disease, so that a headache becomes an indication of something wrong within the system, so does He make the absence of His own fellowship the tell-tale by which we may know that there is something within our soul that is hostile to Him—something that must be driven away before the sacred Dove will come, with wings of comfort, to dwell in our hearts. “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” No. That is impossible.  
III. Now, thirdly, I want to urge all Christians to SEEK AFTER THIS AGREEMENT WITH CHRIST.  
Beloved Brothers and Sisters, in order that you may agree with Christ, I have first to remind you that the perpetual indwelling of the Holy Spirit must be with you. Unless the same Spirit that dwells in Christ shall dwell in you, your agreement can never rise to such a height as to admit of any depth or nearness of union. Take care continually to seek the unction from on high, the indwelling of the Holy One of Israel! In the measure in which your heart has been endued by the Divine influence and baptized by the holy fire of the Spirit—in that proportion will your soul be in agreement with Christ and your union be true, close and lasting. Take care of that.  
And then, next, under that Divine influence, look well to all your motives. Seek not to have any aim to get honor to yourself, or honor to your fellow men. Take care that in all you do, you do it with a single eye to your Master’s honor, for, unless your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If you will win the sunlight of your Master’s face, you must seek His Glory and His Glory alone.  
Then, if you would have union with Christ, take care, in the next place, that you do all in dependence upon Him, for if, in the affairs of your soul, you set up in business for yourself, Christ will be at enmity with you. Seek not only to turn your eyes to Him for direction, but also for support. And look to Him in your prayers, in your preaching, in your hearing and in everything, for so shall Christ and your soul be agreed and you shall have fellowship with Him.  
And, lastly, be continually panting after more holiness. Never be content with what you are. Seek to grow. Seek to be more and more like Christ! And then, when that desire for holiness is strongest, you will have the same desire that Christ has, for His desire is that you should be holy, even as He is holy. And His command is, “Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.” And when your desires are Christ’s desires, then shall it be possible for you to walk with Christ, but not till then!  
I long to have a Church in complete agreement with the Lord Jesus Christ, for that would be a Church against which the gates of Hell could never prevail! If a church is merely founded by a man, the man will die and the church will perish. If a doctrine is only taught by a man and you receive it on his authority, his authority will pass away as all earthly things must. But, if it is of God, woe unto them that fight against it, for they can never prevail against Him! Woe unto him that dashes himself against this stone, for he shall be broken in pieces! And if it is rolled upon him, it shall grind him to powder! Let us be sure that a church is a Church of God in her doctrines, in her ordinances, in her prayer and praise—and we may know that she shall be like the stone we read of in Daniel, “cut out of the mountain without hands.” None shall be able to break her, but she shall break all opposers in pieces and she shall fill the earth!  
Now there are some friends who are about to walk with Christ into this pool of Baptism. Can two walk here unless they are agreed? You may walk into this pool, but you cannot bring Christ with you unless you are agreed with Him. If you come without agreement with Christ, you will make a slip of it in your life, or else go back and walk no more with Him and be offended with Him. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, unless your two hearts are agreed, unless Christ and your heart are made one, you will fall out with one another before long! Christ will not long be at peace with you, nor will you be at peace with Christ. Your profession will be short-lived, after all, unless it is a true and real one—the expression of the inner heart. I pray that your profession tonight may be a sincere one, that you may testify to the world a true, saving and entire agreement with your Lord and Master. And if any of you are not agreed with Christ, I beseech you, though you have come so far, come no farther! Go not into this pool till you are thoroughly agreed with Christ! I charge you, in the name of the living God, as you shall have to stand before His bar at last, play not the hypocrite! Be sincere, for, if you give yourselves not wholly to Christ, you are doing like those who come unworthily to the Lord’s Table—who eat and drink condemnation to their own souls—for he that is plunged into the Baptismal pool as a hypocrite, is immersed unto his own damnation!  
But, O, you humble followers of Jesus, you have testified to us your fellowship in the faith! Be not afraid, now, to confess it before men—and may God acknowledge all your names, at last, among the followers of the Lamb, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
JOHN 9.

[Regular readers of the Sermons will probably notice that this Exposition was given by MR. SPURGEON before he delivered the discourse published last week—Sermon #2667, Volume 46—A Pressed Man Yielding to Christ. It was too long to be issued then, so it is appended to this shorter Sermon for which no Exposition had been preserved.]

John 9:1-2. And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from his birth, And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? The procedure of these disciples is very much like that of many people in these days—they are much more ready to ask questions about sufferers than they are to sympathize with them. If the hearts of the disciples had been in a right condition when they saw this blind man, they would have said, “Lord, cannot this poor man’s eyes be opened?” But, instead of talking like that, they were full of idle curiosity which prompted them to raise metaphysical difficulties and to ask foolish questions. So they wanted to know how it was that the man came to be born blind. Was it in consequence of some sin on the part of his parents, or through some sin of his own in a previous state of existence, (for some of them seem to have had even that foolish notion), or was it because of some sin of his which God foresaw that he would commit and, therefore, laid this affliction upon him from the hour of his birth?

3 *.*Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. That is to say, this blindness was not the result of special sin in any individual, but God intended that His works of mercy and of Grace should be manifested through his affliction. It is a cruel thing when every form of malady or disease is traced to some fault in the person who has to suffer from it. This is evil! I had almost said infernal, for Satan himself could hardly devise a more false and wicked thing than to say that because a man is a special sufferer, therefore he must have been a special sinner! It is not so, for, often, some of God’s truest children—some of those who live nearest to Him—are those who keep the night watches through pain, or they are bedridden from year to year, or are deprived of some of their limbs, or in some other way are full of suffering. This is in order that in their case, also, the works of God should be manifest in them as they were in this poor blind man.

4. I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day. “I have no time to go into these questions with you merely to satisfy your curiosity. ‘While it is day,’ I must go on with the work which I was sent into the world to do.”

4-7. The night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing. There was no long discourse to be delivered while this poor man was waiting to see what would happen to him. Our Lord spoke just a few words to His disciples and then went at once to the miracle He intended to perform. “When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.” Our Savior sometimes works without means. At other times by means and, occasionally He uses means which, at first sight, appear not to be the best to produce the designed result. To put clay on a blind man’s eyes does not seem a very likely operation for giving him sight. And, oh, dear Friends, when God uses us as His instruments and makes us to be like this clay upon the poor blind man’s eyes, I am sure that there is much about us that might make us feel as if we would rather hinder than help! And when we do the best we can, what is there in us that is of any value?

I think I once saw the pen with which Milton was said to have written part of Paradise Lost. Poor pen! It could not remember the great poet, could it? Yet, he had used it to noble purpose. As I looked at it, I did not think of ascribing a single stanza of that matchless poem to the pen with which Milton wrote. So, Beloved, we are the pens that the Lord uses when He means to write His messages of Grace upon the hearts of saints and sinners. But we are such poor pens, such feeble instruments to be held in His hand that we wonder He can ever make use of us! This blind man did exactly as he was told to do. What a blessing it was for him that he received the clay on his eyes and simply went and washed it off again as the Savior told him! That was all he had to do—and then he came back seeing clearly! Oh, if sinners were only attentive to Gospel directions—and then were obedient to them without adding to them or taking from them—how many more blind eyes would be very speedily opened and how greatly would Christ be glorified!

8, 9. The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him. But he said, I am he. With that downright simplicity and shrewdness which marked his whole character, the man said, “I am he.” He did not go beating about the bush at all, but he straightway acknowledged that he was the man of whom they were speaking.

10, 11. Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, A Man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight. I admire the brevity of his statement, the boldness of it and the simple naiveté of it. The way in which he told the story did not embellish it in the least degree. In fact, it could not have been embellished without spoiling it. And when you, dear Friends, are giving an account of your own conversion, describing the way in which salvation became yours, tell it as simply and plainly as you can. It will never be so well adorned as when it appears in its own naked simplicity and beauty. I commend this man’s example to all of you who have to give your testimony before you are admitted as members of the Church. When speaking of your conversion, put the narrative in as plain and simple a form as this man adopted.

12-14. Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Therefore, this act of Christ would be something horrible in the eyes of the Pharisees. They would make out that Christ, when He made the clay, had turned brick maker on the Sabbath, thus violating the traditions of the fathers, just as, on another occasion, they said that He allowed His disciples to go threshing on the Sabbath, when they gathered ears of corn in the field, rubbed them between their hands, and ate the grain because they were hungry. The Rabbis regarded that as an act of threshing, and a very serious violation of the Law of God! And now that Jesus had Himself made clay, and opened a man’s eyes with it, they held up their hands in holy horror—no, in impious horror—that Christ should do such a thing on the Sabbath!

15. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see. He makes his story shorter as he goes on telling it. These people were unworthy of the words he spoke to them and, therefore, he gave them as few as possible.

16, 17. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because He keeps not the Sabbath day. Others said, How can a Man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man again, What say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet. That was as much as he then knew. By thoughtful consideration he had come as far as to know that Jesus must be a Prophet.

18-21. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How, then, does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. They also were shrewd. They did not wish to get themselves into trouble and, therefore, they said as little as they could. They referred the Pharisees to their son who was quite able to answer them.

22-24. These words spoke his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed, already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner. They thought that they could smooth the man over, so that he would say no more. “We know”—we who know everything, we who are the rulers and teachers of the people—“we know that this Man is a sinner.” That might have closed the mouths of many men but, on that occasion, they had before them a person who could not easily be made to believe all they chose to say—a sharp, shrewd man who had keener eyes in his head, even when he was blind, than they had while they could see!

25. He answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. “About that point, I am perfectly certain, whatever question there may be concerning anything else.”

26-28. Then said they to him again, What did He do to you? How opened He your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: why would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciples? Then they reviled him. As they could not answer him, they reviled him. It is the old plan which is still followed by certain lawyers, “No case. Therefore abuse the plaintiff.” “They reviled him.”

28, 29. And said, You are His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: As for this—They did not say, “fellow,” because they meant something worse than that, something which they could not express. “As for this”—

29, 30. We know not from where He comes. The man answered and said unto them, Why here is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He comes, and yet He has opened my eyes! They were the gentlemen who said, “We know,” and they wanted, a little while before, to silence him by parading their superior knowledge! So now he turns upon them, and says, “Herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where He comes, and yet He has opened my eyes!”

31 *.*Now we know that God hears not sinners. He meant men who are living in known sin, impostors and deceivers. Of course, God would not hear sinners of that stamp.

31-33. But if any man is a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began it was not heard that any anyone opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing. This was bravely spoken. The man did not, at that time, know the Godhead of the Savior, but he felt that He must have come from God, that He was one of God’s servants, or messengers, or Prophets. Therefore he avowed what he knew. Dear Friends, always act up to the light you have enjoyed. If you have starlight, thank God for it, and acknowledge it before men, for then He will give you moonlight. And if you have moonlight, walk by it, thank God for it, and acknowledge it and He will give you sunlight. And when you have sunlight, walk in it, and, one of these days, you will come to that Light which is as the light of seven days, the Light of God Himself!

34. They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us? Their dignity was touched! Their superlative wisdom lifted them so much above this poor man that they said, with the utmost disdain, “Do you teach us?”

34, 35 *.*And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out. Oh, if there are any of you who are suffering persecution for Christ’s sake, who have been cast out of any company because of what He has done for you, I do not think you need any sweeter comfort than this one line—“Jesus heard that they had cast him out.”

35-37. And when He had found him, He said to him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him, and it is He that talks with you. I scarcely remember a time that, up to this time, the Lord Jesus had given such a manifestation of Himself to anyone except to the Samaritan woman at the well! When she mentioned the Messiah, He said to her, “I that speak unto you am He.” And here He reveals Himself to this man as the Son of God, which was somewhat more than that woman probably meant by the term, “Messiah.”

38. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him. Which proves that the man was not a Unitarian. “He worshipped Him” who had opened his eyes. And we, also, will worship Him forever and ever, blessed be His holy name!

39-41. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind, also? Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you should have no sin: but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains. It would have been better for them if they had known their blindness and applied to Him who could give them sight and forgive their sin!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #597 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

PREPARATION FOR REVIVAL NO. 597

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY OCTOBER 30, 1864 BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Can two walk together, except they are agreed?” Amos 3:3.**

THE Believer is agreed with God. The war between the most holy God and His offending creatures is over in the case of blood-washed sinners. It is not suspended by a truce, but ended forever by a peace which passes all understanding. The Believer is fully agreed with God concerning the Divine Law—he confesses that, “the Law is holy and just and good”—he would not have it altered if he could. He rejoices in the way of God’s testimonies more than in all riches. Yes, in His Precepts does he take delight, praying evermore, “O let me not wander from Your Commandments.” He joyfully acknowledges that the Judge of all the earth rules mankind by a Law in which there is no injustice, by statutes which subserve the best interests of the governed while they secure the Glory of the great Governor.

The Christian “consents unto the Law that it is good.” He is agreed with God, moreover, that a breach of the Law should be visited with penalty— he would be unwilling that sin should go unpunished. He feels that the sanctions of Law, however terrible, are absolutely necessary and require to be severe. Above all, he is agreed with God in that great Atonement for sin which God Himself has ordained and provided in the Person of Jesus Christ. Gazing upon the matchless sacrifice of Calvary—while the Lord is content, the Believer is satisfied—where God finds satisfaction for His injured honor, the Believer finds the noblest object of admiration and adoration.

You love Golgotha, O Judge of the earth. And Your people are perfectly agreed with You in this. And so the Christian is at one with God in His love of holiness—he delights in the Law of God after the inward man. Sin, which is abhorrent to the Most High, is obnoxious to the Christian in that measure in which he is enlightened and conformed unto the image of Christ. Great God, You have unsheathed Your sword and bathed it in Heaven for the destruction of all evil and Your redeemed are on Your side, abhorring that which is evil and resolving to fight under Your command till the last sin shall be cut off. You have uplifted Your banner because of the Truth and around Your standard the soldiers of the Cross are rallying! Your battle, O Most High, is the battle of the Church! Your foes are our foes and Your friends are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all our delight.

I trust that most of us who are here in the name of Jesus feel a deep, sincere and constant agreement with God. We have been guilty of murmuring at His will. But yet our newborn nature evermore at its core and center knows that the will of the Lord is wise and good. And we therefore bow our heads with reverent agreement and say, “Not as I will, but as

You will. The will of the Lord be done.” Our soul, when through infirmity is tempted to rebellion, nevertheless struggles after complete resignation of her wishes and desires to do the will of the Most High. We do not covet the life of self-will—we sigh after the spirit of self-denial—yes, of selfannihilation that Christ may live in us and that the old ego, the carnal I, may be altogether slain.

I would be as obedient to my God as are those first-born sons of light, His messengers of flaming fire. As the mercury feels the mysterious changes of the air and sensitively moves in accordance with the atmosphere, so would I, being surrounded by my God, evermore perceive His wishes and will and move at once in obedience to them. Our strength shall be perfect when we have no independent will but move and act only as we are moved and acted on by our gracious God. I hope that at this hour we can truly say that notwithstanding our many sins, we do love the Lord our God. And if we could have our will this morning we would follow His commands without the slightest departure from the narrow path. We are in heart agreed with God.

The text reminds us that this agreement gives us power to walk with God. May we be enabled to claim this privilege which Divine Grace has bestowed on us—power to walk with God in daily, habitual, friendly, intimate, joyous communion. Believer, you can walk with God this very day! He is as near to you as He was to Abraham beneath the oaks at Mamre, or Moses at the back of the desert. He is as willing to show you His love as He was to reveal Himself to Daniel on the banks of Ulai, or to Ezekiel by the streams of Chebar. You have no greater distance this day between you and your God than Jacob had when he laid hold upon the Angel and prevailed. He is your Father as truly as He was the father of the people whom He covered by day with a cloud and cheered by night with a pillar of fire.

And though no Shekinah lights up a golden Mercy Seat, yet the Throne of Grace is quite as glorious and even more accessible than in the days of old. He shall hide you in His pavilion, as He did His servant David—yes, your hiding place shall be in the secret of the tabernacle. Enoch’s privilege was not peculiar to him—it is your birthright—claim it! Noah’s high honor of walking with God was not reserved for him alone. It belongs to you also, shut in as you are in the Ark of the Covenant and saved from the deluge of Divine wrath.

It should be the Christian’s delight to be always with his God—walking with Him in unbroken fellowship. Enoch did not take a turn or two with God, as Matthew Henry observes, but he walked with Him four hundred years! O that we might cease to be with our God as wayfaring men who tarry but for a night—may we dwell IN God and may He dwell in us. Walking implies action. And our actions should always be in the Lord. The Christian, whatever he eats, or drinks, or does, should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him. Walking has in it the thought of progress. But all our progress should be with God. As we are rooted and grounded in Christ so we must ask to grow up in Him, ever abiding in our highest moments with God and never imagining or conceiving any progress which shall remove us from humble confidence in Him.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, it may be that your heart is agreed with God and yet you have lost for a time your walking with Him— be not at ease in your soul till you have regained it! Search your own heart by the light of the Word and of the Holy Spirit. And when you know yourself to be agreed with God—through Him who is our peace—hesitate not to draw near with holy confidence to your Father and your God! In spite of all your past wanderings He welcomes you to walk with Him, seeing that you are agreed.

At this season we, as a Church, have had our hearts set upon a revival of religion in our midst. Many of us will be greatly and grievously disappointed if such a revival shall not take place. We have felt moved to cry for it! I think I may say we have been almost unanimously thus moved. Already there are signs that God is visiting us in a very remarkable manner—but our souls are set upon a greater work than we have ever seen. Now, dear Friends, we need as the first and most essential thing in this matter that God should walk with us! In vain we shall struggle after revival unless we have His Presence.

If, then, we desire to have His Presence with us, we must see to it that we are perfectly agreed with Him both in the design of the work and in the method of it. And I desire this morning to stir up your pure minds to heart-searching and vigilant self-examination that every false way may be purged from us, since God will not walk with us as a Church unless we are agreed with Him.

The first remark, then, of this morning is simply this—we desire in this matter to walk together with God. And in the second place if we would have Him with us we must be agreed with Him. Therefore, thirdly, we desire to purge ourselves of everything which would mar our perfect agreement with God and so prevent His coming to our aid. I do ask the prayers of God’s people that He may enable me to speak to profit this morning, for if ever I felt my own unfitness to edify the saints, I do so just now—I will even confess that if I could have had my own choice, I should have left it to someone else to address you this morning. My harp is out of tune and the strings are all loosened, but the Chief Musician understands His instruments and knows how to get music out of us—and in answer to prayer He will doubtless sustain us and give you a blessing.

I. Let us, first, AVOW OUR DESIRE THAT IN OUR PRESENT EFFORT WE MAY WALK WITH GOD. Otherwise our strivings after revival will be very wearisome. I know of nothing more saddening than to attend a Prayer Meeting where the devotion is forced and the fervor laborious—where Brethren puff and strain like engines with a load behind them too heavy for them to drag. It is painful to detect an evident design to get up an excitement and wind up the people to the proper pitch when the addresses are adapted to foster hotheadedness and the prayers to beget superstition.

God’s true saints cannot but feel that to gain the Graces of the Spirit by fleshly vehemence is sad work. They retire from such a meeting and they say, “How different is this from occasions when God’s Spirit has been really at work with us!” Then, like a ship with her sails filled with a fair wind, floating majestically along without tugging and straining, the

Church, borne onward with the breath of the Divine Spirit, with a full tide of Heaven’s Grace, speeds on her glorious way. “If Your Presence go not with me, carry us not up therefore,” was the request of Moses.

And I think we may rather deprecate than desire a revival if God’s Presence is not in it. Lord, let us stay as we are, crying and groaning, to see better days, rather than permit us to be puffed up with the notion of revival without Your own power in it! Let us have no special Prayer Meetings merely for the sake of them. But let us, O let us receive special blessings as the result of prayer—if You do not intend to help us now let us weep in secret—but let us not rejoice in a mere name if the substance is lacking!

During a course of meetings by which we desire to excite the hearts of Believers to a deeper interest in spiritual things, if there is not a gracious power in them, you will soon perceive a dullness, a flagging, a heaviness, a weariness stealing over the assembly. The numbers will decline, the prayers will become less fervent and the whole thing will degenerate into a hollow sham or a mournful monotony. To come up from the wilderness is hard climbing unless we lean on our Beloved. O You who are our Beloved and adorable Lord, lest our souls grow weary in well-doing and faint for heaviness, be pleased to let us enjoy communion with Yourself!

Not only is there weariness in our own attempts, but they always end in disappointment, unless God walks with us. You may pray and pray and pray, but there shall be no conversions, no sense of quickening until the Spirit’s working is distinctly recognized. The minister shall be just as much a preacher of the mere letter as ever he was. The Church officers shall be as formal and official as ever they were. The Church members shall be as inconsistent and as indifferent as they were likely to be. The congregation shall be as uninterested and as unmoved as they were in the worst times unless the Spirit of God works with us.

In this thing we may quote the words of the Psalmist, “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His beloved sleep.” O Friends, it is well to have a holy industry and a devout perseverance! It is well to strain every nerve and put forth every effort! But all this must end in the most sorry, heart-sickening failure unless the Lord rends the heavens and come down. I am telling you what you all know and what, I trust, you feel—but it is what we are constantly forgetting—for many are they that go to war at their own charges and so become both bankrupt and defeated. And many are they who would build God’s House simply by stress of human effort, and they fail because God is not there to give them success.

Yet more—supposing that in our attempt at revival we should not be favored with the Presence of God? Then prayer will be greatly dishonored. I take it that when a Church draws near to God in special prayer, asking any mercy, if she does not receive that mercy on account of some disagreement with God, then her belief in prayer is, for the future, greatly weakened. And this is a most serious evil—for it loosens the girdle of the loins of God’s saints. Anything which makes men doubt the efficacy of prayer is an injury to their spirituality. And thus upon the largest scale God’s Church will suffer loss if her prayers shall remain unanswered. We must go on! It would be ruin to forbear or to turn our backs.

As a Church we must now conquer or die! How can I again stir you up to supplication if, on this occasion, your prayers should be in vain? I shall come into this pulpit with but a faint heart to speak of my Master’s faithfulness if He does not give you evidences of it. Ah, my Brethren, when you are lifting up your voices in intercession, I cannot expect to mark your earnestness nor to behold your faith unless that faith shall be confirmed just now by a shower Divine mercy! To the world at large the non-hearing of prayer would be a ready argument—either against the existence of God—or else against the reality of His promises! I hope such a thing as this will not occur.

“Aha! Aha!” says the enemy, “see what has come of it all! The people cried but they cried in vain. They met in large numbers. They approached the Mercy Seat with tears and groans but no result has come of it. There have been no more conversions than before and God’s strength has not been put forth.” Would you desire that such a calamity as this should occur? The true soldiers of the Cross in our Israel would almost as soon lay down their necks as that God’s honor should thus be attained in the presence of His foes!

Moreover, every attempt at revival of religion which proves a failure— and fail it must without the Presence of God—leaves the Church in a worse condition than it was before, because of the lack of any stir at all. Then God’s people fall back into their former lethargy with an excuse for continuing in it! Or if a false stir is made, a reaction follows of a most injurious character. I suppose the worst time in the Christian Church is generally that which follows the excitement of a revival. And if that revival has had no reality in it, the mischief which is done is awful and incalculable. If no excitement shall come at all the mischief is still as great—God’s people, being disappointed—have little heart to listen to further exhortations to future zealous action. They become content with their Laodicean lukewarmness and it becomes impossible to bestir them again.

If a revival should apparently have success and yet God is not in it, perhaps this is even worse. The wildfire and madness of some revivals have been a perfect disgrace to the common sense of the age, let alone the spirituality of the Church! I know and speak not without facts when I declare that some Churches have been seriously deteriorated and permanently injured by large admissions of excited but unconverted persons—so that the only thing a fresh pastor could do was to begin afresh and purge the Church book throughout, sweeping off scores of carnal persons. The beginning anew being almost hopeless, because after the sudden outburst of passion about religion has passed there follows a season in which religion is treated with indifference, if not with disdain! I had rather see a Church asleep than see it awake into the fever of fanaticism—better that she should lie still than do mischief.

O dear Friends, we have felt in our souls not that we may have revival, but that we must have it. And when we think of the incalculable damage that shall be done to us all if the Lord does not visit us, I am sure we must again draw near to the angel and wrestle afresh—with this determination—that we will not let him go unless he bless us. We may be confirmed in our anxious desire to have the Lord walking with us in this thing when we consider the blessings which are sure to flow from His Presence.

Ah, what holy quickening shall come upon every one of us. The preacher will not have to lament that he has so little power in prayer— both alone and in your presence he shall be strengthened to intercede as an angel of God! You shall not have to mourn that the service lacks its former sweetness. You will feel the blessedness you knew when first you saw the Lord. You will not have to mourn that you are cold and dead, that your songs languish and that your prayers expire. Instead, every action shall be fraught with vigor! Every thought shall glow with earnestness! Every word shall be clothed with Divine power! Let God arise, and doubts and fears shall betake themselves to their hiding places as the bats conceal themselves at the rising of the dawn.

Let the Lord visit you, and difficulties which frown like Alps will sink to plains. Let Him arise, and all your enemies shall flee before you as the smoke before the wind! The heavens shall drop with showers of mercy, and even your sins and all their guilt shall shake as Sinai shook at the Presence of the God of Israel. A Church with God’s Presence in it is holy, happy, united, earnest, laborious, successful! She is fair as the moon before the Lord and clear as the sun in the eyes of men! She is terrible as an army with banners to her enemies. If God shall be pleased to be with His Church, then direct good shall visit our congregation.

We used to say at Park Street, that there were not many seat-holders unconverted. The like is to a great extent true here. The immense increase of our Church gives us the hope that the day will come when there will not be a single seat unoccupied by a Believer—but it is not the case yet. I suppose the Church is about half the congregation now. There are some, however, that from the very first have listened, but so far as salvation is concerned, they have listened in vain—they have been moved to tears, they have made good resolutions. But after ten or eleven years of ministry they are just where they were—except that they have accumulated fresh guilt.

Some desire to be Christians but they harbor some darling lust. We know some who used to feel under the Word but do not feel now. The voice which once was like a trumpet now lulls them to sleep! Some have made a compromise—one day they serve God and another day they serve their sins—like the Samaritans who feared the Lord and served other gods. Now let our cries be heard for the Master’s Presence and we shall soon see these brought in! Hearts of stone shall be turned to flesh. The iron of the Word shall break the northern iron and steel! Jehovah Jesus shall ride victoriously through those gates which have been barred against Him and there shall be shouting in Heaven because the Lord has gotten Him the victory!

Wider blessings will follow. A Church is never blessed alone. If any one Church shall stand in the vigor of piety, other Churches shall see their example and make an advance towards a better state. Here we have around us many Churches—hills which God has blessed. But they, like ourselves, have a tendency to slumber. Let God pour out His Spirit here and the shower will not be confined to these fields but will drop upon other pastures and they shall rejoice on every side! Our testimony for God rings through this land—from one end of it to the other! Our ministry is not hidden under a bushel nor confined to a few. Tens of thousands listen every week to our word. And if the Lord shall be pleased to bless it, then shall it be as ointment poured forth to load the moral atmosphere with a savor of Christ Crucified!

One nation cannot feel the power of God without communicating some of its blessing to another. The Atlantic cannot divide—no tongue or language can separate us. If God blesses France or Switzerland, the influence shall be felt upon the Continent. If He should bless our island, all the whole earth must feel His power here! Therefore do we feel encouraged mightily to pray! O, my Brethren, the world grows old—man’s faith is getting weary of long waiting. The false prophets begin again to appear and cry lo, here and lo, there.

But the Lord must come—of this are we confident—in such an hour as we think not, He may appear. How would we have Him find us at His coming? Would we have Him find His servants sleeping? His stewards wasting His goods? His vinedressers with neglected vines? His soldiers with swords rusted in their scabbards? No, we would have Him find us watching, standing upon the watchtower, feeding His sheep, tending His lambs, succoring the needy, comforting the weary, helping the oppressed!

Gird up your loins then, I pray you, as men that watch for their Lord! If my words could have the power in them which I feel they lack, I would stir you up, dear Brothers and Sisters, to seek unto the mighty God of Jacob that when the Son of Man comes, if He finds no faith upon the earth elsewhere, at least He may find it in us—if zeal shall be extinct in every other place, at least may He find one live coal yet glowing in our bosom! For this we want His Presence, for without it we can do nothing.

II. This brings me, in the second place, to observe, that IF WE WOULD HAVE THE PRESENCE OF GOD, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD BE AGREED WITH HIM. We must be agreed with God as to the end of our Christian existence. God has formed us for Himself that we may show forth His praise. The main end of a Christian man is that having been bought with precious blood, he may live unto Christ and not unto himself.

O Brethren! I am afraid we are not agreed with God in this! I must say it, painful though it is, there are many professors and there are some in this Church who at least appear to believe that the main end of their Christian existence is to get to Heaven—to get as much money as they can on earth and to leave as much as they can to their children when they die! I say, “to get to Heaven,” for they selfishly include that as one of the designs of Divine Grace. But I question if it were not for their happiness to go to Heaven, whether they would care much about going if it were only for God’s Glory, for their way of living upon earth is always thus—“What shall I eat? What shall I drink? How shall I be clothed?”

Religion never enters their thoughts. They can judge and weigh and plot and plan to get money, but they have no plans as to how they can serve God. The cause of God is scarcely in their thoughts. They will pinch and screw to see how little they can contribute in any way to the maintenance of the cause of the Truth of God or to the spread of the Redeemer’s kingdom. They will so far condescend to consider religion as to think how they can profess it in the most economical manner but nothing more.

You will not hear me speak so foolishly and madly, as if I thought that it were not just and laudable in a man to seek to make money to supply the wants of his family, or even to provide for them on his own decease. Such a thing is just and right—but whenever this gets to be the main thought—and I am persuaded it is the leading thought of too many professors, such men forget Whose they are and Whom they serve! They are living to themselves. They have forgotten Who it is that has said, “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as with silver and gold.” Oh, I pray God that I may feel that I am God’s man, that I have not a hair on my head which is not consecrated, nor a drop of my blood which is not dedicated to His cause, and His cause only!

And I pray, Brothers and Sisters, that you may feel the same—that selfishness may totally die out of you—that you may be able to say without any straining of the truth, “I have nothing to care for nor to live for in this world but that I may glorify God and spread forth the savor of my Savior’s name.” We cannot expect the Master’s blessing till we are agreed about this. This is God’s will—is it our will today? I know I have around me many faithful hearts who will say, “My desire is that whether I live or die, Christ may be glorified in me.” If we are all of that mind, God will walk with us.

But everyone who is of another mind and of a divided heart is a hindrance and an injury to us in our progress. It would be no loss to lose such persons but a spiritual benefit to the entire cause if this dead lumber were cast out. When the body gets a piece of rotten bone in it, it never rests, till, with pain, it casts out the dead thing—and so with the Church. The Church may be increased by dead members but when she begins to get vigorous and full of life, her first effort is with much pain, perhaps with much marring of her present beauty, to cause the dead substance to come forth.

And if this should be the case, though we shall pity those who are cast forth, yet for our own health’s sake we may thank God and take courage. If we would have God with us we must be agreed as to the real desirableness and necessity of the conversion of souls. God thinks souls to be very precious and His own words are, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” Are we agreed with God in that? Our God thinks souls to be so precious that if a man could gain the whole world and lose his soul he would be a loser. Are we agreed with Him there?

In the person of Christ, our God wept over Jerusalem—He watered with tears that city which must be given up to the flames. Have we tears? Have we compassion? When God thinks of sinners it is in this wise—“How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?” Can we bemoan sinners in that way? Do we stir our souls to an agony of grief because men will turn from God and will willfully perish in their sins?

If, on the contrary, you and I selfishly say, “We are safe, it does not matter to us whether others are brought to know Christ,” we are not agreed! God will not work with us—and such of you as feel this indifference, this cursed lethargy—you are our curse, our burden, our hindrance! God forgive you and stir you up to feel that your heart will not rest unless poor sinners are plucked as brands from the burning! Are we agreed here?

In the next place, if we would have the Lord with us we must be agreed as to the means to be used in revival. We are agreed that the first means is the preaching of Christ. We do not want any other doctrine than that we have received—Christ lifted up upon His Cross as the serpent was lifted up upon the pole. This is the remedy which we, in this House of Prayer, believe in. Let others choose sweet music, or pictures, or vestments, or baptismal water, or confirmation, or human rites—we abhor them and pour contempt upon them! As for us, our only hope lies in the doctrine of a Substitute for sinners—the great fact of the Atonement! The glorious Truth of God that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners! I think we are agreed with God in this, that the preaching of Christ is the way by which Believers shall be saved.

God’s great agency is the Holy Spirit. We are agreed, Brethren, that we do not want sinners to be converted by our persuasion—we do not want them brought into the Church by excitement. We want the Spirit’s work and the Spirit’s work alone. I would not bend my knee once in prayer, much less day by day, to win a mere excitement. We have done without it and we shall do without it by the Grace of God. But I would give my eyes if I might but know that the Holy Spirit Himself would come forth and show what Divinity can do in turning hearts of stone to flesh! In this thing, I think that we are agreed with God.

But God’s way of blessing the Church is by the instrumentality of all her members. The multitude must be fed, but it must not be by Christ’s hand alone. “He gave the bread to the disciples and the disciples, to the multitude.” Are you all agreed here? I am afraid not. Many of you are engaged in works of usefulness and I will make this my boast this day—that I had never thought that I should meet with a people so apostolic in their zeal as the most of you have been! I have marveled and my heart has rejoiced when I have seen what self-sacrifice some of the poorest among you have made for Christ! What zeal, what enthusiasm you have manifested in the spreading abroad of the Savior’s name!

But still there are some of you who are doing nothing whatever. You have a name to live, but I fear that you are dead. You are very seldom at a Prayer Meeting—even some Church members and persons whom I know are not kept at home by business but by sheer indifference to the cause of God! Some of you are never provoked to zeal and to good works. That you come and listen to us, is something. And for what you do we are grateful. But for what you do not do—over this we mourn because we fear that we are restrained in our efforts for the spread of the Savior’s kingdom—as a Church we are not agreed on God’s plan.

And we shall continue to be restrained until every man in the Church can say, “I will consecrate myself this day unto the Lord of Hosts. If there is anything to be done, be it to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, here

I am—  
*“There’s not a lamb among His flock,  
I would disdain to feed.  
There’s not a foe before whose face  
I’d fear His cause to plead.”*

Yet again, dear Friends, are we agreed this day as to our utter helplessness in this work? I caught a good sentence the other day. Speaking with a Wesleyan minister, I said to him, “Your denomination during the past year did not increase—you have usually had a large increase to your numbers. You have never been so rich as now. Your ministers have never been so well educated. You have never had such good Chapels as now and yet you have never had so little success. What are you doing? Knowing this to be the fact, what are you doing? How are the minds of your Brethren exercised with regard to this?”

He comforted me much by the reply. He said, “It has driven us to our knees. We thank God that we know our state and are not content with it. We have had a day of humiliation and I hope,” he said, “some of us have gone low enough to be blessed.” There is a great truth in that last sentence, “low enough to be blessed.” I do fear that some of us never do go low enough to be blessed. When a man says, “Oh, yes, we are getting on very well. We do not need any revival that I know of,” I fear he is not low enough to be blessed. And when you and I pray to God with pride in us, with self-exaltation, with a confidence in our own zeal, or even in the prevalence of our own prayers of themselves, we have not come low enough to be blessed!

An humble Church will be a blessed Church! A Church that is willing to confess its own errors and failures and to lie at the foot of Christ’s Cross is in a position to be favored of the Lord. I hope we are agreed, then, with God, as to our utter unworthiness and helplessness so that we look to Him alone! I charge you all to be agreed with God in this thing—that if any good shall be done, any conversions shall occur—all the Glory must be given to Him. Revivals have often been spoiled, either by persons boasting that such-and-such a minister was the means of them, or else, as in the case of the North of Ireland, by boasting that the work was done without ministers. That revival, mark you, was stopped in its very midst and seriously damaged by being made a kind of curiosity and a thing to be gazed at and to be wondered at by persons both at home and abroad.

God does not care to work for the honor of men, either of ministers or of laymen, or of Churches, either. And if we should say, “Ah, well, I should like to see the Presence of God with us that we may have many conversions and put it in the Magazine and say that is how things are done at the Tabernacle,” why we should not have a blessing that way! Crowns! Crowns! Crowns! But all for Your head, Jesus! Laurels and wreaths! But none for man—all for Him whose own right hand and whose holy arm has gotten Him the victory! We must all be agreed on this point and I hope we are.

III. And now to conclude. LET US PUT AWAY ALL THOSE THINGS WHICH OFFEND OUR GOD. Before God appeared upon Mount Sinai, the children of Israel had to cleanse themselves for three days. Before Israel could take possession of the promised rest of Canaan, Joshua had to see to it that they were purified by the rite of circumcision. Whenever God would visit His people, He always demands of them some preparatory purging that they may be fit to behold His Presence—for two cannot walk together unless that which would make them disagree is purged out.

A few suggestions then, as to whether there is anything in us with which God cannot agree. Here I cannot preach to you indiscriminately but put the task into the hand of each man to preach to himself. In the days of the great weeping we read that every man wept apart and his wife apart, the son apart and the daughter apart—all the families apart. So it must be here. Is there pride in me? Am I puffed up with my talent, my substance, my character, my success? Lord purge this out of me, or else You can not walk with me, for none shall ever say that God and the proud soul are friends! He gives Grace to the humble. As for the proud, He knows them afar off and will not let them come near to Him.

Am I slothful? Do I waste hours which I might usefully employ? Have I the levity of the butterfly which flits from flower to flower but drinks no honey from any of them? Or have I the industry of the bee, which, wherever it lights would find some sweet store for the hive? Lord, You know my soul, You understand me. Am I doing little where I might do much? Have You had but little reaping for much sowing? Have I hid my talent in a napkin? Have I spent that talent for myself instead of spending it for You? Slothful souls cannot walk with God. “My Father works,” says Jesus, “and I work.” And you who stand in the marketplace idle may stand there with the devil—but you cannot stand there with God! Let every Brother or Sister who is guilty of this purge away their sloth.

Or am I guilty of worldliness? This is the crying sin of many in the Christian Church. Do I put myself into association with men who cannot by any possibility profit me? Am I seen where my Master would not go? Do I love amusements which cannot afford me comfort when I reflect upon them—and which I would never indulge in if I thought that Christ would come while I was at them? Am I worldly in spirit as to fashion? Am I as showy, as volatile, as frivolous as men and women of the world? If so—if I love the world—the love of the Father is not in me! Consequently He cannot walk with me, for we are not agreed.

Again, am I covetous? Do I scrape and grind? Is my first thought not how I can honor God but how I can accumulate wealth? When I gain wealth do I forget to make use of it as a steward? If so, then God is not agreed with me—I am a thief with His substance—I have set myself up for a master instead of being a servant and God will not walk with me till I begin to feel that this is not my own, but His! And that I must use it in His fear. Again, am I of an angry spirit? Am I harsh towards my Brethren? Do I cherish envy towards those who are better than myself, or contempt towards those who are worse off? If so, God cannot walk with me for He hates envy and all contempt of the poor is abhorrent to Him.

Is there any lust in me? Do I indulge the flesh? Am I fond of carnal indulgences by which my soul suffers? If so, God will not walk with me—for chambering and wantonness and gluttony and drunkenness separate a Believer and his God—these things are not honorable to a Christian. Before the great feast of unleavened bread a Jewish parent would sweep out every piece of leaven from his house. And so anxious would he be and so anxious is the Jew at the present day, that he takes a candle and sweeps out every cupboard no matter though there may have been no food put in there at any time. He is afraid lest by accident a crumb may be somewhere concealed in the house. And so, from the attic to the cellar he clears the whole house through to purge out the old leaven. Let us do so, too.

I cannot think you will do so as the effect of such poor words as mine. But if my soul could speak to you and God blessed the utterance, you would. For my own part I cry unto my Master that if there is anything that can make me more fit to be the messenger of God to you and to the sons of men, however painful might be the preparatory process, He would graciously be pleased not to spare me of it. If by sickness. If by serious calamities. If by slander and rebuke more honor can be brought to Him, then hail and welcome all these things! They shall be my joy! And to receive them shall be my delight! I pray that you utter the same desire— “Lord, make me fit to be the means of glorifying You.”—

*“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol is  
Help me to tear it from its throne,  
And worship only You.”*

What? Do you object? Do you want forever to go on in the old deadand-alive way in which the Churches are just now? Do you feel no sacred passion stirring your breast to anguish for the present and to hope for the future? O you cowards who dread the battle, slink to your beds! But you who have your Master’s Spirit in you and would long to see brighter and better days—lift up your heads with confidence in Him who will walk with us if we are agreed!

My text has a main bearing upon the unconverted—I think of preaching from it this evening to those who are not agreed with God and who cannot walk with Him. I pray that they may be reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. And the most likely means to accomplish this will be by your earnest and fervent prayers. O Lord, hear and answer for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Mr. Spurgeon’s Sermon on “Baptismal Regeneration” (Number 573 in this volume) has now reached the 180th thousand. It is felt to be important that it should be still more widely circulated and friends are urged to make an earnest effort to scatter it far and wide.]

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THE VOICE OF CHOLERA

NO. 705

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 12, 1866, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Can two walk together, except they are agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? Will a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is evil in a city, will not the  
Lord have done it.”  
Amos 3:3-6.**

WE have all felt grieved when reading our bills of mortality to observe the mysterious spread of cholera in our great city. It is high time that it should be made the subject of special prayer, and that the nation should seek unto the Lord for its removal. While as yet there has been but comparatively little of the evil, we should be humbled under it, that we may be spared a greater outbreak. There are different ways of looking at this disease. Men viewing it from one point of view have frequently despised those who have regarded it under another aspect.

Occasionally Christian men indignantly express themselves concerning those who speak of cholera as the product of ascertained and governable causes to be checked and even prevented by due attention to the laws of health. I have never shared in that indignation. It seems to me that this disease is, to a great extent, in our own hands and that if all men would take scrupulous care as to cleanliness, and if better dwellings were provided for the poor, and if overcrowding were effectually prevented, and if the water supply could be larger, and other sanitary improvements could be carried out, the disease, most probably, would not occur. Or, if it did visit us occasionally, as the result of filth in other countries, it would be in a very mitigated form.

I am thankful that there are many men of intelligence and scientific information who can speak well upon this point, and I hope they will never cease to speak until all men learn that the laws of cleanliness and health are as binding upon us as those of morality. So far from a Christian man being angry with those who instruct the people in useful secular knowledge, he ought rather to be thankful for them and hope that their teaching may be powerful with the masses. The Gospel has no quarrel with ventilation, and the Doctrines of Grace have no dispute with chloride of lime! We preach repentance and faith, but we do not denounce whitewash—and as much as we advocate holiness, we always have a good word for cleanliness and sobriety.

We would promote with all our hearts that which may honor God, but we cannot neglect that which may bless our neighbors whom we desire to love even as ourselves. On the other hand, it is even more common for those who look to natural causes alone to sneer at Believers who view the disease as a mysterious scourge from the hand of God. It is admitted that it would be most foolish to neglect the appointed means of averting sickness—but sneer who may, we believe it to be equally an act of folly to forget that the hand of the Lord is in all this. The singular manner in which this disease seizes frequently upon unlikely persons and turns aside from its expected path should show us that there is an unseen hand which directs its gloomy circuit.

Let the wise man work below, but fix his hope above. Let him cleanse and purge away the hotbeds of death, but let him look up to the Lord and Giver of Life for success in all his doings. It is not my business this morning to describe the sanitary aspect of the subject. This is not the day nor the place, but I shall claim a full liberty to enter into the theological view of it, and if that should happen to excite the contempt of the practical man, we shall be more grieved for his narrowness of mind than for his contempt of us! We do not despise him, but wish him God speed in his reforms, and he should not despise us, but recognize in us his true allies.

We believe that God sends all pestilences, let them come how they may—and that He sends them with a purpose, let them be removed in whatever way they may. And we conceive that it is our business as ministers of God to call the people’s attention to God in the disease and teach them the lesson which God would have them learn. I am not among those, as you know, who believe that every affliction is a judgment upon the particular person to whom it occurs. We perceive that in this world the best of men often endure the most of suffering and that the worst of men frequently escape. And therefore we do not believe in judgments to particular persons except in extraordinary cases. But we do, nevertheless, very firmly believe that there are national judgments, and that national sinsprovoke national chastisements.

As to individuals, their punishment or reward is reserved for the next state—but nations will not exist in the next world—there is no such thing as a judgment of nations, as such, at the Last Great Day. That will be the judgment of individuals one by one. The trial and punishment of nations takes place in this state, and it is here that we are to look for the judgment of God upon national sin.

Upon the present visitation as a national chastisement we shall speak this morning. I shall not detain you with further preface but conduct you at once to the questions of the text.

I. THE FIRST QUESTION is a metaphor taken from the traveler: “Can two walk together except they are agreed?” which means, being interpreted, that it is no wonder if God does not continue to walk with a sinful people. It is not to be expected that when a nation falls out with God, God should continue to bless it. Two travelers have been walking together for some little time, but all of a sudden they fall to angry words and after awhile one strikes the other and maltreats him. You cannot suppose that the person thus attacked will continue to walk with him who maliciously assaults him. They must part company.

Now, when God walks with a nation, that nation prospers, but if that nation falls to words with God, quarrels with Him about His will and Law, and rushes perversely into sinful courses—if there are some in it who would have no God at all, who do their best to extirpate His very name from the earth which He Himself has made—then we cannot expect that God should continue to walk with such offenders! Brethren, let me ask you soberly, without fanaticism, to consider whether there has not been enough in England, and especially in this great city, to make God angry with us? Has there not been grievous disagreement between the dwellers in this city and God? Has there not been enough to make Him say, “I will walk no more with this people. I will chasten them sorely, and send heavy judgments upon them”?

We will not speak of those sins of this city which are common to all other places. But let me ask whether the drunkenness of England is not enough to provoke God to strike it with all His thunderbolts. If it is said that there is as much drunkenness elsewhere, I reply that possibly there may be places found which are quite as besotted, where the gin palace blazes with glaring lights at every corner, and the gates through which drunkards reel to Hell are opened at every turn. It may be so, but I must still hold that there is no other country where drunkenness is carried on to such an extent under so strong a protest—for drunkenness happens to be a sin against which not only the pulpit, the press, and the bench are continually exclaiming—but tens of thousands of earnest, indefatigable, courageous, self-denying men are both, by their example, and their teaching, denouncing this vice.

We certainly have no deficiency of protests against excess of drink, for there are few companies in which the most sweeping censures are not frequently heard. There is not a place throughout the world where drunkenness is so vehemently and abundantly cried down as in England! There is no place where there is established so strong a public sentiment against this degrading form of self-indulgence. There has been much done, not, I say, only by those who preach the Gospel, which lays the axe at the root of all sin, but also by those who dedicate their strength to the sawing off of this particular limb from the great tree of evil.

This vice, then, is known by every man to be a vice, and is no longer winked at as a venial offense. It wears upon its front the damning mark— it is no longer misnamed conviviality, and excused as an amiable weakness. The public mind, to a great extent, is enlightened upon the subject of strong drink, and consequently this sin of drunkenness is more Godprovoking in this country than in any other. There may be countries where there is just as much drunkenness, but none in which the protest is more clear and plain! And we all hold that sin is increased by the measure of light against which a man commits it, and that when an evil practice is by the common consent of mankind denounced and put down, it becomes the more atrocious on the part of those who still pursue it.

Alas, alas! This drunken city may well expect that God should visit it! Moreover, we know enough—and we do not wish to know more of the evil which the moon sees—of the debauchery with which certain of the streets of our city are reeking. We thank God it has never come to such a pass in England, that we nationally recognize and systematically regulate lasciviousness so that it may be indulged in with comparative impunity. But there can be no sort of doubt that among all classes and ranks of men there is enough of lewdness to bring down Heaven’s wrath upon our city! The sins of the flesh are sure to be visited before long by that God who loathes iniquity, and in whose nostrils fornication is a stench. He will not forever endure this abounding sin, for it is committed, be it remembered, in a country famous above all others for its love of home and its estimation of the joys which cluster around the family hearth.

We have not the pestilential influence of a licentious court and a degraded public opinion, but this sin is carried on in the teeth of a general reverence for purity. Shall not God visit London for the sins which nightly pollutes her streets, festers in gilded halls, and riots amid revelry and music? Like a terrible monster, the social evil drags our daughters down to destruction, and our young men to the gates of the grave! And while this lasts we need not wonder if God’s health-giving Providence should refuse to walk with us, for He cannot be agreed with a people who choose the way of filthiness.

Constant neglect of the worship of God is a sin for which London is peculiarly and pre-eminently guilty. In some of our country towns and villages the accommodation in places of worship is even larger than the population! And I know places in England where there is scarcely a soul to be found at home at the hour of public worship—certainly not more than absolutely necessary to nurse the sick, care for the infants, and protect the doors—for the whole population turns out to attend a place of worship. But in London the habitual forsakers of public worship are probably in a large majority! It must be so, because we know that even if they wished to go, the provision of seat room is most lamentably short of what they would require, and yet, short as it is, there is not half so much need of churches and chapels in London as there is of inclination to go to either the one or the other.

The masses of our people regard not God, care not for the Lord Jesus, and have no thought about eternal things! This is a Christian city, we sometimes say, but where shall be found more thorough heathens than we may find here? In Canton, Calcutta, or even Timbuktu, the people have at least a form of worship and a reverence for some idea of a god, but here tens of thousands make no pretense of religious worship. I protest unto you all that whereas you think Christianity to be well-known in our streets and lanes, you only think so because you have not penetrated into their depths—for thick darkness covers the people.

There are discoveries yet to be made in this city that may make the hearts of Christendom melt for shame that we should have permitted such God-dishonoring ignorance—that in the very blaze of the sun, as we think our country to be—there should be black spots where Christian light has never penetrated! O London! Do you think that God’s Sabbaths are forever to be forgotten? That the voice of the Gospel is to sound in your ears and forever to be despised? Shall you forever turn your foot from God’s House and despise the ministrations of His Truth, and shall He not visit such a city as this?

This dreaded cholera is but a gentle blow from His hand, but if it is not felt, and its lesson are not learned, there may come, instead of this, a pestilence which may reap the multitude as corn is reaped with the sickle! Or He may permit us to be ravaged by a pestilence worse than the plague—I mean the pestilence of deadly, soul-destroying error! He may remove the candle of His Gospel out of its place and may take away the bread of life from those who have despised it, and then, O great city, your doom is sealed!

Brothers and Sisters, if there is any one thing which yet provokes God above all this, it is the fact that we have once again, as a nation, permitted downright Popery to claim to be our national religion! Dark is the day and dismal is the hour which sees the ancient superstitions defiling the houses which are at least nominally dedicated to the God of Heaven. In our Established Church the Gospel is no longer dominant, albeit that a little band of good and faithful men still linger in it, and are like a handful of salt amid general putrefaction. We have no longer any right to speak of our national Protestant Church—it is not Protestant—it tolerates barefaced Popery, and swarms with worshippers of the god whom the baker bakes in the oven, and whom they bite with their teeth!

Not many streets from this building in which we are assembled you may have your candles, and your incense, and your copes, and your albs with all the other pomp and vanities of the detestable idolatry of Rome. That Romanism against which Latimer bore testimony at the stake has been suffered to hold its mummeries and practice its fantastic tricks in the name of this nation until it counts its deluded admirers by tens of thousands! That monster which stained Smithfield with gore and made it an ash heap for the martyrs of God has come back to you! The old wolf that tore your fathers and tore their palpitating hearts out of their bosoms you have allowed to come back into your houses—and you are cherishing it and feeding it with your children’s meat!

Once again the harlot of Babylon flaunts her finery in our faces almost without rebuke. Do not tell me it is not Popery! It is the same Antichrist with which your fathers wrestled—and a man with but half his wits about him may see it to be so—and yet this land bears it, and rejoices in it, and crouches at the foot of a priest once more! Our great ones, our delicate women, and dainty lords, are once again the willing vassals of priest-craft and superstition. And amid all this, if anyone speaks out, he is assailed as uncharitable, and abhorred as a troublemaker in Israel! Is it for nothing that God has favored this land with the Gospel? Must all her light be turned to darkness? Must all the gains of the valiant men of old be lost by the sloth and cowardice of this thoughtless generation?

In days of yore, men like Knox and Welch in Scotland, and Hugh Latimer, and John Bradford fought like lions for the Truth of God, and are we to yield like cowardly curs? Are the men of oak succeeded by the men of willow? The men who cried, “No Popery here!” now sleep within their sepulchers, and their descendants wear the yoke which their fathers scorned! Shall not God visit us for this? I would that a voice of thunder could arouse this slumbering generation! I am for liberty of conscience for every man—I would have, by all manner of means, the Catholic as free to practice his religion as anyone else!

I would have religion left to its own native power for its support, and would allow no church to offer to God what it had taken from an unwilling people by the legalized robbery of a church-rate and tithe! But, above all things, if we must be doomed to have an Established Church, I pray God it may not forever be a den of superstition and the haunt of Papist heresies! If the Church of England does not sweep Tractarianism out of her midst, it should be the daily prayer of every Christian man that God would sweep her utterly away from this nation—for the old leprosy of Rome ought not to be sanctioned and supported by a land which has shed so much of her blood to be purged from it!

Can two walk together, then, except they be agreed? And as these things cannot be supposed to be agreeable to the mind and will of God, we cannot wonder if there should be a plague upon our cattle, and then a plague upon men, and if these should come sevenfold as heavy as they have ever come as yet!

II. THE SECOND QUESTION of the Prophet is, “Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing?” Amos had observed that a lion does not roar without reason. By this question he brings forward the second Truth of God, that when God speaks it is not without a cause, and especially when He speaks with a threatening voice.

My brethren, our God is too gracious to send us this cholera without a motive. And He is, moreover, too wise, for we all know that judgments frequently repeated lose their force. It is like the cry of, “Wolf”—if there is no meaning in it, men disregard it. God therefore never multiplies judgments unnecessarily. Besides, He is too great to trifle with men’s lives. We heard of some twelve hundred or more who died in a week in London, but did we estimate the aggregate of personal pain couched in that number—the aggregate of sorrow brought to so many hundred families? The aggregate, too, of eternal interests which were involved in those sudden deaths?

Time and eternity, both of them big with tremendous importance, were wrapped up, just so many times in those hundreds who fell beneath the Mower’s scythe. Do you think the Lord does this for nothing? The great Lion of Vengeance has not roared unless sin has provoked Him. Since I have already indicated our great public sins, I should like to ask Christians present how far they have been concerned in them. You who profess to be people of God, and who recognize God’s hand in this visitation, I ask you how far has justice found provocation in you?

What have you had to do, professing Christians, with the drunkenness of this city? Are you sure that you are quite clear of it? Have you, by your teaching and by your example, shown men that the religion of Jesus is not consistent with drunkenness? Have you tried to put down this vice, or are you in some degree a fellow criminal—an accomplice before or after the fact? Oh if you have been guilty, I pray you seek to be purged of this sin! You cannot wipe out all the national iniquity, but if each man reformed himself of this vice, by God’s Grace, this great evil would cease. Let each Christian look at home. How far, you professors of religion—how far are you clear in the matter of sins of the flesh? Has there never been any lightness of speech about these sins?

When merriment has become uproarious upon impurity, have you ever joined in such laughter? And what about your course of conversation? Have you always been free—I will not say from the grosser acts of sin—I scarcely like to ask you such a question, but have you been clear from everything that verged upon it? Have you heard ringing in your ears the precept, “Be you holy, for I am holy”? Has the Holy Spirit by His mighty Grace kept you from indulging in unclean words and thoughts? Have you in any way fallen into lightness of talk and thought, and so helped to increase the flood of this evil? Oh, my Brothers, who among us must not confess to some guilt when we remember the Savior’s words, “He that looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart”?

Let us bow our heads in penitence, and seek to the God of all Grace that He would not roar over this, His prey, but be pleased to purge us from it that we may be clean in His Presence! And so with the other sins which we have indicated. Have we all borne our earnest, fervent protest against them? Have we been negligent of the House of God, or has our continual meeting for public worship cleared us of this? I think most of us are clear here, but I know there are some professors who neglect the assembling of themselves together, who spend their Sunday occasionally, at any rate, where it ought not to be spent, and who thus by their lax example increase the general forgetfulness of God.

And as to this Anglican Popery—have we spoken out about that? Or do we lend it our direct or even indirect support? God grant that if we have not repudiated it we may do so, and holding the Truth of God in the love and power of it may we come out of Babylon, lest we be partakers of her plagues in the day when God shall visit her in His wrath.

Such, I think, was what Amos indicated by his second question. III. THE THIRD QUESTION is this: “Will a bird fall in a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for him?” The first question was taken from travelers, the second from wild beasts, and the third from fowlers. You see the bird aloft in the sky. All of a sudden it flies to the ground and is taken in the net. Now Amos says it would not be taken in the net unless a net had been designedly laid to catch it. It is taken because the snare was meant to take it—and Amos means to remind us that men do not die without a design on God’s part.  
It is the same thought as before, but it is held up in another light. The bird is not taken in the net without the design of the fowler—and men do not fall into the net of death without an intent on God’s part. Death, with all which it involves on earth and in eternity, is not sent by God without a reason. Forever banished from the Christian’s conversation is the word “chance.” “It repents me greatly,” says Augustine, “that I ever used that heathenish word, “fortuna,” for fortune or chance is a base heathenish invention. God rules and overrules all things, and He does nothing without a motive.  
Brothers and Sisters, the falling of a sparrow to the earth is in the Divine purpose and answers an end. Every grain of dust that is whirled from the threshing floor is steered with as unerring a wisdom as the stars in their courses, and there is not a leaf that trembles in the autumn from the tree but is piloted by the plan and purpose of the Lord. Surely, then, in so great an event as death, involving, as we have already said, so much of pain to the person falling, so much of bereavement and sorrow to the families of those who are struck, we cannot believe but what God has a purpose.  
The insatiable archer is not permitted to shoot his bolts at random— every arrow that flies bears this inscription, “I have a message from God for you.” When God permits disease to walk through the streets at night, to stretch out his mighty but invisible hand and take away here a child, and there an adult, and consign to the grave those who might have otherwise long survived, you will not believe that the Lord commissioned so dread a messenger without intending to answer some end by his errand. Let us conclude most surely that a purpose, consistent with the love and justice of God, lies hidden in the present harvest of death.  
IV. Now follows a FOURTH QUESTION: “Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? By which he means that the fowler does not remove the net until he has caught his bird, so that this fourth question implies that inasmuch as God had a purpose in sending tribulation, we may expect that He will not remove it until that design is answered.  
Whatever God has to say to London, if it is heard at once He need not speak again, but if it is not heard the first time, there shall come a second voice, and yet another. The fowler takes not away his net unless some bird is caught, and God takes not away the trouble which He sends unless He has answered His design by it. If you ask me what I think to be the design, I believe it to be this—to waken up our indifferent population—to make them remember that there is a God! To render them susceptible to the influences of the Gospel, to drive them to the House of Prayer. To influence their minds to receive the Word, and moreover to startle Christians into energy and earnestness that they may work while it is called today.  
My reason for selecting this subject at all was that I might be helpful in the hands of God the Holy Spirit to aid this great design, that you, dear Friends, might hear at once God’s voice, that for you, at any rate, it might not be necessary that there should be a repetition of the judgment. Brothers and Sisters, you are acquainted with history, and you have reason to bless God, I am sure, in turning over its pages that we have, during the last half century, been spared many of those dreadful calamities which in former days occurred in this and other lands.  
Who can read the story of the plague of London without a shudder? And who can close the book without thankfulness that such a black death is unknown among us? Who has read of famines in this land without gratitude for the abundance of bread? Who can turn to the descriptions of the sack and pillage of cities under such armies as those conducted by Tilly and other savage commanders, without thankfulness that we live in better days? Who can even read the story of the last campaign in Austria without thanking God that our country is an island, and that so we are preserved from the horrors of war?  
But it is much to be feared that a constant run of prosperity, perpetual peace and freedom from disease may breed in our minds just what it has done in all human minds before, namely, security and pride, heathenism and forgetfulness of God. It is a most solemn fact that human nature can scarcely bear a long continuance of peace and health. It is almost necessary that we should be, every now and then, salted with affliction lest we putrefy with sin. God grant we may have neither famine, nor sword—but as we have pestilence in a very slight degree it becomes us to ask the Lord to bless it to the people that a tenderness of conscience may be apparent throughout the multitude—and they may recognize the hand of God.  
Already I have been told by Christian Brethren laboring in the east of London that there is a greater willingness to listen to Gospel Truth, and that if there IS a religions service it is more acceptable to the people now than it was—for which I thank God as an indication that affliction is answering its purpose. There was, perhaps, no part of London more destitute of the means of Divine Grace, and of the desire to use the means, than that particular district where the plague has fallen. And if the Lord shall but make those teeming thousands anxious to hear the Gospel of Jesus, and teach them to trust in Him, then the design will be answered! And without a doubt the great Fowler will gather up His net. May it be so, O Lord, for Your Son Jesus Christ’s sake.  
V. The questions have all worked to one point. We have seen that it is no wonder if disease should come. We have learned that it does not come without a cause. We have seen that when it does come there is a design, and that it will not be removed unless that design is answered. And now we are prepared to take the further step, raised by THE FIFTH QUESTION, namely, that an awakening should be the result. “If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?”  
In times of war in olden times there were men stationed upon watch towers, and when they saw the enemy coming the cornet was sounded, and the people rushed to arms. The sound of a trumpet was the warning of war. This cholera is like the sound of a trumpet. The voice of the Christian ministry is not heard. Those who go to listen to it do not all hear it, for they hear as though they heard not, while the great masses know nothing and care less about the preacher’s message. The ministry of London is not altogether powerless to those who attend it, but it is utterly without point or force to the dense masses who lie outside the House of God.  
Disease, however, is a trumpet which must be heard! Its echoes reach the miserable attics where the poor are crowded together and have never heard nor cared for the name of Christ—they hear the sound—and as one after another dies, they tremble. In the darkest cellar in the most crowded haunt of vice—yes, and in the palaces of kings, in the halls of the rich and great—the sound finds an entrance and the cry is raised, “The death plague is come! The cholera is among us!” All men are compelled to hear the trumpet! Would to God they heard it to better purpose! Would to God all of us were aroused to a searching of heart, and, above all, led to fly to Christ Jesus, the great Sacrifice for sin, and to find in Him a rescue from the greater plague—the wrath to come!  
VI. The great end and design of God, then, it seems, is to arouse the city, and that arousing should follow from the fact declared in THE LAST QUESTION: “If there is evil in a city, will not the Lord have done it?” Here is not intended moral evil—that rests with man—but physical evil, the evil of pestilence or famine! Shall there be cholera in the city, and God has not done it? My soul cowered down under the majesty of that question as I read it. It seemed to stretch its black wings over my head, and had I not known them to be the wings of God, I should have been afraid!  
The text talked with me in this fashion—It is not the cholera which has slain these hundreds. The cholera was but the sword. The hand which scattered death is the hand of a greater than mere disease. God Himself is traversing London! God, with silent footstep, walks the hospitals, enters the chamber, strikes the wayfarer in the street, and chills the heart of the suppliant kneeling by his bed. God, the great Judge of all, at whose belt swing the keys of Death and Hell, the mysterious One whose voice bids the pillars of Heaven’s starry roof to tremble, who made the stars, and can quench them at His will—it was none other than He who walked down our crowded courts, and entering our lanes and alleys called one after another the souls of men to their last account! God is abroad!  
There are times when God comes especially near to men. He is everywhere, and yet He is frequently described in Scripture as saying, “Let Us go down, that We may see whether it is altogether according to the report.” God has come down, and is going through this city! Tread solemnly when you go to your business tomorrow morning—you walk the streets where God has walked—you who will go to the cemetery with your dead ones, I had almost said. Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground, for God is there! The last time this disease was here I had a pervading sense of the Presence of God wherever I went. It seemed to me as if the veil between time and eternity were more transparent than usual.  
If anything ought to compel our attention to God’s voice, it should be the remembrance that it is attended with God’s Presence, and if anything ought to make us feel His rod, it is the fact that it is not the rod that smites, but God Himself that uses the rod!  
Leaving the text itself, I want to gather up my thoughts, as God shall help me, in a few earnest words. My dear Hearers, I would speak as God’s mouth to you as His Holy Spirit shall enable me. Is not the Lord speaking to all of us, both saints and sinners, and warning us to be agreed with Him? O you who are His blood-bought people, Believers in Jesus—is there any sin that has parted you from communion with Christ? Have you fallen into anything which has provoked the Spirit, so that His comforts are withdrawn? If so, by deep humility and earnest prayer, standing at the foot of the Cross of the Lord Jesus, pray*—  
“Return, You heavenly Dove, return  
Sweet messenger of rest!  
I hate the sins that made You mourn,  
And drove You from my breast.”*  
At all times it is well for the Christian to acquaint himself with God and be at peace, but especially just now. How can you help others if you yourself have lost the sense of the love of God shed abroad in your heart? I know you are His and He will never cast you away, but if you do not enjoy His Presence you will be as weak as water. And oh, those of you who are not His people! Can you bear to be at disagreement with God? How can He walk with you? You ask His protection, but how can you expect it if you are not agreed with Him?  
Now, if two men walk together, there must be a place where they meet each other. Do you know where that is? It is at the Cross! Sinner, if you trust in Jesus, God will meet you there! That is the place where true atone-ment is made between God and sinners. If you go repenting to Jesus, saying, “Have mercy upon my iniquity. Wash me in Your blood,” you shall be agreed with God, and then you may look forward to living or dying with equal delight! For if we Live we shall walk with God on earth, and if we die we shall walk with God above!  
Brethren, while the lion roars, should we not remove any evil which may have caused his anger to burn? Christian, search yourself now and purge out the old leaven! The head of the Jewish household, when the feast of unleavened bread draws near, not only puts away the loaves of bread ordinarily used in the household, but takes a candle and searches every part of the house lest there should be even a crumb of leaven anywhere. He cleans it all out, that he may keep the feast not with leavened bread.  
Now, Christian, as this is God’s visitation, ask for the candle of the Holy Spirit to discover any little sin. Let any little self-indulgence into which we have fallen be conscientiously given up, and for the sake of that dear Savior who denied Himself every comfort for us, let us take up our cross and follow Him, determined that if the lion shall roar, it shall not be because of any prey in us.  
And oh, Sinner, against whom God has been roaring, do you not remember His own words, “Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver”? Who can remove the iniquity which provokes the Lord to jealousy except the dying Savior, the Lord Jesus? He has put away sin by bearing it in His own body, and if you trust Him there shall he no sin in you to provoke God. But it shall be said of you as of Israel, “In those days, and in that time, said the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”  
Moreover, the Lord our God speaks to us by His Providence, and says, “Submit yourselves, this day, to God’s design.” The great Fowler has spread the net—He will not take away that net till He has caught the bird. Be caught in it! Saint, fly not from your God! If He puts out even an angry hand, fly into it—there is no shelter from an angry God but in the pierced hand of His dear Son! When vengeance would strike a heavy blow, the closer you can get to it, the less will it wound you. Get close to God in Christ! Cling to Him, and He will not destroy you. Fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly! Be taken in God’s net! Say to God, “What would You have me to do? Would you have me to be Yours? Here I am, Lord! Before you take me in the net of death, take me in the net of Grace. Before the snares of Hell prevent me, let the blessed snare of Your eternal love sweetly entangle me. I am, I would be, Yours.”  
Be awake, Christian, and be aware of God’s design, for the trumpet is sounding, and when the trumpet sounds the Christian must not slumber. Let the Presence of God infuse into you a more than ordinary courage and zeal. My Brothers and Sisters, I wish I could speak to you this morning as I had hoped to have done, for then I would thrown my whole soul into every word! I charge you, as you love Jesus, as you know the value of your own soul—now, if never before—be in earnest for the salvation of the sons of men!  
Men are always dying! Time, like a mighty rushing stream is always bearing them away—but now they are hurried down the torrent in increasing numbers! If you and I do not exert ourselves to teach them the Gospel, upon our heads must be their blood. It is God’s work, we know, to save, but then He works by instruments, and we have His own solemn word for it—“If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands.” Are there no houses round your dwelling where Jesus is unknown? Is there no court, no lane, no alley near to where you reside without God and without Christ?  
Have you no friends unconverted? Have you no acquaintance unsaved? May there not be even sitting in the pew with you some unpardoned person? May there not be, Sunday after Sunday, sitting in the next seat someone who knows not Christ—who was never warned of his danger or pointed to the Remedy? It is a great mercy, when the bell tolls, if we can say of those who die, “I did all I could to save them from ruin.” I thought when I read Whitfield’s words to his congregation, I wish I could always say as much. He said, “Ah, Souls, if you are lost, it is not for lack of praying for! It is not for lack of weeping over! It is not for lack of faithful Gospel preaching.”  
I can say the last, but I cannot say the first as I could wish. And yet I know that there are some of you here, who, if you are lost, are not lost for lack of warning, nor for lack of teaching, nor for lack of invitation. We have set before you life and death! We have threatened you in God’s name, and we have invited you by the precious blood of Jesus! Years ago there seemed to be some hope about you, but it was like the morning cloud and the early dew, for you are still unsaved. When I heard the other day that Mrs. So-and-So was dead, and that she died of cholera, I could not lament, for she was one who had long feared God! When they told me that a worthy young man had fallen, I was sorrowful to have lost so good a student from the College, but I was thankful that one who had served his God so well in his youth had gone to his rest.  
But if I heard of the death of some of you, it would cause me unmingled grief and fear! Some of you have been sitting here for years who will, I fear, go out of this Tabernacle to destruction—you know you will unless you are changed! If you die as you now are you have nothing to expect but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! Some of you know well the result of sin and yet you choose it—your consciences prick you often—and yet you run against them! You have been alarmed and so awakened that it seems impossible that you can continue as you are! But alas, you will not turn and your end is coming.  
My Hearer, I can hardly face the thought of your fate! I feel like Elijah when he looked into the face of Hazael and trembled as he foresaw his history. It is terrible to think of your doom! He who has warned you and prayed for you will meet you in another world, and when he meets you, you shall not have to say he did not speak plainly and pointedly to you. You will be speechless because the trumpet was sounded and you did not take the warning! God was in the city and you would not hear Him! Death spoke as well as the minister, but you stopped both your ears because you were resolved to die! And your heart was set on mischief!  
You scorn eternal life and choose destruction for the sake of a few paltry pleasures, or a deceitful darling lust which will treacherously stab you through your heart! You let Jesus go, and Heaven go, and all this for a moment’s pleasure! Ah, my Hearer, you shall have much to answer for. I speak to you as a dying man and pray you not to venture into eternal wrath. Give these words some consideration, I pray you, and as you consider them, may God the Holy Spirit fasten them as nails in a sure place, and may you seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near, for this is His word to you—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”  
And Jesus adds His loving words, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

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THE ROYAL DEATHBED

NO. 426

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?” Amos 3:6.**

WE have nothing to do this morning with the question of moral evil and indeed with the awful mystery of the origin of moral evil we have nothing to do at any time. There may have been some few speculators upon this matter, who like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego could walk in the midst of the fire unharmed. But most men who have ventured near the mouth of this fiery question have been like Nebuchadnezzar’s guards— they have fallen down, destroyed by the blasting influence of its heat.

The problem we have to solve is not how was evil born but how shall evil die—not how it came into the world—but the mischief it has worked since its coming and how it is to be driven out. Those persons who fritter away their time in useless and curious enquiries about the origin of moral evil and so forth, are generally persons who are too idle to attempt the practical casting out of the fiend and therefore would kill their time and quiet their consciences by abstruse controversies and vain jangling about subjects with which we have nothing to do.

The evil in the test is that of calamity and we might so read the verse— “Shall there be a calamity in the city and the Lord has not done it?”—a question exceedingly appropriate at the present time. There has been evil in this city. A calamity of an unusual and disastrous nature has fallen upon this nation. We have lost one who will find today a thousand tongues to eulogize him. A prince whose praise is in the mouth of all—who is in such repute among you that it is utterly needless for me to commend his memory to your hearts. We have lost a man whom it was our habit to suspect so long as he lived he could do little without arousing our mistrusts.

We were always alarmed by phantoms of intrusion and unconstitutional influence and now that he has departed we may sincerely regret that we could not trust where confidence was so well deserved. Not of lack of homage to his rank, his talents, or his house could he complain, but from his tomb there might well come the still small voice of memory, reminding us of many careless suspicions, a few harsh judgments and one or two heartless calumnies. I was pleased by a remark made by the leading journal of the age, to the effect that the Prince Consort’s removal might suggest deep regrets for our thrifty homage and measured respect.

He has deserved nothing but good at our hands.

Standing in the most perilous position his foot has not slipped. Standing where the slightest interference might have brought down a storm of animosity upon his head he has prudently withheld himself and let public affairs as much as possible alone. Looking upon the nature of our government and the position of the Throne in our constitution, I can but say, “Verily it is a heavy calamity to lose such a husband for such a Queen.” So dire is this evil that our troubled hearts are shadowed with dark forebodings of other ills of which this may be the mournful herald.

We were saying with David, “My mountain stands firm, it shall never be moved”—an earthquake has commenced, the mountain trembles, one great rock has fallen—what may come next? We did reckon upon war, but we had no forewarnings of a Royal funeral. We looked forward with some apprehension to strifes abroad, but not to losses at home. And now we feel that a cornerstone in the Royal house has been taken away and we look forward with sorrow and fear to what may come next and next and next.

We have great faith in our Constitution, but had we not even greater faith in God we might fear lest the removal of an eminent minister, lest the taking away of some great men who have stood prominent in our commonwealth should leave us desolate, without earthly helpers. It is not the fall of yonder stately column which alone has caused us sadness. It is the Prophetic finger pointing to other parts of the goodly pile which has made us full of forebodings of the time when many a noble pillar must lie in the dust. Nor is this all, or the deepest sorrow.

We feel this to be an evil upon the city because of the taking away of a parent from his children and such children, too—princes, princes whom no man may venture to instruct as could a father—princes into whose ears wise counsels will scarcely enter, save through a father’s voice— princes and princesses who needed to have his prudent counsel to steer them through the various trials of their minority and to cheer them when they should come into the battles of life. He is taken away, who in concert with the Queen, has so well trained them and what his loss may be to their future characters time only shall reveal.

More than this—and here we touch the most tender string and come nearest to the heart of the evil—Her Majesty has lost her beloved husband, her only equal friend, her only confidant, her only counselor in her private cares. Except for her children she has lost all at a blow and she is this day more widowed than the poorest widow in the land. The bereaved wife of the peasant is too often afflicted by the grasp of chill penury, but she has some equals and friends who prevent the colder hand of regal isolation from freezing the very soul. In our tenderly beloved Sovereign we see Majesty in misery and what if I say we behold the empress of sorrow?

Just as the mountain peaks—the first to catch the sunbeams of summer are the most terribly exposed to the pitiless blasts of winter—so the elevation of sovereignty with all its advantages in prosperity involves the maximum of sorrow in the hour of tribulation. What rational man among us would be willing to assume imperial cares in ordinary times, but what must they be now, when household bereavement wrings the heart and there is no more an affectionate husband to bear his portion of the burden?

Brethren, we can only sympathize, but we cannot console. Ordinary cases are often within reach of compassion but the proper reverence due to the highest authority in the land renders it impossible for the dearest friend to use that familiarity which is the very life of comfort. This is a calamity indeed! O Lord, the Comforter of all those whose hearts are bowed down, sustain and console our weeping monarch! Would that Robert Hall, or Chalmers, could arise from the grave to depict this Sorrow! As for me, my lips are so unaccustomed to courtly phrases and I understand so little of those depths of sorrow that I am not tutored and prepared to speak on such a subject as this.

I do but stammer and blunder, where there is room for golden utterance and eloquent discourse. You God of Heaven, You know that there beats nowhere a heart that feels more tenderly than ours, or an eye that can weep more sincerely for the sorrow of that Royal Lady who is thus left alone. Alas, for the Prince who has fallen upon the high places! From the council-chamber he is removed. From the abode of all the graces he is taken away. From the home of loveliness, from the throne of honor he is gone and it is an evil—such an evil as has never befallen this nation in the lifetime of any one of us—such an evil that there is but one death—and may that be far removed—which could cause greater sorrow in the land.

But now, our text lifts up its voice and demands to be heard, since it is a question from the lips of the Eternal God. “Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?”

There are two things upon which we will speak this morning. First, God has done it. Secondly, God has done it with a design. Let us endeavor to find, if we can, what that design is.

I. First then, there is an evil in the city. But GOD HAS DONE IT. There was considerable curiosity to enquire into the second cause of this evil. From where came the fever? We could not suppose it to be bred, as the fever frequently is, in our courts and alleys in the plague-nest where filth provided it with all its food until it was hatched to pestilence. What were its earliest symptoms, what its growth and how it was that it baffled the physician’s skill? We may lay aside these enquiries, to look apart and away from the second cause—to the first great Cause who has done all.

“The Lord has done it.”

He gave the breath and He has taken it away. He molded the manly form and He has laid it prostrate in the dust. He has sent the man and He has said, “Return! to the dust from where you were taken.” I call to remembrance the notions which have spread throughout this world and which are still living in our age—the notions which seek to banish God and make Him a stranger in the midst of His own works. God must have done this thing or else we are driven to some other alternative. How came this calamity about? Shall we suppose it to be by chance? There are still some found foolish enough to believe that events happen without Divine predestination and that different calamities transpire without the overruling hand, or the direct agency of God.

Alas, for you and for me, if chance had done it. Ah, what were we, Brethren, if we were left to chance! We should be like poor mariners, put out to sea in an unsafe vessel without a chart and without a helm. We should know nothing of the port to which we might ultimately come. We should only feel that we were now the sport of the winds, the captives of the tempest and might soon be the victims of the all-devouring deep. Alas, poor orphans were we all, if we were left to chance. No father’s care to watch over us, but left to the fickleness and fallibility of mortal things!

What were all that we see about us, but a great sand storm in the midst of a desert, blinding our eyes, preventing us from ever hoping to see the end through the darkness of the beginning? We should be travelers in a pathless waste, where there were no roads to direct us—travelers who might be overturned and overwhelmed at any moment—and our bleached bones left the victims of the tempest, unknown, or forgotten of all. Thank God it is not so with us. Chance exists only in the heart of fools. We believe that everything which happens to us is ordered by the wise and tender will of Him who is our Father and our Friend. We see order in the midst of confusion, we see purposes accomplished where others discern fruitless wastes. We believe that, “He has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of His feet.”

Some, on the other hand, run to another extreme—still forgetting their God. They deny the thought of chance but they bend to the idea of fate. Some Predestinarians without a God are as far astray in their ideas as those who believe in chance without a God. For what is the “fate” of some men? It reminds me of one of those huge machines employed in the lead mines where two wheels are always revolving and breaking the stones quarried from the pit. The stones at first lie at a distance but they are continually moving nearer and nearer to the all-devouring mouth of the great wheels and at last they are crushed and ground.

Such is fate in the minds of some men. Or to use another figure—it is like the great car of Juggernaut, dragged along by irresistible power. On it comes, crushing, mangling, flattening beneath its wheels the bleeding bodies lying in the way. From this horrid car of fate none can get away, none even attempt to escape. They are bound hand and foot and laid down in its pathway and when the time comes the wheels will grind the poor wretches to powder.

Well, I thank God that while I believe in predestination, I know the difference between that and fate. Fate is predestination blind, demented, brainless, wandering about, achieving wondrous things without a purpose, overturning mountains, plucking up cedars by the roots, scattering firebrands, hurling deaths about—but all without an end. Such is fate—it is because it must be—events occur because they shall be. But predestination is a glorious thing. With many eyes it looks to the interests of God and His creatures, too. And although it says the thing must be, yet it must be because it is wise and right and just and kind, that it should be.

And though we may think that it comes to the same in the end, yet to our hearts the differences are as wide as the poles asunder. Believe not in fate—but believe in God. Say not it was the man’s destiny—but say it is God’s will. Say not a cruel and irresistible fate has snatched him away. But say a tender hand finding that the due time was come—has taken him from evil to come.

These two suppositions being disposed of, there remains another. “Is there evil in a city and the Lord has not done it?” If neither a foolish chance nor an unconscious fate has done it, perhaps the spirit of evil may have inflicted it. Perhaps Satan may bring evils upon us. Perhaps he may drag down men to their graves. Perhaps he may cut the thread of life. Perhaps he is the evil genius of the world and the keeper of the gates of death. Brethren, we must get rid of the thought at once from our minds. Be gone far hence, foul King of Errors! You are the prince of the air but you are not king of kings, nor are you now the king of death.

The keys swing not at the girdle, not from your black lips can come the summons, “Prepare to meet your doom.” Not with your foul fingers are we plucked from our houses and from our thrones—not through your cruelty are we given up in a black day. Your despotic and tyrannical mind has no power to lord it over us. No, Jesus, You have vanquished Satan, You have delivered us from the very fear of death because You have destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

A thousand angels could not drag us to the grave. And you, black spirit, you shall not be able to confine us there, when once the trump of the archangel shall awaken us from our sleep. No, Satan has not done it. Look not on your troubles and trials, my Brethren in Christ, as coming from Hell. Satan may sometimes be the instrument of your plans, but still they come from God. In the cup of our sorrows there is not a dreg which

the Father did not put there. Bitter as the compound may be, the eternal hand of wisdom mixed the whole. The rod may fall, but Satan does not wield it. Like as a father “chastens his children,” so the Lord does chasten “them that fear Him.”

But once more—one more thought arises in our mind. Perhaps the greatest temptation of modern times is to impute everything which happens to the laws of nature. Now this may satisfy philosophy, but theology goes a little further and while it admits all the laws of matter, yet it asserts that a law is in itself utterly powerless apart from a power to carry it out. It may be a law that such-and-such things shall be done, but they never will be done unless there is some Power to make the law effective. The notion of some in modern times seems to be that this world is like a great clock wound up many years ago. In fact, there are some who believe in perpetual motion—and appear to teach that it wound itself up!

In order to get rid of God and send Him as far away as possible they go back to primeval times and conceive that then all the wheels were set in motion and a sufficient quantity of momentum put into the whole affair so that it is now going on of itself. As to Divine interpositions, these they will not believe. Miracles, of course, are absurd and everything is left to the ordinary laws of nature—there being sufficient vitality—according to some, in the world itself to carry on its own acts, according to certain laws and rules. Blessed be God, we know that this is not true.

We believe it is our duty to use every sanitary means to remove the seeds of disease. We believe that they err who would proclaim a fast over a plague when it were better to sweep the street. We think that they are wrong who only go to the prayer meeting when they had better go and put down a row of dilapidated cottages and build better ones. We think that they are impractical and do not understand the Scriptures well who would be on their knees when they ought to be on their feet and doing earnest work for man.

But at the same time, still we have it that the Lord has done everything and that these calamities come not except God puts forth His hand—that it is His will to remove men by death and only by His will could they die. Why, that idea of leaving us all to machinery is an unhappy one to a man who can say, “My Father, my Father in Heaven.” It is as if a child should be left without nurse or parent, but then there is a cradle which works by machinery and rocks the child so many hours a day. When it is time for the child to wake he is aroused by machinery. There is an engine ready to feed him—there is a contrivance prepared to take off his garments at night and an invention to put them on in the morning.

He grows up and whatever is to be done, has to be done by a machine— no love, no father, no tender nurse, no kind and affectionate mother—he is the child of machines and wheels. And so, from year to year, he is passed on from one to another. When he comes up into life he is still fed by a machine. He sleeps, he goes on his journeys—in everything that he does he sees no living face—he feels no soft hand, he hears no loving tender voice. It is one clever piece of soulless, lifeless mechanism that accomplishes all.

Now, I bless God that is not the case with us. I cannot see my Father’s hand. I thank Him I am fed, but I know He feeds me. I know the laws of nature contribute to preserve life but I see the effects of His presence in my life. I should feel like a sad and miserable orphan with nothing that could find my heart’s craving after a something to love if I believed this world to be deserted of its God—and to have been going on with no Father near it to keep it in order and to make it produce the results which he designed. Blessed be God, we have no doubt about our answer to the question. Even if there is evil in a city the Lord has done it!

Let us pause a moment here and think. If, then, the Lord has done it, with what awe is every calamity invested? Standing by the royal deathbed I thought I was in the presence of a prince, but lo, I see a man. It is Your work, O you Most High. You have sealed those eyes in darkness. You have bid that heart cease its beatings—You, even You, have stretched the manly form in death. How near we are to God! Tread softly, as you go by that little room where your infant’s dead body lies yet unburied. For God is there plucking the flower-bud and appropriating it to Himself.

You have had some trial yesterday. “Put off your shoes from off your feet.” For God is in that burning bush. Men see nothing but the calamity. The eyes of faith see God. We sometimes count it a matter of interest if we hear that such-and-such a departed worthy slept in such-and-such a room, or wrote in such-and-such a place. What shall we say when we remember that God is there—that God is here—that while we wear these garments of sorrow when we bowed our heads just now and shed tears of sympathy, God was here Himself—the All-worker, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Speak with bated breath. Hush and be silent—you are in the presence of majesty. Let us think of national calamities or of private ills with that reverence which should be inspired by a consciousness of the presence of Deity.

And then, again, if God has done it, forever be put away all questions about its being right. It must be right. If any would reply, we would answer them in the curt phrase of Paul, “No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?” But to take him away and to remove him just in the hour of the nation’s perils—can this be right? Brethren, it must be. He has died at the best hour. The affliction has come at the most fitting season. It would have been wrong that it should have been otherwise—it would neither have been wise nor kind that he should have been spared. And this I

gather from the fact that God has taken him away.

And therefore it must be most wise, best, most kind. Only say the same over all your losses. Though your dearest friend be removed—be hushed, be dumb with silence and answer not—because You did it, even You, O God, therefore we say, “Your will be done.” And this, too, shall be our best comfort. God has done it. What? Shall we weep for what God has done? Shall we sorrow when the Master has taken away what was His own? “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The gardener had a choice flower in his beds. One morning he missed it. He had tended it so carefully that he looked upon it with the affection of a father to a child and he hastily ran through the garden and sought out one of the servants. He thought surely an enemy had plucked it and he said to him, “Who plucked that rose?” And the servant said, “I saw the master walking through the garden early this morning, when the sun was rising and I saw him bear it away in his hand.” Then he that tended the rose said, “It is well. Let him be blessed—it was his own. For him I held it. For him I nursed it and if he has taken it, it is well.”

So be it with your hearts. Feel that it is for the best that you have lost your friend, or that your best relation his departed. God has done it. Be filled with comfort. For what God has done can never be a proper argument for tears. Do you weep, you heavens, because God has veiled the stars? Do you weep, O earth, because God has hidden the sun? What God has done is ever ground for sonnet and for hallelujah. And even here, over the dead as yet unburied, our faith begins to sing its song—“It is well, ‘tis well; ‘tis for the best and let the Lord’s name be praised now as ever.”

II. I now only want your attention for a few minutes while I pass on to the second head. IF GOD HAS DONE IT, HE HAS DONE IT WITH SOME DESIGN.

It is not always proper for us to ask reasons for Divine acts, for if He gives no account of His matters we ought not to ask any account. That frivolous affectation of piety which leads even professedly Christian men to call every affliction a judgment—and to consider that every patron who is suddenly taken away, dies as a judgment either upon him or others, I detest from my very soul. The infidel press usually lays hold upon this as being our weakest point. It is not our weakest point. We have nothing to do with it. Those who talk thus know nothing of their Bibles.

They upon whom the tower of Siloam fell—do you think that they were worse sinners than others? I am utterly sick of the cant of a portion of the religious world when they raised a kind of miniature howl at me when I said and still repeat it, that an accident on a railway on Sunday is not a judgment, but happens in the common course of Providence and that we are not to look for an immediate reason close at hand for any of these events. God’s judgments are a vast deep—they are not that little shadow pool—to the bottom of which every fool’s plummet may reach.

God has some greater mystery in what He does than these, which every babe might discover. But we draw a line between private calamities and national calamities. Nations have no future, hence the Judge of Unctions must chastise them here. For individuals, the punishment of sin is not in this world, but in the world to come. But nations will not rise as nations— they will rise as individuals, hence, when a death becomes a national calamity, it is fitting and proper to question, if we do not pry too deeply as to why God has done it. Personally, the judgment is in the next world and to each man the end of his career is to come there. But with nations I think there are judgments here and that we would be wrong if we passed by the dealings of God without hearing “the rod and Him that has appointed it.”

Now, why has God been pleased to take away the Consort of our Queen? I think, in the first place, we may see a motive for it in His thus giving a most solemn warning to all the kings and princes of the earth. Thus says Jehovah, King of kings and Lord of lords—“Emperors and princes! You, too, die like men. Let not your crowns seem to you eternal. There is but one King, immortal, invisible. Think not, when you stretch your specters over nations, that yours is an Almighty arm. Your arm shall drop the rod, your head shall lose its crown. Your purple shall give place to the shroud and your palace shall be the narrow limits of the tomb.”

The dead from their graves are crying—  
*“Princes? This clay must be your bed  
In spite of all your towers;  
The tall, the mighty and majestic head  
Must lie as low as ours.”*

You will say, “But why not remove a common and ordinary person?” Because it would not have that effect. You, God, have spoken from the castle where the flag, half elevated, hung out the sign of sorrow and You have said to princes who must hear and to Czars who must listen, “I am God and beside Me there is none else. As for you, you kings, your breath is in your nostrils. Men of high degree are vanity. Wherein are you to be accounted of?” We, the multitude, can hear sermons every day when we see our fellows and our equals removed from us by death. But these high and lofty ones sit up in their state like the gods in high Olympus and if there were not death in their ranks they might write themselves down as demigods and demand worship at our hands.

O empire! Your escutcheon marred and blotted. For Death, the herald, has challenged the royalty of emperors and kings and dashed down, once and for all, his gauntlet in defiance of the princes of the earth. You shall sleep like your serfs and slaves. You shall die like your subjects. Heroes have passed away, as well as the minions they led to slaughter. And so, you mighty ones, must you find that Death advances with equal foot to

the palace of the king—as to the cottage of the poor.

More than this—who can tell how many a heart that had been careless in our court and thoughtless among our lords may be made to consider? If anything can do it, this must. They who have been dazzled with the brightness of splendor and have lost their thought amidst the noise of pomp, will hear for once a sermon by a preacher whom they dare not despise. For God will say to them, “Courtiers! Noblemen! Peers! I have taken away your head from you. Prepare to meet your God!” And it may be that today there are knees bowed in prayer which never bowed before. Eyes may weep for sin as well as for death today. Hearts may be breaking with a consciousness of guilt, as well as with a sense of loss.

It is hard for the rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven, thus Providence attempts to make it easy. It is not easy to get the ear of those who are thus immersed in the ordinary gaieties and cares of Court life— but this detains them. Death holds the wedding guests while with his lean and skinny hand uplifted, he tells out the tale and makes them hear and checks and keeps them till the story is done. It may be that God intends to bring out for this our age, some who shall stand towards the Church of God today as Lady Huntingdon and Ann Erskine did to the Church a hundred years ago. It may be he is tutoring some women today who, like Anne of Bohemia, the friend of the Reformers, may become promoters of the Gospel of Christ. And those who otherwise might have been strangers may come to lend their influence and their power to the promotion of real godliness and the vital interests of men.

I think these are not unreasonable things to say. We may see that God has His purpose here. Besides, methinks today God has spoken to us as a people. He has shown to us our entire dependence upon Him. He can take away every Prince and every Noble, every Cabinet Minister and every Privy Councilor. He can leave this nation like a ship dismasted. He can, if He so wills, take the hand from the helm and let her be drifted out to sea and there she may be encompassed with the clouds of war and the lightning of judgment—and all our State may suffer wreck like Nineveh and Babylon of old.

Britain! God has blessed you, but remember, it is your God. England, God has honored you. But forget not the God who keeps you. O nation, too, apt to become proud of your own strength—now that you are today wrapped about with sackcloth and the ashes are on your head—bow and say, “God is God alone. The shields of the mighty belong unto Him and unto Him and unto Him alone, be glory and honor, forever and ever.”

Then, He has spoken to each of us as individuals. I hear a voice which says to me, “Preacher! Be instant in season and out of season, be up and doing earnest and fervent, for your day is short and your time shall soon be over.” I hear a voice which says to you, officers of the Church, “Be diligent in business, fervent in spirit—serving the Lord. For soon shall the pallor of death overtake you and he shall lay his chill hand upon your hoary heads and stretch you in the cold grave.” I hear a voice which speaks to the people of my charge—the members of this Christian Church—“Work while it is called today, for the night comes wherein no man can work.”

And I hear a solemn note, ringing as a funeral bell to you who are unconverted and I translate its message thus—“Prepare to meet your God, you careless ones, who are at ease, make ready, for He comes. You thoughtless ones, who give yourselves no trouble about eternity, make ready, for He comes. Drunkard, you who are a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, make ready for He comes. Swearer, blasphemer, if there is such a one here, make ready, for He comes. He comes whom you have blasphemed. And each one of you, if you are out of Christ, if your sins still lie upon you, if you have never sought and found absolution from the lips of God your Father, seek it, seek it, for He comes.”

When at the battle of Balaclava the troop of soldiers rode into the valley of death, it must have been a frightful thing to see your comrades reel in the saddle and fall back, to hear bullet after bullet whistling about one’s ears. And shots finding their mark in one’s companion. To see the road strewed with bodies and the ranks so continually riddled and thinned. And what has been the life of many of us but such a charge as that? Companions of our boyhood! Where are you? Friends of our youth! How many of you have fallen? And the gray-haired sire as he looks back, can say, “How few survive of all I once new! How many have gone! What multitudes have fallen in the valley of decision!”

And we stand—miracles of long-suffering. We stand monuments of mercy! Must not our turn soon come? Must not our turn soon come, I say? Have we a lease of our lives? Can we postpone the dread moment? Can we hope to live long when the whole of the longest life is short? Let us prepare, for tomorrow may see our coffin measured, tomorrow may behold us ready for our cerements. No, tonight the setting sun may set upon our dead bodies. I do beseech you, remember, that you are mortal. Remember by this solemn drapery of woe and by the garment of your sorrow, that soon you must be wept over—soon mourners shall go about the streets for you and you shall go to your long homes.

I am addressing some of you this morning who awake my most tender anxieties. You have been to hear this voice before, some of you and you have trembled. But your strong passions are too much for you. You have said, “Go your way. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” And that convenient season has not come yet. You would be saved, but you must be damned. You have longings after life at times, but the cravings of that old lust, that old habit of drunkenness, that old vice,

those old corruptions, come and you go back like dogs to your vomit and like sows that were washed to your wallowing in the mire.

I speak to some this morning, who have trembled in this house when they heard the Word preached and they have gone home and they have felt for a little while solemnly impressed. But they have put the anger of mercy from them. They have despised their own salvation. Well, you shall do it but a few times more. You shall despise your own souls but a few more days and then you shall know, on your deathbeds, that we have not lied to you, but have spoken to you God’s Truth. May God convince you of that, before you discover it too late, when the judgment shall sit and your body, together reunited, shall stand before the judgment seat.

Feeble as my words may be, they will be a sad part of the account that you were warned to think on your latter end and to turn to God. Oh, by death and all its terrors, if unaccompanied by faith. By resurrection and the horrors it shall increase, if you shall perish unforgiven! By the judgment and its tremendous pomp—by the sentence and its eternal certainty—by the punishment and its everlasting agony—by time and eternity—by death and the grave—by Heaven and by Hell—by God and by the wounds of the Savior—awake, you sleeping ones! Awake, before you sleep the sleep of death!

The way of salvation is again proclaimed. “Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” On yonder Tree He pours out His blood a sacrifice. Trust your soul with Him and He will save you. Put it in His hands and He will keep it and at the last He will be answerable for your soul and He will present it “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” before the Throne of God, even the Father.

May the Lord follow with His blessing what has been said and to Him shall be glory.  
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END OF VOLUME 7 Sermon #2965 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Amo 4.12

PREPARED TO MEET GOD  
NO. 2965

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1875.

**“Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel: and because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”  
Amos 4:12.**

THERE is a peculiar solemnity about the language of our text because, albeit that the whole of Scripture is the Word of God, yet very much of it is given to us by the Prophets, Apostles and other Inspired writers. But here, it is God Himself who is speaking and out of Heaven He addresses His erring people and says to them, “Because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” If ever every mortal ear should be earnestly attentive, it is when God’s voice is heard. Shall not the creature listen to its Creator? Shall not man give heed to the voice of the God of the whole earth? O Lord, give to us hearing ears and let not your words merely reach our ears, but may the inward meaning of them penetrate our souls through the effectual working of Your almighty Spirit!

I. I am going to use the closing words of the text—“Prepare to meet your God, O Israel,” as AN ADDRESS TO ALL WHO ARE NOW PRESENT.  
You have come here, but for what purpose have you come? If you have come rightly, you have come to meet your God. The Israelites often came together to bow down before their engraved images, or professing to worship God with rites of their own inventing. They forgot that all true worship must be spiritual and though they did not and could not meet with God in such a way as that, yet they went back to their homes perfectly satisfied with what they had done. They had performed the external rites of their religion. They had gone through all its ceremonies correctly and they were content. But now God calls upon them to prepare to meet HIM—no longer to be satisfied with the visible and the external, but to get to the Invisible and the Eternal—and that is the call of God to everyone who is now here present.  
“What did you go out to see?” What did you come here to hear? Too many attend even the House of God with the notion of merely going to listen to the preacher. He is a thoughtful man, profound, philosophic. Or he is an eloquent man, oratorical and fluent. Is it for this reason that you go to your churches and your chapels, simply to be charmed by the voice of man? If so, let me remind you that God abhors this mockery of worship! As for myself, I have long ago despised the tricks of oratory and the gaudy displays of eloquence. I would sooner be dumb than merely speak so as to exhibit my own powers. If you have come here aright, you have come that God may meet with you and that you may meet with God—that your consciences may be awakened and that the Truth of God may enter your hearts.  
O my Hearers, have you come with any such design? Are there not some of you who have almost come out to meet God as Michal went out to meet David—that she might scoff at him? Have not some of you come almost as Goliath went to defy Israel—that you may fight against God and contend against the Truth? Or, possibly, to despise it in your hearts and to mock at it? God speaks to all such persons and says to them, “Cease you from your evil ways and prepare your heart to meet ME.” Oh, if we always went up to the assemblies of God’s people with prepared hearts, we would not go there in vain! If sinners came up to hear the Gospel with their hearts breaking all the way, and crying from their very souls, “Oh, that we might find Christ!”—if they came up with earnest, believing prayer—if they gathered together with a sacred expectation of blessing—what meetings there would be between God and them! There would be for them no more wasted Sabbaths, no more sham profession, no more formal religion without any effect upon the conscience and the life! Then would our solemn services be streams of blessing—water would again leap out of the rock and the thirsty congregation would indeed be refreshed! O God, will You not touch men’s hearts so that when they gather together in Your House, they will come prepared to meet You there and to worship You in spirit and in truth?  
II. A second application of the text which I shall make, without insisting upon its being the one designed, is this—it may be looked upon as AN ADDRESS TO GOD’S OWN PEOPLE.  
Sometimes the Lord’s people get out of the way of communion and fellowship with Him. It was so with Israel in the day of Amos, yet here the Lord avows Himself to still be their God, for He says, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” As for you who are His people, He is still your God and though you may have fallen into a cold condition of heart, and are now walking in darkness and seeing no light, yet He calls you to meet Him, for He desires to have your company! He has been chastening you, again and again, because you would not walk near to Him, and He is prepared to chasten you yet more. But He will stay His hand if you will now come near to Him. Remember what Eliphaz said to Job and obey the injunction, “Acquaint yourself now with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you.” Child of God, permit me to point to you with my finger and say to you, “Prepare to meet your God!” Were not those blessed times when the sound of His feet made music in your ears? Have you forgotten the Hermonites and the Hill Mizar where the Lord appeared to you and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you”? Oh, blessed were those days when we retired to a private corner and communed with God! Hallowed was that study, that kitchen, that bedroom, that hay-loft, or that ditch under the hedge where we were accustomed to meet with the Beloved of our souls and to talk with Him as one talks with his friends. We have had many blessed occasion when Heaven’s gate has seemed to be set wide open—and if we did not pass right through, yet we did sit down as upon the doorstep of Glory and Jesus showed Himself to us—and we poured out our heart before Him! There have been times when we have received those kisses of His lips of which we love to speak even now, when the company is select, and there have been love-tokens between our soul and our Savior which have made us feel that, whether in the body or out of the body, we could hardly tell—only God knew! Then, by all your sweet recollections of the past, come, you children of the living God, and prepare to meet Him again!  
If you ask, “What shall we do in order to get ready to meet Him?” I answer—Cast out the idols from your hearts! Let them all go! Love no one else and nothing else as you love Him, but give Him your whole body, soul and spirit! Humble yourself before Him at the very thought that you should ever have wandered away from Him and played the wanton towards your Best-Beloved! Come, also, with a firm reliance upon His unchanging mercy, believing that though you have often forsaken Him, He has never forsaken you. Believe in that gracious declaration of His which says, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” Look again to the precious blood of Jesus—which is the only way of access to the Father—and come sprinkled with it even now. Why should you not come to Him at once? God has most delightful ways of blessing His people on a sudden. “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Personally, I know what it is to rise from the deeps of despair, right away from the place where I was distracted with a thousand cares, sorrows and sins and to soar straight away into the serene ether of perfect reconciliation with God and conscious fellowship with Him!  
“Behold,” says the risen and glorified Jesus, “I stand at the door and knock.” It is at the door of Laodicea, the door of that Church which was lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, and it is at your door, O lukewarm Christian, that Christ is now knocking! What is the cure for your lukewarmness? It is Christ’s standing at the door and knocking, and saying to you, “If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me.” This will lift you up out of your lukewarmness and, instead of Christ spewing you out of His mouth, as it looks as if He must do, He will come and feast with you—and you shall feast with Him! Open your hearts to Him, now, Brothers and Sisters among us who profess to love Him! How can we keep our hearts closed against Him? “Come in, you blessed of the Lord,” we cry to our Beloved and, as we gaze upon Him and see that His head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, our hearts yearn towards Him and with heartfelt love we pray to Him, “Abide with us, O blessed Savior, and go no more out forever, but let our fellowship with You be perpetual!”  
III. I should have liked, if I had had time—but I have not—to have applied this text to any professors here who have gone beyond the negative loss of communion with God—who have backslidden into sin. This is THE LORD’S ADDRESS TO BACKSLIDERS— “Prepare to meet your God.” Prepare to come back into His loving arms and to be reconciled to Him again! There are some of you, perhaps, who were not only members of this Church, but who were also members of the class so long presided over by that godly woman for whom we have hung up these memorials of our grief. [Mrs. Bartlett. She had been “called Home” during the week preceding the delivery of this sermon. (See Sermon #1249, Volume 21—

Saints in Heaven and Earth One Family)—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at

http://www.spurgeons.org.] She wept over you when you turned aside. And, among the many things which have made it hard work for you to sin is this one—that you knew you were grieving her gracious and gentle spirit. Hear her voice calling to you from the grave! No, more than that, listen as she speaks to you out of the excellent Glory, saying, “My Beloved Sister, come back to your Lord!”

You have had to suffer already for your backsliding. God has sent you, as the Lord says He sent to idolatrous Israel, “blasting and mildew.” He has also withheld from you the rain in a spiritual sense, so that you are near unto famishing. And there is something even worse coming upon you. God does not tell you what it is, even as He did not tell the guilty Israelites all that He would do to them—it is something so terrible that He seems to hesitate to describe it! But He says, “Because I will do this unto you.” I know not what it is, nor can you guess, but it is something that will destroy all your joys and lay you prostrate in the dust of sorrow. Because He threatens to do this to you, return to Him, return to Him now! “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” I wish I could come round to each one of you backsliders and beseech you to remember that we have not ceased to love you, nor to pray for you, nor to hope that you may yet be led to prepare to meet your God!

IV. Now, coming to my principal objective on this occasion, I want to take the text and use it as A MESSAGE TO THE UNCONVERTED. O Spirit of God, apply it to them with Your almighty power!

I think the text may be applied to the unsaved in three ways. First, as a challenge—“Prepare to meet your God.” Secondly, as an invitation— “Prepare to meet your God.” And, thirdly, as a summons—and it will, one day, come in that form to everyone of us—“Prepare to meet your God.”

First, this sentence comes to the ungodly as a challenge. At the time referred to in the text, God had been punishing the idolatrous Israelites again and again, and again, and again, with the view of bringing them to repentance. But none of His chastisements had, so far, moved them to yield to Him. The more God smote them, the harder they became, so He seemed to say to them, “Well, then, since you will not submit to Me. Since nothing appears to make you bow down at My feet, I will now put on my armor of wrath and come out against you with sword and buckler! And I throw down this challenge to you—prepare to meet Me.” Now, my dear Hearers, you who have long heard the Gospel but who, until now, have rejected it, I ask you—Do you hope to be able to withstand God when He comes forth against you in the majesty of His righteous wrath? Already, when He has but touched you, He has made every bone and nerve in your body to tremble. You know how near to the gate of death He has brought you—do you imagine that when He comes out against you in His might, you will be a match for Him?

There are three things you may try to do and I will ask you whether you are prepared to meet God in reference to them. The first will be to justify yourself for remaining His enemy. Are you prepared to do that? When the Lord God says to you, “I created you, I have kept you in being, I have fed you and cared for you until now—why have you not obeyed Me?” When the Lord Jesus Christ says to you, “I loved sinners so much that I died for them—why will you not believe in Me?” And when the Spirit of God says, “I strove with men. Why did you resist Me?” What answer will you give? Will you be able to make it clear that you were perfectly justified in choosing the pleasures of this world rather than yield obedience to God? Will you be able, with all your logic, to make it seem right for you to have lived a wrong life, right to have despised the Law of God and right to have rejected the Gospel of Christ? Come, Man, Woman—set your wits to work and see whether you can expect, in the Great Assize which will soon be held, to be able to justify yourself before the bar of God! Prepare, in that way, to meet your God.

Or, secondly, do you expect to be able to resist Him? Come, you brave men, gird on your armor and come out to battle against the Lord God Almighty! Better let the thorns contend against the fire which licks them up with its flaming tongue! Better let the wax contend against the furnace heat which makes it run like water than let the sinner try to contend against the Omnipotent God! His faintest breath would suffice to scatter the ungodly and drive them like chaff before the wind. Can you stand up against the Most High, O you that despise and forget Him? Did Pharaoh triumph over Jehovah at the Red Sea? Did Sennacherib overthrow the God of Israel on that dreadful night when his vast host was cast into a deep sleep from which there was no awakening? No—and you cannot successfully stand up against God! But if you mean to fight with Him, count the cost, understand what it means and so prepare to meet your God.

There is a third course open to you and that is, are you able to endure what He can lay upon you? I have read of a prisoner insulting the judge by whom he had been sentenced by telling him that the punishment he had awarded was a mere trifle! Can you say this to God? O unconverted men, will you be able to endure the terror of His ire in that day when He comes forth against you! Oh, no! The very joints of your body shall be loosed in that day. Your hair shall stand erect with horror! That bold spirit of yours shall despair and all you bravado with which you said, “There is no God,” shall have departed from you and you will crouch, tremble, weep and wail in His Presence! You say today, “There is no Hell,” but you will not say that when you get there! You defy God today, but you will not defy Him in the day when He reveals Himself to you, for then you will cry to the mountains to fall upon you to hide you from His angry face! O Sirs, the challenge of the living God is this—if you will not yield to Him, be prepared to fight the quarrel out with Him! If you will not submit to His mercy, if you cannot justify yourselves for your wrongdoing, then take up your arms and contend with Him, or harden yourselves like adamant and prepare to endure the fierceness of His wrath! But neither of these things can you do, so let that terrible challenge bring you to your knees and cause you to—

*“Seek His Grace  
Whose wrath you cannot bear.”*

So, in the second place, I will use the text as an invitation. And the note at once changes from the thunders of Sinai to the still small voice of Calvary—“Prepare to meet your God.” Have you heard these tidings, ungodly men? God is coming out against you, armed with His dreadful two-edged sword—that very sword of Infinite Justice with which He smote His only-begotten Son in that day when He stood as the Substitute for sinners! What can you do? Will you run away from Him? To whom or where can you run? The utmost ends of the earth are in His hands! Should you fly to the far-distant seas, He will arrest you there. Should you plunge into the thickest shades of darkness, His eyes will still behold you—

*“Lord, where shall guilty souls retire,  
Forgotten and unknown?  
In Hell they meet Your dreadful fire,  
In Heaven Your glorious Throne.  
If winged with beams of morning light  
I fly beyond the West,  
Your hand, which must support my flight, Would soon betray my rest.  
If o’er my sins I think to draw  
The curtains of the night,  
Those flaming eyes that guard Your Law Would turn the shades to light.  
The beams of noon, the midnight hour,  
Are both alike to Thee—  
Oh, may I never provoke that power  
From which I cannot flee!”*

God is coming forth to meet you and there is no way for you to escape from Him! Will you stay where you are? Then He will soon overtake you and when He does, then shall come your terrible end. Your wisdom is to give heed to the advice of the text and go meet Him! You cannot escape if you remain where you are, so go meet Him! “How?” you say. Well, go to meet Him thus—with humble confessions and petitions on your lips and with ropes on your necks, adjudging yourselves worthy of death and yielding yourselves up entirely into the Lord’s hands. Confess that you deserve any punishment that He pleases to put upon you. It is thus that a rebellious subject should meet his King—confessing guilt, praying for mercy, pleading for forgiveness, asking for Grace. Thus David met his God. Read the 51st Psalm, note how he prayed and go and do likewise. You must also go with repentance in your hearts. The sins you have loved in the past must be hated and forsaken. You must go to God abhorring yourselves and making a full surrender of your souls to Him. Yield yourselves thus to Him and do it at once, seeing that since you have rebelled against Him, His Justice can seize you at any moment— and execute upon you His hot displeasure!

But let me tell you that you have a stern task before you if you are to prepare yourselves in this fashion to meet your God—a task which you will find impossible to perform in your own strength! Our rebellious heart will not readily yield. Our stubborn spirit will not easily bow. Our pride will not let us confess our sin. The dumb devil within us will not permit us to pray. I will tell you what to do. Go to God, just as you are, in the Mediator’s name, or go first to Jesus and say, “Lord Jesus, give me repentance. Give me faith, give me hatred of sin, give me a yielding spirit, give me a heart of flesh, give me a pliant mind.” And when you have thus yielded yourself up to Jesus, you are prepared to meet God, for the place where God meets sinners is at the Cross of Christ and it is the only place where it is safe for a sinner to attempt to meet his God! If, then, you would be prepared to meet your God, go to that Jesus who met His Father on your behalf and who, as the result of that terrible meeting, died for your sins, if you are truly trusting Him. Go to Christ and He will wash you in His precious blood and clothe you in His spotless robe of righteousness! Go to Christ and He will breathe the perfume of His merits over you and then, when you meet God, He will not merely see in you a sinner, but a saved sinner! He will smell the fragrant odor of the garments of His Son which will have such a sweet savor to Him that you will be acceptable to Him for Christ’s sake! There is no other way to God than this. How I wish that every unconverted person here would heed this message and obey it—“Prepare to meet your God.” Go and meet Him in the way I have pointed out to you—go and meet Him this very hour.

“Where shall I go to meet God?” asks one. Well, meet Him just where you are. Trust Jesus and yield yourself to God and the great transaction is done. Or get away into some quiet corner and pour out your grief before the Lord and ask Him, for Jesus’ sake, to meet with you that you may be reconciled to Him through the death of His Son.

It is scarcely a week ago since our good Sister, Mrs. Bartlett, fell asleep, and I do not know of anything that would so well keep her in our memories—especially in the memories of those of you who have often heard her loving invitations, but have not yielded to them, as for me to speak on her behalf, as well as on my Lord’s behalf, and say to you, “Come and meet the Lord! Come and meet Him now, prepared to meet Him through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ your Lord.” Happy day, happy day, would it be if many were led by the gracious Spirit to meet with God now! I remember well the time when I first met Him thus. I thought that I was a lost soul. I judged myself to be upon the brink of Hell. I had no merit and no native goodness to bring me to God— I was a mass of corruption and sin, but—

*“I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary, and worn, and sad”—*

and in Jesus I met my God and, meeting God, my soul was set at liberty! And tonight my soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior! The door that was open to me is open to you, my Friend, so enter it, and enter it now! May the Holy Spirit graciously enable you to come!

And, lastly, if the invitation of this text is not accepted, it will soon be heard as a summons. I am not the officer to bring the summons to you. I have no authority to do that. I am sent to invite you to meet your God and I have done that. But there will come a day, my Friends, when the authorized officer will deliver this message to you, “Prepare to meet your God.” You will be sitting at the work-table, young woman, and you will feel a strange pain in your side and you will ask yourself, “What is this?” It will be a message saying to you, “Get you home to your bed, for, thus says the Lord, ‘from that bed you shall come down no more till you are carried down in your coffin.’ ‘Prepare to meet your God.’” That message will come to you, also, my aged Friend, before very long. You have almost completed the full period of your life and, very soon, you must retire to your room and sit still and wait, for you also must prepare to meet your God. This summons may come to me as I stand here, or to you as you sit there—it may come to the strongest young man or young woman among us. Even while we are at this service, the dart of death may reach any one of us!

What a flurry some people are in when that summons comes to them, “Prepare to meet your God!” As a rule, they have not the hardihood to put it aside. A few do, but many say, “Send for the minister, call in some praying friends and let us prepare to meet our God.” They go about that solemn business in quite the wrong fashion! Their harvest is past, their summer is ended and they are not saved and, even now, they do not go the right way to be saved—they are relying upon men! They are relying upon prayers, for they have not yet learned to look alone to Jesus! I do not know any more dreary work than to be called, sometimes at dead of night, to see a dying man or woman who has lived a careless, godless life. I often feel as if it would be better to refuse to go, for, when one gets there, frequently the person is insensible and what their friends imagine we, who are ministers, can do with insensible people, is more than I can tell. Why, we cannot do much with you while you have your senses! Even while you are sitting here, much that we say glides off you like rain off the roof of your house. What can you hope that we can say to you when you are either unconscious, or distracted with pain—with your head aching and your mind confused—and your soul amazed by the near prospect of the world to come?

God’s Grace can work miracles, I know, but I fear that this miracle is seldom worked—that the man who has neglected all his life to prepare to meet his God should be able to light his lamp all of a sudden—and go forth to meet the King just when the trumpet voice is sounding through the streets, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him.” For the most part, there is a piteous appeal, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,” but that we cannot do. And, while they go to buy for themselves, the Bridegroom comes—and when they clamor for admittance at the closed door, the answer is, “Too late! Too late! You cannot enter now.” The old Rabbis used to say that every man should prepare to die one day before his death-day and, since he did not know whether he might not die tomorrow, the wisest plan was for him to prepare today. And so it is. Through this assembly, then, let this Truth of God run—that there will come a summons to death and that summons will run thus, “Prepare to meet your God.”

But when you die, in an instant your soul will be before the bar of God. There will be held what I may call the petty sessions before the Last Grand Assize, but at that session your soul will stand alone and God will bid you go to the house of detention where you must wait till your body shall rise to be united with your soul! When the day of Resurrection arises, louder than ten thousand thunders will ring out the blast of the archangel’s trumpet, startling Heaven and earth, and echoing over land and sea, “Awake you dead, and come to judgment!” Then shall the cemeteries heave and toss like seas when lashed into fury by the tempest! Then shall the battlefields of earth grow rich with living men as the harvest field is rich when the reaper goes forth with his sickle! Then shall earth, from her teeming womb, yield the unnumbered myriads that have slept within her bosom—and they shall stand, covering earth and sea, a countless multitude like the leaves of the forest or the sands of the seashore! Then again shall the trumpet sound o’er all the gathered throng, “Prepare to meet your God!” And HE shall come, the Man, Christ Jesus, whom they would not have to be their God and King and, sitting on the Great White Throne, with all nations before Him, “He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” And “the books” shall be opened and whoever, of all our fellow creatures and of ourselves, also, shall not be found written in the Book of Life shall be cast into the Lake of Fire!

O Sirs, O Sirs, in the name of the living God, I ask you—Are you prepared for that great day? Some of us can say, with humble boldness, “Yes, we are prepared for it.” I hope that many here can truthfully say, with Count Zinzendorf—

*“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress!  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.  
Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who anything to my charge shall lay? While through Your blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”*

But if you have not been absolved by the blood of Jesus, how can you stand there? The very light of His Countenance would scare you into abject terror! And, if His face alarms you, what will His voice do when He says, “Depart, you cursed”? And what will His hand do when He grasps His rod of iron and breaks you in pieces like a potter’s wheel? Beware, you that forget God, lest you loiter and linger and procrastinate until that last trumpet summons sounds, “Prepare to meet your God.” May He graciously grant that you may be prepared now, instead of standing unprepared in that dread day!—

*“You sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear!  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there!”*

Crouch at His feet! Bow down before those dear feet that were nailed to the Cross! Look up to the hands that still bear the nail prints! Gaze upon the face that once was stained with spittle, but now shines beyond the light of the sun! Look upward to that brow which once was crowned with thorns! Hide yourself in that cleft in His side where the spear made an open way to the heart of Jesus! In a sentence, rest in His atoning Sacrifice, for there is nothing else in which you can rest! May the Lord enable you to do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **AMOS 5:4-27.**

Verse 4. For thus says the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek you Me, and you shall live. And that is just the message of God to professing Christians now—“Seek you Me.” Get away from your mere ceremonies, from trusting in your outward performances—and get to God Himself. Get beyond your fellow worshippers and your ministers, beyond your sanctuaries and your supposed holy places—and get in spirit and in truth to God Himself! “Seek you Me, and you shall live.”

5. But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal and pass not to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nothing. These were the places where the calves and other idols were set up for the worship of God by means of visible symbols. That was the Romanism of that day. Pure spiritual worship was ordained by God, but that was not enough for the idolatrous Israelites. They must set up the image of an ox, the emblem of power—not that they would worship the ox, they said, but that they might worship the God of Power through that symbol. And that is the plea of Papists today—“We do not worship that cross. We do not worship that image. These things help us! They are emblems.” But they are absolutely forbidden by God—“You shall not make unto you any engraved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.” The First Commandment forbids us to have any other God than Jehovah. The Second forbids us to worship Him through any emblem or symbol whatever.

6, 7. Seek the LORD, and you shall live, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el. You who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth. Here you have another great Truth of God—that in order to seek God aright, we must turn away from sin. All the Ritualism in the world will not save us, or be acceptable to God! There must be purity of life and holiness of character. Justice must be done between man and man, and we must seek to be right before the righteous and holy God.

8. Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion. The Creator of the spring-bringing Pleiades and of the winter-bringing Orion.  
8, 9. And turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is His name that strengthens the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress. The God of the weak, the Defender of the oppressed! You that oppress the poor and tread down the people, seek you Him and wash your hands from the stains of your past injustice!  
10. They hate him that rebukes in the gate, and they abhor him that speaks uprightly. There is still a generation that cannot bear to be told of its faults—and it shows its venom against everything that is right.  
11. Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and you take from him burdens of wheat: you have built houses of hewn stone but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine of them. God has often shown how He can overthrow those who oppress the poor!  
12-17. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their rights. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that you may live: and so the LORD, the God of Hosts, shall be with you, as you have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of Hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. Therefore the LORD, the God of Hosts, the Lord says thus, Wailing shall be in all streets, and they shall say in all the highways, Alas, alas, and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skillful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through you, says the LORD. National sins bring down national judgments and when God grows angry against the people, He makes the places of their feasting, the vineyards where their choicest vines grow, to become the places of their sorrow, so that wailing and distress are heard on all sides. Oh, that nations knew the day of their visitation and would do justly! Then would such judgments be averted.  
18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. “The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light,” for such as you impenitent, unjust, graceless sinners. “The day of the Lord” will not bring blessings to you! It will be—  
19. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. From bad to worse do they go who think to escape from present misery by plunging into the Presence of God. The suicide is, of all fools, the greatest, for he goes before God with his own indictments. No, with his own sentence in his hand. He needs no trial—he has condemned himself!

20-22. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it. I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept these: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. See how God speaks about public worship and formal sacrifices when the heart is not right with Him? When the moral conduct of the offerer is wrong, the Lord will not accept his offering.

23, 24. Take you away from Me the noise of your songs; for I will not hear the melody of your viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. This is what God asks for— righteousness, not sweet music! Have they not, at this very day, turned what were once houses of prayer into music halls, set up their idols in our parish churches and adorned their priests with every kind of Babylonian garment which they could find at Rome, the mystical Babylon? Are they not turning this nation back again to that accursed Popery, the yoke of which our fathers could not bear? Therefore, the Lord is angry with this land! There are storm clouds gathering over it because it is not sufficiently stirred with indignation against those idolatrous men who are again seeking to come to the front among us!

25. Have you offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? “Did you worship Me? Did you offer sacrifices to Me?” “No,” said God, “you did not.”

26, 27. But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is The God of Hosts. Oh, for pure worship! Oh, for pure living! Oh, for hearts that spiritually worship the Lord, for Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him.” “But unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?”

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PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD  
NO. 923

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”  
Amos 4:12.**

GOD had, in the days of Amos, by different ways rebuked the sin of His people Israel. He had wasted them with famine and sword. He had withheld the rain. He had sent forth the pestilence after the manner of Egypt. He had smitten their fields and gardens with blast and mildew, and He had overthrown some of them, as Sodom and Gomorrah. But they still persevered in their rebellion, and therefore He declares that He will send them no more of His messengers, and shoot no more of His far-reaching arrows, but will come Himself, in His own Person, to deal with them.

God’s way of dealing with rebellious humanity, is, at first to upbraid and persuade with words—soft, gentle, tender words. These He repeats many times, accompanying them with tokens of tenderness and Grace. By-and-by He exchanges these words of tenderness for words of mingled threat—He begins to expostulate with them—why will they drive Him to this? Why will they die? Why will they bring ruin upon themselves? Then, if words are of no effect upon them, He turns to blows—but His strokes fall softly at first. Yet if these avail not, His strokes gather strength, till at last He smites them with the blows of a cruel one, and wounds them sorely.

If after this the sinners remain obstinate, the Lord’s longsuffering turns to wrath, and He says, “Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more. Already your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint. What shall I do unto you? What shall I do unto you?” Things have come to a dreadful pass when at last the Lord puts aside the rod, when He puts aside afflictions which He has sent as chastisements, and comes forth Himself to end the strife, crying, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies.”

Such was the position of Israel in the text. They had scorned all the milder dealings of God, and now He says to them, “Prepare to meet Me, even God Himself, in all the terror of justice.” The Prophet may be understood as in irony challenging the proud rebels to meet in arms the God whom they have despised. Let them prepare to fight it out with Him whom they have made to be their enemy, and against whose Laws they have so continually revolted. “Prepare,” says the Prophet, “O you potsherds, to strive with your Maker! You worms, to battle with Omnipotence.” As it stands, the text is an awful challenge of Almighty wrath when at last longsuffering vacates the throne, and Justice bares its two-edged sword. Woe,

woe, woe to boastful scoffers in that great and terrible day!

We shall not, however, dwell upon the particular position of the text, nor confine ourselves to the meaning of the words as the Prophet used them. We shall, however, hope as fully as possible to illustrate the natural sense of the text, in the hope that such earnest and solemn words may awaken in some hearts tenderness towards God, and the desire to be prepared to meet Him. “Prepare to meet your God.” We have before us a most important call, and we shall consider first the many tones in which it may be uttered. Secondly, the heavy tidings conveyed by it to the ungodly. And thirdly, the weighty admonition given there.

I. First, then, let us think of these words in THEIR DIFFERENT TONES. They vary from grave to gay, from dread to delight—“Prepare to meet your God.” Why, methinks there are no more joyous words under Heaven than these under some aspects, certainly none more solemn out of Hell under others. “Prepare to meet your God.” These words may have sounded through the green alleys of Paradise, and have caused no discord there. Blending with the sweet song of new-created birds, these notes would have but given emphasis to the harmony.

Often from the mossy couch whereon he reclined in the happy life of his innocence and bliss, the great sire of men would be aroused by this holy summons. When the sun first scattered the shades of darkness, and began to gild the tops of the snow-clad hills with morning light, Adam was awakened by the birds amid the groves of Eden, whose earliest song his heart interpreted, as meaning, “Awake, O wondrous man, and prepare to meet your God.” Then climbing some verdant hill from where he looked down upon the landscape, all aglow with glory and with God, Adam would, in holy rapture, meet his God.

And in lowly reverence would speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend. Then, too, at eventide, the dewdrops, as they fell, each one would say to that blessed man, “Prepare to meet your God.” The lengthened shadows would silently give forth the same message, and perhaps it is no imagination, angels would alight upon lawns adorned with lilies, and pause where Adam stood pruning the growth of some too luxuriant vine, and would with courteous speech remind him that the day’s work was over, for the sun was descending to the western sea, and it was time for the favored creature to have audience with his God.

The faintest intimation would suffice for our first parent, for the crown of Paradise to him was the Presence of the Lord God. And Eden’s rivers, though they flowed over sands of gold, had no river in them equal to the stream whereby the spirit of Adam was gladdened when he had communion with the Most High. For then he drank from that river of the water of life which flows from underneath the throne of the Great Supreme. Unfallen man had no greater joy than walking with God. It was Heaven on earth to meet in converse tender and sublime with the great Father of Spirits. No marriage bells ever rang out a sweeter or more joyous melody than these glad words as they were heard amid the myrtle bowers and palm groves of Eden by our first parents in the heyday of their innocence, “Prepare to meet your God.”

Then, when Jehovah walked in the garden in the cool of the day, He had no need to say aloud, “Adam, where are you?” For His happy creature whom He has made to have dominion over all the works of His hands was waiting for Him as a child waits for his father when the day’s work is done—watching to hear his father’s footsteps, and to see his father’s face. Oh, yes! Those were words in fullest harmony with Eden’s joys, “Prepare to meet your God.”

But, Brethren, weep not over those withered glories as those who are without hope, for the words have something of a heavenly sound to those who have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We, though fallen and sinful, and therefore naturally averse to God, have, many of us, been renewed in the spirit of our minds, and now oftentimes to us the welcome message comes, “Prepare to meet your God,” in a sense most delightful and most entrancing. It is our summons to devotion. It is morning, and as we put on our garments before we go forth to the battle of life, the angel of the Lord whispers to us, “Prepare to meet your God.”

And on our knees we seek our Father’s face, and pray that we may be under His guardian care throughout the day. Think not that the holy Voice is silent until nightfall. Oh, no, oftentimes as business gives us pauses, and as our avocations may allow us leisure, we hear the inner life, or what if I say the indwelling Holy Spirit, softly saying to our heart, “Prepare to meet your God.” And we, in spirit, put off our shoes from our feet, and feel that the place whereon we stand is holy ground! We may be in a poor workshop, but our spirit makes it a cathedral as it has communion with the Most High. Our study may be littered over with our books, and papers, and letters. But it becomes a sacred oratory on a sudden, and all things fall into order as the Voice is heard and obeyed.

Perhaps we may be in the cornfield, or on the barley mow, but if the Voice says, “Prepare to meet your God,” the true heart stands as a priest before the altar, and worships in spirit and in Truth. Even the streets of busy London may become a silent temple when the heart is solemnly absorbed in worship. For preparation to meet our God means no change of vestments, nor even the washing of the hands. There is a cleansing of the heart, and a putting on of the white linen, which in the righteousness of saints is performed in a moment, and the soul stands before her God in happy fellowship.

Then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are set times with us when we prepare to meet our God, as for instance, on the eve of the Lord’s-day. It always seems to me to be so pleasant at the family altar to make mention of the coming Sunday and to ask the Lord that we may lay aside our cares. Ask Him that we may be quit of every earthly impediment, and

may sit in the heavenly places on the Day of Rest with our Father and our God. I know how late some of you have to keep your shops open on Saturday nights, and how it almost runs into the Sunday before you can be done with your business—but still I hope you do before you come here make a point of preparing for this meeting place with God by meeting Him first at home.

I would not have you come here unprepared, as though the mere coming into the assembly would be enough. I anxiously desire to see you come with prepared hearts, with longing appetites, with holy aspirations. Bring your harps with you already tuned. Make ready for the holy convocation. Lay by in store your offering, prepare your song, uplift your heart. Yes, and besides the Sundays, there are certain other times with us when we are especially called to meet our God. We keep no holy days by the almanac, but we have holy days apportioned us by Providence and by the Holy Spirit. I mean that there are seasons hallowed by holy memories, or by present circumstances when sorrow and joy, earth and Heaven, all without and within, bear to us a call both loud and sweet, “Prepare to meet your God.”

Then we set apart a special time. The hour is consecrated to secret communion. God has claimed His portion of the day, and we sacredly guard it by entering into our closet and shutting the door. Inward motions of the Holy Spirit frequently calls us away to loneliness—let us not be slow to follow the blessed bidding. The voice of the Beloved invites us to His banquet of wine. He allures us to the secret chambers where Divine Love is revealed. He bids us stand in the cleft of the rock, while the glory of Godhead passes by. On such happy seasons, and I hope they are not infrequent with us, the silver trumpets of Jubilee ring through our souls the notes, “Prepare to meet your God,” and then our motto is, “Up, and away, to the beds of spices, to the garden of pomegranates, where the Beloved will reveal Himself and give us an audience with the King.”

Once again, these words, “Prepare to meet your God,” have no gloomy significance to some of my dear Brothers and Sisters here present, even though we attach to them the sense of the Believer’s meeting God in a disembodied state. Christians, especially when they grow aged, must often hear the angel whisper, “Prepare to meet your God.” From the inevitable process of decay which takes place in the body—from the failure of eyesight, the tottering of the limbs, and the gray hairs—there must come subdued and tender voices, all saying, “Prepare to meet your God.”

The tent is being taken down, the cord is loosed, the tent pin no longer holds to the earth. Soon must the canvas be rolled up and put away. But you have a House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! Look up, then, and prepare to dwell there. Prepare your spirit not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon with your House which is from Heaven. My aged Brothers and Sisters, I can imagine how it is with you. The dear friends who have been the companions of your childhood and your manhood depart before you, and as they wing their happy flight to the land of the living, they look back and say, “Prepare to follow us.”

Nor are you at all grieved at such an invitation! Rather do you sometimes feel impatient for the gladsome time when you may join that cloud of doves which flock to those everlasting windows and find their resting places with the Well-Beloved. Friends gathering in the upper sanctuary beckon to you whose years are threescore and ten, and you feel the attractions of their blessed society on happy Sundays when the atmosphere of your souls is clear, and the Sun of Righteousness shines forth with power! You dwell in the land, Beulah, and behold so vividly the New Jerusalem and its royal Lord, that, as though an angel spoke, you hear the sound, “Prepare to meet your God.”

Often when the hymn is swelling up to Heaven, you feel as if you could mount upon it and pass through the gate of pearl. At the holy Supper Table, how loud is the call to come up higher into the excellent glory! Young as I am, and earthbound—to me, even to me—the Communion Table has made me unloose my cable, spread my sails, and long for that last voyage which shall make this world a foreign shore, and the glory land the harbor of our spirits. Surely, my aged Brethren, it must be far more so with you who have so many friends across the water, so many of your best beloved on the other side of Jordan! Your strength of experience and your weakness of body must both tend to give frequency to the message, “Prepare to meet your God.” To you the tidings are happy. You are exiles and you long for Home, you are children at school and you pine for your Father’s House.

But now I must pass on to notice that those words have not always that sweet ring of the silver bells about them. They are words of caution to the vast majority of men. “Prepare to meet your God.” Alas, How many of you to whom I now speak are unprepared! It pains me to think of it. As I sat last night about eight o’clock, revolving in my mind a subject for this hour’s discourse, there came a knock at my door, and I was earnestly entreated by a father to hasten to the deathbed of his dear girl. I wanted much my time for preparation, but as the dear one was in such a case, and had long been a constant hearer of the Word in this Tabernacle, I felt it my duty to go whether I could prepare a sermon or not.

Glad I was to hear that sick one’s testimony. She told me with what, I fear was her dying breath, that she was not fully assured of her interest in Christ, but she left me no room to doubt when, between paroxysms and convulsions, she said, “I know I do love Jesus, and that is all I know.” Yes, and I thought it is all I want to know. If any one of us always knows that he loves the Savior, what more does he require of testimony as to his state? But my mind was sore oppressed then, as it is now, with the thought that so many of you are not prepared to die at all. I see my sermons in sick rooms, often, and I come to think of preaching sermons in a different light from what many do. I will try to preach sermons which will

suit your most solemn hours and most serious circumstances.

I would gladly deliver sermons which shall haunt your sickbeds, and accuse you unless you yield to their persuasions, and believe in Jesus. When you lie on the borders of the spirit world, you will count all religious trifling to be cruel mockery. So let me say it affectionately, but very earnestly, to you, “Prepare to meet your God,” for I am afraid many of you are quite unprepared. You have seen others die. They preach to you from their graves, and they say, “So to the dust must you also come, my Friend. Be you ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will call for you.”

You have had sicknesses in your own body. You are not now the strong man you once were. You have already passed through many perils. What are all these but voices from the God of Mercy saying, “Consider your ways”? You are not such a simpleton as to think that you shall never die—you know you will. Neither are you so insane as to think that when you die, your death will be that of a horse or a dog. You know there is a hereafter and a state of being in which men shall be judged according to the deeds that they have done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. May I therefore press upon your earnest recollection, and your intense consideration at this present moment, the exhortation of the text, “Prepare to meet your God!”

Once more, let me say that this sound, as I have now put it, has little melody in it. It will by-and-by be heard in ungodly ears as a peremptory summons—and then there shall be no music in it, but a horrid clang that shall drive away all hope—“Prepare to meet your God.” That summons will come to each one of you unconverted people, and when it comes it will admit of no postponement. Call in the wisest surgeon, or the most accomplished physician, and he cannot put off for an hour the execution of God’s death-warrant. “Prepare to meet your God,” will mean that at such a time, and such an hour, and at such a moment, the spirit must return to God who gave it.

There will be no evasion of that summons. There will be no possibility, then, of a Substitute dying in your place. “Prepare to meet your God” will come to you, my Hearer, beyond all doubt. Oh, how I wish that you were prepared for it! You must assuredly meet your God whom you have forgotten all these years—your Creator, whose rights you have ignored. Your Preserver, to Whom you have rendered no kind of recompense. Your King, whose name it may be you have blasphemed. You have denied His existence, but you will meet Him. You have lived in open revolt against His righteous Laws, but you will certainly meet Him. No exemption will be possible. Before His judgment seat you must stand.

Prepared or unprepared at the sound of the resurrection trumpet, you must appear at His bar. No words of mine, however terrible they may be, can by any possibility equal the horror which the judgment to come and the wrath to be measured out will cause to the unregenerate heart. We are sometimes accused, my Brethren, of using language too harsh, too ghastly, too alarming, with regard to the world to come. But we shall not soon change our note, for we solemnly believe that if we could speak thunderbolts, and our every look were a lightning flash—and if our eyes dropped blood instead of tears—no tones, words, gestures, or likenesses of dread could exaggerate the awful condition of a soul which has refused the Gospel and is delivered over to Justice.

“He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Remember His own words, “Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (Psa. 50:22).

Certain prophets of smooth things rise up among us, deluding the people with thoughts that the judgment to come will not be terrible, but will end in eternal sleep. Into their secret my soul comes not. I must speak the Master’s Truth and the Master’s Words. O you ungodly, your punishment will not end, for He has said it, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Your miseries shall have no cessation, for He who cannot lie, declares, “The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever.” From the lips of Jesus at the Day of Judgment you shall receive the sentence of everlasting blessedness or everlasting punishment, and no other.

May God grant that you may not dare to sin under the notion that your sin is a mere trifle, for both you and it will soon cease to be. Nature itself teaches you that your soul will exist forever. O make it not forever a ruin! Bring not upon yourself everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power! Thus have you rung the changes on the tones of these words, and I leave them with you.

II. Secondly, and very briefly. There are HEAVY TIDINGS in these words. Heavy tidings for the ungodly, for thus they run—“Prepare to meet your God.” I wish I could take hold of every unbeliever here, of every man and woman whose heart is not right with God, and personally speak to them, just as of old the Prophet spoke to Jeroboam’s wife, and said, “I have heavy tidings from the Lord for you.” So would I speak to them, “I have heavy tidings, unconverted Friends, from the Lord for you.” And the tidings are these, “You will before long have to meet your God. Listen to the words, “meet your God.”

You have by some means passed through this world without meeting Him. He is everywhere, but you have managed not to see Him. He has fed you, and in Him you have lived and moved, and had your being. But you have contrived so to stultify yourself that you have never yet perceived

Him. You will perceive Him soon. When the flesh shall fall off from your spirit, your disembodied soul will see without these eyes far more clearly than it now does—for you will begin to see the spiritual world which is now hidden from you—and chief and foremost you will meet your God.

Now you say in your heart “no God,” because the thought of God is objectionable to you. You could not sin as you do if you remembered that the all-seeing eye is in the chamber, no, is in your heart itself. Remember you will not be able soon to shake off the thought of God, for you will meet Him face to face. Not the thought of God only, but the actual Being of God will confront you in your dying hour. You will be compelled to meet Him. It will be a close meeting, not as though He looked upon you from afar, or you surveyed Him from a distance. But you will so meet Him that all the Glory of His majesty will operate upon you like the fire which devours the stubble—for our God is a consuming fire.

His holiness will become wrath against your sin, not wrath treasured up and removed far away, but wrath that shall come near to you to consume you. It will be an inevitable meeting, from which you will not be able to escape. From your fellow creature, whom you do not wish to see, you readily withdraw yourself, but you cannot escape from God. The rays of the morning’s sun could not carry you so fast as the Lord’s right hand can move. The uttermost parts of the sea cannot conceal you. The night shall be light about you. Neither the heights of Heaven, nor the depths of Hell can conceal you from Him.

You must meet face to face with your God. And it must be a personal meeting. God and you will meet as if alone. God alone and you alone. What if there are angels? What if there are ten thousand times ten thousands of your kindred sinners? To you, virtually, it shall be solitude itself. You must meet your God! You, YOU! O my dear Hearer, it is a sad thing that this should be heavy tidings to you, for if you were what you should be, it would be joy to you to think that you shall be near your God, and dwell in His embrace. But, unconverted as you are, no tidings can have more of horror in them than these—that you, do as you will, and steel your heart as you may—must by-and-by confront your God.

Think awhile upon Who it is that you have to meet! You must meet your God—your God! That is, offended Justice you must meet whose laws you have broken, whose penalties you have ridiculed. Justice righteously indignant with its sword drawn you must confront. You must meet your God. That is, you must be examined by Omniscience. He who has seen your heart, and read your thoughts, and jotted down your affections, and remembered your idle words—you must meet Him. And infinite discernment you must meet—those eyes that never yet were duped. The God who will see through the veils of hypocrisy and all the concealments of formality.

There will be no making yourself out to be better than you are before Him. You must meet Him who will read you as a man reads a book open before his eyes. You mast meet with unsullied holiness. You have not always found yourself happy on earth when you have been with holy men— you could not act out your natural impulses in their presence, they were a check upon you. But the infinitely holy God, what must it be to meet Him? It will be such an interview for a sinner to meet with the thrice holy God as for dross to meet with the refiner’s fire or stubble with the flame.

You will have, moreover, to meet with insulted Mercy, and perhaps this will be the most dreadful meeting of the whole—when your conscience will remind you that you were invited to repent, that you were urged to lay hold of Christ, that you were honestly bid to be saved—but you hardened your neck and would not be persuaded. O Sinner, by so much as God is patient with you now, by so much will He be angry with you then. They who slight the warnings of His Divine Grace shall feel the terrors of His wrath. To none shall it be so hard to meet God in justice as to those who would not meet Him in Grace—vengeance takes the place of slighted mercy. God grant you may never know what it is to meet insulted love, rejected mercy, and tenderness turned to wrath!

O Sinner, if you have to meet your God as you now are, you will find Him everlasting Truth, fulfilling every threatening Word of His Law and Gospel. Every black Word that is in this Book shall be fulfilled over your head, and every dreadful syllable be verified in your loins and in your heart. Remember too, that you will meet with Him who has Omnipotent power—against whom you can no more contend than the smoke against the wind, or the fuel against the furnace. You shall then know how God can punish, and you will find Him not a weak and trembling God, but an Omnipotent God, putting forth His power to destroy His adversaries who have dared to assail against His majesty.

Thus have I put a few thoughts together, in very feeble language, I confess, but they ought, of themselves, apart from mere words, to have power with you. I pray God the Holy Spirit that you, dear Hearer, may prepare to meet your God. You see who it is you have to meet, and what it will be to meet Him. May God make you to be prepared for what must occur.

III. The last point is this. Here is A WEIGHTY PRECEPT—prepare to meet God. How can a man be prepared to meet God? In the text there is an allusion to preparing for battle, but none of you would wish to contend with God in the  
hereafter. Who is he that thinks that with a thousand he can meet one that comes against him with a countless host of ten thousand times ten thousand? O Rebel, the warfare is hopeless, ground your arms. It were worse than madness to dream of contending with God. Submit, for resistance is vain.

Better far is it to prepare to meet God as sinners. We are today like prisoners who are waiting for our court date, and the news has come that the judge is ready, and we, the prisoners, are to prepare to meet him.

Sooner or later it must be the lot of us all to come before the Judge. Now, Brethren, what is the right way to prepare to meet a judge? If any of you can plead, “Not guilty,” your preparation is made. But there is not one man among us who dares think of that. We have sinned, great God, and we confess the sin. What preparation, then, can we make? Suppose we sit down and investigate our case. Can we plead extenuations? Can we urge excuses or mitigations, or hope to escape by promises of future improvement?

Let us give up the attempt, my Brethren. We have gone astray willfully and wickedly—and we shall do it again—it is of no use for us to set up any kind of defense that is grounded upon ourselves. How, then, can we be prepared to meet our God? Hearken. There is an Advocate, and it is written, “If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.” Let us send for Him. We poor prisoners, lying waiting in the cells, send for Jesus, the Son of God, to be our Intercessor and Advocate. Will He undertake our cause? O that He would plead the cause of our souls, and be our Daysman to speak with God on our behalf!

Yes! He will accept the office, and be our Advocate, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Then let us apply to Him, and say, “Jesus, undertake our case.” Will you not do this? Oh, I pray God you may! Sitting in these pews, you may engage the services of the great Advocate. Cry in your hearts, “Son of David, undertake for me, undertake my case.” Well, now, supposing we have put it all into His hands, and He who is called Wonderful is received as our Counselor to plead for us. What is next to be done?

First He bids us prepare to meet our God by at once taking up our true position as sinners. Let us plead guilty. Let us make a full and penitent confession. We cannot be saved by Christ unless we will do as He bids us. Faith is only real as it is obedient. One of the first Gospel exhortations which Jesus gives us is this, that we confess our sins. O that we may honestly plead guilty, for our iniquity stares us in the face, and we ought heartily to make acknowledgment of it—for it is an evil and a bitter thing—and has worked us woeful damage. O great Counselor, if You bid us plead guilty, we do so with many tears and with broken hearts. We do confess that all our hope must lie in Divine mercy, for we have no merit. Lost and undone, we cry, “Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!”

But what next? Why then, the great Counselor will enter a plea for us, which will bar all further action against us. Though we have confessed that we are guilty, He knows how at the great Judgment Seat to plead a legal argument for the removal of all punishment. And what does He plead? Here is His argument, “My Father,” says He, “I stood of old in the place of these who have committed their case to My hands, and who plead guilty at Your Judgment Seat. I suffered for their sins. I bore, that they might never bear, Your righteous ire. I satisfied Your Law on their behalf. I claim, My Father, that they go free.”

The infinite Majesty admits the plea. O Brothers and Sisters, if your case is in the hands of Christ, and you confess your guilt, do you not see how He sets you free so that you may be prepared to meet your God? Because you can plead the blood of Jesus, the Atonement of the great Substitute for sinners, and covered with that Substitution, you can stand accepted in the Beloved! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

But you have not heard the Counselor through yet, for as He goes on to speak before the infinite Majesty, He pleads, “My Father, I obeyed the Law on their behalf. I kept it in its very jots and tittles. I made it honorable, and now the righteousness which I achieved, I have made over unto them, for all that I am is theirs. My righteousness is their righteousness, and they shall stand accepted in the Beloved.” The great Judge of all admits the fact, and He receives into His bosom and into His Glory poor souls who had sinned and pleaded guilty, but who now have imputed to them the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and are justified by faith which is in Him. All their iniquities are blotted out.

O don’t you see, dear Friends, what it is to be prepared to meet God! For now we have a good case, now we are not afraid of the last court session. Our case is in the hands of a blessed Advocate whose pleading must prevail. All that you and I have now to do is to prove by our actions that we really have believed in Christ. Let us go on to justify our faith if, indeed, our faith has justified us. Let us prove the sincerity of our confidence in Christ by the holiness of our lives, by the devotedness of those lives to His honor and glory. Let us wake up all our powers and passions that we may become His servants to the highest extent and manhood’s energy—living, laboring, working for Christ—because He has undertaken our case, and will save us at the last.

Thus have I set before you what it is to be prepared to meet God, in the hope that many here will make ready to meet Him. And now let me remind you that the subject on which I have spoken this morning may have a much nearer interest to some of you than you imagine. It has a very near interest to every one of us. It is but a matter of time, and all of us must appear at the Divine tribunal—but there are some to whom it may have a peculiarly close bearing. As I just told you, I did not select this subject, I had no idea of preaching from it—the subject selected me. I was dragged into this present line of thought. I am a pressed man in this service.

That sick young woman’s necessities forced me to this subject. Why this special arrangement? I believe the reason is because there are some here this morning who are now receiving the last warning they will ever have. I am solemnly persuaded that I have among my hearers and readers some to whom this feeble word of mine is no other than an arrow from

the bow of the Almighty God. To others it is a final message of mercy, and if this does not strike them, wound them, and drive them to Christ, nothing ever will.

From this day forth they shall feel no more stirrings of conscience, or strivings of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps before another Sunday’s bell shall ring, some of you now listening to my voice will be in the land of spirits and have passed the solemn test—weighed in the balances and found wanting. If it is so, and it were hard for any man here to prophesy that it shall not be so, for where several thousands are met together, the very chances of mortality, as men call them, go to make us fear it. The fact of this subject being thrust upon me makes me feel as though a Prophetic impulse were in it. Then, if it is so, you and I, whoever you may be, fated for death this week, stand in a peculiar relationship to each other.

I may be gazing straight into those eyes which shall never look upon me again till we meet at the Judgment Bar, and if I am not faithful to your soul, you may rise up amidst that throng and say, “I strayed into that Tabernacle, and I listened to you, but you played with your theme, you were not earnest, and so I was lost.” So then I will be earnest! I evoke you by the living God, escape from the wrath to come! As the Lord lives, there is but a step between you and death! Flee for your life! Look not behind you! Turn your whole soul to Jesus! A crucified Savior waits for a lost sinner, willing to receive him, willing to receive him now!

Now you can not look me in the face in the next world and say I did not speak to you earnestly. O that the glance which we exchange at this moment may be succeeded in that tremendous day by a glance of recognition in which there shall be the soft emotions of gratitude and affection, as you and I shall say to each other there, “Blessed be God that we met on that hallowed Sunday, for now we shall meet forever before the throne of Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forever more, and has the keys of Hell and of death.” God bless you, every one of you, richly, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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REASONS FOR SEEKING GOD  
NO. 3034

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 1907.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is His name.”  
Amos 5:8.**

IDOLATRY has been, in every age, the besetting sin of mankind. In some form or another, the unregenerate are all given to it and even in God’s people there remains in their old nature, a tendency towards it.

In its grosser manifestation, idolatry is the desire of man to see God with his eyes, to have outward representation of Him who cannot be represented, who is too great, too spiritual to ever be described by human language, much less to be set forth by images of wood and stone, however elaborately carved and cunningly overlaid with gold! There is a great God who fills all space and yet is greater than space—whose existence is without beginning and without end, who is everywhere present and universally self-existent! But man is so unspiritual that he will not worship this Invisible One in spirit and in truth, but craves after outward similitudes, symbols and signs. If Aaron makes a calf, Israel forgets the Divine Jehovah’s Glory and says of the image of an ox that eats grass, “These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

We are apt to imagine that it is a very strange freak of human depravity when men are led to worship visible objects and signs, but it is not at all unusual or singular! It is the general sin of all mankind. I suppose no man has been entirely free from it and every Believer has to contend against it in its subtler forms, for idolatry takes insinuating shapes, less gross in appearance than the worship of Dagon or Ashtaroth, but quite as sinful.

Take, for instance, the common religious idolatry of our own country which consists, in part, of reverence to holy places, as if under the Christian dispensation, which is not one of type, but of fact, holiness could dwell in stone, lime, wood, slate, iron and brass when architecturally arranged! English idolatry further reveals itself in reverence to an order of men, not because of their superior character, but because of certain mystic rites performed upon them, by virtue of which they are supposed to become the representatives of Heaven and the reservoirs of Divine Grace. How trustful are our English idolaters in these men when they behold them appareled in vestments which the tailor has cut into fashions remarkably helpful to devotion! Without these priests and their sumptuous adorning and grotesque disfigurements, our modern idolaters cannot publicly worship—but in these they have as much as the Ephesians had in their great goddess Diana!

They can only worship their god by objects which appeal to the senses. An outward altar, an outward priest, an outward ritual, outward rites— all these are nothing but another form of the old idolatry of Babel and of Bethel! Man still turns from the unseen God. The unseen Priest who has passed within the veil, man still ignores. The spiritual feast upon the body and blood of Jesus Christ which is the joy of the saints, they know not! But the outward emblems are adored by some and held in great reverence by others. Bread and wine, which are but created and common things, even when placed on the table to assist us in Communion, are made into deities by the blind idolaters of this age! Could Egypt or Assyria do worse? Bread used at the ordinance is but bread and nothing other than ordinary bread. Its emblematic use imparts to it no measure or degree of sanctity, much less of Divinity! It is idolatry—flat, groveling idolatry—and nothing less, which on all sides is spreading its mantle of darkness over this land under the pretense of profoundly reverent piety!

Where Ritualism does not reign, how easy it is for men to be idolaters of themselves! What is self-reliance, understood as too many understand it, but idolatry of self? It is the opposite of dependence upon the living God, the great Source of power and wisdom. Reliance upon my own wisdom, upon my own resolution, upon my own strength of mind—these are idolatries in a subtle and attractive shape. What is much of our overweening affection to our children and to our relatives? What is our unsubmissive repining but idolatry? How is it that we rebel against God if our friends are suddenly taken from us? O man, why is it that your God has so little of your love and the creature so much? There is a lawful affection—up to that point you should go. There is an unlawful affection when, by any means, the creature comes before the Creator—to this you may not descend! Unlawful love, love which idolizes its object, is to be avoided with all our might!

Then, again, perhaps a less excusable form of idolatry, though no excuse is to be offered for any, is that in which men idolize their estates and their confidence in their accumulations—living only to acquire wealth and position—struggling in the race—not to win the crown which is immortal—but that poor wreath with which men crown the wealthy merchant, the diligent student, the eloquent barrister, the valiant men of arms! This is idolatry, again, for it is setting up an earthly object in the place of the Creator. To God is due all my love, my trust, my fear. He made me and, therefore, I am bound to serve Him—and whenever I lay down at the feet of any person or object, dominion over my powers, apart from God, I am at once guilty of idolatry!

I cannot stay to tell you all the various form which this idolatry assumes, but may God give us Grace to strive against them. And you who are still held captive by these idolatries, may He deliver! May He save you from leaning upon an arm of flesh, from trusting in what may be seen and handled, and bring you to rely upon the Invisible God to whom alone belongs power and strength, and who has a right to our confidence and our service!

The text is addressed to those who have been guilty, either in word, or thought, or deed, of idolatry against God. It gives arguments to persuade them to turn away from everything else and to seek the true God. We shall read the text, first, in its natural sense and then, diving into its meaning a little more deeply, we shall find spiritual reasons in it for seeking Jehovah, and Jehovah alone.

I. First, then, IN THE NATURAL SENSE OF THE TEXT, we find a Truth of God which is plain enough, but which we need to constantly be reminded of, namely, that Jehovah is really God. If Jehovah were not really the Creator of the world, if He did not in very deed make “the seven stars and Orion,” if He did not actually work in the operations of Providence, changing the night into day, and day again into night, we might be excused for not rendering Him service since homage might be safely withheld from an imaginary deity.

But, as God is real and exists as truly as we do, as our existence is dependent upon His Sovereign will and He is All-in-All, it is due to Him that we should “seek His face.” And simple as that utterance is, I have need to push it home to you. I am afraid, dear Friends, that many of you think of religion in its bearing towards God as being a very proper, but at the same time, imaginative, matter. You do not practically grasp the thought that God Is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. You do not lay hold upon the fact that as surely as there are fellow creatures round about you, there is a God close to you in whom you live, and move, and have your being. The worldly man puts his foot down on the earth and he says, “This is the main chance. I believe in this.” He takes up certain fragments of that earth, yellow and glittering, and he says, “Ah, I believe in this. Here is something solid and I feel it.” Just so, the created earth is real to him and God, who created all things, is to him but a shadowy being! He may not rudely deny His existence, but practically, he reduces his thought of God to a mere fancy and says in his heart, “No God.” My attentive Hearer, I trust that you are not so unwise! You know that God Is, that He Is even if we are not, that He fills all things and that He dwells everywhere—and since He is the Creator, the First and Chief of all things, I trust you are anxious to seek Him and to yield your obedience to Him!

Note from the text that God is not only the true God, but He is the glorious God. I cannot understand how the heathen, supposing their gods had been gods, could worship such little, mean, base and contemptible beings! Think of Jove, for instance, the great god of Rome and Greece— what a disgusting animal he was! What a monster of sensuality, selfishness and folly! I should feel it hard, as a creature, to worship such a god as that, if he could be a god. But when I think of Him who made “the seven stars and Orion,” who stretched out the heavens like a curtain and made the sky as a molten mirror—who is magnificent in the acts of Creation, marvelous in the wonders of Grace and unsearchable in all the attributes of His Nature, my soul feels it to be her honor and delight to adore Him! It is an elevation to the soul to stoop to the dust before such a God! The more we reverence Him and the less we become in our own sight, the more sublime are our emotions. Well did even a heathen say, “To serve God is to reign.” To serve such a God as ours is to be made kings and priests! Oh, were not our hearts perverted and depraved, it would be our greatest happiness, our highest rapture to sound forth the praises of a God so glorious! And our hearts would be always enquiring of Him, “Lord, what will You have me do? Your will is wiser and better than my own will. I ask no greater liberty than to be bound with Your bands of love! I ask no greater ease than to bear Your blessed yoke.”

Since, then, the Lord is real and, moreover, so glorious as to be infinitely worthy of worship, we should seek Him and live.  
Again, Jehovah the true God, is most powerful for He “makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: Jehovah is His name.” Think reverently of Him, for He is not like the gods of the heathen, of whom the Psalmist said in satire, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.” Contempt and ridicule are poured upon these wooden gods by the Prophet Isaiah when he tells of the workman who takes one end of a log and makes a god of it—and with the other part kindles a fire and warms his hands and cooks his food. Such a god as this it is indeed a degradation for the human mind to worship! But the true God, who has displayed His power in the glittering firmament and in the foaming sea, who is revealed with wonder to the eyes of the astronomer in the innumerable worlds revolving in boundless space—such a God we must reverence. In the hour of storm and tempest, when the Lord is abroad, riding in His chariot of thundercloud upon wings of the wind, casting forth His hailstones and coals of fire, making the earth shake at the sound of His voice and breaking the cedars of Lebanon with the flash of His spear, we feel we must adore Him! And as we bow before Him, reason endorses the worship which Grace suggests. Is not His power a cogent argument for seeking Him? Will not you who have hitherto lived without Him, now adore Him? A real God, so glorious and so powerful, should surely command your reverent adoration!  
Further, He is a God who works great marvels, achieving wonders every moment which would astonish us if we were not so used to beholding them! They tell the story—‘tis but a legend of the days of Solomon the Wise, that the king astonished all beholders by taking a seed and producing from it in a few moments, a full-grown plant. They cried, “How wonderful! How astonishing!” But the wise man said, “This is only what the Lord does every day. This is what He is performing everywhere in His own time, and you see it, and yet you never say, ‘How wonderful!’” When we have watched those who practice sleight-of-hand perform their feats, we have marveled greatly, but what are a few poor elicit tricks when compared with the ordinary, but yet matchless processes of Nature? Our fields and hedgerows teem with marvels never equaled by all the wisdom and skill of man! Walk into the grass field and you tread on miracles. Listen to the birds as they sing in the trees and you hear marvelous speech. If one little mechanical bird, with a few clockwork movements, were warbling out something like music in an exhibition, everybody would gather round it and some would even pay to hear it sing—and yet thousands of birds sing infinitely more sweetly than anything man can make—and men had rather kill them than admire them! Men fail to see the miracle which God is working in each living thing.  
Turn your eyes above you to the starry firmament and watch the Pleiades and Arcturus with his sons, for though we know but little of them, they have won from many an observer an awestruck acknowledgment of the greatness of God, insomuch that it has been said that—  
*“An undevout astronomer is mad.”*  
The order, the regularity, the manifest calculation and design which appear in every one of the constellations, in every single planet, in every fixed star and in every part of the great multitude of worlds which God has created are such decisive evidences that if men do not see something of God in them, they must be weak in their minds or wicked in their hearts! Surely, what is seen of God in this way has tended to make us worship Him. Many of you may know but little of astronomy, but still, you see every day that God is working everywhere around us and that Heaven and earth, and land and sea are teeming with the products of His marvelous skill. The revolutions of day and night and the formation and fall of rain are indisputable proofs of the Presence of eternal power and Godhead! Let us, therefore, seek the Lord.  
How is it that a man can go up and down in God’s world and yet forget the God who made the whole? I do not suppose that a man could have walked through the Exhibition at Paris without thinking of the emperor whose influence gathered all those treasures together and who attracted the kings and princes of the earth to visit it. And yet men will go through this world, compared with which the Paris “Exposition” was a box of children’s toys, and will not recognize God therein! Oh, strange blindness! Mad infatuation that with God everywhere present and such a God—the God whom to know is life eternal, whom to delight in is present happiness and future bliss—man is willingly ignorant, blind to His own best interests, senseless to the sweetest and the most ennobling emotions and an enemy to his best Friend!  
The surface of the text supplies us with motives for seeking GOD. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might supply us with Grace that we might feel the motives and be obedient to them!  
II. We will now regard the text with a more spiritual eye.  
We speak to those who are sensible of their departure from the living God and are anxious to be reconciled to Him by the forgiveness of their sins for Jesus’ sake. But our text also has a word for the stubborn and unawakened. In many parts of Scripture the Lord has been pleased to invite the penitent to come to Him, but in this passage, in order that the invitation my miss none, it is made exceedingly wide in its character. Our text will appear to be very wonderful if we notice the context in which it stands—“You who turn judgment to worm word, and leave off righteousness in the earth, seek Him.” There is no mention of those who thirst for Him, who are humbled and confess their faults! This exhortation is given to those who have no good points about them, but many of the most pernicious traits of character! Those who turn judgment into wormwood and leave off righteousness in the earth—even they are bid to seek God! Marvelous mercy! Who after this shall dare despair? If my hearer has, up to this day, lived a stranger to God, the text does not exclude him from seeking God, but, as with an angel’s voice, it whispers, “Seek Him.” If sin has perverted your judgments, yet seek the great Creator and Preserver! Seek Him, for you shall find Him! You are not bid to seek His face in vain—the command to seek Him implies the certainty of His being found of you!  
The reasons given for seeking the Lord are, spiritually, these. The Lord “makes the seven stars.” That is to say, the Pleiades. And He also “makes Orion.” Now, the Pleiades were regarded as being the constellation of the spring, harbinger of the coming summer. We read of “the sweet influences of Pleiades.” They are most conspicuous at the vernal period of the year. On the other hand, the Oriental herdsman, such as Amos was, when he saw Orion flaming aloft, knew the wintry sign right well. Both the Pleiades and Orion are ordained of the Lord—He makes our joys and our troubles. See, then, the reason why we should seek God, because if Orion should just now be in the ascendant and we should be visited with a winter of despondency, chilled by howling winds of fear and sharp frosts of dismay—if we seek God, He can withdraw Orion and place us under the gentle sway of the Pleiades of promise, so that a springtime of hope and comfort shall cheer our souls, to be succeeded by a summer of rare delights and fruitful joys! Do you hear this, poor troubled one? [See

Sermon No. 818, Volume 14—THE PLEIADES AND ORION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Whatever your sorrow may be, the God who made Heaven and earth can suddenly change it into the brighter joy! By the dispensations of His Providence, He can do it! Your circumstances, which are now so desperate, can be changed by a touch of His hand within an hour. To whom can you better apply for succor? And if your heart is sick and sad with a sense of sin, and you are pining with remorse, His Grace can find a balm and cordial for your wounded conscience which shall give you peace at once! Before the clock ticks again, God can grant you perfect salvation, blot out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Seek you the pardoning God! Seek Him, I say, for to whom else could you go? Where else could you look for strength but to the Strong? Where else for mercy but to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The Lord, moreover, turns grief into joy . In the text it is added, “He turns the shadow of death into the morning.” The long dark night of sorrow, blacker than darkness, itself, because it presages everlasting wrath. The night created by the grim shadow of death—cold, chill, terrible—may have fallen upon your soul, but the living God can at once turn this darkness into the brightness of the morning! When the sun arises with healing beneath his wings, the whole earth is made to smile, and even thus can the Lord at once make your whole nature glad with the light of His Countenance. Though you are ready to lie down in despair. Though you suppose that Hell yawns for you and will soon receive your guilty soul—He can turn this shadow of death into the morning of peace and joy! To whom, then, should you go but to this God? He has already given His dear Son to be the way of life for us sinners. Have you ever heard of another who gave His son to die for His enemies? Gad not about after other helpers, but come at once to your Heavenly Father’s arms, and say with the prodigal, “I will arise and go to my Father.” If you are willing to come to God, the way is open, for Jesus died. You must not come arrayed in the supposed fitness of your own good works or good feelings, but you must come resting on the finished work of the appointed Savior. If you look to Him, you shall be lightened. If you come with His name upon your lips, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. Should not this be a reason for coming— that He can turn your night into day, your winter into summer?

But the text bears another aspect, namely, that God can also turn your present joy into grief and, therefore, you should seek Him. He makes the seven stars give way to Orion. “‘He makes day dark with night.” At this moment it may be that you are at ease—but how long will you be so? Though you have no God, you are content with what you possess in this world, satisfied with your daily earnings, or charmed with your yearly income. You are with your wife, your children, your estate. But remember how soon your joys may be taken from you! Have you not heard how often God’s Providence has stripped the house, stripped the family, stripped the man’s very soul of every comfort? Remember you not the story of Job who, in one day descended from riches to poverty? Know you not that although the wicked spread themselves abroad like a green bay tree, they shall suddenly wither? And though they are exceedingly proud and strong, they shall come to their appointed end like the ox fattened for the slaughter?

All our joys on earth are dependent on the Sovereign will of Heaven. Some of you know this by bitter experience, for you have seen the delight of your eyes taken away in a stroke and the comfort of your heart carried to the grave. Now, to whom should you fly for succor, but to Him upon whom all your present comfort depends and who can so soon take it all away? How prudent to be at peace with Him! How wise, above all wisdom, to be reconciled to the mighty God! But, alas for those who have often been warned but who will not heed the warning! They have hardened their necks and will be suddenly destroyed. Their day will blacken into everlasting night! The proud sinner will die as others do— his eyes will pale and his brow grow cold, for he must face inexorable Death. And then, when he comes into the land to which the wicked are banished, he will enter into the outer darkness, darkness which shall be felt, in the land of confusion, where there is no beginning of hope, or end of misery—who would then desire to stand in his soul’s place? Escape, then, before the darkness gathers! Seek Him, O man, who makes the day dark with night!—

*“You sinners, seek His Grace,  
Whose wrath we cannot bear.  
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,  
And find salvation there.”*

The last clause of the text suggests a fourth reason for seeking the Lord, namely, God may make that which is a blessing to some a curse to others. Did you observe it? Seek Him “that calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth.” This may allude to the deluge, when the waters of the ocean covered the very tops of the mountains. But it may be equally well explained by reference to the clouds which yield refreshing rain. The sun draws up the waters of the sea, leaving the salt behind and when these exaltations have floated their appointed time in the air, they descend upon the thirsty earth to make glad the soil. Now, since the clause bears two readings, it were well to note how the actions of God oftentimes bear two renderings. There is, for instance, the gift of His dear Son, an unexampled act of love—and yet to some of you it will prove “a savor of death unto death.” To the unbeliever, it will prove a terrible thing that Jesus ever came into the world! He is a precious Cornerstone to those who build upon Him, but those who stumble upon Him shall be broken—and if this Stone shall fall upon any man, it shall grind him to powder! That which is Heaven’s greatest joy is Hell’s greatest horror. When Christ shall come, the sight of Him shall draw forth the acclamations of His people, but it will also cause the utmost anguish to His enemies. They shall weep and wail because of Him. They shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the Throne of God and from the wrath of the Lamb! Since you who so constantly hear the Gospel must have it made to you either a savor of death unto death or of life unto life, I pray that the Eternal Spirit may show you the wisdom of seeking God by Jesus Christ—and of seeking Him now!

It will be a dreadful thing, at the Last Great Day, to find the gentle Lamb become a Lion to you, to tear you in pieces when there shall be none to deliver! Why should that which is the meat of humble souls, become your poison? Why should the blood of that Savior in Whom so many have washed their robes, and made them white, be your condemnation? Remember that the blood of Jesus will be either upon you to cleanse you or upon you to condemn you! That dreadful cry of the Jews in the streets of Jerusalem, “His blood be on us, and on our children”—what a curse it brought upon their race in the massacres within the city walls and in the bitter exile and suffering which they have so long endured! Take care that the same curse does not bring upon you an eternal exile from God! Seek His face, I beseech you! You may not long have the opportunity to seek it. The day of His mercy may close as closes this day with the setting sun. You may not survive to enjoy another day of Gospel invitation! May God the blessed Spirit, who alone can do it, make you seekers—and then make you finders—and His shall be the praise!

Thus much to the unconverted. The people of God can think over the text in relation to themselves. It is rich in priceless instruction to them, but time forbids me to direct their meditations. Farewell.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **Psalm 139.**

In this Psalm David praises God by specially dwelling upon the one attribute of Omniscience. If we really wish to praise God, we must think of Him as He is—and it is the best praise that we can render to God to describe Him as He is. And any one of His many attributes is so full of His Glory that if we give due honor to it, we shall have much to say upon it.

Verse 1. O LORD, You have searched me, and known me. It is true that God knows everything, but that is not what David says here. He makes a personal application of the universal Truth of God—“O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.” He does not talk about God’s knowledge of other men, but he speaks to God concerning himself—“O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.” “You have searched me as if You were looking for contraband goods. You have ransacked me, You have gone down into my very heart and have spread out every secret part of my being—‘You have searched me, and known me.’”—

*“Lord, You have searched and seen me through. Your eyes command with piercing view  
My rising and my resting hours,  
My heart and flesh, with all their powers.”*

2. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off. “What I do, and what I do not do—my sitting down for rest, and my rising up for action—You know me altogether, my most trivial deeds and my most important movements. My thoughts are so well known to You that even before I think them, You know what they will be. You need not come near to me in order to know me, so strong are Your eyes that if You only look at me from a vast distance, as a man looks at a star in the midnight air, ‘You understand my thoughts afar off.’ What I think and why I think it, whether it is sorrowful or hopeful, You understand my thoughts. Sometimes I cannot understand it myself, but You always understand it.”

3. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. “You have put a ring around me both in my staying and my going. I go to sleep, but You do not sleep. I cannot think of You while I slumber, but You think of me and You ‘are acquainted with all my ways.’”—

*“Great God, Your penetrating eyes  
Pervade my inmost powers.  
With awe profound my wondering soul  
Falls prostrate and adores.  
To be encompassed around with God,  
The Holy and the Just.  
Armed with Omnipotence to save,  
Or crush me into dust!  
Oh, how tremendous is the thought!  
Deep may it be impressed!  
And may the Spirit firmly engrave,  
This Truth within my breast!”*

4. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether. “You not only know what it is, but You know all about it— even the word which I have not yet spoken, the word that is on my tongue, as well as the word that is not on my tongue—those seeds of speech that have as yet not grown into words, You know them altogether.”

5. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. “Like men lying in ambush, ‘You have beset me behind and before.’ All that I have ever done and all that I shall ever do, You know it all. I am like one under arrest, upon whom the officer lays his hand so that he may have no opportunity of escaping. I am in Your grip. You have taken such a firm hold upon me that I cannot get away from You. In another sense, I am like a child enfolded in His mother’s arms, for You have ‘laid Your hand upon me.’”

6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain unto it. “I cannot climb up to Your glorious Throne—the very lowest step of it is far higher than my feet can reach! ‘I cannot attain unto it.’”

7. Where shall I go from Your spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? “I do not want to do so, but it would be quite impossible for me to flee from Your Presence even if I wished to do so. Neither by steady marching, nor by rapid flight can I get away from You.”

8. If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there. The Hebrew is, “You there,” as if there was nothing else there but God.  
8. If I make my bed in Hell, behold You are there. This seemed even more amazing to the Psalmist than that God was in Heaven, so He put in a, “behold”—“Behold, You.”  
9. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. “If I fly on the wings of light, which travels with inconceivable rapidity.”  
10. Even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. “I cannot go there except by Your leading and I shall not be there except by Your uplifting. There is no way by which I can keep away from God even if I try to do so. If, instead of living in the light, I seek to hide myself in the darkness, what then?”

11. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. “The very night shall change its nature and turn from darkness into light!”

12. Yes, the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You. See, my dear Brothers and Sisters, how we dwell continually under the inspection of God? You have seen bees in a glass hive and watched all their movements, or you have put an insect under a powerful microscope and examined every part of it. Even so does the Omniscient God watch and examine you! Nothing is done by you that He does not observe. The poet speaks of the fierce light that beats about the throne of man, but you dwell in that far fiercer light which beats about the Throne of God!

13. For You have possessed my reins. “Those secret organs of my body which I cannot see, and whose working I can only imperfectly comprehend.”

13. You have covered me in my mother’s womb. “Even before I came on the stage of action, You were exercising wondrous care over me.”  
14. I will praise You. That is a good resolution for each one of us, as well as the Psalmist, to make! As God sees me, let me praise Him—it will be pleasing to Him to hear me praising Him. “I will praise You.”  
14. For I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Nobody can rightly study the anatomy of the human body and see the beautiful arrangement of the various veins, nerves, sinews, muscles and bones without saying with the Psalmist, “I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”  
14. Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well. To study God’s marvelous works, you need not go abroad, for they can be plainly seen in your own body. This earthly house of your tabernacle, in which you dwell so long as you are in this world, is a masterpiece of Divine wisdom and skill!  
15. My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth. God made us in His secret workshop by a marvelous method of Divine Power.  
16. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being not perfect; and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. God’s wonderful foreknowledge enabled Him to know us even before we knew ourselves, or anyone else knew us! And in the very making of us, the creation of our body and mind and spirit, God was beforehand with us.  
17. How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! “I love to remember that You, my God, are thinking of me. I am not distressed or alarmed by that recollection. I do not say, ‘How terrible are Your thoughts unto me, O God!’ But, ‘How precious’— how consoling, how full of promises of blessing to me—‘are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!’”  
18. If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You. “You lull me to sleep and You awake me in the morning. And when I open my eyes, You are still there.” Happy Believer, who is always with God! Why should not You and I, dear Friends, always be consciously in the Presence of God? We are never right unless we are in that condition—and if we ever begin to forget God, we are in a wrong state of heart. If we can live from day to day without realizing that God is near us, we are falling into a sad and dangerous condition!  
19. Surely You will slay the wicked, O God. It cannot be that God has seen all their wicked acts and read their evil thoughts, and yet will spare them! When men offend in the very presence of the judge, it is easy work for him to try them.  
19. Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men. “You men of blood. You men stained with the blood of your fellows. Get away from me, for I do not want to be harboring criminals. God sees my company as well as myself, so depart from me!  
20. For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. David could not bear even the thought that men should insult such a God—a lack of reverence to the All-Seeing One was altogether unbearable to him, so he bade those who were guilty of such wickedness to take themselves away from him.  
21, 22. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies. We are to love our own enemies, but we are not to love God’s enemies, nor willingly to mix with them! How can Christians associate with the lewd and irreverent without becoming partakers of their evil deeds? Let us take note of what David says and realize that we cannot be the friends of God if we are the friends of God’s enemies. Now the Psalmist comes back to his key-note. He began the Psalm with the declaration, “O Lord, You have searched me.” Now he prays.  
23. Search me, O God, and know my heart. “You have searched me, O God, but I pray You to do it again, and to keep on doing it—never take Your great searchlight away from me.”  
23. Try me, and know my thoughts. “I cannot hide them from You, and would not if I could.”  
24. And see if there is any wicked way in me. “Lord, look for the dross, to consume it! Look for the spots, to wash them away.”  
24. And lead me in the way everlasting. “Amen.” Our hearts say, “Amen—so let it be.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #417 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Amo 6.1

SCOURGE FOR SLUMBERING SOULS  
NO. 417

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 3, 1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.”  
Amos 6:1.**

IN itself considered it is no ill thing to be at ease. No, it is a great blessing to be at ease in Zion in the healthy sense and meaning of that word. Is it not one of the invitations of Christ—“Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest?” Is not this one of the promises made to the believer—“His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth”? (Psa. 25:13). Is not this the privilege which is accorded to the Church of God, in the words of Isaiah—“Your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation”? (Isa. 33:20). And still more in the prophecy of Jeremiah 46:27—“Jacob shall return and be in rest and at ease and none shall make him afraid!”

To have perfect quietness in Christ is indeed a privilege which only belongs to those who have entered into that which is within the veil! Oh to enter into our rest! For “they that have believed do enter into rest.” They have found in the finished work of Christ enough for their soul’s repose. They see in the faithfulness and power of God enough support for the future whatever troubles it may bring. They see in the precious blood of Christ sufficient atonement for the past whatever its sins may have been. And in communion and fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, abundant joy for the present whatever may be its trials, its difficulties its straits, or its fears.

It is a blessed thing then, understanding the word “ease” in its good sense, to be at ease in Zion. So good a thing that it is denied to the wicked, for “the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” And of the wicked it may be said, “And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest. But the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart and failing of eyes and sorrow of mind” (Deut. 28:65). Oh beloved Brothers and Sisters, it is a thing worth praying for and worth striving after, that our spirit may have perfect rest.

The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is King of Salem and Prince of Peace, “and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever” (Isa. 32:17). Peace, peace to you, you troubled one. In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace.

But it seems there is also another sense in which the word “ease” may be used, for the text says, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” This is a carnal ease, a fleshly security. It is not the confidence of a man who is pardoned but the ease of a hardened wretch who has learned to despise the gallows. It is not the assurance of one who is on the rock, but the ease of a senseless drunkard whose house is tottering from its sandy foundations and yet he riots at full speed. It is not the calm of a soul at peace with God but the ease of a madman, who, because he has hidden his sin from his own eyes, thinks he has concealed it from God.

It is the ease and peace of one who has grown callous, hardened, brutalized, stupid, sullen and careless. One who has begun a sleep which God grant may soon be broken or else it will surely bring him where he shall make his bed in Hell.

As I know there are many in this congregation who are at ease in Zion—I shall not draw the bow at a venture this morning, but in the name of God shall aim straight at the heart. I shall first of all—laboring all the morning long as God’s servant to wake up those that are at ease in Zion— try to wake them by calling out their names—for that is said to be an admirable method of waking sleeping men.

Secondly, by shedding a light upon their eyes, for there are many who can sleep in the night who will not sleep so comfortably in the day. And then, thirdly, by sounding the trumpet in their ears. Yes and such a trumpet that if God the Holy Spirit is here, it shall sound like the blast of the archangel and make them quiver with fright even if they turn not unto God. But all these things will fail unless the Holy Spirit who quickens those that are dead in trespasses and sins, shall be present to wake and to save these sleepers.

1. First, in order to the arousing of the many that are at ease in Zion, we will CALL OUT THEIR NAMES—which are to be found in the chapter before us.

The name of the first sleeper in Zion is Presumptuous. His character is described in the first verse—“They trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came.” Alas, proud Heart, you come to this house and you go from it quite content and easy because you say to yourself, “I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing.” “Let the drunkard tremble,” you say, “I have always been moral. Let the dishonest bow their heads, I have always walked in integrity before men.”

And so you wrap yourselves in your good works and hope thus to stand complete before God. So you trust in your mountain of Samaria and say, “My mountain stands firm. I shall never be moved.” I can hardly understand your being at ease in self-righteousness—if you occupy these seats often—for there are none against whom we hurl such thunderbolts as those workmongers, those merit-trusters who boast of themselves that they are righteous and deceive both themselves and others. Against no man do we utter sterner anathemas than against him who, going about to establish his own righteousness, has not submitted himself to the righteousness of Christ.

Why, Man, your purest works are only dross and dung in the sight of God. Your best performances are defiled with the marks of your sin-black hands. They cannot even bear the twilight of an awakened conscience. How, then, will they bear the sevenfold sunlight of God’s great Judgment Day—when He shall bring all things before Him and everything shall be naked and open? He that trusts in his own works leans upon a broken reed. As well attempt to cross the storm-tossed ocean upon a child’s paper boat, or mount to the Heaven of God in the philosopher’s balloon. As well attempt to put out the fire of a blazing prairie by carrying in your hand a little water scooped from the neighboring stream, as hope by any means to get rid of your own iniquities by doing better, or of your past sins by future holiness.

I tell you, Man, your prayers, your alms-giving, your fasting, your repenting, your church-going, your chapel-going are all as nothing in the eye of Him who demands perfect obedience and will never accept anything short of perfect righteousness from man. Away, away, away with these gaudy rags! They will be unraveled before long. You may toil at the loom night and day but your work shall be rent in pieces and not a shred shall be left—you are spinning nothing but a spider’s web which Justice shall tear in pieces and like Adam, whose fig leaves could never cover him, you shall cry before God, “I knew that I was naked and I hid myself.” Woe, then, to those that are at ease in Zion, whose name is Presumptuous.

But the great mass of you escape while I speak thus. “No,” you say, “We do not belong to that class, we know the Gospel better than that. We are orthodox Protestants and stand fast with good Martin Luther and believe that a man is justified by faith and not by the works of the Law.” Remember, you may believe that and yet not be justified yourself. You may hold the doctrine plainly enough—but it is one thing to believe in the justification of the ungodly—and quite another thing for an ungodly man to be justified.

2. A second name is put before us in the roll and that is Not-now, or Procrastination. Surely there are hundreds of you who will recognize your own surname. See how you are described in the third verse—“You that put far away the evil day.” Yes, you are only young apprentices at present and when your time is out you think it will be early enough to attend to matters of soul-interest. Or you are only journeymen at present and when you have earned sufficient money to set you up in business, then will be the time to think of God. Or you are little masters and have just begun business—you have a growing family and are struggling hard and this is your pretense for procrastination.

You promise that when you have a nest egg and can quietly retire to a snug little villa in the country and your children have grown up—then you will repent of the past and seek God’s grace for the future. All these are such delusions of the grossest kind. For you will do no such thing. What you are today you will probably be tomorrow and what you are tomorrow you will probably be the next day. And unless a miracle shall happen, that is to say, unless the supernatural grace of God shall make a new man of you, you will be at your last day what you now are—without God, without hope—and a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel.

Procrastination is the greatest of Satan’s nets. In this he catches more unwary souls than in any other. “Not now. Not now. Not now. Time enough. Time enough. Time enough,” says Satan. “Taste the world’s pleasure first. Come, take your swing, go to the end of your tether and then pull up of a sudden and repent.” Well knows he that then he will have the same cry for them—“Not now. Not now, until they come into the jaws of death and then he will turn round and hiss into their ears the awful words—“Too late! Too late! Too late!” Though he will be as much a liar then as he is now, for it is never too late if the Lord make bare His arm.

Now might I not look around these galleries and down upon these pews below and remember many of you who for these seven or eight years have been hearers of the Gospel from my lips? There have been many times when you have trembled and been alarmed. You felt like Felix, but like he you cried—“Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you.” Ah, that convenient season has not come yet and I fear it never will. Bless the Lord, there have been many hundreds of you whose own season never came—but the Lord made you come at His convenient season and not at yours.

May it be so with others of you! But alas, alas, how large a proportion of those who come into this house of prayer still say, “Not now, not now,” and put off the day and will not come. They think they are to live forever, imagining that the Judgment Day will never approach, that they shall never have to give an account before God. And so they go on in their sins till the chapter shall end and the finis shall be written in black letters— for, “Depart you cursed!” shall be their sentence.

3. The third name is Evil-doer or Sin-lover. “They cause the seat of violence to come near.” Into the house of God there are many who still persevere in their sins, though not so comfortably as they would have done if they had neglected the means of grace. Many I know have come here, who at last said, “Well, this will not do. I cannot hear the Gospel and have the shop open on Sunday. I cannot act as I have done in my business and yet be a seat-holder there—one of the two must be given up.”

And God has given them grace to serve Jehovah and renounce Baal. But ah, there is a large proportion who are undecided. Where were you last night? Here you sit and who would know but that you are the greatest saints out of Heaven? But, perhaps, some time or other last week you sat where none would know that you were the basest sinners out of Hell. Many attend the synagogue of Satan as well as the synagogue of God. Some can give the right hand to religion, while the left hand clasps their iniquity. Oh, those sweet sins, those darling sins that men hug and press to them. They might as well put a viper in their bosom and hug it there, while all the while it infused its venom into their veins.

How many must indulge their sins! They would have Christ, but they must have their cups, too. They would follow the Savior, but they must have their chambering and wantonness They would be Christians, but oh, it is a hard road and a narrow one and they cannot give up their sweet lusts. O Soul, am I not calling out your name now? Do I not now describe your character to the very life? Lover of sin the day shall come when you will hate your sin because of the punishment it shall bring you—for he that woos sin, woos punishment. He that loves iniquity drinks a cup which is sweet at the brim—but the dregs! The dregs! The dregs!—which must be drained! How direful shall be that burning draught! Oh, the draining of those dregs will last throughout eternity, an eternity of Hell.

4. The next name is Love-self. “They lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat the lambs out of the flocks and the calves out of the midst of the stall.” This was not wrong, if they had a bed of ivory there was no more objection to their lying upon that than to their lying upon a common couch. There can be no reason why persons blest with rank in life where they can use these things should not use them, for every creature of God is good and nothing to be despised, but to be received with thankfulness.

Their fault was this—they lived only for self-indulgence. They come under the category of those described by the Apostle—“Whose God is their belly.” They lived only to eat and to drink, to be merry and to make merry with their friends. You know I am no ascetic, my humor is far too warm and genial for me to claim association with John the Baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey. My sympathies run with the Master, of whom it is said, “The Son of Man came eating and drinking.” But still I must, even as He did, protest against those who live only for the flesh, who are simply strainers for meat and drink, whose life-work is to provide food and raiment, who are satisfied so long as they have the richest dainties and the choicest wines.

I must protest against those who even come up to the house of God because they love to have their ears regaled with sweet sound and even God’s Prophet is to them as one that plays a goodly turn upon a pleasant instrument. Self-indulgence! Oh, this is the God of many! They live not for Christ—what do they do for Him? They live not for His Church—What care they for that? They live for self and for self only. And mark—there are such among the poor as well as among the rich—all classes have this evil leaven. Self-honor, self-seeking, these be your gods, O Israel and multitudes dance and sing in honor of the beloved deities.

Fullness of bread often brings on emptiness of heart and there are many who are like the Israelites in the wilderness. While their meat is yet in their mouth the wrath of God comes upon them—because their meat is the offering which they offer at the shrine of their god—and that god is their belly. Do I not speak to some such here this morning? Probably those to whom this most applies will say, “Well I do not think that is for me.” Probably it is for you, then, for this is a charge to which no man would like to plead guilty.

Among all the sins that are confessed nobody ever confessed covetousness. No, he only exercises a proper discretion in taking care of himself. He thinks that the excellent of the earth ought to be provided for. He puts himself down among them and therefore takes care that he should have not only his bread and his water given him, but whatever else he may desire besides. O self-lover, remember there are no pampered tables and office confectioneries in Hell. Awake, then, from your dreams!

5. It seems that among those who were at ease in Zion, was one called Careless, an individual who belongs to a very large family—we may give him another name, giddy, light-hearted. He is described in the fifth and sixth verses, “That chant to the sound of the viol and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David. That drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the chief ointments.” You know how many we have, even among those who frequent our sanctuaries, who say, “Be gone, dull care.” They never sit down for half an hour and turn over the Word of God to see whether these things are so. “No,” they say, “let well enough alone.” They

are happy. They are comfortable for the present.

And like butterflies, while it is a bright summer’s day, they think the winter is far off. Their whole life is spent in levity. We may call them the froth of society. There is nothing solid in them. They are not solid enough even to be desperately wicked. Even their religion is carelessness. They sing a hymn as though it were a song. When prayer is offered—and they will sometimes go to prayer meetings—they are criticizing the terms which are used before the mighty God. Sometimes they venture to make a profession of religion. But you might hope to build a palace with pillars of smoke or adorn a queen’s brow with dewdrops sooner than find any Truth in their godliness.

Their convictions are always superficial—a sort of scratching of the soil as with the old plows, but there is no sub-soil plowing—no turning up and breaking the clods—no tearing up of the vitals of their consciences, no revelation of themselves to themselves. Like stony-ground hearers, they receive the Word with gladness but they have no depth of earth and after a little while, when the seed springs up, it withers away. Not here and there do we find such, but there are very many careless souls who never will give themselves the healthy exercise of thought. Woe unto you, woe unto you, if thus you are at ease in Zion!

6. And now to call out the last name in the list, there is one called Crossless. He is described in the sixth verse, “And they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” It is an awful thing to live in this world without a cross! I have heard of one who, being told of another that he had never any trials, said he should not like to live in the same town, for he was sure something terrible would happen to him. I was once preaching in a country village where there was an estimable pastor who seemed to have a very quiet and nourishing little Church. I said to him, “Now, yours is the course of life I should prefer, to be quiet and secluded and not to have an excess of labor. You,” I said, “seem to have no trials.”

Ah, it was not long after, he had the most crushing of trials that could happen to man and his brain reeled beneath it. And so, no doubt, if a child of God should be a little while without a trial, it is only because there is another one coming and he is having a little respite because a very heavy blow is about to fall upon him. As John Bunyan says in his doggerel rhyme—

*“A Christian man is seldom long at ease,  
When one trouble’s gone another does him seize.”*

It is written of the ungodly—“Moab has been at ease from his youth, he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel.” There are such in this congregation. You never had a great trouble in your lives. Some little things that you have elevated into trials by sentimentalism have fallen upon you. But you have never had any great racking of mind, no great temptations, or trials, or losses, or crosses. And you are comfortably saying—“I am favored because I have none of these.” Methinks I may add that you are highly abhorred—for only they escape the rod whom God disowns!

Just as a man dare not chasten another man’s child, but is sure to chastise his own, if he loves him, you have escaped crossless till now. Take care, your being at ease in Zion on this account is very dangerous. Oh, may God arouse you as I thus describe your ease and call out your name!

II. And now, having thus passed through their names we come to SHED SOME LIGHT UPON THESE SLEEPERS’ EYES.  
Ah, Brethren, this time we have a hopeless errand! It is of no use shedding any light upon these people’s eyes. That will not wake them, for, to tell the truth, they are sleeping with the sun of Heaven shining upon their eyelids, for the text says they are “at ease in Zion.” They were not at ease in Ethiopia where they have never heard the Gospel. They were not at ease in Sheba, or the ends of the earth where no warning Prophets had been sent.  
They were at ease in Zion where Wisdom cried aloud in the streets, where her oracles were in every house and where her servitors stand at every door. What is the use of bringing light to these people? We shall not waken them so but perhaps we may do it by reminding them of this light. And oh,! while I do this, my dear Hearer, if there is any value in your soul and if it is worth while to be saved, I pray you hear for yourself. “He that has ears to ear, let him hear,” while I do in God’s name, perform the sorrowful task of endeavoring to wake you out of your sleep.  
In the first place you are asleep, but you know not your danger. Ah, how many of you foster the sins which you know will destroy your souls. You put your hands into the fire knowing it will burn you, yes, and you have the festering blisters still upon you where you were burnt before. You leap into the furnace knowing that you must be consumed, while you can hear the cries of those who, as your companions, have already felt the heat. Oh, I beseech you to remember that to sin in the light is to sin with vengeance. To sin against knowledge is to sin seven times over. He that sins in Sidon or in Tyre is but a petty offender compared with sinners in Chorazin or Bethsaida.  
According to the degree of privilege is the degree of sin. He that leaps over hedge and bar and post to destroy himself, is a self-destroyer indeed. He that starves with bread in his hand deserves to starve. He that cries of sickness when the physician lives next door and he refuses to call him in, deserves to die. He that perishes when Christ’s Cross is lifted up, when the brazen serpent is held up before his eyes and he is bidden to look to it deserves that the fiery serpent should bite him and that the poison should rankle in his veins. Oh, sin not, I pray you. For you cannot sin so cheaply as others. Strange paradox—to die in the light is to die in the thickest darkness.  
But again—you frequently have arousings. Oh, I pray God I may never be found among the list of those sleepy preachers who will let their congregations continue peacefully in their sins. I appeal to you—what man’s smile have I ever courted—or what man’s frown among you have I feared? Have I always been harping upon some sweet doctrine, saying, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace”? Have I not told you what sin will bring upon you? Have not these eyes wept over you, while I have cried, “Oh, that you knew your end, that you would consider these things”? Has not this throat been hoarse when I have called out after you in God’s name as you were going along the downward path?  
I have heard of a preacher, who in order to be spiritual, gave up his ministry because he said it was written, “In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.” Little was he fit for a minister, for he would soon have known that ministry is the hardest of toil. He who does not know how to combine the two things, to minister and yet to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, is not a minister of God. If I have preached in such a way that I have found my ministry a light labor. If the preaching of a sermon has been to me but a trifle to be played with—then God be merciful to me for this great evil!  
But be assured it is not so. I have come forth some Sunday mornings with the burden of the Lord upon my heart till I have been bowed down with the weight. And there is not a Sunday night and has not been for many a day, when I do not come on this platform in such a state both of body and soul that I pity a dog who has to suffer what I have, under the terror and the weight of the awful responsibility of having to preach to such a crowd as this. If you perish, any one of you, it is not because I have not warned you. It is not because I have not shunned to use plain language, or have selected courtly phrases to make you think me eloquent.  
I have come down upon your consciences as with a sledge hammer. I have sought to dash at your hearts that you might turn unto the Lord my God. Woe, then, to those that are at ease under a faithful, laborious and earnest ministry! God have mercy on such! They need it. O Lord, we pray You lay not this to their charge!  
But more than this. Have you ever thought of it—you that are unsaved in this congregation and yet are so continually here—that everything in this place cries out against you? As often as the pool beneath me is opened and the ordinance of baptism is administered—every candidate descending into the pool bears witness against you. As they say—“I am on the Lord’s side,” they leave you behind and you have this reflection—oh that you would let it work in you—that you dare not confess Christ. And tonight, when that table shall be spread with the blessed emblems of His body and of His blood, they will cry out against you.  
The bread will say to you—“You have never eaten the flesh of Christ.” The blood will cry to you—“You have never been able to drink of His blood.” The whole communion as it sets forth the dying of the Lord will say to you—“You have no interest in Calvary—you have no part or lot in this matter. You are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.” And as each shall partake of that ordinance, you will see the hoaryhead receive it and he will speak to you hoary-headed sinners, old in sin but not yet babes in grace, groveling, like sere-wood, only the more ready for the fire.  
And as the young come and take it, they will say to you—“I am young and I know the Savior. You are twice my age and yet you are strangers to Him.” You go quickly onwards, but not staying to think of Him who shed His blood for men. But perhaps you say that there are hypocrites among them. Then the very hypocrites warn you and silently testify, watch yourself that you be not a hypocrite. Why, look at this morning’s service. If you are still at ease in Zion every part of it has been accusing you. We sung this morning—“Welcome sweet day of rest.” Is it the day of rest for you? That is to say, in a spiritual sense can you rest yourself in Christ?  
Do you feel any comfort in the rising of the Lord from the tomb? Could you join in the last verse—  
*“Sit and sing myself away,  
To everlasting bliss?”*  
Why, was it not a lie upon your lips, unless you are a believer in Christ? And then came the reading of the Word. Was not every verse a thunderclap against those that are at ease in Zion? And then came the prayer and while we prayed for God’s people and your heart wandered, was not the prayer an accusation before Almighty Heaven against you? And now comes the sermon and oh, if that, too, should be slighted and despised, do you think God shall despise it and slight it? No, “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish—to the one we are the savor of death unto death and to the other the savor of life onto life.” And do you not see, my dear Hearers, that this very house of prayer, if you are at ease in Zion, accuses you?  
When last Sabbath evening I saw the crowds outside—the many hundreds—I might say the thousands who stood waiting there and never gained an entrance though they were willing to tug and strive and have their garments rent from their backs in the struggle—if they might but enter and hear the Word—I thought of some of you who come so comfortably into your seats and yet grow none the better by it. Oh, it were better for you that you had never been born, if you thus sit and hear the Word and hear it ringing in your very soul and yet go away and despise it!  
Many of those outside will rise up in judgment against you. “That man,” say they, “had a seat I might have had. That man kept me out. And I hearing the Word—who can tell!—I might have received it, but I could not hear and he heard it and despised it.” He that has the child’s bread and treads it under foot deserves to starve. He that has the river of the water of life and will not drink it, but muddies it with his foot, deserves to die of thirst. And what shall we say of many here present? Do they despise their privileges? Look at the very seat you are sitting in. Why, it cries out against you. How many times have you sat upon it and how many times have you gone away unblessed?  
On the week-night when you were absent, there has been a sinner sat there and was saved. You have occupied that place—well, not so very many times, for we have not been in this house long—but add up the times when you occupied your seat in Park Street and at the Surrey Music Hall, or Exeter Hall. How many sermons have been wasted on you? How many invitations to dead ears, warnings to stony hearts? How many cries of God to ears that would not hear, the weeping of an earnest ministry over that were as flints and the earnest exhortation and admonition of a tender heart to hearts as that were as adamant and would not feel?  
Ah, to be at ease in Zion is to be damnably at ease. To be at ease under a faithful ministry is to be at ease in the jaws of Hell. To be at ease when the House and the Gospel and the Sabbath are all crying out against us is to be at ease while God is making ready His sword against us. But I cannot stay longer, nor do I wish to do so! Oh that my heart had language and could speak without my lips! Oh that I might fling myself at your feet and say to you—“Why will you die, O house of Israel, why will you die?”  
I call you to witness that in putting the things of God far from you, you are guilty of willful and aggravated wickedness—for you have been warned not once nor twice, nor twenty times, but so many times as there are Sabbaths in the year! But this is not enough for me merely to say that I am clear from your blood. Oh that you may be clear of it yourselves! Oh, sovereign grace, renew the heart! Oh, Jesus, Conqueror, lead them captive at the chariot-wheels of Your love and make them bow! No human power can do it, but You can do it, Lord, do it for Your glory’s sake!  
III. And now I come to my last point. God give me strength to urge it and may the Holy Spirit send it home. The last point is this—TO SOUND THE TRUMPET IN THE EARS OF THE SLEEPERS.  
My trumpet has no great variety of sound. It has but one note. Not one which I give to it, but one which is ordained of God in the text. It sounds— “Woe! Woe! Woe!” There is not a man living among us that knows the full meaning of that word—“Woe.” No, there is not a damned spirit in Hell who has got to the bottom of that word—for there is an eternity of damnation. —to as we are in an infinity of misery. “Woe, woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” I shall bring out but the gentler parts of the note and first I say— woe to you, woe to you, for how is it at all likely that you ever will be saved?  
When a man has not attended the house of God and is suddenly brought in, we say, “Well, I am glad to see that man come in, who can tell?—the ministry may be blessed.” I have noticed that in the innumerable cases of conversion which we have had in this place, the majority have been persons who had not heard the Word long. There have been some few persons who have for five, or six, or ten years, been regular attendants, but these are not many. The majority of cases are those out of the streets and the world who had lived in the habitual neglect of the Word of God. They came in and the Word was with power to their souls. I am not to account for that! I have only noticed it and I state it as the result of a pretty wide observation.  
Now how are you to expect to be blessed? I know God can do all things. We are not to limit the Holy One of Israel—but what are the means to be used with you? “Sickness,” you say, “perhaps will bless me.” But you have been sick, you have had a fever, perhaps the cholera and you thought you repented, but you did not. Why should you be smitten any more? You will revolt more and more. Perhaps you say—“If I had another ministry it might be blessed to me.” Oh, I pray you to go and find another. I pray you for your souls’ sake find another if you think so.  
But if it is that you have heard a faithful and earnest ministry already, then remember God’s great means has been used, His greatest means— the preaching of the Word. How then can you hope to be saved at all? And then another thought comes in. You say you have been twenty years a hearer and you are not saved—now is there any probability that you ever will be? God is Sovereign, He can save you. We are only speaking now of probabilities. Does it not seem very probable that if when the Gospel was very new to you and you took a lovely interest in it and still it was not blessed to you, that now when your ears have got accustomed to our voice till you can go to sleep under it—does it not seem probable that you will never have a blessing under it at all?  
Does it not seem probable that the next twenty years, if you live so long, will be as profitless as the twenty that are passed and so you will go unsaved to your graves? I think it was Christmas Evans who used the simile of the blacksmith’s dog, which when his master first set up in trade was very much frightened with the sparks. But at last he got to be so used to them that he went to sleep under the anvil. “And so,” said the good preacher, “there are many that go to sleep under the Gospel, with the sparks of damnation flying about their nostrils.” And certainly there are such here.  
I am told that when they are making the great boilers at Bankside, when a man has to go inside for the first time and hold the hammer the noise is so frightful that his head aches and his ears seem to have lost all power of hearing for a long time afterwards. But I am also told that after a week or two a person can go to sleep in the midst of these boilers while the workmen are hammering outside and he would sleep none the less for the noise. So I know there is such a thing as going to sleep under the most thundering ministry.  
I know that men get used to these things—used to being invited, used to being warned, used to being thundered at. They have been pleaded with until they sleep under it. Yes, I doubt not they would sleep even if the world were blazing, if the sun were turned into darkness and the moon into blood. And I think that even the trumpet of the archangel would not suffice to wake them from their lethargy, if they heard it long enough to be accustomed to it. Oh, then, shall we give you up as hopeless? I think we almost may. If you have heard so long and been unblest there is no great likelihood that you ever will be blessed. But you will go on as you have been going, till at last you perish.  
But, remember—for I must sound this trumpet one moment longer— that being at ease in Zion you are at ease where God will come first. Judgment must begin at the house of God. His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor. He begins with His own floor. He shall purify the sons of Levi. He will begin with them that are in His house so that judgment will have to begin with you. What a place to be asleep in! Not asleep in the far ends of that country where the invasion can only come after due and proper notice—but asleep on the coast—when Justice is on board its vessel and is ready to land on the shore. This is to sleep, indeed.  
Remember, too, you are asleep where God is most severe. Certain it is, according to Scripture, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for Capernaum, where Christ was preached. Why, you are asleep where Justice deals its heaviest blow— asleep where its sword is keenest, where its battle is hottest and its doom is the most dreadful. Well, if you are sleeping here, methinks you will sleep anywhere and if the thundering of God’s great woe cannot suffice to wake you up what can? O God Almighty! What can? You can do it Yourself. O that You would do it! But it shall be a miracle indeed and a wonder of grace if these sleepers shall be made to wake.  
And now I send you not home with the word “woe” in your ears alone. Do you feel the force of what has been said? O my Hearers! Do you feel that it is a solemn thing to have been at ease so long? Do you tremble? Are you saying, “O that I might be saved! O that God would have mercy upon me!” He will do it. HE WILL! The Gospel is free to you still as it always has been and lo, we preach it to you. All He asks of you is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He has not asked an impossible thing—a hard thing—that which takes weeks to do. It is done in an instant and when His Spirit is present, it is done at once and completely.  
“But what is to believe in Christ?” you say. It is to trust Him—trust Him with your soul—trust Him with your soul just as it is. Trust Him with it now. I do not say to you, “Go home and pray,” though I hope you will— that is not my errand. I have to say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is the way to salvation and you have no need to go home to do that. If the Spirit of God has shown you your need of Christ, that can be done where you are—in the pew. O may the Spirit enable you in your soul thus to cry to God—“I am guilty of all that has been said. I am guilty. I acknowledge it with sorrow. I feel I cannot save myself and that the means of grace cannot save me, for they have been tried and they have failed.  
“Lord, I have such a stony heart that nothing can break it but Yourself. I am such a careless, good-for-nothing sinner that the most earnest ministry is lost upon me. I have been pleaded with long, but I have not turned. I confess that all this has aggravated my guilt. I acknowledge it. And now, if You destroy me, Lord, You would be just. But, O save me! Save me!—not for any good thing I have, for, ‘All unholy and unclean, I am nothing else but sin.’ But Father, Jesus died. I believe that He is able and that He is willing to save to the uttermost them that come unto You by Him. Just as I am, I put my case into His hands, I am guilty. Lord, I feel it. Oh that I could feel it more, but Lord, I trust in Him.”  
Are you touching the hem of His garment and putting your trust in what He did and what He is? Then your sins which are many are all forgiven you. Go in peace. “There is therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” You are saved the moment you believe in Christ. You are saved. His finished work is yours. It needs not a stitch to be added to it. His complete atonement is yours. It needs no blood of bullocks, no tears of man to complete it. It is done. You are saved by His grace. Clap your hands and go in peace.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1470 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Amo 6.12

A QUESTION FOR HARD-HEARTED HEARERS NO. 1470

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?” Amos 6:12.

THESE expressions are proverbs, probably taken from the familiar adages of the country, but, anyhow, right worthy to be used as proverbs. The wiser men become, the more sententious are their utterances, the more terse and full of meaning are their sayings and, therefore, the wisdom of the wise condenses into proverbs and the language of Prophets is sure to abound in them. But a proverb is generally a sword with two edges, or, if such a metaphor might be tolerated, it has many edges, or is all edge and hence it may be turned this way and that way and its back stroke will be as sharp as its direct cut, for every part of it will have force and point. A proverb has often many bearings and you cannot always tell what was the precise meaning of him who uttered it, except by the connection.

Now, I believe that the connection would abundantly tolerate two senses in this place. An ancient commentator asserts that there are seven meanings of it and that any one of them would be consistent with the context. I cannot deny the assertion, for if it is correct, it is only one among many instances of the manifold wisdom of the Word of God. Like those curious carved Chinese balls in which there is one ball within another, so in many a holy text there is sense within sense, teaching within teaching and each one worthy of the Spirit of God.

The first sense of the text I would say just a word or two upon is this— the Prophet is expostulating with ungodly men upon their pursuit of happiness where it can never be found. They were endeavoring to grow rich and great and strong by oppression. The Prophet says, “you have turned judgment into gall and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock.” They had transformed the judgment seat into a place where justice was bought and sold and the Book of the Law was made to be the instrument of chicanery and high-handed fraud. “Yet,” says the Prophet, “there is no gain to be gotten this way—no real profit, no true happiness. As well may horses run upon the rock and oxen plow the sand—it is a foolish attempt, it is labor in vain.”

And truly, dear Hearers, if there are any of you, and probably there are, who try to content yourselves with this world and hope to find a Heaven in the midst of your business and your family without looking upward for it, you labor in vain! If any of you endeavor to find pleasure in sin and think that it will go well with you if you despise the Law of God and seek your own pleasure by breaking the natural laws which concern your body, you will find that you have made a great mistake! You might as well seek for

roses in the grottoes of the sea, or look for pearls on the bare pavements of the city! You will find what your soul requires nowhere but in God. To seek after happiness in evil deeds is to plow a rock of granite. To labor after true prosperity by dishonest means is as useless as to till the sandy shore.

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?” Young man, you are killing yourself with ambition and if your objective were worthy, we might not be so grieved, but your ambition is selfish—you seek only your own honor and emolument—and this is a poor, poor objective for an immortal soul. And you, too, Sir, are wearing out your life with anxiety—your mind and body both fail you in endeavoring to amass riches, as if a man’s life consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesses! You are plowing a rock! Your avarice will not bring you joy of heart or content of spirit, but will end in failure.

And you, too, who labor to weave a righteousness by your works apart from Christ and fancy that with the diligent use of outward ceremonies you may be able to do the work of the Holy Spirit upon your own heart— you, too, are plowing thankless sand! No harvest will ever repay your selfelected toils. Merit can no more spring from human hands than fruit from an iron rod! The strength of fallen nature exerted at its utmost can never rescue a soul from the storm of wrath which awaits the guilty. You may row hard to bring that galley of yours to shore, but it shall be broken by the fierce storm. Why, then, attempt the impossible when faith would, in a moment, calm the sea and bring the ship to shore? Woe unto those who kindle a fire, surround themselves with sparks and delight themselves in the blaze of their own kindling, for they shall have this of the Lord—they shall go down in sorrow!

So far, I believe, I have not misread the text, but have mentioned a very probable meaning of the words as they stand in the context. But, still, another strikes me which I think equally suitable and upon it I shall dwell, by God’s help. It is just this. God will not always send His Prophets to warn people, or employ His ministers to call them to repentance. When it turns out that men’s hearts remain obdurate and they do not and will not repent, then God will not always deal with them in mercy. “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” There is a time of plowing, but when it comes to be quite evident that the heart is willfully hardened, then Wisdom, itself, suggests to Mercy that she should give over her efforts. “Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?”

No, there is a limit to the efforts of kindness and in fullness of time the labor ceases—the rock remains a sterile rock, forever unplowed.  
I. Taking that sense, we shall speak upon it and remark, first, that MINISTERS LABOR TO BREAK UP MEN’S HEARTS. This is the first effort of the wise preacher. The servant of Christ who teaches the Gospel, whatever he may be called, is a sower of seed—and though it may appear useless to sow seed upon rocks, we are bound, while acting as evangelists, to sow our Seed everywhere. Broadcast is our Master’s rule—“Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Hence in our Lord’s parable a handful fell upon the highway where the birds devoured it and another handful fell upon the rocky soil where it sprung up, but tomorrow perished because it had not depth of earth.  
It was no business of the sower to select the soil. He was to sow as he went along, for so his Master told him. But I think he would not be blamed, but commended if he threw double handfuls over there where the soil was evidently rich and well prepared! As a sower he was to sow broadcast and leave the Seed to fall where it might under the guardian care of Him who sent Him to sow. But when he became a farmer, he would have further duties and among the rest, that of breaking up the fallow ground that he might no longer sow among thorns.  
We have so often sown on the rock and have been so frequently disappointed because of the hardness of the unrenewed heart, that much time must be spent by the pastor, as a lover of men’s souls, in trying, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to break up the hard earth—to make it so that it will be receptive of the Seed and ready to nurture the Living Grain after it has fallen there. There are many Truths of God which are used in this plowing and driven in like sharp plowshares to break up the heart. Men must be made to feel that they have sinned and they must be led to repent of sin. They must receive Christ, not with the head, only, but with the heart—for with the heart man believes unto righteousness.  
There must be emotion—we must cut into the heart with the plowshare of the Law. A farmer who is too tenderhearted to tear up and harrow the land will never see a harvest! Here is the failing of certain Divines—they are afraid of hurting anyone’s feelings and so they keep clear of all the Truths which are likely to excite fear or grief. They have not a sharp plowshare on their premises and are never likely to have a stack in their barn. They angle without hooks for fear of hurting the fish and fire without bullets out of respect to the feelings of the birds! This kind of love is real cruelty to men’s souls. It is much the same as if a surgeon should permit a patient to die because he would not pain him with the knife, or by the necessary removal of a limb. It is a terrible tenderness which leaves men to sink into Hell rather than distress their minds! It is a diabolical love which denies the eternal danger which assuredly exists and argues the soul into presumption because it thinks it a pity to excite terror and so much more pleasant to prophesy smooth things.  
Is this the spirit of Christ? Did He conceal the sinner’s peril? Did He cast doubts upon the unquenchable fire and the undying worm? Did He lull souls into slumber by notes of flattery? No, but with honest love and anxious concern He warned men of the wrath to come and bade them repent or perish! Let the servant of the Lord Jesus in this thing follow his Master and plow deep with a sharp plowshare which will not be balked by the hardest clods! This we must school ourselves to do. It may be contrary to our impulses and painful to our feelings, but it must not be left undone to gratify our love of ease and our desire to please our hearers. If we really love the souls of men, let us prove it by honest speech which costs us pain; by earnest warning which it is more grievous to us to utter than to others to hear! This part of our work is essential to man’s welfare and can by no means be omitted. The hard heart must be broken, or it will refuse the Savior whose Glory lies very much in His being sent to bind up the broken-hearted. There are some things which men may or may not have and yet may be saved—but those things which go with the plowing of the heart are indispensable and, therefore, men must have them or hopelessly perish! The heart must be broken up—there must be a holy fear and a humble trembling before God! There must be an acknowledgment of offenses committed and a penitent petition for mercy. There must, in a word, be a thorough plowing of the soul before we can expect that the Seed should bring forth fruit!  
II. But the text indicates to us that AT TIMES MINISTERS LABOR IN VAIN. “Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?” There are some hearts—there are some in this house tonight, there are some who are always here—who are very hard soil. When the plowman plows, he soon discovers what he is at work upon. I do not suppose that anybody but a minister with considerable experience will understand what I say when I declare that there is a sympathy between the preacher of the Gospel and his hearers of a very intimate kind, even as there is a mutual action between the soil and the plowman.  
Though our hearers are silent, they probably speak more to the preacher than he does to them. In a short time a plowman feels whether the plow will go or not and so does the minister. He may use the very same words in one place which he has used in another, or they may seem to him to be so, but he feels in the one place great joy and hopefulness in preaching, while with another audience he has heavy work and little hope mingles with it. The plow in the last case seems to jump out of the furrow—and a bit of the blade is broken off every now and then. He says to himself, “I do not know how it is, but I know I can’t get on at this,” and he becomes conscious that his Master has sent him to work upon a particularly heavy soil. The people were so far attentive that nobody was asleep— they seemed to drink in every word and yet they were as unmoved as so many statues!  
They did not feel and did not appear as if they could feel anything. The preacher was ready to stop and burst into tears to see how utterly unfeeling his audience had become, but that did not alter them. He hoped it was no vain regard for his own reputation which distressed him, but that a sincere desire for their good and for the honor of the Truth of God moved him to holy jealousy. But he felt a kind of heart-breaking coming over him because he could make no headway. He was doing his best. The very same that he had done in other places with abounding success and with a sense of joyous ease, he was now doing in heaviness of spirit, conscious that he was wasting effort and that his pleadings were lost upon the people.  
All laborers for Christ know that this is occasionally the case. You must have found it so in a Sunday school class. You must have known it to be so in a cottage meeting or in any other gathering where you have tried to teach and preach Jesus. You have said to yourself every now and then, “Now I am plowing a rock. Before, I turned up rich soil which a yoke of oxen might plow with ease and a horse might even run at the work. But now the horse may tug and the oxen may wearily toil till they gall their shoulders—but they cannot cut a furrow—the rock is stubborn to the last degree.” There are such hearers in all congregations. They are as iron and yet they are side by side with a fine plot of ground!  
Their sister, their brother, their son, their daughter—all these have readily felt the power of the Gospel, but they do not feel it. They hear it, respectfully hear it and they allow it free course so far that they permit it to go in one ear and out the other, but they will have nothing more to do with it. They would not like to be Sabbath-breakers and stay away from worship. They, therefore, do the Gospel the questionable compliment of coming where it is preached and then refusing to regard it! They are hard, hard, hard bits of rock—the plow does not furrow them.  
Many, on the other hand, are equally hard, but it is in another way. The plow seems to touch them when they hear the Word of God preached, but it is in seeming only—the impression is not deep or permanent. They receive it with joy, but retain it not. They listen, apparently with deep attention and they are ready enough to go to a place of worship, as often as ever you like, but it never comes to practice with them. They will hear about repentance, but they never repent. They hear about faith, but they never believe. If we were to preach anything other than the Truth of God they would be indignant, for they are very good judges of what the Gospel is—but they have never accepted the Gospel! They will not eat, but still they insist that good bread shall be put on the table. They will not wash, but they will have the hose continually open before them.  
They are great sticklers for the very things which they personally reject. They are moved to feeling—they shed tears occasionally. A sentimental tale would make them weep fast enough and, sometimes, the pathos of the preacher stirs them in the same manner, for a time, but their hearts are not really broken up by the Word. They go their way and forget what manner of men they are. Their transient feeling is rather an illustration of their hardness than an instance of true emotion. They are hard, hard, hard, rocky-hearted through and through! They are stony-souled enough to mock the Word of God by feeling and yet not feeling—by the imitation of a sensibility which never amounts to spiritual sensation. We have such in this congregation—the Lord have mercy upon them! While I am speaking, I hope the description will come home to them and that each one of them may listen for himself and feel the plowshare tearing its rough but useful way.  
Now, all this is worse because certain of these people, these rockyhearted people, have been plowed for years and they become harder instead of softer! Once or twice plowing, a broken share or two and a disappointed plowman or two, we might not mind if they would finally yield— but these have, since their childhood, known the Gospel and never given way before its power! It is a good while since their childhood, now, with some of them! Their hair is turning gray and they are getting feeble with years. I am addressing those who have heard the Word of God preached in sincerity and earnestness, now, scores and hundreds of times! You have heard wagonloads of sermons! You have been entreated and persuaded times beyond number! You have had invitations and expostulations multiplied ad infinitum!  
Yes, and you have been prayed over and wept over, but your hearts are still rocky—labor has been lost upon you. In fact, you used to feel the Word, in a certain fashion, far more, years ago, than you do now! The sun, which softens wax, hardens clay—and the same Gospel which has brought others to tenderness and repentance has exercised a contrary effect upon you and made you more thoughtless, more hardened, more worldly and more contemptuous of Divine things than you were in your youth! We knew it would be so—we told you so years ago—for though we are always unto God a sweet savor, we are among men a savor of death unto death as well as of life unto life! I fear that this sad result is being illustrated in your case.  
Why are certain men so extremely rocky? Some are so from a peculiar dullness of nature. There are many people in the world whom you cannot very well move. You would have to put a piece of dynamite under them before you could alarm them, they are so very quiet and cool about everything! They are the same in business—there is nothing sanguine about them, no excitability, no possibility of stir or emotion. They have a great deal of granite in their constitution and are more nearly related to Mr. Obstinate than to Mr. Pliable. Now, I do not think very badly of these people because one knows what it is to preach to an excitable people and to get them all stirred up and to know that at the end they are none the better, but relapse into inaction, whereas some of the more dull and immovable people, when they are moved, are moved, indeed! When they feel, they feel intensely, and they retain any impression that is made.  
A little chip made in granite by very hard blows will abide there, while the lashing of water, which is easy enough, will leave no trace even for a moment! It is a grand thing to get hold of a fine piece of rock and to exercise faith about it! The Lord’s own hammer has mighty power to break and, in the breaking, great Glory comes to the Most High. Worse, still, certain men are hard because of their infidelity—not heart-infidelity all of it— but an infidelity which springs out of a desire not to believe which has assisted itself by manufacturing doubts and discovering difficulties. These difficulties exist and were meant to exist, for there were no room for faith if everything were as plain as the nose on one’s face! These people have gradually come to doubt, or to think that they doubt essential Truths of God and this renders them impervious to the Gospel of Christ—another sad means of hardening the heart till it rivals granite.  
A much more numerous body are very orthodox people, but very hardhearted people for all that. Worldliness hardens a man in every way. It often dries up all his charity to the poor because he must make money and he thinks that the poor societies are quite sufficient excuses for neglecting the offices of charity. He thinks how comfortable poor people are when they are attended to by relieving officers! He pretends to believe that our union houses are perfectly palatial establishments and that it would be wicked to give away a penny because he might be helping an imposter and encouraging idleness! At any rate, it is better for him to take care of his worthy self and give the penny to Number One!  
Worldliness hardens him in that way and so it does with regard to other things. He has no time to think of the next world—he must spend all his thoughts upon the present one. Money is tight and, therefore, he must hold it tight and when money brings in so little interest, he finds another reason for being the more niggardly. He has no opportunity for prayer—he must get down to the counting house. He has no time for reading his Bible—his ledger needs him. It is of no use to speak to him about eternal things, for he is thoroughly engrossed with the affairs of time. You may knock at his door, but his heart is not at home—it is never at home—it is always in the counting house where he lives and moves and has his being. His god is his gold; his bliss is his business; his all in all is himself! What is the use of preaching to him? As well may horses run upon a rock, or oxen drag the plow across a field sheeted with iron a mile thick!  
With some, too, there is a hardness produced by what I might almost call the opposite of stern worldliness, namely, a general levity. Some are naturally butterflies—they never think or want to think! Half a thought exhausts them and they must be diverted or their feeble minds will utterly weary! They live in a round of pleasure and amusement. Their chief delight is giggling—it does not amount to laughter, for it is downright earnest men that laugh—these are too silly, too frivolous for anything but mere childish giggling! They go through the world as if it were a stage and all the men and women only players. It is very little use preaching to them—there is no depth of earth in their superficial nature. Beneath a sprinkling of shifting, worthless sand, lies an impenetrable rock of utter stupidity and senselessness!  
I might thus multiply reasons why

some are harder than others, but it is a well-assured fact that they are so and there I leave it to notice a third point.  
III. I shall now ask everybody to judge whether this running of horses upon a rock and this plowing there with oxen shall always be continued? I assert that IT IS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT GOD’S SERVANTS SHOULD ALWAYS CONTINUE TO LABOR IN VAIN. These people have been preached to, taught, instructed, admonished, expostulated with and advised—shall this unrecompensed work be always performed? We have given them a fair trial—what do Reason and Prudence say? Shall we be bound to continue till we are worn out by this unsuccessful work? We will ask it of men of business! We will ask it of men who plow their own farms—do they recommend perseverance when failure is certain? Shall horses run upon the rock? Shall one plow there with oxen? Surely not forever!  
I think we shall all agree that labor in vain cannot be continued forever if we, first of all, think of the plowman. He is not much and he does not need to be much considered, but still, his Master will think of him. See how weary he grows when the work discourages him. He goes to his Master with, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Why have You sent me,” he asks, “to a people that have ears but hear not? They sit as Your people sit and they hear as Your people hear—and then they go their way and they forget every Word that is spoken—and they obey not the voice of the Lord by His servant.”  
See how disappointed the preacher becomes! It is always hard work when you appear to see no progress although you do your utmost. Nobody likes doing work which will not pay and from which nothing comes! I once looked over a military prison and I saw the soldiers carrying shot from one end of a yard to the other. And it was remarked to me by the warden that some time ago they made the men pile the shot at one end in a pyramid and then take it back to the other end of the yard and pile it there. But as that gave them some kind of amusement, the work was not thought sufficiently irksome and so they made the culprits carry a shot to one end of the yard and bring it back, and thus no pile was formed at either end!  
The growing of the little pyramid, though they knew they would have to move it again, afforded a measure of interest to the prisoners and as the work was to be a matter of punishment and not of interest, even that was denied them. How frequently we have felt like those poor soldiers in prison, for we have carried the Gospel and brought it back again, seeing no result to our endeavors! With many of you, our work has been all wasted, all useless! Now, will God keep His servants in such work? If they were His prisoners in a military prison, it would be natural He should! But they are not—they are His sons and He loves them! Will He keep them to such weary work as this?  
Must they always do that which discourages and disappoints them? No man, whoever he may be, likes to be given work which appears to be altogether a waste of time and effort. To his own mind it seems to have a touch of the ridiculous about it and he fears that he will be despised of his fellows for aiming at the impossible. Shall it, then, always be our lot to treat with hard-hearted men and women? Will the great Farmer bid His plowmen spill their lives for nothing? Must His preachers continue to cast pearls before swine? Shall they continue to speak to deaf ears? Must they always expostulate with stones and prophesy to those who are less sensible than the beasts of the field?  
If the consecrated workers are so bid of their Lord, they will persevere in their painful task—but their Master is considerate of them and I ask you, also, to consider whether it is reasonable to expect a zealous heart to be forever occupied with the salvation of those who never respond to its anxiety? Shall the horses always plow upon the rock? Shall the oxen always labor there? Then think again—there is the Master to be considered. The Lord—is He always to be resisted and provoked and yet continue to have patience? Many of you have had eternal life set before you as to be received by simply believing in Jesus Christ—and you have refused to believe.  
Now, my Lord might have said to me, “Go home. You have done your duty with them. Never set Christ before them again—I am not going to have My Son insulted.” If you offer a beggar in the street a shilling and he refuses and will not have it, you cheerfully put it into your purse and go your way—you do not stand there begging him to have his needs relieved. But, behold, our God in mercy has been begging sinners to come to Him, imploring them to accept His Son! In His condescension He has even come down to be like a salesman in the market, crying, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters and he that has no money, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” In another place He says of Himself, “All day long have I stretched out My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying generation.”  
Well, if the Lord of Mercy has been refused and the Lord of Love has been despised so long in the sight of you who reverence Him, does not some indignation mingle with your pity—and while you love sinners and would have them saved—do you not feel in your heart that there must be an end to such insulting behavior and such matchless patience? You cannot always be pleading with those who will not be persuaded, for he that refuses you refuses Him that sent you! I ask those whose hearts are hard to think of the matter in this light and if they do not respect the plowman, yet let them have regard to his Master.  
And then, again, there are so many other people who are needing the Gospel and who would receive it if they had it, that it seems as if it would be wise to leave off wearying oneself about these people who will not have it. What did our Lord say? He said that if the mighty things which had been done in Bethsaida and Chorazin had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented! What is more amazing, still, He says that if He had worked the same miracles in Sodom and Gomorrah which He worked in Capernaum, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes! Well, then, does it not occur to us at once to give the Word of God to those who will have it and leave the despisers to perish in their own willfulness? Does not Reason say, Let us send off this medicine for the sick where there are sick people who will value it, for these people refuse it”?  
There are thousands of people willing to hear the Gospel! See how they crowd wherever the preacher goes—how they tread upon one another in their anxiety to listen to him! And if these people who hear him every day will not receive the message of God, “in God’s name,” he says, “let me go somewhere else where there is a probability of finding soil that can be plowed.” “Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen?” Must I work always where nothing comes of it? Does not reason say, let the Word of God go to China, to India, or to the utmost parts of the earth where they will receive it, for those who have it preached in the corners of their streets despise it and think it a common thing, if not an utter nuisance?  
I shall not lengthen out this argument, but shall just put the question again. Would any one of you continue to pursue an object when it proved to be hopeless? Have you ever attempted to make a child who has been in a fit and fretful, happy and good-tempered? You have said many kind and gentle things and you have used a few sharp words, too, but as my little lord would not come round, you have said to yourself, “Then let him sulk until he has had it out.” And if the Lord has sent His servants to speak kind, gracious, tender things and men will not hear, do you wonder if He should say, “Let them alone. They are joined unto their idols. Let them alone.”  
There is a limit to the patience of men and we soon arrive at it. And assuredly there is a limit, though it is long before we outrun it, to the patience of God! “At length,” He says, “it is enough, My Spirit shall no longer strive with them. Now will I henceforth let them alone.” If the Lord does this, can any of us blame Him? Is not this the way of Wisdom? Does not Prudence, itself, dictate it? If we put it to any man of thoughtful mind here, he will say, “Yes, yes, it cannot always be that the rock should be plowed by the oxen.”  
IV. Fourthly, THERE MUST BE AN ALTERATION, then, and that speedily. Can this be altered? Can the oxen be taken off the rock? Yes, it can be easily done and very likely it will happen before long to some hard hearts now before me. It can be done three ways. First, the person can be taken away so that the unprofitable hearer shall no more hear the Gospel from the lips of his best-approved minister. There is a preacher who evidently touches the man a little and has some sort of power over him, but, as he rejects his testimony and remains impenitent, the preacher shall be removed to another town. The hearer shall now hear monotonous discourses which will not touch his conscience nor disturb his lethargy. He shall go into a lone village, or a foreign land where he shall be no longer persuaded and entreated—and there he will sleep himself into Hell! That may be readily enough done—perhaps some of you are making arrangements, even now, for your own removal from the house of hope.  
Another way is to take away the plowman. He has done his work as best he could, now call him off from his hopeless task. Let him go Home. He is weary—let him go Home to his Master! The soil would not break up, but he could not help that, let him have his wages. He has broken his plow at the work—let him go Home and hear his Lord say, “Well done.” He was willing to keep on at the disheartening labor as long as his Master bade him, but it is evidently useless, Therefore let him go Home, for his work is done. He has been sick, let him die and enter into his rest. This is by no means improbable.  
Or, there may happen something else. The Lord may say, “Now, that piece of rock shall never trouble the plowman any more. I will take it away.” And he may take it away in this fashion—the man who has heard the Gospel but rejected it will die. I pray my Master that He will not suffer this to happen in the case of any one of you, that you should die in your sins—die impenitent—for then we cannot reach you any more or indulge the faint hope for you! No prayers of ours can follow you into eternity! The most ardent lover of your souls cannot hope that there shall be an escape for you after death! There is one name by which you may be saved and that name is sounded in your ears—the name of Jesus! But if you reject Him now, even that name will not save you, for He shall be your terror!  
From His face you shall flee away and your great cry shall be, “Rocks, hide me! Mountains, fall upon me! Hide me from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne and from the face of the Lamb.” You will dread Him and well you may dread Him, though at this hour He waits to be gracious to you. I pray you do not destroy your own souls by continuing to be obstinate against Almighty Love. Oh that the Lord might do for you what we cannot! May He make you willing in the day of His power, for otherwise, as surely as you live and God lives, if it comes to close quarters with you and your offended God—with no Christ between to be the Mediator—it will go hard with you! “Beware,” He says, “you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you.”  
Do not mind anything that I say on my own, but look at the Word of God for yourselves and you shall find that the Inspired Scripture has in it terrible threats against impenitent sinners! And there is no imagery, (though borrowed from the mediaeval times, against which our adversaries make so much noise), there is no imagery that at all exaggerates the terror which must actually fall upon every soul that commits suicide by rejecting the Savior and spits into the face of God’s own Christ by saying, “I would sooner be lost than have Him to save me,” for that is, virtually, what every unbelieving soul is saying! O God, grant that some better thing may happen!  
I close by asking, is there any alternative to all this? Can nothing else be done? This soil is rock—can we not, somehow sow it without breaking it? No, it must be broken. “You must be born again.” “Except a man receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child he can in no wise enter therein.” There must be repentance, for without repentance there is no remission of sin. But is there not a way of saving men, somehow, without the Gospel and without the Grace of God? The Lord Jesus did not say so— He told us to preach as follows—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.” He does not hint at a middle course or hold out a “larger hope,” but He says, “he that believes not shall be damned,” and so he must be.  
God grant that no soul here may dream that there may, perhaps, be some back door to Heaven, for the Lord has provided none. What then? Shall the preacher be permitted to continue his fruitless toil of plowing? Yes, he is willing. He is willing if there is only half a hope left him—willing to go on and say—“Hear, you deaf and see, you blind, and look you dead!” He will even speak so this day, for his Master bids him preach the Gospel to every creature! But it will be hard work to repeat the word of exhortation for years to those who will not hear it! Happily, there is one other turn which affairs may take! There is a God in Heaven! Let us pray to Him to put forth His power! Jesus is at His side—let us invoke His interposition! The Holy Spirit is almighty—let us call for His aid!  
Brothers who plow and my Brothers and Sisters who help us as we plow and long for our success, cry to the Master for help! The horse and the ox evidently fail, but there remains One above who made both ox and horse and who is able to work great marvels! Did He not once speak to the rock and turn the flint into a stream of water? Let us pray to Him to do the same now! And, oh, if there is one who feels and mourns that his heart is like a piece of rock, I am so glad he has come so far as feeling it, because he who feels that His heart is a rock gives some evidence that the flint is beginning to be transformed. O Rock, instead of smiting you tonight, as Moses smote the rock in the wilderness and erred therein, I would speak to you!  
O Rock, would you become like wax? O Rock, would you dissolve into rivers of repentance? O Rock, fall down with that wish! Echo to the voice of exhortation! O Rock, break with that good desire! O Rock, dissolve with that longing for God because He is working upon you now! Who knows, but at this very moment you shall begin to crumble? Do you feel the power of the Word? Did the sharp plowshare touch you, just now, and did you begin to break up? Break and break again, till by contrition you are broken in pieces all asunder, for then will the good Seed of the Gospel come to you and you shall receive it into your bosom—and we shall all behold the fruit thereof!  
And so I will fling one more handful of good Seed and have done. If you desire eternal life, trust Jesus Christ and you are saved at once. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” says Christ, “for I am God, and beside Me there is none.” He that believes in Him has everlasting life! “Like as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” O Lord, break up the rock and let the Seed drop in among its broken substance—and get a harvest from the dissolved granite, at this time, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

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PLOWING ROCK  
NO. 2977

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1876.

**“Shall horses run upon the rocks? Will one plow there with oxen?” Amos 6:12.**

THESE two questions are evidently Oriental proverbial expressions. Proverbs have always been used by the wisest of men. Solomon not only spoke and wrote a great many, but he also made a considerable collection of those uttered by others. We find in the writings of such notable thinkers as Socrates, Pliny and Aristotle, an abundance of short, pithy sentences, many of which can be used as proverbs. Proverbs have great force in them, because they are condensed wisdom. They are generally most convincing—it is hardly ever possible to answer or controvert them. They carry truth home as an arrow has often been known to carry death to the person aimed at, for they strike, they stick, they penetrate, they wound. Our Lord Jesus very frequently made use of proverbs, nor was He singular in doing so. The Prophets of old constantly employed them and here, in our text, we see Amos—who, from his occupation as a herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, was probably more familiar with their use than some others of the Prophets were—puts together two proverbs which were commonly used to signify that men do not, as a rule, continue to labor in vain and spend their strength for nothing. Wise men do not send their horses to run upon the rocks and they do not send their oxen to plow where all their toil would be wasted— “Shall horses run upon the rocks?” “Will one plow rocks with oxen?” The answer implied is, “Certainly not,” and it means that if a thing cannot be done, or is not worth doing if it can, it will be well for us not to attempt to do it. Our text may have two bearings—first, upon men and, secondly, upon God.

I. First, WITH REGARD TO MEN. They are not usually so foolish as to try to plow a rock, yet many are as foolish as that in moral and spiritual matters!

I want to give you three or four illustrations of this fact. The first is that many persons have tried to find the way of safety and pleasure in the way of sin. Many a man has sought to get rich by injustice. Possibly he has succeeded to a certain extent, but, as a general rule, it is notorious that ill-gotten riches are generally ill-spent and bring a curse upon their possessors. Some have thought that if they indulged their passions, they would have great enjoyment. Although their fathers warned them that such a sin would be like self-destruction and would make their whole life sad, they have not believed it would be so and they have tried to plow this hard rock of sin and to find lasting pleasure therein. There are hundreds and thousands of men who are pursuing the way which is not good—and they know it is not good—yet they foolishly continue in it because they conceive it to be the path of pleasure, nor can you beat that false notion out of their heart, do what you may! On the contrary, they turn upon you and call you a “Puritan” because you object to their style of living. Possibly they revile you as a hypocrite because you point out the evils of the way in which they are walking. Yet if they would but think at all seriously, they must perceive that the way of sin cannot lead to happiness. It is absolutely inconceivable that God, who made the whole universe, should have arranged that the terminus of sin should be Heaven, or should have made the path of evil lead to joy and peace! The Judge of all the earth cannot have put a premium upon wickedness! In the long run, it will be proved that sin brings forth sorrow and that the path of right is the path of peace. Yet many will not see that it must be so and they continue, even to the bitter end of life, to plow that rock, breaking the plowshare, wearing out the ox, and themselves dying a death of miserable disappointment, which, if they had not been arrant fools, they would never have had to endure, for they would never have attempted so hopeless a task as that of trying to find any real pleasure in the ways of sin! As well might you sow the sea with salt and expect to reap from it a harvest of golden sheaves! As well might you scatter firebrands and expect to gather from them the cooling streams that flow from the mountain spring, as live in sin and expect to receive happiness as the result of doing so! Cease, O sons of men—such an act of madness as the plowing of this rock must always be!

Others are attempting another equally absurd task. They are hoping to find real joy in pursuits which are laudable in themselves, but which are entirely of this world. Did you ever read the book called The Mirage of Life? It is a book which is well worth everyone’s reading. The author gives, in sets of pictures, the life of the man of pleasure, the life of the courtier, the life of the philosopher, the life of the statesman, the life of the warrior and so on with a very fair selection of facts from the lives of such men, with the objective of showing that, although each one of them was eminent in his own line of things—and apparently successful in that line—yet they all failed to find the precious jewel of solid satisfaction. Most of them lived in a sort of perpetual weariness and when, at last, they died, and their eyes were opened, they found that their pretty dreams had all vanished and that the reality, when they beheld it, was dreary indeed. There have been men—perhaps some of you have known them—who have had more wealth than you and I would care to count, yet they have thought themselves poor—and so they really were, for they were incapable of enjoying the riches which they had amassed! There have been men who have been crowned with laurel who have had all sorts of honors heaped upon them, yet, when a friend has wished them a happy new year, they have said, “Then it had need be a very different year from any that we have ever yet experienced.” The high places of the world, like the mountaintops, are glassy with icy dangers and they are cold with discontent. Many try to clamber up to them—and a few reach the summit, but others perish in the crevasses. Yet those who reach the summit often envy those who are in the valley below, and those in the valley envy those on the heights, for, beneath yon moon, there is no contentment to be found in earthly things either in the peasant’s hut or the monarch’s palace! The man whose arm is not long enough to grasp that which lies in the land beyond the stars will have to live and die without attaining to perfect satisfaction. Man, it is not here below that God has placed that which you need! The bread for your souls must come from Heaven! That which can satisfy your immortal spirit must be Divine, like the Creator who made you! God alone can satisfy the cravings of your soul. Cease, then, to toil, and tug, and fret, and fume, and waste your time and strength in seeking happiness in these bubbles of earth. “Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”—insofar as you need them— but as for seeking them first, plow that rock no longer, for it will yield you no return for all your toil!

Men of another sort are satisfied that the things of this world are not sufficient to render a man perfectly happy, so they have religious thoughts of a certain form. They believe that they are very good, excellent and they mean to make themselves still better and so to get perfect peace by feeling that they are what they ought to be, and have done what they ought to have done! I remember when I plowed that hard rock and entertained the hope of getting a very fine crop off it—but I woke, one morning, to discover that the rock would not yield even the moss or lichen of comfort to me—there was nothing on its surface that could bring me any contentment. Self-righteousness is a great cheat. The man who gets most comfort out of it simply gets that comfort because he is ignorant! If he knew himself and knew God’s Law, and knew the demands of inflexible Justice, he would fling upon the nearest dunghill that self-righteousness of his which looks like fair white linen, but which really is, in God’s sight, nothing but filthy rags! O Sinner, you cannot find your way to Heaven by your own works, for the only way to Heaven by works is to keep perfectly the Law of God—and you have already broken that Law! You must present this matchless vase, flawless and entire, at the gates of Glory if you would be saved by works—but you have already shattered it in a thousand pieces—how can you hope to mend it? That is impossible! The hope of salvation by a perfect life is over and you must, each one, feel that your life has already been imperfect.

Some hope that they will get perfect peace by the way of ceremonies . Many people tell us that we are living in a very enlightened age, but I am inclined to think that Carlyle was uncommonly near the mark when he said that “the United Kingdom contains about thirty millions of people, mostly fools,” for it does seem as if people, nowadays, are fools to a very large extent. For instance, a man says that if we will come and confess our sins to him, he can forgive us in the name of God—and that he can, by sprinkling a few drops of water upon a child, and uttering certain words, transform an heir of wrath into an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven! He also says that if we come to what he calls an altar, he will give us the very body and blood of Christ to eat and drink! Well, when I was young, I thought that anybody who talked like that ought to be served like the gypsies who were put in prison for taking sixpences from silly servants and pretending to tell their fortunes! And, in later years, I have been sometimes surprised that the law has not been put in motion against these gentlemen, for certainly the imposture which they seek to foist upon us is a far more terrible one than that of the fortune-telling gypsies! The so-called “priest” has no power to forgive sins, or to change the nature of the child he sprinkles, or to offer the sacrifice of the “mass.” There is nothing more in him than there is in anybody else—and let him talk as loudly as he may, his pretensions are utterly vain and worthless! If you trust to him, the result to you will be the same as it has been to tens of thousands before you, for you will find that all the ceremonies which men have invented, yes, and all the rites that God Himself has given, cannot bring healing to a diseased soul, or hush the tumult of an awakened conscience, or bring the soul into a state of conscious reconciliation with the Most High! O Sirs, you may be sprinkled, and confirmed, and immersed, and go to the Communion Table, and do I know not what besides—yes, you may travel along seven thousand leagues of ceremonialism, but you will be just as uneasy at the end as you were at the beginning! That is not the way of peace, neither will God make it to be so! It is plowing a rock—and no harvest can possibly come of it.

Some are trying the equally impossible task of being saved by Jesus Christ when they shall have prepared themselves for Him. In other words, they talk about being saved by Christ, but, in their heart of hearts, they do not think that Christ can save them till they have reached a certain standard of excellence. Now we know, from the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save His people from their sins and He will do it from first to last, or not at all. He will be the Alpha and the Omega— the A and the Z of salvation’s alphabet, or else He will have nothing to do with it! Yet thousands of hearers of the Gospel are constantly saying, “We will believe in Jesus when we feel our sins more—when we feel more repentance—when we have done this and told that, and experienced the other.” Ah, Sirs, this plan of bringing Christ in at the end of the work— after you have accomplished the first part of it yourselves—is a most foolish mistake, and a fatal one, too! It is like setting oxen to plow a rock. Let me ask you—Are you any better than you used to be? You have been trying, for a long while, to make yourselves ready for Christ—are you any more ready than you were at the first? Has it never struck you that Hart’s lines are true?—

*“If you tarry till you’re better,  
You will never come at all”?*  
Thus I have shown you how the text can be applied with regard to men.

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you how these Proverbs can be applied WITH REGARD TO GOD. “Shall horses run upon the rocks? Will one plow there with oxen?”

God does not always continue to do that which, after a certain period, turns out to be unprofitable. Dear Friends, there are some of you—I pray God to grant that there may not be any of you of whom this will remain true—but it is at present true that there are some of you to whom the Gospel has come in vain. Up till now, so far as you are concerned, the Gospel plow has only gone across a rock—the Truth of God preached in your hearing has not gained an entrance into your heart. Oh, how many come and hear us preach merely that they may compare us with other preachers! They pass certain criticisms upon our mode, manner and matter. We do not know, and we do not care what they say, but the point that really concerns us is that we cannot get the Gospel plow into them— we cannot make them feel, and repent, and believe! A great master of the art of preaching once said, when his congregation complimented him on having delivered a fine discourse, “There is another sermon lost.” He did not want his hearers to praise his discourse—he wanted them to feel the power of the Truth of God which he had preached to them! And so do we. But there are some hearers into whom we do not know how to get the Truth of God. We may put it, first in one way, and then in another way— sometimes pathetically and, at other times, we may make use of a little humor. We may denounce or allure, but we are equally foiled in whatever way we attempt to reach them. We cannot get the plow in where we want it to go and if ever the share does seem to make a little impression, it only produces a slight surface scratch. Some of you have had a good many of those scratches. You have thought, “When I get out of this place, I will go home and pray,” but you have not done so. Or, if you have prayed, your seriousness has soon vanished and the impression made upon you in the service has expended itself in that prayer!

What is worst of all, in some of you, God’s dealing with you, in the preaching of the Gospel, has developed the hardness of your hearts. It has made others realize how hard they are and, truth to tell, it has really hardened them. Plowing does not harden rocks—but preaching does harden sinners if the Gospel does not reach their hearts and, of all hardhearted men, the hardest are those who have been hardened in the fire of the Gospel! If you want to find a heart that is as hard as steel, you must look for one that has passed through the furnace of Divine Love and has been made aware of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, but has rejected the Truths of God that has been made known to it.

This hardening of heart is not the fault of the plowshares which have been used and, with some of you, God has used a great many. There is a man here who used to be plowed by God when he was a child, and the plowshares employed then were his mother’s tears. He cannot forget them! Even now, as I bring them to his memory, he feels as if he must weep as he did when he was a child. Ah, my Friend, that mother of yours is in Heaven, now, but if she could look down upon her son, and tears could be shed in Heaven, what cause she would have to weep over you! She prayed for you when you were nestling in her bosom and she took you to the House of God from your very early days. You can remember her very look when she used to speak to you about Jesus when you were quite a little child! And perhaps you remember her dying request that you would follow her to Heaven. But that plowshare—one of God’s best— has never yet cut into your rocky heart and you still remain as hard as you ever were!

Since that time God has tried you with the plowshare of personal sickness. You have not always been such a strong man as you are today. Time was when you lay very near the gates of death and you trembled at the prospect before you! Do you remember when the fever seized you, or when you thought the cholera had claimed you as its victim? You trembled then and you made many vows which all proved to be lies! And you even made a profession of repentance, but it was mere profession— and though you appeared, just for a little while, to be touched—and those who were around you, who had prayed for you, hoped that at last the plowshare had entered into you—they found that you rose up from that bed of sickness worse than you were before!

Since then, God has used another sharp plowshare upon you—the conversion of some of those who are very near and dear to you. You were not at all pleased when your wife came home a converted woman, but you could not help feeling it. And when your sister wrote and told you that she was rejoicing in Christ as her Savior, you could not pour ridicule upon the letter and, as you read it, it brought tears to your eyes. You quickly wiped them away and said that you were not such a fool as to trouble about so absurd a matter, yet it was not easy for you to forget the emotion which the news had caused. Possibly your own dear child, whom you love very much, has made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you do not know anything, experimentally, about such faith as that. This is a very sharp plowshare and none can think lightly of it but those who are unaware of its operation. To have your relatives and friends converted and to be yourself left out of the happy circle of blessing ought to make you think seriously about this matter!

Another plowshare has gone across your rocky heart from the fact that some of your old companions are dead. One was buried this week, was he not? You used to drink and smoke with him, but there will be no more pipes and beer on a Sunday night for you two! You know right well that he died without the fear of God in his heart and you also know that you are living in the same sad and perilous condition. It gave you quite a shock when someone said to you, “Old Tom is dead.” You have also seen several of your business friends die. There was that clerk who was in the office with you a little while ago—he is gone and you have been called to occupy his place. Death has come awfully near you again and again. You have been like a soldier on the field of battle who saw the ranks on every side of him mown down, yet he still lived on. God’s plow has been at work with you—He has been trying, by these striking Providential dealings, to touch your hard heart—but it has not yet yielded. Do you think that God means to keep on plowing you to no effect? If you do, you are wonderfully mistaken, for the oxen will not always plow upon this rock—and when it comes to this—that neither can love melt you, nor terrors subdue you—God will say, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” And when God says that, your doom will be sealed! May God grant that He may never have to say that concerning any whom I am now addressing!

I have thus shown you that you have been like a piece of granite rock, untouched by all the different plowshares which have been tried upon you. There is another thought that you must not forget and that is, you have wearied the workers. I pity the poor oxen that have to plow a rock— they plod on and on and all their toil is wasted. The hardest form of labor is that which produces no result. I remember being in a military prison where they punish the men by making them carry cannon balls from one end of the yard to another, and bring them back again—a very senseless practice. The sergeant who accompanied me said, “When we let the men carry the balls from this end of the yard, to make them into a pyramid at the other end, there was some kind of amusement in the task, so the rule was made that the man must carry the ball from this end of the yard and bring it back again, and his toil seems to be so altogether fruitless that it becomes a double punishment to him.” It is certainly a very great trial for a man to have to work for nothing and to feel that all he is doing will result in nothing. There are some of us who have had to do so with you unconverted folk. And sometimes some of us have been very harshly used—we oxen that have to plow such hard rock’s as you are!

The first part of my text asks, “Shall horses run upon the rock?” I remember going over a smooth, rocky place in the Alps which is called Hell-Place because it is so very slippery. Well, horses could not be expected to run over rocks like those, and it is not surprising that they sometimes trip! And if the preacher occasionally trips, it is little wonder when he has such rocks as those to go over. George Herbert says that the sins of hearers sometimes make the preacher trip, and so it is. There is often, in the hearer, that which makes the preacher speak amiss. I remember pleading one night here with all my soul, and I said, “If some of you who are listening to me, never mean to accept Christ as your Savior, do not continue to sit in this place and hear the Gospel, but go away and let somebody who will accept Him, occupy your seat.” I did not think that one of my hearers would take me at my word, but there was one, over whom I have never ceased to lament, and for whom I still pray, who says that he will never come here again because he is one of those who will never receive Christ and, though he would still like to hear me preach, he will never occupy another person’s place. It was a mistake on my part to say what I did, but I do not think I would have tripped like that if the rock had not been so hard and smooth!

It is hard for a horse to have to run upon such a rock as that and it is hard for the oxen to keep on plowing there. I have had over 20 years of this kind of plowing upon some of you—and I have made nothing of you yet. Thank God, there are not many of your sort, but there is still a remnant left of the old Park-Streeters who were “almost persuaded” then, and they are still “almost persuaded.” And I am “almost persuaded” that I shall never be able to do them any good. It seems to me that there is nothing which I can say that will ever reach their hearts, or else, surely, it would have reached them before now! I am always glad when I hear that some other preacher attracts them and that they are listening to him with interest, for, as long as they get saved, I do not mind how it is done. Still, it is hard lines for us to have to preach for 20 years to some of you and to have all that labor for nothing. If anybody could teach me how to preach better, I would gladly go to school, again, and learn how to get at some of your hearts. If they would teach me how to speak in such a vulgar style that I would lose my reputation, but be blessed to the saving of your souls, I would willingly fling my reputation to the winds! Or if I could learn the art of oratory, I would go and sit at the feet of Cicero or Demosthenes, if I could but get at your superfine hearts that need such fine words before they will be touched! But I fear that it is the oxen’s fate to go on plowing, and plowing, and plowing—and to get weary with the labor, and yet to see no result of it all.

One other thing that I want you to remember—you who remain unconverted after all this effort—and that is if the same labor which has been lost upon you, has been used elsewhere, it might have been profitable. Christ said, concerning Bethsaida and Chorazin, a very amazing thing which I do not fully understand, but which I absolutely believe—“If the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” It is a very extraordinary thing that God would send the Gospel to men who do not get any good out of it, and not send it to people who would have got good out of it! There are people, possibly, even in London, certainly, in other parts of the earth, who would have been converted if they had heard the Gospel as much as you have—yet you have heard it and have not been converted! That same digging about and fertilizing that would have made other trees bring forth much fruit, has been used in vain upon you, for you have brought forth no fruit. And you have stood there and occupied a plot of ground which a better tree might have occupied. You have cumbered the ground—do you think that God will always allow you to do that? Have you—who live in the country and have a large orchard—have you a tree that has borne no fruit for many years? I am sure that, if so, you mean to have it cut down before long—and God means to have some of you cut down—and that, it may be, before long! I tremble even as I speak to you thus, for I may be a Prophet foretelling the destruction of your soul! May God, in His infinite mercy, grant that you may repent before His axe of Judgment falls upon you!

Any man in his senses, when he finds that the rock will not break, gives up plowing it. The ancient proverb says, “Will one plow there with oxen?” and God, though infinitely merciful, is equally wise. And if, after the use of means which are blessed elsewhere, any heart still remains hard, He may fairly say, “I have done with it. I give it up to its natural rockiness and so let it continue forever.” That is the end of the matter and a terrible end it is! And I do not know anything more that I can say about it. I have preached the Gospel thousands of times and I have nothing to preach but the Gospel—but these people will not have it, so what more can I say to them? A man came to me the other day and asked me to pray for him. He was one to whom I had many times explained the Gospel and after I had again done so, he said to me, “Will you pray for me, Sir?” I said, “No, I will not.” He asked, “Why not?” and I replied, “Do you want me to ask God to save you apart from the Gospel? I have told you the Gospel again and again—will you accept it? If you will not, I shall not ask God to save you. How can I do so? I cannot expect Him to save you if you will not have the Gospel. If you will have it, that will save you. If you will not have it, you will be lost and it is no use for me to pray for you.”

There I had to leave the matter so far as that man was concerned, but let me say this much to God’s people—You see that we cannot do anything with this rock. The oxen are quite tired out with their useless labor, so let us pray to God to turn that rock into good soil. It needs a miracle to be worked and only God can work it. Let us unite our prayers and cry to God, “O Lord, You did change our rocky hearts into good soil, where the Good Seed could enter, germinate and grow. Change these rocks, we beseech You!” Here is the reason for our Prayer Meetings and for our private intercession. We can do nothing with these rocky hearts, so let us turn to God who can do everything! Then I may add that if you will pray God to change these rocky hearts, I will go on preaching to them! The weary ox will go on plowing again, hard as it has found the work for these 20 years and more. If you will pray, I will preach! If you pray God to make the rock brittle and break it up, I will plow it again, and I should not wonder if the plowshare gets into some of them at last, so that there may yet be a golden harvest to God’s honor and Glory!

Let me put the plow in one minute more. The greatest rock-breaking plow that I know of is the one that broke me up. If that will not do it, I do not know of any other that will. When Christ died upon the Cross, among other wonderful things that happened, we read that “the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.” Ah, it was a dying Christ that rent the rocks! Sinner, listen once more to—

*“The old, old story*

*Of Jesus and His love.”*  
You have offended and grieved your God and my God is just—and must punish you for your wrongdoing. But, in order that He may not punish you, He has taken upon Himself your nature and come into this world to suffer in the sinner’s place and borne what was due to human sin in His own body on the Cross! Out of pure love to those who were His enemies, out of love to those hearts that are so hard that they will not love Him, out of love to those who have, perhaps, for 50 years rejected and despised Him—for love, for the sake of love, alone, He died upon the Cross, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” And now, if you will trust Him, you shall at once have the pardon of all your sins! If you will trust Him, you shall be—

*“To the great Father’s bosom pressed,*

*Once for all a child confessed!”*  
You shall be cleansed in a moment and accepted and saved forever if you do trust the Incarnate, dying, risen, glorified Redeemer! God grant that this plowshare of the Cross may touch you! Law and terrors, I know full well, do not affect some men, but Almighty Love—will that not affect them? God grant that it may, and unto Him shall be glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: AMOS 6:1-8; 7:1-6.

Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. His words are rugged, but sometimes he rises to sublimity. His expressions are somewhat dark and not readily understood, but when we learn the meaning of them, we perceive that they are full of deep, earnest, solemn warning and instruction.

Amos 6:1. Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! It was a time of great sin and also of great judgment, yet there were some in Zion who were quite at ease under all that was happening. No sense of sin grieved them, no thought of coming judgment alarmed them. What did they care if the nation went to rack and ruin? What did it mean to them that God was angry with His people? They were atheists or, at least, they acted as if they were! Whatever might happen, they would run the risk of it. “Woe,” says God, to all such people as these—and when the Lord says, “Woe,” to anyone, it is indeed woe, for He never speaks thus without cause.

2. Pass you unto Calneh, and see; and from there go you to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? Or their border greater than your border? The Lord points to other cities which had been destroyed—to Calneh, and Hamath, and Gath which He had smitten because of the sin of the people who had lived there, and He says, “You that dwell at Jerusalem, and you that live at Samaria, do not imagine that you will escape the consequences of your sin. I was able to reach the inhabitants of these proud cities, despite their strong fortifications and their powerful armies—and I can also reach you.” So, when we look back upon the judgments of God upon guilty men, we may conclude that no sinner has any right to think that he shall escape. The proudest and mightiest have been brought down by God and so will men who dare to resist the Most High continue to be humbled, even to the world’s end.

3. You that put far away the evil day. You who say, “There is time enough yet. Let us see a little more of life; why need we be in a hurry to seek salvation?” “You that put far away the evil day”—

3. And cause the seat of violence to come near. For, when men try to postpone thoughts about “the judgment” which is to follow “after death,” they are generally the more eager to indulge in sin. They say, “There is time enough yet,” because they want a longer period for yet greater indulgence in sinful ways. The Lord cries, “Woe,” to all such people as these.

4. That lie upon beds of ivory. They were men of wealth who spent their money upon all manner of luxuries while the poor of the land were perishing through need.

4. And stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall. It was, as I have said, a time of danger when war was at the gates, but the people were so careless that they lived as if peace were established forever and the enemy could never touch them! Their expenditure was at a high rate for self-indulgence and only for that.

5. That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instrument of music, like David. But not for the same purpose as David played and sang—his instruments of music were used for spiritual solace and the worship of God—but these people set their wits to work to find out how their music might inflame their lusts and be a vehicle for the expression of their lascivious desires.

6. That drink wine in bowls. For seldom can a careless man crown the edifice of his sin without indulging in drunkenness! He must have the sensual delight that he finds in “the flowing bowl.”

6. And anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. It is not wrong for a person, to whom God has given much of the good things of this life, to enjoy them fitly and reasonably. The sin of these people consisted in the fact that when others were afflicted, they took that opportunity to indulge themselves in all the delights of the flesh. And when God’s rod was being used for chastisement, they went on with their sinful mirth to show how little they cared about it. Probably I am addressing some who have, at this very moment, a sore sickness in the house. Or it may be that a beloved wife is scarcely cold in her grave, or a dear child has only just sobbed itself into its death-sleep—yet the survivors are running after amusements, pleasures and follies more wildly than ever, as if to hush the voice of conscience and to forget the strokes of God’s rod! Oh, that this very solemn chapter might convey a warning message to them!

7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed. Whenever God does come forth to execute judgment upon the ungodly, He will first pick out those who have defied Him the most. Those who have the proudest spirit and the hardest heart shall be the first to feel the strokes of His rod.

8. The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, says the LORD, the God of Hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

The next chapter shows that even when God was very angry with the wicked, there was still wonderful power in prayer.  
Amos 7:1-3. Thus has the lord God showed unto me; and, behold, He formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king’s mowing. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech You: by whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small. The Lord repented for this: it shall not be, says the LORD. In a vision, the Prophet saw the locusts or grasshoppers come to devour all the green things of the land—a very terrible visitation! If you have never seen it, you cannot realize how utterly bare everything is made after the visit of the locusts. The Prophet put up a vehement and earnest prayer. He cried, “O Lord God, forgive!” And no sooner was the intercession offered than the Lord said, “It shall not be.” Thus the impending judgment was turned away.  
4-6. Thus has the Lord God showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech You: by whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small. The Lord repented for this. This also shall not be, says the Lord God. This time the Prophet saw the fire devouring the land—perhaps the fire of war which casts its blazing brand upon peaceful dwellings. This fire, however, was something worse than that, for the very deep itself seemed to be licked up by tongues of flame and the Prophet, in hearty sympathy with the afflicted people, cried again as he had done before, and the answer came, “This also shall not be, says the Lord God.” This ought to encourage you who are the King’s remembrancers to make use of the position in which His Grace has placed you, and to cry earnestly to Him to turn away His wrathful hand and have pity upon sinners! God grant that many of us may have such an intercessory spirit as that of Amos the herdsman-Prophet!

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THE KING’S MOWINGS  
NO. 3129

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1872.

**“The king’s mowings.”  
Amos 7:1.**

CERTAIN lands belonged to the king so far that he always took the first cut of grass for himself and left any aftermath to those who worked upon the land. Now, our great King has His mowings, too. His Church is the field which He has enclosed and blessed. At set seasons the King takes His mowings. Lately, beyond any other time in my life that I remember, the King has been taking His mowings in and around the Church of which He has made me overseer. One has spent many hours at the bedsides of the dying and in trying to console the bereaved. Our loss, if I may venture to call it a loss, as a Church, at the opening of this year was extremely heavy. The King has been taking His mowings among us and has cut down here, one, and there, another. When churches commence with a great many young members, there would naturally not be so many deaths at first, but as we all grow old together, there must be a large proportion of removals from this world into the land above. I purpose to speak a little upon that subject and I shall do so in a threefold way—first, by way of consolation. Then, by way of admonition. And then by way of anticipation.

I. First, by way of CONSOLATION. It is a sorrowful matter that our Beloved Brothers and Sisters should be taken from us. We were not more but less than men if we did not sorrow. Jesus wept and by that act He sanctified our tears. It is not wrong, it is not unmanly—much less is it sinful for us to drop the tear of sorrow over the departed—yet let us help to wipe those tears away with a handkerchief of sacred consolations.

First, seeing that “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass,” do you lament that the King has been mowing? Then let this thought chide you. The King Himself has done it! There is no such abstract thing as death—an unloosed monster devouring the saints at will—“Drinking the blood of men and grinding their bones between his iron teeth.” This is a poet’s raving! No destroying angel is sent forth to slay the Israel of God! There is a destroying angel, it is true, but He comes not near those who bear the blood mark. It is not in the power of disease or accident to kill the children of God except as instruments in the Divine hand. No saint dies otherwise than by the act of God! It is always according to the King’s own will—it is the King’s own doing. Every ripe ear in His field is gathered by His own hand, cut down by His own golden sickle and by none other. Every full-blown flower of Grace is taken away by Him, not smitten with blight, or cut down by the tempest, or devoured by some evil beast—

*“When mortal man resigns his breath,  
‘Tis God directs the stroke of death.  
Casual however the stroke appear,  
He sends the fatal messenger.  
The keys are in that hand Divine—  
That hand must first the warrant sign  
And arm the death, and wing the dart  
Which does His message to our heart.”*

The Lord has done it, in every case, and knowing this, we must not even think of complaining! What the King does, His servants delight in, for He is such a King that, let Him do what seems good to Him and we will still bless Him—we are of the mind of him who said, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”

Again, those who have been mown down and taken away are with the King. They are the King’s mowings! They are gathered into His stores. They are not in “purgatory” (a Romanist lie). They are not in the limbus patran, much less are they in Hell. They are not wandering in dreary pathways amidst the stars to find a lodging place. Jesus prayed, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” And this prayer has fixed the saints’ abode! We shall enter into no question, now, about whether Heaven is a place, or where it is, or whether it is merely a state—it is enough for us that where Jesus is, there His people are—not some of them in lower seats, or in lower rooms, or sitting outside, but they are all where He is! That will certainly content me. And if there are any degrees in Glory, you who want the high ones may have them. The lowest degree that I can perceive in Scripture is, “that they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory”—and that lowest degree is as high as my most vivid imagination can carry me! Here is enough to fill our souls even to the brim.

And now do you sorrow for those who are with Christ where He is? Do you not almost blame your tears when you learn that your beloved ones are promoted to such blissful scenes? Why, Mother, did you ever wish for your child a higher place than that it should be where Jesus is? Husband, by the love you bore your wife, you cannot grudge her the Glory into which she has entered! Wife, by the deep devotion of your heart to him who has been taken from you, you could not wish to have detained him a moment from the joy in which his soul now triumphs with his Lord! If he were gone to some unknown land, if you could stand on life’s brink and hear the roaring billows of a dread mysterious ocean and say, “My dear one has gone, I know not where, to be tossed like a waif or stray upon yonder tempestuous sea,” oh, then you might mix your own tears with the brine of that ocean! But you know where they are, you know with Whom they are and you can form some idea, by the joy of Christ’s Presence here on earth, what must be their bliss above!—

*“Sounds of sweet melody fall on my ears. Harps of the blessed, your music I hear!  
Rings with the harmony Heaven’s high dome, Joyfully, joyfully bring the saints Home.”*

It is a sweet reflection, too, that although our dear friends have been cut down like flowers by the scythe, yet their lot is better than ours, though we are standing and blooming today. Life seems better than death and the living dog is better than the dead lion—but take into account the everlasting state—and who will dare to say that the state of the blessed is worse than ours? Will not all assert that it is infinitely superior? We are still suffering, but they shall smart no more. We are weak and tottering, but they have regained the dew of their youth! We know what need means and wipe the sweat of toil from off our face, but they rest in abundance forever! The worst of all is that we still sin and have to wrestle hard with doubts and fears. Satan still besets us, the world is around us and corruptions fester within us. But they are where not a wave of trouble can ever break the serenity of their spirit! They are beyond the barking of the Hell dogs and beyond the arrows of Hell’s quiver, though there are archers who would shoot their darts into Heaven itself if they could! The ingathered ones are supremely blest! They are far beyond what we are in joy, knowledge and holiness! Therefore, if we love them, how can we mourn that they have gone from the worse to the better—and from the lower to the higher room?

And, moreover, Brothers and Sisters, although some of you sorrow very bitterly because God has taken away the desire of your eyes with a stroke, let me remind you that you might have had a worse sorrow than this concerning them. Ah, the mother who has to mourn over an adult son who has become a profligate, has a thousand times more bitter pang than she has who seen her infant carried to the grave! The father who knows that his sons or daughters have become a dishonor to his name may well wish that he had long ago seen them laid in the silent tomb. And I have known men in the Church whom I would sooner have buried a thousand times over than have lived to see what I have afterwards seen in them! For years they stood as honorable professors—but they lived to dishonor the Church, to blaspheme their Lord, to go back into perdition and prove that the root of the matter was never in them! Oh, you need not weep for those in Heaven! Weep not for the dead, neither bewail them—but weep for the spiritually dead—weep for the apostate and backslider! Weep for the false professor and the hypocrite—“the wandering stars,” “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” If you have tears, go and shed them there—but for those who have fought the fight and won the victory, for those who have stemmed the stream and safely landed on the other side—let us have no tears! No, put away the sackbut and bring forth the clarion! Let the trumpet ring out jubilantly the note of victory! It is to them the day of jubilee—why should it be for us the hour of sorrow? They put on the crown and bear the palm branch in their hands—why should we don the funeral weeds? There is infinitely more to rejoice in than there is to sorrow for! Therefore let our hearts be glad. The Lord has said to them, “Well done,” and rewarded them according to His Grace—and this is infinitely better than that they should have lived to slip and slide!

“But this is poor comfort,” you will say, and therefore let me come back to the text and say that the King has taken His mowings. Sorrowful as we may be, it is not the worst sorrow that we could have, but whether or not, we must not grudge the King any whom He takes from us. All the friends we have are lent us. The old proverb says, “A loan should go laughing home,” that is we should never be unwilling to return a loan, but cheerfully give it back to the lender. Our dear ones were lent to us and what a blessing they have been to us! The lamps of our house, have they not been the joy of our day? The Master says, “I need them back again,” and do we clutch at them and say, “No, Master, You shall not have them”? Oh, it must not be so! Our dear ones were never half as much ours as they were Christ’s! We did not make them, but He did! We never bought them with our blood, but He did! We never sweat a bloody sweat for them, nor had our hands and feet pierced for them, but He did! They were lent to us, but they belonged to Him! Your prayer was, “Father, let them be with me where I am,” but Christ’s prayer was, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.” Your prayer pulled one way and Christ’s pulled another. Be not envious that Christ won the suit! If I ever enter into the Lord’s Court of Chancery, if I find that Christ is on the other side, my Lord, I will not plead. You shall have Your will, for I and You and You and I are one—and if it is Your plea that all I love may be with You, so be it, for I shall be with You, too, before long, and I would not quarrel with Your wish. The King has let out this Church like a pasture to us and He says, “I must sometimes take My mowings.” Well, He has so watered us and given us the smell of a field that the Lord God has blessed, that when He comes and takes His rent, we may not stand at the gate and forbid Him, but say, “Good Master, come and take which You will! Take your quit-rent, for the field is all Your own. You have dearly purchased it and You have tilled it with much diligence—take what You will, for it is Yours.”

And, let me add, to increase our comfort the King took His mowings at the right time. Out of those whom He has taken away from us, I think we must all confess that the Lord took them when they should be taken. In one case, a venerable Sister, who if she had lasted longer, would have been the prey of weakness and of pain—‘twas well she fell asleep. In another case, a dear young friend was pining under that fell disease, consumption—her throat was scarcely able to receive nourishment—I think those who loved her best must have felt relieved when at last she fell asleep. Two Brothers rise before my mind’s eye—the one struggled through life and wondered often that he did not sink before, for he was like a ship unfit for sea which every wave threatens to engulf! It is a wonder that he survived as long as he did. He served his Lord up to the last and when all was over, it was well. Another, whom I saw with an afflicting disease about him that had brought him very low, had led so gracious a life that he did not need to utter any dying testimony. Beloved Brothers, also, who were once with us in the College have fallen asleep, having finished their course and kept the faith.

I may add that not only did the King take His mowings at the right time, but in every case I have now before my mind, He took them in the easiest way. He took them gently. Some have a hard fight for it at the last, but in these cases, though there were pains and dying strife, yet at the last their souls were kissed away by the dear lips of Him who named them by their names and said they were His! They fell asleep, some of them so sweetly that those who looked on scarcely knew whether it was the sleep of life or the deeper sleep of eternity. They were gone—they were gone at once to their Lord and their God! Putting all these things together—reflecting that the King has done it, that those He has taken away He has taken to be with Himself, that their present lot is an infinitely better one than anything beneath the moon and considering, too, that we must never grudge the King the heritage which He has so dearly bought, and that He took His mowings at the right time and took them in the happiest manner—we will no longer repine, but we will bless the Lord!

II. And now, Brothers and Sisters, allow me for a few minutes to use the subject by way of ADMONITION.  
I hardly know whether, under this head, I have grouped together thoughts that are quite admonitory. The first one is to be very joyous. It is this—that as we belong to the King, our hope is that we shall be mown too! We are sitting on the banks of Jordan, especially some of us who are of riper years, waiting for a summons to the court of the Eternal King! It becomes a wonder, sometimes, with aged Christians, why they stay here so long. John Newton, I think, used to marvel at his own age! And Rowland Hill used to say that he half imagined they had forgotten him—and hoped they would soon remember him and send for him. Well, we have not quite gone that length—we who are young—but still we entertain the hope that some fair evening, calm and bright, the angel reaper will come with the scythe. Then shall we, having fulfilled, like the hireling, our day, lay down our tools of labor and take our rest. Then shall we put down our sword, take off our breastplate and unloose the shoes of iron and brass, for we shall fight no more, but take the palm and claim the victory before the House of God! Never let us look forward to this with dread. It is amazing that we should do so—and we would not if our faith were stronger. When faith vividly realizes the rest that remains for the people of God, we are tempted to long to be up and away! Then why should we wish to linger here? What is there in this old musty worn-out world— worm-eaten and full of holes, with its very gold and silver cankered—that can satisfy an immortal spirit? Let us away to the hills of spices and to the mountains of frankincense, where the King in His beauty stands with “helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim” and all the hosts that serve Him day and night, to behold His face, and evermore adore Him! Let us anticipate cheerfully the time when the King’s mowings shall also include us!  
Brothers and Sisters, the admonition that arises out of all this is, let us be ready. Should not every Christian live every day as if he were going to die that day? Should we not always live as if we knew our last hour to be at the door? If a man in his right state were informed all a sudden, “You will die tonight!” He ought not to have to alter his mode of life one atom! He should be so living that he had nothing more to do but to continue his course. It is remarked of Bengel, the great critic, that “he did not wish to die in spiritual parade, but in the ordinary way—like a person called out to the street door from the midst of business—so much so that he was occupied with the collection of his proof-sheets at his dying season, as at other times.” To me, it seems to be the very highest kind of death to die in harness—concluding life without suspending service. Alas, many are unready and would be sadly put about if the midnight cry were suddenly heard. Oh, let us see that everything is in order! Both for this world and the next, nothing should be left to be hurried over in the last few hours. Christian, is your will made? Are your business affairs all straight? They ought to be—everything ought to be as nearly as you can keep it in perfect order, so that you are ready to go at any minute. Mr. George Whitefield used to so live in anticipation of death that he said, “I never go to sleep at night with even a pair of gloves out of place.” Oh, that we would be habitually ready and in order—especially in higher matters—walking before the Lord, as preparing to meet Him!  
Then, dear Friends, this departure of many of our fellow workers, while it admonishes us to be ready to go, at the same time teaches us to do twice as much while we are here, seeing that our numbers are being so constantly thinned. A brave soldier, in the day of battle, if he hears that a regiment has been exterminated by the enemies shot and shell, says, “Then those of us that survive must fight all the more bravely! There is no room for us to play at fighting. If they have slain so many, we must be more desperately valiant.” And so, today, if one here or there is gone, a useful worker from the Sunday schools, or from the street preaching, then it is time our broken ranks were repaired! O you young men, I pray you, fill up the gap! And you young women who love the Savior, if a Sunday school teacher is gone and you are teaching, teach better! Or if you are not teaching, come and fill the place! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I pray for recruits. I stand like a commander in the midst of my little army and see some of the best smitten down—here one and there one—and what can I do, but as my Master bids me, lead you on and say, “Brothers and Sisters, step into their places! Fill the gaps in the ranks!” Do not let death gain upon us, but even as one goes into the Golden City, let another cry, “Here I am! Call me, also, to my reward!” As for us who are at work, we must labor more zealously than ever, we must pray more fervently than ever! When a certain great man suddenly died in the ministry, I remember, in my young days, an old preacher saying, “I must preach better than ever I did, now that Mr. So-and-So is gone.” And you, Christian, whenever a saint is removed, say, “I must live the better to make up to the Church the loss which it has sustained.”  
One other thought, by way of admonition. If the King has been taking His mowings, then the King’s eyes are upon His Church. He has not forgotten this field, for He has been mowing it! We have been praying lately that He would visit us. He has come, He has come! Not quite as we expected Him, but He has come, He has come! Oh yes, and as He has walked these aisles and looked on this congregation, He has taken first one, and then another. He has not taken me, for I am not ready. And He has not taken you, for you are not quite ripe—but He has taken away some that were ripe and ready—and they have gone to be with Him where He is. Well, then, He has not forgotten us, and this ought to stimulate us in prayer! He will hear us! His eyes are upon us! !his ought to stimulate us to self-examination. Let us purge out everything that will grieve Him! He is evidently watching us. Let us seek to live as in His Presence—that nothing may vex His Spirit and cause Him to withdraw from us!  
Beloved, these are the words of admonition.  
III. And, now, a few more words by way of ANTICIPATION. I hardly know under what head to place them. What anticipations are there that come out of the mowing?  
Why these. There is to be an after-growth. After the King’s mowings, there came another springing up of fresh grass which belonged to the King’s tenants. So we expect, now that the King has been mowing, that we shall have a fresh crop of grass! Is there not a promise, “They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses?” Fresh converts will come and who will they be? Well, I look around, but I will not say, with Samuel, as I look at some young man in the gallery, “Surely the Lord has chosen him.” Neither will I look down to someone in that area and say, “Surely the Lord has chosen him,” but I will bless God that I know He has chosen some and that He means to make this fresh grass spring up to fill up the vacuum caused by the King’s mowings!  
Do you know who I should like to come if I might have my preference? Well, where the daughter has died, how glad I should be if the father came, or the brother came. And where the father has died, how I would rejoice if the son should come! And where a good woman has been taken away, how glad would I be if her husband filled up her place! It seems to me as if it were natural to wish that those who loved them best should occupy their position and discharge their work for them. But if that cannot be, I stand here tonight as a recruiting sergeant. My King in His wars has lost some of His men and the regiment needs replenishing! Who will come? I put the colors in my hat, tonight, but I will not stand here and tempt you with lies about the ease of the service, for it is hard service! Yet I assure you that we have a blessed Leader, a glorious conflict and a grand reward! Who will come? Who will come to fill up the gaps in the ranks? Who will be baptized for the dead, to stand in their place of Christian service and take up the torch which they have dropped? I will pass the question round and I hope that many a heart will say, “Oh, that the Lord would have me! Oh, that He would blot out my sins and receive me!” He delights in contrite hearts! He saves such as are of a contrite spirit. He will save whom He will have, but the way to be enlisted is plain! “Oh,” you say, “what must I give to be Christ’s soldier?” To be the queen’s soldier, you do not give anything—you receive a shilling. You take in order to be a soldier of the queen, and so, to be Christ’s soldier, you must take Christ to be your All-in-All, holding out your empty hand and receiving of His blood and righteousness to be your hope and your salvation! Oh, that His good Spirit would sweetly incline your wills that one after another might be made willing in the day of His power! May He thus do— and our hearts will greatly rejoice!  
As I read the passage in Amos from which I have taken my text, I noticed something about caterpillars. (The marginal reading calls them “green worms”). It is said that after the King’s mowings, there came the caterpillars to eat up the after growth. Oh, those caterpillars! When the poor Eastern farmer sees the caterpillars, his heart is ready to break, for he knows that they will eat up every green thing! And I can see the caterpillars here tonight. There is the great green caterpillar that eats up all before him—I wish I could crush him. He is called the caterpillar of procrastination! There are many, many other worms and locusts which eat up much, but this worm of procrastination is the worst, for just as the green blade is beginning to spring up, this caterpillar begins to eat. I can hear him gnawing, “Wait, wait, wait! Tomorrow, tomorrow! A little more sleep, a little more sleep, a little more sleep!” And so this caterpillar devours our hopes. Lord, destroy the caterpillar and grant that instead of the fathers, may be the children! Instead of the King’s mowings, may there come up the after-growth who shall be a rich reward to the farmer and bring glory to the Owner of the soil!  
We have reason to pray that the Lord would send the dew and the rain to bring forth the after-growth. “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.” Now this congregation is like mown grass. God has mown it—a rich mowing has the King taken from us. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, we have the promise—let us plead it before the Throne of God. All the preaching in the world cannot save a soul, nor all the efforts of men. But God’s Spirit can do everything! Oh that He would come down like rain upon the mown grass right now! Then shall we see the handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains multiply till its fruit shall shake like Lebanon and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. The Lord send it, the Lord send it now!  
If any would be saved, here is the way of salvation—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” To believe is to trust. What you have to trust in is this—that Jesus is God, that He became Man, that He suffered in the sinner’s place and that whoever believes in Him shall be forgiven because God has punished Christ instead of Believers. Christ bore God’s wrath instead of every sinner that ever did or ever shall believe in Him! And if you believe in Him, you were redeemed from among men. His substitution was for you and it will save you! But if you believe not, you have no part or lot in this matter. Oh, that you were brought to put your trust in Jesus! This would be the pledge of your sure salvation tonight and forevermore! God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **REVELATION 21.**

Verse 1. And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. Astronomers tell us that within living memory several starry worlds have burnt out and vanished out of sight. The Apostle Peter has told us that this world will be destroyed by fire, but it will afterwards be renewed, and a new sky and a new earth will appear after the first firmament and the first earth shall have become extinct. God means that this planet should continue to exist after it has had a new creation and renewed its youth. The regeneration of His people, their new birth, is a foretaste of what is yet to happen to this whole world of ours. We have the first fruits of the Spirit and we groan within ourselves while we wait for the fullness of that new creation!

“The first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea,” because the sea is the emblem of separation, destruction and unrest. The sea has her dead who shall be given up. The sea cannot now rest nor be quiet, but all shall be calm and tranquil in the new Heaven and the new earth!

2. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. John saw, in vision, the glorified Church of God coming to dwell on the new earth, descending for a while from Heaven to be the very glory of the newly-created world!

3, 4. And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. When there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth, and the Church shall be in her new and glorified condition, then there will be no need for all those purifying forces which have been so active here below. There shall be no death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, nor trial of any kind—all shall be happiness for all shall be holiness! And then, as God dwelt of old among His people in the wilderness, and as Jesus Christ, the Word, was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His Glory, so in that new world shall God reveal Himself to His people by a special indwelling and a peculiar nearness.

5. And He that sat upon the Throne said, Behold, I make all things new.  
[See Sermon #1816, Volume 31—SERMON FOR A NEW YEAR’S DAY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful . Once, the Lord might have said, “Behold, I make all things,” but now He says, “Behold, I make all things new.” Glory be unto the great Creator! Did not the morning stars sing together for joy when He made the world? But equal if not greater Glory must be ascribed to the great Regenerator, the New Creator! Shall we not all sing together to His praise? Yes, that we shall if we are numbered among the “all things” that He makes new!

6. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. [See Sermon #1459, Volume 26—GOOD NEWS FOR THIRSTY SOULS— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Probably

John did not expect to hear that sweet Gospel message just then. The Lord Jesus Christ was speaking of lofty themes, of worlds newly made— and yet in the very middle of it all He puts this gracious promise! Let this be a pattern to all of you who are preachers or teachers—no matter what your subject may be, a Gospel promise or invitation is always in place and in season. You may put it among the most golden sentences like a precious stone in a setting of pure gold and it will never be out of order, come when it may. Men hate God without the slightest reason for doing so and God loves men without the slightest reason—there is every reason why men should love God, and not hate Him—yet they have hated Him without a cause. And there is every reason why God should hate man and not love him—yet He loves us so much that He gave His onlybegotten Son to die, that whoever believes in Him may live forever!

7. He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. What a wonderful word is that! “He shall be My son”—not My servant, but, “My son.” God give us the faith to rise to this more than royal dignity! “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.”

8. But the fearful. No, that is not the right word, it is the cowardly, for there are many who are full of fear who are nevertheless most sincere and right in God’s sight. “But the cowardly.”

8. And unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers. And the Apostle John tells us that “whoever hates his brother is a murderer.”  
8. And whoremongers. Unchaste and unclean men and women.  
8. And sorcerers. Persons who profess to have communications with the dead. Necromancers, spiritualists and all people of that sort.  
8. And idolaters. That is, all who love anyone or anything more than God.  
8. And all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. That is the death that never dies—the death which is far more to be dreaded than the death of the body!  
9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife. John had already caught a glimpse of “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven.” And now this angelic messenger bids him come nearer and look more closely into this mysterious and glorious city “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

10-13. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. God’s Church glorified lies open to all quarters of the infinitude of space! It is no prison of souls that dare not go beyond its borders, but a many-gated city, so that the blessed spirits there can fly wherever they will!

14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. Not Peter only, but the whole of the twelve Apostles shall have their names in the foundations of that holy city!

15, 16. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. It seems at first to be astounding that the height of a city should be equal to the length and the breadth of it, but if you have traveled in Italy, you must have seen many a city, perched upon a hill, which seemed to be even higher than it was broad or long, if you included the wall of the city and the houses, one above another, right up to the loftiest minaret or tower. Yes, like a priceless square casket made all of costly jewels is this wondrous city, equally glorious whichever way you look at it! “The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.”

17, 18. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. Such gold as never was, nor is, nor ever shall be on this earth until that time when God shall have purified it. Our gold is dull, opaque—light is blocked out by it. How many might see if it were not for the gold which blinds them and hides the Truth of God from them!

19, 20. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. You know that the stones of which this holy city is built are living stones. You and I, if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be there—living stones prepared by living Grace to have a name and a place in this living city! But what changes will have to be worked in us before we are fit to be put among these precious jewels! We are like poor blocks of common stone, but we do not know what we shall be like when we have been cut and polished on the great Lapidary’s wheel. You may take a precious stone to a jeweler and ask him what its value is, but he will say, “I cannot tell what it is worth until it has been cut and polished.” That is how the Lord will prove the value of His living stones. If He will but work upon us by His Grace, we cannot tell what He will make of us before He places us in the position He has appointed for us in the glorious city that rests upon these twelve precious foundations!

21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each individual gate was of pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. John had already said that “the city was pure gold like unto clear glass” and now he says that “the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” We do not always get such a combination as this here below, gold, precious and pure, yet unstained with blood and undimmed with the oppression of the poor—delicate gold, “as it were transparent glass.”

22, 23. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is

the Light thereof. [See Sermon #583, Volume 10—THE LAMB—THE LIGHT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Yes, and the glorified  
Church, herself, because of this Light, sheds such a bright light on all within her that all the saints rejoice in her light!

24, 25. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. Shut gates signify war—open gates mean peace. There shall be no more fear of war, no Gog and Magog to gather together to battle, no Armageddon to be dreaded by the glorified Church of Christ who shall be in perfect peace forever.

26, 27. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie; but they which are written in the

Lamb’s Book of Life. [See Sermon #1590, Volume 27—THE BARRIER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]  
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THE PLUMB LINE  
NO. 2904

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 27, 1876.

**“Thus He showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what do you see? And I said, A plumb line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel: I will not again pass by them anymore. Amos 7:7, 8.**

GOD usually speaks by men according to their natural capacity. Amos was a herdsman. He was not a man of noble and priestly rank, like Ezekiel, nor a man of gigantic intellect and mighty eloquence, like Isaiah. He was a simple herdsman and, therefore, God did not cause him to see the visions of Isaiah, or dazzle his mind with the wondrous revelations that were given to Ezekiel. God’s rule is, “Every man in his own order” and if we depart from that, we get out of place and we are apt to try to make others do that which they are not fit to do and then blame them when they fail to accomplish what they should never have attempted! God always uses His servants in the best possible way and as they ought to be used. And so, when the herdsman Amos had a vision, he simply saw a piece of string with a plumb of lead at the bottom of it—a plumb line—a thing which he could easily understand.

There was a mystery about the vision, but the vision itself was not mysterious. It was a very simple emblem, indeed, exactly suited to the mind of Amos, just as the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah were adapted to the more poetic minds of men of another class. You and I, dear Brothers and Sisters, may be very thankful if God should use us as he did Amos and, if He does, we must not be envying the Isaiahs and Ezekiels. If we see a plumb line, let us preach about a plumb line! And if God should ever enable us to understand the visions of Zechariah or Ezekiel, then let us preach about them. Let every preacher or teacher testify according to the measure of the Light of God and Grace that God has given him—then we shall do well. Amos can see a plumb line and he sees it well—and when he has seen it, he tells what he has seen—and leaves God to set His seal upon his testimony.

Now, on this occasion we have nothing before us but this plumb line, but there is a great deal to be learned from it. The first thing is this—the plumb line is used in construction. Secondly, the plumb line is used for testing what is built. And, thirdly, it appears from the text that the plumb line is used in the work of destruction, for the casting down of that which is found not to be straight.

I. First, THE PLUMB LINE IS USED IN CONSTRUCTION. We are told in the text that “the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line,” that is to say, a wall which had been constructed with the help of a plumb line and, therefore, He tested it with that which was supposed to have been used in its construction—which was a fair and proper thing to do. If the wall only professed to be run up without a plumb line, then it might be hard to try it with the plumb line. But as it was a wall which professed to have been constructed according to the rules of the builder’s art, it was fair and reasonable that it should be tested by the plumb line.

First, then, dear Friends, a plumb line is used in building when it is done as it ought to be. And I remind you that God always uses it in His building. Everything that God builds is built plumb, straight, square and fair. You see that rule at work in Nature—there is nothing out of proportion there. Those who understand these things and look deeply into them will tell you that the very form and size of the earth have a connection with the blooming of a flower, or the hanging of a dew-drop upon a blade of grass and that if the sun were larger or smaller than it is, or if the material of which the earth is formed were more dense, or different in any degree from what it is, then everything—the most magnificent and the most minute—would be thrown out of gear! Someone of old used to say that God is the great Arithmetician—the great Master of geometry—and so He is. He never makes any mistakes in His calculations. There is not anything in the world that He has made in a careless manner. The mixing of the component parts of the air we breathe is managed with consummate skill and if you could resolve a drop of water into its original elements, you would be struck by the wisdom with which God has adapted the proportions of each particle so as to make a liquid which man can drink! Everything is done by order and rule, as in the changes of the various seasons, the movements of the heavenly bodies and the arrangements of Divine Providence. God always has the plumb line in His hand. He never begins to build, as a careless workman would, that which might turn out to be right, or might turn out to be wrong—He makes sure work of all that He does.

In spiritual matters it is very manifest that whenever God is dealing with souls, He always uses the plumb line. In beginning with us, He finds that the very foundation of our nature is out of the perpendicular and, therefore, He does not attempt to build upon it, but commences His operations by digging it out. The first work of Divine Grace in the soul is to pull down all that Nature has built up. God says, “I cannot use these stones in My building. This man has been behaving himself admirably in some respects and he thinks that he is building up a temple to My honor and glory with his own natural virtues, his own good works and other things of a like character. But all this must be dug out.” The man has taken a great deal of pains in putting it together but it must all come out and there must be a great hole left—the man must feel himself emptied, abased and humbled in the sight of God, for if God is to be everything to the man, then He must be nothing! And if Christ is to be his Savior, He must be a complete Savior from beginning to end. So the foundation of human merit must be cleared right out and flung away, for God could not build squarely upon it. With such a foundation as that, the plumb line would never mark a perpendicular wall.

After all human merit has been flung out, the Lord begins His gracious work by laying the foundation stone of a simple faith in Jesus Christ— and that faith, though simple, is very real. When a man professes to convert his fellow man, he only gives him a fictitious faith which is of no value to him. But when God saves a sinner, He gives him real faith. There may be little knowledge of the Truth of God, but the little that the man knows is truth—and faith, though it is but as a grain of mustard seed, if it is of the right sort, it is better than that faith which is as big as a mountain, yet all of the wrong sort, which will not stand in the time of testing! But the faith which the Holy Spirit gives is the faith of God’s elect—the real faith which will endure even the tests which God applies to it.

Side by side with that faith, God puts true repentance. When a man attempts to convert his fellow man, he gives him a sham repentance, or perhaps he tells him that there is no need of any repentance at all. Certain preachers have been telling us, lately, that it is a very easy matter to obtain salvation and that there is no need of repentance—or if repentance is needed it is merely a change of mind. That is not the Doctrine that our fathers used to preach, nor the Doctrine that we have believed! That faith which is not accompanied by repentance will have to be repented of! So, whenever God builds, He builds repentance fair and square with faith. These two things go together—the man just as much regrets and grieves over the past as he sees that past obliterated by the precious blood of Jesus. He just as much hates all his sin as he believes that his sin has been all put away.

The Lord never builds anything falsely in any man, or teaches him to reckon that to be true which is not true. He builds with facts, with substantial verities, with true Grace and with a real and lasting work in the soul. When the Lord builds in a man, He builds with the plumb line in the sense of always building up that which is towards holiness. Have any of you fallen into sin? Rest assured that God did not build you in that way. Have sinful desires and lusts after evil been excited within you by any doctrine to which you have listened? Then you may be sure that it was not of God! “By their fruits shall you know them,” is an Infallible test of doctrines as well as of disciples! And if any of you have embraced any form of doctrine which hinders you from being watchful, prayerful, careful and anxious to avoid sin, you have embraced error and not the Truth of God, for all God’s building tends towards holiness, towards carefulness, towards a gracious walk to the praise and glory of God!

When the Lord builds a man up, He makes him conscientious, makes him jealous of Himself, makes him detect the very shadow of sin so that before the sin, itself, comes upon him, he holds up his all-covering shield of faith that he may be preserved from its deadly assaults. You may always know God’s building because it is pure building, clean building— but if anybody builds you up in such a style that you can talk of sin as a trifle and think that you may indulge in it even in the least measure with impunity—that is certainly not God’s building!

And, blessed be His name, when our souls are really given up into the Lord’s hands, He will continue to build in us until He has built us up to perfection! There will come a day when sin which now makes its nest in this mortal body of ours shall find this body dissolving and crumbling back to the earth of which it was made—and then our emancipated spirits, delivered from the last taint and trace of sin—free from even the tendency to evil—shall soar away to be with Christ which is far better— and to wait for the trumpet of the Resurrection, when the body, itself, shall also be delivered from corruption, for the grave is a refining pot and, at the coming of Christ, our body shall be pure and white like the garments of a bride arrayed to meet her bridegroom! And the soul, reunited with the body, shall have triumphed over every sin! This is the way that God builds. He does not build us up so that we can go to Heaven with our sin still working in us. He does not build us up to be temples for Him to dwell in and let the devil also dwell in us. Antinomian building is not according to the fashion of God’s building—God builds up surely, solidly, truthfully, sincerely and until we have reached that state of perfection which makes us fit for Heaven!

Now, Beloved, as God thus uses the plumb line in His building, I gather that we also should use the plumb line in our building. First, with regard to the lifting up of our own soul, I would urge upon myself, first, and then upon you, next, the constant use of the plumb line. It is very easy to seek after speed and to neglect to ensure certainty. There is such a thing as being in a dreadful hurry to do what had better never be done, or else be done in a very different style. We see some people who become Christians in about two minutes—and I am devoutly thankful when that is really the case. We see some others become full-grown Christians in about two days and instructors of others in the course of a week—and, very speedily, they attain to such vast dimensions that there is no ordinary church that is big enough to hold them! That is very quick work— that is the way that mushrooms grow, but it is not the way that oaks grow! I urge you all to remember that often the proverb, “the more haste, the less speed,” is true in spiritual things as well as in temporal. My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you only grow an inch in the course of ten laborious years, yet that growth is real—it is better than appearing to grow six feet in an hour when that would only be disease puffing you up and blowing you out. Often and often the soul needs to use the plumb line to see whether that which is built so very quickly is really built perpendicularly, or whether it does not lean this way or that. As the work goes on, we should frequently stop and say to ourselves, “Now, is this right? Is this real? Is this true?” Many a time, if we did that, we would have to fall on our knees and cry, “O Lord, deliver me from exalting myself above measure and counting myself to be rich and increased with goods when, all the while, I am wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”

I would like you young men who are here to use the plumb line when you begin your spiritual life-building. I mean this—your father and mother are members of a certain church, but do not you, therefore, go and join that church without a thorough investigation of the principles on which it is founded. Use the plumb line to see whether it is all straight and square. Try all the doctrines that are taught and do not embrace that which is popular, but that which is Biblical! Then try with the plumb line the ordinances of the church—do not submit to them simply because other people do so, but use the plumb line of Scripture to test them all. You know that as a body we are not afraid that you will ever read your Bible too much. We, as Baptists, have no objection to your bringing everything that is taught to the test of the Bible, for we know that we would be the gainers if you were to do that. But instead of using the plumb line of the Bible, many people have a newly-invented test—the Book of Common Prayer, or Minutes of the Conference, or something else equally valueless! Now, whatever respect I have for books of that sort, I prize my Bible infinitely above them all and above all the volumes of decrees of popes, councils and conferences put together! I would not like to feel that I had been building, and building, and building, and building and yet that there had been a radical error in the whole structure, for I had commenced with a mistake and I had been building myself up not in the most holy faith of the Apostles, but in the most mischievous error of my own notions! I pray you, apply the Bible plumb line continually to all your beliefs, views and practices!

But, even before you do that, use the Gospel plumb line to see whether you really were ever born-again, for our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Test yourselves as to whether you have really believed in Jesus Christ for, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” And if you have believed in Him, take care that while you think you are getting more faith, more love, more patience, more of every Grace—keep the plumb line going— otherwise you may get a great deal into the structure that you will have to take out, again, and you will get the building out of the perpendicular and the whole of it may come down with a crash!

And this plumb line is also to be used upon all work that is done on behalf of other people. There is much teaching which has been given with a pure motive, but which, nevertheless, cannot endure this test. There are some little sects still existing upon the face of the earth that were formed with much labor by their originators, but they are evidently not gold, or silver, or precious stones, for they are passing away with the lapse of time. I would like, as a minister of the Gospel, to do for God that which will endure the supreme test of the Day of Judgment. I should not like to build up a great Church and then, when I was dead and gone, for it to be scattered to the four winds—and to learn in Heaven that I had been mistaken except as to the matter of my own salvation and that, consequently, while some good was done, there was evil done as well! No, we must constantly use the plumb line so that what we build may be perpendicular and may stand the test of the ages and the test of God’s great Judgment Seat! Look to it, Sirs, you who are diligent, that you are diligent in spreading the Truth of God and not error! See to it, you who count up your many converts, that they are real converts and not the mere fruit of excitement! See to it, you who plod on from day to day so industriously seeking to save souls that they are really saved and truly brought to Christ, for, if not, your work will be in vain! Churches that are built in a hurry will come down in a hurry—wood, hay and stubble that look all right in the building will look terrible in the burning when the Day of the Trial by Fire comes!

So that is our first point—that the plumb line is to be used in the construction of the building.  
II. Secondly, THE PLUMB LINE IS TO BE USED FOR TESTING THE BUILDING WHEN IT IS BUILT.  
Do not let us judge either ourselves or one another simply by the eyes. I have frequently thought that a building was out of the perpendicular when it was not and I have sometimes thought it perpendicular when it really was not so. The human eye is readily deceived, but the plumb line is not—it drops straight down and at once shows whether the wall is upright or not .We must continually use upon ourselves the plumb line of God’s Word. Here is a wall that needs to be tested—the wall of selfrighteousness. This man thinks he is all right. He never did anything very wrong. Moreover, he is religious in his way. He says that he has kept the Law of God from his youth up. That is a fine piece of wall, is it not?— with some very handsome stones inlaid with fair colors. You are very proud of it, my dear Friend, but if I put the Bible plumb line to your life, you will be astonished to find how much out of the perpendicular it is. The plumb line is according to this standard, “If any man will be saved by his own works, he must keep the Law of the Lord perfectly, for he who is guilty of the breach of any one of God’s commandments, has broken the whole Law. ‘Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.’” That condemns your wall, does it not?—because you have not at all times kept the whole Law of God in the fullness of the meaning which Christ gave to it. If you are to be saved by works, there must not be a single flaw in the whole wall of your life! If there is, it is not in the perpendicular.  
Here is another wall, built by a man who says that he is doing his best and trusting to Christ to make up for his deficiencies. Well, my dear Friend, your wall is sadly out of the perpendicular because there is a text which says, “Christ is all”—and I know that the Lord Jesus Christ will never be willing to be put side by side with such a poor creature as you are—to be jointly used with yourself to your soul’s salvation! Remember that in the Gospel plan it is not Christ and Co.—it must be all Christ, or no Christ at all! So, if you are depending partly upon self and partly upon Him, my plumb line shows that your wall is out of the perpendicular and that it will have to come down.  
Another man is depending upon rites and ceremonies. Now there are some very strong texts in Scripture concerning that matter. Here is one. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Will you come before God bringing the blood of beasts or costly offerings? Has He not told you that to come before Him with a broken and a contrite heart and, especially to come to Him through the merit of the one great Sacrifice offered by His Son is the only acceptable way of approaching Him? The most gorgeous ceremonies in the whole world cannot save a single soul! That wall is out of the perpendicular and must come down!  
Here is another man who says, “I am, as often as I can be, a hearer of the Word.” I am glad that you are, but if you are only a hearer and not a doer of the Word, your wall is out of the perpendicular, for, if it is good to hear what is right, it is still better to do it. And your condemnation will be all the more terrible if you have known what you ought to do and yet have not done it. There are many of you who come here and who have been coming for a long time who, I hope, will be led to do much more than simply come to hear, for I trust that you will be led by the Holy Spirit to lay hold on eternal life! If not, your wall will not endure the test of the Bible plumb line which plainly shows that you are quite out of the perpendicular!  
There are many other bowing walls, beside those I have mentioned, but I cannot stop to try them now. I would, however, most earnestly urge you all to remember that if you do not test yourself by the plumb line of God’s Word—if you are God’s servant, you will be tried and tested. Have you ever known what it is to be laid aside, on a bed of sickness, and to have everything about you tried? In times of acute pain I have had every morsel of what I thought to be gold and silver put into the fire, piece by piece, by the Master, Himself, until He has put it all in. Thank God some of it has been proven to be gold and has come out all the brighter for the testing. But oh, how much of it has proved to be alloy, or even worthless dross! You can have a great deal of patience when you have not any pain. And you can have a great deal of joy in the Lord when you have got joy in your worldly prosperity—and you can have any quantity of it when you have no troubles to test its reality! But the real faith is that which will endure the trial by fire. The real patience is that which will bear intense agony without a murmur of complaint. The Lord will test and try you, my Brothers and Sisters, sooner or later, if you are His. He will be sure to use the plumb line so you had better use it yourself. It may save you much anxiety in the future if you stop now to question yourself and to enquire whether these things are real and true to you or not.  
And remember, once more, that God will use the plumb line at the Last Great Day to test everything. How many of us could hear, without a tremor, the intimation that God had summoned us to appear before His bar? O my Brothers and Sisters, if the great scales of Divine Justice were swinging from this ceiling right now and the Judge of All said to you, “Step in and let me see what is your weight,” is there one of us who could solemnly and sincerely rise and say, “Lord, I am ready for the weighing”? Yes, I trust that many could say, each one for himself or herself, “There is not anything good in me, but my hope is fixed on Christ alone. And though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I want to be, nor what I shall be, yet ‘by the Grace of God I am what I am.’ My profession of being a Christian is not a lie. It is not a pretense, it is not a piece of religious masquerade—it is true, great God—it is true.”  
My Brother, my Sister, if you can say that, you may step into the scales without any fear, for the contrite and believing heart can endure being weighed! But into the scales you will have to go whether you are ready or not. Your building will all have to be tested and tried. Some of you have built fine mansions, towers and palaces—but the plumb line will be applied to them all and it is God, Himself, who will use the plumb line in every case! No counterfeit will be allowed to pass the pearly gates, nor anything that defiles, or works abomination, or makes a lie. At the Last Great Day none shall pass from beneath the eye of the Judge of all without due examination. He will not suffer even one of the guilty to escape, nor condemn any of those who have been absolved for Christ’s sake. It will be a right and just judgment that will be given in that day— but there will be judgment!  
III. My last point is this—THE PLUMB LINE IS USED IN THE WORK OF DESTRUCTION.  
When a city wall was to be battered down, the general would sometimes say, “This wall is to be taken down to this point.” And then the plumb line was hung down to mark how far they were to go with the work of destruction. They thus marked out that part which might be spared and that which must be destroyed. Now, in the work of destruction, God always uses the plumb line and He goes about that work very slowly. He shows that He does not like it. When the Lord is going to save a sinner, He has wings on His feet—but when He is going to destroy a sinner, He goes with lead footsteps, waiting, warning many times and while He waits and warns, He sighs and cries, “How shall I give you up?” He even goes so far as to use an oath, saying, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” God never brings men to judgment, as the infamous Judge Jeffreys did, in a great haste—he would hurry them off to the gallows with indecent speed. But, at the Last Great Day there will be a solemn and stately pomp about the whole dread assize—the sounding of the trumpet, the bursting of the graves, the setting up of the Great White Throne, the opening of the books and the majestic appearance of Him from whose face Heaven and earth will flee away! And when the Judgment begins, it will not be without due order, nor will it be without keen perception of all differences. There will hang the Infallible plumb line! That which is perpendicular will be declared to be perpendicular and that which bows will be shown tottering to its fall, for, before the Judge’s eyes and before the eyes of the assembled universe shall hang a plumb line, with these words above it, “He who is filthy, let him be filthy still...and he who is holy, let him be holy still.”  
The whole judgment shall be according to the plumb line. Not a soul, in that great day, will be sent to Hell who does not deserve to go there! If there is any man who can plead that it would be unjust to condemn him—if he can truthfully prove that he has been obedient up to the measure of his light—if he can prove that justice is on his side—God will not do an unjust turn to him or to any other man. Those awful gates that grind upon their iron hinges never yet opened to receive a soul damned unjustly! It would be impossible, in the very nature of things, for such a thing to happen. If any man could truly say, “This is unjust,” he would have taken away the sting of Hell, for this is the essence and the soul of Hell—“I am wrong and can never get right. I am wrong and do not want to get right. I am so wrong that I love the wrong and make evil to be my good, and good to be my evil! I hate God, for it is impossible, while I am in such a state as this, that I can be otherwise than unhappy—and this is the greatest Hell that can happen to a man—not to love God and not to love right.” That is the flame of Hell, the worm that gnaws forever—that being out of gear with God—that being out of harmony with the Most High forever! I think that there needs to be no fiercer Hell than that.  
So the final judgment will be according to the plumb line so that no one will be condemned unjustly. You talk to me about the fate of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel and I reply, “I know very little about them, but I know that God is just, so I leave them in His hands knowing that the Judge of all the earth will do right.” There will not be one pang, to a soul in Hell, more than that soul deserves—not a single spasm of despair, or a sinking in hopelessness that is imposed by the arbitrary will of God. It will be a terrible reaping for them, when they reap sheaves of fire, but they will only reap what they have sown. There will be an awful pouring out of Divine Vengeance upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, but no one will be able to say that the judgment is unjust. The lost will feel that they only have to eat as they baked and to drink as they brewed. It will all be just to them and this is what will make the teeth of the serpent of Hell and the flame of its fire—that it is all just—that if I were, myself, judge, I must condemn myself to what I have to suffer. Think of that and escape from the wrath to come!  
And as that plumb line hangs there, in that Great Day of Account, there will be differences made between some lost men and other lost men. All Hell is not the same Hell any more than all flesh is the same flesh. That man knew His Lord’s will and did it not—lay on the lashes to the fullest that the law allows! That other man did not obey His Lord’s will, but then, he did not know it, so he shall be beaten with few stripes. Few will be too many for anyone to bear, so do not run the risk of them! But, oh, the many stripes—what will they be? There are the lost that perished in Sodom and Gomorrah—those filthy beings whose sins we dare not think upon. There they are and there is the Hell they suffer. There hangs the plumb line and, by His unerring justice, God awards their doom!  
But what will He award to you, and you, and you who have heard the Gospel simply and plainly preached, and yet have rejected Christ? You will have to go lower down in Hell than the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, for God’s plumb line tells us that sin against the Light of God is the worst of sin and that the willful rejection of the atoning blood flowing from the loving Savior’s wounds is the climax of all iniquity! That is how the plumb line will work. And when you come up, you rich man who has spent your money in sin—and when you come up, you poor man who works so hard—there shall be a difference between the one of you and the other—between the seducer whom the world allows to enter into her drawing room and the poor girl whom he led astray, for, though both are guilty—God will make a difference, not as men make it here, but quite the other way! The man of talent, of rank and of position who frittered away his whole existence in the life of a butterfly—there will be a difference between his sentence and that of the obscure, uneducated individual who did sin, but not as he did who had the greater gifts! To put one talent in a napkin brings its due punishment—but to bury or misuse 10 talents shall bring a tenfold doom—for there will hang that plumb line and by the rules of Infinite Justice everything shall be determined.  
“This is dreadful talk,” some of you may be saying. It is. It is. And it is a dreadful business altogether for the lost—that being driven from God’s Presence when you die—hearing Him say, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” You do not like to hear about this and I do not like to preach about it. Only I must do so lest you come unto that place of torment because I failed to warn you. Then might you say in your despair, “O cursed preacher! O unfaithful minister! You tried to tickle our ears with pleasant things but you left out all allusions to the wrath to come! You toned down the Truth of God, you softened it— and now we are ruined forever through your wicked desire to please our foolish ears!  
O Sirs, you will never be able to truthfully say that, for I do pray you to escape from that awful future! Run no risk of it. I think every one of you would like to have his house insured against fire and to know that as far as proper title-deeds go, whatever you have is held on a good tenure. Then I implore you, make sure work for eternity by laying hold on Christ Jesus! Yield yourself up to Him that He may make you right where you are wrong, put you in gear with God and set you running parallel with the will of the Most High! That He, indeed, may build you up on the perpendicular, on the solid foundation of His eternal merits by faith through the power of the ever-blessed Spirit—that you may be so built that when God, Himself, holds the plumb line, it may hang straight down and He will be able to say, “It is all right.” Happy will you be if you hear His verdict, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”  
May God grant this mercy to each one of you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **1 CORINTHIANS 3.**

Verse 1. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. Their spiritual part had not grown strong. Their old carnal nature still had the preponderance as Paul was obliged to address that which was the bigger half of them.

2. I have fed you with milk. That is a blessing.  
2. And not with meat. That is not a blessing. It is a great privilege to be fed even with the simple Doctrines of Grace, with the milk of the Gospel. But it is a higher blessing to have such a spiritual constitution as to be able to eat the strong meat of the Word!  
2, 3. For hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? As ordinary, unregenerate men.  
4. For while one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal? Is not this just how common, ordinary men would do? Where is your spiritual-mindedness if you so act?  
5. Who then is Paul? Mark, it is Paul, himself, who asks this question! He puts his own name here in order to show that he does not despise Apollos any more than he despises himself.  
5-9. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God’s husbandry. You are God’s tilled ground. Then the Apostle works out the same thought under another image turning from agriculture to architecture.  
9, 10. You are God’s building. According to the Grace of God which is given unto me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. Paul began the churches. He was the first preacher of the Gospel in Corinth and also in other places—and other preachers followed in his footsteps. When a man lays a good foundation, he always feels anxious that those who come after him should build in the same substantial manner as he has begun. It is a great grief to a man if he sees that after he has laid a foundation of the Truth of God, somebody else follows and builds up an error on the top of it. Alas, men still do that sometimes!  
10-15. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, rubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work endures which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. If he is a good man, he builds for God, though he may build mistakenly and say much that he ought not to have said. He shall escape, as a man flies out of a burning house, but all his work is gone. What a dreadful thing that would be, at the end of life, to get into Heaven, but to have seen that all your life’s work had been a failure—to have been building a great deal, but to see it all burned—or to know, as you die, that because it was not God’s Truth, it would all be burned!  
16, 17. Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God—For so it should run—  
17. Him shall God destroy. If any man should pull down that which Paul built for God—if any man shall pull down that which any faithful minister of Christ has built before him—“him shall God destroy;”  
17, 18. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For that kind of folly is the doorstep of true wisdom.  
19. For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. All that which calls itself philosophy and talks about its culture and so on, is foolishness with God—just as much today as it was among the Greeks.  
19. For it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness. They call themselves wise, but they shall all be taken in their own craftiness.  
20, 21. And again, The lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. Men are poor things to glory in.  
21, 23. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s. Glory be to His holy name!

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÷Amo 8.1

A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT  
NO. 343

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, OCTOBER 28, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“Thus has the Lord God showed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what do you see? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon My people of  
Israel; I will not again pass  
by them any more.”  
Amos 8:1, 2.**

IN reading through the prophetical books, you must have been struck at their singular variety. On looking a little more closely, you have at once perceived that every Prophet has a manner and style peculiarly his own. Although God speaks through them all, yet they lose not their individuality or originality of character. The breath which causes the music is the same, but no two of the instruments give forth precisely the same sound. It is true they all utter the Words of God. But each voice has its own special cry, so that though God is pre-eminently seen, yet the man is not lost.

You do not find in searching through the Prophets that Jeremiah copies the language of Isaiah. The herdsman Amos writes not like the wise counselor Daniel. Nor does Jonah borrow the notes of Malachi. Every man speaks after his own order. Whatever he was when God called him to be a Prophet, that he remains. God consecrates what is already there and does not re-cast the man into a new mold. I believe this is an excellent lesson to all ministers of Christ in these times. How much more useful might many men be if they would speak according to their own character, after their own style.

But instead, the young minister attaches himself to some eminent model and copies, not only the expressions, but the very tones, the action—no the whims and absurdities of the master whom he venerates. But if each man, instead of seeking to be another, would be himself—if he would consecrate his powers and talents to God as they are, and bring them out in their native simplicity—whether they are polished or rough— the world would be conscious that a man had arisen who was in earnest and not a mere player, an imitator of another.

God himself, I doubt not, will speak more clearly through a man who speaks out of the fullness of his heart, than He will through another who cannot let the stream of Divine influence come through him naturally, but needs seek to turn it into the artificial current of some other man’s form of eloquence. I am led to make these observations, because this is specially the case with regard to Amos. Amos was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle, and all through his book you find him continually alluding to his peasant life. He seems to have been an honest, homely countryman and he talks to us about sheep which have been rent in pieces by the lions of the kine of Bashan—of the cart full of sheaves, of sifted corn—and plowmen and

vine-dressers.

He does not mount to the sublimity of Isaiah. He has no golden mouth like that Chrysostom among the Prophets. He never soars to the height of Daniel, he lacks Ezekiel’s eagle wings and the weeping eyes of Jeremiah. But he dashes out before you in his first chapter like some untamed irresistible being and begins—“The Lord will roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn and the top of Carmel shall wither.” And then through the first two chapters he flings firebrands about him with both his hands. He has a flame for Syria and another for Gaza. He flashes lightning upon Tyrus in a few sentences and pours a vial of wrath upon Edom.

He darts his sacred ire on Ammon and devours the palaces of Moab. He stabs his foes in short abrupt sentences, not aiming at eloquence, but speaking always like a herdsman. As Shamgar slew the Philistines not with the sword of Goliath, but with his own ox-goad, so does Amos come out against the sins of his times with no polished shaft taken out of the quiver of the noble, but with his own ox-goad and right gloriously does he lay sin dead at his feet.

And now look at my text in the light of what I have already said. It appears that Amos was a skillful man and able to turn his hand to other useful employments. There was one occupation which was usually given to men who had delicacy of hand and skill—that was the culture of the sycamore fig tree. You will find that Amos is called in one of the chapters of his own book, “a gatherer of sycamore fruit.” A more correct translation might be a bruiser—a trainer or preparer of sycamore fruit—the sycamore fruit being like a fig, though not quite so excellent in flavor. It was believed in the East that it would never ripen except it was a little bruised, so that some person was employed with an iron comb to scratch and wound the skin.

Unwounded, the fruit, even when ripe, was too bitter to be eaten. But after it had been wounded, it ripened rapidly and became sweet and was not an objectionable article of diet. Now the good man had desired to be employed by his neighbors, at certain seasons of the year, in bruising their figs that they might become ripe. And now, in one of the visions which God gives to him, he sees neither the seraphim of Isaiah, nor the cherubim of Ezekiel, but he sees a basket of summer fruit, a vision suited to his capacity and harmonizing with his occupation.

There is no need for any labored disquisition. There are no hard words in a herdsman’s language and no great mysteries in a herdsman’s vision. There is a basket of fruit which is so ripe that it has been gathered and it is a sort of fruit—summer fruit—which will not keep, which will not keep until the winter, but which must be eaten at once. Amos sees at once that God’s purposes were now ripe with regard to His people Israel and that the nation itself had become ripe in its sin—so ripe that it must be destroyed.

It teaches us, in these modern times, that there is a ripeness of men as well as of summer fruit. There is a ripening in holiness till we are gathered by the hand of Jesus for Heaven and a ripening in sin till we are swept away with the rough hand of death and are cast away into the rottenness of destruction.

I. I shall use my text, then, in three different ways. The first remark being that GOD’S PURPOSES HAVE A RIPENESS.  
God always times His decrees. He is never before His time and He never is so much as a single hour behind. Many men are wise too late. God is always wise and always proves His wisdom, not only by what He does, but by the time when He does it. Let us notice two of God’s greatest acts and notice the ripeness of them.  
There was the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. God had promised to our forefather Adam in the garden that a mysterious Seed of the woman should be born and should bruise the serpent’s head. In mysterious signs He had shown to His people that a Messiah was coming. By many of His Prophets had He spoken of Immanuel, God With Us. But for thousands of years the Lord came not, although sin was rampant and the darkness dense, nothing could excite the Lord to an unwise haste.  
Nor, on the other hand, did He stay beyond the proper hour, for when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, made under the Law. In Heaven we shall probably discover that Christ came to die for our sins precisely at the only fitting moment, that in fact, redemption’s work could not have been so wisely accomplished at the gates of the garden of Eden as on Calvary. And that the reign of Herod and the Roman Caesar afforded the most fitting era for the sacrifice of the Cross.  
And so shall it be with regard to the second advent of our blessed Lord and Master. We are apt to say, “Why are His chariots so long in coming? Do not the virgins sleep because the Bridegroom tarries, the wise as well as the foolish, have they not all slumbered and slept?” And many are the servants who say in their heart, “My Lord delays His coming,” and are ready therefore to beat their fellow servants, to drink and to be drunk. But cheer your hearts, you who look for His appearing, He will not come too hastily, for why should the sun arise until darkness has had its hour? Nor will He delay His appearing one moment beyond the proper time, for should not the sun beam forth in the morning?  
We know and are persuaded that when He shall stand a second time upon the earth, it shall be as much the fullness of times for Him to come, as it was the fullness of time when He came at first. When His feet stood on Calvary, they stood there in good time—and when they shall stand on Olivet and when He shall judge the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat, then, too, shall He come at His proper time and His proper season. Watch then, Beloved, watch and wait earnestly, be not discouraged or cast down. “One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years are but as one day.” He shall come and you shall behold Him in His glory and shall be partakers of the splendor of His reign.  
And now I shall wish for a moment to apply this great Truth of God of the ripeness of God’s purposes to your own personal affairs. You believe that the advents of Christ are well-timed. Indeed, Beloved, so is every act of God. The time when you were called by Divine Grace was the proper time for you to be converted. That hour when Jesus looked on you with an eye of love, when you were dead in sin, was a time of love and it was a time of wisdom, too. God did not wait too long, else you might have been driven to despair or to desperation in sin. He did not come too soon. You may have wished that He had come before, but doubtless He had some end to serve, that in permitting you to learn more fully the lesson of your own sinfulness you might be the better prepared to adore the infinite, matchless, Sovereign Grace, which has now plucked you as a brand from the burning.  
Your calling, I say, was well timed. It came to you not as unripe fruit shaken from the tree, or beaten off by hailstones, but as fruit that was gathered in its season. So, mark you, shall it be with all that occurs to you in life. Your trials always come to you at the right moment. Do you doubt it? Do you say that troubles always follow troubles? That they are not equally enough distributed and that you generally receive one severe blow just when your strength and patience have been exhausted by the endurance of another?  
Ah, this is the language of your reason, but the language of your faith should be, “Great God, I leave my times and seasons in Your hands, for well I know if You smite me again, and again, and again, it is that You may multiply to bless me, that my manifold trials may produce in me manifold blessings.” So be of good cheer, my Hearer. I know that in looking back, you have seen that your troubles have come to you at the right time. Have they not always come just when you had strength to bear them, or else, have they not come just when they were required to wean you from this world, to deliver you from carnal security into which you had well near fallen? Or to wake you up from some deadly slumber of indifference, which might have destroyed you?  
And mark you, as your trials, so your deliverances. You want deliverances now. God will not give it to you in your time, but in His. He will not send to you His mercies before their date. You shall wait until the tribulation has had its perfect work, by producing patience. Then the hour of your extremity shall be the hour of God’s opportunity. He knows when your strength is spent and you are ready to perish—then shall the Sun of Righteousness arrive with healing beneath His wings. Your deliverances from trouble shall always come to you in time enough. But they shall never come too soon, lest you be proud in your heart.  
Learn, Believer, to be resigned to God’s will. Learn to leave all things in His hands. It is pleasant to float along the stream of Providence. There is no more blessed way of living than the life of faith upon a Covenantkeeping God—to know that we have no cares—for He cares for us. To know that we need have no fear—except to fear Him. To know that we need have no troubles, because we have cast our burdens upon the Lord and are conscious that He will sustain us. And oh, how sweet is it to look forward to the day of our death in this way—to feel that, “plagues and death around us fly, but until He pleases, we cannot die.”  
We may walk among a thousand graves, but no grave shall open its mouth for us. We may stand where pestilence is blazing forth and devouring the nations as the fire devours the stubble, but we must lie secure. We are immortal till our work is done. God’s purpose for our death shall not be fulfilled till that purpose is ripe and surely we would not have Him wait longer than His appointed time.  
I take this first head by way of cheering my own heart and yours. For I am persuaded that the doctrine of predestination—the blessed truth of Providence—is one of the softest pillows upon which the Christian can lay his head and one of the strongest staffs upon which he may lean in his pilgrimage along this rough road. Cheer up, Christian! Things are not left to chance—no blind fate rules the world. God has purposes and those purposes are fulfilled. God has plans and those plans are wise and never can be dislocated. Oh, trust Him, and you shall have each fruit in its season, the mercy in its time, the trial in its period, and the deliverance in its needed moment.  
II. And now I turn to the second point—NATIONS HAVE THEIR RIPENESS AND THAT WHEN THEY COME TO THEIR RIPENESS THEY MUST BE DESTROYED.  
We may see in this basket of summer fruit a picture of them. In the case of these summer fruits there was a need that they should be at once eaten. And there is a need when a nation has become ripe in sin that it should be given up to destruction. There are such things as national sins and there are consequently such things as national punishments. In looking back upon the history of the world, though skeptics might entertain a doubt as to individual transgression and personal punishment, they must confess that there have been such things as national judgments sent from the hand of God.  
If I could take you today to the dreary wilderness of Babylon, I would bid you listen to the hooting of the owls and shiver amid the lonely ruins. I would remind you that this was the throne of one of the greatest monarchs. You ask, “And why were these people swept from off the face of the earth? Why has the palace been consumed with fire and the beautiful city become desolate?” We can give you but one answer—that the sins of this people at last became so intolerable that from the very force of its own rottenness it crumbled to decay.  
We take you again to Greece and bid you stand among the fallen pillars of its glorious temples. We show you the broken memorials of its ancient idolatry. We point to the fact that all the glories of Alexander and of Macedon have long since been eclipsed. And if you should ask the same question as you did at Babylon, “Who slew all these and gave their cities for a prey?” it would not be a sufficient answer to assure you that the tooth of time had devoured these palaces, or that passing ages and the natural shifting of the focus of civilization had made those things totter to their fall. It was the sin of the Grecian State that brought upon it its ruin.  
If it had not been given up to inordinate luxury. If its hero soldiers had not degenerated into robbers. If its statesmen had retained their early integrity. If the nation had been as manly, as pain-enduring, as upright as they were in days gone by, Greece had not ceased to exist. The Roman iron could not have been a match for the Corinthian brass. The battle would have lasted long and Spartan valor would have driven back the Roman legions. Had they been free in heart they would have been free from the iron yoke. They had enslaved themselves long before the Western empire had subdued them.  
So was it with old Rome. Long did God endure with it. Emperor succeeded Emperor—or rather, let me correct myself—Fiend succeeded Fiend. It seemed as if Hell strove to outdo itself by sending forth a greater monster than the last. All of them brutish. With but few exceptions, most of them cruel, every one of them capricious. And God bore long with the sins of the old palaces of Rome—long did He endure her base idolatries and her cup that was filled with the blood of the saints. But at last He spoke and it was done. The northern swarms soon swept away the flimsy remnants of an empire, whose moth had been its own corruption.  
We believe that it is the same with Rome at present—the Vatican. Iniquity had been heaped upon iniquity, worse than even Pagan Rome was guilty of. The persecutions of Pagan Rome against God’s saints have been excelled by Popish Rome. If there were fiends in Rome before, I know not how to describe these men who have persecuted God’s saints in days gone by and yet could claim to be vicars of God. Oppression has been heaped upon oppression, blood has followed blood, iniquity has cried unto iniquity and lo, the sword of God is at the gate of Rome. Lo, God, even now, in the thundercloud, hangs over the palace of the Vatican.  
And if for awhile the judgment shall be withheld, it is because the iniquity is not yet full. Another Perugia, another slaughter of innocent men. Another attack upon the Gospel, another attempt to burn the Scriptures and Rome shall have consummated her guilt. Then shall the nations of the world eat her flesh and devour her as with fire and a great cry shall go up from earth, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, is fallen!” Then shall be heard the song in Heaven, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the smoke arises forever and ever and the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.”  
Let us not, however, in our self-righteousness, fancy that this fact has no relationship to us. We as a people have been very guilty. I trust it cannot be said of us that our iniquity is full, but much, very much of sin has there been. Has not drunkenness run down our streets? Has not infidelity had its favored haunts in all our towns? Has not Sabbathbreaking been a continual and a crying sin? Has not England grievously offended God in thrusting her poisonous drugs upon an Empire which sought them not? Have we not often been the aggressors and in our lust for the extension of empire in the East has not many a deed been done for which an Englishman might blush?  
We have all good need when we are making intercession for the nation, to repent before God for our national sins. We are a proud people. No nation upon the earth can match us for boasting. We have larger words to speak concerning our own dignity than any other race of men. It were well for us if we had humbler words before the Throne of God. I believe we are a more highly favored nation than even Israel of old. God has done more for Britain, or certainly as much, as he did for Abraham’s race and even if we have not rebelled and revolted as often as did Israel in the wilderness, yet our little rebellions, if they were so, would be great because of the greatness of God’s goodness.  
Oh Christians! Be in earnest that this land may be filled with Divine Grace. Be earnest in prayer that the torrent of our iniquities may be dried up, lest haply that supposition of a great historian should at last become a fact and the New Zealander should yet sit on the broken arch of London Bridge, wondering that so great a city could have passed away. We are not sure that Nineveh and Babylon were as great as this metropolis, but they certainly might have rivaled it—and yet there is nothing left thereof and the dragon and the owl dwell in what was the very center of commerce and civilization.  
May it not be so with us and may not the name of Anglo-Saxon be blotted out. May we repent, may we seek God and pray that this nation may be in covenant with Him and may abide faithful to Him, even till the Lord Jesus Christ shall come and absorb all monarchies into His own great empire which shall extend from sea to sea and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.  
III. I shall now pass to that which is the main business of this morning’s work. May God help me therein and give both physical and spiritual strength. I now come to deal with each man before me. The basket of summer fruit which Amos saw before him, I would now bring before your own eyes. You see it—the basket full of fruits—quite ripe and requiring to be eaten. Here is the picture of what some of us are and what all of us must be.  
In the first place, with the righteous man there is a time of ripening. In one sense the moment a man is converted he is fit for Heaven. In another sense he is not fit—otherwise God would take him at once to Himself. The Christian, when first converted, is but a bud upon the tree, a mere blossom. There is need that he grow unto perfection and that that fruit should become ripe fruit. Christians are every day ripening by the perfecting energy of the Holy Spirit, without whom they can never advance in the Divine life.  
But the Holy Spirit uses means and upon these I shall enlarge. Believers are each day ripening by the care of God, the great Husbandman who looks for fruit from men and walks among the trees each day and bids the sunshine of His love and the dew of His kindness fall upon them, that they may bring forth much fruit. They are ripened by every Providence which passes over them. The cold wind ripens them. Even winter’s frost, which might destroy our fruit, ripens that which grows in the garden of the Lord.  
The sorest tribulation which ever exercises a Believer is a ripening dispensation and is making him ready to stand in the full development of His Grace before the glory of His Father’s Throne. In fact, without affliction, no Christian can ever ripen. He is like the sycamore fig of Amos, there must be the scratching of the rind of the fruit. There must be a bruising with the iron comb, or else the Christian will not become ripe. We may grow in some things by prosperity. But true ripeness in Divine Grace can only

be obtained in adversity. Our cares, our losses, our crosses, our depression of spirits, our temptations from without and from within— these are all ripening dispensations—they are making us ready for the time when our Beloved Lord shall come and gather us into the basket, like apples of gold in baskets of silver.  
We are being ripened each day, I trust, by what we hear under the ministry and by what we read in God’s Word. The means of grace co-act with God’s dealings in Providence. Our prayers ripen us. The blessed Supper of our Lord helps to ripen us. Our seasons of fellowship with Jesus—the sweet promises which are every day fulfilled ripen us. The assistances which are rendered necessary by the incidents of each day— all these things work together for good to them that love God. They are dividing us each day from the earth—loosening our roots—cutting the strings which bind us here below. They are pluming our wings for the last great flight—when, leaving earth with all its ties behind us we shall enter into the realities of the bliss which remains for the people of God.  
But you ask me, in what respect the Christian is ripening? I reply he is ripening in knowledge—he is learning each day what he knew not before. He begins now to spell over the heavenly alphabet and there are some of the words of the celestial tongue which he can speak most plainly. He begins to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and lengths and breadths and he knows the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. Things which were mysterious to him, once, are plain enough now and riddles are become simplicities. He is no more a child in knowledge, but has become a man in understanding. He shall ripen in knowledge until he shall know even as he is known.  
So does he advance each day in experience. That experience of his which was but as a little unripe fruit, has now swelled out into the full orb of the ripening pomegranate. He has felt and tasted and handled of the good Word of God. Religion is not a theory to him now. It is a matter of fact. He knows whom he has believed and he is persuaded that He is able to keep that which he has committed to Him. And increasing thus in knowledge and experience, he ripens also in spirituality. He becomes less worldly, he shakes off more and more the cares which once were chains to him. He bears his trials more easily than he once did.  
A great wave that would have drowned him now merely washes his loins with its foamy crest. He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is not now grasping after this world’s wealth—he seeks to fill a treasury into which the moth cannot enter—and where thieves cannot break through and steal. And as he ripens thus in spirituality, he ripens in savor. His conversation becomes more full of marrow. He is not now like Pharaoh’s lean kine, nor like the ears of corn that were dried and shriveled in the east wind. He is an instructor of the ignorant and a teacher of babes.  
You listen to him, you watch his daily walk and conversation. He is one from whom you may learn much. A person who is to be imitated—for there is a sweet smelling perfume of fellowship with Christ about him in all that he says and all that he does. He is a ripe Christian, ripening for Heaven. And you may add to this that he now becomes more kind in spirit than he was before. The asperities of his youth give way to cordial kindness in his old age. He learns to overlook faults which irritated him when he was younger. He learns to bear with the young and with the silly—for he remembers that he was once young and foolish, too.  
He has compassion for those that are out of the way and a kind and encouraging word for the distressed. He goes about with a beaming countenance, looking, indeed, like a ripe fruit with a rich bloom upon it, a pleasant sight for the great Husbandman. If, Brothers and Sisters, this is accompanied with old age, it is indeed a fair vision to see a Christian fully ripe. I think if I needed an illustration of one who as often as I saw him, always seemed to be fruit fully ripe and whose recent death thoroughly well justifies my belief, I might refer to that venerable and excellent servant of God, Dr. Fletcher. He had in his youth sharp and severe trials and troubles, but they helped to ripen him. He had to bear up continually with arduous labor, always sweetened with unusual success.  
My acquaintance with him was only in the declining years of his life. He was always as I knew him, an example of a ripe Christian. He had always a kind word ready upon his tongue and never lacked a generous thought bubbling up in his heart. If an enemy spoke against you, he would say, “Never mind them, let them write until they wear the nibs from their pens, but do not answer them.” If he suspected that others thought harshly of you, he would always have an excuse for the young beginner, or if he did not make an excuse in your presence, yet he would give you a word of encouragement. Ah, I dare say many of you have seen him during this last year or two. That noble countenance, that fatherly expression, that overflowing love, were all signs that he was getting ready for the hand of the blessed Master to take him to Himself.  
God forbid we should have wished him to be here longer! Was he not ripe? Let him, then, be taken Home! God forbid we should have desired that he had gone earlier. He would not have been ripe, but when fully ripe the Master removed him. I cast my eyes round upon some of you, dearly Beloved. some of you whose heads are bald and others of you who wear that crown of glory, woven of gray hairs, and I do trust it will be so with you, that each day shall be making you more and more meet for your Father’s Presence.  
When the silver cord shall be loosed and the golden bowl shall be broken—when they that look out of the windows shall be darkened and when the pitcher shall be broken at the cistern and the wheel shall be broken at the fountain—may your spirit return in gladness to God who gave it, that you may rejoice in Him forever and forever. I do not like to see a Christian die like a boy who leaves his play because he is tired of it. I do not, on the other hand, like to see a Christian go from this world like a boy who is flogged out of his play and who is sorry to leave it. I like to see him like a fair ship which has all its cargo on board and all its passengers on deck. The flags are flying and the pennants streaming in the gale. All the canvas is fully stretched and it waits till it is just high tide—the tide begins to roll out towards the sea and it sails on the head of the tide with the wind bellying out the sails and so has the soul an abundant entrance into the joy of its Lord. May it be yours and mine, as many years as we shall live, to be each of us ripening for the, “rest which remains for the people of God.”  
Lastly and very solemnly, now, may God the Holy Spirit bless what I shall have to say concerning a ripeness with which the sinful and ungodly, all of you who are unconverted, are ripening. You are being ripened from within. The depravity of your own heart is developing itself every hour and though the heart can grow no worse, yet will the outward life grow worse by a ripening process from within. The fermentation of your own depravity shall prepare you for destruction. Satan, too, is daily busy with you, to try and make you grow in vice. He is an apt teacher, for well is he skilled in it and he will leave no stone unturned to make the young beginner in sin sit in the chair of Belial and become a very Doctor of Damnation.  
Yes, as a creature planted in the field of Providence, you are daily ripening in sin. Are you prosperous—do you not become proud? Do things go amiss with you—do you not murmur against God? And are not your pride and murmuring each a species of ripening for the great day of God’s wrath? Ah, and I speak to some today who are getting ripe in sin by being taught and instructed in evils which they never knew before. Young man, have you been lately taken into a firm where you have been taught by other young men, more advanced than yourself, some new folly, some new iniquity which you never knew in your country home?  
You are being ripened for Hell. Old man, have you just come to that period in life when you are able to teach others iniquity and guide others into sin? You are not as Amos, who could ripen fruit for God, but you are become a bruiser of sycamore fruit for Satan—helping Satan to ripen the fruit in his own diabolical garden.  
I speak to some here this morning who have strolled into this Hall from curiosity, who are growing very ripe in sin. You look back upon the days of your boyhood now, with wonder—wondering, as you say, that you could ever have been “so green,” so foolish as you then were. Ah, but what is your wisdom now? Has it not been an advancement in guilt? Have you not looked upon sin so long that you are being changed into its image, from iniquity unto iniquity, as by the very work of Satan himself?  
Are not some of you conscious that you know things now that you did not know years ago and that you can indulge with hardness of heart in crimes that would have startled you in days gone by? Oh, look back I beseech you, upon the hours of your comparative innocence and mourn over the thought that you are growing riper and riper and riper each day and everything that happens to you is conspiring to make you rotten-ripe. Before long you will fall from life’s spreading tree and utterly perish.  
And do you ask me in what it is that the sinner ripens? I could not give you particulars in such a case as this, but certainly most sinners ripen in knowledge of sin. They ripen in love to sin and they ripen also in the hardness of heart which enables them to commit sin with impunity. And with some, sin has attained such a ripeness that they dare to blaspheme God! They have grown so rotten ripe, that they will even dare to say there is no God, or think that He is blind, or ignorant and will not see and punish sin in the sinner.  
It is an awful sign of nearness to Hell when a man begins to think that he can doubt the existence of God. I consider that time is lost in controverting with men upon this point. We are not to controvert but to denounce. I should not expect to teach a serpent to change its hissing for music—nor do I think that while men are unregenerate it is of much use to teach them to exchange their infidelity for formality. God Himself must convert those who have gone into infidelity with His own Word, for our reasoning are powerless. We must pray for them. Yet must they be left in His hands, for it is a deep ditch and the abhorred of the Lord do fall therein.  
I may have in my presence, too, some who have become so rotten-ripe that they will not only curse God themselves and despise religion and violate every precept of it, but they will not tolerate religion near them. They cast slander upon every godly action. They persecute their relations who fear the Lord. Ah, Sirs, you do but show what spirit you are of. Your actions do but discover the inward baseness and depravity of your hearts. Take heed to yourselves—take heed.  
When you see the ripe fruit upon the tree you expect it shall soon be gathered and when I hear of those ill-deeds of yours, I may well expect that your damnation shall not long tarry, but that the pains of death shall soon close themselves upon you. You are ripening, Sinners, you are ripening, and unless God changes your hearts, your gathering time shall soon come. And for what are you ripening? You are ripening for death— ripening for eternal judgment and ripening for the wrath of God. Will you take this fact home with you? If I cannot speak to you this morning as I would, at any rate I will speak to you as I can.  
Oh unconverted men and women, I bid you take this with you, you are ripening for Hell! And some fruits ripen very quickly and those that ripen slowly ripen surely and the gathering time shall come. The righteous shall be gathered and be as apples of gold in baskets of silver. And you shall be gathered and be as grapes of Gomorrah and be cast into the winepress of Divine Wrath to be trod in His indignation. Does the prospect please you? Are you prepared to make your bed in Hell and to lay down in everlasting burnings? Oh, remember, if you take the road, you must take the end. If you will have your ripening time of sin, then your rotting time must be a time of damnation.  
“Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” He will not change His dispensations for you. “He that goes on in his iniquity, hardening his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” Oh, my dear Hearers, I could stand and weep over some of you! My soul weeps now at the thought of the many who have been in this hall and have gone away to despise the Word which has been preached and to be ripened in their sin by the very efforts which have been made to turn them away from their iniquity. And shall it be so with you? Shall Sabbath after Sabbath only ripen you for the flames?  
Sirs, shall earnest warnings only supply fire wood for your burning? Shall the tender heart of one who would die to save you only increase the guilt which you acquire by despising that earnestness? Oh, what multitudes in this hall have been changed, renewed, converted and some of them were the rotten-ripe ones. When I look over the Church-book we have to record those who have been added to our fellowship—containing the history of their conversion—I often clap my hands with delight, for there are those in the Church now who were not simply drunkards and swearers, but who were the worst of drunkards and vilest of blasphemers.  
We have some who were not content with being damned themselves, but did their best to turn wife and children from the way of the Truth of God and hated and scorned that which was good. Many a man has come to me when he was about to be added to the Church and his first speech has been, “Will you ever forgive me, Sir?” I have said, “Forgive what?” “Why, because,” says he, “there was no word in the English language that was bad enough for you and yet I had never seen you in my life and I had no reason for speaking like that. And oh, if I have cursed God’s people and said all manner of evil of them, will you forgive me?”  
My reply has been, “I have nothing to forgive! I am sure if you have spoken against me I am heartily glad that you are ready to confess the sin to God. But as far as I was concerned there was no offense given and none taken.” And oh how glad have I been when that man has said that his heart was broke and that he repented of all his sins and Christ had put away all his iniquities and that he wished to follow the Lord and make confession of his faith. May that be my happy lot this morning.  
Or instead thereof, must I, the minister of this congregation, behold some of you in perdition? Must I, my Hearers, if I am saved myself, stand and look upon you cast down into perdition by the eternal God? I cannot bear the thought. I know not whether it is pleasing to you—but surely it cannot be. Do you wish forever to be cast away from God?—Forever! Forever! Forever! Are you so mad as to dash yourself against the point of Jehovah’s spear! Say, what pleasure is there in casting yourself upon the bosses of His buckler? Why will you cast yourself into an oven of devouring wrath? What need is there, Sinner, that you should rend yourself in pieces and be your own tormentor?  
And yet every sin is a mixing of the poison that destroys your own soul, every act of lust is a kindling of the fire that shall consume you. Oh, I bid you, turn!  
O Lord, turn the sinner! O Spirit of God, come down and work with the most obdurate and hardened of men. And let sinners who are ripened for destruction now be renewed in heart, that they may become fruits of grace and at last be ripened for eternal glory.

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THE SIEVE  
NO. 825

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 16, 1868, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn  
is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least  
grain fall upon the earth.”  
Amos 9:9.**

“I WILL command, and I will sift”—how easily the Divine purposes become facts! The Lord has but to command and His will is done. Omnipotence has servants everywhere. If those who serve Jehovah cheerfully shall not suffice to carry out His will, the very devils themselves, and the most rebellious of spirits shall be chained to the chariot of His Divine decree and made to effect His designs—

*“When God commands, who dares oppose,*

*Or ask Him why, or what He does?”*  
And if they, in their impudent obstinacy should oppose, their opposition is made to subserve the very purpose which it was designed to thwart! And all their raving and their raging, their rebellion and their struggles merge into a wonderful adherence to the eternal plan by which Divine Wisdom and Grace shall be displayed.

We are led to make that remark by the text opening thus—“I will command, and I will sift”—as if the mere command were enough to effect the sifting. God has but to speak and it is done! And at His will His children shall be chastened with innumerable trials, or delivered in abundant mercies. The rills of comfort and the streams of woe, alike, flow at His bidding, or at His word are dried up.

This prophecy is no doubt originally applicable to the long-afflicted seed of Israel. How terribly has it been fulfilled! Have not the sons of Jacob been sifted among all nations? They have been removed to and fro as a shepherd’s tent. They have known no abiding dwelling place. Since the day when, in answer to their cry, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” the firebrand of the Roman soldier set their Temple on a blaze, and the plow of the Roman conqueror went over the bloodstained foundations of the beloved city—since that day they have been a nation scattered and peeled—sons of the weary foot—a nation without a land—a people without a language!

The sufferings of the Jews are almost unparalleled. From the time of the famous siege of Jerusalem down to days almost within memory they have been a proscribed and persecuted people. Their name has been a word of scorn and their race a byword and a proverb. In almost every land they have been hunted like the partridges upon the mountain—he that killed them thought he did God service. The followers of that greatest of Jews, the meek and lowly Jesus, thought they displayed their Christianity by hounding to the death His Brethren according to the flesh! Perhaps no chapter in human history shows more how near akin man may be to a devil than the history of the Jews in Spain.

But why instance one nation—all have been barbarous and inhuman— England had her share in their murder. As a frugal and industrious people they have flourished wherever they have been allowed to trade, but their wealth has been extorted from them by greedy monarchs, or destroyed by lawless mobs. For them there were no laws except such as are made for the destruction of wolves and foxes. They could never be sure of life or limb. To mock them was the sport of children—to torture them was the amusement of kings and princes. Alas, poor Israel, what have you not suffered? What woes have been made to roll in billows over you!

Nation of God’s election, yet to be restored to joy—for whom a glorious future is certainly ordained—how have you been trod as the mire in the street! The precious sons of God, comparable unto fine gold—how have they been esteemed as earthen pitchers—the work of the hands of the potter! Israel has forgotten her God and rejected her King, the Son of David, the crucified Jesus—and therefore long days of bitterness and centuries of grief have been appointed her! O God, how long? When will You return and bid Judah’s Lion-standard once more wave in triumph? When shall the throne be restored unto Jerusalem and the kingdom unto Judah? When shall the long-expected Messiah set up the kingdom which shall endure forever?

I intend, this morning, not to discuss those matters, but to take the text as it applies to the spiritual Israel. Undoubtedly all these prophecies have a double teaching. And while it is atrocious to overlook the literal meaning, and a despite to the Spirit of God to read literal passages as though they were altogether spiritual and figurative, yet after having once stated the literal meaning we are allowed to go on, in the way of teaching, to the spiritual sense, as we shall now do, so far as the Spirit of all Grace shall assist us.

Two things there are in the text for God’s people to remember—the sifting and the saving. We shall be sifted, everyone of us, yet shall not the least grain fall to the ground. Tried much, but never forsaken, often near to death, but never suffered to perish!

I. Let us begin with THE SIFTING. God has ordained that this side of the Jordan there shall be no rest for His people as to their outward circumstances. The Covenant of Grace has for one of its clauses, “In the world you shall have tribulation.” As long as the wheat lies on the threshing floor, the flail must be kept in motion. And so long as the corn-heap of the Church is a mingled mass of chaff and wheat, the winnowing fan must not be laid aside. The Church of God, since its institution, has never been perfectly pure.

It has been the object of all true ministers, as the Lord’s watchmen, to keep His Church pure—and the servants of God in every age have longed and desired that the tares might be rooted up from among the wheat—but it has never been so. The Church has shared in the imperfection of everything else that is human, and therefore, upon God’s floor there has never been a heap of perfectly pure, well-winnowed wheat—some chaff has always been introduced by some means or other. No matter how stringent your regulations, how Scriptural your rules, how judicious your officers, how precise your examinations, for all that, as certainly as Judas thrust himself in among the Twelve, so will there creep in unawares among us ungodly men who were of old ordained unto this condemnation—who shall be as chaff in the midst of the wheat.

Because of this we must expect, wherever and whenever God has a Church, to find that it is in the sieve. As long as the farmer’s corn is not clean, he will keep on sifting it. And as long as God’s Church is not pure, He will continue to purify it. He will, in fact, fulfill the words of the text, “Sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve.” Now take this great fact in reference to the Church at large, and you will see it worked out in her history. No sooner had the Lord a Church after the time of His Ascension, and that Church had begun to multiply through the Pentecostal blessing, than Herod rose up, and, strong-handed tyrant as he was, took the sieve and sifted the Church most terribly—till the saints of God were scattered, and many of them slain!

Persecution set in as soon as the Church appeared—the Man-Child was scarcely born into the world before the dragon began to pour forth floods out of his mouth—hoping that he might utterly drown the woman’s Seed. From that first day until now the page of history is crimson with the blood of the faithful. Notice the persecutions by the Pagan emperor—through what seas of blood the Church swam in those cruel days! What horrors make the flesh to creep as we turn to Papal times! Surely the blood of saints shed for the testimony of Jesus might have filled the Mediterranean to its brim! I know not whether every drop of the Atlantic ocean might not have been colored red if the warm blood of all the martyrs had been poured into its all but boundless deeps. So many were the saints of God that were offered, that arithmetic can scarcely compute their number, and time would fail us to narrate their torments and their triumphs.

The Church was sifted by these persecutions. The vain and light, the formal and the insincere went off from her, too glad to earn inglorious safety by dastardly apostasy! They could not afford to lose their lives for the Truth of God’s sake. The Cross was too heavy for their galled shoulders and they turned aside. Yet not the least true grain fell to the ground! The Church was never the worst for her fiercest persecution! In fact, she seemed to derive new vigor from her baptism of blood—and her voice was never so piercing and so potent as when it was uplifted from the rack and the stake! Her soldiers never fought so well as when the martyr’s ruby crown hung visibly before their eyes! Sifted, she has been, but never injured! She has been a grand gainer through the Grace of God by all her tribulations and afflictions.

Brothers and Sisters, we need not suppose that the sacramental host of God’s elect has come to the end of persecution! We may have done so in this country. I cannot tell. This I know, I would not aid in maintaining an unjust law to escape from persecution. I would not deny to the Roman Catholic his natural rights though I thought he would burn me and my fellow Believers as soon as he had the power! I would do him no wrong under the pretext of preventing him from doing a wrong to me. God forbid that we should do evil that good may come!

True Protestantism does not live upon political favoritism or national supremacy. Truth can afford to let justice be done, for she knows that the right can never hurt her. We who worship Jesus in spirit can afford to do what is right and let consequences take care of themselves. My Brothers and Sisters, let the worst come—let violence again assail us—we have overcome in days gone by, and can overcome again! Weak and feeble as we are today, when filled by the Holy Spirit we shall be strong and shall form a fresh band of martyrs to illustrate the faithfulness of God again! But we cannot, we cannot do violence to our consciences and the rights of other men even though it is to save our lives and preserve our liberties.

Other sieves beside persecution have been used. Not long after the days of the Apostles, yes, even in their days, God was sifting His Church in the sieve of heresy. There arose men who taught contrary to the Truth as it is in Jesus. They were cunning and smooth-spoken men who, by sleight of words and craftiness of argument, led aside many and perverted the faith of not a few. Ever since those times notorious heresies have, at various seasons, afflicted the Church like epidemics among sheep—deadly and hard to cure. Professors have fallen before the hurricane of false doctrine like leaves in autumn. Thick as leaves in Vallambrosa have been the apostates who have been hurried here and there by the fitful winds of novel opinions, subtle refining, and pestilent errors! Denying the Lord that bought them—denying the cardinal doctrines of the faith—they have perished in their iniquity.

Doubtless the uprising of false doctrine is intended by God to be a test to the professing Church. While men hear the Truth of God and nothing but the Truth of God, and it is the fashion to avow it, who shall judge between the pretended and the real? But when a strong party is made for error, then some son of Levi lifts up the banner of separation and cries, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come unto me!” Then straightaway there is a division in the camp, and it becomes known who has the Truth of God written in his heart and who has it merely on his tongue! By the fierce blasts of false teaching, which are apparently so injurious, a difference is made between the rotten boughs which only adhere to the tree from force of habit, and the living boughs which keep their hold because they suck their vital sap from the stem.

We need not fear if even worse heresies should arise in these times than in the past, for God will defeat them! It seems to me very likely that Antichrist has yet more deceptive inventions to reveal—we have not yet fathomed all the depths of Satan. Puseyism, with its many attractions, is about as cunning a device as we could well imagine. It has outdone Rome, itself, in some respects! But yet there may be worse to come. If so, so be it, for God will overrule it for good. These devices of men and doctrines of devils are only so many sieves by which the Lord will separate the chaff from the wheat—and make it to be known who are His elect and who are not.

So, too, the uprising of new infidelities are intended to act as a test to the Church. At different times the public mind exhibits a stronger tendency towards unbelief. One wave rolls up black with superstition and the next is pale with infidelity. The mind of man oscillates like a pendulum between believing a lie and believing nothing. Frequently the Church is assailed by a crafty philosophy and then by a brutal ignorance. Every Truth which she declares is exposed to the most violent and even ferocious assaults. She has been assailed from all quarters and at all points. In modern times she has been peculiarly attacked by criticism upon her Bible which she upholds as the revealed will of God. Men have even been found calling themselves bishops and presbyters of the Church who have sought to undermine the foundations of the Gospel by impugning the truthfulness of the Word of God!

This is no strange thing—it is but an old device. Those who have read the history of the Church from the very beginning will remember how she had to contend with Atheism, Deism, Arianism and all shapes and forms of doubts and skepticism in her earliest days. This is no new conflict, O soldiers of the Cross—neither is it one concerning which you have any ground for alarm! We have overcome Atheism in the past, and we shall vanquish it in the future. There will be benefit reaped by the Church from skeptical attacks, and certainly no detriment shall accrue to her. She will come out of her trial, however fiery, like gold seven times purified! She shall shine with a clearer luster because of the ordeals which she has triumphantly endured.

I will mention one more sieve in which the Church at large has been tested. It is that of providential examination by public opinion and sense of justice. You must never expect that any professing Church of God will be, for a long time, flourishing if it abides exactly in the same state. Whenever our Churches run for years in the same rut, little good is done. To many of our old established Baptist Churches, it would be the greatest possible blessing if the Chapel were burnt down, or if some disorderly zealot would break all their proprieties to shivers—anything to break the deadly stagnation under which they wither!

As it is in small Churches, so it is in the Church at large—change and stir are necessary. We must expect, often, to hear that the ship of Christ’s Church is in a storm—there must not be smooth sailing for the vessel of the Church—it must be tossed with tempest and driven to and fro. At the present juncture all established Churches are in the sieve. I believe there is much good corn in the established Church, though intermixed with a sad amount of chaff—and now the whole is being sifted and will be sifted yet more and more. I do not care who holds the sieve—whether it is a politician or an ecclesiastic—I am persuaded that by God’s Grace good will come of all this strife, and debate, and agitation.

The public mind, when it stirs itself about religion, is often mysteriously guided to the right path. And even if it chooses a wrong thing for a season, yet the wrong only plays itself out and the right, by-and-by, comes to the fore and wins the victory. God will not have His Church in alliance with the State! And though they settle down upon their lees, and are at quiet in an adulterous connection with the powers that be—the trying time must come and the sieve must be used.

The true friends of the Church need not wish for the sifting to be withheld, for not one grain of precious Truth will fall to the ground! All that will perish will be the chaff, which is a signal blessing to lose. Purification will be the result of agitation. After the Episcopal Church is sifted, other Churches will endure the same. All must take their turn—and those Churches which have any mixture of tradition or man’s teaching—those Churches which depart in anything from this Book will lose much by the sifting that they now hold to be precious. And a blessed loss it will be to them! We, as a denomination, shall have our sifting, too—how shall we come forth from it? It may not come yet, but the ordeal is surely ordained for us. Perhaps we shall rebel terribly at the trial of cherished prejudices, but our rebellion will be in vain.

So long as the Divine will shall be accomplished, what does it matter? Let us be content to abide what the Lord has appointed—  
*“Let sects, and names, and parties fall,  
And Jesus Christ be All in All.”*

Let every turret of ecclesiastical citadels be cast down, however venerated they may be, if they are not of the Lord! Let every graceful pile, though hallowed with the moss of ages, be hurled down and not one stone left upon another if it is not of the Lord’s building! Lord, send through the camp Your sharp two-edged sword to kill error everywhere! Search us with candles and try us as the refiner tries his gold till You have consumed every false thing and made Your people to be a Scriptural Church, a pure Church, a living and perfect Church fair as the sun, clear as the moon and terrible as an army with banners!

Thus far we have spoken of the Church of God at large. Other matters call us onward. God’s Truths are like crystals which bear one uniform shape whether in larger masses or broken into fragments. Take, too, the great Truth of God that the whole Church shall be winnowed, and as you break it up you will see that each Church and each individual Christian must be sifted, too. The Lord will sift all His people—sift them most thoroughly and in all respects. Let us think of certain of the sieves in which you and I shall be tried. One is the preaching of the Word. Wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached it acts as a discerner of spirits.

There are certain searching and testing Truths taught in God’s Word, which when spoken in plainness and distinctness, cause mere professors to be angry and voluntarily to withdraw themselves. This is the design of such Truths—that the vile may be separated from the precious. You remember when our Lord stated a certain doctrine, it is said that certain of them walked no more with Him? It was not that He had done anything evil, or laid any hard duty upon them, but He had simply stated a deep Truth of God. He had gone a little beyond His ordinary teaching, and at this deep Truth they were straightaway scandalized and walked no more with Him.

So in the preaching of the Gospel—if the minister declares the whole Truth of God, certain persons will say, “I cannot receive that”—not because it is not Scriptural, but because it does not jump with their prejudices, or suit their carnal tastes. Now, when such people go away, we have no cause to mourn except that they should be so foolish! Our cause is rather for rejoicing that God has made His Word to answer what always was its purpose—the separating of the precious from the vile. The Gospel is like a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit—it is intended to cut between the joints and the marrow, and to lay bare the very heart of man!

I would hate to come into this pulpit and utter words which should be needlessly offensive, but I do delight to preach the Gospel that the Word shall find you out and make you perceive that we are speaking of you! Every true preacher of the Gospel will be sure to become a spiritual detective. He may not know anything of his hearers, but in the course of his ministry he will speak as if he had entered into the very chambers of their heart and read the secrets of their soul! There are some who do not like close dealings, though that seems to me to be the very ministry every Christian ought to prefer—a heart-searching, heart-trying ministry!

But to many, plain preaching is very distasteful—they want to be patted on the back, and praised, and extolled—they like to have human nature lifted on high, and have sweet things said unto them! They are like those of old who said unto the Prophets, “Prophesy smooth things unto us.” But the genuine Gospel, wherever it comes with power, acts like a sieve, for vain and foolish people are offended at that which searches and tries them, and so they fall to the ground with the chaff—while the precious wheat, under such a ministry, remains to the glory of God! I have known some young ministers dreadfully alarmed because a few of their hearers have been indignant and threatened to withdraw when they have preached the Doctrines of Grace. This is the natural result of a faithful ministry—why, then, be alarmed? No, let the chaff blow away! If God’s Gospel offends any man, let him be offended! Or, rather, let Divine Grace come and change his heart until he shall yield to it—for the Word of God cannot yield to him!

But, Brethren, we shall have severer tests than these! Every professing child of God will be tested by temptation. You think, young Disciple, that you shall never fall! You do not know what traps there are—what gins, what pitfalls—what slippery places! How soon you may be taken in them! She who lies in your bosom may lead you into sin. He who has been your instructor from your youth up may be your Ahithophel and entrap you by his subtlety. You cannot tell where you shall meet your foe—but conclude that behind every bush there is an enemy and underneath every tuft of grass a viper! It is very easy for us, at first conversion, to think that we have overcome our sins and to imagine that they are dead and buried. But how soon we find that they are yet alive to be our pest and plague, and to keep up a constant warfare in our soul.

Brothers and Sisters, tens of thousands of fair vessels have floated from the docks and have passed down the river with every color flying— receiving every man’s good word, freighted with hope, and manned with resolution—and yet they have been wrecked most hopelessly! A shifting quicksand or a hidden rock has been their destroyer, and they have been heard of no more in the regions of the good. So may it be with you, young Professor! Tempted in the one point which you have left unguarded, the enemy may attack you at the post at which you have set no watchman— and you may fall a prey, even you who thought yourself so sure! The daily temptations of the shop, the house, the field, the street, yes, even of the Church of God, are the discoverers of sincerity, the detectives of delusion, the exposers of hypocrisy and the beacons of wisdom.

Next to these come the trials of life. Believe me, these are severe enough for any of us—to some they are crushing! But to all, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. There are temptations in prosperity—that is a sieve which few men can pass. As the refining pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise—many men can bear to be censured who cannot endure to be praised. Where one man has been ruined by adversity, 10,000 men have been destroyed by prosperity. Do we not see it? When men get into that sieve and become rich, they cannot attend the little Meeting House they once attended. They are too big for their former Brothers and Sisters—they go off to some other religion that shall be more fashionable—and they forsake the simple faith of their fathers and the Truth of God.

The men, who in their prosperity ought to be pillars in God’s Church, become the fiercest of her foes. Who are those most bitter against the Truth of God but the sons of men who held it, but, having grown rich, have despised their fathers’ faith and their fathers’ God, and have gone over to the adversary! Few men can endure long-continued, undisturbed prosperity! Capuan holidays ruined Hannibal’s troops! And in the luxurious ease of the valleys men degenerate—but among the mountains we find a brave and hardy race—for there the dangers of the crags and the cold of winter brace nerve and muscle till each becomes vigorous and men are fit for acts of valor and deeds of heroism. It is in battle and service that veteran soldiers are bred!

There is a sieve, then, in prosperity. And adversity acts in the same sifting manner. I know it has acted so in this Church—some who were fervent among us are gone forth from us because they have not prospered in the world as they wished and have been unable to endure the pinches of need. Therefore they have drifted into wrong courses and doubtful dealings, and they are ashamed to show their faces among the people of God. Lord, deliver us from being filled with riches or stinted by poverty—from either extreme, save us! The prayer of Agur is a most wise one—“Give me neither poverty nor riches.”

Whether rich or poor, we must look upon our condition as being a test by which God would make known to us and to His Church whether we are solidly in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, or only superficial professors—having a name to live, but we are dead. Farther tests, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord uses are inward conflicts. Of these I have no doubt many of you are well aware. Ah, there are times with us when everything in us is salted with fire and weighed in the balances. We speak pretty boldly sometimes, but there are seasons when we cannot speak at all for very trembling of heart.

Were it not for the infinite mercy of God, we should then give up all— sealing our own doom with the black seal of despair! The Lord sets a testing time for everything in the Christian. He does not let any part of him escape the proof-house. His faith is tested—he thought he did believe in God, but when wave upon wave rolls over him, till all God’s billows have passed over his head, he half suspects that he never knew what faith was! And if, at such an hour, he had not living and real faith, he would utterly perish as wax melts in the fire. Our experience! Why it often happens to me that every experience I have ever enjoyed of Divine love and faithfulness is veiled in a cloud—and I fear lest it should have been all a delusion!

I look back upon it all, and tremble lest I should have deceived myself. I ask whether such Divine Grace could have been shown to such a sinner! Most men’s experience, when it is put into the sieve, comes out very much less showy than when it went in. We thought—we thought that we had experienced the deep things of the Spirit. But we found when we came to search, that we had heaped up much borrowed experience, many stolen plumes, and feathers plucked from others’ wings. Our good resolutions— how they shrivel when they are put into the sieve! “Lord, I will never deny You,” said Peter, but when the cock had crowed, where was Peter’s steadfastness?

When the soul is bruised and broken under a sense of past sins—when it is crushed and beaten small under a consciousness of present departure from God by unbelief, or the neglect of private prayer, or other spiritual mischiefs—then Satan will come in and tell us that God has forsaken us, and He will be gracious no more. And he will shoot his fiery darts with such pertinacity and skill, that he will stick us all over in every part of our spiritual man with his fiery suggestions! Ah, then you will find out whether Grace within is real, or whether your love and faith are false and feigned! At such times, much tinsel and gilt are crumpled up by the heat, and we find that much of our spiritual beauty was but skin deep. Beloved, the most real thing about us is our sinnership, and I trust, also, our simple child-like dependence upon Jesus—

*“I, the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me.”*

Let me sing that from my heart, and there is no sham in the song. You will have to be emptied of every particle and portion of self-righteousness, and come to Jesus just as empty and vile as you did at the first—to throw yourself at His dear, bleeding feet—and find that His fullness and your emptiness are the two most real things in all the world—

“I’m**a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”**

All experience beyond this is but a flower and may wither, but this is the root that abides—all else is but as grass that springs up in its season, fair and verdant—but is soon scorched in the summer’s drought.

This is the eternal foundation which cannot be moved or shaken, world without end—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” and, “whoever believes in Him shall never perish, but shall have eternal life.” How often, when sifted do we come to this as our ultimate resource? And, indeed, it is a blessed thing to come here and to remain here, and never to go beyond it but abide ever in that precious Truth, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief! Then can we bless the sifting and admire the love which ordained it.

There will come other siftings beside these. The hour of death has often served as a touchstone by which formality has been revealed. Men have felt the mask rudely plucked off when lying at death’s gate. They have been compelled to see the leprosy in their brow which they had feared to think upon before. They have discovered, then, the foul and reeking pollution concealed within their hearts which before they had filmed over with religious duties and virtues and professions. Sepulcher light is brighter than we think—the dying bed is a great revealer of secrets.

And what a test the Day of Judgment will be! Ah, speak of this with bated breath, and speak of it with a broken heart—those scales in which we must all be placed! Shall it be said, “Mene, Mene, Tekel,” “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting”? Or shall we be accepted in the Beloved? There will be no escaping that last dread ordeal, nor will there be any deceiving the Infallible Judge! How will it go with you, Professor? Soaring Professor, if your wings are not your own, the sun will melt the wax and you will fall to your destruction! Gifted Professor, think not your gifts can help you, for only Divine Grace, not gifts, shall stand you in that last sifting when Jesus shall divide the righteous from the wicked!

We may have preached in the pulpit, or taught in the Sunday school! We may have been deacons or elders! We may have sat at the Lord’s Table and eaten and drunk with His people! We may have been baptized and received into the Church. We may have been the loudest and busiest talkers in the courts of the Lord, but we shall be cast away forever unless we have a new heart and a right spirit—unless an effectual work of the Holy Spirit shall have been worked in us—bringing us away from ourselves and all other dependences, to the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world!

God grant that you and I may stand this test at the last. But in order to do so, we must stand these present tests—we must be steadfast and unmovable—and having done all, we must still stand steadfast in the Truth of Christ. Thus have I, very feebly, brought before you the fact of the sifting.

II. Let us now turn to THE SAVING—a few comforting words. Sifting is very far from being a pleasant experience for the wheat. Look into the sieve for a minute—the grain lies still and begins to make acquaintance with the chaff and the wheat around it. But lo, it is tossed aloft and all its associations broken! It mounts for awhile, but falls again to the bottom, not to rest, but to be continually tossed about. In the sieve the corn has no peace. And so may Believers sing—

*“We’ve no abiding city here.”*

This is not your rest! You must not expect continuance on this revolving orb. You had, at one time, a delightful family circle round about you. It is broken up now—husband gone, friends gone—old associates gone. You who have your families around you now must look upon them as only loaned to you for a time—you are in the sieve, remember, and nothing is stable. Never whisper, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.” No one talks like that but a mistaken one! You will be moved soon, for you are in the sieve.

Yes, and you may have had many trials and changes, and been tossed from America to Australia, and from Australia to England and back again to the Continent! You may have been tossed from house to house, from riches to poverty, from “pillar to post,” as we say—but the tossing is not over yet—there is more to come. Here is the matter that makes calamity of so long a life that we get not to the end of the sifting till we come to our graves. We are still tossed up and down, still being forever molested and disturbed in our earthly circumstances.

But here arises the comfort—we are assured that no anger occasions our being put into the sieve. The farmer does not sift his wheat because he dislikes it, but just the opposite—he sifts it because it is precious. And you, child of God, your trials and changes, and constant catastrophes and afflictions are no proofs of lack of affection on the part of the Most High, but the very contrary. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” It is because you are gold that you are in the crucible! And it is because you are wheat you are put into the sieve.

Another man might have been much happier and more peaceful than you as far as outward circumstances—I say not that he could have had a real peace like yours, which you possess within your heart, that is a different matter. But another man might have had eyes standing out with fatness—possessing more than heart could wish. He might have spread himself like a green bay tree, being prosperous in life and having no bands in death. Whereas, you as one of God’s people are often chastened, afflicted, tried, and troubled. Well, so it must be, but you must reflect that there is great wrath in God’s apparent mercy to the wicked—God is but fattening them like bullocks for the slaughter! But as for you, there is no Divine wrath in your tribulation. It is all sent in love. Love is in every loss, every bereavement, every bodily pain. Love, love, love—nothing but love, even when the cup is bitterest.

There is another thought, also, that may cheer you—it cannot be the purpose of the farmer to destroy the grain when he puts it into the sieve. I never heard of any farmer doing so. If he meant to burn it or let it rot, he would not take the trouble to sift it—it cannot be his intention to destroy it if he sifts it. And so, you poor, timid Believer, the Lord does not intend to destroy you by these trials. He has said, “I will not break the bruised reed.” He may bruise it, but not break it. “I will not quench the smoking flax.” He will chasten, but not destroy. He will bring you low, but He will yet appear for your deliverance and lift you up.

If the Lord had meant to destroy you, He would have left you in your prosperity to run deeper into sin. He would have suffered you to become rotten with pride, or polluted with base passion to your destruction. No, it is because there is a need for it that He prunes the tree that He loves so well—purging it that it may bring forth more fruit—and that He may have the glory of it. I think I see you, poor Believer, tossed about like that wheat, up and down, right and left, in the sieve, and in the air never resting. Perhaps it is suggested to you, “God is very angry with me.” No, the farmer is not angry with his wheat when he casts it up and down in the sieve—and neither is God angry with you! This you shall see, one day, when the light shall show that love ruled in all your griefs.

Then comes the promise, “There shall not the least grain fall to the ground.” And why is this? It is a great wonder that, when sifted so much, not one grain falls. I suppose he who usually handles the sieve, now and then, lets a little corn fall under foot—but God says that not even yonder small shriveled corn shall perish! He says that half-developed grain shall not fall—the very least shall be preserved and kept from falling with the chaff. And why? It may be replied that the Lord’s people are preserved in some degree by their intrinsic weight—because the Holy Spirit gives them substance and solidity. The Holy Spirit has put into every Believer a life that cannot die, making him a living and incorruptible seed that abides forever! The wind which sweeps away another man like chaff cannot remove the Believer because he is solid wheat.

Where the Lord God, Himself, dwells, there is a power to resist temptation—even such temptations, as, apart from that power—would be our destruction. But the great defense of God’s people lies in this—that He who holds the sieve watches with an observant eye and acts with unlimited power. He sees that little grain as it moves up and down in the sieve. The least corn of wheat He keeps His eye upon. He never sleeps, never for a moment forgets—and when it seems likely that a grain may fall, He knows how to catch it just at the falling moment and to preserve it still.

“He gives more Grace.” “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones—not one of them is broken.” “It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish.” “And this is the Father’s will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” Much sifted, but not lost! Much tempest tossed but never shipwrecked! Much put into the fire, but never consumed! Blessed be God for all that!

Now observe, the very least of God’s people is safe because the love of Christ is as much set upon the least as the greatest. Because Jesus has as much bought with blood the least as the greatest. Because Christ is as much the Surety of the little saints as of the strong saints. Because the least in the family is as dear to the heavenly Father as the elder sons. Because the absence of the feeblest saint would make a gap in Heaven quite as much as the loss of the greatest. Because if Jesus should suffer one of His people to perish, He would as much break His suretyship engagements by losing the least as the greatest. Because it would be as much dishonor to Christ to suffer the meanest as the best to fall, for Satan would say, “He kept the strong, but could not keep the weak.”

The very least of God’s people is safe because Christ’s love encompasses the lambs as much as the sheep, and eternal Grace makes as sure their salvation as that of Apostles and martyrs. God will not be thwarted and Christ will not be robbed! The Holy Spirit will not be defeated! The Covenant shall not be broken! The oath shall not fall to the ground! The blood shall not have been spilt in vain and intercession shall not go up to Heaven unheeded for any one of these little ones—they must—they shall be kept!

Though earth’s old columns bow, not one of these shall be cast away! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but no word of Christ shall perish, and His word is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” And therefore whoever believes must and shall be saved, be he little or be he great! God bless this present assembly and bring us all to trust in Jesus, and then give us this blessed salvation. Amen and Amen!

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Sermon #296 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

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A REVIVAL  
NO. 296

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 26, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader  
of grapes him that sows seed; and the  
mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt.” Amos 9:13.**

GOD’S promises are not exhausted when they are fulfilled. For when once performed, they stand just as good as they did before—and we may await a second accomplishment of them. Man’s promises even at the best are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply. But God’s promises are as a fountain, never emptied, ever overflowing, so that you may draw from them the whole of that which they apparently contain and they shall be still as full as ever. Hence it is that you will frequently find a promise containing both a literal and spiritual meaning. In the literal meaning it has already been fulfilled to the letter, in the spiritual meaning it shall also be accomplished and not a jot or tittle of it shall fail.

This is true of the particular promise which is before us. Originally, as you are aware, the land of Canaan was very fertile. It was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Even where no tillage had been exercised upon it, the land was so fruitful that the trees who sucked the sweetness from the wild flowers produced such masses of honey that the very woods were sometimes flooded with it. It was “A land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates. A land of oil olive and honey.”

When, however, the children of Israel thrust in the plowshare and began to use the many arts of agriculture, the land became exceedingly fat and fertile. It yielded so much corn the Israelites could export through the Phoenicians both corn and wine and oil, even to the pillars of Hercules, so that Palestine became, like Egypt, the granary of the nations. It is somewhat surprising to find that now the land is barren, that its valleys are parched and that the miserable inhabitants gather miserable harvests from the arid soil. Yet the promise stands true, that one day in the very letter Palestine shall be as rich and fruitful as ever it was.

There are those who understand the matter, who assert that if once the rigor of the Turkish rule could be removed—if men were safe from robbers—if the man who sowed could reap and keep the corn which his own industry had sown and gathered, the land might yet again laugh in the midst of the nations and become the joyous mother of children. There is no reason in the soil for its barrenness. It is simply the neglect that has been brought on from the fact that when a man has been industrious, his savings are plundered from him and the very harvest for which he toiled is often reaped by another and his own blood spilt upon the soil.

But, my dear Friends, while this promise will doubtless be carried out and every word of it shall be verified, so that the hilltops of that country shall again bear the vine and the land shall flow with wine, yet, I take it this is more fully a spiritual than a temporal promise. And I think that the beginning of its fulfillment is now to be discerned and we shall see the Lord’s good hand upon us, so that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt.

First, I shall this morning endeavor to explain my text as a promise of revival. Secondly, I shall take it as a lesson of doctrine. Then as a stimulus for Christian exertion. And I shall conclude with a word or two of warning to those whose hearts are not given to Christ.

I. First, I take the text as being A GREAT PROMISE OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. And here, in looking attentively at the text, we shall observe several very pleasant things.

1. In the first we notice a promise of surprising ingathering. According to the metaphor here used, the harvest is to be so great that before the reapers can have fully gathered it in, the plowman shall begin to plow for the next crop—while the abundance of fruit shall be so surprising that before the treader of grapes can have trodden out all the juice of the vine, the time shall come for sowing seed. One season, by reason of the abundant fertility, shall run into another.

Now you all know, Beloved, what this means in the Church. It prophecies that in the Church of Christ we shall see the most abundant ingathering of souls. Pharaoh’s dream has been enacted again in the last century. About a hundred years ago, if I may look back in my dream, I might have seen seven ears of corn upon one stalk, rank and strong. At another time, the time of plenty went away and I have seen and you have seen, in your own lifetime, the seven ears of corn thin and withered in the east wind. The seven ears of withered corn have eaten up and devoured the seven ears of fat corn and there has been a sore famine in the land.

Lo, I see in Whitfield’s time, seven bullocks coming up from the river, fat and well-favored and since then we have lived to see seven lean kine come up from the same river. And lo, the seven lean kine have eaten up the seven fat kine, yet have they been none the better for all that they have eaten. We read of such marvelous revivals a hundred years ago, that the music of their news has not ceased to ring in our ears. But we have seen, alas, a season of lethargy, a poverty of soul among the saints and of neglect among the ministers of God. The product of the seven years has been utterly consumed and the Church has been none the better.

Now, I take it, however, we are about to see the seven fat years again. God is about to send times of surprising fertility to His Church. When a sermon has been preached in these modern times, if one sinner has been converted by it, we have rejoiced with a suspicious joy. For we have thought it something amazing. But Brethren, where we have seen one converted, we may yet see hundreds. Where the Word of God has been powerful to scores, it shall be blessed to thousands. And where hundreds in past years have seen it, nations shall be converted to Christ. There is no reason why we should not see all the good that God has given us multiplied a hundred-fold. There is sufficient vigor in the seed of the Lord to produce a far more plentiful crop than any we have yet gathered.

God the Holy Spirit is not stinted in His power. When the sower went forth to sow his seed, some of it fell on good soil and it brought forth fruit, some twenty fold, some thirty fold, but it is written, “Some a hundred fold.” Now, we have been sowing this seed. And thanks be to God, I have seen it bring forth twenty and thirty fold. But I expect to see it bring forth a hundred fold. I do trust that our harvest shall be so heavy that while we are taking in the harvest, it shall be time to sow again. That Prayer Meetings shall be succeeded by the enquiry of souls as to what they shall do to be saved and before the enquirers’ meeting shall be done, it shall be time again to preach, again to pray. And then, before that is over, there shall be again another influx of souls, the baptismal pool shall be again stirred and hundreds of converted men shall flock to Christ.

Oh, we never can be contented with going on as the Churches have been during the last twenty years! I would not be censorious, but solemnly in my own heart I do not believe that the ministers of our Churches have been free from the blood of men. I would not say a hard word if I did not feel compelled to do it. But I am constrained to remind our Brethren that let God send what revival He may, it will not exonerate them from the awful guilt that rests upon them of having been idle and dilatory during the last twenty years.

Let all be saved who live now—what about those that have been damned while we have been sleeping? Let God gather in multitudes of sinners, but who shall answer for the blood of those men who have been swept into eternity while we have been going on in our canonical fashion— content to go along the path of propriety and walk around the path of dull routine—but never weeping for sinners, never agonizing for souls? All the ministers of Christ are not awake yet. But the most of them are. There has come a glad time of arousing, the trumpet has been set to their ear and the people have heard the sound also.

II. The promise then, seems to me to convey the idea of surprising ingatherings. And I think there is also the idea of amazing rapidity. Notice how quickly the crops succeed each other. Between the harvest and the plowing there is a season even in our country. In the east it is a longer period. But here you find that no sooner has the reaper ceased his work, or scarce has he ceased it, before the plowman follows at his heels. This is a rapidity that is contrary to the course of nature. Still it is quite consistent with grace.

Our old Baptist Churches in the country treat young converts with what they call summering and wintering. Any young Believer who wants to join the Church in summer, must wait till the winter and he is put off from time to time, till it is sometimes five or six years before they admit him. They want to try him and see whether he is fit to unite with such pious souls as they are. Indeed among us all there is a tendency to imagine that conversion must be a slow work—that as the snail creeps slowly on its way, so must grace move very leisurely in the heart of man. We have come to believe that there is more true divinity in stagnant pools than in lighting flashes. We cannot believe for a moment in a quick method of travailing to the kingdom of Heaven. Every man who goes there

must go on crutches and limp all the way.

But as for the swift beasts, as for the chariots whose axles are hot with speed, we do not quite understand and comprehend that. Now, mark, here is a promise given of a revival and when that revival shall be fulfilled this will be one of the signs of it—the marvelous growth in grace of those who are converted. The young convert shall that very day come forward to make a profession of his faith. Perhaps before a week has passed over his head you will hear him publicly defending the cause of Christ and before many months have gone you shall see him standing up to tell others what God has done for his soul. There is no need that the pulse of the Church should forever be so slow. The Lord can quicken her heart so that her pulse shall throb as rapidly as the pulse of time itself. Her floods shall be as the rushing of the Kishon when it swept the hosts of Sisera in its fury.

As the fire from Heaven shall the Spirit rush from the skies and as the sacrifice which instantly blazed to Heaven, so shall the Church burn with holy and glorious ardor. She shall no longer drive heavily with her wheels torn away, but as the chariot of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, she shall devour the distance in her haste. That seems to me to be one of the promises of the text—the rapidity of the work of grace, so that the plower shall overtake the reaper.

3. But a third blessing is very manifest here and one, indeed, which is already given to us. Notice the activity of labor which is mentioned in the text. God does not promise that there shall be fruitful crops without labor, but here we find mention made of plowmen, reapers, treaders of grapes and sowers of seeds and all these persons are girt with singular energy. The plowman does not wait, because, says he, the season has not yet come for me to plow. But seeing that God is blessing the land, he has his plow ready and no sooner is one harvest shouted home than he is ready to plow again. And so with the sower. He has to prepare his basket and to collect his seed. But when he hears the shouts of the vintage, he is ready to go out to work.

Now, my Brethren, one sign of a true revival and, indeed, an essential part of it, is the increased activity of God’s laborers. Why, time was when our ministers thought that preaching twice on Sunday was the hardest work to which a man could be exposed. Poor souls, they could not think of preaching on a weekday. Or if there was once a lecture, they had bronchitis—were obliged to go to Jerusalem—and lay by, for they would soon be dead if they were to work too hard. I never believed in the hard work of preaching yet. We find ourselves able to preach ten or twelve times a week. And find that we are the stronger for it—that in fact, it is the healthiest and most blessed exercise in the world.

But the cry used to be that our ministers were hardly done by. They were to be pampered and laid by, done up in velvet and only to be brought out to do a little work occasionally. And then to be pitied when that work was done. I do not hear anything of that talk nowadays. I meet with my Brethren in the ministry who are able to preach day after day, day after day and are not half so fatigued as they were. And I saw a Brother minister this week who has been having meetings in his Church every day and the people have been so earnest that they will keep him very often from six in o’clock in the evening to two in the morning.

“Oh,” said one of the members, “our minister will kill himself.” “Not he,” said I, “that is the kind of work that will kill no man. It is preaching to a sleepy congregation that kills good ministers, but not preaching to earnest people.” So when I saw him, his eyes were sparkling and I said to him, “Brother, you do not look like a man who is being killed.” “Killed, my Brother,” said he, “why I am living twice as much as I did before. I was never so happy, never so hearty, never so well.” Said he, “I sometimes lack my rest and want my sleep, when my people keep me up so late, but it will never hurt me—indeed,” he said, “I should like to die of such a disease as that—the disease of being so greatly blessed.”

There was a specimen before me of the plowman who overtook the reaper—of one who sowed seed, who was treading on the heels of the men who were gathering in the vintage. And the like activity we have lived to see in the Church of Christ. Did you ever know so much doing in the Christian world before? There are gray-headed men around me who have known the Church of Christ sixty years and I think they can bear me witness that they never knew such life, such vigor and activity, as there is at present. Everybody seems to have a mission and everybody is doing it.

There may be a great many sluggards, but they do not come across my path now. I used to be always kicking at them and always being kicked for doing so. But now there is nothing to kick at—everyone is at work— Church of England, Independents, Methodists and Baptists—there is not a single squadron that is behind. They have all their guns ready and are standing, shoulder to shoulder, ready to make a tremendous charge against the common enemy. This leads me to hope, since I see the activity of God’s plowmen and vine dressers, that there is a great revival coming— that God will bless us and that right early.

4. We have not yet, however, exhausted our text. The latter part of it says, “The mountains shall drop sweet wine.” It is not a likely place for wine upon the mountains. There may be freshets and cataracts leaping down their sides. But who ever saw fountains of red wine streaming from rocks, or gushing out from the hills? Yet here we are told that, “The mountains shall drop sweet wine,” by which we are to understand that conversions shall take place in unusual quarters. Brethren, this day is this promise literally fulfilled to us. I have this week seen what I never saw before. It has been my lot these last six years to preach to crowded congregations and to see many, many souls brought to Christ.

It has been no unusual thing for us to see the greatest and noblest of the land listening to the Word of God. But this week I have seen, I repeat, what my eyes have never before beheld, used as I am to extraordinary things. I have seen the people of Dublin, without exception, from the highest to the lowest, crowd in to hear the Gospel. I have known that my congregation has been constituted in a considerable measure of Roman Catholics and I have seen them listening to the Word with as much attention as though they had been Protestants.

I have seen men who never heard the Gospel before, military men, whose tastes and habits were not likely to be those of the Puritan minister, who have nevertheless sat to listen. No, they have come again—

have made it a point to find the place where they could hear the best— have submitted to be crowded, that they might press in to hear the Word and I have never before seen such intense eagerness of the people to listen to the Gospel. I have heard, too, cheering news of work going on in the most unlikely quarters—men who could not speak without larding their conversation richly Irish oaths—have nevertheless come to hear the Word.

They have listened and have been convicted and if the impression does not die away, there has been something done for them which they will not forget even in eternity. But the most pleasing thing I have seen is this— and I must tell it to you. Hervey once said, “Each floating ship, a floating Hell.” Of all classes of men, the sailor has been supposed to be the man least likely to be reached by the Gospel. In crossing over from Holyhead to Dublin and back—two excessively rough passages—I spent the most pleasant hours that I ever spent.

The first vessel that I entered, I found my hands very heartily shaken by the sailors. I thought, “What can these sailors know of me?” And they were calling me, “Brother.” Of course, I felt that I was their Brother, too. But I did not know how they came to talk to me in that way. It was not generally the way for sailors to call ministers, Brother. There was the most officious attention given and when I made the enquiry, “What makes you so kind?” “Why,” said one, “because I love your Master, the Lord Jesus.” I enquired and found that out of the whole crew, there were but three unconverted men. That though the most of them had been before without God and without Christ, yet by a sudden visitation of the Spirit of God they had all been converted.

I talked to many of these men and more spiritual, heavenly minded men I never yet saw. They have a Prayer Meeting every morning before the boat starts and another Prayer meeting after she comes to port. And on Sundays, when they lay-to off Kingstown or Holyhead, a minister comes on board and preaches the Gospel. The cabins are crowded—service is held on deck when it can be. And said an eyewitness to me, “The minister preaches very earnestly, but I should like you to hear the men pray. I never heard such praying before,” said he, “they pray with such power, as only a sailor can pray.” My heart was lifted up with joy, to think of a ship being made a floating Church—a very Bethel for God?

When I came back by another ship I did not expect to see the like—but it was precisely the same. The same work had been going on. I walked among them and talked to them. They all knew me. One man took out of his pocket an old leather covered book in Welch—“Do you know the likeness of that man in front?” said he. “Yes,” I said, “I think I do—do you read these sermons!” “Yes, Sir’” replied he, “we have had your sermons on board this ship and I read them aloud as often as I can. If we have a fine passage coming over, I get a few around me and read them a sermon.”

Another man told me a story of a gentleman who stood laughing when a hymn was being sung. And one of the men proposed that they should pray for him. They did and that man was suddenly smitten down and began on the quay to cry for mercy and plead with God for pardon. “Ah, Sir,” said the sailors, “we have the best proof that there is a God here, for we have seen this crew marvelously brought to a knowledge of the Truth of God and here we are, joyful and happy men, serving the Lord.”

Now, what shall we say of this, but that the mountains drop sweet wine? The men who were loudest with their oaths, are now loudest with their songs. Those who were the most darling children of Satan, have become the most earnest advocates of the Truth of God. For mark you, once get sailors converted and there is no end to the good they can do. Of all men who can preach well, sailors are the best. The sailor has seen the wonders of God in the deep. The hardy British Tar has got a heart that is not made of such cold stuff as many of the hearts of landsmen. And when that heart is once touched, it gives great big beats. It sends great pulses of energy right through his whole frame. And with his zeal and energy what may he not do, God helping him and blessing him?

5. This seems to be in the text—that a time of revival shall be followed by very extraordinary conversion. But, albeit that in the time of revival, grace is put in extraordinary places and singular individuals are converted, yet these are not a bit behind the usual converts. For if you notice the text does not say, “the mountains shall drop wine” merely, but they “shall drop sweet wine.” It does not say that the hill shall send forth little streams, but all the hills shall melt. When sinners, profligate and debauched persons, are converted to God, we say, “Well, it is wonderful thing, but I do not suppose they will be very first class Christians.”

The most wonderful thing is, that these are the best Christians alive— the wine which God brings from the hills is sweet wine. That when the hills do melt they all melt. The most extraordinary ministers of any time have been most extraordinary sinners before conversion. We might never have had a John Bunyan, if it had not have been for the profanity of Elstow Green. We might never have heard of a John Newton, if it had not have been for his wickedness on shipboard. I mean he would not have known the depths of Satan, nor the trying experience, nor even the power of Divine Grace, if he had not been suffered wildly to stray and then wondrously to be brought back.

These great sinners are not a whit behind those who have been trained under pious influences and so have been brought into the Church. “Always in revival you will find this to be the case, that the converts are not inferior to the best of the converts of ordinary seasons—that the Romanist and the men who have never heard the Gospel—when they are converted, are as true in their faith, as hearty in their love, as accurate in their knowledge and as zealous in their efforts, as the best of persons who have ever been brought to Christ. “The mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt.”

II. I must now go on to the other point very briefly—WHAT IS THE DOCTRINAL LESSON WHICH IS TAUGHT IN OUR TEXT. AND WHAT IS TAUGHT TO US BY A REVIVAL?

I think it is just this—that God is absolute monarch of the hearts of men. God does not say here if men are willing but He gives an absolute promise of a blessing. As much as to say, “I have the key of men’s hearts. I can induce the plowman to overtake the reaper. I am master of the soil— however hard and rocky it may be I can break it and I can make it fruitful.” When God promises to bless His Church and to save sinners, He

does not add, “if the sinners is willing to be saved”! No, great God! You lead free will in sweet captivity and your free grace is all triumphant.

Man has a free will and God does not violate it. But the free will is sweetly bound with fetters of the Divine love till it becomes more free than it ever was before. The Lord, when he means to save sinners, does not stop to ask them whether they mean to be saved—but like a rushing mighty wind the Divine influence sweeps away every obstacle. The unwilling heart bends before the potent gale of grace and sinners that would not yield are made to yield by God. I know this, if the Lord willed it, there is no man so desperately wicked here this morning that he would not be made now to seek for mercy. However infidel he might be, however rooted in his prejudices against the Gospel, Jehovah has but to will it and it is done. Into your dark heart, O you who have never seen the light, would the light stream. If He did but say, “Let there be light,” there would be light. You may bend your fist and lift up your mouth against Jehovah, but He is your master yet—your master to destroy you, if you go on in your wickedness! But your master to save you now, to change your heart and turn your will, as He turns the rivers of water.

If it were not for this doctrine, I wonder where the ministry would be. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. The power of our preaching is bought—it can do nothing in the conversion of men by itself. Men are hardened, obdurate, indifferent—but the power of grace is greater than the power of eloquence or the power of earnestness—and once let that power be put forth and what can stand against it? Divine Omnipotence is the doctrine of a revival. We may not see it in ordinary days, by reason of the coldness of our hearts. But we must see it when these extraordinary works of grace are wrought. Have you ever heard the Eastern fables of the dervish, who wished to teach to a young prince the fact of the existence of a God? The fable has it that the young prince could not see any proof of the existence of a First Cause—so the dervish brought a little plant and set it before him. And in his sight that little plant grew up, blossomed, brought forth fruit and became a towering tree in an hour.

The young man lifted up his hands in wonder and he said, “God must have done this.” “Oh, but,” said the teacher, you say, “God has done this, because it is done in an hour—has He not done it, when it is accomplished in twenty years?” It was the same work in both cases. It was only the rapidity that astonished his pupil. So, Brethren, when we see the Church gradually built up and converted, we lose the sense perhaps of a present God. But when the Lord causes the tree suddenly to grow from a sapling to a strong tall monarch of the forest, then we say, “This is God.” We are all blind and stupid in a measure and we want to see sometimes some of these quick upgoings, these extraordinary motions of Divine influence, before we will fully understand Gods power.

Learn, then, O Church of God today, this great lesson of the nothingness of man and the Eternal All of God. Learn, disciples of Jesus, to rest on Him—look for your success to His powers and while you make your efforts, trust not in your efforts, but in the Lord Jehovah. If you have progressed slowly, give Him thanks for progress. But if now He pleases to give you a marvelous increase, multiply your songs and sing unto Him that works all things according to the counsel of His will.

III. I now desire, with great earnestness, as the Holy Spirit shall help me, to make the text A STIMULUS FOR FURTHER EXERTION.  
The duty of the Church is not to be measured by her success. It is as much the minister’s duty to preach the Gospel in adverse times as in propitious seasons. We are not to think if God withholds the dew, we are to withhold the plow. We are not to imagine that if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is with act, not with result. The Church has to do her duty, even though that duty should bring her no present reward. “If they hear you not, Son of Man, if they perish they shall perish, but their blood will I not require at yours hands.” If we sow the seed and the birds of the air devour it, we have done what we were commanded to do and the duty is accepted even though the birds devour the seed.  
We may expect to see a blessed result, but even if it did not come we must not cease from duty. But while this is true so far, it must, nevertheless be a Divine and holy stimulant to a Gospel laborer, to know that God is making him successful. And in the present day we have a better prospect of success than we ever had and we should consequently work the harder. When a tradesman begins business with a little shop at the corner, he waits awhile to see whether he will have any customers. By-and-by his little shop is crowded. He has a name. He finds he is making money. What does he do? He enlarges his premises. The back yard is taken in and covered over. There are extra men employed. Still the business increases, but he will not invest all his capital in it till he sees to what extent it will pay. It still increases and the next house is taken and perhaps the next—he says, “This is a paying concern and therefore increase it.”  
My dear Friends, I am using commercial maxims, but they are common-sense rules and I like to talk so. There are, in these days, happy opportunities. There is a noble business to be done for Christ. Where you used to invest a little capital, a little effort and a little donation, invest more. There never was such heavy interest to be made as now. It shall be paid back in the results cent per cent. No, beyond all that you expected you shall see God’s work prospering. If a farmer knew that a bad year was coming, he would perhaps only sow an acre or two. But If some Prophet could tell him, “Farmer, there will be such a harvest next year as there never was,” he would say, “I will plow up my grass lands, I will stub up those hedges—every inch of ground I will sow.”  
So do you. There is a wondrous harvest coming. Plow up your headlands. Root up your hedges. Break up your fallow ground and sow, even among the thorns. You know not which shall prosper, this or that. But you may hope that they shall be alike good. Enlarged effort should always follow an increased hope of success.  
And let me give you another encouragement. Remember that even when this Revival comes, an instrumentality will still be wanted. The plowman is wanted, even after the harvest and the treader of grapes is wanted, however plentiful the vintage. The greater the success the more need of instrumentality. They began at first to think in the North of Ireland that they could do without ministers! But now that the Gospel is spread, never was there such a demand for the preachers of the Gospel as now. Proudly men said in their hearts, “God has done this without the intervention of man.” I say, they said it proudly, for there is such a thing as proud humility. But God made them stoop. He made them see that, after all, He would bless the Word through His servants—that He would make the ministers of God “mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.”  
Brothers and Sisters, you need not think that if better times should come, the world will do without you. You will be wanted. “A man shall be precious as the gold of Ophir.” They shall take hold of your garments and they shall say, “Tell us what we must do to be saved.” They shall come to your house. They shall ask your prayers—they shall demand your instructions. And you shall find the meanest of the flock become precious as a wedge of gold. The plowman shall never be so much esteemed as when he follows after the reaper and the sower of seed never so much valued as when he comes at the heels of those that tread the grapes. The glory which God puts upon instrumentality should encourage you to use

it. And now I beseech and entreat you, my dear Brothers and Sisters,

inhabitants of this great city of London, let not this auspicious gale pass away without singular effort. I sometimes fear lest the wind should blow on us and we should have our sails all furled and therefore the good ship should not speed. Up with the canvas now. Oh, put on every stitch of it. Let every effort be used, while God is helping us. Let us be earnest coworkers with Him. Methinks I see the clouds floating here. They have come from the far west, from the shore of America. They have crossed the sea and the wind has wafted them till the green isle received the showers in its northern extremity. Lo, the clouds are just now passing over Wales and are refreshing the shores that border on the principality. The rain is falling on Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. Divine Grace is distilling and the clouds are drawing nearer and nearer to us.

Mark, my Brethren, they tarry not, for men, neither for the sons of men. They are floating over our heads today. Shall they float away and shall we still be left as dry as ever? ‘Tis yours today to bring down the rain though ‘tis God’s to send the clouds. God has sent this day over this great city a Divine cloud of His Grace. Now, you Elijahs, pray it down! To your knees, Believers, to your knees. You can bring it down and only you, “For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” “Prove me now herewith,” says the Lord of hosts, “and see if I will not open the windows of Heaven and give you such a blessing that you shall not have room to contain it.”

Will you lose the opportunity, Christians? Will you let men be lost for want of effort? Will you suffer this all-blessed time to roll away unimproved? If so, the Church of 1860 is a cowardly Church and is unworthy of its time. And he among you, Brothers and Sisters, that has not an earnest heart today, if he is a Christian, is a disgrace to his Christianity. When there are such times as these, if we do not every man of us trust in the plow, we shall indeed deserve the worst barrenness of soul that can possibly fall upon us. I believe that the Church has often been plagued and vexed by her God, because when God has favored her she has not made a proper use of the favor. “Then,” says He, “I will make you like Gilboa. On your mount there shall be no dew. I will bid the clouds that they rain no more rain upon you and you shall be barren and desolate, till once again I pour out the Spirit from on high.”

Let us spend this week in special prayer. Let us meet together as often as we can and plead at the Throne. And each man of you in private be mighty with your God and in public be diligent in your efforts to bring your fellow men and women to Christ.

IV. I have done, when I have uttered a WORD OF WARNING to those of you who know not Christ.  
I am aware that I have many here on Sabbath mornings who never were in the habit of attending a place of worship at all. There is many a gentleman here today who would be ashamed in any society, to confess himself a professor of religion. He has never perhaps, for a long time heard the Gospel preached. And now there is a strange sort of fascination that has drawn him here. He came the first time out of curiosity—perhaps to make a joke at the minister’s expense. He has found himself enthralled, he does not know how it is, but he has been all this week uneasy. He has been wanting to come again and when he goes away today, he will be watching for next Sabbath.  
He has not given up his sins, but somehow they are not so pleasurable as they used to be. He cannot swear as he did. If an oath comes out edgeways, it does not roll out in the round form it used to do—he knows better now. Now, it is to such persons that I speak. My dear Friends, allow me to express my hearty joy that you are here and let me also express the hope that you are here for a purpose you do not as yet understand. God has a special favor to you, I do trust, and therefore He has brought you here. I have frequently remarked that in any revival of religion, it is not often the children of pious parents that are brought in, but those who never knew anything of Christ before.  
The ordinary means are usually blessed to those who constantly attend them. But the express effort, and the extraordinary influence of the Spirit reaches those who were outside the pale of nominal Christians and made no profession of religion. I am in hopes it may meet you. But if you should despise the Word which you have heard. If the impression that has been made and you know it has been made—should die away—one of the most awful regrets you will ever have when you come to your right sense and reason in another world will be the feeling that you had an opportunity, but that you neglected it. I cannot conceive a more doleful wail than that of the men who cries at last in Hell, “The harvest is past—there was a harvest. The summer is ended—there was a summer—and I am not saved.”  
To go to perdition in ordinary times is Hell. But to go from under the sound of an earnest ministry, where you are bid to come to Christ, where you are entreated with honest tears to come to Jesus—to go there after you have been warned is to go not to Hell merely, but to the very Hell of Hells. The worst damnation is reserved for men who hear the Truth of God and feel it, too, but yet reject it and are lost. Oh, my dear Hearer, this is a solemn time with you. I pray God the Holy Spirit may remind you that it may be now or never with you. You may never have another warning, or if you have it, you may grow so hardened that you may laugh at it and despise it. My Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, by God, by Christ Jesus, by your own immortal welfare, stop and think now whether it is worth while to throw away the hallowed opportunity which is now presented to you. Will you go and dance away your impressions, or laugh them out of your soul? Ah, you may laugh yourself into Hell, but you can not laugh yourself out of it.  
There is a turning point in each man’s life when his character becomes fixed and settled. That turning point may be today. It may be that there shall be some solemn seat in this hall, which if a man knew its history he would never sit in it—a seat in which a man shall sit and hear the Word and shall say, “I will not yield. I will resist the impression. I will despise it. I will have my sins, even if I am lost for them.” Mark your seat, Friend, before you go. Make a blood-red stain across it that next time we come here we may say, “Here a soul destroyed itself.”  
But I pray rather that God the Holy Spirit may sweetly whisper in your heart—“Man, yield, for Jesus invites you to come to Him.” Oh, may my Master smile into your face this morning and say, “I love your soul, trust Me with it. Give up your sins. Turn to Me.” O Lord Jesus do it! And men shall not resist You. Oh, show them Your love and they must yield. Do it, O Crucified One, for Your mercy’s sake! Send forth Your Holy Spirit now and bring the strangers home and in this hall grant, O Lord, that many hearts may be fully resigned to Your love and to Your grace! Amen.

÷Oba 1.17

POSSESSING POSSESSIONS

NO. 2136

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 23, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. Obadiah 1:17.**

THIS **is a remarkable passage. Its wording is singular. It begins with a, "but," because the previous verses have been denouncing judgments upon Edom. When God comes forth to punish His enemies He also comes forth to bless His friends. When Pharaoh is overthrown in the Red Sea, it is that Israel may pass onward to Canaan. When Amalek is overcome, it is that Israel may be at peace. There is a black cloud as well as the silvery rain. The acceptable year of the Lord is the day of vengeance of our God. This combination so constantly occurs that the Psalmist said, "I will sing of mercy and judgment."**

**The sword of vengeance is displayed at the same time as the scepter of Divine Grace. In that Last Great Day—that coming of the Lord which is the joy and expectation of His people—there will be confusion to His adversaries. To the ungodly, "the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light." When He comes forth there will as surely be a curse to the left hand as a blessing to the right—and both will be everlasting. Hell is as deep as Heaven is high, for God, who delights in mercy, also hates iniquity and will put away the wicked of the earth like dross. God grant to you and to me that we may know on which side we stand and may be found in Christ, wearing His righteousness and accepted in the Beloved so that whenever the Lord comes forth with plagues for His adversaries, He may have favor towards us.**

**When, in the words of verse 16, His foes, "shall be as though they had not been," may the full force of the present text be revealed in our case— "But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." I have no doubt that this promise has been fulfilled already and that there was a time when the house of Israel, restored from captivity, came back to Zion and Edom was utterly consumed. "The house of Jacob shall be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord has spoken it."**

But the former fulfillment of a promise does not make it useless like a cashed check—the promise may be presented again—and it will again be honored. God's rules of action are ***immutable* and therefore what He did to one company of His people He will do to others of them. God is Sovereign but yet He acts according to His unchanging Nature so that from one of His proceedings we may infer the rest. The temporary restoration of the captives to Jerusalem can only have fulfilled the promise upon a very small scale—it has a wider meaning than such an event could exhaust. The Lord is prepared to do the same on a larger scale for all those who put their trust in Him.**

Taking the text as containing a general principle, I shall use it for our own encouragement and edification, praying God the Holy Spirit to make it truly useful. I notice, in the text, first, ***a privilege to be desired—*"The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." Secondly, *a favor to be remembered—*"Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance." And, thirdly, *a character to be conspicuous—*"And there shall be holiness."**

I. **First of all, consider A** PRIVILEGETOBEDESIRED**. The land of Canaan had been granted to Israel by the Lord of All. Each family had a lot and portion which belonged to it forever, being entailed upon it by a Covenant of salt. Through their sins the tribes were carried into captivity—the land was taken from them by their conquerors and they could no longer possess their possessions. Now, the promise comes to them by the prophet Obadiah: "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."**

**A property may be my lawful possession and yet, for different reasons, I may not be able to get at it—it may be in the hands of one who defrauded me of it, or I may be far away and unable to reach it. The words are singular, but their meaning is distinct—"They shall possess their possessions." Let us use the words as applicable to *souls who shall be led to take what is promised to Believers*. "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." We set before many of you, every Lord's-Day, the great possessions of eternal life, of pardon, of justification, of the new birth, sanctification and all the other treasures of the Covenant of Grace. But though they are set before you and you long after them, many of you feel unable to grasp them as your own.**

**You know that the tenure of these possessions is faith, but either you do not understand what faith is, or you, for some other reason, fail to exercise it and so you do not appropriate what the Gospel freely gives to you. You are either confused by ignorance, dazed by fear as to your sin or held back by the temptations of the devil. I pray that you may be granted Divine Grace speedily to take what Jesus freely gives so that you may come to possess your possessions. If you have the power given you today, by faith, to take the Lord Jesus Christ as yours—and if you now trust in His most precious blood—you need not be afraid that you will be taking possession of what does not belong to you, for every believing soul may know that what he takes by faith was bestowed upon him in the Covenant of Grace from before the foundation of the world!**

If you believe in Christ, you were chosen of God before the world began! For Believers, redemption was specially offered by our Lord upon the Cross—He bought for them the Covenant heritage and He has made it over to them so that it shall be theirs forever. You cannot know this before you believe! But faith reveals the Divine choice and gift. You who now believe were once strangers to such an extraordinary joy as that which comes by faith. You wandered up and down in sin, knowing nothing of what free Grace and dying love had done for you—but now you have come to God and you have ventured by faith to take possession of what the Lord so freely offers in the Gospel—and behold, it is revealed to you that these things were yours in the purpose of God, even from everlasting! Now is it fulfilled to you—"The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."

**God gave you all Covenant blessings in Christ Jesus according as He chose you, in Him, from before the foundation of the world. God saw you in Christ as His elect, His Beloved, His redeemed and therefore for you He prepared a kingdom which you inherit through His Grace. If you have now the confidence to believe in Christ Jesus and to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," then you shall know that in grasping gracious blessings you do but come to your own! You possess your possessions!**

**Let it be the prayer of everyone here who by faith has entered into rest, that others may now be brought in that so the number of the elect may be accomplished and that all Covenant provisions may be received by those for whom they are prepared. Oh, for the bringing home to their God and to their own possessions those who are now prodigals, starving in the far-off country! Let us go a step further. Beloved Friends, many by faith have laid hold upon the Covenant possessions, but yet they do not *fully* possess them. The text leads me to pray that *Believers may enjoy fully what they have grasped by faith*.**

**Christ is mine, but, Beloved, who among us knows all that is ours in Christ? He is a case which is all ours, but we do not open its doors and take out all its treasures! Our possessions in Christ are very wide but we need to be bid, like Abraham, to lift up our eyes to the north and to the south and to the east and to the west, that we may form a clearer idea of the goodly land which the Lord our God has given us! We *see* the blessings of the Covenant but do we *feed* on them as we might! Do we drink deep into them and is our soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness by them? I fear we do not by enjoyment possess our possessions!**

**Alas, with many Believers times of actual realization and enjoyment are rare—they can talk about the blessing—but they do not habitually rejoice in it themselves. "Oh, yes," they say, "it is a very delightful thing to be washed in the blood of the Lamb." But do they enjoy the peace which flows from cleansing? Have they "received the Atonement" and with it that peace with God which follows upon justification by faith? Do they delight in "the peace of God which passes all understanding"?**

You know, dear Brothers and Sisters, that it is your high privilege to have access to the Mercy Seat—but do you ***use* that access and come often and boldly to the Throne of Grace? Do you avail yourselves of your opportunities? Do you make the utmost use of prayer? In other holy matters do you really stand where God would have you stand? Are you as rich as Christ has made you? A man may have large possessions and yet be practically poor because he is miserly in his expenditure. Is it not so with many a child of God? All things are ours and yet we live as if nothing were ours! Like a horse shut out of the pastures we nibble round the hedges— better far for us to be like sheep which enter in and lie down in green pastures. Oh, for Grace to appropriate by enjoyment those treasures of the Covenant which make the soul to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!**

I pray that we may not look in at the windows of the banqueting hall, but may sit at the table and possess our possessions. Why should we be hungry and thirsty when Christ has given us His flesh to be meat, indeed, and His blood to be drink, indeed? Why should we be hanging down our heads like bulrushes when the Lord loves us and would have His joy to be in us that our joy may be full? Why are we so dispirited by our infirmities when we know that Jehovah is our strength and our song—He also has become our salvation? I tell you, Brothers and Sisters, we do not possess our possessions! We are like an Israelite who should say, "Yes, those terraces of land are mine. Those vineyards, olives, figs and pomegranates are mine. Those fields of wheat and barley are mine, yet I am starving."

Why do you not drink the blood of the grapes? He answers, "I can scarcely tell you why, but so it is—I walk through the vineyards and I admire the clusters, but I never taste them. I gather the harvest and I thrash it on the barn floor, but I never grind it into corn, nor comfort my heart with a morsel of bread." Surely this is wretched work! Is it not folly carried to an extreme? I trust the children of God will not copy this madness! Let our prayer be that we may use and enjoy to the utmost all that the Lord has given us by His Grace and so possess our possessions!

Go a step further. We possess our possessions ***when we hold firmly what we enjoy*. Too many Christians hold their blessings with a feeble hand—they *expect* where they ought to *enjoy—*and *think* where they ought to *know*. They are never sure and thus they do not "possess their possessions." They are not sufficiently at home with spiritual things to be said to possess them. At times they rise into rapturous joy—I think I heard one of them sing the other day—**

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

**But the Brother very soon came down from that mountain—the Sister soon quit Tabor and made her way to the place of Wailing. Why this fickleness? Some do not stay long enough in the garden of Assurance to see a single fruit ripen—they do not possess their possessions.**

**It is a grand thing when the Grace of God enables a man to say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." When happy feelings vanish, faith abides the same. Be it night or be it day, our soul waits only upon God, for our expectation is from Him! When you have such a grip of the Everlasting Covenant that if all the devils in Hell were to try to drag it from you, you would defy their efforts, it is well with you! We know, *then*, that we have passed from death unto life! We know that Christ is ours and that we are His. We are resting in Him and are saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord?**

When we are thus assured, we then really possess our possessions— our title deeds are before us—and the inheritance is within sight of our faith. If a man is living in a house which does not belong to him, he can hardly be said to possess it. He may be at any moment disturbed, if not ejected altogether. If one who can prove his claim comes that way, out he must go! Beloved, our God has given us a Covenant right in Christ Jesus to the blessings of His Grace—we cannot be ejected! Justice is on our side as well as Grace since Jesus died. Our tenure is not uncertain—because Jesus lives we shall live, also. Blessed is he who, having believed in the Lord Jesus, is able to sing—

*"Now I can read my title clear*

***To mansions in the skies, I bid farewell to every fear, And wipe my weeping eyes."***

**May this be the lot of all the members of *this* Church and of all my Lord's servants in *every* place!**

I have not come to the end of my tether yet. I will fix another meaning upon these words and apply them to ***souls realizing things to come*. Brothers and Sisters, we have possessions which we have not yet seen and cannot as yet enter upon—**

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

**We believe in the Second Coming of our Lord from Heaven and in the Glory that shall follow. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and the eternal bliss of the godly in Heaven. We believe that we shall dwell with Christ forever and ever. Can we possess these possessions even now? We cannot now rise from the dead, for we are not yet buried. We cannot yet walk the golden streets, for we have not passed through the gate of pearl. Yet, by the realizations of *faith*, we may make these things to be so near that we may measurably enjoy them even now—and so already possess our possessions!**

"He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Though we are not actually in Heaven, yet in union with our Lord we are virtually there. We have been buried and risen with Him in Baptism. We have been raised from spiritual death into newness of life and we have gone up above all earthly things into the heavenlies, where we dwell. Yes, Beloved, faith has a strange realizing faculty— imagination can do much in this direction—but faith can do far more. By imagination a man can make fiction appear fact—faith has nothing to do with fiction, but it makes the sure hopes of the future to be the pleasures of the present.

Earth can become the vestibule of Heaven! Life here may be the rehearsal of the Glory-Life above. Even here we may possess our possessions by enjoying a period of rest, "as the days of Heaven upon the earth." Already we have the earnest of the inheritance in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and we have obtained that inheritance in Christ—

*"The men of grace have found Glory begun below Celestial fruits on earthly ground From faith and hope do grow."*

**More and more may we enjoy the peace, the rest, the purity, the victory of Heaven—and thus possess our possessions!**

One other meaning and upon this I am going to lay emphasis—we long to see ***souls winning others for Jesus*. I think when it says, "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions," it may also mean the possessions of their enemies, for, in the 19th and 20th verses, we read—"They of the south shall possess the Mount of Esau and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Zarephath, shall possess the cities of the south."**

**The saints annex the territories of their enemies which are theirs in Christ Jesus. The whole world belongs to Christ and in His name we are to possess it for Him. As yet we see not all things put under Him—the enemy abides in His strongholds. Ah, how terribly does the enemy keep his hold on London! Beloved, we long that this text may prove true to us by our achieving the capture of this great city. "There is very much land yet to be possessed," and we must press on our conquest in the name of Jesus! We must carry the war into the enemy's country and storm fort after fort for Jesus! This land is a part of Christ's own kingdom—let us take it! Is this to be done? It *must* be done! We must not be satisfied till millions bow at our Lord's feet—until Jesus, by the Grace of God, possesses the east and the west, the north and the south. I regard this as a promise to us—"The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."**

**Drunkenness must come down like Jericho before the trumpets of Israel! Sin and lechery, like the iron chariots of the Canaanites, must be broken in pieces before our holy faith. Unbelief and superstition, like the hosts of Jabin, must give way before the everlasting Gospel which *must* and *shall* conquer. Oh that the whole Church would be up and doing for the Lord our King! Oh, for a dauntless faith to go up and possess the gates of our enemies! This is one of God's great designs. He has chosen us and brought us to Zion that there we may find deliverance for ourselves and then may lead others to the Deliverer! Is it not written in the 21st verse, "And saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's"?**

If we have been chosen of God we have been chosen with this objective—that we gather out from the world the rest of the Lord's redeemed— and win for our King the nations now in revolt against Him. Many of us are, just now, praying day and night that this may be our best year—that we may have a larger increase than ever before. I invite you all to join with me in this continual supplication and may it come to pass before our own eyes, that, in this Tabernacle, "the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."

II. **So much upon the main part of our discourse. There are two other things to be handled and, first, comes this—A** FAVORTOBEREMEMBERED**—"Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance." This fact should help us to possess our possessions! See what God has done for us! What can He not do? Is anything too hard for the Lord? That you may see the force of the passage, let me work out its meaning. *We have been saved,* for, "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance" and we have found it so. In Christ Jesus we have been saved!**

**The Revised Version has it, "In Mount Zion there shall be those that escape." We have escaped from sin, death and Hell. One of the greatest expositors of the Minor Prophets reads it, "Upon Mount Zion there shall be an escaped remnant," which indicates a people small and weak but effectually rescued—and such are we. This rendering reminds us of that other Prophet who said, "In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (****[Joel 2:32](tw://bible.*?id=29.2.32|_AUTODETECT_|)). Glory be to God! We are saved!**

**Delitzsch reads it, "Upon Mount Zion will be that which has been saved." Yes, we have been saved—saved from spiritual death, saved from punishment, saved from *sin*** itself—saved unto the glory of our God! We have been saved, not on Mount Sinai, for there the Law thunders terribly—but on Mount Zion where the blood of sprinkling speaks better things than that of Abel! Because of this deliverance let us go up and publish salvation and proclaim the name of our Deliverer! Hearken unto His voice, you captives, that you, also, may be delivered! Look to Him, you perishing, that you also may be saved! Now may we cheerfully possess our possessions, since we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

*We are daily saved,* for the text says, "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance." Salvation abides there at *all* times. Not only have we *been* saved, but we *are* saved continually from all evil. If we fall into trouble at any time, we fly to Jesus. If we have hourly temptations, we look to Jesus for hourly succor. We have present salvation. Let us not think of our salvation as a matter which was finished in us on a certain day and then and there ended. Conversion is the beginning of sanctification and sanctification is the life-long working out of salvation. Grace will always be needed from day to day until we enter into Glory. In Mount Zion, in Christ Jesus, in the Word, and in the Church of God there is a fountain of salvation which never dries up. If it is so, let us enjoy it, without stint, now and always! Let us be rich in abiding treasure. Let us be happy in never-failing safety and let us seek to bring this deliverance to others.

*We are few, comparatively*. I reminded you of that reading of the text— "Upon Mount Zion shall be an escaped remnant." I will not make guesses as to what the number of God's chosen will be in the end. But at present, taking the most charitable view of things, the saved ones are as a handful of corn on the top of the mountains, or as the gleanings of the vintage. The world lies in the Wicked One, and those who are in Christ Jesus are a small remnant. That cheering word, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," is still applicable to the Church. When we accept the most enlarged notion of the numbers making up the Church of God at the present day and compare that slender company with the population of the globe, it is like comparing a drop in a bucket to the favor of the temple.

Ah, me! Let us not despair—if God has saved us, though we are but few, He will accomplish His purposes by us. He saves not by many nor by few—His own right arm gets unto Him the victory. You are able to possess the land, few as you are! Only go forth in the same spirit as the 12 did when the Holy Spirit rested upon them at Pentecost—and few as you may be—you can yet subdue the nations for Christ.

*We are chosen by Divine Grace*. In Mount Zion the escaped remnant are men chosen by Grace and ordained unto this deliverance. If you believe that God has chosen you, nothing should daunt you. More courage comes into the heart through a grip of the doctrine of election than by any other Truth of God. Let a man believe that God has ordained him to this or that and he goes forward with irresistible resolve! The man impressed with his election crashes through every difficulty as though he were a bolt of iron shot from some tremendous cannon by a master marksman. Who shall hinder my accomplishing that to which God has appointed me? I shall fulfill my destiny! Who shall hinder me? In this there is a mighty motive for pressing on to possess our possessions and win for Christ the purchase of His blood. "The remnant has obtained it." The victory remains with the people whom the Lord has chosen!

Notice this, that we are *set for the deliverance of others.* The Lord's purpose of Grace to any man does not end with that one man. He chooses one man with a view to others. When God chooses a company of men to eternal life, it is that they may be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jehovah chose Israel that the favored nation might receive the oracles of God and preserve them for the ages to come. If He has chosen us and brought us to His Mount Zion, it is that, finding deliverance for ourselves, we may go forth and bear the tidings of it to the ends of the earth! Is it not written, "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"?

Brothers and Sisters, we ought to go in and possess the land and win the people for Jesus, for that is why we are we chosen! Has He saved you? Has He taken you out from among the fallen mass of mankind? Has He chosen you by His discriminating Grace? Oh, then you are not your own— you are His forever—and you are not to live for yourselves, but for His Glory and for the making known of His salvation among your fellow men! Beloved, take heart and courage and let your souls be big with high enterprise and noble purpose! Say to yourselves, "It shall be true, 'the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions,' for we know of a truth that there is deliverance upon Mount Zion." **III.** Our final word is perhaps the most important of all. I call your attention to a third matter, namely, **THE** **CHARACTER** **TO** **BE** **CONSPICUOUS**. "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and *there shall be holiness*." It is through *holiness* that the house of Jacob shall enter into that possession of which I have spoken at so great length. If there is no holiness, then there has been no deliverance—and there shall be no possessing of possessions. Holiness is a link which is essential to the golden chain of blessings. If we are without holiness, we shall not see the Lord on our side. To give you the bearing of the words before us, I remark, first, that it might be translated, "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and *there shall be a sanctuary*," or, "a holy place"—an inviolate sanctuary of God.

The people of God are the Temple of God. The Church of God should be God's peculiar dwelling place where He walks as King in His own palace. The Temple of the Godhead, is, first of all, the Person of Christ, and next the Church of the living God. "This is My rest; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." With what dignity is the Church invested, when it is, in very deed, the Temple of God! When we come together in our solemn gatherings and especially when we surround the communion table and are visibly seen as a Church, let us be filled with solemn awe and holy trembling—for the Lord is among us as He was in Sinai—or, better still, as He was in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of old. True saints are living stones of the living Temple where the Lord Jehovah deigns to make Himself known!

Unless we can realize this we shall not possess our possessions. If your Church membership is a mere trifle to you. If you think that a Church is simply a community of people who meet together for religious purposes you miss the mark. The Church must be the sanctuary of God—the place where God reveals Himself—and if it is not so, the men and women who make up that Church have never tasted the Divine deliverance and neither will they possess their possessions! Without the Presence of God in the Church it has no power to subdue the world to the faith. The great thing that makes God's people a holy people, is *the Presence of God with them*. He sanctifies both the place of His abode and those that come near to Him. It is holy ground where Jehovah reveals Himself, though it is but in a bush. God is everywhere but He is not everywhere as He is in His Church.

There is a special, gracious Presence of God in the midst of His chosen people and this it is that makes them "holiness unto the Lord." Have you ever been forced to cry with Jacob, "How dreadful is this place!" and that because you had also cried, "Surely God was in this place!"? In a gathering of saints, when you have drawn near in solemn prayer to God and have laid hold upon the Covenant Angel and prevailed, have you not felt that you were the Lord's? We are never so holy as when we are near to God! God's overshadowing Presence sanctifies the man whom it covers! Beloved, we *must* have this or we cannot conquer the nations! If God is not with us and the shout of a King is not in the camp, there will be no brave deeds done in the battle! The Church needs reviving at home. We hear men talk of "getting up a revival." What idle talk is this! If the Church of God becomes spiritually quickened, the revival will come—but no way else. Let *us* carefully see to our *holiness* and *God* will see to our *success*.

Next to this, *there must be holy teaching—* "there shall be holiness." All the teaching that goes forth from us must be God's holy Truth and not the dream of human wisdom. If I hear of a ministry under which there are no conversions, I usually find that it is not a holy ministry. If in the teaching there is nothing which is calculated to convert sinners, we cannot wonder that it is not used to that end. If I go fishing with a torn net, is it any wonder that I catch no fish? God will not convert souls by unholy sermons, for it would not be to His Glory to do so. Instrumentality must be fitted for what it aims at, and soul-saving sermons must deal with *sin, salvation* and with the *blood* of Jesus! What have we to do with themes which are foreign to our design?

If I were to come here and talk to you about strikes, or Home Rule, or Socialism and should you pray to God to convert souls by my discourse— would it not be a mockery or worse? I think so. Zion must have holy preaching if she is to have conquering power. Whatever our ministry lacks, it must be said of it, "There shall be holiness," or there will be death in the pot. Oh that the preacher might always be holy! Unless we preach a holy God, a holy doctrine, a holy Gospel and holy practice, we sow the wind! Beloved, we must maintain *holy ordinances*. God forbid that we should put a slight upon Baptism and the Supper of the Lord! Some have rejected these sacred institutions—and how they will answer for it in the day when Christ shall come! If the Lord Jesus has ordained these institutions, how dare we set them aside? Surely this is presumptuously mounting to the Throne of Christ, pushing Him from the seat of legislation and daring to make laws for ourselves! No—there shall be *holiness* and *then* we shall possess our possessions and find in the ordinances means of instruction and usefulness.

There must be holiness in the form of *holy pleadin*g. If every member of this Church, which has enjoyed so much of Divine favor, could be aroused to mighty intercession for the souls of men, should we not see great things? If every member were in earnest in praying for the visitations of God and if everyone pleaded day and night for the display of Divine power—and added to his pleading that which would prove it to be sincere, namely, his own individual effort—what a day would break upon us! It would be a morning without clouds! I see no reason why it should not be so. I pray it may be realized at once. May our ideal become a fact! May God Himself fulfill the promise, "There shall be holiness"! Holiness will breed prayer and prayer will bring power—and that power will work mightily for the Glory of the Lord.

One thing more—*there must be holy living*. Prayer Meetings—what are they if they are held by a number of people who do not serve the Lord at home? Preaching—what is that if the preacher preaches what he has never experienced and is not prepared to practice? Teaching in Sunday schools—what is that if the children are taught by frivolous persons whose lives are destitute of piety? God will not bless us to the effecting of His purposes of salvation unless we are clothed with holiness as with a garment. Zion's priests must put on their snow-white garments of holy living if they are to offer an acceptable sacrifice before Jehovah!

If I might plead on my knees with tears in my eyes, I would beseech every Brother and Sister here to be holy! Hear how the Lord says, "Be you holy, for I am holy." "Be you imitators of God as dear children." "Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh." "Let your conversation be as it becomes the Gospel of Christ." You cannot possess your possessions to your own joy unless your lives are holiness unto the Lord! You cannot have full assurance; you cannot rise to close communion with Christ; you cannot anticipate the joys of Heaven—you cannot be useful to men unless you carefully obey the Lord and walk in holiness before Him. Our hearts can truly pray—

***"Yet one thing we need, More holiness grant, For more of Your mind And Your Spirit we pant."***

If this panting is fulfilled, all things will go well with us. Suffer the word of exhortation. As we so eagerly desire that we may have a great increase to this Church through numerous conversions, let us lay this to our hearts that we must be *holy*—for if we are *not* holy we shall not be fit to be *blessed*.

*The unholy worker is not really in earnest*. He may have a factitious or fictitious earnestness but heart-passion for souls is not found in unholy men. Unless you are thoroughly consecrated to God and then sanctified by the Spirit, you will not speak with that accent of conviction which carries the Truth of God home to the hearer. Do you not know yourselves that when you have listened to a clever preacher who has no spirituality— but is a mere actor and known to be of worldly habits—his preaching has no power in it for you? What he said was all very well but it fell flat—he was a clever and eloquent man but he did not touch you.

When I heard George Muller some years ago, there was nothing of oratory in what he said—but then there was George Muller behind it—and every syllable had weight. That blessed man spoke as one who had experienced what he said. His long life of faith in God made every word powerful with the heart and conscience. Teachers of Bible classes and schools—a holy life must be your power in your classes or your words will be to your children as idle tales! If they see your lives to be unholy, *the ungodly will reject your testimony* and it will be no wonder that they do so! They *need* to reject it. They are looking for excuses to reject it and they will gladly find an argument in your unhallowed conversation.

They will say, "The man does not believe it, himself, or else he would not live as he does." I heard of one who was asked by her minister whether she remembered last Sunday's sermon. "No," she said, "it is all gone." "But you ought to remember it," said the minister. "No," she replied, "I am not to be expected to do so, for you did not remember it yourself—you read it all from a paper." The argument is if the preacher does not remember his own preaching to put it into practice, how can he expect others to do so? Shall the taught excel the teacher? Brother, you lose your leverage of power if you fail in holiness!

What is more, *saints cannot pray for a blessing on a work which is not holy*. If you work for God in an unholy way or work for God rightly, yet, nevertheless, are inconsistent in your ordinary life, the people of God will be grieved and will find it impossible to pray for you. "Ah!" said one to me, talking of his minister of whom I was sorry that he should have so to speak, "*You* may well have a blessing, for God's people love to pray for *you—*but as for our minister, he is a fine preacher but there is nothing gracious about him—and none of the Lord's people feel drawn to him." This is a grievous loss to a man—a leak which will sink his ship. Can any good come of a ministry for which saints cannot pray? Unless the people of God see in a man downright consecration to God and holiness of spirit and life, they cannot feel that union of heart which produces intercession.

Lastly, *God Himself will not honor a ministry which is not accompanied by holy character*. How can God set His seal to an unholy life? Ah, Brothers! If we can go into the world and sin as others do all the days of the week, it will be in vain to pull over us the garb of sanctity on Sunday and say, "I am a witness for Christ." What does God think of such conduct? Does He call on evil men to be His witnesses? He hates hypocrisy and therefore He cannot append the "signs following" to a ministry which is impure. O my Brothers, we desire honor from the Lord in conversions. We would not be as Saul, when he laid hold on Samuel and cried, "Honor *me* before the people!" All the honor which rhetoric and oratory could bring would be nothing to us if we did not see souls saved!

O you that are not yet Believers in Jesus, how much I wish that you were so! May you be led to believe at once in Him whose death must be your life! Who must Himself be your salvation! Look to Him and live! And you that are Christ's, I beg you to remember the remarkable expression of the text and may you "possess your possessions"! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 44.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK”—90, 957, 999.

÷Jon 1.3

RUNAWAY JONAH AND THE CONVENIENT SHIP  
NO. 2171

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 10, 1890.

**“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish.” Jonah 1:3.**

SAD sight! Here is a servant of God running away from his work. As well see the stars wandering from their spheres! When we read that he fled from the presence of God, we do not suppose that Jonah thought that he could get away from God as to His Omnipresence, but he wanted to escape serving in the Divine Presence—he wished to avoid being employed by God in his special service as a Prophet. He thought that the Lord might call him and send him upon errands if he went to Nineveh, for Assyria had some measure of evident relationship to the Lord and His people. But if he could once travel as far as Tarshish, he would be out of the world altogether and would no more have to speak in the name of the Lord. He imagined that there could be no relationship between Tarshish and Israel and he would not be expected to do any further prophetic work. Or, if he did, he would not suffer in repute, for the report would not reach Jerusalem. If he did not want to get away from the toilsome and self-denying duty of prophecy, he did, at least, wish to avoid an expedition to the heathen of Nineveh—an expedition which, he foresaw, would not be for his own honor.

Now, why did he desire to get away from his work? Whatever reason he had, it must have been a bad one, for no servant of God ought, on any account whatever, to think of quitting the service of his Lord. We should not wish to avoid the doing of the Lord’s will. When we know what our duty is, we ought to follow it with unswerving determination. We must not wish to leave our post, no, not even to go to Heaven. We ought not to be sighing to be gone. Employers do not like a man who is always looking for Saturday night! Let him attend to the work of Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and the week will end quite soon enough.

One does not like to see a fellow standing about, stretching his arms upward and sighing, “The week is very long. I wish it were Saturday.” You like a man who means to do a fair day’s work for a fair day’s wage and

who does not watch till you turn your back that he may slacken his labor. We must not be crying, “Oh that I had wings like a dove!” What should we do with them if we had them? Such heavy mortals as some of us are had better keep nearer the ground! Whatever reason anyone thinks he has for avoiding the Lord’s work, the reason is as vicious as the thing he is aiming at, for children of God have no right to leave the service of their heavenly Father and, when they do so, it is at their own peril.

What was his reason? Was it, in part, that he considered the work to be too great for him? Certainly he had a great task appointed him. “Nineveh, an exceedingly great city of three days’ journey”—how was one man to admonish and evangelize the whole of it? Preposterous! Might he not have been aided by at least one colleague? Even Moses had his Aaron! Why did not the Lord send forth a college of Prophets, or an army of preachers and bid them go and divide the vast city into districts? Then they could hold services in all the large halls, at the street corners, or even visit from house to house! Just one man is pitted against hundreds of thousands?

Would a single voice be heard amid the noise of a city which was full of tumult? The odds were great against the lone man. Was that why Jonah ran away? I think not—but it has been the cause of the flight of many others. Is there a servant of God here who feels unequal to his work and therefore wishes he could escape from it? My dear Brother, you are unequal to your work, for you have no sufficiency of your own! I know, also, that I am, in and of myself, unequal to my own calling—shall we, therefore, run away?

No, no! That is not the true line of argument. This is the reason why we should stick to our work all the more closely. Every hard thing can be cut by something harder and the most difficult work can be done by stern resolution. But if the work cannot be well done by us, how will it be done without us? If our diligence seems too little, what will our negligence be? If there is too much for us to do, should we therefore leave undone what we can do? God forbid! Pluck up courage, my Brother, and in your own personal weakness find a strong reason for getting to your work, for, “When I am weak, then am I strong” and the strength of God is made perfect in our weakness! With more prayer we shall have more power.

I hardly think that fear of being overdone was Jonah’s reason for deserting his post. Why did Jonah wish to run away? Because he did not like the Ninevites? I think that there was something of that on his mind. He was a stern old Jew and he loved his race—and he felt no desire to see anything done for the Gentiles or for the heathen outside the Abrahamic Covenant—therefore he had no passion for a mission to Nineveh. Is there anybody here who does not want to go to a certain service because he does not like the people? Will you flee to Tarshish to get away from a dreaded sphere? Are you backing out of your duty because those with whom you are to serve are not quite to your taste—too ignorant or too cultured, too countrified or too polite? Come, my dear Brother, this must not be! Be not of a cross, morose disposition as Jonah undoubtedly was. If the men to whom you are sent are worse than others, let that be a call for you to go to them, first, even as the Apostles were to “begin at Jerusalem.” If those to whom you are sent are greater sinners than others, they need Christ all the more! And if you have heard a very bad report of them, surely there is a call for you to elevate them.

However, I am not sure that this was very much Jonah’s case, though it may have been one of the many arguments that worked together to produce his undutiful behavior. Was it not, possibly, because Jonah knew that God was merciful? “Now,” said he to himself, “if I have to go through Nineveh and say, ‘Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,’ and if these people repent, it will not be overthrown! And then they will say, ‘Pretty Prophet that Jonah! He is a man that cries, ‘Wolf,’ when there is no wolf,’ and I shall lose my reputation.” Do I address any servant of God here who is afraid of losing his reputation? This is not a reason which will stand examination.

My Brother, that is a fear which does not trouble me. I have lost my reputation several times and I would not go across the street to pick it up! It has often seemed to me to be a thing that I should like to lose—that I might no longer be pressed with this huge throng—but might preach to two or three hundred people in a country village, look after their souls and stand clear, at last, to God about each one of them. Whereas, here I am tied to a work I cannot accomplish—pastor to more than 5,000 people! A sheer impossibility! How can I watch over all your souls? I should have an easy conscience if I had a Church of moderate size which I could efficiently look after. If a reputation gets one into the position I now occupy, it certainly is not a blessing to be coveted.

But if you have to do anything for Christ which will lose you the respect of good people and yet you feel bound to do it, never give two thoughts to your reputation for, if you do, it is already gone in that secret place where you should most of all cherish it. The highest reputation in the world is to be faithful—faithful to God and your own conscience. As to the approbation of the unconverted multitude, or of worldly professors, do not care the turn of a button for it—it may be a deadly heritage. Many a man is more a slave to his admirers than he dreams of—the love of approbation is more a bondage than an inner dungeon would be. If you have done the right thing before God and are not afraid of His great judgment seat, fear nothing, but go forward! I think that there was a little of regard for reputation in Jonah—possibly a great deal.

But still there was a higher and a better motive, though even that was a bad one, for anything is bad, however true and excellent in itself, that leads a man to run contrary to God’s mind. It was this. He thought that the Character of God Himself would suffer, for if he went down to Nineveh

and proclaimed, “Yet 40 days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” then the people might repent and Jehovah would allow them to live. And then, after a while, the people would say, “Who is Jehovah? His Word does not stand fast. He does not carry out His judgments. He lays His hand on the hilt of His sword and then pushes it back into the scabbard.” Thus the Lord Himself, by His mercy, would lose His name for Truth and Immutability.

Jonah would have preferred the destruction of Nineveh to the least dishonor to the name of the Lord. Have you ever felt as if you could wish that God would execute judgment on deadly forms of error and cruel forms of oppression? Have you not been half weary of His longsuffering? I stood at the bottom of Pilate’s staircase in Rome. Pretentious imposition! It is said to be the staircase from which our Lord came down from Pilate’s Hall— and there are certain holes in the wood which covers the marble wherein are said to be seen the drops of blood which fell from our Lord’s bleeding shoulders. As I saw people going up those stairs on their knees and the priests looking on, it occurred to me that if the Judge of all would lend me His thunderbolts for about five minutes, I would have made a wonderful clearance.

It was the Jonah spirit stirring me and I felt I did well to be angry. But, you see, the good Lord did not empower me to be an executioner—and I am right glad that He did not! Have you ever felt a zeal for the Lord of Hosts which led you, like John, to wish to call fire from Heaven? Did you not feel half sorry that the Lord withheld His anger when it seemed necessary to execute vengeance in order to maintain the honor of His Gospel? Have you not almost said, “Oh, that He would punish such tremendous iniquities”?

Not long ago, when these streets of ours were ringing with stories of licentious infamy, did you not feel as if something must be done, something terrible, to sweep away the dens of lust and cleanse the Augean stables of pollution? But God did nothing in the way of plague, or war, or famine. In His longsuffering He passed by the transgressors and allowed them, still, to go on in their wickedness as He has done these many years, bearing and forbearing, if haply men may come to repentance. This is a trial to righteous souls!

That, I think, was the great fear that lay in the heart of Jonah, for he said to God, when God had spared the city, “I pray You, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repent You of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.” This was not because the people were spared, but because he thought God had lost His honor by not fulfilling His threats.

I have given too much time to these excuses of Jonah. If you have any excuses for not doing what you ought to do, turn them out of doors and never let them in again. Away with them! Away with them! You need not even take the trouble to repeat them to yourselves, or to judge their comparative value—they are all mischievous. If you are a servant of God, obey Him at once without question. If you are not a servant of God, God grant that you may be, for, if you are not His servant, you are His foe. And if you turn not to Him through Jesus Christ and do not find mercy at His hands, what will become of you?

Now I come to the text. Jonah desired to go away from his prophetic work by journeying to the out-of-the-way place called Tarshish. And when he came to Joppa, which was the port of Jerusalem, he found a vessel bound for the place which he desired to reach. May we be taught of the Holy Spirit certain practical Truths of God from this incident! I would teach you four things.

I. The first is—WE MAY NOT FOLLOW OUR IMPULSES TO DO WRONG. Jonah felt it come upon him, all of a sudden, not to go to Nineveh, but to Tarshish. “Tarshish! Tarshish!” was constantly whispered in his ear, till he had Tarshish on the brain and go he must. Now I very commonly meet with persons who say, “I felt that I must do so-and-so. It came upon me that I must do so-and-so.” I am afraid of these impulses— very greatly afraid of them! People may do right under their power, but they will spoil what they do by doing it out of mere impulse and not because the action was right in itself.

People far oftener do very wrong under impulse and I feel it necessary to give a warning to any here who are prone to be so led. Our impulses are not to be depended on—our thoughts run wild. Do you say, “It came into my mind all of a sudden to do so-and-so”? And do you think this a good reason for your act? You are much mistaken! Do you say, “It flashed upon me to do so”? Do not let this be the rule of life. As well follow a will-o’-thewisp as follow these freaks of fancy. You must never obey an impulse to do wrong!

Now, in Jonah’s case the impulse was, “Go to Tarshish. Go to Tarshish.” I dare say that he could have pleaded that he felt pressed in spirit to do so. “Go to Tarshish, go to Tarshish,” was still beaten upon the drum of his soul. Now it may be that the impulse is to do a very brave thing. To go to Tarshish was a daring act. Jews never took well to seafaring. They were a land-loving people. Will Jonah go in a ship? We nowadays think little of it—but the Hebrews thought it a very terrible ordeal to go upon the sea. And then, to go to Tarshish—to the utmost ends of the earth—who but the men of Tyre would venture so far?

These Hebrews did not know what kind of a place Tarshish was, but Jonah is bold to go. Some of you who are now in the Tabernacle ought to be on the Congo, or in North Africa, or in India, or in China—but you do not go from lack of courage. Yet, you see, men are bold enough when

bent on going wrong. They will take great leaps in the dark! Whereas others are afraid to follow the right along a far safer way, Jonah will go to Tarshish! He is not afraid of the sea, or the storm, or anything—but although the impulse may seem to call him to that which is brave and noble, it is evil—for it leads him to oppose the plain command of God.

Impulses may also appear to be very self-denying . It was disagreeable to go to sea and to leave his native land and all its associations. Yet on this point of self-denial it is easy to go wrong. A man may be worshipping self by practicing what he calls self-denial. The devil can readily use this as a raiment of light under which to hide the demon of arrogant selfrighteousness. Men may fast from bread that they may gorge their souls on pride. It seemed also that he might have claimed liberty in this matter. Surely he might go to Tarshish if he liked! It is true he was a Prophet, but could he not quit the service if he wished? Does God turn men into slaves that they may serve Him? Surely a Prophet may make an excursion and take a holiday!

If he did not feel happy in going to Nineveh, was it right for him to go? Have you ever met with this form of argument? I have heard people speak about sacred duties in this style. Take, for instance, Believers’ Baptism— they believe that it is Scriptural, but they say—“I never felt called upon to attend to it.” As if we were not called upon to obey every command of Christ! I have heard persons say, “No doubt it is in the Word of God, but I have never felt it laid home to me.” What a wicked thing to say! If I had a boy and I gave him a command, and he told me that he did not feel it “laid home,” and therefore should not obey me, I think I should take care to lay it home very soon in a way which he might not appreciate.

I believe that when Christian people trifle with known duties, their heavenly Father will soon find a rod to fit their backs. A tender conscience looks to the Word of the Lord and longs in all things to be conformed to it. What do you need beyond the command of God? If an angel were sent from Heaven to command you to obey, the command would not be more binding upon you than it is now! The Lord has given you liberty—not liberty to sin—but liberty to obey. Never talk of freedom to do wrong. It is a horrible thing for one to say, “God loves us to be free in our service of Him and therefore I shall not serve Him, but follow my own impulses.”

At the same time, Jonah was violating his conscience, running counter to the inner life. As a servant of God he was bound to go where he was commanded and he was fighting against that which was to him a necessary element of life. O Friends, take care of defiling your consciences! Whatever you do, never trifle with conscience. If you are going to make a gash in yourself anywhere, make it on your ear, or on your nose, but not in your conscience! The wounding of your members would pain you and might injure your beauty—but a wound in your conscience is a far more serious matter since it touches the center of life. A gash in the conscience may disfigure a soul forever. Let conscience speak to you in all things and do not follow fancy. Weigh the impulse in the scales of conscience and if it is not such that conscience can guarantee it to be consistent with the mind of God, let the impulse alone. We are no more to follow vain impulses than cunningly-devised fables. The Word of the Lord is to be our leading star in all things.

Persons who talk about their impulse will often do what they would condemn in others. This ought to open their eyes to their dangerous proceeding. If anybody else had run away to Tarshish when he was told to go to Nineveh, Jonah would have seen his wrong and would have rebuked him with all his might. I should like to have seen Jonah analyzing Jonah’s case—just as David judged and condemned the rich man who took the poor man’s ewe lamb—and then found that he had been judging and condemning himself!

I should like to make some of you into jurymen upon your own cases. I am sure that you would censure yourselves in burning language for those very things which you now allow. How clearly would you see the disgrace of a man’s running away from the plain path of righteousness because he had a miserable impulse urging him to do wrong! Why, you can see the absurdity of it now. Will you, then, go on with a like course yourself? Will you flee to Tarshish when God bids you go to Nineveh? Shall self rule? Shall the flesh be pleased? This presence of impulse is what none of us would allow to be an excuse if it were made the rule of conduct towards ourselves. If any person had an impulse to knock us down, we should not see the propriety of it. If he had an impulse to rob us, we should feel an impulse to call in a constable! If any man had an impulse to wrong us, we should appeal to the law for protection.

In the same way, if we feel an inward incitement to do what we ought not to do, let us not be so silly and so wicked as to imagine that the law will be relaxed because of the evil movements of our mind! I think it necessary to take this text and speak in this way because I have seen several examples of men following, not the Word of God, not the law of righteousness, but some idle movements of their own minds to which they attached an authority which did not belong to them. I am ready to say, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” But they half imagine that these fancies come from God, whereas God is not the Author of evil desires and suggestions!

It is much more likely that these thoughts come from the devil—and most of all likely that they rise from a foolish and corrupt heart. If anything says to you, “Flee to Tarshish,” when God says, “Go to Nineveh,” shut your ears against the evil impulse and hasten to do as God bids you. What have you to do with the devices and desires of your own hearts? Are these to be a law to you? I pray you, be not among the foolish ones who will be carried about with every wind of fancy and perversity. “To the Law

and to the Testimony,” should be your cry and you may not appeal to inward movements and impulses.

II. My second remark is this—WE MAY NOT TAKE A WRONG COURSE BECAUSE IT SEEMS EASY. Jonah says, “I will go to Tarshish.” And he goes down to the port of Joppa where he finds a ship going to Tarshish. How easy a thing it often is to carry out an evil purpose! My dear Hearers, whether you are Christians or not Christians, I want to put you on your guard against the idea that because a certain course in life is very natural and easy, you may therefore follow it, though it is not right. Remember that the way of destruction is always easy. “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, and many there are which go in there.”

The way to Hell is downhill and this is easy traveling. Because it seems easy, natural and almost inevitable for you to go along a certain questionable road, do not, therefore, dream that this gives you a license to follow it. You have reason to suspect a course in life in which there is no difficulty, for righteousness is by no means an easy thing. If a course of conduct should be difficult, you may the more surely reckon upon its being right, for “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there are that find it.” Remember that to do wrong will always be easy while our carnal nature is what it is. Men can always find, somewhere or other, the means to rebel against God. The old proverb is, “You can always find a stick to beat a dog with”—and I only quote it to show that in some things the will always ensures the way. Man can always find ways of sinning against God.

I remember, in my younger days, a schoolboy who, when at play with his companions, would fly into furious passions and would at once throw something at the person with whom he was angered. And the point I noticed was that he always found something to throw. Let him be in the schoolroom, or in the playground, or in the street—there would surely be a stone, or a book, or a slate, or a cup ready to his hand. So is it with men who fight against the Lord—they discover weapons everywhere in the fury of their rebellion. The evil brain is quick in devising. The depraved heart is swift in apprehending and the sinful hand is deft in carrying out any and every scheme of disobedience to the Lord. When a man wishes to sin, it is always easy to sin and therefore the readiness of any mode of action is no argument in its favor.

Satan also labors to make men sin and his cunning is great. When he tempted Jonah to go to Tarshish, the Evil One knew that there was a ship at Joppa waiting for a fair wind to sail for Tarshish. Therefore he whispered into Jonah’s ear, “Go to Tarshish,” because he knew that he would not be thwarted in following out the base suggestion. Our tempter has a complete acquaintance with what is going on in the world and therefore he can plot and scheme so that his suggestion shall be supported by events which are transpiring. He is not Omniscient, but his army of spies keeps him well posted. He can therefore fit his temptations to our surroundings.

The way of sin may well be easy since evil men will help you that way. If anything wrong is to be done, the sons of Belial will lend a willing hand! Thus an evil device may well succeed since all the world pulls that way. Only set up a calf and the tribes will hasten to cry, “These are your gods, O Israel.” Sin is soon made popular. All men will praise the evil way which yields them pleasure. In the rush along the downward road the eager crowd will carry you off your feet and bear you with them down to destruction without your needing to exert yourself—and therefore it is generally easy to go wrong—it is swimming with the stream, flying with the wind.

Moreover, good things are always difficult. God makes them so for purposes of discipline to His people. He that can persevere in goodness, when made to suffer by it, is good, indeed. It is, moreover, an increase to the honor of saints that they are enabled to do the right thing under great opposition and to fight their way to Heaven, foot by foot, at the sword’s point. If virtue were so very easy, where would be the honor of it? To Glory and Immortality we climb uphill! Do not, I pray you, fall into the delusion that because an evil act looks to be the next thing, the inevitable thing, therefore you may do it! The law is not, “Do the easiest thing,” or some would be very virtuous.

Would you excuse other people for injuring you on the ground that it was easy to do so? Somebody in your house pilfers, robs you of your trinkets or your cash—but you do not accept the excuse that such things were so readily got at that it was natural for the thief to take them! A man only opens his mouth and takes away your character—is the ease of slander an excuse for it? A person signs your name to a check and gets the money for it—is it a valid excuse when he says, “I have a great facility in imitating handwriting. Forgery is very simple and remunerative, so you can hardly blame me for trying it”? No, Friends, you denounce the thief, the slanderer, the forger—and even so will you be denounced if you fall into the sin which does so easily beset you.

I doubt not I am pricking the conscience of some who will do anything for a quiet life and are gradually slipping down to Hell because the way there is so smooth that they delight in it—so easy that their sloth prefers it. I know how many are excusing themselves for doing wrong because it is, in their case, so natural, while to do right would cost so great a trial. O Sirs, take yourselves out of the deadly atmosphere which renders the sleep of sin almost sure to overtake you! Excuses are soon fabricated! I pray you, quit that unrighteous business and, at all costs, follow after that which is good! Begin by faith in Jesus and then go on to build up a holy character. May the Holy Spirit work it in you!  
III. Now, we will go a step further. WE MAY NEVER PLEAD PROVIDENTIAL ARRANGEMENT AS AN EXCUSE FOR DOING WRONG. There could hardly ever be a more remarkable instance of apparently Providential co-operation than we have here! Jonah wants to go to Tarshish and having selected that place as the region of his hiding, he must go down to Joppa, on the Mediterranean sea. He walks on the wharf and the first thing he sees is a ship going to Tarshish! Is not that Providence? Boats did not often make that voyage. Do we not confess that it is Providence when we learn that the vessel will take passengers at a set fare?

Jonah wants to go to Tarshish and the very day that he gets to Joppa, a decked vessel is about to start for the remote region which he desired to reach! No one can refuse to see an apparent Providence. This is often used as a cover for wicked actions. “I could not do otherwise,” says one. “Providence seemed to point in that way. I should have been flying in the face of God if I had not done as I have done.” Ah, me! How base is man to seek to saddle his sin upon God! How grossly you deceive yourself! If Jonah was so persuaded, he was soon cured of his error. Two or three hours later, when they woke Jonah from his sleep in the hole of the ship and he saw that awful storm—did he then consider that a gracious Providence had led him into that tremendous tempest?

He soon wished himself anywhere else than on the great sea! When they were about to throw him out to the fishes, he did not say much about Providence—he was too much convinced of his own folly to blame his God. I have seen a man in trade doing certain tricky things and he has tried to make it out that the circumstances compelled him to do it. “Such-andsuch a person walked in just at that time and said certain things—and another event occurred so remarkably pat to the case that it all looked like a Providential arrangement—and everyone who saw it would have thought so.” Nonsense! Nothing can make it right to do wrong! I pray you, never blaspheme God by laying your sins on the back of His Providence!

This is an act of daring presumption and profanity. You will never see a Providence more remarkable than that which occurred to Jonah and yet Jonah, for all that, was rebelling against the Lord in going down to Tarshish! Providence or no Providence, the Word of the Lord is to be our guide and we must not depart from it under pretext of necessity or circumstances. It is very easy to make up a Providence when you want to do so. If you sit down and try to find, in the ways of God, an excuse for the wrong which you mean to commit, the crafty devil and your deceitful heart, together, will soon conjure up a plea for Providence.

The man who shot another in malice might say that Providence led him to carry his gun that morning. The burglar providentially met with a companion who wished to relieve a householder of his spare plate. The petty pilferer saw goods lying unprotected near a tradesman’s door and they providentially happened to be exactly what he needed. It will not do! The pretence is too barefaced. Yet I fear that many who think themselves Christians are deluded by this wicked argument! Such a method of reasoning would have led many into sin who are famous in history for their virtue. The three holy children would have escaped the fire and Daniel would never have been in the lion’s den if they had been guided by what men call Providences.

But note other plain instances—such as Joseph. Joseph’s mistress is so kind to him and he is in such a splendid position as head of the household—it is hard for him to deny her desire and lose his place. Had not Providence put him into his fortunate position? Shall he throw it away? When his mistress tempts him, shall he risk all? Would it not be better to think that Providence plainly hinted that he should comply? Joseph was not so base as to reason in that fashion! He knows that adultery cannot be tolerated and so he flees from his mistress and leaves his garment in her hands rather than remain near her seductions.

Look at David, too. He is brought out by Abishai upon the field at night. There lies king Saul, sound asleep, and Abishai says to David, “God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time!” What a Providence, was it not? The cruel foe was altogether in David’s hands and the executioner was eager to settle all further conflict by one fatal stroke! What could be clearer or simpler? Wonderful Providence! Yet David never said a word as to Providence, but replied, “Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s Anointed and be guiltless?”

He therefore came away and left the king sleeping as he was. He would not follow opportunities, but would keep to the Law of his God. I pray you, do the same and if ever everything seems to lead up to wrong-doing—and many circumstances unite to steer you in that direction—do not yield to them! Your guide in life is not a so-called Providence, but an unquestionable precept of the Lord! Do as God bids you and do it at once. God help you to follow where He has laid down the lines! By His Spirit may He lead you in the way everlasting, for the path of obedience is the way of peace and righteousness.

A so-called Providence has often been a pretext for wrong-doing. I dare say that many have erred through looking at circumstances rather than at commands. Look at Lot. Lot went and dwelt in Sodom, among a godless, filthy set of Canaanites. He had been with Abraham in the separated life before, but now he quit tent life for a city dwelling with its foul surroundings. Why did Lot go to Sodom? He looked and saw its well-watered plains—and as he had flocks and herds, it seemed a Providence that he was able to go there and that his uncle Abraham had left him free to choose. Did not Providence say, “Go to the well-watered plain of Sodom”? What could be more plain?  
I have known a sort of Providence speak in that fashion to certain

Christian people who were growing rich and desired to get into what is called society—they jumped at the first chance and fell into bad company. They entered upon a trade which promised to pay them well. True, it was a bad trade, a perilous trade to him that carried it on and a ruinous trade to those drawn into it—but then it would pay well. It was the well-watered plain of Sodom and they pleaded that they could not wisely forego it. Others will go to live in a certain district where there is no Gospel preaching. They leave all their friends, their Bible class and every opportunity of usefulness for the sake of the hedges and the birds. Providence has found them a spot where they can be as idle as they like.

When men go into dangerous courses, they thus speak of Providence. Fine Providence, is it not? Alas for Lot! In the end he had to read over again those lessons of Providence by the light of the blazing cities of the plain. Think, also, of Aaron. He, on one occasion, fell so low as to try to throw his sin upon Providence. When he had been making the golden calf for the people to worship and his brother Moses sharply upbraided him for it, he declared that the people were ready to stone him and when they brought their gold, he said, “Then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.” It is true the image came out, but it had first been molded and put in! Aaron wanted to make Moses believe that a special Providence made the metal form itself into the shape of the ox-god. A wretched falsehood!

Alas, that the priest of the Most High should palter with truth in this manner! And so there are people who tell you wonderful stories about what has happened to them and what has led them into their way of evil. Blessed forever be the Providence of God! Let the Lord be worshipped and adored, for He is good and does good, and good only! His Providence is always holy! Stay clear of every blasphemous charge against it! Never let us avail ourselves of opportunities to do evil—but if we dare to do so—let us not saddle the blame of it upon the thrice-holy God!

Would you excuse any other man who should do you wrong on the ground of Providence? Suppose a thief broke into your house and said that it was a Providence that you had not fastened the back window, or that the fastening was so easy to open? Suppose he said that Providence spared him a good deal of trouble because your drawers were not locked, nor your money put into the iron safe? What would you say about such Providences? A person deceives you in business and takes you in—but he says that it was a very remarkable Providence that put you in his way! Do you endorse such talk? Why, you would not listen to the fellow for a moment—and will you listen to yourself, when your heart begins to make the holy Lord an accomplice in your transgressions?

No, no, there are devil’s providences as well as Divine Providences! And there are mistaken notions of Providence and wretched perversions whereby the Holy One of Israel is grossly insulted and provoked! Thus have I briefly given you three words of caution and the fourth is like unto them.

IV. WE MAY NOT EXCUSE OURSELVES IN DOING WRONG BY THE LAWFULNESS OF AN ACT IN ITSELF. What is right in another may not be right in me. That which another might do without offense may be a grievous wrong in a child of God.

For the mariner to go to Tarshish was right enough . We do not say that in itself it was wrong to go by sea to Tarshish. There would be an end to trade if ships might not roam the watery plains. Yes, my dear Friend, it may be quite right for certain persons to pursue a course which you must not even think of! For the Tyrian sailors to go to Tarshish was their business, their calling, their duty—but it was very different with the Prophet. It was not Jonah’s business, calling, or duty—why should he go to Tarshish? There is a solemn difference between being at sea in the path of duty and going there to escape service.

He did exactly as the sailors did. I mean that, as a matter of form, it was the same—but they were right and he was wrong. They did not go on board to escape from the service of God—but he was doing so and that made all the difference. Two men may do the same thing and the one may be improving his Grace by doing it—and the other may be increasing his damnation by doing it. After all, it is the motive that must rule our judgment of the action. Beware of defending your transgression from the fact that others may do it without being censured!

But might not Jonah be allowed to go to Tarshish if he wished? Yes, it might, under certain circumstances, have been right for Jonah. When he was off duty, it might have been good for his health for him to go to Tarshish—but it must not be so when God says to him, “Go to Nineveh.” You may not do that which is contrary to the Lord’s will, even though, in itself, the action may be innocent. We may not say, “I have a right to do it.” We have no right to do otherwise than as the Lord commands. We have no right to do wrong—and the more God loves us and the more sure we are that we are His children—the more are we bound to follow closely in the way of truth and holiness. We are not saved by works, but because we are even now saved, we desire, in all our ways, to glorify Him who has saved us by His most precious blood. O dear Heart, if you are, indeed, a servant of God, you will know that obedience is liberty, holiness is freedom! To the pure in heart sin would be bondage, while to do what God commands would be liberty. By Divine Grace we will to do the will of the Lord.

It was no excuse for Jonah’s sin that he acted in an honorable manner in the doing of it. It is true that Jonah paid his fare and that this was right, if he meant to take his passage. “He found a ship going to Tarshish, and he paid the fare thereof.” He did not steal on board and try to get a free passage as a stowaway. But someone asks, “When he had paid his fare, had

he not a right to go?” Yes, he had, as far as the captain of the vessel was concerned. But he had no right before God! After paying his fare, how could he decline to go? He would lose his money, and that would be foolish. Yes, it is very easy to construct excuses for wrong courses, but they will hold no water. Apologies for disobedience are mere refuges of lies. If you do a wrong thing in the most right way in which it can be done, it does not make it right. If you go contrary to the Lord’s will, even though you do it in the most decent and, perhaps, in the most devout manner, it is, nevertheless sinful and it will bring you under condemnation.

Servants of God, you are under a higher law than anybody else . Redeemed with precious blood, chosen of God by His Sovereign Grace, made heirs of eternal Glory, it is yours to “perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord” by His good Spirit and so to do whatever He says to you, neither turning aside to the right hand nor to the left. Thus have I shown you that there is teaching in the incident at Joppa. I think it is legitimate teaching, from the fact that when Jonah wanted to do evil, everything seemed ready to his hand—and yet he was doing grievously wrong. May this warning be useful to some of you, by God’s Grace! I do not know for whom this sermon is meant, but I have felt bound in spirit to deliver it. It is intended as a warning for somebody who is hearing it, or shall hereafter read it.

Perhaps some dozen or two may find it applicable to their cases and, if it comes home to your consciences, I charge you, by the living God, do not turn a deaf ear to it! Let it search you through and through. Let it not only plow you, but scar you and cross-plow you and have its full effect upon your heart—and then, feeling that you have sinned, cast all your idle excuses to the wind and come to Jesus just as you are. Come to Jesus and find pardon for all your inexcusable sins! As long as you are sewing together the fig leaves of excuse, you will never come to Jesus for true covering. But when you have done with the spider’s webs of foolish argument, the Holy Spirit will bring you to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if you wished to go to Tarshish, it would be a great Providence if you found a vessel bound for that port. But if you want to go to Jesus you may always go to Him. You may go to Him now! Sitting in that pew you may come to Jesus. If you go to Tarshish, you will have to pay the fare. There is no fare to pay in coming to Jesus. To Him it is, “Come and welcome.” His salvation is free, gratis—given to all who are willing to receive. It is not to be bought by way of merit or of money—it is to be had freely by the way of Sovereign Grace.

I know that the impulse of yonder young man is to fly away from Christ and hope, and Heaven—the Lord help him to resist the impulse! Your mother begged you to attend the House of God—the inclination is to go out for country strolls. Resist the wish and hear the Gospel! Many go to Tarshish and are lost. I know that the temptation to yonder young woman is to forsake the way of righteousness, to follow after gaiety and so to go to Tarshish. Shut your ears to every whisper of the deluding foe and, however easy it may be for you to obey his suggestion—however even Providence may seem to make a way for you—regard not the voice of the Tempter and do not dishonor the Lord your God by supposing that He can really invite you by His Providence to do that which He forbids you by His Word.

Listen to me and come to Jesus! Come to Jesus now! Perhaps tonight, if that young man does not come to Jesus, he will be lured into a den of vice and led into desperate sin. And for many a year he will not again feel that tenderness which is stealing over him just now. Trifle not with the wooing of Divine Grace lest you be ensnared by the lies of Satan! The man is strongly tempted now—a voice incessantly cries in his ears, “Go to Tarshish.” I implore you, O my tempted Brothers and Sisters, nerve yourself to fight with this demon! Instead of hearkening to his alluring note, let the voice of Mercy have power with you. God the Holy Spirit grant that it may be so! “Come unto Me,” says Jesus, “all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.”

Seek not Tarshish, but Calvary! If you run from the Presence of the Lord, a storm will pursue you! An angry sea will open its abysses for you! There may be no fish for you, no friendly whale to carry you to shore—and you may be lost forever! O man of God, run not away from your work! O Sinner, lust not after vain and empty pleasure! Child of God, come back to Him from whom your heart has wandered and, from now on, by His Grace, be diligently His servant to the end! Sinner, you that have gone far away from peace and hope, hear the heavenly voice tonight which warns you of your danger!

Cry, “I will arise, and go to my Father.” He will come to meet you! On your neck He will fall. He will kiss you, wash you, clothe you, save you and you shall praise Him world without end! Happy, indeed, shall I be if I have, by the Grace of God, taught some souls to give up their dissembling and excuse-making! And if I have persuaded them to make full confession of sin before the Lord Jesus who will wash them till they are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jonah 1, 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—645, 185, 381.

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TRAVELING EXPENSES ON THE TWO GREAT ROADS

NO. 622

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 2, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“So he paid the fare.”  
Jonah 1:3.**

AS **a general rule, wherever we go, whatever we do, we must "pay the fare." Expenditure is connected with every act, work and operation. The sun does not constantly flood this world and all its sister spheres with light and heat without some kind of consumption within itself. Nor does the earth yield her fruits of harvest except at the cost of the matter of which it is composed. By the force of wind and frost, the very "Mountain falling comes to nothing and the rock is removed out of his place" (****[Job 14:18](tw://bible.*?id=18.14.18|_AUTODETECT_|)). The rivers do not reach the sea without wearing away their banks and cutting channels in the earth through which their floods may flow. The raindrops, the generous gifts of Heaven, have first been loaned from the treasury of the great deep. The air itself is constantly in process of consumption, and were it not that a fresh supply is daily being produced, even the atmosphere would become exhausted.**

**All the processes of Nature involve a constant expenditure of power. Ponderous as is the engine of creation and little as it shows the fretting power of age, it is certain that in the whole of its machinery, from its most stupendous wheel down to its smallest valve, it is daily and necessarily experiencing an appointed amount of wear and tear. It is assuredly so with regard to the lesser world of man. The body cannot move a limb or contract a muscle without expense. The lifting of my hand, the pointing of my finger, the motion of my tongue, the stirring of my brain in thought all cost something and make a draught upon the inner store of strength—you cannot so much as gaze upon the world around you without some wear and tear of that marvelous optical instrument by which outward sights are brought to the inward mind.**

**Friction operates on flesh and bone and sinew and a higher friction acts on mind and intellect and passion, for even these grow weak with strain and age—"the fare"—Nature sternly demands before she will loose her cable or spread her sail to the breeze. He quarrels with God's laws who expects something for nothing and hopes to be served without offering a just remuneration and to find friends without showing himself friendly. We must pay our fare, for the universe requires it—we will pay it cheerfully— for we are honest men.**

This general rule of expenditure holds good when we enter the world of morals and commune with ***spiritual* things. Man plucked the forbidden fruit and dearly was that apple paid for in the fall of all our race. The Lord redeemed us in His boundless love, but not without a price—the free mercy of God cannot work its way among men except Heaven's best treasure is spent to purchase men from bondage. Expense occurs everywhere in our salvation—"The price of pardon was the Savior's blood." "To buy our souls it cost His own."—**

*"There's never a gift His hand bestows, But cost His heart a groan."*

**Nor is it so in the kingdom of Heaven only, for even if a man would pursue a foolhardy voyage across the sea of rebellion in the ship of sin to the horrible land of perdition, he must "pay the fare." Sinners, for that which is not bread, must spend their money and for that which profits not, must pay their labor. He who would be saved must take care to sit down and count the cost, lest, after having begun to build, he should not be able to finish it. But let him not think that he is alone in his expending, for the transgressor's bill of costs is no light one! War of any sort is costly, but ungodly men will find that a war with Heaven is the dearest of all. God's House, like the palace of Solomon, needs a large income to sustain its daily feasting—but it is not like the house of evil which makes a beggar of every man that comes within its doors.**

I. **I shall, this morning, commence my discourse by endeavoring to direct your attention to** THECOSTOFTRAVELINGONTHEBROADROADTOHELL**. Phocian paid for the poison which killed him—and the sinner pays dearly for the sin which proves his ruin. The worldling often taunts the Christian because he expends his money on his religion. The Christian may well reply to the sinner, "I wish that your taunts were more true, for I fear that I do not spend one-tenth as much in the service of God as you do in the service of your vices." Very few except the most generous of Christians could venture to say that they spend as much upon their God as profligates squander upon their lusts.**

1. **Let us begin to add up the bill! We are met at once with a heavy item. The man who makes the world his idol and forgets God, has at once, at the start of his voyage, to pay down and place in a sinking fund all hope of God's favor and all expectation of the blessings which it brings. He cannot run contrary to God's will and command and then expect that God will be his Friend and prosper his designs! If I set myself up in rebellion against Heaven's great King, I cannot suppose that He will make it His constant care to promote my interests, nor dare I dream that He will aid and abet me in my designs of evil.**

**"With the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate" (****[Psa. 18:26](tw://bible.*?id=19.18.26|_AUTODETECT_|)), is the revelation of Scripture. "If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you," is the voice of the God of Sinai. The man throws down the glove of battle against the Lord and his Creator will let him know that it is, "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker." Long-suffering is Jehovah and He does not smite the rebel with speedy ruin, but still it is written, "God is angry with the wicked every day: if he turns not He will whet His sword, He has bent His bow and made it ready." The good man sees a gracious Providence smiling at his side—he knows that, " all things work together for good to them that love God."**

And although the wheels of Providence are too high for him to understand their revolutions, yet he knows that they are full of eyes, marking the wisdom and care of his Father in Heaven. He sings with rapture*— "Your ways, O Lord, with wise design, Are framed upon Your Throne above. And every dark and bending line Meets in the center of Your love."*

**The Almighty God is the Believer's refuge and beneath His wings he finds perpetual shelter. Not so the sinner. In the court of Providence he is an outlaw and can claim no right of protection. How shall Providence care for him who cares not for God? He is under its ban and he shall, before long, learn that, "They that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish and by the breath of His nostrils are they consumed."**

**The ungodly cannot claim the privilege which Eliphaz ascribes to the righteous—"He shall deliver you in six troubles: yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you. At destruction and famine you shall laugh: neither shall you be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For you shall be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you." On the contrary, Providence may justly remind him of his sins and say, "Call now, if there is any that will answer you. And to which of the saints will you turn?"**

**Our gracious God has given no charge to His angels to keep the sinner in all his ways. Those ministering spirits have no commission to bear him up lest he dash his foot against a stone. Rather, the forces of Nature are restrained by almighty mercy, or else the very stars in their courses and the waters in the rivers would fight against the wicked, as they did against Sisera in days of yore.**

**The Christian has the Presence of God also to rejoice in. Mungo Park, when lost in the wilderness, observed a tiny piece of moss, and marking how beautifully it was fashioned, he recollected, "God is here! My Father is here!" So does the Christian. He is never out of his Father's House and consequently he is forevermore at home. The lines of Thompson are ours, not as poetry merely, but as matter of fact—**

*"Should Fate command me to the farthest verge Of the green earth, to distant barbarous climes, Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam Flames on the Atlantic isles; 'tis naught to me Since God is ever present, ever felt, In the void waste as in the city full. And where He vital breathes, there must be joy. When even at last the solemn hour shall come, And wing my mystic flight to future worlds, I cheerfully will obey. There with new powers Will rising wonders sing. I cannot go Where UNIVERSAL LOVE not smiles around, Sustaining all yon orbs and all their sons, From seeming evil still educing good. And better there again and better still, In infinite progression."*

**It is not so with the sinner? The presence of God is to him dreadful. If there were some valley of confusion where God's power is not known, its congenial desolation would become the sinner's Heaven—the place where God's Presence shall gleam upon him with irresistible force will be his Hell. Moreover, the sinner gives up every promise of God in choosing the road to perdition. There is not a word in this Book of Divine Love which can breathe comfort into the sinner's ear while he chooses his own ways. It is a book of threats and of curses to the impenitent. It woos as a mother would call her wandering child—it has a gentle voice forever broken, and contrite spirit—but it thunders like Sinai's own self against every hardened sinner who will not turn from his wicked way.**

O Unbeliever, you have renounced, by the very fact of your remaining without God and without Christ, all possession in the rich promises of God! You have sunk the immense capital upon the interest of which the Christian lives in time and in the enjoyment of which he hopes to be blest throughout eternity. You who know how to add, mark this one item of expenditure to begin with, and guess how heavy is the fare of sin!

2. **In the next place, they who follow the course of sin make a great expenditure of their time. However, that I dare say they do not think much of, for time to them is a mere drug of no clear value. Many of the ungodly seek after pastimes, kill-times and all sorts of inventions by which they may get rid of time, which to us appear sadly too little for our daily work. The precious privilege of existence is to them a nuisance. The pictured gallery of life is to them a prison or corridor through which they would hasten as speedily as may be, forgetting its end and where it leads.**

**Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if they were wise they would comprehend that time is the stuff which life is made of and that this life is the only season in which we can be made qualified for the enjoyments of eternity. If men understood it, they would sooner cast pearls to swine than give their days to sin and their nights to rioting. If time is the chrysalis of eternity, who but a fool would treat it with contempt?**

**He is the worst of prodigals who wastes that most precious of all treasures, his time! But what hours does fashion demand? What days will the debauched and the profligate give to their sensual indulgence? But what am I saying? It is needless to single out the more bold of transgressors— the rule is universal—the sinner's life is all waste, for it is unconsecrated by faith, unblessed by God and is therefore all lavished for nothing on shadows and dreams.**

3. **It must not be forgotten that some ungodly men expend a deal of labor to gratify their evil desires. The way to Hell may be downhill, but it is not all smooth. There are Hills Difficulty even for the ungodly. "The way of transgressors is hard." Therefore the Savior says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden," for sinners labor and their sins prove to be a heavy burden. The same Hebrew word and the same Greek word, stands both for "laboring," and for "sin," for sinning is often hard.**

**As the Prophet says, "The people labor in the very fire and weary themselves for vanity." Though men call sin pleasure, who does not know that it often jades and wearies the man worse than the hardest toil! How the proud man toils for honor! How the miser pinches himself for gold! How the thief exhausts his ingenuity to get at another man's wealth! How hard is the harlot's drudgery! How heavy is the yoke of Satan!**

4. **Sinners, again, are frequently put by their sins to a great expense of their actual substance. Their money finds feather's for its wings in the gratification of their desires. Who can be a drunkard without coming to poverty or lessening his estate? Who fills the cup to the brim without before long clothing himself with rags and bringing his household to poverty? The prodigal wasted his substance in riotous living—who can do otherwise if he entertains a host of greedy sins? God only knows how much of the poverty of this land is due to nothing else but drunkenness.**

No doubt there always will be some poverty which may claim our charity, for the poor shall never cease out of the land. But still, it is to be feared that three-fourths of all the poverty of this great city is to be traced more or less directly to the gin palace and the beer shops. Drunkenness is a "reedy sin and like the horseleech it cries, 'Give, give.' " England, with all its liberality, does not give anything like so much to the cause of missions, or for the maintenance of religion, as men spend in intoxication.

Then look at other sins, how costly they are! Consider those amusements of the world which many defend as being no offense to public morals, but which the spiritual avoid as being unfit occupations for heirs of Heaven. Even these are far from being inexpensive. I noticed yesterday an advertisement in the newspaper for boxes at the opera, for a certain term, to be let for two hundred guineas! What would people think if a pew in any place of worship were only to be had on terms of so heavy a subscription? Why, that sum would pay the charges all the year round of full many a place of worship!

And yet this amount represents probably but a portion of the expense involved in attendance at the theater. There are far greater drains upon the purse than those implied in missionary societies, ministers, chapels and Bible-women. Who has not heard how fast debauchery burns the candle at both ends? Is it not said of the prodigal, that he devoured his living with harlots? This sin has brought many a man of wealth and fortune down to shiver like a beggar on a dunghill! "Remove your way far from her and come not near the door of her house...lest strangers be filled with your wealth and your labors be in the house of a stranger." He who sins must pay the fare.

5. **Nor is this all. Those men who go far into sin and carry out the desires of their hearts soon find that there is an expense of health. How many a man has rottenness in his bones and disease in his heart's core brought on by gluttony, drunkenness and vice? Well may men pray that they may be delivered from the sins of their youth and their former transgressions, for they are in a sad plight who mourn at the last when their flesh and their body are consumed. It is not God who has thickly sown this world with disease and sorrow—man's iniquity has done it. Men cast darnel and cockle into the furrows of life and when they spring up, they complain of the appointments of God, whereas, they are the result of their own sins!**

**And there is no injustice in the rule, that whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?" "His bones are full of the sins of his youth which shall lie down with him in the dust." The fare, the full fare of sin's voyage, must be paid.**

6. **Another expense and that one which ought not to be forgotten, is the loss of peace of mind. A man cannot indulge in sin and yet go to his bed with a quiet conscience. At least, if he can do so, this callousness is of itself a still greater evil. For the most part, men start back at the ghosts of their own crimes. "Terrors make the wicked afraid on every side and drive them to their feet." Even the respectable sinner whose life is outwardly moral, but whose heart is far from God, cannot avoid some qualms and disturbance of mind.**

If I am not one with God, if I am not washed in Jesus' blood, if I am not sanctified by God's Holy Spirit, there is an aching void within me which the world can never fill. There is an inward monitor which tells me, "There is something that you need, a something that the world cannot give you which you cannot earn for yourself. How is it that you are living in the neglect of it?" "A dreadful sound is in his ears: in prosperity the Destroyer shall come upon him...He wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? He knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand."

Until I was saved by Divine Grace, I can truly say I had no lasting peace. But now my peace is like a river. How a trumpet will often blanch the sinner's cheek! The cholera comes and how the man trembles because death is at work next door! How fearful he is when he stands at the grave's brink and looks down upon the coffin of some companion with whom he has spent many a boisterous hour! Ah, you cannot have peace! You cannot have peace till you have Christ! You cannot be truly happy till you have given your souls to Jesus!

The apple may look fair, but it is rotten within. You may talk of joy, but you know it not if you know not Jesus. Surely to lose this priceless pearl is an item in the bill of no mean magnitude—

*"Peace has sweets That Hybla never knew. It sleeps on down Culled gently from beneath the cherub's wing.*

**Who would throw this away for vexing, mocking, deceiving, lying vanities?**

7. **The worst expense, however, we have only hinted at. The man who goes to Hell must pay the fare in another way—he loses his soul. What that loss may be no mortal tongue can tell. If one could come again from the pit, as once the rich man proposed, perhaps he might tell us in dolorous tones what it is to be cast out from God into the place where there is not a drop of water to cool the fire-tormented tongue. But it is not for us even to conceive what the place of torment may be.**

**It is enough to hear and profit by the question of the Savior—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What is Caesar the better for his dominions? What is Croesus the better for his wealth? What is the philosopher the better for his wisdom, now that he is cast away from the favor of God forever? In fact, the greater the wretched beings were on earth, the more terrible will their doom be in eternity, when, looking from their beds of flame, the lesser sinners shall cry, "Are you become like one of us? Is the lofty one brought low? Is the proud one humbled? Is the boaster made to feel in the torment of this fire that he is no greater than the rest of us?"**

I say, the more honor and dignity and glory the man obtained on earth, the more terrible his shame and disgrace when, his soul being lost, he is cast into the pit forever! Let us, then, if we have been deluded by the pleasures of sin, or have been tempted in any way to forget God because we have thought that the way of the flesh was easy—let us think awhile that we shall have to pay the fare and that the fare is far too expensive to be paid by men of understanding. We dare not risk soul and body, life and death, Heaven and Hell, judgment and eternity merely for the sake of those paltry, passing, delusive joys which are all that the world can pretend to offer.

II. **Let us change our strain and say a little upon** THEEXPENSEOFAVOIDINGDUTY. Jonah's duty was to go to Nineveh and preach the Word—he preferred not to go—he therefore shirked the work, went down to Joppa and paid his fare to go to Tarshish. I hope we are not in the habit of doing the same, but yet there are occasions when even God's servants shrink from duty and seem willing to forget that where God calls they are bound to go.

Possibly this remark may apply to some minister who may come under the Word. He is called to bear his protest against a certain sin and he thinks to himself, "If I so speak, some of those who hear me will never come again. I may lose rich subscribers. I will not say a word on that point." Or, he has it laid upon him to cry against the monstrous evils in the State Church—but he puts his finger to his lips and remains silent, inwardly calculating—"I had better hold my peace on that subject, for I may risk my popularity."

Such a minister should reflect that it is a very expensive thing to try to fly to Tarshish when you ought to go to Nineveh, for a man cannot avoid duty without expense. I have known good people who will say, "I know soand-so is what I ought to do, but still, you see, the path is very difficult and I do not feel called upon to make so great a sacrifice." Well, Friend, if you do not make the sacrifice when God demands it of you, He has other ways of taking away your treasured goods. In the long run you will find it far more expensive to shun the work and will of God than at once to give yourself to it. You will be a loser by your prudence! You shall find that the Scriptural rule holds good, "He that would lose his life shall save it, but he that would save his life shall lose it."

If you are willing to be a loser for Christ you shall be a gainer! But if you insist upon being held harmless and try at all costs to make provision for the flesh, then you shall find that before long you will have to pay the fare to your own grievous hurt and injury. What did Jonah lose? Jonah had to pay as part of his fare the presence and comfortable enjoyment of God's love. He went down into the bottom of the vessel and hid himself from sight. I think I see him. That Jonah, who a few days after walked with all the boldness of a lion through the streets of Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" That Jonah who bearded Nineveh's haughty monarch and was not afraid to tell him that in forty days his city would be overthrown!

That Jonah goes sneaking down among the goods at the bottom of the hold for fear anybody should see him and there hides his coward, craven head. Poor Jonah, you have lost the hallowed fellowship of your God! You have lost His Presence and consequently your courage has all oozed out of you! This is a dear price which you have paid for shunning Nineveh! When you and I serve our Lord Jesus as Believers should do, we can remember that our God is with us and though we have the whole world against us, if we have God with us what does it matter? But oh, the minute we start back and begin to seek our own inventions and appeal to our own wisdom, we are all at sea without a pilot and our great Helper withdraws from us. Then may we bitterly lament and groan out, "O my God, where have You gone? How could I have been so foolish as to shun Your service and in this way to lose all the brightness of Your face? This is a price too high! Let me return to my allegiance and to Your Presence."

In the next place, Jonah lost all peace of mind. When he was in Nineveh, crying, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," he was not afraid of the edge of the sword, nor of the tyrant's rage—he felt that he was doing God's work and he knew that when on God's errands he was perfectly safe. His heart beat gently, like that of a man in a happy, tranquil frame of mind wearing the herb called heart's ease in his bosom. But now, down there, in the hold of the vessel, his heart is palpitating—he does not know what may happen and until sleep happily comes in to ease the distress of his mind he is like a poor hunted staff, panting with alarm.

These were two great things to lose—God's Presence and his own peace of mind—but these were not all his damage and injury! He was now brought into great peril—he must be thrown into the sea. In all likelihood he will meet with a watery grave. Had he gone to Nineveh that would not have occurred. He would have been under the care of God's special Providence there, but now the winds and waves threaten him. With what a splash he falls into the deep! As we see him engulfed let us, with holy caution, shun the dangerous way of disobedience. Other men may escape the chastisements of God in this world, but not the Lord's own children. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

Now, too, he is brought into great affliction of soul. He tells us that he, "cried by reason of affliction." He compares his state to the "belly of Hell." He was brought into such depths of distress, a miracle interposed to save his life—but not to cheer his spirit. Like the Savior, of whom he was a type, he was exceedingly sorrowful and very heavy, almost unto death.

Sin soon destroys a Believer's comfort. It is the deadly upas tree from whose leaves distil deadly drops which destroy the life of joy and peace. Jonah, too, had lost everything upon which he might have drawn for comfort in any other case. He could not turn to the promise of God that He would keep him, for he was not in God's ways. He could not say, "Lord, I am Your servant," for then conscience would have said, "Yes, and a pretty servant, too!" He could not say, "Lord, I am on Your errand!" for conscience would have said, "No, you are on your own!" He could not say, "Lord, I meet with these difficulties in the discharge of my duty, therefore help me through them"—no, for there would have been a reply, "You are not here in the discharge of duty.

"You flew in the teeth of the Most High. You sought to escape from a little difficulty—you tried to get away from the Presence of God altogether and you have prepared all this for yourself. If the draught is bitter, you mixed it. If the fruit is sharp, you planted the tree. If this harvest is terrible, you sowed the seed—you are reaping your own deeds—you are being filled with your own ways." Poor Jonah, poor Jonah, to be in such a state as this!

Then here is another point—he had to go to Nineveh after all—and so will you. You may kick, but when God means you to do His work, you will be made to do it. The ox-goad has been thrust into you already because you hate the yoke. You do not like it and you kick against it and the only result is that it is driven further into you. Saul, Saul, it is hard for you to kick against the pricks, for with all your kicking and rebelling you will have to go where you were originally ordered to go. You might as well go at first—you will go with better Grace. You will go with your Master's comfortable Presence—and you will have to go one way or another.

Many men have found this true. They have struggled against duty and perhaps year after year they have drawn back from it, finding miserable excuses for their consciences. But they never prospered in business, they could not get on in the world, they had trouble on trouble and at last it came to this—they had to go back to the very place where they were ten or twenty years ago. And there they discharged the duty which they had been so long seeking to avoid which had proved a burdensome stone to them until they were rid of it by yielding to its demands.

Now, my dear Brothers, do not play the Jonah, for you will have to pay the fare of it. If you know your duty, do it. I may be speaking very pointedly to some of you. "I should have to sever the bonds of many a fond connection." Do it for Christ's sake. "I should have to leave the camp and go outside of it, take up a very heavy cross and bear Christ's reproach." You may as well do it now as by-and-by, for you will have to do it.

"But," says one, "this business of mine—I have nothing left to live upon. I feel it is a bad business, but I do not like to give it up just yet." You will have to do so sooner or later. You may as well do it now, before, like Jonah, you have had to pay for your wit. Remember, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and a good understanding have all they that keep His commandments." May God the Holy Spirit give you the wisdom which comes from above which will lead you to sit as a child at the feet of Jesus and learn His ways.

"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you." "But hearken diligently unto His commandments and then shall your peace be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

**III.** A few words upon another point—there is **AN** **EXPENSE** **CONNECTED** **WITH** **GOING** **TO** **HEAVEN**. It is estimated at a very high rate by some who say that the road is good enough, but the tolls are too high. Others pretend to believe that religion is only a scheme for putting money into ministers' pockets, whereas I can truly say for one, that what I receive for my ministry is not a tenth of what I could readily earn in an engagement infinitely less laborious and harassing than my present position. Although, let it be added, I would not leave my ministry for ten thousand worlds.

Let us think over this matter of expense and begin with an old story. "An aged couple, in the vicinity of London, who, in the early part of life, were poor, but who, by the blessing of God upon their industry, enjoyed a comfortable independency in their old age, were called upon by a Christian minister who solicited their contributions to a charity. The old lady was disposed to make out some excuse and to answer in the negative, both for her husband and herself. And therefore replied, "Why, Sir, we have lost a great deal by religion since we began. My husband knows that very well." And being wishful to obtain her husband's consent to the assertion, she said, "Have we not, Thomas?"

Thomas, after a long and solemn pause, replied, "Yes, Mary, we have lost a great deal by our religion! I have lost a great deal by my religion. Before I got religion, Mary, I had got a water pail in which I carried water and that you know I lost many years ago. And then I had an old slouched hat, a patched old coat and mended shoes and stockings. But I have lost them, also, long ago. And, Mary, you know that poor as I was, I had a habit of getting drunk and quarrelling with you. And that you know I have lost.

"And then I had a burdened conscience and a wicked heart. And then I had ten thousand guilty feelings and fears. But all are lost, completely lost and, like a millstone, cast into the deepest sea. And, Mary, you have been a loser, too, though not so great a loser as myself. Before we got religion, Mary, you had a washing tray in which you washed for hire. And God Almighty blessed your industry—but since we got religion—you have lost your washing tray. And you had a gown and bonnet much the worse for wear, though they were all you had to wear. But you have lost them long ago.

"And you had many an aching heart concerning me, at times. But those you happily have lost. And I could even wish that you had lost as much as I have lost and even more—for what we lose by our religion, Mary—will be our eternal gain." We need not add the preacher did not go away without substantial proof that Thomas deemed his losses for religion his most weighty obligations to the goodness of Almighty God as the richest gift of Divine Grace on earth and the most authentic pledge of Glory in the world to come!

If some of us were to look back upon what religion has cost us we might cast up the amount with very much the same result. Where were you apt to spend your Sundays once, some of you? Where would some few of you have been on other occasions?—at the race course, at the theater— yes, and in the brothel. But now you are washed and cleansed and sanctified and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. This is what your religion has cost you—the giving up of nothing that made you truly happy—but only renouncing that which pretended to make you happy but which was ruining your soul forever!

The first expense of religion is that it takes away from men spurious joys and gives them real ones. It takes away from them shadows and gives them substance. Then, again, the expense of your religion has been this— some of you have given a good deal of your time to the cause of Christ. Others of you have devoted a considerable portion of your money to it, but after all that you or any of us have ever given, I am sure we can say religion has cost us nothing which we did not give cheerfully—and it has asked of us nothing which it was not our happiness to render! We have felt a greater joy in giving than in withholding—a greater bliss in serving God than in being idle. Moreover our liberality has always been repaid to us with interest, for our God will be in no man's debt.

Here is a specimen of what has been our experience from the pen of a tradesman: "Some years ago I heard a sermon from the words, 'Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse' ([Mal. 3:10](tw://bible.*?id=39.3.10|_AUTODETECT_|)). I cannot describe how my mind was impressed with the manner in which Jehovah here condescended to challenge His people when He says, 'And prove Me now,' etc. Suffice it to say that the subject made such an impression that I found it my duty to do more for the cause of God than I ever had done. I did so, and on closing that year's accounts, I found that I had gained more than in any two years preceding it. Some time afterwards I thought the Redeemer's cause had an additional claim, as the place in which we worshipped Him needed some repairs. The sum I then gave was L20. And in a very little time afterwards I received L40 which I had long given up as lost."

Our Master's service is our liberty. We count it our joy to run in the way of His commandments. And if the worldling pities us and says, "Poor man, how he must deny himself!" We reply, "In one sense it is true, but in another, our best self is fed and satisfied and feasted when we deny self. The duties we perform are not performed as duties, but as *privileges.* We do not run into them at all because we feel forced to do so, but because we love them. We confess that religion has cost us our spirit, our soul, our body. And our only regret is we have not more that we can give to the cause of Christ. We think we can stand at the foot of the Savior's Cross and say***—***

***"Now for the love I bear His name, What was my gain I count my loss. My former pride I call my shame, And nail my glory to His Cross. Yes, and I must and will esteem All things but loss for Jesus' sake O may my soul be found in Him, And of His righteousness partake!"***

Religion, then, takes away from us nothing but what we are glad to lose. And it asks nothing of us but what we are too glad to give. And it returns to us in ten thousand ways all that it takes from us. It gives us blessings of the upper and of the nether springs. It comforts us in life, it cheers us in death. It makes us so happy that we can say with Watts***—***

***"I would not change my blessed estate For all the world calls good or great; And while my faith can keep her hold, I envy not the sinner's gold."***

**IV.** In the last place, **THE** **TRUE** **FARE** **OF** **GODLINESS** **IS** **ALREADY** **PAID**—**NOT** **BY** **US**—**BUT** **BY** **OUR** **LORD** **JESUS**. Jonah paid his fare from Joppa to Tarshish, but I never find that he paid any fare back. The conveyance which brought him to land was far cheaper than the ship of Tarshish, though not quite so comfortable. He came back to land with no expense to himself whatever!

So we must pay much and do much in order to be cast away—but the way of eternal life and salvation is perfectly free. When Jonah was thrown out into the midst of the sea, the whale did not swallow him because he was a man of money, or because he was a man of merit—he was just a needy, destitute sinner, subject to the wrath of God as expressed in that tempest and in that storm and in that boiling sea. And there came the friendly fish which carried him into a living grave for three days that his life might be preserved.

And this is very much like our salvation—salvation by death and burial with Jesus. We flee away. We trust by our self-righteousness to escape from the tempest of God's wrath, but we cannot. At last we feel that we are cast right out into the sea to perish and God's anger, as we think, is hot against us. There is no good thing in us, nothing upon which we can rely. We see no hope of escape. Just then the death of Christ, which was our greatest crime—which seems as though it would destroy us—takes us into its friendly shelter and in it we go to the bottoms of the mountains.

In it we descend till all the waves and billows of God's wrath have rolled over us. And in it we are securely landed, to praise the name and love of God. When our extremity comes and there is none to help, then God prepares the way of deliverance for us, His people. Hear me for one moment, my Brothers and Sisters, this morning. We have sinned! God help us to feel the sin! Grievously have we offended against God by flying in His face and going where He would not have us go!

Can we return? We have paid our fare to go to the place of destruction, but we have no means to pay our fare to Heaven. Penniless, stripped of all hope in ourselves, is there any way by which we can return—by which we can find eternal life? There is! There is—if we give ourselves up wholly to God, confessing our sins and if our soul rests alone upon the finished work of the great salvation provided in Christ Jesus. We need not fear because we have nothing. Our God, who has everything, asks nothing from us. He does not save us because we are righteous, but because He is gracious. He will not deliver us because there is something good in us—but because there is everything good in Himself.

Let me say to those of you who are sleeping this morning, careless of your fate—If you sleep much longer, you may wake up where your waking will be terrible. What are you doing, O you Sleepers! Rise! I remind you of your future doom, of your present danger. O Spirit of God, arouse them! And if awakened, you cry, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer comes, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Though you can see no means of escape, yet there is a means provided by God! And when you are cast out from the ship, have left all other confidence and think that God's sea of wrath will cover you up—then Christ, who has been prepared of old as our great Deliverer, shall take you and bear you safely to the land of eternal Glory. I would God that you were made to forsake the way of the Destroyer and led in the way of peace, that He might have all the praise forever. May He bless these poor, feeble, but well-intended remarks, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2903 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Jon 1.5

SLEEPERS AWAKENED  
NO. 2903

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 27, 1876.

**“But Jonah was gone down into the lowest part of the ship; and he lay there and was fast asleep.”  
Jonah 1:5.**

WE are told before this fact is mentioned that the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea to overtake the ship in which Jonah was sailing for Tarshish. The great wheels of Providence are continually revolving in fulfillment of God’s purposes concerning His own people. For them winds blow and tempests rise. It is a wonderful thing that the whole machinery of Nature should be made subservient to the Divine Purpose of the salvation of His redeemed! I was in a diamond-cutting factory at Amsterdam and I noticed that there were huge wheels revolving and a great deal of power being developed and expended. But when I came to look at the little diamond—in some cases a very small one, indeed—upon which that power was being brought to bear—it seemed very remarkable that all that power should be concentrated upon such a little, yet very precious object! In a similar style, all the wheels of Providence and Nature, great as they are, are brought to bear by Divine skill and love upon a thing which appears to many people to be of trifling value, but which is to Christ of priceless worth—namely, a human soul!

Here is this common-looking Jew, Jonah, named according to the general rule that names go by contraries, “a dove,” for, at any rate on this occasion, he looked more like the raven that would not come back to the ark! And for this one man—this altogether unfriendly Prophet—the sea must be tossed in tempest and a whole ship full of people must have their lives put in jeopardy! This Truth of God is a very far-reaching one. You cannot well exaggerate it. The vast universe is but a platform for the display of God’s Grace and all material things that now exist will be set aside when the great drama of Divine Grace is completed. The material universe is but scaffolding for the Church of Christ. It is but the temporary structure upon which the amazing mystery of redeeming love is being carried on to perfection. See, then, that as the great wind was raised to follow Jonah and to lead to his return to the path of duty, so all things work together for the good of God’s people and all things that exist are being bowed and bent towards God’s one solemn eternal purpose—the salvation of His own!

But note also, that while God was awake, Jonah was asleep. While storms were blowing, Jonah was slumbering. It is a strange sight, O Christian, that you should be an important item in the universe and yet that you should not know it or care about it—that all things are keeping their proper place and time for you and yet that you are the only one who does not seem to perceive it and, therefore, you fall into a dull, lethargic, sleepy state. Everything around you is awake for your good, yet you are slumbering even as the fugitive Prophet was while the storm was raging!

I am going to speak upon the case of Jonah, first, as we may regard it as a useful lesson to the people of God. And, secondly, as it may be considered as an equally valuable warning to the unconverted.

I. First, then, I shall use the case of Jonah as A USEFUL LESSON TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD—and I may very fairly do so when we remember who Jonah was.

First, Jonah was a believer in God. He worshipped no false god—he worshipped only the living and true God. He was a professed and avowed believer in Jehovah. He was not ashamed to say—even when his conduct had laid him open to blame and when there was nobody to support him—“I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, which has made the sea and the dry land.” Yet, though he was a believer in God, he was in the lowest part of the ship fast asleep! O Christian—a real Christian, too—if you are in a similar condition, how is it that you can be slumbering under such circumstances? Should not the privileges and the honor which your being a believer has brought to you by Divine Grace forbid that you should be inactive, careless, indifferent? I may be addressing dozens of Jonahs—those who are really God’s people, but who are not acting as if they were—chosen of the Most High but are forgetful of their election, their redemption, their sanctification, the life they have begun to live here below and the eternal glory that awaits them hereafter!

Besides being a believer or as a natural consequence of being a believer, Jonah was a man of prayer. Out of the whole company on board that ship, he was the only man who knew how to pray to the one living and true God. All the mariners “cried every man unto his god.” But those were idle prayers because they were offered to idols—they could not prevail because they were presented to dumb, dead idols! But here was a man who could pray—and who could pray aright, too—yet he was asleep! Praying men and women—you who have the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven swinging at your belt—you who can ask what you will, and it shall be done for you—you who have many times in the past prevailed with God in wrestling prayer—you who have received countless blessings in answer to your supplications—can you be, as Jonah was, sleeping in the time of storm? Can it be possible that he who knows the power of prayer is restraining it—that he to whom God has given this choice privilege is not availing himself of it? I fear that this may be the case with some of you and looking at Jonah, a praying man sinfully asleep, I cannot help feeling that I may be speaking to many others who are in exactly the same condition!

More than this, Jonah was not merely a believing man and a praying man, but he was also a Prophet of the Lord. He was one to whom God had spoken and by whom God had spoken. He was a minister—that is to say one of God’s own sent servants though he was not in his proper place when he was in the ship sailing towards Tarshish. But can God’s minister neglect their duty like this? If I had been asked at that time, “Where is the Prophet of the Lord?”—perhaps the only Prophet of his age—at any rate a man who was the very foremost in his time—if I had been asked, “Where is he?” I would have said that he must be looked for amidst the masses of the dense population of Nineveh, carrying out his Master’s commission with unstaggering faith! Or else that he might be looked for amidst the thousands of Israel, denouncing their idol gods and their wicked ways. But who would have thought of finding Jonah asleep on board such a ship as that? He is a Seer, yet he sees not, for he is sound asleep! He is a watchman, but he is not watching, for he is slumbering and sleeping! Everything is in confusion, yet this man, upon whom rests the Divine anointing and into whose mouth God has put a message to multitudes of his fellow creatures is sleeping instead of witnessing!

Come Mr. Preacher, see to yourself while I am talking about Jonah— and I will take the message to myself while I am talking to you—for this is a matter which ought to come home to all of us upon whom such great responsibilities are laid and to whom such high privileges are given. But all of you who love the Lord are witnesses for Christ in some capacity or other—and it would be a very sad thing if you who are called to speak in the name of the Lord, though it should only be in your Sunday school class, or in a little cottage meeting, or to your own children—should be asleep when you ought to be wide awake and active! May the Lord awaken you, for you are the wrong person to be asleep! You, above all others, are bound to have both your eyes open and to watch day and night to hear what God the Lord will speak to you and what He would have you say to the ungodly or to His own chosen people in His name.

It is also worthy of notice that at the very time when Jonah was asleep in the ship, he was not only a Prophet, but he was a Prophet under a special commission. He was not on furlough. He was, on the contrary, empowered by special warrant, under the King’s seal and sign manual, to go at once to a certain place and there to deliver the King’s message. And yet there he is, asleep in this ship and going in the very opposite direction to the one given him! When Prophets sleep, it should be when their errand has been done and their message has been delivered, but Jonah had not been on his Lord’s errand, nor had he delivered his Lord’s message. No, he had refused to obey his Lord and had run away from the path of duty—and here he lies, fast asleep in the lowest part of the ship! O dear Brothers and Sisters, if we could truthfully say that our own work for the Lord was done, we might be somewhat excused if we took our rest. But is our life-work done? Mine is not, that I feel certain. In fact, it seems to be scarcely begun. Is yours finished, my Brother, my Sister? Have you so lived that you can be perfectly content with what you have done? Would it not be a cause of grief to you if you were assured that you would have no more opportunities of glorifying God upon the earth? I think you would feel that very much. Well, then, how can you be willing to be indifferent, cold and dead when so much of God’s work lies before you scarcely touched as yet?

All that you and I have done so far has been like apprentice work—we have just been getting our hands in—we have not become journeymen in God’s great workshop yet—certainly we cannot claim to be wise masterbuilders! Few of us, if any, have attained to that degree, so let us not go to sleep. O Sir, shame on you! Asleep in the early morning? A man may take his rest when he gets weary after a long day’s toil, but not yet—with all that work to be done—with the King’s commission pressing upon us! With the call of the myriads of Nineveh sounding in his ears, Jonah, God’s appointed Messenger, should not have been found asleep in the lowest part of the ship.

This, then, is who the man was. He was a believing man and a praying man. He was a Prophet and a Prophet under a special commission. But where was he? Where had he gone?

Well, he had gone down into the lowest part of the ship. That is to say he had gone where he hoped he would not be observed or disturbed. He had gone down into the lowest part of the ship—not among the cargo— the mariners threw that overboard, yet the noise did not wake the sleeping Prophet. He was not upon the deck ready to take a turn at keeping watch—no, he had got as much out of the way as he could! And I have known Christian people try, as far as they could, to get out of the way. Possibly they are not living inconsistently, or doing, as far as others can see, anything that is glaringly sinful—but they have retired from their Master’s business. They have got into a little quiet place where nobody notices them. I wonder whether there is a Christian who has gone to live in a country village where he has not yet said anything for Christ, although, when he lived in London, he was a busy worker for God? He has, like Jonah, gone down into the lowest part of the ship, into a quiet place where nobody can see him. Around him there are very few Christian people—perhaps hardly any—and he does not want anybody to know that he is a Christian. He would like to live in a private way. If he were asked about himself, he would answer, as Jonah did, “I fear God.” But he does not wish to be asked anything about himself. He does not want people to fix their eyes upon him. He is afraid of being too conspicuous. He says that he was always of a retiring disposition, like the soldier who ran away as soon as the first shot of the battle was fired and so was shot as a deserter. He says that he is like Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night, or like Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He has gone down into the lowest part of the ship, though, at one time, he was one of the foremost workers for Christ!

He has gone, too, where he will not lend a hand in any service that needs to be done. He was once in the Sunday school, but he says that he has had his turn at that and does not intend to do anything more. He used to be, perhaps, a deacon of a church, but now he does not wish for such a position as that. He says there is a great deal of trouble and toil in connection with such offices and he intends, for the future, to avoid everything that will give him trouble or cause him the slightest toil. Once he took delight in preaching the Word and in those days if anybody had said that he would live to be silent and not speak in Christ’s name, he would have been very angry at the man who made such a statement! But it has now come true. Jonah is not up on deck helping to hold the rudder, or to set a sail, or to do anything—not even a hand’s turn to help the poor laboring vessel! He has gone to sleep in the lowest part of the ship where nobody enquires about him, at least for the present, and where there is nothing for him to do!

Observe, too, that Jonah was staying away from the Prayer Meeting. Do you ask, “What Prayer Meeting?” Why, every other man on board that ship was crying unto his god, but Jonah was asleep in the lowest part of the ship! He was not praying—he was sleeping and, perhaps, dreaming— but he was certainly not praying! And it is a very bad thing when a true servant of God, a praying man and one by whom God has spoken before, begins to get into such a spiritually sleepy state that he not only does nothing to help the Church, but he does not even join in prayer in the time of danger! Do you know anybody in such a state as that, my Brother? “Yes,” you reply, “several.” Are you in that state yourself, Brother? If so, let charity for people who are doing wrong begin at home—it may extend to others afterwards. But if this cap fits you, wear it and wear it till you wear it out and have improved yourself through wearing it!

This man, asleep in the lowest part of the ship, represents one who cannot even take any notice of what was going on around him. At first he did not wish to be observed, but now he does not care to observe others. What is the condition of the millions of heathen in foreign lands? That is a subject that he avoids—he is of opinion that they will be converted in the millennium, or that even if they are not converted, their future lot may be a happy one. At any rate, it is a subject about which he does not concern himself. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship and he appears quite content to let the millions of heathen perish. Then, with regard to the Church of Christ at home, sometimes he is told that everything is prospering, but from other quarters he is informed that we are all going to the bad. Well, he does not know which report is the true one and he does not particularly care! And as for the Church of which he is a member, does he not care for that? Well, yes, in a certain fashion, but he does not care enough for the Sunday school, for instance, to lend a hand there, or for the preaching society to lend a hand there. He never encourages the minister’s heart by saying that the love of Christ compels him to take his share of holy service. Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship. He is not much noticed, if at all, for those around him have come to the conclusion that he is good for nothing and he, as I have shown you, does not take much notice of what is going on though all the while he is a man of God, a man of prayer and one whom God has used in times past! I wonder whether these descriptions are at all applicable to any of my hearers? At any rate, I know that they represent, as in a mirror, the lives of many professors of religion. We trust they are sincere in heart in the sight of God, but, to us their sleepiness is more apparent than their sincerity!

Now, further, what was Jonah doing at that time? He was asleep— asleep amid all that confusion and noise! What a hurly-burly there was outside that vessel—storms raging, billows roaring—and Jonah was not a sailor, but a landsman and yet he was asleep. Certainly he must have been in a remarkable state to be able to sleep through such a storm as that! And what a noise there was inside the ship as well as outside! Everybody else was crying to his god and the mariners had been throwing the cargo out of the ship, so they must have stirred the whole place up from one end to the other. There seems to have been scarcely any opportunity for anybody to rest, yet Jonah could sleep right through it all, no matter what noise the men made as they pulled the ropes, or threw out their wares, or what outcries they made as they presented their prayers to their idol gods! Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise and, O Christian, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this—for you to be negligent of God’s work in such a time as this is just as strange!

The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonahs if they only want to awake. Then there are the rampant errors of the times, the sins of the times, the confusions of the times, the controversies of the times—all these things ought to wake us. And then, beyond the times, there is eternity with all its terrors and its glories! There is the dread conflict that is going on between Christ and Belial—between the true and the false—between Jesus and antichrist. All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the lowest part of the ship. I think, Brothers and Sisters, if we are spiritually awake—if we only look at the condition of religion in our own country—we shall often be obliged at night to literally lie awake and toss to and fro, crying, “O God, have mercy upon this distracted kingdom and let Your Truth triumph over the Popery which many are endeavoring to bring back among us!”But, alas, the great multitude of Believers have little or no care about this matter—they do not even seem to notice it, for they are sound asleep in the midst of a storm!

Notice, also, that Jonah was asleep when other people were awake.. All around us people seem to be wide awake, whether we are asleep or not. When I see what is being done by Romanists and observe the zeal and self-denial of many persons who have dedicated themselves to the propagation of their false faith, I am astonished that we are doing so little for the true faith! Is it really the case that God has the dullest set of servants in the whole world? It is certain that men are all alive in the service of Satan—then we should not be half-alive in the service of our God! Are the worshippers of Baal crying aloud, “O Baal, hear us,” and the devotees of Ashtaroth shouting, “Hear us, O mighty Ashtaroth,” and yet the Prophet of Jehovah is lying asleep in the lowest part of the ship? Is it so? Does everything else seem to awaken all of a man’s energies—but does true religion paralyze them?

I have really thought, when I have been reading some books written by very good men, that the best thing for sending a man to sleep was a book by an evangelical writer—but that the moment a man becomes unsound in the faith, it seems as if he woke up and had something to say which people were bound to hear! It is a great pity that it should be so, just as it was a great pity that everybody should have been awake on that vessel with the exception of Jonah, yet I fear that it is still only too true that those who serve the living God are not half filled with the awakening fervor which ought to possess them for the honor of the Lord Most High!

Jonah was asleep, next, not only in a time of great confusion and when others were awake, but also in a time when he was in great danger, for the ship was likely to sink. The storm was raging furiously, yet Jonah was asleep. And, Believer, when you and those about you are in danger of falling into great sin through your careless living—when your family is in danger of being brought up without the fear of God—when your servants are in danger of concluding that religion is all a farce because you act as if it were—when those who watch you in business are apt to sneer at Christian profession because they say that your profession is of very little worth to you—when all this is taking place and there is imminent danger to your own soul and to the souls of others, can you still sleep in unconcern?

And Jonah was asleep when he needed to be awake. He, above all other men, was the one who ought to be awake and to call upon his God. If anybody goes to sleep nowadays, it certainly ought not to be the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! All things demand that Christians should be in real earnest. I know of no argument that I could gather from time or eternity, from Heaven or earth, or Hell to allow a Christian to be inactive and careless! But if I am asked for reasons why Christians are needed to be in downright earnest and full of consecrated vigor in the service of God, those arguments are so plentiful that I have no time to mention them all! The world needs you! Careless souls need to be awakened! Enquiring souls need to be directed! Mourning souls need to be comforted. Rejoicing souls need to be established! The ignorant need to be taught, the desponding need to be cheered! On all sides, for a Christian there is an earnest cry and, certainly in these days, God has made a truly godly man to be more precious than the gold of Ophir! And that man who keeps himself back from earnest service for God in such a time as this, surely cannot expect the Lord’s blessing to rest upon him. Verily, the old curse of Meroz may well be pronounced upon the man who, in this age and under present circumstances, like Jonah, goes down into the lowest part of the ship, lies down and goes to sleep!

Jonah was asleep with all the heathens around him upbraiding him by their actions. They were praying while he was sleeping and, at last it came to this—that the shipmaster sternly addressed the Prophet of God and said, “What are you doing, O sleeper?” It is sad, indeed, when things have come to such a pass that a heathen captain rebukes a servant of God! And yet I am afraid that the Church of God, if she does not mend her ways, will have a great many similar rebukes from heathen practices and heathen utterances! Look at the enormous sums that the heathen spend upon their idols and their idol temples and worship—and then think how little we spend upon the service of the living God! One is amazed to read of the lacs of rupees that are given by Indian princes for the worship of their dead deities—and yet our missionary societies languish and the work of God in a thousand ways is stopped because God’s stewards are not using what He has entrusted to them as they should. Think, too, of the flaming zeal with which the votaries of false faiths compass sea and land to make one proselyte, while we do so little to bring souls to Jesus Christ!

One of these days you will have Hindu and Brahmins talking to us in this fashion, “You profess that the love of Christ compels you, but to what does it compel you?” They even now ask us what kind of religion must ours be that forces opium upon the poor Chinese! They quote our great national sins against us and I do not wonder that they do. I only wish that they could be told that Christians reprobate those evils and that they are not Christians who practice them. But we must do more than even the best Christians are now doing or else we shall have the heathen saying, as the semi-heathen at home say, “If we believed in eternal punishment, we should be earnest day and night to rescue souls from it”—which is to me a strong corroboration of the truth of that Doctrine. We do not need any Doctrine that can make us less zealous than we are! We certainly do not need any Doctrine that can give us any excuse for lack of zeal. Still, there is great force in the remark I quoted just now. We are not as earnest to save men from going down to the Pit as we ought to be if we do, indeed, believe that they are hastening to that doom! The shipmasters are again rebuking the Jonahs! Those who believe in error and who worship false gods turn around upon us and ask us what we are doing. O Jonah, sleeping Jonah, is it not time that you were awake?

But why was Jonah asleep? I suppose that it was partly the reaction after the excitement through which his mind had passed in rebelling against God. He had wearied himself with seeking his own evil way, so now, after the disobedience to God of which he had been guilty, his spirit sinks and he sleeps. Besides, it is according to the nature of sin to give— not physical sleep, I grant you—but to give spiritual slumber. There is no opiate like the commission of an evil deed. A man who has done wrong is so much less able to repent of the wrong and so much the less likely to do so. Jonah’s conscience had become hardened by his willful rejection of his Lord’s commands and, therefore, he could sleep when he ought to have been awakened and alarmed.

Besides, he wished to get rid of the very thought of God. He was trying to flee from God’s Presence. I suppose he could not bear his own thoughts—they must have been dreadful to him. So, being in a pet against his God and altogether in a wrong spirit, he hunts about for a snug corner of the ship, stretches himself out and there falls asleep and sleeps on right through the storm! O sleepy Christian, there is something wrong about you, too! Conscience has been stupefied. There is some darling sin, I fear, that you are harboring. Search it out and drive it out! Sin is the mother of this shameful indifference! God help you to get rid of it! Brothers and Sisters, I am speaking to you with as much directness as I possibly can, yet not with more than I use towards myself. Have I, in my preaching, been slumbering and sleeping? If you find that I am not in earnest, I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, tell me of it and wake me out of my sleep if you can, as I now tell you of it and say, by all that God has done to you in saving you by His Grace and in making you His servant, give not up your soul to slumber, but awake, awake—put on strength and awaken yourself, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to prayer and to the service of your God!

Thus I have spoken, perhaps at too great a length, to Christians. II. Now, more briefly, I want to give A WARNING TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Jonah, asleep on board that ship, is a type of a great number of unconverted people who come to our various places of worship. Jonah was in imminent danger, for God had sent a great storm after him and, my unconverted Hearer, your danger at this present moment is beyond description. There is nothing but a breath between you and Hell! One of our beloved Elders was with us here last Sabbath—he is now with the spirits of just men made perfect—but if it had been the lot of any unconverted person here to suffer and to expire in the same manner, alas, how sad it would have been for you, my Hearer! Driven from the Presence of God, you would be cast in the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! The sword of Divine Justice is already furbished, will you yet make mirth? Can you laugh and jest when there is but a step between you and death—but a step between you and Hell? An enemy to God, unforgiven, the Angel of Justice seeking you out as the storm sought out Jonah in that ship, “What are you doing, O sleeper,” when the peril of everlasting wrath is so near you?

You are asleep, too, when there are a great many things to awake you. As I have already said, there was a great noise in the vessel where Jonah was, a great noise inside and outside the ship, yet he did not awake. I do believe that many of you unconverted people find it hard to remain as you are. You get hard blows, sometimes, from the preacher. At family prayer, often, your conscience is touched. When you hear a passage from the Bible read, or when you hear of a friend who has died, you get somewhat aroused. Why, the very conversion of others should surely awaken you! If nothing else had awoke Jonah, the prayers of the mariners ought to have awakened him—and the earnestness of your mother and father, the pleading of your sister, the cries of new converts, the earnest anxieties of enquirers ought to have—and if you were not so deeply sunken in slumber, would have some influence over you to arouse you.

You are asleep while prayer could save you. If your prayers could not be heard, I think I would say, “Let him sleep on.” If there were no possibility of your salvation, I do not see why you should be awakened from your slumber. Despair is an excellent excuse for sloth—but you have no reason to despair. “Arise, call upon your God,” said the shipmaster to Jonah! And we say to you, “Friend, how is it that you are so indifferent and do not pray, when it is written, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find,’ and when the facts prove the Truth of the words of Jesus, ‘for he that asks receives, and he that seeks finds’?” Heaven is within your reach, yet you will not stretch out your hands! Eternal life is so near to you that Paul writes, “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” Assuredly that man who has food heaped up before him, but who sits down and goes to sleep with his head in Benjamin’s mess and yet will not eat of it deserves to be starved! He who can sleep when the river runs up to his very lips—he who is dying of thirst, yet will not drink deserves to die, does he not? With such wondrous blessings set before you in the Gospel—with Heaven itself just yonder and the pearly gates set wide open, yet you are so indifferent that you despise the good land and murmur and refuse to accept the Savior who would lead you to it—why, surely, you must be sleeping the sleep of death!

You are sleeping while God’s people are wondering at you, just as those mariners in the ship wondered at Jonah—and while they are weeping over you and praying for you! There are some in this place who are the constant subjects of prayer. Some of you who are seated here do not know it, perhaps, but there are those who love you and who mention your name day and night before God. And yet, while they are concerned about you, you are not concerned about yourself! O God, if storms cannot awaken these sleeping Jonahs, awaken them by some other means, even though it is by one like themselves, or one even worse than themselves! Send a message that shall upbraid them. Set some blasphemer to ask them how they can attend the means of Grace and yet be undecided! I have known that to happen. I have known a coarse, vile-living man to accost a moral and excellent attendant on the means of Grace and say to him, “Why are you not either one thing or the other? If religion is all a lie, why don’t you be as I am? But if it is true, why don’t you become a Christian?”And verily may they put such questions as those to some of you!

O Friends, I pray you, if you are out of Christ, do not pretend to be happy! Do not accept any happiness till you find it in Him. To some of you I would speak very pointedly. Are you sick? Do you feel that your life is very precarious? O my dear Friend, you are like Jonah when the ship was likely to be wrecked. Do not delay! Are there the beginnings of consumption about you? Is it supposed to be so? Do not delay! Has some relative been taken away and does there seem some likelihood that you may have the same disease? Oh, do not sleep, but awake! Are you getting old, Friend? Are the gray hairs getting thick around your brow? Oh, do not delay! For unsaved young people it is wrong to sleep, for he that sleeps when he is young sleeps during a siege! But he that slumbers when he is old sleeps during the attack, when the enemy is actually at the breach and storming the walls! Do any of you work in dangerous trades? Do you have to eat your bread where an “accident” might easily happen as it has often happened to others? Oh, be prepared to meet your God!

But, having begun this list, I might continue it almost indefinitely, but I will end it in a sentence or so. Are you a mortal man? Can you die? Will you die? May you die now? May you drop dead in the street? May you go to sleep and never wake up again on earth? May your very food or drink become the vehicle of death to you? May there be death in the air you breathe? May it be so? Will you one day, at any rate, have to be carried to your long home, like others, and lie asleep in the grave? Will you give account to God for the things done in the body? Will you have to stand before the Great White Throne to make one of that innumerable throng and to be there put into the balance to be weighed for eternity? If so, sleep not, I beseech you, as do others, but bestir yourself!

May God’s Holy Spirit bestir you to make your calling and election sure! Lay hold on Jesus Christ with the grip of an earnest, humble faith and henceforth surrender yourself to the service of Him who has bought you with His precious blood! God grant to all of us the Grace to awake and arise that Christ may give us life and light for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 51.**

Verses 1-5. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. “It is not merely that I have sinned in practice, but I am a sinner by nature. Sin would not have come out of me if it had not first been in me. I am a mass of sin and must, therefore, be loathsome in Your sight.”

6, 7. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop. Take the bunch of hyssop as the priests did, dip it into the basin filled with sacrificial blood—“Purge me with hyssop.” Apply the precious blood of Jesus to me—

7, 8. And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. He feels like a man whose bones are broken and he asks the Lord, by putting away his sin, to bind up those broken bones till every one of them should sing a song of gratitude to the Divine Healer.

9-13. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clear heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You. “If You will only save me, I will tell everybody about it. I will be a preacher as well as a penitent. Rising from my knees where I have been confessing my sin, rejoicing that You have blotted it all out, I will hasten away and tell others what a good God You are, and they will believe my testimony, and sinners shall be converted unto You.

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God. David had been guilty of the death of Uriah. It is a proof of his sincerity that he does not mince matters, but calls a spade a spade and prays, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God.”

14. The God of my Salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. “I will not only preach, but I will also sing. I will be preceptor as well a preacher. A Christian can never do too much for the Lord who has so graciously pardoned him. David feels that he cannot do anything right, either singing or preaching, by himself; so he adds—

15. O Lord, open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering. God cares little for the mere outward forms of worship. Ritualistic observances are nothing to Him—“You desire not sacrifice, otherwise I would give it: You delight not in burnt offering.” Though these were the fixed ordinances of the Lord under which David lived, yet he was enabled to look beyond them to something higher and better!

17-19. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build You the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar. When we come to God and are saved by Him, then ordinances take their proper place. You cannot teach a man how to live until he is born and you cannot teach him what his spiritual life is to be until he is born-again. All religious rites and ceremonies which precede the new birth go for nothing. First there must be the inward life—the broken heart, the contrite spirit—and then everything else drops into proper order. Mind this—God help us all to mind it well!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #469 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, O SLEEPER?  
NO. 469

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship. And he lay and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him and said unto him, What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, call upon your God, if so be that God will think upon us,  
that we perish not.”  
Jonah 1:5, 6.**

OF all the men in the ship, Jonah was the person who ought most to have been awake. But nevertheless, he was not only asleep but fast asleep. All the creaking of the cordage, the dashing of the waves, the howling of the winds, the straining of the timbers, and the shouting of the mariners, did not arouse him. He was fast locked in the arms of sleep. See here, in Jonah’s heavy slumber, the effect of sin. No noxious drug can give such deadly sleep as sin. The body never knows so dread a sleep when under the influence of opiates, as the soul does when sin has cast it into a slumber. If men could be awake to the evils, to the danger, to the desperate punishment of sin, sin were not half so deadly as it is. But when it puts its sweet cup of nightshade to the lip, that cup soon blinds the eyes, and “steeps the senses in forgetfulness,” and man knows not what or where he is.

Nor is sin the only cradle in which evil rocks the soul—the world, too, casts men into slumber. I do not know that Jonah ever slept so soundly anywhere as when he had gotten into the midst of busy mariners who were going to Tarshish. Ah, it is comparatively easy for us to keep awake in the midst of God’s Church. It is easy for us to maintain our steadfastness and integrity when we meet with those who rejoice in His name. The world is an enchanted ground, and happy is that Christian who is able to survive the deadening influence of business, the soporific influence which creeps over the minds of men whose merchandise increases, whose houses are filled with the riches of nations.

What downy pillows does the world sew to all armholes! What beds of ease she spreads for those whom she entraps. See also, the slumbering effects of the flesh. It was to spare himself a little toil, it was to avoid personal dishonor, that Jonah fled. Ah, flesh! When you are yielded to, into

what follies will you not drive us, into what prostration of strength do you not hurl us? Pleasures and comforts, if sought as ends, are desperate drains upon the vigor of the spirit. When the body is indulged, then the soul lies cleaving to the dust. It is not possible for us to pamper the flesh without, at the same time, starving the soul. If we sacrifice unto our own lusts, we are quite certain to get the sacrifices by robbing God’s altar. The body shall not have pleasure in sin unless the soul shall soon be in a state of misery and decay.

See also, in our text, one of the devices of Satan. He seeks to lull God’s Prophets into slumber, for he knows that dumb dogs that are given to sleep will never do any very great injury to his cause. The wakeful watchman he always fears, for then he cannot take the city by surprise. But if he can cast God’s watchman into slumber, then he is well content and thinks it almost as well to have a Christian asleep as to have him dead— he would certainly sooner see him in Hell—but next to that, he is most glad to see him rocked in the cradle of presumption, fast asleep. May we be delivered from Jonah’s condition.

But since like Jonah, we are infested by sin, encumbered by the flesh, surrounded by the world, and tempted by the devil, we have good cause occasionally that the shipmaster should come round and shake us by the shoulders, or even roughly strike us with the rope, lest we should sleep as do others and so fall into spiritual decay.

I shall this morning act the shipmaster’s part and, as captain of this vessel, I will cry both to slumbering saints and to sleepy sinners, “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God.”

I. First of all, we will deal with the SLEEPING SAINTS, those poor Jonahs who are God’s true servants but are yet asleep. To break their bands of sleep asunder, let me remind them, first, that the ship is in danger. It was ill for Jonah to sleep when all hands were at the pumps. When every other man was doing his best to lighten the ship and save her, if possible, from the terrific tempest, it was a shame that he should be asleep. The peril of human life demanded of every generous spirit prompt and earnest action. Every groaning timber would upbraid the lazy, sleepy Prophet. Members of this Church, professed Christians, is it not a shame to be slumbering, to be dilatory, in your Master’s service when the souls of men are in danger? It is marvelous to me how men can be so careless about the ruin of men’s souls.

Let us hear the cry of, “Fire! fire!” in the streets, and our heart is all in trepidation lest some poor creature should be burned alive. But we read of Hell and of the wrath to come, and seldom do our hearts palpitate with any compassionate trembling and fear. If we are on board a vessel and the shrill cry is heard, “A man overboard!” who has ever heard of a passenger wrapping his plaid around him and lying down upon a seat to contemplate the exertions of others? But in the Church, when we hear of thousands of sinners sinking in the floods of ruin, we behold professed Christians wrapping themselves up in their own security and calmly looking on upon the labors of others, wishing them no doubt, all success, but not even lifting a finger to do any part of the work themselves.

If we heard tomorrow in our streets the awful cry—more terrible than fire—the cry of, “Bread! Bread! Bread!” and saw starving women lifting up their perishing children, or hungry men imprecating curses upon those who should keep back their necessary food from them—would we not empty out our stores? Who among us would not spend our substance to let the poor ravenous creatures satisfy the pangs of hunger? And yet, here is the world perishing for lack of knowledge. Here we have them at our doors crying for the bread of Heaven—and how many there are that hoard their substance for avarice, give their time to vanity, devote their talents to self-aggrandizement—and center their thoughts only on the world or the flesh?

Oh, could you once see with your eyes a soul sinking into Hell, it were such a spectacle that you would work night and day, and count your life too short, and your hours too few for the plucking of brands from the burning. I suppose if we had once seen a drowning man, or a wretch borne over the rapids of Niagara, or if we had seen a person stabbed in the street, we should scarce ever forget it. Death’s doings are painted in very red colors upon the memory.

O that God would give some of you the sight of a lost soul! O that you could see it in its naked condition when it steps behind the curtain into the world unknown! O that you could behold its first horrors, when it discovers itself exposed to the anger of Almighty God! Would that you could see that soul when the awful Hell-sweat shall stand upon its brow as God proclaims—“Depart, you cursed one!”

O if only the vision of Hell were sometimes before our eyes—that some few of the sighs of a damned soul were ringing in our ears! Would God we had a vision of the judgment, the tremendous crowd, the flaming heavens, and the rocking earth, the open book, the eyes that flash with lightning and the voice that speaks with thunder! Would that we could see the crowds as they descend into the pit that has no bottom. For then, starting up like men that have long been given to a foolish slumber, we should gird up our loins, and using both our hands, we should seek to pluck men from the burning and deliver them from going down into the pit.

Men are dying! Men are perishing! Hell is filling! Satan is triumphing!

Poor souls are howling in their agonies and you sleep? I, as the shipmaster, shake you yet again. O that the Holy Spirit may quicken and arouse you! Perhaps He may do it through my voice, while again I entreat you. “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God,” that the multitudes perish not!

A second time I would arouse you, by reminding you that in the peaceful times in which we live, men are earnestly craving for our prayers—men are longing for deliverance. In Jonah’s ship every man was a pleader— every person was praying. And though I cannot say this of the world that lies in the Wicked One, yet, to a very great extent, it is true that the masses are longing to hear the words of this life. There was never an age like this for hearing sermons. I marvel, every Sunday, as I see the crowd willing to stand outside waiting by the hour and then rustling in like a mountain torrent, even treading upon one another to hear the Word of God!

Is not this an encouragement to labor? See the theater on a Sunday— no actors could attract greater multitudes! How they throne the doors to listen to some simple-minded man, who is going to tell the story of the Cross! I have seen this thirst for the Word all over England. But this present week, I have seen in a village, thinly populated, some ten thousand people crowding the cliffs, drinking in every word from the preacher’s lips—earnest to listen to the message of mercy. By God’s Grace, we have not now to stir up the people to attend the means—for there is all around us a desire to hear. This is a hearing age. This is a time when men are willing to listen—when they are only too glad to hear the Word faithfully preached. I say not that it is so in every place but certainly it is in London. And a man with but very moderate gifts, if his tongue is but on fire, will soon command an audience.

If there is an empty place of worship in London, it is generally the preacher’s fault. And, in nine cases out of ten, you will find that empty benches are evidences that the man does not preach the Gospel. For, if he preached the Gospel, the people would soon throng to listen to him. What? Shall we sleep NOW? What? Shall we be idle now? Ministers of Christ, shall we relax our efforts, or shall we be dull and cold about immortal souls when every omen urges us to zealous labor? My fellow workers—deacons and elders, honored Church officers—will you draw back in this day of hopefulness, and refrain to sow the seed, when the field is plowed and ready for the grain?

Church members—you young men that can speak in public—you women that can in your households talk of Christ—will any of you be dull and lethargic now? Now is the moment when we may carry the fortress by storm, and if armed and carrying bows we turn our backs in the moment of victory, when triumph trembles in the scales—how we should throughout life regret our wicked folly and idleness! What do you mean, O sleeper, to sleep now? Arise, for it is a happy and auspicious hour—“Arise, and call upon your God.”

Yet further, let us remember that as Jonah was the only man in the ship whose prayer could be of any avail, so the children of God are the only men who can do any real spiritual service to the perishing world. All the cries of the shipmaster and his crew were addressed to the gods of their various countries. And they had ears which could not ear and hands which could afford no aid. Jonah was the only man who worshipped the Lord that made the sea and the dry land. Hence, his prayers, alone could save the ship.

Now, the salvation of the world under God lies with the Church. Christ has finished the atonement. It is for the Church to finish the ingathering. Christ has paid the purchase-price and completed redemption by His blood. It is for the Church to seek the Holy Spirit and fully to redeem the world by power. Suppose, then, that you who fear God say, “This is no case of mine. I am not my brother’s keeper”? Suppose that you waste opportunities and throw precious time to the dogs—then the world must go down to its awful doom. But, mark you, its blood shall be upon your garments. This generation, under God, must have salvation given to it through our ministry, through our Evangelists, through our Sunday schools, through our missionaries, through our preaching and teachings.

And if we do it not, the world will not stay from perishing while we are staying from laboring. Men will not live on until another generation worthier than we are shall have taken our places, but this generation must go down to the tomb, muttering curses between its lips against the faithless, wicked, unbelieving, inactive Church. And we must go down, too, to meet the doom of those who had no real faith in Christ, or else they would have had a love for the souls of men. To meet those who had not the spirit of Jesus, or else they would with wooing entreaties and with earnest efforts have brought men to the Cross of Christ.

Ah, Beloved! I know that we have some in the Church who are but a drag to it. There are some in all Churches who are of this kind, but let me solemnly remind you—we must address the Church as a body—let me again remind the Church that it is with her and with no one else that the world has to deal as to its conversion. We must never think of leaving Christ’s work to societies. They have had their day and have supplied a great lack created by the loss of the Apostolic spirit. But it is now time that the aroused and revived Church should assume her true position and do her own work. Fifty years or more, missionary societies have been trying to convert the world, and albeit that many souls have been saved, and therefore the effort has been far from useless, yet, compared with Apostolic success, they have been a miserable failure.

All these years we have spent ten times the money, with not a tenth of the success, of early Evangelistic effort. In my inmost soul I believe that the Lord is not with the most of our foreign missions. And why? Because God never called the missionary societies to the work. He never bade the missionary society become the spouse of Christ and bring forth sons unto Him. His offspring, His seed which shall reward Him for His soul’s travail, must spring from His own well-beloved bride. Much as I value all good societies, I cannot hesitate to declare that the Church is the ordained agent, and that all beside is human, and derives authority only from man. Hence I say of a society for the conversion of the heathen—it is a manconstituted body and not of God.

The Lord will work, not by committees, but by His Churches. The Church must do her own work and when all our Churches are thoroughly aroused to this fact and every congregation shall send out its own men, pray for their own men, and support their own men, we shall see greater things than we have ever dreamed of and “the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” But it lies with the Church. O you that are in the Church and sleep, what do you mean? Rise and call upon your God.

Further, and here I more especially address such members of this Church as may have been up to now careless about the good work. Remember, Sleeper, that you are in the ship yourself, that you enjoy its privileges, and therefore you ought to take your quota of the work. It is said of Lepidus, a Roman officer, that one day, when all the soldiers were at drill he laid down out of the sunshine and said he wished it were all the duty of a soldier to lay under a tree forever. We have some such soldiers. The breed is not extinct. The enlisting officer, however exact he may be, cannot help it—there will lie some such introduced into all our little armies— who like to lie in the shade and take matters easy and wish this were all that ever a Christian soldier had to do.

Oh, rise, Man! For if the battle is to be won, it must not be fought by soldiers lying in the shade, but by men who can bear the heat of the sun, wear their heavy armor without weariness, and rush to battle against the foe for God and for the Truth—fearless and dauntless—in the face of leaguered hosts. There is an old story told of Philip, last king of Macedon. Before the last disastrous battle by which his monarchy was destroyed, it is said that he stood up to speak to his soldiers upon a sepulcher. It was interpreted by the soothsayers to be a sign of sure defeat, because he stood upon a tomb to speak.

And I, your minister, if it should ever be my unhappy lot to stand upon a dead Church to preach the Word, cannot expect anything but the most disastrous defeat. Let but the minister of God be supported by a living Church, let him be borne up in the arms of a loving and a praying people—and who can stand against his word? Nothing but victory must follow. But let us have dead, careless deacons and elders, let us have idle Church members and the omens are against us, and the result of our battle must be a terrible calamity. There is more mischief done by the presence of one unconverted person in a Church than we think.

We are told by anatomists, that there is no part of the body which is dead. Even the bones are alive. Life abhors alliance with death. And if a dead substance once gets into the body, all the enfolds of nature are directed to the one point where the foreign body is found, to drive it out. And often ulcers and running sores and such like things, are but the effects of nature seeking to expel the dead substance from the body. Now, there is nothing in Christ’s real Church that is dead. And if ever dead substances get into the Church, they will not lie there still and quiet, but the Church shall be aware of it in her every nerve and pore—and she shall soon begin to exert her strength and vitality to expel the foreign substance from her living body. Would that this energy could be spared for other works, for the saving of souls for Jesus!

Now, I address some pretended Christians here who are not alive to God. Let me beg of them to relinquish their profession, or if not, to make it real. Either be what you profess to be, or drop your profession. Lie not unto God, for in so doing you injure the Church of which you are a part and, which since you are a part of it, it is your duty to serve. I should not expect, if I were a member of a commercial firm, to take half the profits and to do nothing. It is evil to the very last degree to share the benefits without uniting in the toil. And yet some professors are guilty of this miserable conduct. As it was in the days of Job, so it is even until now—“the oxen were plowing and the asses were feeding beside them.” There is always a large proportion of the latter class in the Churches—too glad to feed but quite unwilling to work. To every Jonah, then, I say, “either arise and pray with us or get out of the ship, for sooner or later we shall be compelled to throw you out if you do not.”

Furthermore, and here let me conclude this point, the honor of our God is mightily concerned in every Jonah being aroused. How could Jehovah be glorified, if the only worshipper of Jehovah in the vessel should sleep? If he did not cry to God, how could the mariners know whether Jehovah did hear prayer or not? Now, mark you, the honor of Christ—of His doctrines, of His blood, of His Person, the dignity of everything that we hold sacred— rests, in the eyes of the sons of men, in the keeping of the Church. When a Church grows proud, worldly and idle, what does the world say? “That’s

your religion!” says the world. And then, “Aha! Aha! Aha!” it says, “what a lie religion is!” But let the world see a really earnest Church, it grows very angry, it finds all the fault it can. But down deep in its heart, it reverences those it hates and it secretly confesses, “There is a power here.”

They gaze and admire, even though they hate the might with which God surrounds such a Church as this. The Christian religion was at one time looked up to by the heathens with awe and reverence, for they saw its martyrs dying without a tear. They saw in astonishment its poor content in their poverty, without murmuring—its great men humble, not giving way either to lust or covetousness. They saw the purity and chastity of Christian matrons. They beheld the diligent industry of Christian bishops. They saw as though they beheld the face of an angel, when they looked upon Christ’s fair Church on earth.

But she became degenerate—she committed fornication by being allied with the State. She lost her dignity and turned aside from her high position as queen of the Lord, and a spiritual body quickened by a Spirit from above. What, then, did the world do? It mocked and jeered. And while it paid an outward homage to a bejeweled Church glittering with gold and silver, yet in its soul it loathed and despised her. Men no longer needed to dread the omnipotence of Christian zeal. An excellent historian thus speaks of Believers in the martyr age—hear it and judge whether men have such reasons to fear us now.

He describes the common opinion of the Roman pagans concerning the followers of Jesus—“They were intensely propagandist. While ever unseen they were at work. Every member was a missionary of the sect, and lived mainly to propagate a doctrine for which they were ever ready to die. Thus the infection spread by a thousand unsuspected channels. Like a contagion propagated in the air, it could penetrate, as it seemed, anywhere, everywhere. The meek and gentle slave that tends your children, or attends you at table, may be a Christian. The favorite daughter of your house, who has endeared herself to you by a tenderness and grace peculiarly her own, and which seems to you as strange as it is captivating, turns out to be a Christian.

“The captain of the guards, the legislator in the senate-house, may be a Christian! In these circumstances who or what is safe? What power can defend the laws and majesty of Rome and the peace of domestic life, against an enemy like this? Then it was often as hateful for its absence as for its presence. With sullen moroseness this strange people studiously absented themselves from all places and scenes of public entertainment and festivity. Games, shows, gladiatorial contests, public fetes of every kind, military or civil, they eschewed as they would have done the plague. Such scenes, indeed, were so mixed up with idolatry and so steeped in licentiousness and sin, that though consecrated by the presence and express sanction of their country’s gods, they were not good enough for them!”

O my Brethren, how I wish that we could be thus happily reviled. If we cannot reach so high, at least let us keep our garments spotless. Would you make this Church, my fellow members, to become a stink in the nostrils of the wicked? We have, Brethren, a power among men. When they have followed us with their hoots and their jeers, we have borne patiently and have been too glad to bear every slander if we might arouse lazy generation from their lethargy. We have seen success follow our efforts. We have beheld the opening of places for the preaching of the Gospel which had been closed for centuries. We have seen the theater devoted to God on the Sunday—and now, now, shall we stay our course? God forbid! For, if we do, what shall the enemy say but, “Lo! God has forsaken them, the Gospel can but create a temporary excitement, truth is evanescent in its influence.” Instead thereof, let us hold hard to God and to His Word, for the glory of the Truth and for the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, I hear some self-satisfied people say, “We do not want this sermon this morning. We are not asleep. The members of this Church are not a slothful people.” Well, dear Friends, I cheerfully admit that, as a body, we are not given to slumber. But I am not so sure that this is true of you all. At any rate, those who are awake will find it a good thing to have a jog, lest they should fall like Eutychus into a sleep. But I am sure that some of you are asleep, and I shall not hesitate to treat you as such. But you will reply to me, “Why, Sir, we talk about religion.” Many people talk in their sleep. I have heard of a man who preached an excellent sermon when he was asleep. “Well but is not our walk consistent?” Yes, but when I was a small boy, I used to walk in my sleep. And then I could venture in my sleep where I should not have wandered when I was awake and I should not wonder but this may be your case.

“Yes, but do we not feel religious influences? Do we not weep under a sermon?” Yes, and I have heard people cry in their sleep. Such things are quite possible. “But do we not rejoice very much when we hear the Gospel?” Yes, and some folks will laugh in their sleep. John Bunyan tells of Mercy, who did laugh because of the beauty of her dream. And your dreams may be so pleasant that they make you laugh. “Ah, well,” says one, “but I do not see that we are so very sound asleep, for we think a great deal about religion.” Yes, and people think when they are asleep. For what are their dreams but unconnected thoughts? And so you may have some straying thoughts of God and of right, and yet after all you may be fast asleep.  
“Then, what do you mean by a man’s being really awake?” I mean two

or three things. I mean, first, his having a thorough consciousness of the reality of spiritual things. When I speak of a wakeful man, I mean one who does not take the soul to be a fancy, nor Heaven to be a fiction, nor Hell to be a tale, but who acts among the sons of men as though these were the only substances and all other things the shadows. I want men of stern resolution, for no Christian is awake unless he steadfastly determines to serve his God, come fair, come foul. I would have you, young Christians, dedicated to God’s service. Just as Hamilcar led his two children to the altar and made them swear by the gods that they would never cease their enmity to Rome while they lived, I want you to feel that the vows of God are upon you, so that you cannot cease from attacking sin and winning souls as long as you live.

And I do not think you are awake, moreover, unless you are moved by a passionate earnestness to win souls for Christ. A man who labors and sees no success attending his efforts, may be awake if he mourns and groans, and sighs before God. But an idle preacher, a preacher without converts—a Sunday school teacher in whose class there is no conversion—a man who never saw a sinner brought to Christ by his means, and yet is happy and content—such a man is asleep. Let him take heed that he sleep not the sleep of death.

I had sooner the Lord would send claps of thunder to this Church, in the form of heavy trials and troubles—the removal of your pastor, the taking away of our best men, the riot of mobs, or the slander of the press— than that we should continue to multiply and increase and should make this place a huge dormitory wherein we snored out God’s praises in our sleep, instead of an armory where we sharpen our swords on the Sunday to go out the whole week long, contending for God and for the good of men. Never may these benches be beds, nor these seats, couches for sluggards to recline upon. “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God.”

I have now said enough, I hope, to the slumbering Christians, only that there are some who are asleep who will not hear what I say. I do not mean that there are any in the congregation asleep with their eyes shut. But if they are asleep with their hearts, it is probable that what I say may do good to those who are awake. But those who are asleep and given to slumber, will say, “A little more rest and a little more folding of arms. We are saved ourselves, let us sleep on.” May the Lord grant you a better mind, and constrain you to act as holy gratitude and love demand of you.

II. Very solemnly and earnestly would I now address myself to SLUMBERING SINNERS. What crowds are there, this morning, of these careless ones, who are at ease on the brink of ruin. Unconverted and yet unconcerned—exposed to the wrath of God but fearless—as though all were peace, They are on the edge of perdition but merry as a marriage bell— condemned already—but mirthful as revelers at a feast.

Let me attempt to disturb your quiet, by remarking, first, that your sleep is utterly incomprehensible to those who are awake. Convicted souls, who feel the danger of their own state, cannot understand how you can be so careless. We were once as foolish as you are, but when we first began to perceive things in their true light, it was the wonder of wonders to us how we could have been so much at ease in so perilous a position. The man who sports upon the gallows, or laughs when consuming in the fire, or jests with his head upon the block, is not more a marvel than you.

You are a sinner—a sinner! You can hear that title applied to you without any sort of fear, whereas a sinner is a thing abhorred of God. The God that made you loathes you. The sinner is one whom God must smite. He bears with you long but He must smite you soon. The sword may sleep in its scabbard but it must leap forth to smite you even to the death. A sinner! Why, you are one whose life is a continued miracle, for the heavens would fall upon you, if long-suffering did not restrain them. The very stones of the field would smite you, if God did not bind them over to keep the peace. And the beasts of the field are in league against you, and would devour you, if He did not hold them in from you.

Why, you are one that has no friends anywhere. You are a blot upon nature. You are a dishonor to creation. You are loathsome in yourself. You are contagious to others. You are grievous to the best of men. You are harmful even to the bad. You are a weed ripening for the burning, a pool of foul waters breeding a foul gas, a monster to be hunted out of the universe of God. You are a felon, a criminal, a traitor, a sinner, which is all these things in one and yet, under such an accusation, you are at ease!

Man, remember again, you are a mortal. Time eats away your life and hurries you to your grave. The sun does not stand still for you—speeding on his everlasting course, day after day—he bears you to the tomb. Every tick of yonder clock sounds as the footfall of approaching Death. The rider upon the pale horse is pursuing you, his charger is foaming with speed. Perhaps you may never see another day. The light of 1863 may never shine into your eyes. Or, if you should not yet expire, how short is the longest life! How certain is your death! A mortal man and yet you sleep!

Think, Man, of that upper chamber where you shall play the leading part, pale and languid, stretched out upon the bed. The curtains shall be drawn about you and every voice shall be hushed in sad anxiety. Weeping relatives shall gaze upon your brow, clammy with the death-sweat, and life shall be a thing of seconds with you. Heavily heave the lungs, languidly beats the pulse. The awful moment is at hand. It is yourself, you strong man, grappling with a stronger than you are. Those are your eyes

which shall be glazed in the darkness of death, and those are your limbs which shall be gathered up in the last mortal agony.

And do you, knowing, feeling that you must die, and having the sentence of death in your members already—do you still sleep? Alas, alas! How dire the stupor which death cannot startle. But, Man, remember you are an immortal and this makes it the more grievous that you should sleep. You shall not die when you die—you shall live again forever! Forever! Forever! Oh, eternity! Eternity! A deep without a bottom and without a shore! My Hearer, you must sail over it forever and forever never reaching a port—and that eternity will be to you, if unsaved, a sea of fire, lashed to eternal storm.

Eternity, eternity—mountain without a summit! Up its sides you must climb, O Sinner, and find it an ever-burning volcano. On, on, on, must you ascend, for summit there is none—forever! Forever! Forever! Forever! And yet do you sleep on, Sinner? What madness do I see in you? It is madness without method, insanity exaggerated, to despise the warnings of eternity. Remember, Man, as you are immortal, there is a Heaven, and dying, as you are living, you will lose it. For you no harps of angels, no songs of saints, no melodies of joy. For you no face of Christ to be seen with rapture, no embraces of the ever-loving Husband. For you no sunshine of the Father’s face, no bliss ineffable, no rivers of pleasure at His right hand.

You are losing all these! Eternal and exceeding weights of glory you are spurning and yet you sleep! O Sleeper, what do you mean? If this bestirs you not, I would have you remember, Man, as surely as you lose Heaven, so certainly you are gaining Hell. For you the flames that never can be quenched, the thirst without a drop of water. For you an angry God, a fiery Law, a flaming Tophet. For you the company of blaspheming fiends and despairing spirits. For you unutterable agony, “where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.”

“What do you mean, O sleeper,” when this must be your doom if you sleep on? Were it not that we know that man is dead in trespasses and sins, this sleeping would be utterly incomprehensible to those who have once been awakened. I marvel that I can preach about these awful themes without an agony of earnestness. These are no trifles, no themes for an orator’s idle hour, or a hearer’s curious ear. These matters may well make both the ears of him that hears to tingle. O that they might make your hearts tremble before the Lord, that with contrition you might seek His face!

Further would I press this matter home. I am sure that you frivolous, thoughtless men and women, can give no justifiable cause for carelessness. Sinner, why do you sleep? Perhaps you tell me you do not believe there is any danger. I reply to you, you do believe it, you know you do. I reason not with you if you pretend to be infidels. There is that in you which makes you know that there is a God and that He must punish sin. You may boast that you have no fears of the hereafter but when you are alone, or sick, or in your sober senses, you tremble at the judgment to come.

You know it, Man, and at the bayonet point, I charge home upon you. O that I could carry your heart as readily as your conscience. You know that these things are not fictions nor falsehoods. If you should have some honest doubts, you have but to open your eyes to see, and use your common sense to be convinced. Do but listen to the utterances of your fellow sinners, as they have passed from time into eternity and have felt the foretaste of eternal wrath, and surely you must confess that there is a God that visits transgression and sin upon the ungodly. But, you will tell me, perhaps, there is time enough and therefore you may sleep. But there is no time, Man, there is no time to spare! If I were in a fever I would not say, “There is time enough to be healed,” but I would say, “Let me be delivered from this consuming heat.”

If I stood just now upon the edge of a burning mountain and felt the lava giving way beneath my feet, I would not say “There is time enough yet,” but I would long now to make my escape. Sinner, you stand today over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten. You are swinging over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope and the strands of that rope are snapping now. Now! Now! You are in danger! You may die this morning. Many places of worship have been made places of death. God save you, that this may not happen to you, but still, this is your time of danger and there is no time to spare.

Do you say, “Well, we may as well sleep, for there’s no hope for us?” No! Sinner, no! Blessed be God, you cannot say that! You that sit under my ministry constantly know I never taught you that! I never said of anyone of you that you could not be saved. I have not preached to you an impossible Gospel. I have not shut the gates of mercy on mankind in proclaiming Christ. Have I not rather told you that, “He is willing to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him?” I have set the door open before you and I have entreated you to come in—no, I have labored to compel you to come in that His house may be filled.

And now, again, I utter the same message, “Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely.” Trust in Jesus! Trust in Jesus and you shall be saved. Your despair is wicked, for it gives God the lie! Your despondency is sinful, for it doubts the Truth of Him who cannot be false to Himself or to you! Sinner, trust Him and you shall be saved this morning. God help you to throw yourself flat today upon the covenanted

promises of God in Christ, and trusting His precious blood, He will save you now and save you forever. O why, why do you sleep? If you can cite no good cause, if you can offer no convincing reason, what do you mean then, O sleeper? Arise and call upon your God!

But Soul, Soul, we remind you yet again, as we cannot understand your sleep, and you can not justify it—we would solemnly beg you to consider that your sleep will soon end in ruin. Ah, there are some of you whose hearts I shall never reach. Let me live as long as I may, I shall never see you saved. There are some of you—I have often made you weep, but the Lord has not made you hate your sins. Some of you love drunkenness and though you leave it for a little season, yet all the entreaties of the minister, and all the pleadings of your conscience, cannot keep you from returning like a dog to your vomit and like a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Oh, my Hearers, there are some of you—I have not quite despaired of you—but I tell you solemnly it has almost come to that. O that you would know, even now in this your day, the things which make for your peace. Oh, how I fear and think I have just cause to fear, that there are some of you who will sit in this Tabernacle till you die and you will go from this place to Hell with my voice of entreaty ringing in your ears. I have prayed for you and you are not saved. I have leveled sermons at you and you have not been moved. I have preached plainly to your face against your iniquity, and laid your sin before your eyes and you have not repented. I have held up my Master’s bleeding body and you have not been wooed to love.

You have been convicted for a season, and you have hushed the voice of conscience. You have vowed and you have broken your vows. You have turned again to your folly and you are still what you were—senseless, stolid, hardened—dead in sin. I shall not forever hammer at this granite. Not always shall the horses run upon the rock, nor shall we plow there with oxen, for God shall lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet and where are you then? Oh, if we knew by express revelations, concerning any man here present that he would be one day in Hell, if looking into his eyes we could read there, “That man will dwell forever in torments,” should we not weep over him?

Yet I fear there are such here. I fear—may God remove the fear by His Grace—I fear there are such. “Lord, is it I?” Let each one say—“Lord, is it I?” Well, Sinner, you shall go sleeping on. You will go home to your house today and forget all that I have said. You will come again tonight but the result will be the same. Like the door on its hinges you will turn in and out without a change all your days. See Man, you will listen to my voice, it will be to you as a pleasing song but nothing more. You will be all your life as the deaf adder which cannot be charmed. You will now and then murmur in your sleep, “The preacher is too earnest and makes too much noise about these melancholy matters,” or “he is too prone to dwell on these hard threats.” You will return to a deeper sleep and so continue year by year. How do you approve of the prospect? But stay, let me finish the story. One day there will run a rumor among us, “So-and-So who sat in that pew is dead.”

“Did he die in the Lord?” will be our solemn question. And the answer will be, “We fear not. He showed no signs of repentance or of faith in Christ.” Ah, then, what must our conclusion be? Well Sinner, well, do me this one favor. If you will be damned, let me be clear of your blood. Do me but this one service—if you will perish, let it not be laid to the door of my unfaithfulness. If there is anyone here present, stranger or regular attendant, who will choose his own perdition, I charge you, pay some regard to my earnest protest, for I enter it now before the Lord. Be damned if you will, but do let me first of all stand before you and tell you what damnation means and tell you that there is a way of salvation.

Let me stretch out these hands again and plead with you that you would come to Christ, that you might live. “What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, call upon your God,” for it may soon be too late for you to arise. Soon none will be able to warn you. Soon none will weep for you. Soon none will entreat you. When once the iron gates are shut and the brazen bolts are drawn, all the friendship of earth or the fury of Hell cannot unlock them. The awful gratings of those bolts that shut in souls forever in fell despair, shall be ever in your ears, covering you with hopeless dismay. Now I pray you while yet there is hope. “Awake! Arise, or be forever fallen!”

Lastly, I think I may call upon those present here who know what it is to be fully awakened, to do their best to awaken others. We read in ancient history of the Sybarites, who were a people so given to slumber that they killed their dogs lest their barking should arouse them. They would have no crowing of the cock to awake them at morn. There are some sinners who would desire to banish every warning friend and faithful minister far away from them. But I pray you, even though it should be unpleasant, do your best to keep your friends from ruin. We know that when persons are likely to perish through opiates and they are falling to sleep, the physician does not hesitate to thrust pins into the flesh, or walk them up and down even though they cry and long to go to sleep.

So with you, be not too careful about wounding the feelings or shocking the nerves if you may but win the soul. Better that you should get into discredit for being impertinent with your friends than let their souls perish through your politeness. Be you not like Agag, who comes delicately, with “surely the bitterness of death is past.” Like the old Puritans, who

availed themselves of every opportunity to rebuke sin and uphold righteousness, so be you instant in season and out of season. If you should save a soul through being too zealous, neither your Master nor the saved one will blame you for it and at least in Heaven it will never be a source of regret to you that you were too active and too diligent.

You may have an opportunity today. Who can tell whether God may not bless you in it, if you use it? But I pray you, use it, whether He blesses you or not, lest the neglect of that opportunity should leave blood upon your garments. By Him that bought you with His blood, live to His service—by Him that called you unto a holy calling, give yourselves wholly to the winning of souls—by Him who from the beginning has chosen you unto salvation, live as the elect of God, having hearts of compassion.

By your life, for which you are responsible—by your death, which may be so near—by Jesus, whose face you hope to see—by Hell, into which lost souls are sinking—by Heaven, to which the penitent shall rise, which is your hope and your joy—proclaim the Word of God everywhere to men. Tell it, tell it till the skies shall echo it. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Cast your bread upon the waters”—labor, toil, seek, strive, agonize—and God give you His own blessing, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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÷Jon 1.12

LABOR IN VAIN  
NO. 567

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 1, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Jonah said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land. But they could not:**

**for the sea worked and was tempestuous against them.” Jonah 1:12, 13.**

THESE mariners manifested most commendable humanity. They were not willing, even though it were to preserve their own lives, to cast overboard an innocent man. Therefore they first used their best endeavors. And when these failed they made a solemn appeal to God, entreating Him not to lay upon them innocent blood—and then, since necessity has no law, Jonah, as a last resource was given up to the boisterous element, but not till every effort had been made to save him. We should he very careful of human life, doing nothing which even indirectly may destroy or injure it.

And if we should be jealous over life, how much more anxious should we be concerning men’s souls! And how watchful lest we should do anything by which the least of the human family may have his eternal interests endangered by our example or teaching! God give us Divine Grace, like these mariners, to row hard that if possible we may bring the ship to land laboring that none around us may be left to perish.

I shall not, however, dwell upon that aspect of the text. Our Savior selected Jonah as one of His peculiar types—“There shall no sign be given,” said He, “to the men of this generation but the sign of the Prophet Jonah.” We believe, therefore, that we are not erring if we translate the details of the history of Jonah into spiritual illustrations of man’s experience and action with regard to Christ and His Gospel.

We have before us a picture of what most men do before they will resort to God’s remedy. That remedy is here most fairly imaged in the deliverance of the whole ship’s company by the sacrifice of one on their behalf.

I. Our first observation is that SINNERS, WHEN THEY ARE TOSSED UPON THE SEA OF CONVICTION, MAKE DESPERATE EFFORTS TO SAVE THEMSELVES. The men rowed hard to bring the ship to land. The Hebrew is they “dug” hard, sending the oars deep into the water with much exertion and small success. The tempest so tossed the sea about that they could not row in a good and orderly manner. But they desperately tugged at the oars, which the towering waves rendered useless by too deep a digging.

Straining every sinew they labored by violence to get the ship in safety to the haven. Brethren, no word in any language can express the violence of earnest action with which awakened sinners strive and struggle to obtain eternal life. Truly, if the kingdom of God were in the power of him that wills and him that runs, they would possess it at once! Since they struggle, however, in an unlawful manner, the crown of victory will never be awarded them. They may kindle the fire and rejoice in the sparks, but thus says the Lord, “This shall you have of My hand: you shall lie down in sorrow.”

Let us notice some forms of the fleshy energy of men straining after self-salvation. The most usual is moral reformation. We have seen the drunkard, when conscience has been awakened, renounce his cups altogether. He has gone further than temperance and has espoused total abstinence. And proceeding further still, it often happens that in the excess of zeal, he vomits forth furious words against all who go not the same length of abstinence as himself.

Yonder man was given up to blasphemy, but now an ill word never comes from his tongue—and he is therefore content with himself because he no longer curses God. Another has followed an ill trade, or has been in the habit of neglecting Sunday worship. Conscience has mercifully led him to give up his ill connections and attend a place of worship. Is not this well? It is, indeed, well. But it is not enough! It is marvelous how far men will push their reforms. And yet how little solid peace such purging can secure. For what is the sinner after his reformation but the blackamoor washed clean, a blackamoor still?

I would have the Ethiopian clean by all manner of means. But I would not let him fancy that the soap and the niter will make him white. I would have the leopard tamed and caged, but this will not remove his spots. Moral reforms are excellent in themselves, but they are dangerous if we rest in them. Let even a corpse be washed, but let no man dream that the most careful washing will restore it to life. “You must be born again” rings out the death knell of all salvation by human effort. Unless reforms are founded in regeneration, they are baseless things which fail in the end for want of foundation. They are deceptive things, affording a transient hope, which soon, alas, must melt away.

Ah, my Hearer, you may go on improving and reforming, but all your present and future amendments can never wipe out the old score of sin. There stands the black catalog of your sins, engraved as in eternal brass! The gloomy record remains unaltered and unalterable by any deeds of yours. Something more potent than your tears and change of life must take away the sins of your departed years. Beware, then, of thinking that you are getting the ship to land—no matter how hard you row with these oars of human resolution.

Others add to their reformation a superstitious regard to the outwards of religion. According to the sect with which they unite, they become excessively religious. They reverence every nail of the Church door and every panel of the pulpit. There is not a brick in the aisle which is not sacred to them, nor even tile on the roof! Every rubric, every “Amen,” every vestment and candlestick has to them a world of sanctity about it. They are not content with the ordinary days of worship, but the Church bell rings every morning. And well it may, for if men are to earn salvation in God’s House, they had need be there all day and all night, too!

Even in a Protestant Church, men row very hard with multitudinous observances and superstitious performances, but when you get into the Romish Church, the labor in vain comes to a climax! There are vows of poverty, celibacy, silence, passive obedience and a thousand other tortures! If the Moloch whom they worship is not satisfied he ought to be. We heard but the other day of a gentleman giving up all his goodly heritage, selling his broad acres and pouring all the purchase money into the coffers of the monks and priests in order that at last by rowing hard in this way he might get the ship to land.

It is remarked of the Hindus that they give vastly more to their idols than we bestow upon the cause of God and I suppose it is true—but then they also are rowing hard to get the ship to land. All they do is for themselves. Self is always a mighty power in the world. Do but teach men that they can gain their own salvation by their own doings and mortifications and offerings and I would expect to see the treasury filled! I would expect to hear the whip constantly going upon the shoulders. But I should despair of seeing anything like holiness surviving in the land. Superstition is hard rowing but the ship will not come to the land by it. Men invent ceremony after ceremony. There is this pomp and that show—this gaudy ornament and that procession. But the whole matter ends in outward display, no secret soul-blessing results flow from there. Priests and their votaries may go on piling up human inventions ad infinitum, but they will forever fail to ease the conscience, or give rest to a disturbed soul. Man’s awful necessities crave something more than the husks of superstition!

You will find another form of the same thing among ourselves. Many persons row hard to get the ship to land by a notional belief in orthodox doctrine. This superstition is harder to deal with, but quite as dangerous as the belief in good works. It is quite as legal an idea for me to think to be accepted by believing good doctrine as to expect to be pardoned for doing good works. Yet we have scores of people who, if they can get hold of the Calvinistic creed at the right end—if they become masters of it and know how to argue against Arminianism—if they become not only sound Calvinists but a little sounder still, having not only the sixteen ounces to the pound but two or three ounces over and above, so as to make them ultra-Calvinistic—why then they fancy that all must be well!

“I never can hear a preacher,” this man will say, “who is not sound. I can tell at once when there is a grain of free will in the sermon.” This is all very well, but he who boasts thus may be no better than the devil! No, he may not be so good, for the devil believes and trembles—but these men believe and are too much hardened in their own conceit to think of trembling. Away with the idea that believing sound doctrine and chaining ourselves to a cast-iron creed is vital godliness and eternal life! Orthodox sinners will find that Hell is hot and that their knowledge of predestination will not yield a cooling drop to their parched tongues.

Condemning other people—cutting off the saints of God right and left—is but poor virtue and to have these blessed doctrines in the head while neglecting them in the heart is anything but a gracious sign. If you can “a hair divide between the west and north-west side,” do not therefore fancy that your fine gifts and profound orthodoxy will ensure you an entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. Ah, you may row with those oars, but you will not get the ship to land—you must be saved by Sovereign Grace through the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart—or you will not be saved at all. As it is not by doing that we are saved, neither is it by subscribing to creeds. There is something more than this needed before the ship can reach the port.

Perhaps, in this congregation, we have other subtle methods of endeavoring to do the same thing. The pastor has noticed that many are resting upon their own incessant prayers. Ah, my poor Hearer, you know your need of something, you can hardly tell what. You have heard the subject of salvation explained to you a hundred times and now when it comes to the pinch you do not understand it after all. I thank God that you have learned how to pray—that your sighs and cries and groans come up before Him. But I sorrow because you trust in your prayers and rest in them. Remember that you will no more be saved for the sake of your prayers than for the sake of your good works.

If your knees become hard as the knees of St. James are said to have been—hard like the camel’s through long kneeling—and if with the Psalmist you could say, ‘My throat is dried, my eyes fail,” yet all this, if you look to it and do not look to Christ, will never avail you. I knew what it was for months to cry out to God and to find the heavens above me as brass, because I had not understood clearly the soul-quickening words, “Believe and live,” but dreamed that by praying I could get myself into a suitable state to receive mercy, or perhaps move the heart of God towards me!

Whereas that heart needed no moving towards me, it was full of love from before the foundation of the world. Pray, my dear Brethren. Let me never discourage you in that. But do let me beg you not to sit still, or recline upon your prayers, for if you get no further than your prayers, you will never get to Heaven. There is more wanted than crying to God! More wanted than earnest desires, however passionately they may be breathed. There must be faith in Jesus or else you will row hard with your prayers, and you will never bring the ship to land.

Then there are others who are toiling by—I scarcely know how to describe it—a sort of mental torture. Oh, the many who say, “If I could feel as I ought to feel. O, Sir, my heart is as hard as a nether millstone. And yet I do not feel that it is hard—I wish I did. I would give my eyes if I could repent. I would give my right arm if I could but weep for sin! I would be satisfied to be a beggar, or to lie rotting in a dungeon if I could but feel that I was fit to come to the Savior! But, alas, I feel nothing! If I did but feel my unfitness—did but know my own unworthiness—I should have hope. But I am made of such Hell-hardened steel that neither terrors or mercies can move me. O, that I could repent! O, that this rock could give forth streams like that Rock which Moses smote in the wilderness of old! O, that I could but bring my heart to melt into something like desires after God and Christ! Oh, I am everything but what I should be!”

Now, my dear Hearer, you will row very hard in this way before you will ever come to land, for self-righteousness lies at the bottom of all this. You want to save your heart from hardness and then come to Jesus, which is much as to say you wish to save yourself and then come to Him to put the finishing stroke upon you. You have a secret attachment to your own goodness or you would not be so eager to compass a fitness— you should at once do as you are bid and rest alone on Jesus. Your business is not with self, but with Jesus! With Jesus, just as you are. However hard your heart may be—however destitute of feeling you may have become—this, though it should be subject for lamentation, should never keep you from resting in Him who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

I tell you, your trying to get your heart into a right state, your trying to repent, your trying to be humble is all labor in vain. It is all going the wrong way to work. Your business is with Christ! He can soften, cleanse and sanctify, but you can do none of these, try as you will. Come as you are to my Lord Jesus, hard-heart and all, and the sea shall soon be calm for you. While you row with your own oars, the sea will only work and be the more tempestuous.

Various are the shapes which this carnal energy assumes. I have met with many who are in this kind of case. They are constantly starting objections to their own salvation and trying to answer them. They have comfort for a moment and they say, “Yes, this is very sweet, but”—and then they will spend a week or two in trying to split up that but. When they are rid of this but, a mercy will come to them from another quarter and they are sure to meet it with, “Ah, blessed be God for that, but.” They are always pulling away at these buts.

These big waves come sweeping up to the side of their vessel and they try to dig their oars into them. Friend, if you are never saved until you, an unpardoned sinner, have answered all objections, you will never be saved because there are a thousand objections to the salvation of any man which can only be met by one argument and that is the blood of Jesus. If you will go here and there seeking answers to the devil’s suggestions of unbelief you may travel the whole world and end your fruitless task in despair.

But if you will come to Jesus, if you will see Him like another Jonah thrown out of the ship for your sake. If you will but see Him lost that you may be saved, then a peace which passes all understanding shall keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

II. We will now take the second point. Like these mariners, THE FLESHY EFFORTS OF AWAKENED SINNERS MUST INEVITABLY FAIL. The text says, “The men rowed hard to bring it to the land. But they could not.” With all man’s rowing after mercy and salvation, he can never find it by his own efforts. For this good reason, first of all, that it is contrary to God’s Law for a sinner to get comfort by anything he can do for and by himself. Here is the law—“By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.”

That rule, then, fixed and fast as the laws of Nature, shuts out forever all hope of the attainment of joy and peace by anything that we can do, or be, or feel—for all these the Law already claims of us. How mad then will it be on our part if we run counter to a Divine Law! Success is impossible in so perverse a course. I do well, therefore, if I discourage all the efforts of awakened consciences to find peace anywhere except in the work of Christ. Let a man labor ever so earnestly, yet if he goes against the laws of Nature, you know his labor is lost.

Here is an oven to be warmed for hungry persons need bread. See the workers yonder, how they toil, bringing snow with all their might to heat the oven. “Well,” you say, “do not discourage them. Do not discourage their earnest activity. It is a pity when you see people really determined to do anything, to discourage their efforts.” Ah, it is a pity, indeed, except when these efforts are foolish. If I see them bringing snow to heat an oven I know they will never do it, work as hard as they may.

And when sinners bring their own works to yield them spiritual comfort, I know that they are spending their labor for that which profits not and I must and will discourage them! Some years ago certain persons engaged in a speculation to sink a coal mine in a part of England where coal was never found. Prospectuses were issued. Directors obtained. And shareholders duped! And the workmen began to sink their shaft. Now it was absolutely certain—any geologist could have told them so—that they would not find coal, let them dig to doomsday.

Suppose you and I had gone there and seen them digging and had laughed at them, or told them it was all of no avail? Wiseacres might have replied, “You ought not to discourage coal mining, you ought not to discourage men who are working so very hard.” I would say, “I would not discourage coal mining in any place where there is coal to be had. But for these poor souls to throw away their sweat and their money for that which is not coal—I will discourage them in that insane enterprise and think I do them good service.”

When we see men struggling after eternal life through their own efforts, we know eternal life is not to be had there. We are glad that they are awakened to anything like effort, for anything is better than spiritual sloth—but we are grieved to see them laboring in the very fire, toiling where success can never crown their endeavors. There is no salvation by the works of the Law—why then look for it there? If you dash your head against the law of Nature, the law of Nature will not change for you. And if you labor in opposition to the irreversible Law of God, you will pay the penalty of it in your utter failure.

The ancients fabled that it was one of the tortures of Hell to which the daughters of Danaus were condemned, that they should fill a tub without a bottom with buckets full of holes. Behold the picture of the selfrighteous man’s undertaking! He may labor, he may toil, but he is filling a bottomless tub with leaky buckets. And work as he may, though he drop down dead in the attempt, success is impossible. O that he knew it to be so and would trust in the Lord Jesus! Besides this, the man cannot succeed in obtaining salvation by his own efforts because in what he is doing he is insulting God! He is casting dirt in the face of Christ! He is denying the whole testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Ah, my Hearer, if you could save yourself, why was it necessary that Christ should die for you? If your prayers could avail, why did He sweat great drops of blood? Why, Man, if there were any merit in your mortification, or your reformation, what need that the Prince of Life and Glory should veil Himself in ignominy and suffer a death of shame? You do, in fact, say by your fleshly attempts, I want no Savior, I can save myself! You do, in fact, scoff at the great Atonement which God has made in the Person of Christ!

This insult will ruin your soul, except you turn from it. Repent of it, I pray you. Humble yourself and receive Jesus’ finished work. If scorning the Jordan, Naaman had gone to Abana and Pharpar, he might have washed not only seven times but seventy times seven! He might have earnestly persevered in the constant immersion, but he would have remained a leper to his dying day. If you scorn the Atonement and neglect God’s great command to believe and live. If you go about to try and feel, or be, or do, you will use these Abanas and Pharpars to your own damnation! And to your own salvation never.

I pray you, do not insult God by looking for balm in Gilead, or for a physician there. There is no balm in Gilead, there never was any. There is no physician there, or else the daughter of my people would long ago have been healed. Men would long ago have saved themselves. You must look higher than the Gilead of human energy. You must look higher than earth’s physicians. You must look to the hills where comes our Help, the great mountains of a Savior’s work and merit!

There are many other reasons why it is impossible that a man can ever get comfort in the way of works and feelings. The principal one I will mention is because that is the way of the curse. He who is under the Law is under the curse. So long as I stick to the Law, do what I may, I am under the curse of the Law and consequently under the curse. And how can I expect in the way of the curse to find the eternal blessing? Oh, folly, to choose the way of the curse as the way of blessing! But the best proof of it all is experience. Ask either saint or sinner and you shall find that peace was never obtained in the way of the flesh. Turn to the Christian and he will tell you, “Therefore being justified BY FAITH, we have peace with God.”

He will tell you that when he turns away from faith and looks to himself his darkness begins at once. He will assure you that he never walks in perfect light and true comfort except when he keeps his eyes fast fixed upon the great Sacrifice of Calvary. I know, Brethren, whenever I am dull and drooping as to my eternal interests, it is always because I have thought more of my graces than of Christ’s Grace, or more of the Spirit’s work in me than of the finished work of Christ on my behalf. There is no living happily but by depending wholly upon Christ. A sinner resting upon his Savior as his only hope is blest.

Now, if this is the experience of all saints, and if no sinner living will dare to tell you that he can get his conscience quiet by his own works— why do any of you try? Heaven bears witness that salvation by faith is certain—Hell bears witness that works do but ruin us. O, hear the double testimony and lay hold upon eternal life through the Person of Christ Jesus! O my dear Friend, if you are really panting for salvation, go not round and round these dreary performances of your own doings! It must all end in misery, disappointment and despair. “They rowed hard to bring it to land. But they could not.”

All human work which does not begin and end in the Lord Jesus must be a failure. All your works have been failures with you up to the present and so it will be to the end of the chapter. Give it up and God help you to try His method, for it is sure and efficacious.

III. Now, with very great brevity, I will bring you to the third point of the sermon which is that THE SOUL’S SORROW WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE SO LONG AS IT RELIES UPON ITS OWN EFFORTS. What is the effect of all that the creature does before it believes in Christ? It may be overruled for good, but much of its effect is mischievous. The good effect which flows from it lies in this—the more a man strives to save himself, the more convinced will he become of his own impotence and powerlessness.

I thought that I could turn to God whenever I pleased till I tried to turn to Him. I thought repentance a very easy thing till I began to repent. I dreamed that faith in Christ must be mere child’s play till I had to groan, “Lord, help my unbelief!” As for the Law, when we attempt to keep it, we groan under a heavy burden which we have no strength to bear—

*“How long beneath the Law  
I lay in bondage and distress!  
I toiled, the precept to obey,  
But toiled without success.”*

Oh, it is hard serving the Law! He is a cruel taskmaster. The whip is always going and the flesh is always bleeding. It is hard service. Weary and faint, we fall down under it and feel it to be a load intolerable to be borne. Well is Haggi chosen as the type of the Law, for indeed it genders unto bondage.

And well was blazing Sinai chosen as its representative, for even Moses said, when standing upon that mountain, “I do exceedingly fear and quake.” To be clean divorced from all legal hope is a blessed preparation for Gospel marriage with Christ. It was well that rowing hard made the mariners feel their inability to cope with the tempest—and it is best of all when creature efforts produce a clear discovery of creature weakness.

Another good result will sometimes follow. The man passionately striving to save himself by keeping the Law finds out the spirituality of that Law, a spirituality which he never saw before. He has given up outward acts of sin, but all of a sudden he is startled to find that even though he has given them all up in open fact, he is still condemned for allowing the thoughts of them in his heart! Even a look may be fornication, though no act of sin shall follow it. He remembers that even the wish of his heart may be theft. And that covetousness is not only straining after another man’s goods, but envying him the enjoyment of them.

Now he finds the work is impossible, indeed, for he might sooner hold the winds in his fist than control his passions, or with his breath blow the sea into a calm sooner than he could restrain the impetuous propensities of his nature. O, Brethren, it is a good thing when we find that the Commandments of God are exceedingly broad—when we see the sharpness of this great axe of the Law and how it cuts at the very root of the tree and leaves us no green thing standing wherein we can boast!

So far so good. Fleshly effort, overruled by Divine Grace, has helped us to the discovery of the grandeur and dignity of the Divine Law. But I am afraid that much of this toil and labor is very mischievous because it makes unbelief take a firmer grip. It is easier to comfort a soul who has been a short time in darkness than it is to comfort one who has given way a long time to an unbelieving state of heart. I remember one, I believe she is in darkness now and if I remember right it is ten years ago since she first fell into these doubts and fears. I am sometimes afraid she will never see the Light because it has become chronic with her.

Giant Despair’s prisoners do not all escape. He has a yard full of bones, remember. These are the relics of willing prisoners who would not be comforted and put out their own eyes to avoid the Light. I believe that some sinners make excuses for themselves out of their despair and that they let their doubts and fears grow till they cast a thick shadow, like Jonah’s gourd. And then they sit down with a miserable sort of comfort beneath the leaves. “There is no hope, therefore will I go on in my sins. There is no hope for me, therefore let the worst come to me. I can but be damned. I will fold my arms and sit still.”

Oh, this is a damnable temptation! It is one which ruins multitudes I am sure! This is Satan’s man-trap! Beware of it! This is the devil’s stocks in the inner prison—he is to be pitied who is laid by the heels in them. While you are rowing hard to get your vessel to land and standing out against the gracious plan which God has ordained, you are letting the nightmare of unbelief grow into a dread reality! You are letting this deadly incubus rest more terribly upon your hearts. O, Sinner, I pray God deliver you from this work-mongering, this horrible trying to save yourself by something homegrown and home-spun. If we could cut off the head of your self-righteousness, we would have hope of you! If you would give up all attempts to deliver yourselves and leave the case in Christ’s hands, the thing would be done!

But while you are thus doubting and fearing, you are sinking deeper in the mire. And it is harder to get you out now than ever it was. Remember this one thing, that while the sinner is thus straining himself to get to Heaven by his own righteousness, his day of wrath is getting nearer. He is adding sin to sin. He is accumulating the fuel for his own burning, filling the sea of wrath in which he must be drowned forever. “What? When I am praying, groaning and crying to God and when I am trying to mend my ways and do my best, do you say I am only doing mischief?”

I do say it. I say these things are good in themselves, but if you are resting in them, you are so flying in the teeth of God’s great Gospel, so insulting the dignity of the great Savior that you are adding sin to sin! And among the firewood for your burning there shall be none so dry which shall burn so terribly as your own good wicked works, your own rebellious virtues, your own proud detestable righteousness which you set up in opposition to the merit, blood and righteousness of God’s appointed Mediator!

Gold is good enough, but if you bow down before the golden calf I will hate the gold because you worship it. Your morality is good enough, but if you trust to it I will hate your morality because it is your destruction. Sinner, I pray you remember that your life is being shortened all the while you tarry in the plains of self. Time flies and you fade like a leaf, while your righteousnesses, which are but filthy rags, are crying out against you! You are laboring without success. But more, you are losing time which might have been turned to better purpose. While you are spending your money for that which is not bread, you are getting nearer and nearer to the dread famine when there shall be no bread to buy.

While you are trying to get this fool’s oil with which to keep your lamps burning, the Bridegroom is coming and the midnight is hastening when you shall have to say, “Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.” There shall be no time, then, for you to buy for the darkness shall have come upon you and the door shall be shut and the Bridegroom’s supper shall have begun. O that I could have some power to induce you not to follow any longer these fine ways of yours, these proud deceptive plans! O that you would receive God’s plan of redemption and enjoy the peace which it brings!

IV. We will try to explain God’s plan and then we have done. That is our fourth point—THAT THE WAY OF SAFETY FOR SINNERS IS TO BE FOUND IN THE SACRIFICE OF ANOTHER ON THEIR BEHALF. Here is Jonah. Leave out the fact that he was sinful and he becomes an eminent type of Christ. “Take me up and cast me into the sea and the sea shall become calm under me.” Substitution saves the mariners—Substitution saves sinners. This is the essential oil of Gospel Truth. Jesus Christ says to His people, “I am cast into the sea. There in that depth I sleep for a while, like Jonah, to rise again on the third day. But My being cast into the sea makes a deep calm for you.” How very simple this process was. They take Jonah—he himself desires it—he is thrown overboard and the deeps swallow him up.

Ah, poor Jonah, what a fall! What a terrible descent! What a frightful end to his prophetical career! Down he goes. Did I not see huge jaws opening amid the billows? Was he not devoured by some terrible monster! Poor fellow, he must have our pity! But how strange it is! Why the wind has ceased—it has dropped dead! And the waves seem to be playing now where they were battling fiercely a moment ago! No, the sea is glassy! We need not the oars any longer! Up with the sails, we shall soon be safely in port!

An odd thing this, the drowning of one becomes the safety of all. Mariners, let us sacrifice to Jonah’s God. Ah, it is a strange and marvelous thing! It is that which sets angels singing and makes the redeemed spirits wonder on forever, that Jesus came down into this ship of our common humanity to deliver it from tempest. The vessel had been tossed about on all sides by the waves of Divine wrath. Men had been tugging and toiling at the oar. Year after year philosopher and teacher had been seeking to establish peace with God. Victims had been offered and rivers of blood had flowed and even the first-born of man’s body had been offered up.

But the deep was still tempestuous. Then Jesus came and they took Him and cast Him overboard. Out of the city they dragged Him. “Away with Him! Away with Him! It is not fit that He should live!” Out of all comfort they had cast Him long ago—now from society they cast Him, too. From pity they cast Him! From all sympathy they cast Him! And at last from life itself they hurled Him, while God stands there to help them to cast Him into a sea of woes. As He, Jesus, dies there is a calm. Deep was the peace which fell upon the earth that dreadful day. And joyous is that calm which yet shall come as the result of the casting out of that representative Man who suffered—the Just for the unjust to bring us to God!

Brethren, I wish I had better words with which I could fitly describe the peace which comes to a human heart when we learn to see Jesus cast into the sea of Divine wrath on our account. Conscience accuses no longer. Judgment now decides for the sinner instead of against him. Memory can look back upon past sins, with sorrow for the sin it is true, but yet with no dread of any penalty to come! It is a blessed thing for a man to know that he cannot be punished, that Heaven and earth may shake, but he cannot be punished for his sin!

If God is unjust I may be damned. But if God is just I never can be. That is how the saved sinner stands. Christ has paid the debt of His people to the last jot and tittle and received the Divine receipt. And unless God can be so unjust as to demand twice payment for one debt, no soul for whom Jesus died can ever be cast into Hell. It seems to be one of the very principles of our nature to believe that God is just. We feel it and that gives us our terror at first. But is it not marvelous that this very same first principle, the belief that God is just, becomes afterwards the pillar of our confidence and peace?

If God is just, I, a sinner, alone and without a substitute, must be punished. Christ stands in my place and is punished for me. And now, if God is just, I, a sinner, standing in Christ, can never be punished! God must change His Nature before one soul for whom Christ was a Substitute, can ever by any possibility suffer the lash of the Law. I must confess I do not understand the atonements which some preach. An atonement which does not atone—a redemption which does not redeem—a redemption which intends to redeem all men born of Adam and yet leaves the major part in slavery—an atonement which makes full atonement for all human sin and leaves men to be condemned afterwards—I cannot comprehend that!

But I do understand a Substitution—Christ taking the place of the Believer—Christ suffering the quid pro quo for the Believer’s punishment— Christ rendering an equivalent to Divine wrath for all that His people ought to have suffered as the result of sin. I right well and right joyously understand that the Believer, knowing that Christ suffered in his place, can shout with glorious triumph, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Not God, for He has justified! Not Christ, for He has died, “yes rather has risen again.” My hope is not because I am not a sinner, but because I AM a sinner for whom Christ died. My trust is not that I am holy, but that being unholy Christ died for me!

My rest is here, not in what I am or shall be, or feel, or know, but in what Christ is and must be! In what Christ did and is still doing as He stands before yonder Throne of Glory. O Beloved, it is a blessed thing to get right out of self. But many Believers seem to have one foot on self and one on Christ. They are like the angel with one foot on the sea and the other on the land—only being angels—they cannot stand on such a footing. Put both feet on the Rock, Beloved! Stand altogether on Christ!

Arminianism is one foot on Christ and the other foot on self. “Christ has saved me,” says the Arminian. There is His foot on the land. “But,” he says, “I must hold on. It depends upon me whether I persevere to the end.” There is his foot on the sea. If he does not look out, that foot will give way. But how blessed it is when the Christian can say, “I am saved.” There is no if, no but about it. There is nothing for me to do to complete my salvation. It is all done. There is not one jot or tittle left to complete the Covenant of my salvation. The Covenant of effectual Grace is all written out in the fair handwriting of my Savior with a pen dipped in His own blood, and it guarantees all spiritual blessings to me forever! The edifice has been built and there is not wanted a beam or a brick, or even a nail or a tin tack to complete it!

From its foundation to its top stone it is all of Grace and all perfect. My garment of salvation has been woven from the top throughout—there is not a rag of thread or stitch of mine wanted to complete it. “It is finished,” said the Savior, as He dipped it for the last time in the glorious carmine of His own blood and made a rich royal robe for His people to wear forever! O Brethren, if there were one stone to be put to the walls of our salvation—one single trowel full of mortar to make the stones set firmly—it would be all undone, all in ruin. But the whole of it has been completed! Stone and mortar, from basement to summit—all has been completed by Sovereign Grace!

And what shall you and I do? Since Jesus has been cast overboard for us, let us now rest in perfect quiet. Let us enjoy the peace “that passes all understanding, which shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” And then, having been saved in such a way as this, let us now go to work for God—not to win life, not to win Heaven—life and Heaven are ours already! But loved by Him let us now love Him with a perfect heart!

The man who has not attained to rest in Jesus is incapable of virtue. A man who does anything for his own salvation acts from a selfish motive, does everything for himself. He has no virtue in him. But the man who is saved, who knows there is nothing for him to do, either to put himself into salvation or to keep himself in it—knowing that all is now finished, having no need to do anything for self—he does everything for God and is holy in heart and life. Now he can sing with Toplady*—*

*“Loved of my God, for Him again,  
With love intense I’d burn.  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
I’d choose Him in return.”*

Let us show that this is the true root of virtue. Let us teach men who say this doctrine is licentious that it is the most heavenly soil in which the fruits of the Spirit can grow! Like a genial sunshine is this doctrine to our fruits to ripen them! Like a heavenly shower to bring them forth! God give you, Sinner, to rest in my Savior! God give you, Saint, to live to your Savior and He shall have the praise in both cases. Amen.

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÷Jon 2.4

JONAH’S RESOLVE—OR, “LOOK AGAIN!”  
NO. 1813

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Then I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.”  
Jonah 2:4.**

WHAT a complex creature is man! Those who fancy that they can fully describe him, do not understand him. He is a riddle and a contradiction. As says Ralph Erskine—

*“I’m in my own and others’ eyes*

*A labyrinth of mysteries.”*  
Here, for instance, is a confession from David. “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand” (Psa. 73:22, 23). Paul says, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 7:24, 25). He is strengthened with all might by the Spirit of God in the inner man and yet he is weakness itself! In the text before us, Jonah appears to be in a despairing condition—“I am cast out of Your sight,” but still he has hope, for he resolves, “Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Everything seems lost and yet, as long as a man can look to God, nothing is lost! God cannot see him, so he thinks, yet he talks about looking towards God— this is amazing, is it not? It is as if he said, “I am cast out of Your sight and yet You are the Object of my sight.”

I do not know of a more gloomy sentence that human lips can speak than this—“I am cast out of Your sight.” I do not know of a more hopeful resolution that the human heart can determine upon than this—“Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Oh, untried and inexperienced Brothers and Sisters, be not at all disconcerted when you cannot comprehend yourself! On the contrary, take it as one of the evidences that there is a Divine life within you when you become a mystery to yourself! If, like a schoolboy, you can draw your own likeness on a slate with a piece of pencil and can say, “This is all myself,” why, then you will be rubbed out and your image will be forgotten! But an immortal and divinely-inhabited spirit which is to survive sun, moon and stars is not so readily sketched. While you are brother to the worm and akin to corruption, you are, nevertheless, nearly related to Him that sits on the Eternal Throne! Vast regions of wonder-land lie between your condition, as the abject prey of Death, and your portion as an heir of God by Christ Jesus. Manhood is a great deep. I set it not side by side with the fathomless abyss of Godhead, but I know of nothing else which surpasses it.  
Our text, next, leads me to observe that faith in the child of God, whatever may be his circumstances, still comes to the front. Here is Jonah in such a wretched condition that he says, “I am cast out of Your sight.” And yet, despite this, he declares, “Yet I will look again toward your holy temple.” The huge Atlantic wave comes rolling on—it sweeps not only over the feet and breast of Faith, but it rises far above her head—and, for the moment, Faith seems to be drowned. Wait an instant and with her face ruddy from the wave and her locks streaming from the flood, Faith lifts up her head again and cries, “Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Write Faith’s motto—INVICTA—she always rides forth upon the white horse, conquering and to conquer! Faith is the child of the Omnipotent and shares in His Omnipotence! She is born of the Eternal and she possesses His immortality!

You may crush and grind her, but every fragment lives. You may cast her into the fire, but she cannot be burned, neither can the smell of fire pass upon her! You may hurl her into the great deeps but she is bound to rise again. Faith has eyes that were made to drink in the sunlight and, so long as God is a Sun, there will be eyes of faith to rejoice in Him! If we have faith, there is that in us which overcomes the world, baffles Satan, conquers sin, rules life and abolishes death. All things are possible to him that believes. Faith triumphs in every place, notwithstanding that her life is one of continued trial. Sense is broken like a potter’s vessel and reason is frail as a spider’s web, but Faith abides and grows—and reigns in the power of the Most High!

Please observe, for it may be for the comfort of some here present, that Jonah was in a position altogether unique and yet his faith stood him in good stead. You have read of Joseph in the dungeon, but his imprisonment was nothing compared with the entombment of Jonah in the belly of a fish! You have read of Job on a dunghill in utter misery—it is a sorry plight—but there are many Jobs in one Jonah if we reckon by present misery and distress! To lie as a living man in a living sculpture was horrible. Jonah, no doubt, suffered from those inconveniences which, apart from miracle, would have ended his life right speedily. A dark, stifling, pestilential cell would have been preferable to the stomach of a shark, or whatever great fish it may have been which had swallowed him. The amazing thing is that he was aware of his position and knew when the monster dived to the sea bottom, when it passed through a meadow of seaweed, when it neared some great mountain and when, again, it rose to the surface! This makes the miracle all the more striking, for one is apt to imagine that the man must have lain dormant, or at least, must, in a measure, have been unconscious while in such singular hiding. His position was such as never mortal man had known before or since.

Now, it sometimes happens that singularity gives a sting to sorrow. When a man believes that nobody has ever suffered as he is doing, he concludes his case to be well-near hopeless. Dear tried Friend, you cannot say this with any certainty, I am sure, for you have comrades with you in your every grief. But Jonah could say it with absolute truthfulness—he was where no man had been before and where no man has been since— and still to be alive. His trial was all his own. No stranger intermeddled in it. In his affliction, he had no predecessor and no successor. He was the first and the last that for three days and nights had dwelt in the belly of a fish! He was singular to the last degree and yet—here is the blessedness of it—his faith was equal to his position!

You cannot banish Faith, her home is everywhere! You have seen upon the Manx penny, the three legs which must always stand—turn the coin whichever way you please! Such is faith—throw it wherever you may, it always falls on its feet. If faith is in a little child, it gives the child wisdom beyond its years. If it is in a decrepit old man, it makes him strong out of feebleness. If it is faith in solitude, it blesses a man with the best of company. If it is faith in the midst of adversaries, it brings to a man the best of friends. Faith in weakness makes us strong! In poverty it makes us rich and in death makes us live! Get a firm confidence in God and you need not enquire what is going to happen—all must be well with you. Winding or straight, up hill or down dale, or through the fire or through the sea, if you believes, your road is the King’s highway!

If faith does not fail, nothing fails. Faith arms a man from head to foot with mail through which neither sword, nor spear, nor poisoned arrow can ever pierce. Though it is forged upon the anvil of the devil’s greatest subtlety, no weapon can prosper against you, O true Believer! You are as safe as He in whom you believes, for, “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” If I might, at this time, help any child of God who is in trouble, into a solid rest in God, I should be, indeed, delighted. Oh that the ever blessed Spirit would help me to that end! Carefully note, first, the verdict of sense—“I am cast out of Your sight.” And, secondly, the resolve of faith—“Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” These, remember, were both found in one man at one time.

I. First, here is THE VERDICT OF SENSE. Please notice that it comes first in the text. Sense hurriedly decides, “I am cast out of Your sight.” It is noteworthy that unbelief is always first to speak. Whenever David observes, “I said in my haste,” you will notice that something is to be confessed which was unwise and untrue. Unbelief cannot wait, it must have its say—it blabs out all its silly soul at its earliest opportunity! In your own case, if you can be calm and patient, you will speak to God’s Glory, but if you are hasty and petulant and must talk as soon as the trial comes upon you, it is almost an absolute certainty that you will say what you will be glad to unsay! Our hasty words are often dipped in wormwood and handed back to us that we may eat them! Hold still a while, my Brothers and Sisters, or, if you must speak, speak to your God and not against Him—speak to your God and not to yourself.

Soliloquies are frequently an increase of woe. The heart ferments and heats itself, creating an inward fever which parches the soul. If a vessel needs vent, it is not helped by being stirred within itself, yet such is the case when we say with David, “I pour out my soul in me.” Better is that word, “You people, pour out your heart before Him,” even before the living God! Brothers and Sisters, speak not to yourself, lest you seem to be a madman—you may vex your soul exceedingly by those lone maunderings—speak to your God! Even if you utter hasty words and words of unbelief, they are better uttered in His Presence than muttered within your own heart. He will hear them in either case, but when He perceives that in your spirit there is no guile, though much impatience, He will freely forgive you all your childish error of too hasty speech and help you to bear up under your woe. Speak, for silence slays! But speak to God, for He is full of compassion. Take the warning of the text, however, and be slow to murmur, remembering that the carnal nature is ever swift to speak and sure to speak amiss.

This verdict of sense , in the next place, was apparently very correct. “I said, I am cast out of Your sight.” Did it not seem so? Jonah had tried to get away from God and God had pursued him with a tempest and almost broken the ship to pieces in order to be at him. As the result of the tempest, Jonah had been hurled into the sea and in the sea a great fish had swallowed him and he had been carried down till the floods compassed him about. Did not all his surroundings confirm his suspicion that he was a castaway? Could he expect, ever again, that the Word of the Lord would come to Jonah, the son of Amittai? Could he hope, ever again, to stand with the joyful multitude that kept holy day in the courts of the Lord’s house, or to present his sacrifice of thanksgiving upon Jehovah’s altar? No, if he judged by his feelings, he was shut up to the conclusion which he expressed.

There remained nothing for him but bare life and that in such a condition that one could hardly desire to have it continued. He reckoned, with abundant show of reason, that he must be cast out of God’s sight. Yet it was not so and, therefore, I invite those of you who have begun to judge your God by what you feel and by what you see, to revise your judgment— and in the future to be very diffident as to your power to come to any just conclusion as to God’s dealings with you! Thank God, you will be wrong if you despair. It is much better for you to show your faith by relying on your God than to display your folly by saying, “I am cast out.”

As this verdict of sense seemed to be correct, Jonah must have felt that it was assuredly deserved. If the Lord had dealt with Jonah according to his sins, he would have been a castaway. He had hurried to Joppa and taken a passage in a ship to go to Tarshish, or anywhere else, to flee from the Presence of God. Now, what was a fitter punishment for him than that he should be cast out from the sight of God? Had not this been his inquiry at Joppa, “Where shall I go from Your Spirit?” Was not this his demand, “Where shall I flee from Your Presence?” Now he has his answer—he is carried down till the depth closed him round about! His waywardness had come home to him—he had been paid in his own coin and what could Jonah feel, but that he was filled with his own ways? Had he died in the sea, he could not have doubted the Lord’s justice. If he had been driven away as an outcast, it would have been righteous retribution to a runaway who refused his Master’s service. This must have made him doubly sorrowful! A guilty conscience is the most sour ingredient of all. When each wave howled in Jonah’s ear, “You deserve it,” he was in an evil plight, indeed.

One sharp part of Jonah’s misery was that God’s hand was so evidently in his misery. He sees it and trembles. Observe how he ascribes all to God—“You have cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about; all Your billows and Your waves passed over me.” We can bear a blow from an enemy, but a wound from our best friend is difficult! If the Lord, Himself, goes forth against us, the war is one to tremble at! If the messenger of grief is commissioned by Jehovah, Himself, and we know it—mere carnal reason concludes that all is finally over—and that henceforth all we can do is to sit down and die! Faith thinks not so, but this is after the manner of flesh and sense.

Observe that this verdict of sense, “I am cast out from God,” was very bitter to Jonah. You can see by the way in which he speaks that it is a heavy burden to him and yet it seems strange that it should be so. Here is a man who, when he was in a wrong state of heart, sought to flee from the Presence of the Lord and, therefore, went to the seacoast on purpose; rejoiced to find a ship bound for a distant and almost unknown land; paid the fare to sail therein of set purpose that he might get away from God— and now that he thinks he is away from God, he is filled with horror and dismay! By this we know the children of God—even at their worst estate.

Oh, you that are the people of God, you may sometimes, in your willfulness, wish that you could get away from the all-searching eyes of God, but if you could do so it would be Hell for you! If you are a child of God, you must dwell in the Presence of God. It is your life and you cannot be happy anywhere else. Oh, redeemed, regenerate man, it is impossible, now, for your once renewed spirit ever to be happy in the beggarly elements of your former condition! Except in the Divine atmosphere of heavenly love there is no rest for you. You are spoiled for this world, O heir of the world to come! There was a time when its dainties would have been sweet to your taste and your soul could have been filled with them, but that day is over, now—you must eat the Bread of Heaven or starve!

If you are not happy in your God, you are doomed to be happy nowhere. There is no choice left for you. Your very nature is so affected, now, that as the needle rests not unless it points to the pole, so can your heart never be quiet except in Jesus! The light of His Countenance must be light to you, or you must walk in darkness! Your music must come from Jesus’ lips, or else there is nothing for you but wailing and gnashing of teeth! Your Heaven must be in His embrace—there is no Heaven elsewhere for you! Nor would we wish to have it different. I am sure I can say from my very soul that if God would leave me, it would be to me a Hell worse than Dante or Milton could imagine! What if I still had to pursue my holy calling and to preach! What woe to preach without Him! What a hollow mockery! If I were bound to continue the outward form of prayer and of a moral life, what vanity of vanities would it all be without my Lord!

Without God? Brothers, Sisters, can you bear the thought? It is not the pang of Hell, nor its fires, nor its undying worm, nor anything else that can be pictured of amazing terror that causes such alarm as the bare thought of being severed from God! To be cast out from His sight were Hell, indeed! Now, I should think that if Jonah had been in a calm state of mind and had been able to consider things in the light of the Truth of God, it ought to have given him some ground of hope that he was not cast out from God, after all, because he was so unhappy at the idea of being so cast out. Will the Lord leave a soul that is distressed by such leaving? No spirit is wholly cast off from God if it longs after God. If you can be content without God, you are, indeed, a lost one! But if there is in you a wretched rankling discontent at the very thought of being severed from your God, then you are His and He is yours—and no eternal division shall come between you and Him!

Thus I have brought out somewhat the force of this verdict of sense—“I am cast out of Your sight.” But I want you, further, to notice that it was not true. There was ground for grief, but not for this despairing inference. The verdict was not sustained by sufficient evidence. It was a great deal more than Jonah should have said, “I am cast out of Your sight.” What? Alive in the sea, Jonah? Alive in the deep? Alive in the belly of a fish? And you say that you are cast out from God’s sight! Surely if God were anywhere in the world, it were in that great fish! Where else could there have been surer proof of His present power and Godhead than in keeping a man alive in a living morgue? There was a constant standing miracle for three days and nights! And where there is a miracle, there is God most visibly seen! If Jonah could have asked the seas and asked the deep places of the earth, they would have told him that the Lord was not far away. If he could have asked the fish, itself, it would have acknowledged that God was there!

If those who go down to the sea in ships, see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep, much more might he have seen them who went into the sea in a fish’s belly! There is a text that Jonah could never have heard, which I commend to you against the time when you get to be where Jonah was. I do not suppose you will ever be literally buried alive in a fish, but you may spiritually sink as deep as the Prophet did. What is that text? “Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37). Jonah said, “I am cast out”—but that was not true. Poor Jonah! The mariners cast him out, but God did not—he was cast out of the ship, but not out of the sight of God! The Lord of old was faithful and it was His rule never to cast away His people. Even as David says, “For the Lord will not cast off forever: but though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion, according to the multitude of His mercies.”

Mark the text I quoted from our Lord’s own lips—“Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” Never question this sacred Word of God! He will never, never cast out a single one that trusts Him! So that if ever you should be in a condition which seems, to you, quite as forlorn as that of this Prophet in the midst of the sea, you may yet be sure that you are not cast off, nor cast out. He who says he is cast out, says more than can possibly be true since the Infallible promise is, “Him that comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” It is not for us to forge a lie against the God of the whole earth! He does not speak that which is false, but out of His mouth proceeds Truth. Even if all things in earth and Hell should swear that the Lord has cast away one of His own believing people, it will be our duty to disbelieve them all, for it is impossible that He should cast out any Believer, for any reason or motive whatever!

II. Follow me, dear Friends, and may the Lord make it profitable to you while I dwell during the rest of my time upon THE RESOLVE OF FAITH. Oh that the Holy Spirit may work in us “like precious faith” with Jonah! “Yet,” Jonah says, “even if I am cast out, yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Jonah was a man of God when he was in his worst state of mind—at no time was the eternal life quite extinct within him. An ugly kind of saint this Jonah, when he was in the sulks! A proud, selfconscious, willful and morose being—hard to love! Yet, as an oyster may bear a precious pearl within its rough shell, so did the harsh Prophet contain, within his being, a priceless jewel of faith—faith eminent, prevalent, triumphant—faith of the highest degree!

This faith put him upon prayer . The chapter begins, “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly.” Jonah had not prayed when he went down to Joppa. He had taken the management of himself into his own hands and referred nothing to God as to that rash voyage. How could he pray in such a temper? He paid his fare to go to Tarshish—he did not pray God’s blessing on that expenditure, I am quite sure. When the sea began to work and was tempestuous, he was in the sides of the ship, but he did not pray. No, he went to sleep! His conscience had become stupid and seared as with a hot iron—there was no prayer in him—but there was a certain numbness of mind and lethargy of heart.

And now he gets into the fish’s belly, a very close, dead place, where one would think he would lie in a state of coma, or in a sort of fainting fit, if it were possible for him to live at all! Yet there he begins to pray. You will find God’s children praying where you thought they would despair and, on the other hand, you may discover that they do not pray where you thought they would abound in supplication. “Oh,” says one man, “if I could have my time all to myself and had not the worry of this family and this business, what a deal of time I would spend in prayer!” Would you? I would not guarantee your abundant devotion!

Some of those who have least time for prayer, pray most, and those who have most opportunity and everything congenial, are too often found to be most slack in their petitions. Jonah’s oratory was narrow and this pressed the prayer out of him. He did not pray in the sides of the ship, where he had room enough and to spare. He prayed where he could not get upon his knees, or hear his own voice. Laid out in his living coffin, he began his pleading. One would think it hard to make the belly of Hell, the gate of Heaven, but Jonah did. He prays and one of the surest evidences of a living faith is prayer. If you cannot do anything else, you can pray— and if you are a child of God, you will as surely pray as a man breathes or as a child cries—you cannot help it! Prayer is your vital breath, your native air. Whether on the land or in the sea, prayer is your life and you cannot exist without it if you are, indeed, born from on high. Answer, dear Hearer, is it not so? It is not the prayerbook, but the prayerfaith that we must have! Have you such faith?

I beg you to notice, however, that this faith of Jonah showed itself not in prayer to God in general, but the passage runs, “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord HIS God.” There is a mint of meaning here! If you go upstairs and pray to God, as everybody’s God, you have done what every Jack, Tom and Harry may do. But to go to your closet and cry to the Lord as your own God is what none but an heir of Grace can do. Oh to cry— “My Father and my Friend! My God in Covenant! My God to whom I have spoken years ago and from whom I have heard full many a time! You whom I love! You who loves me, Jehovah, my God!”

This laying hold upon God as our own God is a business which the outer-court worshipper knows nothing of. Have some of you got a God at all? “Oh,” you say, “I know there is a God.” Yes, I know there is a bank, too, but that does not make me rich! What is your God to me? I want to say, “my God,” or I cannot be happy! Have you a God to yourself, all to yourself, for if it is so, you will pray the prayer of faith when you draw near to Him—and this will prove that whatever your condition may be, you are not cast out from the sight of the Most High!

There is one thing about Jonah I want you particularly to notice, that as his faith made him pray and made him pray to the Lord, his God, his faith made him deal familiarly with holy Scripture. “What?” you ask—“how do you know that?” He had but a small Bible compared with ours, but he had laid much of it up in his memory. Evidently he loved the Book of Psalms, for his prayer is full of David’s expressions. Kindly look at Jonah’s prayer. I think I am right in saying that there are no less than seven extracts from the Psalms in that prayer and its preface. It was Jonah’s own prayer and no man compiled it for him, for he was far away from the haunts of men. Yet his heart led him to his former readings and his memory came to his aid with expressions most suitable and forcible, borrowed from a former much tried servant of the Lord.

A deep experience is bound to resort to Scripture for its expression. Human compositions suffice for surface work, but when all God’s waves and billows have gone over us, we quote a Psalm. When our soul faints within us, we are not to be revived by human songs, but we turn to the grave sweet melodies of Inspiration. When a true child of God is in trouble, it is wonderful how dear the Bible becomes to him—yes, the very words of it! I say the very words of it, for I care nothing about the scorn which attaches to a belief in, “Verbal Inspiration.” If the words are not Inspired, neither is the sense, since there can be no sense apart from the words. My soul knows what it is to hang her hope upon a single Word of God and to find her trust accepted! I would not even change the expression of our translation in many places—not that I am bound by a translation, for God’s original is that which we accept as Infallible, but yet there are translations which are evidently accurate, for the Lord’s own Spirit has made them unutterably dear to His saints.

There are circumstances connected with the very words of many a text and with God’s dealing with us through those words—and in such instances we cling even to the English text with all our might. I think you will find that tried saints are the most Biblical saints. In summer weather we delight in hymns, but in winter’s storms we fly to Psalms. Your frothy professors quote Dickens or George Eliot, but God’s afflicted quote David or Job! Those Psalms are marvelous! David seems to have lived for us all—he was not so much one man as all men in one. Somewhere or other, the great circle of his experience touches yours and mine—and the Holy Spirit, by David, has furnished us with the best expressions which we can utter before the Lord in prayer. Give me the faith which loves the Scriptures! Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God—and true faith always loves the Word from which it sprang—it feeds thereon and grows thereby!

In proportion as people begin to criticize the Scriptures and to doubt the authenticity of this and that—in that proportion they move out of the latitude of faith. The region of criticism is cold as the polar seas. Faith loves a warmer atmosphere. The faith of God’s elect clings to God and reverences His Word. By every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live—and upon such meat Jonah lived where others would have died.

I desire to come close up to my text, while I bid you note that faith dares come to God with a, “yet.” Jonah said, “Yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Faith in her worst circumstances trusts God. Clog her, load her, shut her up, yet she looks to God, alone! “O God, I trusted You once when I was but young and I felt my need of a Savior! I came to You, then, and, by Your Grace I looked to Jesus and found peace at once! But then I did not know the evil of sin as I know it now.” What then? Why, with this new knowledge, yet will I look to Jesus! I did not know, then, the depravity of my heart as I know it now, but yet with this fresh sense of guilt I will, by God’s Grace, look as at the first! I did not know, then, Your great and exceeding wrath against sin as I know it now, but yet, with this fuller discovery, I will look to You. I did not know the burden of life, then, as I know it now. I did not know the power of Satan over me, then, as I know it now—yet will I look again unto Your holy Temple!

With all these new weights and fresh encumbrances I do, today, by Your Grace, what I did many years ago—I throw myself on You, my Lord, and trust in Your matchless plan of salvation through the precious blood of Christ! It charmed me once, it charms me yet again. This is the perseverance and determination of Faith. She leaps over all walls and dashes through all hedges with her, “yet.” Come what may, she has looked to Christ and she means to do so whatever may arise to suggest some other course.

According to the Hebrew, the word should be rendered, “only,” instead of, “yet”—“only I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” Faith looks to God only. Faith comes alone to her God and seeks no company to keep her in countenance. When we were first saved, it was by faith, only, and we must still be saved in the same way. In Jonah’s case all props were knocked away—he had nothing to look to in the whale’s belly at the bottom of the sea. But then and there he trusted God and that was all. He could not think very clearly, nor confess before men. Neither could he be or do anything, for he was packed away in quarters too close for action. But he could look again towards the Temple of God and this, alone, he did!

He could give the faith-look when all looking with the eyes was far out of the question. How could he tell in which direction to look for the Temple when all around him rolled the dark sea? His look was inward and spiritual and he was content to do that, and only that. His state was looking, looking—only looking. Be it ours to believe, to believe and yet again to believe! Jonah looked, again, to the place where God revealed Himself and we look to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! He looked to the Mercy Seat sprinkled with the blood of Sacrifice, where the Lord was known to pardon and bless all suppliant sinners. And we, also, look to Jesus as the great Propitiation.

To this look we will add nothing as a ground of trust! Jesus only is our hope and we will only look to Him! We will add nothing to our look, our look to Christ! He alone is our stay and our comfort. It is a blessed thing to get clear of all secondary hopes and to live by faith alone. Mixtures will not do in the hour of trial. A single eye is what is needed—the least division in your trust is painful and dangerous. If you have lost some of your first light, look again! Look toward His holy Temple at once and the Light of God shall surely return to you!

Do you notice here that faith is driven to do according to her first acts— “Yet I will look again.” You know faith is described in other ways beside looking. It is taking, grasping, possessing, feeding, but faith, first of all, is looking, and so, whenever you fall into grievous trouble, it will be wise to resort to the beginning of your confidence and hold it fast to the end. If you cannot grasp, yet look! There are several grades of faith and when you cannot reach the higher grade, it will be wise to enter fully into the lower one. Remember, the lowest form of faith will save—and even the smallest measure of faith is effectual for salvation, though not for consolation. Look! Look to Jesus! “There is life in a look.” There is Heaven in a look. “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Look! If you cannot go forth to fight by faith, stand still and look by faith. If you cannot declare the glory of the Lord, yet look! If you cannot tell what God has done for you, yet keep on looking by faith to see what God will do for you! Do your first work and, as your first work was a simple look at the Crucified One, look again to Him!

With this I shall close, urging dear friends here present, even if they forget all the rest of my text, to remember those two words, “Look again.” If any of you are in trouble, I will bid you go home with only these two words ringing in your ears, “Look again!” If you did look once, but have fallen into new darkness, look again! I mean, this morning, and I would ask you to follow me in it—to look to my Lord Jesus Christ, again, as I did at the first. It is frequently a great benefit to overhaul the foundations and begin again at the beginnings. I looked to Christ 33 years ago, or more— and so did some of you. But the devil may say, “Your faith was fancy; your conversion was a delusion.” Be it so, O Satan! We will not dispute with you, but we will begin again from this moment!

It is such a mercy that faith does not need to grow old before it saves us—the faith born this moment saves the soul in its very birth! Is it so, that your faith is not more than five minutes old, my Brothers and Sisters? Have you only just begun to trust Christ? Well, your faith has saved you quite as effectually as the faith of a man who has believed in Christ for 50 years! We must believe anew each day—yesterday’s believing will not do for today. Let us now look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross and trust Him, this morning, as if we never trusted Him before. “I will look again toward Your holy Temple.” It will do each man good to look anew to that Cross which is the sole hope of his soul. There is nothing more sweetening to the spirit than to confess sin and accept mercy in the original style—and to go to Jesus anew just as we went at first. Let us do so at this moment!

A person proudly said, the other day, that he could no longer sing— *“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All.”*

He had got beyond that! Highty tighty, here’s a fine fellow! He has just risen from the dunghill and is come to be a grand gentleman all at once! Nothing will do for him but—

*“See the conquering hero comes,*

*Sound the trumpets; beat the drums.”*  
Alas, for the top-lofty hypocrite! Shame on the proud self-magnifier! If he did but know himself, he would confess his nothingness with a deeper emphasis than ever—and he would, like the publican, cry—“God be merciful to me, a sinner!” I believe that as a child of God grows in sanctification, he deepens in humility. And as he advances to perfection, he sinks in his own esteem. Oh that men would give over that bladder-blowing which seems to be so much admired in certain quarters! We have had much occasion to mourn over the lower life of some professors, but the higher life of others is not a bit better—it is false, proud, censorious, and unpractical!

Those who boast of perfection will have much to grieve over when once they come to their senses and stand in truth before the living God! No man talks of living without sin till he is taken in the net of self-deception! I have walked with God for many years and enjoyed the light of His countenance, but my experience is that I am, this day, obliged to take a far lower place before Him than ever I took before, while—

*“Less than nothing I can boast,*

*And vanity confess.”*  
Brothers and Sisters, whether you will do so or not, I flee to the Cross again! In the Rock of Ages I again hide myself! Who among us dares to come forth from that Divine shelter? “Jesus, lover of our soul, let us to Your bosom fly.” Let all of us sing as though it were for the first time—

*“Just as I am—without one plea  
But that Your blood was shed for me,  
And that You bid me come to You,  
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

Dear Friends, it is due to God, it is due to Christ, it is due to the Gospel that we should, every day, believe with the same simplicity of undivided trust. Keep on believing in Christ, “to whom coming as unto a living stone.” We are to live by faith! You may be quite sure that you are permitted to do this, for Christ is always a sinner’s Savior. If you cannot come to Him as saints, come to Him as sinners! If your unfitness for fellowship as a servant comes before your mind and breaks your heart, yet remember that you may always return as a prodigal son! If you cannot feed in green pastures as sheep of the fold, yet yield to the strong hand of Him who seeks the lost sheep. If you cannot come to Jesus as you should, yet come just as you are. If your garments are not clean as they should be, yet come and wash them white in the blood of the Lamb.

This ought to be done more readily by us every day, for it should be a growingly easy thing to believe our God as experience proves His faithfulness. When we are at our worst, let us trust with unshaken faith. Remember that then is the time when we can most glorify God by faith. To trust Christ when you have a shallow sense of sin, when your heart is glad and your face is bright, is but a slender trusting Him. But to believe that He can cleanse you when your heart is black as Hell—when you cannot see one good trait in all your character, when you see nothing but fault and imperfection about your entire life, when all your outward circumstances seem to speak of an angry God and all your inward feelings threaten you with doom from His right hand—this is to believe, indeed! Such faith the Lord deserves of you.

Oh, if you are only a little sinner, a little Savior and a little faith may serve your turn. If you have but little fear and a little burden, and little care, and little need—why then you cannot greatly prove or trust your Lord! But if you are up to your neck in sorrow, yes, if you are drowned in it as Jonah was, and are driven well-near to despair, then you have a great God and you should glorify Him by greatly trusting Him! If you are tempted to lay violent hands upon yourself, or to do some other rash and evil deed, do no such thing, but trust yourself with your God and this will give Him more Glory than seraphim and cherubim can do.

To believe in the promise of God, as you read it in His Word, is a grand thing. To believe it though you are sick and sorry—though ready to die— this is to glorify the Lord! Brothers and Sisters, if I live, I will believe the promise! If I die I will believe the promise! And when I rise again I will believe the promise! Let us resolve to believe though the world is in flames and the pillars thereof are removed. Let us believe though the sun is turned into darkness and the moon into blood! Let us believe though all the powers of the earth are marshaled in fight and Gog and Magog gather themselves together to battle. Let us believe though the trumpet sounds for judgment and the Great White Throne is set in the open Heaven!

Why should we doubt? The Covenant confirmed by promise and by oath—and ratified with the blood of Jesus—places every Believer under the broad shield of Divine Truth—so what cause can there be for fear? O my Hearer, do you believe in Christ? Do you trust your God? If you can stand to that, you are not only a saved man, but you already give glory to God. So may He help you to do. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jonah 1 and 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—90, 598, 533.  
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÷Jon 2.7

A PLAIN TALK UPON AN ENCOURAGING TOPIC  
NO. 3101

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 16, 1908.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple.” Jonah 2:7.**

THE experience of the saints is the treasure of the Church. Every child of God who has tried and proved the promises of God, when he bears his testimony to their truth, does, as it were, hang up his sword and spear on the Temple walls and thus the house of the Lord becomes “like the tower of David built for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.” “The footsteps of the flock” encourage others who are following their track to the pastures above. Every preceding generation of saints has lived and suffered to enrich us with its experience. One great reason why the experience of saints in olden time is of such use to us is this—they were men of like passions with ourselves. Had they been otherwise, we could not have been instructed by what they suffered. They endured the same trials and pleaded the same promises before the same God who changes not in any measure or degree, so that we may safely infer that what they gained by pleading may also be obtained by us when surrounded by the same circumstances. If men were different, or if the promises were changed, or if the Lord had varied, all ancient experience would be but an idle tale to us. But now, whenever we read in Scripture of what happened to a man of faith in the day of trial, we conclude that the same will happen to us— and when we find God helping and delivering His people, we know that He will even now show Himself strong on our behalf, since all the promises are yes and Amen in Christ Jesus unto the Glory of God by us. The Covenant has not changed—it abides firm as the eternal hills. The preacher, therefore, feels quite safe in directing you to the experience of Jonah and in inviting you to make its lessons a practical guide to yourselves.

We shall use the lesson of the text, first, for the child of God and, secondly, for the sinner awakened and aroused.  
I. OUR TEXT HAS AN EVIDENT BEARING UPON THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD, for such was Jonah. With all his mistakes, he was a man of God. And though he sought to flee from the service of his Master, yet his Master never cast him off—He brought back His petulant messenger to his work and honored him in it—and he sleeps among the faithful, waiting for a glorious reward.  
Think, then, of the saints’ condition. In Jonah’s case, as set forth before us, the child of God sees what a plight he may be brought into— his soul may faint in him.  
Jonah was certainly in a very terrible condition in the belly of the fish, but the position itself was probably not so dark as his own reflections, for conscience would say to him, “Alas, Jonah, you came here by your own fault, you had to flee from the Presence of God because in your pride and self-love you refused to go to Nineveh, that great city, and deliver your Master’s message.” It gives a sting to misery when a man feels that he, himself, is responsible for it. If it were unavoidable that I should suffer, then I could not repine. But if I have brought all this upon myself, by my own folly, then there is a double bitterness in the gall. Jonah would reflect that now he could not help himself in any way. It would answer no purpose to be self-willed now—he was in a place where petulance and obstinacy had no liberty. If he had tried to stretch out his arm, he could not. He was immured in a dungeon which imprisoned every sense as well as every limb and the bolts of his cell, his hand could not draw! He was cast into the deep in the midst of the seas, the waters compassed him about even to the soul, the weeds were wrapped about his head. His state was helpless and, apart from God, it was hopeless.  
Children of God may be brought into a similar condition and yet be dear to His unchanging heart. They may be poor and needy and have no helper. No voice may speak a word of sympathy to them and no arm may be stretched out to succor them. The best of men may be brought into the worst of positions. You must never judge of character by circumstances. Diamonds may be worried upon the wheel and common pebbles may bathe at ease in the brook. The most wicked are permitted to clamber to the high places of the earth while the most righteous pine at the rich man’s gate, with dogs for their companions. Choice flowers full often grow amid tangled briars. Who has not heard of the lily among thorns? Where dwell the pearls? Do not the dark depths of the ocean conceal them amid mire and wreak? Judge not by appearances, for heirs of the Light of God may walk in darkness and princes of the celestial line may sit upon dunghills. Men accepted of God may be brought very, very low, as Jonah was.  
Let me remark that the hearts of God’s servants may sometimes faint within them—yes, absolutely faint in them and that, first, through a renewed sense of sin. In this matter my tongue will not outrun my experience. Some of us have enjoyed for years a full assurance of our pardon and justification. We have walked in the Light as God is in the Light, and we have had fellowship with the Father and with the Son—and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, has cleansed us from all sin. We have often felt our hearts dance at the assurance that “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ.” We have stood at the foot of the Cross and seen the records of our sins nailed to the tree, as the token of their full discharge. Yet, at this time, we may be suffering an interval of anxious questioning and unbelief may be lowering over us! It is possible that our faith is staggered and, therefore, our old sins have risen up against us and are threatening our peace. At such times, conscience will remind us of our shortcomings, which we cannot deny, and Satan will howl over the top of these shortcomings, “How can you be a child of God? If you were born from above, how could you have acted as you have done?”  
Then, if for a moment we look away from the Cross. If we look within for marks of evidences, the horrible bog of our inward corruptions will be stirred and there will pour into the soul such dark memories and black forebodings that we shall cry, “I am utterly lost, my hope is hypocrisy! What can I do? What shall I do?” Let me assure you that under such exercises, it is no wonder if the soul of the Christian faints within him. Be it remembered, also, that soul-fainting is the worst form of fainting. Though Jonah in the whale’s belly could not use his eyes, he did not need them. And if he could not use his arms or his feet, he did not require to do so. It mattered not if they all failed him! But for his soul to faint—this was horror indeed! So is it with us. Our other faculties may go to sleep if they will, but when our faith swoons and our confidence staggers, things go very hard with us. Do not, however, my Brothers and Sisters, when in such a state, write yourself down as a hypocrite, for many of the most valiant soldiers of the Cross know by personal experience what this dark sensation means—  
*“What though Satan’s strong temptations Vex and tease you day by day?  
And your sinful inclinations  
Often fill you with dismay?  
You shall conquer,  
Through the Lamb’s redeeming blood!  
Though ten thousand ills beset you,  
From without and from within,  
Jesus says He’ll never forget you,  
But will save you from Hell and sin!  
He is faithful  
To perform His gracious word!  
Though distresses now attend you  
And you tread the thorny road,  
His right hand shall still defend you,  
Soon He’ll bring you home to God!  
Therefore praise Him,  
Praise the great Redeemer’s name!”*  
The same faintness will come over us, at times, through the prospect of prolonged pain or severe trial. You have not yet felt the cruel smart, but you are well aware that it must come and you shudder at the prospect. As it is true that “we feel a thousand deaths in fearing one,” so do we feel a thousand trials in the dread of one single affliction. The soldier is often braver in the midst of the battle than before the conflict begins. Waiting for the assault is trying work—even the crash of the onslaught is not so great a test of endurance. I confess that I feel an inward faintness in the prospect of bodily pain. It creates a swooning sickness of heart within me to consider it for a moment and, beloved Friend, it is no strange thing that is happening to you if your soul also faints because of difficulties or adversities that lie before you. May you have wisdom to do what Jonah did—to remember the Lord—for there and only there lies your great strength.  
Faintness will also come upon true Christians in connection with the pressure of actual sorrow. Hearts may bear up long, but they are very apt to yield if the pressure is continuous from month to month. A constant drip is felt even by a stone. A long day of drizzling rain is more wetting than a passing shower of heavy drops. A man cannot always be poor, or always be sick, or always be slandered, or always be friendless without sometimes being tempted to say, “My heart is faint and weary; when will the day break and the shadows flee away?” I say again, the very choicest of God’s elect may, through the long abiding of bitter sorrow and heavy distress, be ready to faint in the day of adversity.  
The same has happened to earnest Christians engaged in diligent service, when they have seen no present success. To go on tilling a thankless soil, to continue to cast bread upon the waters and to find no return has caused many a true heart to faint with inward bleeding. Yet this is full often the test of our fidelity. It is a noble thing to continue preaching, like Noah, throughout a lifetime, amid ridicule, reproach and unbelief—but it is not every man who can do so. The most of us need success to sustain our courage and we serve our Master with most spirit when we see immediate results. Faint hearts of that kind there may be among my fellow soldiers, ready to lay down the weapons of their warfare because they win no victory at this present. My Brothers, I pray you do not desert the field of battle but, like Jonah, remember the Lord and continue to abide by the royal standard!  
It may be that enquiries will be made as to why we should thus enlarge upon the different ways in which Christians faint. Our reply is, we have been thus particular in order to meet the temptation so common among young Christians, to fancy that they are singular in their trials. “Surely no one has felt as I feel,” says many a young Christian. “I don’t suppose another person ever hung down his head and his hands and became so utterly overcome as I am.” Do not listen to that suggestion, for it is devoid of truth! Faintness is very common in the Lord’s hosts—and some of His mightiest men have been the victims of it. Even David himself, that hero of Judah, in the day of battle waxed faint and had been slain if a warrior had not come to the rescue. Do not give way to faintness! Strive against it vehemently, but at the same time, should it overcome you, cast not away your confidence, nor write yourself down as rejected of God or one fatally fallen.  
And now, Brothers and Sisters, we will notice the saints’ resort. Jonah, when he was in sore trouble, tells us, “I remembered the Lord.” What is there for a faint heart to remember in the Lord? Is there not everything? There is, first, His Nature. Think of that. When I am faint with sorrow, let me remember that He is full of pity and full of compassion. He will not strike too heavily, nor will He forget to sustain. I will, therefore, look up to Him and say, “My Father, break me not in pieces. I am a poor weather-beaten boat which can scarcely escape the hungry waves. Send not Your rough wind against me, but give me a little calm that I may reach the desired haven.” By remembering that the Lord’s mercies are great, we shall be saved from a fainting heart.  
Then I will remember His power. If I am in such a strait that I cannot help myself, He can help me! I have needs and sharp pinches, but there are no such things with Him. There are no emergencies and times of severe pressure with God. With Him all things are possible! Therefore will I remember the Lord. If the difficulty is one which arises out of my ignorance, though I know not which way to take, I will remember His wisdom. I know that He will guide me. I will remember that He cannot make a mistake and, committing my way unto Him, my soul shall take courage. Beloved, all the Attributes of God sparkle with consolation to the eyes of faith. There is nothing in the Most High to discourage the man who can say, “My Father, my God, in You do I put my trust.” None who have trusted in Him have ever been confounded. Therefore if your soul sinks within you, remember the Nature, Character, and Attributes of God!  
When you have remembered His Nature, then remember His promises. What has He said concerning souls that faint? Think of these texts if you think of no other—“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” “Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be.” “My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” “Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” When we get upon this strain and begin to talk of the promises, we need hours in which to enlarge upon the exceeding great and precious words, but we mention only these—we let fall this handful for some poor Ruth to glean! When your soul is faint, catch at a promise, believe it and say unto the Lord, “Do as You have said,” and your spirit shall speedily revive.  
Remember, next, His Covenant. What a grand word that word, “Covenant,” is to the man who understands it! God has entered into Covenant with His Son, who represents us, His people. He has said, “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed.” Truly, we may say with good old David, “Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” When everything else gives way, cling in the power of the Holy Spirit to Covenant mercies and Covenant engagements, and your spirit shall be at peace—  
*“With David’s Lord, and ours,  
A Covenant once was made  
Whose bonds are firm and sure,  
Whose glories shall never fade!  
Signed by the Sacred Three in One,  
In mutual love before time begun—  
Firm as the lasting hills,*

*This Covenant shall endure,  
Whose potent shalls and wills  
Make every blessing sure!  
When ruin shakes all Nature’s frame,  
Its jots and tittles stand the same.”*  
Again, when we remember the Lord, we should remember what He has been to us in past times. When any of us fall to doubting and fearing, we are indeed blameworthy, for the Lord has never given us any occasion for doubting Him. He has helped us in sorer troubles than we are passing through at this time. We have tested His faithfulness, His power and His goodness at a heavier rate than now—and though greatly tried, they have never failed us yet! They have borne the strain of many years and show no signs of giving way. Why, then, are we distrustful? Many saints have proved the Lord’s faithfulness for fifty, sixty, or even 70 years—how can they be of doubtful mind after this? What? Has your God been true for 70 years and can you not trust Him a few more days? Has He brought you to 75 and can you not trust Him the few months more that you are to remain in the wilderness? Call to remembrance the days of old, the love of His heart and the might of His arm when He came to your rescue and took you out of the deep waters, and set your feet upon a rock, and established your goings! He is still the same God. Therefore, when your soul faints within you, remember the Lord and you will be comforted.  
Thus I have shown you the saint’s plight and the saint’s resort. Now observe the success of his prayer. Jonah was so comforted with the thoughts of God that he began to pray and his prayer was not drowned in the water, nor choked in the fish’s belly—neither was it held captive by the weeds that were about his head, but up it went like an electric flash, through waves, through clouds, beyond the stars, up to the Throne of God—and down came the answer like a return message! Nothing can destroy or detain a real prayer. Its flight to the Throne of God is swift and certain. God the Holy Spirit writes our prayers, God the Son presents our prayers and God the Father accepts our prayers—and with the whole Trinity to help us in it, what cannot prayer perform? I may be speaking to some who are under very severe trials—I feel persuaded that I am—let me beg them to take this promise to themselves as their own. And I pray God the Holy Spirit to lay it home to their hearts and make it theirs, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” God will not fail you though you fail yourself! Though you faint, He faints not, neither is weary. Lift up your cry and He will lift up His hand. Go to your knees, you are strongest there! Resort to your chamber and it shall be to you none other than the gate of Heaven. Tell your God your grief—heavy to you, it will be light enough to Him. Dilemmas will all be plain to His wisdom and difficulties will vanish before His strength! Oh, tell it not in Gath that Israel cannot trust in God! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon that trouble can dismay those who lean upon the eternal arm! With Jehovah in the van, O hosts of Israel, dare you fear? “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” What man’s heart shall quail, or what soul shall faint? “Lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees.” Say unto the feeble in heart, “Be strong. Fear not. God is with you. He will help you, and that right early.”  
II. Now we must change the subject altogether. Having addressed the people of God, we feel very anxious to speak to those concerning whom the Lord has designs of love, but who are not yet made manifest. THE SINNER, WHEN GOD COMES TO DEAL WITH HIM, IS BROUGHT INTO THE SAME PLIGHT AS JONAH. His soul faints in him. What does that show?  
It shows very much what we are glad to see. When a man’s soul faints within him, it is clear that his carelessness is gone. He used to take things very easily and as long as he could make merry from day to day, what cared he about Heaven or Hell? The preacher’s warnings were to him so much rant and his earnestness fanaticism! But now the man feels an arrow sticking in his own loins and he knows that there is a reality in sin—it is to him in very deed an evil and a bitter thing. Now the cup of gall is put to his own lips and he feels the poison in his own veins. His heart faints within him and he remains careless no longer—which is no small gain in the preacher’s estimation!  
His faintness also shows that he will be self-righteous no longer. Once he hoped he was as good as other people and perhaps a little better. And for all that he could see, he was every whit as excellent as the saints themselves. They might speak about their trusting in Jesus Christ, but he was working for himself and expected by his regular habits to win as good as place in the world to come as the best of Believers! Ah, but now God has dealt with him and let the daylight into his soul and he sees that his gold and silver are cankered, and that his fair linen is filthy and worm-eaten! He discovers that his righteousnesses are as filthy rags and that he must have something better than the works of the Law to trust in, or he must perish. So far so good. Things are hopeful when there is no more self-reliance left in the sinner. The worst of human nature is that though it cannot lift a finger for its own salvation, it thinks it can do it all—and though its only place is the place of death and it is a mercy when it comes to burial, yet that same human nature is so proud that it would, if it could, be its own redeemer! When God make man’s conscience a target for His fiery arrows, then straightway he feels that his life is no longer in him and that he can do nothing. And he cries out, “God be merciful to me.” Oh, that the two-edged sword of the Gospel would slay all our spiritual self-reliance and lay us in the dust at the feet of the Crucified Savior!  
Perhaps I speak to some who faint because, though they have given up all self-righteousness now, and relinquished all self-dependence, they yet have not laid hold upon Christ and His salvation. “I have been trying to believe,” says one, “but I cannot succeed.” Well do I remember the time when I labored to believe. It is a strange way of putting it, yet so it was. When I wished to believe, and longed to trust, I found I could not. It seemed to me that the way to Heaven by Christ’s righteousness was as difficult as the way to Heaven by my own, and that I could as soon get to Heaven by Sinai as by Calvary. I could do nothing—I could neither repent nor believe. I fainted with despair, feeling as if I must be lost despite the Gospel, and forever driven from Jehovah’s Presence, even though Christ had died. Ah, I am not sorry if you also have come to this condition! The way to the door of faith is through the gate of self-despair. Till you have seen your last hope destroyed, you will never look to Christ for all things, and yet you will never be saved until you do—for God has laid no help on you, He has laid help upon One that is mighty, even Jesus only, who is the sole Savior of sinners. Here, then, we have before us the sinner’s plight—and I will venture to call it, though it is a very wretched one, a very blessed one—and I heartily wish that every unconverted man were brought into such a condition that his soul fainted within him.  
Now hear the Gospel! Incline your ear to it and you shall live! The way of salvation to you is the way which Jonah took. When his soul fainted, he remembered the Lord. I beseech you, by the living God, to remember the Lord! And if you ask me what it is you should remember, I will tell you in a few words. Remember the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. Remember Him who suffered in the place of the guilty. Know assuredly that God has visited upon Him the transgressions of His people. Now, the sufferings of such an One as Jesus must have power to cleanse away sins. He is God and if He deigns to die, there must be such merit in His death that He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. You are bidden, at this moment, in God’s name, to trust your soul in those hands that were nailed to the Cross and rest your life with Him who poured out His soul unto death that you might live! In yourself you may well despair, but remembering His name, coupled with the names of Gethsemane and Golgotha— remembering all His pains, griefs and unutterable woes —remembering these by faith, there shall be salvation for you at this moment! Do I hear you sigh, “Oh, but I have nothing good within me”? Know, then, that all good is in Him for you—and go to Him for it. “But I am unworthy.” He is worthy—go to Him for worthiness. “But I do not feel as I should.” He felt as He should—go to Him for all that you should feel. If you bring a rusty farthing of your own, God will not have it—it would only insult the precious gold of Ophir which Jesus freely gives you—if He should allow your cankered counterfeits to be mixed therewith. Away with your filthy rags! Would you add them to the spotless garment which Christ has woven? The Apostle says our best works are dross and dung if we venture to put them side by side with the merits of our Redeemer! None but Jesus can save—remember Him and live!  
“But,” says one, “I have tried to remember the Lord. But I find that while I can trust Him to pardon my sins, yet I have such a hard heart and so many temptations, and I am so weak for all that is good, that I still despair.” Listen, then, yet again—remember the Lord. At this time remember the Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended on high, the Holy Spirit was given and He has never been recalled. The Holy Spirit is here in this assembly right now, and in the Holy Spirit is your hope against indwelling sin! You complain that you cannot pray, but the Spirit helps our infirmities. You mourn that you cannot believe, but faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. A tender heart, a penitential frame of mind, a right spirit—these are the works of the Holy Spirit in you! You can do nothing, but the Holy Spirit can work everything in you! Give yourself up to those dear hands that were pierced, and the power of the Holy Spirit shall come upon you! A new heart will He give you and a right spirit will He put within you. You shall learn His statutes and walk in His ways. Everything is provided for the Believer that He can possibly need. O young Man, anxious to be saved, the salvation of Jesus Christ precisely suits your case! O seeking Soul, whatever it is you crave to make you fit to dwell where God is forever, it is all to be had and to be had for the asking, for it is all provided in the Covenant of Grace! And if you will remember Jesus the Lord, and the Holy Spirit—the Indweller who renews the mind—you will be cheered and comforted!  
Yet let me not forget another Person of the sacred Majesty of Heaven— remember the Father as well as the Son and the Spirit! And let me help you to remember Him. You, trembling Sinner, must not think of God as severe or stern, for He is Love. Would you be glad to be saved? He will be still more glad to save you! Do you wish to return to your God tonight? Your God already meets you and bids you come! Would you be pardoned? The absolution is on His lips! Would you be cleansed? The Fountain of atoning blood was filled by His mercy and filled for all who believe in His Son! Come and welcome, come and welcome! The child is glad to be forgiven, but the Father is still more glad to forgive. Jehovah’s melting heart yearns to clasp His Ephraim to His breast. Seek Him at once, poor Souls, and you shall not find Him hard and cold, but waiting to be gracious, ready to forgive, a God delighting in mercy! If you can thus remember God, the Son, the Spirit and the Father, though your soul faints within you, you may be encouraged.  
And so I close by bidding you, if such is the case, to imitate Jonah’s example and send up a prayer to Heaven, for it will come up even to God’s holy Temple. Jonah had no prayer book and you need none. God the Holy Spirit can put more living prayer into half-a-dozen words of your own than you could get out of a ton weight of paper prayers! Jonah’s prayer was not notable for its words. The fish’s belly was not the place for picked phrases, nor for long-winded orations. We do not believe that he offered a long prayer, either, but it came right up from his heart and flew straight up to Heaven. It was shot by the strong bow of intense desire and agony of soul and, therefore, it speeded its way to the Throne of the Most High. If you would now pray, never mind your words—it is the soul of prayer that God accepts. If you would be saved, go to your chamber and rise not from your knees till the Lord has heard you. Yes, where you now are let your souls pour out themselves before God and faith in Jesus will give you immediate salvation!

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

Verse 1. Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish’s belly. What a strange place for prayer! Surely this is the only prayer that ever went up to God out of a fish’s belly! Jonah found himself alive—that was the surprising thing, that he was alive in the belly of a fish—and because he was alive, he began to pray. It is such a wonder that some people here should continue to live that they ought to begin to pray. If you live with death so near and in so great peril, and yet you do not pray, what is to become of you? This prayer of Jonah is very remarkable because it is not a prayer at all in the sense in which we usually apply the word to petition and supplication. If you read the prayer through, you will see that it is almost all thanksgiving—and the best prayer in all the world is a prayer that is full of thankfulness. We praise the Lord for what He has done for us, and thus we do, in effect, ask Him to perfect the work which He has begun. He has delivered us, so we bless His holy name and by implication we beseech Him to deliver us. Notice that it says here, “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God.” He was a runaway—he had tried to escape from the Presence of God—yet the Lord was still his God. God will not lose any of His people—even if, like Jonah, they are in the belly of a fish, Jehovah is still their God—“Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly.”

2. And said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the LORD, and He heard me. You see that this is not praying, it is telling the Lord what He had done for His disobedient servant. Jonah had prayed, and the Lord had heard him, yet he was still in the fish’s belly. Unbelief would have said, “You have lived so long, Jonah, but you cannot expect to live to get out of this dreary, damp, fetid prison.” Ah, but faith is out of prison even while she is in it! Faith begins to tell what God has done before the great work is actually accomplished! So Jonah said, “I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me.”

2. Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice. He was like a man in the unseen world among the dead. He felt that he was condemned and cast away, yet God had heard him, and now he sings about it in the belly of the fish. No other fish that ever lived had a live man inside him singing praises unto God!

3. For You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas. The word Jonah used implies that God had violently cast him away into the deep. “Cast me not off,” prayed David, but here is a man who says that God did cast him out like a thing flung overboard into the vast deep. “You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas.”

3. And the floods compassed me about. “They rolled all over me, beneath me, above me, around me. ‘The floods compassed me about.’”  
3. All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. Jonah had evidently read his Bible. At least he had read the 42nd Psalm, for he quotes it here. It is a blessed thing to have the Bible in your mind and heart so that wherever you may be, you do not need to turn to the Book because you have the Book inside you! Here is a man inside a fish with a Book inside of him—and it was the Book inside of him that brought him out from the fish again!  
4. Then I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple. What grand faith Job displayed when he said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” And here is another splendid manifestation of faith, “’I said, I am cast out of Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy Temple.’ If God does not look at me, I will still look towards the place where He dwells. As I am being flung away from Him, I will give one more look towards His holy Temple.”  
6. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. They seemed to get right into his spirit—his heart became waterlogged. “The waters compassed me about, even to the soul.”  
6. The depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. Like his winding-sheet—as if the cerements of the grave were wrapped about his mouth, ears and eyes—and he was consigned to a living tomb. This narrative is a graphic description of the natural motion of the great fish which had swallowed Jonah. When the fish found this strange being inside him, the first thing that he did was to plunge as deep as he could into the waters. You will see that Jonah did go down very deep, indeed. The next thing was for the fish to make for the weeds—as certain creatures eat weeds to cure them when they feel very ill, this fish went off to the weedy places to see if he could get a cure for this new complaint of a man inside him.  
6. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains. To the very roots and foundations of the mountains, where the big jagged rocks made huge buttresses for the hills above. “I went down to the bottom of the mountains.”  
6. The earth with her bars was about me forever. Down went the fish, as deep as he could go! And, of course, down went Jonah, too, and he might well imagine that he was in a vast prison from which there was no way of escape!  
6. Yet have You brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. And, dear Friend, God can bring you up, however low you may have gone! Though in your own feelings, you feel as if you had gone so low that you could not go any lower, God can, in answer to prayer, bring you up again. O despairing one, take heart and be comforted by this story of Jonah! God is dealing with you as He was with him. There may be a great fish, but there is a great God as well. There may be a deep seas, but there is an almighty God to bring you up out of it!  
7. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD. It is a blessed memory that serves us faithfully in a fainting fit. Mostly, when the heart faints, the memory fails, but Jonah remembered the Lord when his soul fainted within him.  
7. And my prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple. Think of Jonah’s prayer going right within the veil, and reaching the ear and heart of God in His holy Temple. He said that he was cast out of God’s sight, yet his prayer went into God’s Temple. Oh, the prevalence of a bold believing prayer! “My prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple.”  
8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. If you trust anywhere but in God, you will run away from your own mercy. God is the only really merciful One who can always help you. But if you trust in your own righteousness, if you trust in priestcraft, if you trust in any superstition, you are observing lying vanities and forsaking your own mercy! God is the source of your mercy—do not run away from Him to anyone or anything else.  
9. But I will sacrifice unto You. “I long to do so. I cannot do it just now, but I would if I could. And I will do it when You shall grant me deliverance from my present peril.”  
9. With the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD. That is one of the grandest utterances that any man ever made! “SALVATION!” Write it in capital letters. It is a very emphatic word in the Hebrew and I might read it, “Mighty salvation is of Jehovah.” This is real, old-fashioned Calvinistic Doctrine spoken centuries before John Calvin was born! The whale could not endure it and he turned Jonah out and directly Jonah said, “Salvation is of the Lord.” The world does not like that Doctrine and there are many professing Christians who do not like it. They say, “Salvation is of man’s free will! Salvation is of the works of the Law! Salvation is of rites and ceremonies” and so on. But we say, with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.” He works it from beginning to end and, therefore, He must have all the praise for it forever and ever!  
10. And the LORD spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. God has only to speak and even sea monsters obey Him! I know not how He spoke to the fish. I do not know how to talk to a fish, but God does. And as the Lord could speak to that fish, He can speak to any sinner here! However far you may have gone from all that is good, He who spoke to that great fish and made it disgorge the Prophet Jonah, can speak to you, and then you will give up your sins as the whale gave up Jonah! God grant that it may be so this very hour! That is the prayer of an ancient mariner—may it be ours, as far as it is suited to our circumstances—and may we be brought by God’s Grace to cry with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord”!

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THE FAINTING SOUL REVIVED  
NO. 3510

A SERMON  
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“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.” Jonah 2:7.

WHEN man was first made, there was no fear of his forgetting God for it was his highest privilege and delight to have communion with his Maker. “The Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day,” and Adam was privileged to hold fellowship with God, closer, perhaps, than even the angels had in Heaven. But the spell of that sacred harmony was rudely broken by man’s disobedience and his dreadful fall! Ever since our first parent tasted of the forbidden fruit, which brought death and all its train of woes into our world, his mortal race has been naturally prone to forget God. The evil propensities of flesh and blood have made it impossible to persuade man to remember his Creator! The complaint of God against the Jews is true as an indictment against the whole human family. “Hear, O Heaven, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; the ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Man is foolish—he flies from the highest good! Man is wicked—he turns his back upon supreme holiness! Man is worldly—he forgets the Kingdom of God and the world to come. Man is willful—he follows his own vain imaginations and, with head-strong rebellion, opposes himself to his God, that he may pursue his own wayward course and gratify his wanton passions!

To convince a man of his error, to arrest him in his evil pursuits, to reclaim him to the paths of righteousness—this is seldom accomplished without dire trouble and deep affliction. Some men, it is true, are brought to God by gentle means—they are drawn by soft but mighty bonds. Still, a much larger class of persons remains upon whom these silken cords would exert no influence. They must not be handled softly, but must be dealt with heavily. The picklock will never open their hearts—there must be the crowbar, or even the battering ram to give a furious cannonade. Some hearts can never be captured for God and for Truth except by storm. Sword in hand, God’s Law must scale the ramparts! With thundering report, God’s Word must dash down the walls of their confidence and make breach after breach in the bastions of their pride, but even then they will fight it out and never yield, until, driven to an awful extremity, they see that they must either yield at once, or else be lost forever!

It is with such persons that I now particularly want to deal. There are those who have forgotten God after having once known Him—and they are not likely to be brought back without great trouble. And there are others who never did know God and they never will enquire after Him unless they are driven to their wits’ end by calamity, as when a great famine in the land where he dwelt compelled the prodigal for very lack of bread to seek his father’s house. So I have first to remonstrate—

I. WITH THE BACKSLIDER.  
Let me, however, before I go into the matter with you, describe a little more minutely the individuals I wish to address. There is no need to call out your names—it will suffice if we portray your character and describe your conduct. There are some of you who used to be members of Christian Churches years ago, but you have gradually declined and so reckless has your career at length become, that it is a wonder that you have not utterly perished in your sin! You seemed to run well on the outset, and for a time you held on in the way, but where are you now? Well, you happen at this present time to be in God’s House and I trust that God’s own hour has come, when He will meet you and bring you back. What we have to say of Jonah, I do entreat you to apply to yourselves. If the cap seems to fit you, put it on and wear it, even though it should be a fool’s cap—wear it till you are ashamed of yourselves, and are led to confess your folly before the God who is able to remove it—and to make you wise unto salvation!  
Observe, dear Friends, that though Jonah remembered the Lord, it was not till he got into the whale’s belly, nor even then, till his soul fainted within him! He did not remember the Lord all the time he was going down to Joppa to find a ship, nor yet when he got on board that ship. His Master had said to him, “Jonah, go to Nineveh,” but Jonah was a strong-willed, head-strong fellow. Though a true servant of God and a Prophet, yet he fled from the Presence of the Lord. To Nineveh, he resolved within himself, he would not go! He could foresee no honor to himself out of the journey, no increase of his own reputation, no deference that would come to him among those proud Assyrians, so, in direct defiance of the Divine Command, he set off to Joppa, to take a ship and to flee from God’s Presence. Into the ship he got, paid the fare, and went sallying down the sea to go to Tarshish. And all this while he never thought of God.  
Not unlikely in this vast assembly there may be a woman who used to be a member of a Christian Church, but she married an ungodly man— after that there was no going to the House of God, much less anything like keeping up her church membership! The shop was kept open on Sunday, or there was a pleasure party to be entertained at home, or an excursion taken into the country. All this seemed very pleasant. The disquietude of conscience she might feel at first wore off as habit made it familiar, until, year after year, this woman, who once seemed to be a true servant of Christ, lives in carelessness and indifference, not to say profanity, with hardly any thoughts of God! Perhaps she has not quite given up prayer—she could not absolutely become an enemy of Christ, or entertain a dislike to His people—still, God was forgotten. So long as the business prospered, the husband was in good health and the world smiled, God was never thought of.  
Can I be mistaken in supposing that there is a man here who in his youth was a loud talker, a vehement professor of religion and a companion of those that fear the Lord? But after a time there seemed to be a way of getting money rather faster than the ordinary methods of honest labor or simple merchandise, so he entered into a speculation which soon ate out the vitals of his piety. His new projects involved new companions—in their fellowship he stifled his old convictions and, as he would not play the hypocrite, he ceased to make any profession at all! Perhaps months have passed since he has been in a place of worship. Even now he would rather be unrecognized, for he has only come here because a friend from the country asked his company to see the place and to hear the preacher. Ah, my dear Sir, it is strange, indeed, if you are a child of God, that you could have walked so contrary to God as you have. Yet so did Jonah. Do I, then, hold up his case before your eyes to comfort you? No, but let me hope that you will apply the bitter rebuke to your own soul and be led to do as Jonah did. All the while the ship sailed smoothly over the sea, Jonah forgot his God. You could not have distinguished him from the worst heathen on board! He was just as bad as they were. Yet was there a spark of fire among the embers, which God, in due time, fanned into a flame. Happy for you if this better part of his experience should tally with your own!  
Such, too, was Jonah’s blank forgetfulness, that he does not appear to have thought upon his God all the while the storm raged, the billows rolled and the ship was tossed with tempest. The poor heathen sailors were all on their knees crying for mercy, but Jonah was asleep in the vessel, till the superstitious captain, himself, was amazed at his apathy! “What do you mean, O sleeper! Do you not care that we all perish?” He went down and upbraided him, and asked him how it was that he could sleep while the passengers and crew were all crying! “Arise,” he said, “and call upon your God.” He was stirred up to his danger and his duty, even by a heathen! Now maybe there are some here who have had a host of troubles. Is your husband dead? Are you a lone woman with a family to provide for? Or are you a widower, looking on your children with pity, whom you once regarded with a homely pride? Possibly you may have another form of trial. Your business has gone bad—you expected to have realized large profits by it—but you encountered loss upon loss, till your little capital has been scattered. Still, all this while you have not thought about God. Perhaps child after child has been taken from you and yet you have not remembered God. Is it really so that the Lord loves you and, because He loves you, therefore chastens you? Mark my word, you will continue to suffer loss upon loss till you have lost all you have and all you count dear—and you will be brought to death’s door—but He will save you at last! If you ever were His, He never will let you sink into Hell! But, oh, it will be hard work for you to get to Heaven! You will be saved, but it will be so as by fire. You will be saved as by the skin of your teeth—barely saved—and the way in which you are saved will be a most terrible one to you. Oh, Friend, I wish you would turn while God is smiting you gently, for know of a certainty if rods will not do, He will come to scourges! And if the scourge will not do, He will take the knife—and if the knife will not do, He will take the sword—and you shall have to feel it, for, as sure as God is God, He will never lose His child! He will cut that child, as it were, into pieces, but He will save his soul! He will undermine your constitution by disease, and make you toss upon the bed of anguish, but He will bring you back! Oh, that you had Grace to come back by gentler means before these terrible actions are tried!  
So, then, Jonah did not think of God all this time. Now at length the vessel begins to creak, and seems as if she must go to pieces. Then they cast lots and the lot fell upon Jonah. He is about to be thrown into the sea. At that moment a pair of huge jaws open wide, shut again, and swallow him up. “Where am I now?” says Jonah, as he is taken down deep by the motions of this monstrous fish, till the weeds come into the fish and wrap about his head and his life is only preserved by a miracle. Then, oh, then Jonah thinks upon his God! “When my soul fainted within me.” Now why did his soul faint within him? Was it not because he thought, “Now I am in a hopeless case. I shall never come out of this. It is a wonder I am not drowned—it is a marvel I was not snapped in pieces by those huge jaws. What a hopeless case I am in! I will but linger a little while, then I must perish in this horrible prison of a whale’s belly.” I dare say he thought that never was man in such a plight before—never a person that was alive inside a fish! And how comfortless he must have felt with nothing but the cold deep around him. Instead of garments, weeds were wrapped about his head. How his heart throbbed, and his head ached, with no cheer, no light, no friendly voice, no succor, no help—far away from dry land, out on the boundless deep, without a comrade to sympathize with his strange plight!  
Now when a child of God goes astray, it is not at all unusual for God to bring him into just such a state as that, a condition in which he cannot help himself—forlorn and friendless—with no one who can relieve or minister to him. Meanwhile this dreary thought will always haunt his mind, “I brought it all upon myself!” Have you not procured this unto yourself? Like a woman who has left her husband’s house, deserted her home and betrayed her kind and tender protector, what fruit can she expect to reap of her wickedness? When she is ready to starve, when the wind blows through her tattered raiment, when her face is swollen with weeping and her soul is full of anguish, she has only herself to upbraid, as she cries, “I have brought this upon myself! Would God I had never left my cheerful homestead, however humble the lodgings might have been. Would God I had never deserted the husband who loved me and spread his protection over me, however roughly he sometimes spoke! Oh, that I had been more scrupulously obedient and less prone to discontent!” The afterthought of sin—I think they call it remorse. Thus it was that Jonah thought upon his God when the shame of his transgressions overwhelmed him!  
Oh, how merciful our God is to allow us to think about Him and turn to Him when in so pitiable a plight! “Yes,” said a tradesman once to a customer for whose favors he felt little cause to be grateful, “I know why you come to me—you have been to every other shop in the town for the article you require, and you could not obtain it—and now you come back to me whom you had no good cause ever to leave. I shall not serve you.” This is not how the Lord speaks to us. He does not resent our ingratitude. “My child, My poor child,” He says, “though you have gone and spent your substance. Though you have been feeding swine. Though you are all black and foul and filthy, yet you are still My dear child and My heart yearns towards you.” Without a word of rebuke, or even a taunting look, as soon as ever a poor sinner comes back to the Father’s house, the Father’s arms are round about his neck and the kiss of pardon is pressed on his cheek. “I remember you well,” He says, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities.”  
Now if there is a backslider here—and I know there are several—I can only hope that God will bring you into Jonah’s peril. You shall have no pity from me if He does! I will rather be thankful to God that He has brought you there, because I shall know, then, that He has some designs of love towards you! But when you get into the regions of despair, do as Jonah did—think upon your God! What? Do any of you object? Do you imagine that to think about God would make you worse? Well, think that you were once His child, and think again that He has found you out, and knows where you are! Jonah felt that God knew where he was, because He had sent the fish. God knows your whereabouts, my good woman! He knows what quarters you are now in, my fellow sinner! Remember, too, that you are yet alive! What a wonder it is that you are still permitted to hear the voice which says, “Return, return, oh backslider, return!” God is Immutable—He cannot change. His Covenant is steadfast—He will not alter it. If He has loved you once, He loves you now. If He bought you, He will have you! Come back to Him, then! He is still your Husband. Return! Return! He is still your Father—return! Return! But, oh, my Hearer, perhaps you have no pretensions to be a child of His! Perhaps you may have played the hypocrite and made a profession in your own strength. You turned back from the company of those who fear the Lord because you never were truly converted! If it is so, let the mercy which God shows to sinners embolden you to cry to Him! And may He break you to pieces now with the hammer of His Word. So may He save you and so shall His praise be exceedingly great in your salvation!  
Though I have tried thus to reach the backslider, it is likely enough that I have missed my mark, honest as my intention has been. Oh, it seems so dreadful that any of you should perish in

your sins who know the way of escape! Some of you were candled on the knees of piety. There are those now in Heaven who look down upon you and could they weep, you might feel their tears dropping on your brow! You know very well that time was when the hope of a better world yielded you some kind of comfort and joy. You do not think, at any rate, that you were feigning piety then, but you did account yourself a sinner! By the compassion of the Most High, by the love of God, I pray you stop! Do not drink the cup of devils after having drank the cup of the Lord, and give not that soul to damnation which once seemed to bid fair for salvation! Eternal life is too rich a prize to trifle with! May the Spirit of God do what I cannot! May He send home these things to the persons for whom they are intended!  
And now we have, in the second place, to deal with the careless, the thoughtless, the profligate, with—  
II. THOSE WHO NEVER WERE AWAKENED—moral or immoral in the world’s reckoning. Jonah did not remember God till his soul fainted within him. And the reckless sinner, as a rule, never does remember God till under the stress of law, or the distress of pain and penalty, his soul is ready to faint within him. Now I hope some of you will be brought to feel this faintness.  
What kind of faintness do persons who are under the sacred discipline of the Spirit of God generally feel?  
There is faintness of horror at their present condition. I can imagine a person lying down on the edge of a cliff and falling asleep. On suddenly waking up, having moved during his sleep, he finds himself within an inch of the precipice and looks down and sees, far beneath him, the jagged rocks and the boiling sea. How his nerves would quiver as he realized his position and his jeopardy! Many a sinner has thus opened his eyes to discern his terrible hazard. He has suddenly awakened to find that he is on the brink of eternal wrath, standing where an angry God is waving a dreadful sword and certain to plunge it into his heart before long! Every unconverted person here is balanced over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank, and that plank is rotten! He is hanging over the jaws of Hell by one rope—and the strands of that rope are snapping every moment! If a man does but apprehend this and feels it, I do not wonder that he faints.  
Faintness, moreover, arises from a dread of horrors yet to come. Who can conceive the heart-sinking of those poor passengers on board that vessel which so lately foundered in the open sea, at the prospect of being swallowed up alive, and sinking they knew not where! It would be no easy thing, one would think, to keep from fainting at a time when such a doom was imminent. So when God awakens the soul by the noise of the tempest, it looks out and sees the ocean of Divine Wrath about to engulf it. The cries of lost spirits appall it and it says to itself, “I shall soon mingle with those shrieks! My voice will aid the wailings of their dolorous company before long! I shall be driven from His Presence with a fiery sword at my heels before many hours are over.” Then the soul faints with alarm at the thought of judgment to come.  
Faint, too, is the soul of the sinner through a sense of weakness. “I cannot do anything to avert the catastrophe” seems to be the leading idea of a person when he has fainted. Over the awakened sinner there comes this sense of weakness. When a sinner does not know himself, he thinks that being saved is the easiest thing in the world. He supposes that to come to Christ to get peace is a matter that can be done just as readily as one snaps his fingers! But when God begins to deal with him, he says. “I would believe, but I cannot!” And he cries out, “Oh, God, I find that faith is as impossible to me as keeping Your Law! Help me!” Once he thought he could reform himself and become as holy as an angel, but now he can do nothing, and he cries out for very faintness, “Oh, God, what a poor, helpless, shiftless creature I am!”  
And then there will sometimes come over him faintness of such a kind as I must call horrible. Well do I remember when I was in that state! I thought I would give up prayer because it seemed of no use to pray, and yet I could not help praying! I must pray and yet I felt that I did not pray. I thought I would not go to hear the Gospel anymore—there was nothing in it for me—and yet there was a fascination about the preaching of the Gospel that made me go and hear it! I heard that Christ was very gracious to sinners, but I could not believe that He would be gracious to me. Little did it matter whether I heard a promise or a threat. I liked the threats best. Threats appeared to me to be just what I deserved and they provoked some kind of emotion in my breast. But when I heard a promise I shuddered with a gloomy feeling that it was of no use to me—I felt condemned already. The pains of Hell got hold upon me, so tortured was my soul with the forebodings of an endless doom!  
I heard, the other day, of a young minister becoming an infidel, and I prayed for him. What do you think was the burden of my petition? I prayed that God would make him feel the weight of His hand, for I cannot imagine that a man who has once felt the weight of God’s hand can ever afterwards doubt His Being, His Sovereignty, or His Power! Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, there is such a thing as an unutterable anguish a man could not long endure without becoming absolutely insane—and which God makes some people feel in order to crush their love of sin, to purge them of their self-righteousness—and bring them to a sense of their dependence on Him! Some men can never be brought in any other way. I may be addressing the patients I am describing. I sincerely hope I am. You are feeling God’s hand. The whole weight of it rests upon you— and under it you are crushed—as a moth is crushed beneath one’s finger. Now I have a message from God for you. When Jonah was in your case, he remembered his God. Tell me, what say you, poor heart—what say you to remembering your God?  
The case I am going to describe is not exactly that of John Newton, but it is from his experience that I gather my picture. There is a young man with a very good father, a holy father. As the young man grows up, he does not like his trade—he cannot bear it, so he says to his father, “While I succumb to your government, I mean to have my own way. Other people enjoy themselves and so will I. And as I cannot do it under your roof, I will follow my fancy elsewhere.” He goes to sea. When he is at sea, he discovers that all is not quite to his taste—the work he has to do is very different from what he had been accustomed to. Still, he doesn’t flinch. At the first port he reaches, he gives loose to his passions. “Ah,” says he, “this is a jolly life! This is far better than being at home with my father, and being kept tied to my mother’s apron strings all my days! I say a merry life is the thing to suit me, Sir!” He goes on board again, and wherever the vessel puts in, each port becomes an outlet for his vices. He is a rare boy to swear and drink, and when he comes back to England he has no words too bitter to utter against religion in general, and against his father’s scruples of conscience in particular! It so happens that one day there comes on a dreadful storm. He has to take a long spell at the pumps and when that is over, he must begin to pump again, for the ship is ready to founder and every man must keep hard at it hour after hour. There is a driving wind and a heavy tempest. At last they are told that nothing can save them—there are breakers ahead, and the vessel will be on shore! He lashes himself to the mast and floats about all night, and the next day, and the next, with faint hope of life. He has some twitches of conscience now—he cannot help thinking of his father and mother. However, he is not going to be broken down by a trifle. He has a hard heart and he will not give way yet. He is crashed on shore and finds himself among a barbarous people. He is taken care of by the barbarians— they give him food, albeit his meal is scant—and he is presently set to work as a slave. His master proves harsh to him and his master’s wife especially cruel. He gets but little to eat and he is often beaten. Still, he bears up, and hopes for better days. But, half-starved and hard worked, his bodily health and his mental energy are reduced to a low degree. No marvel that fever overtakes him. Who has he to nurse him? What friend to care for him? The people treat him as a dog and take no notice of him. He can neither stir nor move. In vain, he pines for a drop of water in the dead of the night. He feels that he must die of thirst. He lifts his voice, but there is nobody to hear him. To his piteous appeal there is no answer. Then it is he thinks, “Oh, God, if I might but get back to my father!” Then it is, when he is at the last extremity, that he thinks of home.  
Now what happened in the case of John Newton will happen, and has happened, in the case of many a sinner. He never would come back to God, but at last he felt that it was no use trying anywhere else. He was driven to utter desperation. In this dilemma his heart said, “Oh, that I might find the Lord.” Listen, now, I will tell you a tale. A lot of sailors were going to sea. When about to start, the owner said, “There! I have bought a lifeboat. Put it on board.” They reply, “No, never! We don’t believe in lifeboats! They are new-fangled things. We do not understand them and we shall never use one.” “Put it on board and let it abide there,” says the captain. “Well, Captain,” says the boatswain, “a tom fool of a boat—isn’t it? I cannot think what the owner meant by putting such a thing as this on board.” Old tars, as they walk along the deck say to themselves, “Ah, I never saw such a thing in all my life as that! Think of old Ben Bolt taking a lifeboat with him! Don’t believe in such gimcracks!” Presently a stiff breeze springs up, it comes to a gale—a hurricane—a perfect tornado! Now let down the lifeboat, Captain. “No, no, no! Nonsense!” Let down the lifeboat! No, the other boats got out, but they are stove in, one after another, and capsized. They bring out another—she cannot ride out the storm. There she goes, right up on the crest of the waves and she has gone over, bottom uppermost! It is all over with them! “What shall be do, Captain?” “Try the lifeboat, Boatswain.” Just so. When every spar is gone, when every other boat is washed overboard, and when the ship is going down, they will take to the lifeboat! So be it. The Lord wash all your boats overboard. May it please God to wreck your vessel! May He shiver every timber, and make you take to the lifeboat. I fear some of you will never take counsel till you reach the crisis! May there come, then, such a storm that you will be driven to take to Christ! That done there is no storm you need ever fear. That done, let the loudest tempest roar, you are safe! You have Christ in the vessel with you!  
Two or three more words, and I have done. God has been pleased to give His dear Son, His Only-Begotten Son, to die a most dreadful death, not for righteous ones, but for sinners! Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. If you are a sinner, you are the sort of person Christ came to save. If you are a lost one, you are the sort of man that Jesus Christ came to seek. Let your present sorrow comfort you because it is an indication that you are the kind of person that Christ will bless! Let your despair deliver you from despair, for when you despair there is hope for you. When you can do nothing, God will do everything! When you are empty of your own conceits, there is room for Christ to enter your heart. When you are stripped, Christ’s garments are provided for you. When you are hungry, the Bread that comes down from Heaven is provided for you. When you are thirsty, the Water of Life is yours. Let this broken-heartedness, this terror, this alarm, this faintness, this weakness of yours only lead you to say, “I am such as Christ invited to Himself. I will go to Him, and if I perish, I will perish only there.” And if you trust Jesus, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand. May you trust him here and now! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOHN 14:1-20.**

This is a Chapter which I suppose most of us know by heart, full of comfort, a very river of delight.  
Remember that our Lord spoke this to His own beloved ones—to the inner circle. It was not addressed to the general public. It is not a sermon to the world. It is a discourse to those who had lived with Him and were now sorrowing because He was about to leave them by a cruel death. Thus He begins—  
1. Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. “You have believed in God, whom you have never seen. Believe in Me when you cannot see Me. Believe that I still Am—that I still am working for your good. You have believed in God, though He has not manifested Himself to you in His Person as I have done. Now when I am no longer seen of you, believe in Me as you believe in the invisible God.” It is well for us to have the same faith in Christ that we have in the Everlasting God. This is the cure for our heart trouble. You are sure to be troubled in heart unless you have much faith in God. “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.”  
2. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. Our Lord was going away, but He was going away with a purpose, and a grand purpose, too—a purpose which had to do with the everlasting future of His beloved ones. “I go to prepare a place for you.”  
3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And He will come again, Beloved. That is our grandest hope! We are looking for His coming. It is very sweet to know that we shall be forever with the Lord if we die before His coming, but still, the hope of God’s people is the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead—His taking to Himself all His redeemed to be forever with Him!  
4. And where I go, you know, and the way you know. We know where Christ has gone. Every step we can follow. The way we know. It always reconciles us to a friend’s going away if we know where he has gone— know all about him. A mother tells me that she has missed her boy, now, for 12 months and never heard from him. That is sorrow, but when we know that our son has gone to the other side of the world, and we know why he has gone, and where he has gone, and what is coming of it, we are greatly comforted. So Jesus says, “Where I go, you know, and the way you know.”  
5. Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where You go; and how can we know the way? There is always somebody who has not learned the lesson. I am afraid that it is not one Thomas, but a great many Thomases who still have to say, “We know not.” Although Christ Himself is the Teacher, we are always poor learners.  
6. Jesus said unto Him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me. There is nothing good except by Christ. They who hate Christ very soon hate God. They get rid of the Christ of the Gospel and they soon get rid of God out of Creation, too, and there is no coming to the Father in any way or fashion except by Christ. He has gone to the Father, but He is also the way to the Father!  
7, 8. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father, also, and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him. Philip said unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. There is a Philip as well as a Thomas. It does not seem that even with Christ for a Teacher, we would learn much without the Holy Spirit. The greatest blessing, after all, is not the bodily Presence of the Savior, though we learn something from that, but it is the indwelling and the teaching of the Holy Spirit which we most of all need!

9-11. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, then, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works’ sake. The Eternal Union between Christ and the Father should never be forgotten by us. He seems to sink Himself, but the well-beloved Son will have it that His words are not His own, but come from the Father. I cannot help remarking how different this is from some who profess to be the ministers of Christ. They must be original! They must be great thinkers! Every man nowadays makes his own gospel, but the Savior was no original—the grandest of all intellects and yet He says, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very work’s sake.”

12. Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. While the Master was here in His humiliation, He healed a few poor Jews and raised here and there a dead one—but He purposely veiled the splendor of His Godhead. But now that He has gone up on high, He does greater wonders by His servants than He, Himself, personally did, for He said to a few poor fishermen, “Go and break up the Roman Empire,” and they did it! They preached the Gospel and the gods of the heathen that sat upon their thrones for ages were cast to the moles and the bats! And there are greater victories yet before the Church of God. You ought not to measure our passage by the past, but believe that “greater works than these shall you do, because I go unto My Father.”

13. And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. We do not believe enough in the power of prayer. I sometimes feel staggered when I meet with good people, undoubtedly good people, who still look upon it as a new thing that we should believe that God hears our prayers! But this is the fundamental of Christian experience! How can we live without the Mercy Seat? And if that Mercy Seat is nothing but a vain show, and prayer is only a pious but useless exercise, what is there in the Christian religion at all? We have heard some very wise people say that prayer is no doubt beneficial to those who offer it, but to suppose that it has any effect upon the mind of God is absurd. Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that they think us all idiots! They must do so, for do you suppose that any but an idiot would go on praying at all if he did not believe that it had some effect upon the mind of God and that it prevailed with God? I would as soon stand and whistle out of my bedroom window for half an hour, as I would kneel down and pray for half an hour if there were to be no result coming from it! And so would every sensible man! But we know of a surety that God hears prayer. We cannot imagine our Lord deceiving us—and He must have done so if it is not so, for He says—“Whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

14. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it. But there is a deal of praying that never reaches to the name of Christ. Even to pray for Christ’s sake does not reach to the point of praying in Christ’s name. If I go and transact business in the name of such a person, that is a different thing from merely asking to be allowed to do my own business for the sake of that person. But when you are authorized to use the name of Christ—as it were, to write His signature to your checks—oh, what power there is in prayer at that time! “If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” But you cannot ask everything in that name. You are obliged to draw back from some prayers, and say, “No, Christ would never authorize me to put His name to that.” You see there is a blessed check upon the universality of prayer—a most necessary and useful check—for we would not dare to ask some things in that wondrous name!

15-17. If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you. He dwelt with the Apostles, but was not in them until after Christ rose from the dead. But now you and I know His indwelling. He has made our bodies to be the Temples of the Holy Spirit!

18. I will not leave you comfortless. Orphans.  
18. I will come to you. He does this by His Spirit, but still, He means more than that. It is not a spiritual coming merely—it is a personal coming. “I will come to you.”  
19, 20. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me: because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. Wondrous unity!—Christ in the Father, we in Him, and Christ in us! Who understands this? He only who is taught of the Holy Spirit!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #131 New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Jon 2.9

SALVATION OF THE LORD  
NO. 131

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 10, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Salvation is of the Lord.”  
Jonah 2:9.**

JONAH learned this sentence of good theology in a strange college. He learned it in the whale’s belly, at the bottom of the mountains, with the weeds wrapped about his head, when he supposed that the earth with her bars was about him forever! Most of the grand Truths of God have to be learned by trouble. They must be burned into us with the hot iron of affliction, otherwise we shall not truly receive them. No man is competent to judge in matters of the Kingdom of God, until first he has been tried— since there are many things to be learned in the depths which we can never know in the heights. We discover many secrets in the caverns of the ocean, which, though we had soared to Heaven, we could never have known. He shall best meet the needs of God’s people as a preacher who has had those needs himself. He shall best comfort God’s Israel who has needed comfort. And he shall best preach salvation who has felt his own need of it. Jonah, when he was delivered from his great danger—by the command of God, the fish had obediently left its great deeps and delivered its cargo upon dry land—was then capable of judging. And this was the result of his experience under his trouble—“Salvation is of the Lord.”

By, salvation, here, we do not merely understand the special salvation which Jonah received from death, for according to Dr. Gill, there is something so special in the original, in the word, “salvation,” having one more letter than it usually has, when it only refers to some temporary deliverance, that we can only understand it, here, as relating to the great work of the salvation of the soul which endures forever. That “Salvation is of the Lord,” I shall, this morning, try to show as best I can. First, I shall endeavor to explain the Doctrine. Then I shall try to show you how God has guarded us from making any mistakes and has hedged us up to make us believe the Gospel. Then I shall dwell upon the influence of this Truth upon men. And I shall close up by showing you the counterpart of the Doctrine. Seeing every Truth has its obverse, so has this.

I. First, then, to begin by explanation, let us EXPOUND THIS DOCTRINE—the Doctrine that salvation is of the Lord, or of Jehovah. We are to understand by this, that the whole of the work whereby men are saved from their natural estate of sin and ruin and are translated into the Kingdom of God and made heirs of eternal happiness is of God and of Him only. “Salvation is of the Lord.”

To begin, then, at the beginning, the plan of salvation is entirely of God. No human intellect and no created intelligence assisted God in the planning of salvation. He contrived the way, even as He, Himself, carried it out. The plan of salvation was devised before the existence of angels. Before the daystar flung its rays across the darkness—when as yet the unnavigated ether had not been fanned by the wing of seraph and when the solemnity of silence had never been disturbed by the song of angel— God had devised a way whereby He might save man, whom, in His Sovereignty, He ordained would fall. He did not create angels to consult with them. No, of Himself He did it! We might truly ask the question, “With whom took He counsel? Who instructed Him when He planned the great architecture of the temple of mercy? With whom took He counsel when he dug the deeps of love, that out of them there might well up springs of salvation? Who aided Him?” No one! He did it alone. In fact, if angels had then been in existence, they could not have assisted God. I can well suppose that if a solemn conclave of those spirits had been held, if God had told them, “Men will rebel. I declare I will punish them. My justice, inflexible and severe, demands that I should do so. But yet I intend to have mercy.” If he had put the question to the celestial squadrons of mighty ones, “How can these things be? How can Justice have its demands fulfilled and how can Mercy reign?” the angels would have sat in silence until now—they could not have dictated a plan! It would have surpassed angelic intellect to have conceived the way whereby righteousness and peace should meet together and judgment and mercy should kiss each other. God devised it because without God it could not have been devised! It is a plan too splendid to have been the product of any mind except of that mind which afterwards carried it out. “Salvation” is older than Creation. It is “of the Lord.”

And as it was of the Lord in planning, so it was of the Lord in execution. No one has helped to provide salvation. God has done it all Himself. The banquet of mercy is served up by one Host—that host is He to whom the cattle on a thousand hills belong! But none have contributed any dainties to that royal banquet. He has done it all Himself. The royal bath of mercy, wherein black souls are washed, was filled from the veins of Jesus—not a drop was contributed by any other being. He died upon the Cross and as an Expiator, He died alone! No blood of martyrs mingles with that stream. No blood of noble confessors and of heroes of the cross entered into the river of Atonement. That is filled from the veins of Christ and from nowhere else! He has wholly done it. Atonement is the unaided work of Jesus. On yonder Cross I see the Man who “trod the winepress alone.” In yonder garden I see the solitary Conqueror who came to the fight single-handed, whose own arm brought salvation and whose Omnipotence sustained Him. “Salvation is of the Lord.” As to its provisions— Jehovah—Father, Son and Spirit—have provided everything!

So far we are all agreed, but now we shall have to separate a bit. “Salvation is of the Lord,” in the application of it. “No,” says the Arminian, “it is not! Salvation is of the Lord inasmuch as He does all for man that He can do. But there is something that man must do, which if he does not do, he will perish.” That is the Arminian way of salvation. Now last week I thought of this very theory of salvation when I stood by the side of that window of Carisbrooke Castle out of which King Charles, of unhappy and unrighteous memory, attempted to escape. I read in the guide book that everything was provided for his escape—his followers had means at the bottom of the wall to enable him to flee across the country and on the coast they had their boats lying ready to take him to another land! In fact, everything was ready for his escape. But here was the important circumstance—his friends had done all they could—he was to do the rest. But that doing the rest was just the point and brunt of the battle—it was to get out of the window—out of which he was not able to escape by any means, so that all his friends did for him went for nothing, as far as he was concerned!

So with the sinner. If God had provided every means of escape and only required him to get out of his dungeon, he would have remained there to all eternity! Why, is not the sinner, by nature, dead in sin? And if God requires him to make himself alive and then, afterwards He will do the rest for him, then verily, my Friends, we are not so much obliged to God as we had thought! For if He require so much as that of us and we can do it, we can do the rest without His assistance! The Romanists have an extraordinary miracle of their own about St. Dennis, of whom they tell the lying legend that after his head was off, he took it up in his hands and walked 2,000 miles with it! Whereupon said a wit, “So far as the 2,000 miles go, it is nothing at all! It is only the first step in which there is any difficulty.” So I believe, if that is taken, all the rest can be easily accomplished! And if God requires of the sinner—dead in sin—that he should take the first step, then He requires just that which renders salvation as impossible under the Gospel as ever it was under the Law, because man is as unable to believe as he is to obey—and is just as much without power to come to Christ as he is without power to go to Heaven without Christ! The power must be given to him of the Spirit. He lies dead in sin. The Spirit must quicken him. He is bound hand and foot and fettered by transgression. The Spirit must cut his bonds and then he will leap to liberty! God must come and dash the iron bars out of their sockets and then he can escape from the window and make good his escape afterwards! But unless the first thing is done for him, he must perish as surely under the Gospel as he would have done under the Law! I would cease to preach if I believed that God, in the matter of salvation, required anything whatever of man which He, Himself, had not also engaged to furnish! How many have I frequently hanging upon my lips of the worst of characters—men whose lives have become so horribly bad that the lips of morality would refuse to give a description of their character? When I enter my pulpit, am I to believe that these men are to do something before God’s Spirit will operate upon them? If so, I would go there with a faint heart, feeling that I never could induce them to do the first part! But now I come to my pulpit with a sure confidence—God the Holy Spirit will meet with these men this morning! They are as bad as they can be. He will put a new thought into their hearts! He will give them new wishes. He will give them new wills and those who hated Christ will desire to love Him! Those who once loved sin will, by God’s Divine Spirit, be made to hate it and here is my confidence—that what they cannot do, in that they are weak through the flesh—God, sending His Spirit into their hearts, will do for them and in them—and so they shall be saved!

“Well, then,” says one, “that will make people sit still and fold their arms.” Sir, it will not! But if men did so, I could not help it—my business—as I have often said in this place, is not to prove to you the reasonableness of any Truth, nor to defend any Truth from its consequences. All I do here—and I mean to keep to it—is just to assert the Truth because it is in the Bible! Then, if you do not like it, you must settle the quarrel with my Master—and if you think it unreasonable, you must quarrel with the Bible. Let others defend Scripture and prove it to be true. They can do their work better than I could—mine is just the mere work of proclaiming. I am the messenger. I speak my Master’s message. If you do not like the message, quarrel with the Bible, not with me! As long as I have Scripture on my side, I will dare and defy you to do anything against me! “Salvation is of the Lord.” The Lord has to apply it, to make the unwilling, willing, to make the ungodly, godly, and bring the vile rebel to the feet of Jesus or else salvation will never be accomplished! Leave that one thing undone and you have broken the link of the chain, the very link which was necessary to its integrity. Take away the fact that God begins the good work and that He sends us what the old divines call Preventing Grace—take that away and you have spoiled the whole of salvation—you have taken the keystone out of the arch and down it tumbles! Then there is nothing left.

And now on the next point we shall again disagree a little. “Salvation is of the Lord,” as to the sustaining of the work in any man’s heart. When a man is made a child of God, he does not have a stock of Grace given to him with which to go on forever. But he has Grace for that day. And he must have Grace for the next day and Grace for the next and Grace for the next, until days shall end, or else the beginning shall be of no avail. As a man does not make himself spiritually alive, so neither can he keep himself so. He can feed on spiritual food and so preserve his spiritual strength. He can walk in the Commandments of the Lord and so enjoy rest and peace, but still, the inner life is dependent upon the Spirit as much for its after existence as for its first begetting! I do verily believe that if it should ever be my lot to put my foot upon the golden threshold of Paradise and put this thumb upon the pearly latch, I would never cross the threshold unless I had Grace given me to take that last step whereby I might enter Heaven! No man of himself, even when converted, has any power except as that power is daily, constantly and perpetually infused into him by the Spirit! But Christians often set up for independent gentlemen. They get a little stock of Grace in hand and they say, “My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved.” But ah, it is not long before the manna begins to be putrid. It was only meant to be the manna for the day and we have kept it for the morrow and, therefore, it fails us! We must have fresh Grace—

*“For day by day the manna fell,*

*Oh to learn that lesson well.”*  
So look day by day for fresh Grace! Frequently, too, the Christian wants to have Grace enough for a month vouchsafed to him in one moment. “Oh,” he says, “what a host of troubles I have coming—how shall I meet them all? Oh, that I had enough Grace to bear me through them all!” My dear Friends, you will have Grace enough for your troubles, as they come, one by one! “As your days, so shall your strength be.” But your strength shall never be as your months, or as your weeks. You shall have your strength as you have your bread. “Give us this day our daily bread.” Give us this day our daily Grace. But why is it you will get to troubling yourself about the things of tomorrow? The common people say, “Cross a bridge when you come to it.” That is good advice! Do the same. When a trouble comes, attack it and down with it and master it! But do not begin, now, to forestall your woes. “Ah, but I have so many” says one. Therefore I say do not look further before you than your needs. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Do as the brave Grecian did, who, when he defended his country from Persia, did not go into the plains to fight, but stood in the narrow pass of Thermopylae. There, when the myriads came to him, they had to come one by one and he felled them to the earth. Had he ventured into the plain, he would have soon been devoured and his handful would have been melted like a drop of dew in the sea. Stand in the narrow pass of today and fight your troubles, one by one. Do not rush into the plains of tomorrow, for there you will be routed and killed. As the evil is sufficient so will the Grace be! “Salvation is of the Lord.”

But lastly, upon this point. The ultimate perfection of salvation is of the Lord. Soon, soon, the saints of earth shall be saints in light. Their hairs of snowy age shall be crowned with perpetual joy and everlasting youth. Their eyes, suffused with tears, shall be made bright as stars, never again to be clouded by sorrow. Their hearts that now tremble are to be made joyous and fast and set forever like pillars in the Temple of God! Their follies, their burdens, their griefs, their woes, are soon to be over! Sin is to be slain, corruption is to be removed and a Heaven of spotless purity and of unmingled peace is to be theirs forever! But it must still be by Grace. As was the foundation, such must the top stone be. That which laid on earth the first beginning, must lay in Heaven the topmost stone. As they were redeemed from their filthy conversation by Grace, so they must be redeemed from death and the grave by Grace, too, and they must enter Heaven singing—

*“Salvation of the Lord alone,  
Grace is a shoreless sea!”*

There may be Arminians here but they will not be Arminians there! They may here say, “It is of the will of the flesh,” but in Heaven they shall not think so! Here they may ascribe some little to the creature, but there they shall cast their crowns at the Redeemer’s feet and acknowledge that He did it all! Here they may sometimes look a little at themselves and boast somewhat of their own strength, but there, “Not unto us, not unto us,” shall be sung with deeper sincerity and with more profound emphasis than they have ever sung it here below! In Heaven, when Grace shall have done its work, this Truth of God shall stand out in blazing letters of gold, “Salvation is of the Lord.”

II. Thus I have tried to expound the Gospel. Now I shall show you HOW GOD HAS HEDGED THIS DOCTRINE ABOUT.  
Some have said salvation, in some cases, is the result of natural temperament. Well, Sir, God has effectually answered your argument. You say that some people are saved because they are naturally religious and inclined to be good? Unfortunately I have never met with any of that class of persons yet. But I will suppose for a moment that there are such people. God has unanswerably met your objection, for, strange to say, the great number of those who are saved are just the most unlikely people in the world to have been saved, while a great number of those who perish were once just the very people whom, if natural disposition had anything to do with it, we would have expected to see in Heaven! Why, there is one here who in his youth was a child of many follies. Often did his mother weep over him and cry and groan over her son’s wanderings, for with a fierce high spirit that could brook neither bit nor bridle, with perpetual rebellions and ebullitions of hot anger, she said, “My son my son, what will you be in your riper years? Surely you will dash in pieces law and order and be a disgrace to your father’s name!” He grew up. In youth he was wild and wanton but, wonder of wonders, all of a sudden he became a new man, changed, altogether changed, no more like what he was, before, than angels are like lost spirits! He sat at her feet, he cheered her heart and the lost, fiery one became gentle, mild, as humble as a little child and obedient to God’s Commandments. You say, wonder of wonders!  
But there is another here. He was a fair youth—when but a child he talked of Jesus. Often when his mother had him on her knee, he asked her questions about Heaven. He was a prodigy, a wonder of piety in his youth! As he grew up, the tears rolled down his cheek under any sermon, he could scarcely bear to hear of death without a sigh. Sometimes his mother caught him, as she thought, alone in prayer. And what is he now? He has just this very morning come from sin! He has become the debauched, desperate villain! He has gone far into all manner of wickedness and lust and sin and has become more damnably corrupt than other men could have made him! His evil spirit, once confined, has now developed itself—he has learned to play the lion in his manhood, as once he played the fox in his youth. I do not know whether you have ever met with such a case. But it very frequently is so. I know I can say that in my congregation some abandoned, wicked fellows have had their hearts broken and been led to weep and have cried to God for mercy. By His Grace they have renounced their vile sins, while some fair maiden has heard the same sermon and if there was a tear she brushed it away. She still continues just what she was, “without God and without hope in the world.” God has taken the base things of the world and has picked His people out of the very roughest of men in order that He may prove that it is not natural disposition, but that “Salvation is of the Lord,” alone!  
“Well,” but some say, “it is the minister they hear who converts men.” Ah, that is a grand idea, full sure! No man but a fool would entertain it! I met with a man sometime ago who assured me that he knew a minister who had a very large amount of converting power in him. Speaking of a great Evangelist in America, he said, “That man, Sir, has got the greatest quantity of converting power I ever knew a man to have. And Mr. So-andSo in a neighboring town, I think is second to him.” At that time this converting power was being exhibited—two hundred persons were converted by the converting power of this second best—and joined to the Church in a few months. I went to the place some time afterwards—it was in England—and I said, “How do your converts get on?” “Well,” he said, “I cannot say much about them.” “How many out of those 200 whom you received in a year ago stand fast?” “Well,” he said, “I am afraid not many of them. We have turned 70 of them out for drunkenness already.” “Yes,” I said, “I thought so—that is the end of the grand experiment of converting power!” If I could convert you all, anyone else might unconvert you! What any man can do, another man can undo. It is only what God does that is abiding!  
No, my Brothers and Sisters—God has taken good care it shall never be said conversion is of man—for usually He blesses those who seem to be the most unlikely to be useful! I do not expect to see as many conversions in this place as I had a year ago when I had far fewer hearers. Do you ask why? Why, a year ago I was abused by everybody. To mention my name was to mention the name of the most abominable buffoon that lived! The mere utterance of it brought forth oaths and cursing. With many men, it was a name of contempt, kicked about the street as a football. But then God gave me souls by hundreds who were added to my Church and in one year it was my happiness to see not less than a thousand personally who had then been converted! I do not expect that now. My name is somewhat esteemed now and the great ones of the earth think it no dishonor to sit at my feet. But this makes me fear lest my God should forsake me, now that the world esteems me. I would rather be despised and slandered than anything else! The assembly that you think so grand and fine, I would readily part with, if by such a loss I could gain a greater blessing. “God has chosen the base things of the world.” And therefore I reckon that the more esteemed I may be, the worse is my position—so much the less expectation shall I have that God will bless me. He has put His “treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man.” A poor minister began to preach, once, and all the world spoke ill of him but God blessed him. By-and-by they turned round and petted him. He was the man—a wonder! God left him! It has often been the same. It is for us to remember, in all times of popularity, that, “Crucify Him, crucify Him” follows fast upon the heels of “Hosanna.” The crowd today, if dealt faithfully with, may turn into the handful of tomorrow, for men love not plain speaking. We should learn to be despised, learn to be contemned, learn to be slandered—and then we shall learn to be made useful by God! Down on my knees have I often fallen, with the hot sweat rising from my brow, under some fresh slander poured upon me. In an agony of grief my heart has been well-near broken till at last I learned the art of bearing all and caring for none! And now my grief runs in another line. It is just the opposite. I fear lest God should forsake me, to prove that He is the Author of salvation—that it is not in the preacher, that it is not in the crowd, that it is not in the attention I can attract, but in God and in God, alone!  
And this thing I hope I can say from my heart—if to be made as the mire of the streets, again. If to be the laughing stock of fools and the song of the drunkard once more will make me more serviceable to my Master and more useful to His cause—I will prefer it to all this multitude, or to all the applause that man could give! Pray for me, dear Friends, pray for me, that God would still make me the means of the salvation of souls. For I fear He may say, “I will not help that man, lest the world should say he has done it,” for, “salvation is of the Lord,” and so it must be, even to the world’s end.  
III. And now WHAT IS—WHAT SHOULD BE THE INFLUENCE OF THIS DOCTRINE UPON MEN?  
Why, first, with sinners, this Doctrine is a great battering-ram against their pride! I will give you a figure. The sinner in his natural estate reminds me of a man who has a strong and well-near impenetrable castle into which he has fled. There is the outer moat. There is a second moat. There are the high walls and then, afterwards, there is the dungeon, into which the sinner will retire. Now, the first moat that goes round the sinner’s trusting place is his good works. “Ah,” he says, “I am as good as my neighbor! Twenty shillings in the pound, down, ready money, I have always paid. I am no sinner. I tithe mint and cumin. A good respectable gentlemen I am, indeed!” Well, when God comes to work with him, to save him, He sends His army across the first moat. And as they go through it, they cry, “Salvation is of the Lord.” And the moat is dried up, for if it is of the Lord, how can it be of good works? But when that is done, he has a second entrenchment—ceremonies. “Well,” he says, “I will not trust in my good works, but I have been baptized, I have been confirmed—do not I take the sacrament—that shall be my trust! ” “Over the moat! Over the moat!” And the soldiers go over again, shouting, “Salvation is of the Lord.” The second moat is dried up, it is all over with that.  
Now they come to the first strong wall. The sinner, looking over it, says, “I can repent, I can believe whenever I like. I will save myself by repenting and believing.” Up come the soldiers of God, His great army of conviction, and they batter this wall to the ground, crying, ‘Salvation is of the Lord.’ Your faith and your repentance must all be given up, or else you will neither believe nor repent of sin.” And now the castle is taken! The man’s hopes are all cut off. He feels that it is not of self. The castle of self is overcome and the great banner upon which is written, “Salvation is of the Lord,” is displayed upon the battlements. But is the battle over? Oh no, the sinner has retired to the dungeon, in the center of the castle. And now he changes his tactics. “I cannot save myself,” he says, “therefore I will despair. There is no salvation for me.” Now this second castle is as hard to take as the first, for the sinner sits down and says, “I can’t be saved, I must perish.” But God commands the soldiers to take this castle, too, shouting, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Though it is not of man, it is of God. “He is able to save, even to the uttermost,” though you cannot save yourself. This sword, you see, cuts two ways. It cuts pride down and then it cleaves the skull of despair. If any man says he can save himself, it halves his pride at once! And if another man says he cannot be saved, it dashes his despair to the earth, for it affirms that he can be saved, seeing, “Salvation is of the Lord.” That is the effect this Doctrine has upon the sinner—may it have that effect on you!  
But what influence has it upon the saint? Why, it is the keystone of all dignity. I will defy you to be heterodox if you believe this Truth of God! You must be sound in the faith if you have learned to spell this sentence—“Salvation is of the Lord.” And if you feel it in your soul, you will not be proud. You cannot be! You will cast everything at His feet, confessing that you have done nothing save what He has helped you to do and, therefore, the Glory must be where the salvation is. If you believe this, you will not be distrustful. You will say, “My salvation does not depend on my faith, but on the Lord. My keeping does not depend on myself, but on God who keeps me. My being brought to Heaven rests not now in my own hands, but in the hands of God! You will, when doubts and fears prevail, fold your arms, look upwards and say—  
*“And now my eye of faith is dim,  
I trust in Jesus, sink or swim.”*  
If you can keep this in your mind. you may always be joyful. He can have no cause for trouble who knows and feels that his salvation is of God! Come on, legions of Hell. Come on, demons of the Pit!—  
*“He that has helped me bears me through, And makes me more than conqueror, too.”*Salvation rests not on this poor arm, else I would despair, but on the arm of yonder Omnipotent—that arm on which the pillars of the Heavens do lean! “Whom should I fear? The Lord is my strength and my life—of whom shall I be afraid?”  
And this may, by Grace, nerve you to work for God. If you had to save your neighbors, you might sit down and do nothing. But since “Salvation is of the Lord,” go on and prosper! Go and preach the Gospel. Go and tell the Gospel everywhere. Tell it in your house, tell it in the street, tell it in every land and every nation—for it is not of yourself—it is “of the Lord.” Why do not our friends go to Ireland to preach the Gospel? Ireland is a disgrace to the Protestant Church. Why do not they go and preach there? A year or so ago a number of our brave ministers went over there to preach. They did right bravely. They went there and they came back again and that is about the sum total of the glorious expedition against Popery! But why come back again? Because they were stoned! Good easy men! Do they not think that the Gospel will ever spread without a few stones? But they could have been killed! Brave martyrs, they! Let them be enrolled in the red chronicle! Did the martyrs of old—did the Apostles shrink from going to any country because they would have been killed? No, they were ready to die! And if half a dozen ministers had been killed in Ireland, it would have been the finest thing in the world for liberty in the future—for after that, the people would dared not have touched us! The strong arm of the Law would have put them down. We might have gone through every village of Ireland afterwards and been at peace! The constables would soon have put an end to such infamous murder! It would have awakened the Protestantism of England to claim the liberty which is our right, there, as we give it elsewhere! We shall never see any great change till we have some men in our ranks who are willing to be martyrs! That deep ditch can never be crossed till the bodies of a few of us shall fill it up—and after that it will be easy work to preach the Gospel there!  
Our Brothers should go there once more. They can leave their white cravats at home and the white feather, too, and go forth with a brave heart and a bold spirit! And if the people mock and scoff, let them mock and scoff! George Whitefield said, when he preached on Kennington Common, where they threw dead cats and rotten eggs at him, “This is only the manure of Methodism—the best thing in the world to make it grow. Throw away as fast as you please!” And when a stone cut him on the forehead, he seemed to preach the better for a little blood-letting. Oh for such a man to dare the mob and then the mob would not need to be dared! Let us go there, remembering that, “Salvation is of the Lord,” and let us, in every place and at every time, preach God’s Word, believing that God’s Word is more than a match for man’s sin and God will yet be Master over all the earth!  
My voice fails me again and my thoughts, too. I was weary this morning when I came into this pulpit and I am weary now. Sometimes I am joyous and glad and feel in the pulpit as if I could preach forever. At other times I feel glad to close. But yet with such a text, I would that I could have finished up with all the might that mortal lips could summon. Oh, to let men know this, that their salvation is of God! Swearer, swear not against Him in whose hand your breath is! Despiser, despise not Him who can save you or destroy you! And you hypocrite, seek not to deceive Him from whom salvation comes and who, therefore, knows right well whether your salvation has come from Him!  
IV. And now, in concluding, let me just tell you WHAT IS THE OBVERSE OF THIS TRUTH. Salvation is of God—then damnation is of man! If any of you are damned, you will have no one to blame but yourselves. If any of you perish, the blame will not lie at God’s door. If you are lost and cast away, you will have to bear all the blame and all the tortures of conscience, yourself—you will lie forever in Hell and reflect, “I have destroyed myself. I have made a suicide of my soul. I have been my own destroyer. I can lay no blame to God.” Remember, if saved, you must be saved by God, alone, though if lost you have lost yourselves. “Turn you, turn you, why will you die O house of Israel?” With my last faltering sentence I bid you stop and think. Ah, my Hearers! My Hearers! It is an awful thing to preach to such a mass as this. But the other Sunday, as I came down the stairs, I was struck with a memorable sentence, uttered by one who stood there. He said, “There are 8,000 people this morning without excuse in the day of judgment.” I should like to preach so that this always might be said! And if I cannot, O may God have mercy on me for His name’s sake!  
But now remember! You have souls! Those souls will be damned, or saved! Which will it be? Damned forever they must be unless God shall save you—unless Christ shall have mercy upon you, there is no hope for you! Down on your knees! Cry to God for mercy! Now lift up your heart in prayer to God. May now be the very time when you shall be saved! Before the next drop of blood shall run through your veins, may you find peace! Remember, that peace is to be had NOW. If you now feel your need of it, it is to be had now! And how? For the mere asking for it! “Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find.”—  
*“But if your ears refuse  
The language of His Grace,  
Your hearts grow hard, like stubborn Jews, That unbelieving race—  
The Lord with vengeance drest,  
Shall lift His hand and swear,  
‘You that despise My promised rest  
Shall have no portion there.’”*  
Oh that you may not be despisers, lest you “wonder and perish!” May you now fly to Christ and be accepted in the Beloved. It is my last best prayer. May the Lord hear it! Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #275 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

÷Jon 3.9

WHO CAN TELL?  
NO. 275

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?”  
Jonah 3:9.**

THIS was the forlorn hope of the Ninevites—“Who can tell if God will turn and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?” The book of Jonah should be exceedingly comfortable to those who are despairing because of the wickedness of their times. Nineveh was a city as great in its wickedness as in its power. If any of us with little faith had been bid to go round about her and “tell the towers thereof and mark well her bulwarks.” If we had been commanded to go through her streets and behold her both in the blaze of the sun and in the light of the moon as her inhabitants indulged in vice, we should have said. “Alas, Alas, the city is wholly given unto idolatry and it is girt about with a wall of sin as stupendous as its wall of stone.”

Suppose that the problem had been given to us to solve—how shall this city be moved to repentance? How shall its vice be forsaken and the God of Israel worshipped by all its inhabitants from the highest to the lowest? If we had not been paralyzed with despair, which is the most probable, we should, nevertheless, have sat down carefully to consider our plans. We should have parceled it out into missionary districts. We should have needed at least several hundred, if not thousands, of able ministers. At once expenses would have to be incurred and we should have considered ourselves bound to contemplate the erection of innumerable structures in which the Word of God might be preached. Our machinery would necessarily become cumbersome. We should find that we, unless we had the full resources of an empire, could not even begin the work.

But what said the Lord concerning this? Putting aside the judgments of reason and all the plans and schemes which flesh and blood so naturally do follow, He raises up one man. By a singular Providence He qualifies that one man for his mission. He sends him down into the very depths of the sea, where the weeds are wrapped about him. He comes up from the great deep and the awful descent has steeled his soul and completely covered him with the armor of courageous faith. Who need tremble at anything on shore who has passed the bowels of a fish and yet survived? He comes into the city, his eyes almost starting from their sockets with the remembrance of the great judgment which had passed over his head and in stern inflexible manner, with shrill monotonous voice, he begins to cry, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

Is this, O God, is this Your way? Is this the means with which You will accomplish the great event? Will you make Nineveh repent at the bidding of one man? Shall yon sickly man fresh from the sea—shall his voice be sufficient to stir this great city? O God, if You had come forth in Your fiery chariot, if You had spoken with Your thunder, if You had shaken the earth with Your earthquakes—then might Nineveh feel. But surely this one man is not sufficient for the deed! But as high as the Heaven is above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways and His thoughts above our thoughts. So skillful is He that with the weakest instrument He can produce the mightiest workmanship. That one man begins his journey. Already the inhabitants flock to listen to him. He proceeds—the crowd multiplies. As he stands at the corner of the alleys and the lanes, every window is thrown open to listen and the streets are thronged as he walks along. Still on he goes till the whole city has begun to shake with his terrible voice.

And now the King himself bids him come into his presence and the fearless still propounds the threat of God. Then comes the effect. All Nineveh is wrapped in sackcloth. The cry of man and beast go up in one terrible wailing to God. Jehovah is honored and Nineveh repents. Ah, my Brethren, we see in this rich grounds for hope. What cannot God do? Think not that He needs to wait for us. He can accomplish the greatest deeds by the meanest instrumentality. One man, if He willed it, would be sufficient to stir this giant city. One man, if God decreed it, might be the means of the conversion of a nation, no, a continent should shake beneath the tramping of one man.

There is no palace so high that this one man’s voice should not reach it and there is no den of infamy so deep that his cry should not be heard in it. All we need is that God should “make bare His arm,” and who can withstand His might? What, though He grasp but the jawbone of an ass yet is His arm mightier than Samson’s and not only would it be heaps upon heaps, but city upon city, continent upon continent! With the meanest instrument would God slay His thousands and overcome His myriads. Oh Church of God, never fear—remember the men that God has given you in the days of yore. Look back to Paul. Remember Augustine. Think about Luther and Calvin. Think of Whitfield and of Wesley and remember these were but separate individual men and yet through them God did a work the remembrance of still rolls on, and shall never cease while this earth endures.

With this by way of preface, I shall now somewhat turn aside from the narrative to address myself to those who are trembling on account of sin and who are in the same position as the men of Nineveh and like them anxiously desiring mercy.

I shall notice briefly this morning three things. First, the miserable plight in which the men of Nineveh found themselves. Secondly, the scanty reasons which they had for hope. And then, thirdly, I shall observe that we have stronger reasons to compel us to pray and more comfortable arguments to urge us to trust.

I. First then, I shall consider the men of Nineveh, as representing many here present, as to THE DOLEFUL PLIGHT IN VICE THEY FOUND THEMSELVES. The men of Nineveh were like those in the days of Noah. They were married and given in marriage—they ate and they drank—they built and they planted. The whole world was their granary and the kingdoms of the earth their hunting ground. They were rich and mighty above all people, for God had greatly increased their prosperity. And they had become the greatest nation upon the face of the earth. Locked in security they fell into great and abominable sins. Their vices probably rivaled those of Sodom. If they were not worse, even, than the Eastern cities of the present day, they were abominable beyond description. How suddenly were they however startled from their security and convicted of their sin! The preaching of that one strange man had brought them from the height of their splendor to the depths of sorrow. Now was their boasting cut off. The sound of their mirth had ceased. And they began to weep and lament. What was their miserable plight? I take it, it consisted in three discoveries. They now discovered their great sin. Then again, the shortness of their time and in the next place, the terrible character of their destruction. Would that you would discover the like you careless sinners, you that slumber in Zion, you that fear not God, neither turn from your evil ways.

Would I say that in the first place, some Prophet’s voice would stir you to remember your sins, for are they not many and exceedingly great? Let each man among us look to his life and who is there here that need not blush? Some of us have been moral. We have by the training of our youth and by the restraints of grace been kept from the immoralities of others, but even we are compelled to lay our mouths in the dust. While looking into our heart we discover it to be a nest of unclean birds, full of all manner of evil and loathsome things. We have been as visions in our hearts as the worst of men have been in their acts. But there are too many who cannot even plead that they have been moral, though this would be but a poor excuse for the want of love to God.

Look, Brothers and Sisters, look to your lives—who among us has been free from murmuring against God? Who is he that has loved his neighbor as himself? Who is it that has never been angry without a cause? Who has never cursed God in his heart, even if he has not done so with his lips? Who among us have always scrupulously kept our eyes from lust and our heart from covetousness? Have we not all sinned? If our iniquities could now be revealed—if on every man’s brow were written his sin, which of you would not put his hand upon his forehead to hide his iniquity from his fellows? It will be of essential service to many of you if you will read over your lives. Turn, I beseech you, to the pages of your memory and let the black, blotted, misspelled pages now be read again.

Think not that the preacher understands how to flatter his congregation. It has become fashionable in these times to look upon our hearers as all being good and excellent—would not this be a lie and a falsehood before Almighty God? Are there not here those that can indulge secretly in vices which we must not mention? Are there not those who do that to their fellows in trade which they would despise in others? What? Are

none of you covetous? Do none of you over-reach or defraud your neighbors? Do none of you practice the common frauds and tricks in trade? Are none of you liars and none deceivers, none slanderers who bear false witness against your neighbors?

Am I so happy as to have a spotless congregation here? I cannot flatter myself that such can be the truth. No, our iniquities are great and our sins are hideous. Oh, that we were all ready to confess, each man for himself, the iniquities which we have done! Surely, if the Spirit of God shall but shine into our hearts and show us the evil of our ways, we shall find ourselves in a sorrowful condition, indeed, and shall be ready to cry out before God, even as Nineveh did of old.

Added to this, however, the Ninevites had information as to the shortness of their days. “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” How fixed and definite the date! “Six weeks shall scarcely run their round,” says the Prophet, “before you must die and perish miserably.” To an hour was the time described, “yet forty days.” How would the Ninevites count the days with terror and watch each rising and setting sun as if these were the black milestones upon their dreary road to death! “Ah,” says one, “but you will not tell us that our days are only forty.” No, Brothers and Sisters I am no Prophet. I cannot tell how many your days may be—but this one thing I can say—it is possible that there are some here who have not forty days to live! There may be some among you who have not so long a respite as even Nineveh itself.

Suppose now I should be able to take you to that great city. If I could have shown you its massive ramparts and its stupendous fortresses—if like Jonah I could point to them and say, “In forty days this city will be all overthrown,” which would require the greatest stretch of credulity to believe this Prophecy or that which follows, “In forty days your body shall crumble back to dust?” Which, I say, would require the greatest stretch of faith? Which is the easier of these two—to send you to death, or to uproot a city? What are you, Man, but a heap of animated dust? A worm may destroy you, a grain of sand may be sufficient to take away your life. Feeble is the thread of life—a spider’s web is a cable compared to it. It is but a dream--a child’s whisper may break it and we may awake in another world.

“Forty days!” Surely that was a long and distant period compared with what may be the date of your death. I have been long enough preaching in this place to look back now on many who have gone from this spot to the place appointed to all living. Many, many are the faces which this day I miss as I look along your ranks and cast my eye around this gallery. There are not a few who I remember to have passed from the land of the living and to have gone to another world—and some how suddenly, how rapidly! I have been startled at it often myself. I have seen some here on the Sabbath and by the Tuesday or by the Thursday the message has come, “On what day can you bury such-and-such a one?” “Bury her!” “Yes Sir, bury her, she is gone.” And I have said, “How strange it seems that she should be dead who so lately was living in our midst!”

Forty days, I add, is a long lease compared with that which you have any reason to conclude that God has bestowed on you. But what if it were forty years, how short a time even then? If you will but look with the eye of wisdom, how rapidly our years revolve. Are you not startled even now to see the sear leaf in your path? It was but yesterday that the fresh green buds were seen. It seems but a month ago since first we saw the wheat starting up from the ground and lo, the harvest is over and gone, and many of the birds have disappeared and the tints of autumn are succeeding the verdure of summer. Years seem but months now and months but days and days pass so rapidly that they flit like shadows before us. O, Men and Women, if we could but measure life, it is but a span and in a time how short, how brief, everyone of us must appear before his God.

The shortness of time should help to arouse us and then, let me add the third thing which startled the Ninevites—the terrible character of the judgment. Doubtless one part of the effect of Jonah’s preaching may be traced to the singular vagueness of his prophecy. He says, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” By whom, he does not tell us. How, he does not deign to reveal. It is to be overthrown, that is all. Whether some mighty nation should invade it, or whether an earthquake should swallow it up, or whether by plague or pestilence the whole city should be emptied, or whether an intestine disease should cut off the population, he says not. The very vagueness and indistinctness of a prophecy adds to its terror, just as men can never bring their minds to think of specters in the plain daylight, but always conjure up such things in hours of shade and gloom. The gloominess of the message made men tremble.

And oh, you that are not reconciled to God, men without religion, without hope and without God in the world—how terrible is the judgment that shall come upon you! It is not for me to attempt to describe it. Scripture only speaks of the life to come in indistinct terms. Terrible are they in their vagueness. Jesus said, “These shall go away into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth,” and now and then He speaks of torment as a place, “where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.” And then He describes it as “a bottomless pit,” and as “a fire” that “never shall be quenched.” Ah, my Brethren, we know but little of the wrath of God which shall certainly come upon the wicked, but we know enough to let us understand that it is too terrible for human ear to hear. If Hell had been fully described to us in this time-state, this life itself would have been but the vestibule of eternal torment.

I question whether any eyes could bear to read such a description as God might have given. Both our ears would have tingled and our hearts would melt like water at the sound thereof. Oh, Sinner, it is enough for me to say to you this day, except you repent, you must perish with a terrible overthrow. God, even God Himself, shall draw His sword and bathe it in your blood. He shall drive you from His presence amidst the thunders of His wrath and the lightning of His vengeance. He shall smite you with

His Omnipotence and shall spend Himself in punishing you and your torment shall be without end and the smoke thereof shall go up forever and ever. I speak not this day to you that are unbelievers in the Word— with you I will have nothing to do this morning. But to you who are Believers in the Revelation of the Bible—who profess to be nominal Christians—with you I have to deal.

Oh Sirs, if you believe this Book, if you are impenitent, how tremendous is the doom which awaits you—how fatal shall death be to you and how terrible the last dread Day of Judgment! And all this is coming on apace. The chariot wheels of God’s justice have axles which are hot with speed, the black coursers are covered with foam as on they drive. Perhaps, as here I stand and speak, alas, too coldly on things which should make any man boil over with enthusiasm—perhaps death may even now be fitting his arrow to the string and you may be his victim and this sermon may be closed, as Paul’s sermon was, with someone’s falling dead like Eutychus, in the window in his sleep. God grant it may not be so, but nevertheless there is cause enough for each one of us to tremble and to bow before the God of Israel. Thus have I spoken on the first point—O Holy Spirit, bless the word!

These Ninevites however took heart and hope. They said, “Let us proclaim a fast, let man and beast cry mightily unto God, for who can tell but He may turn from His fierce anger that we perish not.”

II. Now the second point was, THE SLENDER GROUND WHICH THE NINEVITES HAD FOR HOPE. And now regard attentively, for I long this morning for you all in the heart of Christ, that you also with a far better hope may be enabled to imitate the example of the men of Nineveh. You will notice that in Jonah’s message, there was no proclamation of mercy made. It was one short sentence of doom. It was like the great bell of St. Sepulcher’s Church tolling out the hour of the execution of a criminal. There was not so much as a note of mercy. It was the trumpet of the Judge, but not the silver trump of Jubilee. No mercy glanced from Jonah’s eye, no pity was in his heart. He was sent with a thundering commission and he dealt it out in a thundering fashion. “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

I think I see the king of Nineveh sitting down with his nobles at a council of State and one of them would say, “We have little hope of mercy, for if you will observe, Jonah never offered us any. How terribly he spoke. There was not so much as a tear in his eyes. I am persuaded that Jonah’s God is very just and severe. He will by no means spare us. We shall be cut off.” But the king’s answer to his counselor was, “Who can tell? You only think so, but you cannot say it, let us yet hope, for “Who can tell.” My dear Hearers, it is no Jonah that addresses you. My language today shall be rather that of Isaiah, “Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord—though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Oh cannot you say with Nineveh’s king, “Who can tell?” Will not you go home to your chamber and pray, for “Who can tell?” Will you not go to the Bible and search for a promise, for “Who can tell?” Will you not go to the Cross and trust in the flowing blood, for “Who can tell?” You may be forgiven yet, accepted yet, and one day yet sing God’s praises before the Throne above.

Another thing which would cut off the hope of the Ninevites very much was this—they knew nothing of God except, it may be, some dreadful legends they had heard of His terrible acts. One of the counselors of the king, deeply learned, would say, “O king, live forever! The God of Jonah is a terrible God. Have you not heard what He did in Egypt? How He destroyed Pharaoh and his chariots of old in the Red Sea? And have you not heard what He did to Sennacherib when He cut him off and his hosts? Have you never heard the thunder of His power and the might of His terrible acts? Surely He will have no mercy on us.” But the king answered—“Who can tell?” You do not know. It is but a surmise. “Who can tell?”

But oh, my Hearers, we are on a vantage ground here, for you know that God is merciful. Many and many a time have we assured you from the lips of God Himself, through this written Word, that He delights in mercy. You have His promise for it, no, you have His oath for it. Jehovah lifts His hands to Heaven and swears by Himself. “As I live,” says the Lord, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies. But had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” Come, then, Sinner, for “who can tell?” He is a merciful God. Do what Benhadad did of old, when he and his army had been routed and he alone was left with a few of his nobles. He said— “Let us put ropes on our necks and go unto the king of Israel, for we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings.” You do the same with Jesus. You have heard that He is merciful and full of compassion. Come to Him now—trust in His blood and, “who can tell?” This day your sins may be blotted out. “Who can tell?” This day you may be washed in the blood of Christ and made white as Adam in Paradise. “Who can tell?” This day the Lord may make your heart leap with joy, while He whispers—“You are Mine and I am yours.” “Who can tell?” Drowning men catch at straws—this is no straw—this is a solid rock—lay hold on it and be saved. “Who can tell?”

But once again, the people of Nineveh lacked another encouragement which you and I have. They had never heard of the Cross. Jonah’s preaching was very powerful, but there was no Christ in it. There was nothing about the Messiah that was to come—no talking of the sprinkled blood— no mention of a great sin-atoning sacrifice—and therefore the men who were in the council of the king, might have said—“Surely we have never heard that any satisfaction has been offered to the injured justice of God. How, therefore, can He be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly?

“Ah,” said the king, “who can tell?” And on that slender “who can tell?” they ventured to cry for mercy. But oh, Sinner, you are answered this day, that “God has spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, that whosoever believes on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that He sent forth His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him might not perish, but might be saved. For there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Come

Sinner, come to the Cross, for God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. I say, this should make you ask—“Who can tell?” He may wash me clean, He may accept me and I may yet be able to sing with the loudest of all the voices of His children—

*“I, the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me.”*

And now shall I tell you what I think was the hope which the poor king of Nineveh really had? I have set before you his discouragements and now I will set before you his encouragements. They were very slender, but still they seemed to have been sufficient. Perhaps the king said in his heart, or he might have said to his counselors—“Sirs, there is one thing which you cannot deny, we are come to the worst and if we repent and cry for mercy, at least that cry will not be to our disadvantage. We shall be none the worse off even if we are not heard.”

Now sometimes I have known a trembling sinner take comfort even from that. The words of our hymn suggest the full idea—  
*“I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try.  
For if I stay away I know,  
I must forever die.”*

If you do not seek Christ. If you repent not of sin. If you put not your trust in Him, you must perish. That is certain. If you go and are rejected, at least you are none the worse off. Try it and you shall find out that you are much the better—for you shall not be rejected. Remember the three lepers at the gate of Samaria? They were sitting there without food to eat and at last the pangs of hunger were strong upon them. One of them said to his fellows, “Let us go now to the host of the Syrians. If they kill us we shall but die. If they save us alive, we shall live. But if we stay here, perish we must.” So, as there was nothing to lose and there might be something to gain, they risked it.

Oh, Sinner, would to God the Lord would teach you as much wisdom as this! Go to Him just as you are and say, “Lord, sink or swim, I take Your Cross to be my only trust. If You will not save me, if I perish in the stream, yet will I perish clinging to the Rock of my salvation, for no other trust and no other hope have I.” Oh, that you may be led to do even this— and you shall not be disappointed.

Besides, the king would add, “It is true that Jonah did not say that God would have mercy, but then he did not say He would not.” There was a cry from Jonah’s lip, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown” but he did not say, “God will not have any mercy at all.” So the king said, “Who can tell, then?” If any could have told him, Jonah would. Was he not a fierce looking man. If there had been any thunders in store, would he not have dealt them out in his terrible fury of prophecy? “Surely,” said the king, if he stopped there and did not add, ‘I will have no mercy,’ this is a happy token. Who can tell? If Jonah did not tell, we cannot.”

And now, Sinner, I would you would catch hold on this. But you have something stronger and firmer still, for there is mercy proclaimed to you this day. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. These are His own words and He Himself expressly invites you to come to Him. He says, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” And He gives you His Word for it—“He that comes unto Me I will in nowise cast out.” Salvation is free as the air we breathe to every convicted sinner. If you know this day your need of Christ, take Him, He is yours. He is a fountain open for the thirsty. All the preparation you need is simply a burning thirst. Then come and drink and none can tell you no—

*“From the Mount of Calvary,  
Where the Savior deigned to die,  
What transporting sounds I hear,  
Bursting on my ravished ear! —  
Love’s redeeming work is done,  
Come and welcome, Sinner, come!”*

Well, then, if you are invited, “Who can tell?” Come, come and try, for, “Who can tell?”  
I think the greatest confidence which the king of Nineveh would have would be derived from the following suggestion. “Oh,” said he, “if God had meant to destroy us without giving us an opportunity of pardon, He would not have sent Jonah forty days beforehand. He would have given us no time at all. He would simply have given a blow and a word, but the blow would have been first. He would have overthrown the city in His wrath without a single message. What did He to Sodom? He sent no messenger there. The sun rose and the fire descended from God’s terrible right hand. Not so Nineveh. It had its warning. And now, Sinner, turn this to good account. You have had many a warning. You are this day warned, no, more—you are affectionately invited to come to Christ. The voice from the Cross is speaking and each trickling drop of blood cries, “Amen.”  
“Come and welcome, Sinner, come!” Now, if the Lord were unwilling to forgive, would He have sent His servants to warn and to invite? If there was not a heart of mercy within Him, would He not have said, “Let them alone, they are joined unto idols, let them perish”? It is no small prophecy of God’s good intentions to a man when God sends to him a faithful minister. Oh, my Hearers, I cannot speak to you with eloquence. I cannot address you with the fervid words of such an one as Whitfield, but this I can say and God is my witness, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, whether man would hear, or whether he will not. If you perish, it is not because I have kept back any part of that which I have received of God, who has sent me.  
I have broken through the trammels of creed and system that I might free my head of the blood of all men. I have not been content to run in the track of an old and narrow creed, if I felt that it kept me from earnestly pleading with you and warning you to flee from the wrath to come. I have endangered many a friendship and brought upon my self no little shame, because I must and will, in this matter, deal earnestly with your souls. It is no child’s play to preach. It shall be no child’s play to give an account of preaching at the last great tremendous day. You are warned—in God’s name I conjure you, before the gates of mercy are shut upon you—before life shall end, now, now remember—now may the Spirit of God bring you to your knees, now drive you to prayer, now lead you to faith in the sprinkled blood of the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world.  
Sinner, remember! If you perish, you destroy yourself. Behold, God wills not your death, but He bids you come now. No, He does, as it were, pray that you would return. He says, “Return, you backsliding children of men.” “Oh Israel, return unto Me.” He says again, “Come, now, let us reason together. Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson they shall be white as snow.” Would that I could draw you! Oh that I had chains on my lips that should bind you in golden fetters to the Cross of Christ! Come, Sinner, for, “who can tell?”  
No, I change the sentence. “I can tell”—if you turn, He will turn unto you. Come to Him and He will accept you, for He is a God ready to forgive and now, this day, He is ready to cast your sins into the depths of the sea and remember them no more.  
III. And now, this shall bring me to the third point, namely, THE URGING OF MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD IMITATE THE NINEVITES IN REPENTANCE.  
It was an old and a horrible custom of past governments, when a man was executed for murder, to allow him to be hung in chains, so that as often as anyone passed by the gibbet they might learn, as was thought, the severity of justice. I fear, however, that they more frequently learned the brutality and barbarism of the age. Now, as these were hung in chains as warnings, I would translate this horrible figure into one that shall glitter with joy and delight. God, in order that you may know His mercy, has been pleased to preserve instances thereof, that so often as you look upon them you may be led to say, if such-and-such an one was saved, why may not I? It is needless for me to refer you to Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. You will remember well the pardon given to David! Surely you have not forgotten the mercy which God had on that chief of sinners, Manasseh! As for the New Testament pardoned sinners, from the thief on the Cross to Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, it suffices but to hint at them.  
And now this day behold before your eyes in this place, sinners, once like yourselves, who have obtained mercy and are now forgiven. Among the thousands in this hall there are not a few who (say some two years ago or less) entered this place out of idle curiosity. I could describe some to you who had never entered a place of worship for twenty or even thirty years. Some of them had been habitual drunkards, their lives had been the abodes of misery. Some of them had been harlots and led others into sin, beside destroying their own bodies and their souls. Into this place they crept, they came merely to listen to the preacher, of whom many a strange thing had been said. Their attention was riveted. An arrow from the bow of God shot into their hearts and here they are this day.  
Without boasting I say it, they are my joy and my crown of rejoicing and shall be such in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If you, who have been like they, but are now repenting of your sins, could hear their testimony as I have done, you would never doubt of the mercy of God. If you could read the account that I have preserved of some of them—sailors, who in every part of the world have sinned—who have never touched upon land except to commit fornication and wickedness—if I could tell you on the other hand the dreadful iniquities into which some here have plunged in the days of their flesh, you would say, “Surely He is a pardoning God,” and methinks that might entice you to come.  
Oh, if there are any such here and there are many such here, I know—if you are sitting in this hall today side by side with some trembling sinner and you observe the tear dropping from his eye, be not slow to tell him, “I am one of the men that Mr. Spurgeon mentions.” The Lord has saved you and be not slow to take the hand of the penitent and bid him come where you went and bid him look for mercy where you sought it and found it. And I may say again, if I may speak for myself here today, if you knew my own character as it was before conversion, you need none of you despair of mercy. When I went to God confessing my sins to Him, I felt myself to be the vilest sinner out of Hell. Others might have praised me, but I had not a word to say on my own account. If the hottest flames of the pit had been my eternal portion it was not one whit more than I deserved. But—  
*“Tell it unto sinners tell,  
I am, I am out of Hell,”*  
and forgiven and accepted in Christ.  
Who, then, need despair? Who can tell? Come, Sinner, come and say this in your heart and go and cry unto God in prayer and lay hold on Christ by faith, saying, “Who can tell?” The innumerable instances of past mercies should stir us up to say, “Who can tell?”  
And then again let me remind you—you that are now conscious of your guilt—your only hope for deliverance lies in the mercy of God. When a man knows that he has only one hope left how tenaciously will he cling to it. Some sick man has tried every system of medicine—he has spent nearly all his wealth and now he has come to the last stage. He is trying the last system of medicine. If this remedy fails, die he must. Do you not readily imagine that he would use this with the greatest diligence and be as obedient as possible to every command of the physician?  
And now Sinner, it is Christ or Hell with you this day. If Christ saves you not, you are a lost man. If the Cross is not your salvation, the jaws of Hell must soon close upon you. It is Christ or nothing. No, it is Christ or perdition! Lay hold on Him then. Clutch Him. He is your last, your only hope. Oh, fly to Him—He is your only refuge. If you were pursued by some fierce beast of prey—if there were but one tree on some vast plain, albeit, there were but a scanty hope of escape by climbing it, with what speed would your feet carry you to it? I see you running and I come before you and say, “Stop, why in such haste?” You rush past me crying—“Sir, it is my only chance, it is my only hope. I am devoured, I am rent in pieces if I find not shelter there.” It is your case today. Behold the roaring lion of the pit, thirsty for your blood, is after you. Away to the Cross! Cling to it. There is hope. There is sure refuge. But apart from that you are worse than rent in pieces. You are destroyed forever and ever.  
But for your encouragement, let me tell you one other thing and then I shall have done. Sinner, remember that while it will be a happy thing for you to be saved, it will be a glorious thing for God to save you. Men object not to do a thing which is expensive to them, if it brings them in some honor. They will not stoop to do a thing which involves shame and scorn. But if honor goes with a thing then are they ready enough to do it. Now Soul, remember, if God shall save you it will honor him. Why, will you not honor Him if He will but blot out your sin? I thought when I was seeking mercy, if God would but save me there was nothing I would not do for Him. I would be cut in pieces rather than deny Him. I would serve Him all my life and He might do what He would with me in Heaven.  
And do you not sometimes feel that if God would but save you, you would sing loudest of them all in Heaven? Would you not love Him—creep to the foot of His Throne and cast your crown before His feet, saying—“Lord, not unto me, not unto me, but unto Your name be all the glory”? God delights to save sinners, because this puts jewels in His crown. He is glorified in His justice, but not as He is in His mercy. He appears in silken robes with a golden crown upon His head when He saves sinners. He wears an iron crown when He crushes them. Judgment is His strange work—He does that with His left hand—but His right-handed acts are those of mercy and of love. Hence He puts the righteous always on the right hand that He may be ready to pardon and ready to deliver.  
Oh, come then, Soul, to Christ! You are not about to ask a thing which God is unwilling to give, or that which will slur His escutcheon, or blot His banner. You are asking for that which is as glorious to God as it is beneficial to yourself. Come, humble Soul, and cry to Christ and He will have mercy upon you!  
My only fear in conclusion is that if any of you have received the slightest impression this morning you will go home and forget it. May I ask you now, as a favor, that if you have but got so much as a scratch under the preaching of the Word, go home alone, if you can. Say but little if you are obliged to walk with others and go straight away to your chamber. There fall there on your knees, make a confession of your sins, cry to God for mercy through the blood of Christ, and, “Who can tell?” Who can tell—this very day there may be a high holiday in Heaven over hundreds of sinners who in this Music Hall have first learned to pray—who in this place have first been led to consider their ways and turn to God?  
I hope our friends will all remain and no one move, while I pray that that may be the case and all of you that wish it may be so, will solemnly say Amen after the few sentences of prayer I shall utter—“Lord, save us this morning. We confess our sin. We ask for mercy humbly through the blood of Christ. We pray You do not deny us, but let us all appear at Your right hand at last. Here reveal with power and let many be saved this morning for Jesus’ sake.” And the people said AMEN.

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÷Jon 4.6

JONAH’S OBJECT-LESSONS  
NO. 2504

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1897. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 11, 1885.

**“And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.”  
Jonah 4:6-8.**

I WANT to lay the stress especially upon these three sentences in my text—  
“God prepared a gourd.”  
“God prepared a worm.”  
“God prepared a vehement east wind.”  
The life of Jonah cannot be written without God. Take God out of the Prophet’s history and there is no history to write. This is equally true of each one of us. Apart from God, there is no life, nor thought, nor act, nor career of any man, however lowly or however high. Leave out God and you cannot write the story of anyone’s life. If you attempt it, it will be so ill-written that it shall be clearly perceived that you have tried to make bricks without straw and that you have sought to fashion a potter’s vessel without clay. I believe that in a man’s life the great secret of strength, holiness and righteousness is the acknowledgment of God. When a man has no fear of God before his eyes, there is no wonder that he should run to an excess of meanness and even to an excess of riot! In proportion as the thought of God dominates the mind, we may expect to find a life that shall be true and really worth living. But in proportion as we forget God, we shall play the fool. It is the fool who says in his heart, “No God,” and it is the fool who lives and acts as if there were no God!  
In Jonah’s life, we meet with God continually. The Lord bade the Prophet go to Nineveh, but instead of going there, he took ship to go to Tarshish. Quick as thought, at the back of that announcement, we read, “But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.” God hurled out the wind as if He had been throwing a thunderbolt after His servant who was seeking to escape from Him—and there was such a terrible storm that the shipmen were compelled to cast Jonah overboard! Then we read, in the 17th verse of the first chapter, “The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” God began by preparing a storm, but he went on to prepare a fish! We do not know what fish it was and it does not matter—it was one that God made on purpose. And it answered so well that Jonah lived in the fish’s belly for three days and three nights— and then he was landed safely—a better man than when he went into the sea, though none too good even then!  
You may have found, dear Friend, that God has prepared a storm in your life. There was a tempest which checked you in your career of sin. You had determined to go to destruction and you had “paid the fare,” but there came a great trial—something or other that stopped your ship and utterly threatened to swallow it up. After that, there came delivering mercy. You who were cast into the sea were, nevertheless, not lost, but saved. What you judged to be your destruction turned out to be for your salvation, for God had from of old prepared the means of saving you— and He sent you such a deliverance that you were compelled to say with Jonah, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Since that time, I should not wonder if you have seen the hand of God in very many amazing ways, possibly in much the same form as Jonah did, not literally, but spiritually. Especially if you have erred as Jonah did, if you have fallen into ill-humors as he did, you have probably had to bear the same kind of discipline and chastisement.  
Let it never be forgotten that Jonah was a man of God. I often hear great fault found with him and he richly deserves the condemnation. He was not at all an amiable person but, for all that, he was a man of God. When he was in the very depths of the sea—when he appeared to be cut off from all hope, he prayed as none but a man of God could pray—“Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice.” It takes a real saint to cry out of such a place as Jonah was in—the living tomb of the belly of a fish! He was also a man of faith, otherwise he had not been a man of prayer. And he did believe in his God—it was the result of a mistake that was made by his faith, rather than by his unbelief, that he tried to run away! He had such regard for God’s honor that he could not bear to exercise a ministry which he feared would raise a question about the truthfulness of God and represent Him to be changeable. So far as his idea of God went, he was faithful to it. His fault mainly lay in that imperfect idea of God which had taken possession of his mind.  
Jonah was a man of faith and a man of prayer, and God honored him exceedingly by making his word to turn the whole city upside down! For my part, I hardly know of any other man who ever had so high an honor put upon him as this man had. It is just possible that if you or I had made a king on his throne to come down from it and robe himself in sackcloth. And if we had seen a whole city—men, women and children— all crying out for mercy as the result of one sermon from us, we might have been as greatly foolish, through the intoxication of pride, as this man was foolish through a vehement zeal for God which happened to take a harsh shape instead of being tempered, softened and sweetened by a recognition of the great love and kindness of God—and by a sweet delight in those gracious attributes of His Character!  
Jonah was grandly stern amid a wicked generation. He was one of God’s, “Ironsides.” He was the man for a fierce fight and he would not hold back his hand from the use of the sword, or do the work of the Lord half-heartedly. He was one who wished to make thorough work of anything he undertook and to go to the very end of it. We need more of such men, nowadays! He was not lacking in backbone, yet he was lacking in heart—in that respect we would not be like he. He was singularly strong where so many in these days are grievously weak. Perhaps he is all the more criticized and condemned because that virtue which he possessed is so rare today. The faults he had were on that side on which most modern professors do not err and, therefore, Pharisee-like, they are content to condemn the man for that which they do not, themselves, commit because they are not brave enough and strong enough to fall into such a fault!  
In my text we have God very conspicuous in the life of His servant Jonah and I want to bring out this truth very prominently, that we may also see God in our lives in similar points to those in which He manifested Himself to Jonah. So, we will notice, first, that God is in our comforts—“God prepared a gourd.” Secondly, God is in our bereavements and losses—“God prepared a worm.” Thirdly, God is in our heaviest trials— “God prepared a vehement east wind.” Then, fourthly, what is not in the text in words, but is the very essence of it, God prepared Jonah—these three things—the gourd, the worm and the east wind were a part of his preparation, the means of making him a fitter and a better man for his Lord’s service. He learned by the gourd, he learned by the worm and he learned by the vehement east wind. They were a sort of kindergarten to which the child-like spirit of Jonah had to go. He needed to be taught as children in their infancy are taught by object-lessons and things that they can see. So Jonah went to God’s kindergarten, to learn from the gourd, the worm and the east wind the lessons that he would not learn in any other way.  
I. So, first, I remind you that GOD IS IN OUR COMFORTS—“God prepared a gourd.” Everything of good that we enjoy, however little it may be, comes from God—  
*“‘Tis God that lifts our comforts high,  
Or sinks them in the grave.  
He gives and blessed be His name!  
He takes but what He gave.”*

Let me call your attention to Jonah’s comfort, that is, the gourd which God prepared. It was sent to him when he was in a very wrong spirit, angry with God and angry with his fellow men. He had hidden away from everybody in that bit of a shanty which he had put up for himself outside the city, as if he was a real Timon, the man-hater. Sick of everybody and sick, even, of himself, he gets away into this little booth and there, in discontent and discomfort, he sits watching to see the fate of the city lying below the hill. Yet God comforted him by preparing a gourd to be “a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief.” You know that we are very apt to say of some people, “Well, really, they are of such a trying disposition. They fret about nothing at all and they worry themselves when they have no cause for it. We have no patience with them.”

That is what you say, but that is not how God acts! He has pity upon such people and He has had patience with many of you when you have been of the number of such people. Why, I do not believe that any man here would have proposed to make a gourd grow up to cover the head of the angry Prophet—we would much more likely have called a committee meeting and we would have agreed that if the discontented Brother liked to go and live in a booth, he had better work the experiment out. It would probably be for his good and make him come back and live in the city, properly, like other people! Though he was left to feel the cold by night and the heat by day, it was entirely his own choice—and if a person chooses such a residence, it is not for us to interfere! That is how men talk and men are so exceedingly wise, you know. But that is not how God talks and He is infinitely wiser than any of His creatures! His wisdom is sweetly loving, but ours sometimes curdles into hardness. What do you think, Brothers and Sisters, has not God sent us many comforts when we did not deserve them? When, on the contrary, we had made a rod for our own back and might well have reckoned upon being made to smart? Yet God has sent us comforts which have relieved us of the sorrow which we foolishly brought upon ourselves—and made us stop the fretfulness which was our own voluntary choice. God has been wonderfully tender with us, even as a mother is with her sick child. Have you not found it so, Brothers and Sisters? Well, now, look back upon your past life and think that all the comforts which came to you when you deserved to be left without them, came from God, and for them all let His name be blessed!

Further, notice that the comfort which came to Jonah was exactly what he needed. It was a gourd, a broad-leaved plant, very probably the castor-oil plant, which botanists call Palma Christi, because of its resemblance to the human hand. In its native country, it grows very rapidly, so that it would speedily afford a welcome shade from the heat. Whatever kind of gourd it was, God prepared the plant, and it was exactly the kind to shield Jonah from the burning heat of the sun. The Lord always knows how to send us the very comfort that we most require. There is many a mother who has had only one of her children spared to her, but what a comfort that one child has been! I have heard one good woman say, “My dear daughter is such a joy to me, she is everything I could wish.” Or it may be that God has sent to you some other form of earthly comfort which has been altogether invaluable to you—it has been a screen from the great heat of your trouble—“a shelter in the time of storm.” Whenever you get such an invaluable blessing, praise God for it! Do not let your gourd become your god, but let your gourd lead you to your God. When our comforts become our idols, they work our ruin. But when they make us bless God for them, then they become messengers from God which help toward our growth in Divine Grace.

Note, next, that God sent this comfort to Jonah at the right time. It came just when he needed it—when he was most distressed. Then it was that the gourd came up in a night. The punctuality of God is very notable—

*“He never is before His time,*

*He never is too late.”*  
Just when we need a mercy and when the mercy is all the more a mercy because it is so timely, then it comes! If it had come later, it might have been too late, or, at any rate, it would not have been so seasonable and, therefore, not so sweet. Who can know when is the right time like God who sees all things at a single glance? He knows when to give and when to take. In every godly life there is a set time for each event. And there is no need for us to ask, “Why is the white here and the black there? Why this gleam of sunlight and that roar of tempest? Why here a marriage and there a funeral? Why sometimes a harp and at other times a sackbut?” God knows, and it is a great blessing for us when we can leave it all in His hands. Let the gourd spring up in a night it will be the right night—and let the gourd die in the morning—it will be the right morning! All is well if it is in God’s hands. Let us, therefore, distinctly recognize God in our comforts, in their coming to us when we are unworthy of them, in their coming in the form in which we most require them and in their coming at the time when we are most in need of them.

This gourd, like all our comforts, was sent to Jonah with an exceedingly kind design, and God made it to come up, “that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief.” One would not have thought of a gourd delivering a man like that from his grief. It is an unmanly thing for a Prophet of Jehovah to have a grief from which a gourd can deliver him, but God knew His servant, and in condescension He sent this amazing form of comfort with this motive, “to deliver him from his grief.” I think that Jonah, when he wrote this verse, must have smiled to himself and thought, “All through the ages, what a fool they will think I was!” Yet he went on and honestly put it down. So, often, when you and I have been comforted by some mere trifle and we have been very grateful for it, looking back upon it, we have thought to ourselves, “What poor creatures we were to have been comforted by so small a thing! How foolish it seems for us, first, to have been put out by so little a matter, and then to have been comforted by something equally little!” Let us see, here, God’s wonderful kindness, His microscopic kindness in thus looking, as it were, to our thimble of grief, and somehow dealing with them after their own shape and form so as to deliver us from the grief they have caused us.

Yet, further, it seems that this design of God was fully answered, for, “Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd.” God has often sent us mercies that have made us exceedingly glad and we have been delivered from the pressure of heavy grief. But here is the sad note in the history of Jonah, as it has often been with us, also—although he was exceedingly

glad, he does not appear to have been exceedingly grateful. It is one thing to be glad of a mercy—it is another matter to be grateful for that mercy. Sometimes a man spends all his time in rejoicing over the comfort, which then becomes idolatry, whereas he ought to have expended it in blessing God for the comfort. And then it would have shown that he was in a right state of heart. I do not read that Jonah thanked God for this gourd. Possibly no worm would have devoured it if he had done so. Our comforts are always safest when they are enveloped in gratitude. Let us overlay the wood of our comfort with the gold plate of our gratitude—and so shall it be preserved. An ordinary comfort protected with a sheet of gratitude shall become to us a double means of Divine Grace.  
This, then, is the first point at which I am aiming. I want every child of

God—and I would that every man and woman and child here would do the same—to think of every comfort as having come from God. Even though it is a poor fading thing, like a gourd, yet it is valuable to you for the present. Therefore, think of it as having come to you from God, even as “the Lord God prepared a gourd” to deliver His servant, Jonah, from his grief. So, the Lord has prepared your comforts, prepared your prosperity, prepared your wife, prepared your children, prepared your friends! Therefore bow your heads in gratitude to Him and bless the name of the Lord whose mercy endures forever.

II. Now we turn to our second point, where we shall need even more faith than in the first part of our subject. The Prophet next says that “God prepared a worm,” which teaches us that GOD IS IN OUR BEREAVEMENTS AND LOSSES.

Jonah’s great comfort was destroyed by a very little thing. It was only a worm, but that was enough to destroy the gourd. Oh, how soon may our earthly comforts be taken away from us! There is a little fluctuation in the markets and the prosperous merchant becomes a bankrupt. A little red spot appears in the cheek of your fair child and in a few weeks she is taken away by decline or consumption. A very little thing may soon destroy all your comforts and make them to be like the withered leaves of Jonah’s gourd.

It was also, probably, an unseen thing that worked this havoc. Very likely Jonah did not see that worm. God prepared it, but the Prophet did not discern it until he saw the destruction it had caused. And, my dear Friends, some little unseen thing may yet come to you and turn into grief all your present joy.

Besides, it was a very foul thing, a worm, a maggot at the root of this gourd—and through this foul thing it withered and died. It is sometimes the sharpest bitterness of our grief when we have our joy spoiled by somebody else’s sin. The venomous whisper of a wicked gossip—a foul drop from the black tongue of slander has poisoned the very well-spring of domestic bliss! In Jonah’s case, the Lord prepared the worm and although no evil thing can be charged against the good God, yet at the back of man’s free will there is the great Truth of Divine Predestination, which, without taking any evil upon itself, yet overrules even the waywardness of man for the Lord’s own Glory. People often think that there is no worm which can eat into their comfort, but God can prepare one, as He did in the case of the Prophet. He as much prepared the worm as He prepared the gourd. He as much destroyed the comfort as He first of all gave it to His sorrowing servant.

This worm, which God had prepared, did its work very speedily. The gourd was destroyed in a night. When Jonah fell asleep, there it was over his head, guarding him from the bright beams of the moon. But when he woke in the morning, it hung shriveled and worn out, affording no protection, whatever, from the fierce rays of the sun. Oh, how soon can God take away every atom of comfort that we have! I am never at a wedding but the thought of a funeral crosses my mind. I cannot help it. Neither do I hear the sound of joyous music, but I reflect how soon it will all be over and the trumpet of the great Day of Judgment will subdue all hearts with fear. It is well, when you are glad, to rejoice as though you rejoiced not, for then you will learn, when you are sorrowful, to mourn as though you sorrowed not. Recollecting the vanity and frailty of all things here below, have yourself well in hand. Create your circumstances, rather than be the creature of them! Overrule them by faith instead of bowing before them in terror.

Further, when God prepared the worm to destroy Jonah’s gourd, the result of its work was very sad. It left the poor man without that which had made him exceedingly glad and he was as angry and distressed as before he had been rejoicing! I want you, dear Friends, to pause here to learn this lesson. It is God who sends your trials—do not get into your head the notion that your sickness or anything else that grieves you is from the devil. He may have a finger in it, but he is, himself, always under the supremacy of God. When Job is vexed and plagued by Satan, the archenemy cannot touch him anywhere till God gives permission. God always stands at the back of all that happens. Therefore, do not begin kicking at the secondary agent. You know that if you strike a dog with a stick, he bites at the stick—if he were a sensible dog, he would try to bite you! If you quarrel with anything that happens, your quarrel is virtually with God Himself. It is no use to quarrel with the Lord’s agent, for it is God, after all, who sends you the affliction—and “He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.” Say, as old Eli did, when he heard the evil tidings concerning his household, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” Let it be with you as it was with Aaron when, as he could not speak joyfully, he did not speak at all—“Aaron held his peace.” It is sometimes a great thing to not be able to say anything. Silence is golden when it is the silence of a complete submission to the will of the Lord. God prepares the worm, therefore, be not angry with the poor worm, but just let the gourd go. It was God who made it grow and He had a perfect right to take it away when He pleased.

III. Now, thirdly, “God prepared a vehement east wind,” which teaches us that GOD IS IN OUR HEAVIEST TRIALS. Jonah could not escape the fury of the wind, especially when his gourd was withered. This wind came from the east, which, according to our old proverb, is “neither good for man nor beast.” But it came from the east most vehemently and, at the same time, after the protecting gourd was gone! The fierce rays of the sun beat upon Jonah’s head, where he seems to have been weakest, though he probably thought himself to be strongest.

So, dear Friends, God may send you troubles on the back of one another. The gourd is gone. Now the east wind comes. Troubles seldom come alone—they usually fly in flocks, like martins—and it will often happen that one will come upon the back of another and you will say to yourself, “Why does this trial come just now when I am least able to bear it?”

Sometimes, also, troubles come very fiercely. It was “a vehement east wind.” It came like the rush of scorching heat out of the open door of an oven. It was like the Sirocco, a sultry wind burning up everything in its track. This wind came with all its might upon poor Jonah—and just so may fierce and fiery trials come at any time upon the dearest servants of God.

And, once more, trouble may come when we think ourselves secure. When Jonah left the city, he seemed to say, “There, I will get away from men. I will not have anything more to do with them, they have always worried and troubled me. I will get quite alone and I shall sit and enjoy myself, for I cannot enjoy anybody else.” But the troubles came even there! Indeed, Jonah had built his booth “on the east side of the city,” just where he would be likely to feel the full force of the wind blowing from that quarter. In going there, he had not gone out of the realm of withered gourds, nor had he gone beyond the reach of the vehement east wind. Neither have you, dear Friend, though you say, “I thought, when I left my last trying situation, I would get into a comfortable place.” Yes, I will tell you when you will get into a comfortable place, if you are a Christian, and that is when you pass out of this world altogether! And you will not find it anywhere else—go where you may on this globe—there are no islands upon which the sea does not sometimes beat roughly. There is no atmosphere so calm but the east wind will disturb it, sooner or later. You may go and sit in your booth if you like, but there shall come to you, even in that booth, the checks of comfort and of loss, of gourds which spring up in a night and which also wither in a night!

Yes, fierce troubles will come to us, and they may bring us no benefit in themselves. It is a popular notion that trials sanctify those who have to endure them. But, by themselves, they do not. It is a sanctified trial that sanctifies the tried one, but trial itself—alone and by itself—might make men even worse than they are. Here, for instance, is Jonah. His gourd is gone and the sun’s fierce heat beats upon him and makes him faint. And even to the Lord, Himself, he says that he does well to be angry, even unto death. The trial was not sanctified to him while he was in it—and it often happens that “nevertheless afterward” is the time in which trials benefit us. “No chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” You may have ten thousand trials and yet be none the better for them unless you cry to God to sanctify every twig of the rod and to make the fury of the east wind or the burning rays of the sun to be a blessing to you!

It seems that, at the time, this trial only revealed Jonah’s folly, for it appeared to make him pray very foolishly and talk very foolishly. His trials were like the tossing of the troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt. This vehement east wind threw up great masses of black seaweed upon the shore of Jonah’s character and made the great sea of his heart roll up the foul mass of corruption that otherwise might have been hidden and still. Brothers and Sisters, unless the Spirit of God comes upon us in power, we shall not grow holy through our trials! Though we were washed in a sea of fire, we would not lose an atom of our sin by suffering! No, the very flames of Hell shall never purify a soul, or purge away a single sin—he that is filthy shall even there be filthy. There is nothing in suffering, any more than there is in joy, in and of itself, to make a man holy!

That is the work of God and of God alone, yet God overrules both our joy and our grief to accomplish His own Divine purpose by His Spirit. It is God who sends the wind, so, once again, I want you to pause and bow your heads before Him who sends all your trouble. Do not be angry with God for what He does to you, but feel that it must be right even though it should tear everything away from you, though it should leave you a widow and houseless, though it should strip you and though it should even slay you! God is still God and the deeper your trouble, the greater are your possibilities of adoration, for, when you are brought to the very lowest, it is then, in extremis, you can raise the song in excelsis! Out of the deepest depths you can praise the Lord to the very highest! When we glorify God out of the fires of fiercest tribulation, there is probably more true adoration of Him in that melody than in the loftiest songs of cherubim and seraphim when they enjoy God and sing out His praises in His Presence above!

IV. Now, lastly, I said that it was not verbally in the text, but it was there in spirit, that IN ALL THIS GOD WAS PREPARING HIS SERVANT.  
Do you not see that God was teaching Jonah by the eye and by experience? Unless the Lord had put Jonah through this process, He could not so well have argued with His servant. So the gourd must go and the wind must come, and the sun must beat upon the fainting Prophet—and Jonah, in his angry temper, must get to feel great grief over his poor gourd which had met with such an untimely death. And then God comes to him and says, “Are you troubled about your gourd? Have you pity upon a gourd and should not I have pity upon a great city with more than a hundred and twenty thousand helpless children within its walls, and all those thousands of unsinning cattle? Should not I spare these, when you would have spared this tender plant which sprang up in a night and withered in a night?”  
Sometimes God puts us through an unusual experience in order that we may the better understand Him. And sometimes that we may the better know ourselves! Men who are of a hard nature must have hard usage. Diamond must cut diamond, that at last the purpose of the great Owner of the jewels may be accomplished. Then, dear Heart, with your sore afflictions, God is preparing you to be a comforter to others! You distressed and troubled one, God is training you that you may be a very Barnabas, the son of consolation, to the sons and daughters of affliction in times to come. I would suggest to some of you here who have to bear double trouble that God may be preparing you for double usefulness, or He may be working out of you some unusual form of evil which might not be driven out of you unless His Holy Spirit had used these mysterious methods with you to teach you more fully His mind.  
I am probably speaking to some who are not yet converted to God. You have not yet believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet you have a world of troubles. You think that God is so angry with you that He means to destroy you, for ever since you have begun to think of Divine things you have had nothing but trouble. You have lost one dear friend after another. You have, yourself, been very ill, and you often feel very lowspirited and sad, and you say to yourself, “Ah, I am doomed to perish!” Now, I do not come to that conclusion at all! On the contrary, I thank God for your trouble, for I think that, as God dealt with Jonah to teach him a lesson, He is dealing with you to bring you to Himself! It was a good thing for Jonah when he had finished that quarrel with his God, for no good ever comes that way. What a blessed thing it would be for you, also, to finish your quarrel with God! Finish it soon, I beg you.  
How can you be reconciled to Him? Only by the death of Jesus, for God has given His Son to die for sinners. That ought to end your quarrel with God. Remember that blessed verse, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Turn to Him, then. Let the God of Love end your discussions and end your questionings! May His blessed Spirit come and sanctify your troubles and bring you to Himself! God bless you all, dear Friends, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**JONAH 4.**

You know all about Jonah’s refusal to go upon the Lord’s errand and how he was held to it, and carried to his work in a great fish as he would not go by himself. Somehow or other God will make His servants do His will. And the more speedily they do it, the better it is for them. You know also how the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah and how the Lord had mercy upon them.

Verses 1-3. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray You, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before You unto Tarshish: for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. “For, if I live, the Ninevites will say, ‘This man scared us needlessly. He is a Prophet of evil and he is a liar, too, for our great city is not destroyed! He frightened us into a kind of repentance for which there was no necessity, for his God does not carry out His threats,” and so forth. And poor Jonah could not face such talk as that. But, Brother, if you preach God’s Word as He gives it to you, you have nothing to do with the consequences that come of it! God will justify His own Truth. And even if it should seem that the worst rather than the best consequences ensue, it is still for you to go on in the name of Him who sent you. Whenever you and I begin to try to manage God’s Kingdom for Him, we find the Divine scepter too heavy for our little hands to hold. Our case would be like that of Phaeton trying to drive the horses in the chariot of the sun! We cannot hold the reins of the universe. And poor Jonah, wanting to manage everything for God, makes a dreadful mess of it and, in his anger, makes a very foolish request—“O Lord, take, I beseech You, my life from me.”

4. Then said the LORD, Is it right for you to be angry? How kind of God to speak thus gently to His rebellious servant. Are any of you given to anger? Might not the Lord say to you, “Is it right for you to be angry, so soon—so often—so long—about such little things?”

5. So Jonah went out of the city—When, no doubt, everybody would have been willing to entertain him, for all, even to the king, must have felt a deep respect for the messenger who had brought them to their knees before the Lord. “Jonah went out of the city”—

5. And sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. To see those 40 days out—half hoping, perhaps, that there would come an earthquake to shake the city down and then, under his little booth of boughs, he would not be hurt by the falling edifices! In as sulky and surly a spirit as he could be, he put himself to great inconveniences. The dampness of the night fell on him and the heat of the sun would soon wither up the branches. If, dear Friends, like Jonah, you need to complain, you will soon have something to complain of! People who are resolved to fret, generally make for themselves causes for fretfulness.

6. And the LORD God prepared a gourd and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd. Those who are angry with God show the littleness of their minds. “Little things please little minds.” So a gourd made Jonah glad.

7, 8. But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die—Jonah was soon up and soon down. Yesterday he “was exceedingly glad for the gourd.” Today he is fainting because of the heat of the sun! If we allow our mercies to become too sweet to us, they will soon become, by their withdrawal, too bitter for us. When we feel too much affection for the creature, we shall soon find a great deal of affliction from the creature. “The sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die”—

8, 9. And said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. He had got into such a bad spirit that he could even brave it out with his God! Oh, that we might be preserved from such an evil temper! It is well for us that, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” When a child is in a fever and says a great many naughty things, his father puts it down to the sickness rather than to the child. So it was with God’s poor fainting servant, Jonah.

10, 11. Then said the LORD, You have had pity on the gourd, for the which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh—“Nineveh, for which I have labored. Nineveh, which I made to grow. Nineveh, which has been many years in the building. Nineveh, which contains multitudes of immortal souls which will not perish in a night—‘Should not I spare Nineveh?’”

11. That great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand. This is always supposed to mean infants and I judge that the supposition is a correct one. So Nineveh had a population of over one hundred and twenty thousand who were under two years old. So it must have been an immense city. Who can tell the blessing that even infants bring to us? It may be that God spares London for the sake of the children in it. What a deal the Lord Jesus Christ made of children! He suffered the little children to come to Him and forbade them not. Does God care for children? Yes, that He does—and so should His servants! They are the better part of the human race! There is more in them that is admirable than there is in us who are grown up. They are, in many respects, a blessing to the city, as these six-score thousand little ones were to Nineveh. But how amazingly does God add—

11. And also much cattle? Does God care for cattle? He does! And how that fact should teach His servants to be kind to all brute creatures! There is some truth in those lines of Coleridge—

*“He prays best, who loves best  
All things, both great and small,”*  
for everything that lives should be the object of our care for the sake of

Him who gave them life. And if He has given us to have dominion over all sheep and oxen, and the birds of the air, and so forth, let not our dominion be that of a tyrant, but that of a kind and gentle prince who seeks the good of that which is under his power.

Here ends the story of Jonah which he tells himself—and he did not add anything to it because nothing needs to be added. The Lord’s question to him was altogether unanswerable and Jonah felt it to be so. Let us hope that during the rest of his life, he so lived as to rejoice in the sparing mercy of God. He had stood outside the door, like the elder brother who was angry, and would not go in, and who said to his father,” Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf.” But his father said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.”

I hope that he went in and I trust that Jonah also went in and lived with the penitent Ninevites, and that all were happy together in the love of the God who had been so gracious to them.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—106 (PART II), 212, 205.

÷Mic 1.2

MAROTH—OR, THE DISAPPOINTED

NO. 3184

A SERMON  
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**“For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.”  
Micah 1:12.**

The village of the bitter spring, for that is probably the meaning of this name, Maroth, experienced a bitter disappointment. At the time when the Assyrians invaded the land, the inhabitants expected that deliverance would come to them from some quarter or other. From the context, I judge that they placed some sort of reliance upon the Philistines. They possibly had some hope that the king of Egypt would come up to attack Sennacherib. Evidently they looked for help everywhere except to God and, consequently, as no good came to them from the men upon whom they had relied, trial and overwhelming distress came to them from the hand of God. He was angry at their trust in men and their lack of trust in Himself and, therefore, He punished their unbelief by their total overthrow! The Assyrian swept over them and stopped not till he reached the gate of Jerusalem, where Hezekiah’s faith in God made the enemy pause and retreat.

The fact recorded in the text suggests to us, first, sad disappointments—“the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came.” And secondly, strange appointments—evil came down from the Lord.” When we have considered these two things, we will change the subject, altogether, and speak about expectations which will not end in disappointment.

I. First, then, we are to think of SAD DISAPPOINTMENTS. “The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came.”  
Disappointments are often extremely painful at the time. Even in little things, we do not like to be disappointed. If our expectations are not realized, we feel as if a sharp thorn has pierced our flesh. But in great matters, disappointment is much more serious. In the case of the inhabitants of Maroth, it was fatal—they expected to be delivered from the Assyrians, but they were either slain on the spot, or carried away captive to Nineveh. It would be the most terrible disappointment of all if our expectations concerning our souls should not be realized! It would be painful to the last degree to discover upon our dying bed that the good we had looked for had not come—to find that we had built our house upon the sand and that when we most needed its shelter, it was swept away! O Lord, disappoint not Your servant’s hope! All my expectation is from You and You have said, “They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.” Any other expectation beside this, concerning our eternal interests, will only bring us pain and misery forever.  
Disappointments in this life, however, although they are at times very painful, are sometimes of such a character that could we know all the truth, we would not lament them. There are many who have looked forward to a change in their condition in life, or their position in society— and they have been disappointed. For a time they have been ready to wring their hands in anguish, yet if they knew what the consequences would have been if their expectations had been realized, they would fall down upon their knees and devoutly praise the Lord for the disappointment which had been so great a blessing in disguise to them! You, my Brother, had expected to be rich by this time, but God knew that had you been rich, you would have been proud and worldly and would have ceased to enjoy fellowship with him—so He kept you poor that you might still be rich in faith! You, my Friend, had expected to be in robust health at this time, but had you been so, you might not have been walking so humbly before the Lord as you are now doing. You, my oft-bereaved Brother, had hoped to see your family spared to grow up, so that you might have had sons and daughters upon whom you could have leaned in your declining days—yet they might have proved a plague and a sorrow to you instead of a comfort and a blessing. Complain not that they were taken from you in their childhood by that kind hand which made them blest forever and only deprived you for a while of their companionship, which might not have been an unmixed blessing to you. Rest assured, O child of God, that whatever happens to you is as it should be! Believe that if you could have infinite wisdom, and the helm of your life’s vessel could be entrusted to your hands, you would steer it precisely as God steers it! You would not always guide the ship through smooth water any more than He does. If you could be unerring in judgment and could be your own guide, you would choose for yourself the track which God has chosen for you. It is Divine Love and Infallible Wisdom that have ordered all things for you up to this very moment, so whatever your disappointments may have been, comfort yourself with the assurance that they have been among your greatest blessings!  
There are some expectations which are certain to be disappointed. When a man expects to prosper through wrong-doing, his expectations will certainly not be realized—at least not in the long run, however much he may seem to prosper for a while. When a man thinks that happiness can be found in the ways of sin, he will be bitterly disappointed sooner or later. When a man expects that by self-reliance he will be able to gain all that he needs without trusting to a stronger arm than his own, his expectations will not be realized. When a man is relying upon his fellow creature—when he thinks that the all-important matter for him is to have some rich patron or powerful friend—and he is under the delusion that he can do without any help from Heaven—he is sure to be disappointed! And he who is depending upon his own good works and trusting to his own unaided resolutions to hold on in the way of holiness will be terribly disappointed unless he repents before it is too late! There are some things which only fools will expect—things which are contrary to the laws of Nature, and things which are contrary to the rules of Divine Grace! The man who never sows good corn, but yet expects to reap at harvest time, is a fool and his disappointment will come in the form of thorns and thistles all over his fields! The sluggard who lies in bed and lazily says, “A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep,” may expert in that way to become wealthy, but Solomon long ago said to him, “Your poverty shall come as one that travels and your need as an armed man.” This is true in spiritual things as well as in temporal. God gives blessing to effort and diligence—not to idleness and lethargy!  
Besides this, in many cases disappointments are highly probable. Some of our familiar proverbs relate to such cases as these. One says, “Those who wait for dead men’s shoes are pretty sure to go barefoot.” Another is, “If they never drink milk till they get their uncle’s cow, they will be long thirsty for the lack of it.” Yet there are persons who waste a great part of their lifetime in vain expectations of what they call, “windfalls.” We know that the “windfalls” in the orchard generally fall because they are rotten and are not worth picking up! And other “windfalls” are often no more valuable. There are men who might have prospered if they had not foolishly sat down in the expectation that somehow or other, a great fortune would hunt them out and make them independent—such expectations are usually doomed to disappointment. If any of you have fallen into the pernicious habit of reading works of fiction and so have formed romantic ideas of what is likely to occur to you, the great probability is that your daydreams will be only dreams—and your castles in the air will never be inhabited by you! I pray you not to fritter away your time and opportunities in vain expectations which most probably will never be fulfilled. Expect to receive not quite all you earn, nor all you lend, and probably your expectations will not be disappointed, but, as another of our proverbs puts it, if you count your chickens before they are hatched, it is highly probable that your expectations will not be realized.  
There are also other expectations that will possibly end in disappointment. Even the most legitimate hopes are not always realized. “There’s many a slip between the cup and the lips.” When we feel almost sure that a certain plan will succeed, suddenly it turns out to be all a mistake. We think that as prudent men, we have arranged matters so wisely that they have to succeed, yet in the issue we are grievously disappointed. Be not hasty in condemning those who do not succeed in business, for at least in some cases, failure has come through no fault of theirs. Do not judge harshly all who are in need—no doubt there are all too many instances in which poverty is the result of idleness or drunkenness—but there are other cases in which poverty is blameless and even honorable. Men may toil hard, do the very best they can and seek God’s blessing upon their efforts—and yet they may not be permitted to secure a competence. If you, my Friend, reckon upon seeing all your schemes succeed, you are very likely to be disappointed. If you, my Christian Brother, imagine that between here and Heaven, the way will be laid with smooth turf, wellrolled, you will certainly be disappointed! If you think that the sea will always be calm as a lake and that no storm will ever ruffle it, you will be disappointed. There will be some things that will fulfill your expectations, but there will be others that will not—and in those you will be like that inhabitants of Maroth who “waited carefully for good, but evil came.”  
In every case disappointments should be borne with the greatest possible patience and equanimity. I am sorry to say that we do not all bear them so, not even all of us who profess to be Christians. Remember that God has never promised that all our expectations shall be fulfilled—it would have been a doubtful blessing if such a thing had been guaranteed to us—and we might easily have expected ourselves into utter misery! Who are you that everything should happen just as you wish? Should the weather be fine simply because you want it to be so when a thousand fields are gasping for rain? Should you have the channels of trade turned in your direction when if that were the case, scores of others would be bankrupts? Is everything in this world to be so arranged that you shall be the darling and pet of Providence? It cannot be right for such a state of things to prevail! Therefore, when we are disappointed, whether it is in little matters or great ones, let us bear the disappointment bravely and lay the whole case before the Lord in prayer. Let us ask Him why He contends with us. And if there is any reason for it which we can discover in ourselves, let us endeavor to remove it. Or if we can find no cause, let us believe that God acts in wisdom and in love—and let us cheerfully submit to whatever He appoints for us.  
We would bear our disappointments with all the greater equanimity if we would always remember that disappointments are often exceedingly instructive. What do they teach us? Well, first they teach us that our judgment is very fallible. We learn from them that we are not such prophets as we thought we were! We fancied that if we said that suchand-such a thing was going to happen, it would surely be so. But when the result proved to be just the opposite, we found that our judgment was not as reliable as we thought it was and, therefore, our forecast was quite inaccurate. So our disappointments teach us our need of greater wisdom than our own—and also teach us the folly of trusting to our own understanding.  
They also teach us the uncertainty of everything that is earthly. What is there, here, that can be depended upon for a single hour? The life of the most robust may suddenly end! The current of affairs may change more rapidly than the tide. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. The greatest wisdom becomes the greatest folly. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. If our disappointments teach us this lesson, we shall be well repaid for having suffered them!  
Let them also teach us to speak correctly, as Christians should. You know how the Apostle James writes, “Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow...For that you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’” Let our past disappointments warn us to speak with bated breath about tomorrow and the more distant future, and not to say without any qualification what we will do as if all time were at our disposal and we were the disposers of all events. Even if we do not always use the words, “If the Lord wills,” “If God pleases,” “If we are spared,” or similar expressions, let the spirit of them always be in our mind so that we do not think and speak unconditionally concerning the unknown future!  
Let our disappointments also teach us to submit—absolutely and unquestioningly—to the Lord’s will. We wish to have things in a certain fashion, but God plainly indicated that they are not to be so. Therefore let us cheerfully surrender our wish to His will. Surely, O child of God, you would not think of wanting to have your way when once you learn that it is contrary to your heavenly Father’s way! If you are right-minded, you will at once give up your wish and will say, “Not my will, O my Father, but Your will be done!” You will probably do that all the more decidedly if some disappointment has burnt into your soul the Truth that God is wiser than you are—and that His will must always prevail above yours. Stand to the surrender at all times and say to the Lord, “Show me Your way, and let me hear the voice behind me saying, ‘This is the way; walk you in it.’”  
Let me also add that disappointments may be greatly sanctified. They are not always so, for sometimes they irritate and so cause sin—or they create a murmuring spirit against God and so make us worse than we were before. But sanctified disappointments are part of that rod of the Covenant which is so beneficial in the hands of a chastening God. Sometimes a grievous disappointment has changed the whole current of a person’s life. A man was looking forward to what he hoped would be a happy marriage, but his intended bride suddenly died—and then he surrendered his heart to Jesus, who became the Bridegroom of his soul! A son had expected to inherit a large estate, but by some means the wealth came not into his possession—and when he found himself poor, he sought true riches in Christ! A strong man had hoped to build up a prosperous business, but he was unexpectedly struck with serious illness, his former prosperity departed from him—and then he fixed his hopes upon the ever-blessed Son of God and so he attained to bliss which no earthly success could ever have brought him! I remember meeting a man who told me that he could never see spiritually until he had lost his natural eyesight! And there have, doubtless, been many who were never rich until they became poor, and others who were never happy until their earthly happiness was blighted and blasted, and then they sought and found true happiness in Jesus. What a blessed disappointment it is that leads us to a Savior’s love!  
Disappointments are also sanctified to Believers when they help to wean them from the world. There is a sort of glue about this world that makes it adhere to us and makes us adhere to it. David found it so when he wrote, “My soul cleaves unto the dust.” Earth naturally clings to earth, but I will guarantee you that David cared little enough for earth when his handsome son, Absalom, became a rebel and when his house, which had been such a comfort to him, became a terror and when his subjects, who had almost worshipped him, joined in rebelling against him! Then did he plaintively sigh, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest.” Yes, disappointments wean us from the world and makes us plume our wings, ready to be up and away to that fair country where hope shall reach its full fruition and disappointment shall be unknown forever!  
Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, when we meet with disappointments in this life, we prize all the more, the faithfulness of our God! When you have had an unkind word from one whom you have loved, how much more closely you have nestled down in the embrace of your ever-loving Savior! When you have been betrayed by a friend in whom you trusted, what sweet communion you have

had with the Friend that sticks closer than a brother! When your gourd above you has withered and you have lost its welcome shade, however more you have prized the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land! It is a good thing for us to have all earthly props knocked away, for then we value more than ever the faithfulness of the God who never fails those who put their trust in Him. Those who always remain on dry land will never learn by practical experience what the sailors know—“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.” And it is when, like the storm-tossed mariners, our soul is melted because of trouble, that our dear Lord and Master, coming to us upon the crest of the wave, becomes tenfold more precious to us than He had ever been before! If our disappointments would only make us hold with a loose hand all we have—house, lands, children, health, reputation and everything else, so that if God should take them all away, we would still continue to bless His name because we never reckoned that they were ours to keep, but were only lent to us during our Lord’s good will and pleasure—if our disappointments only brought us to such a condition as that, they would be, indeed, most soul-enriching things!  
II. Now I must leave this part of the subject and turn to the second portion which is STRANGE APPOINTMENTS—“The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord.”  
This expression must not be misunderstood. “Evil came down from the Lord.” The word, “evil,” here means trial, affliction, chastisement, and to a Christian this kind of, “evil,” is often for his highest good! It does seem singular to a child of God that even that which he thinks to be evil should come down from the Lord. How can it be that God is loving and kind when He deprives one of His children of her husband, or takes away her babe from her bosom? How can it be that God is Infinitely Wise, yet He sometimes casts His poor weak children into difficulties where they are at their wits’ end and know not what to do? How is it that He loves the righteous and is gracious to them, yet He puts some of the best of them into the hottest part of the furnace and makes it burn most furiously like that of Nebuchadnezzar of old? If our aches and pains came from Satan. If our losses were the result of chance, or if our sufferings arose only from the malevolence of the wicked—they would be comprehensible—but it is oftentimes a marvel and a mystery to a Christian why the Lord sends the trials which lays upon him! Be patient, Brothers and Sisters! What you know not, now, you shall know hereafter—so be content to wait until God reveals the mystery to you if He pleases to do so— and then it will make you marvel that your Lord should have taken such pains in training you for the service He has for you yet to render Him!  
Perhaps I am addressing some child of God who is sorely puzzled as to why certain things have happened to him. But, Father, does your child always understand all that you do to him and for him? It was not long ago that your boy was sent away to school—perhaps he thought you unkind in treating him so—yet is was real love to him that prompted you to send him away from you to be all the better trained for whatever may lie before him in his later life. He does not understand all that is in your mind and you can never comprehend all that is in the Infinite Mind of your Father who is in Heaven. Be satisfied that whatever God does must be right.  
Yet, remember that in a certain sense, all trials do come from God. There may be secondary agents coming in between, but let us not quibble at them, or quarrel with them. When Shimei cursed David, Abishai said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray you, and take off his head.” But David said, “Let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David.’” He felt that he deserved to be cursed so he looked upon Shimei’s insults as being a form of chastisement from God. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick—but if he had more sense, he would try to bite you. And when we are chastened, it is foolish for us to be angry with the rod that God employs—and we dare not be angry with God! There may be sin in the person who causes us to suffer, as there was in the case of Shimei, but we must look beyond him even as David did—and learn what God’s intention is in thus chastening us—and submissively accept whatever God appoints.  
There are some trials which come very distinctly from God. Perhaps you have lost one who was very dear to you. Let it comfort your heart that it was the Lord who took away your loved one. There is an empty chair in your house and every time you look at it your eyes fill with tears—yet never forget that it was the Lord who called to Himself the one who used to occupy that chair. Or possibly your trouble is that you are gradually fading away by consumption or some other deadly disease. Well, if it is so, that is God’s appointment for you in the order of His Providence, so do not rebel against what is clearly His will. Or it may be that your trial is that you have struggled hard to gain an honest livelihood for yourself and your family, but instead of attaining that end, you are constantly getting further and further away from it. If it is so, look upon your trouble as coming from God and bear patiently what you are unable to alter!  
This leads me to say to every Christian whose trial is distinctly from the Lord—my Brother or Sister, this makes it all the easier for you to submit without murmuring at God’s will. When such a trial comes, there is nothing for a Believer to say but this, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” There may be cases in which submission will best be indicated by silence before the Lord. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord and there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, it must have been a terrible trial to their father, yet we read, “Aaron held his peace.” As if he thought, “Since God has done it, what can I say?” You know the oft-repeated story of the gardener who had a favorite rose, and when it was plucked, he was very angry. But when he was told that the master had taken it, he said no more about the matter. May not the owner of the garden take any flowers in it that he pleases? And may not the Lord take away His beloved ones from us whenever He chooses to do so? We ought not to be vexed with Him when He does so, but we ought to say with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” No, my Lord, I must not and I will not quibble at anything that You have done. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but let not man strive with his Maker. In our case, it would not only be striving with our Maker—it would be striving with our best Friend, our Father, our All-in-All— and that we must never do. So, if the trial has come distinctly from God, it should be easy to submit to it.  
And, further, if it comes distinctly from God, it gives us all the more powerful plea in prayer. One may plead thus, “O Lord, this trouble is not of my own making. You have sent it to me for Your own wise purposes— will You not bring me through it?” Another may say, “O Lord, I am very poor, yet this is not because I have been imprudent or extravagant, but because You have permitted it—so will You not help me in my time of need?” A Sister pleads, “O Lord, I am in deep distress. My dear husband has been taken away and I am left with many children and with very scanty means. But as You have put me into this furnace, will You not be with me in it and keep me from being consumed?” When a soldier is sent on a campaign, he is not expected to bear his own charges. And if the great Captain of Salvation has sent you out to fight for Him, He will meet your expenses. He will also cover your head in the day of battle and make you more than conqueror through His might. Did the Lord ever lay a heavier burden on any man than that man was able to bear unless He also gave him extra strength to enable him to bear it? Rest confident concerning the trial which God sends you, that He will also send you deliverance from it, or Divine Grace to glorify Him in it! If His left hand smites you, His right hand will support you. If He frowns upon you, today, He will smile upon you tomorrow. If He leads you into deep waters, He will bring you up again to the hills where He will gladden you with the light of His Countenance! The deeper your sorrows, the higher shall be your joys! As your tribulations abound, so also shall your consolations abound by Jesus Christ! The groans of earth shall be surpassed by the songs of Heaven and the woes of time shall be swallowed up in the hallelujahs of eternity! Therefore if in any of these senses evil comes down upon you from the Lord, I pray that He may give you the Grace to accept it and even to rejoice in it!  
III. Now we are to close by thinking of EXPECTATIONS WHICH WILL NOT END IN DISAPPOINTMENT.  
For instance, I expect, and so do you if you are the Lord’s children, that God will keep His promises. It is not always so with men, for they make many promises which they never fulfill. There are men who are so rich and so reliable that their signature to a check is as good as gold to the full value of the check—and God’s promise is His check which can be cashed at the Bank of Faith in every time of need! We are all too apt to rely upon our fellow men, even though they have failed us again and again. But we sometimes find it difficult to depend upon our God, although He has never failed anyone who has trusted Him. O Beloved, what wickedness lurks in that fact! If you believe every promise that God has given, you will be able to endorse the testimony that Joshua gave to the children of Israel just before he died, “You know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you and not one thing has failed thereof.”  
Then next, expect much from the merits and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have really believed in Him, expect to be justified by Him. Expect that He will answer every accusation that can be brought against you either now or at the last great Judgment Day. Expect also to be preserved and kept by Him. Expect that He will go before you as your Shepherd, making you to lie down in green pastures and leading you beside the still waters. Expect that He will plead for you in Heaven and that He will soon come to take you up to dwell at His right hand forever! You cannot expect too much of Christ—and large as your expectations may be—none of them shall be disappointed.  
And, Beloved, expect much from the work of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit of God has quickened you from your death in sin, what is there that He cannot and will not do? Are you in trouble? He can comfort you. Are you depressed? He can cheer you. Are you in the dark? He can enlighten you. Are you at this moment fighting against sin? He can enable you to gain the victory! I am sure that many of God’s children do not expect half as much as they ought from the Holy Spirit. They seem to imagine that there are some sins that cannot be driven out of them! They do not, in the power of the Spirit, put the sword to the throat of all their sins. Yet this should be the constant aim of every Christian—to drive out the Canaanites and kill the last Amalekite with the edge of the sword! The Spirit of God is able to subdue the fiercest temper. He is able to impart activity to the most slothful nature. He is able to repress the wildest and most evil desires. He is able to excite us to those virtues which seem to be directly opposite to our natural temperaments and characters. “All things are possible to him who believes.” If he will but wholly trust to the Holy Spirit, he shall be able to do great exploits in the war that has to be waged within his own heart and also in the fight against evil which is raging all around him!  
If time would permit, I might go on urging you to cherish expectations which are not likely to be disappointed, but I can only summarize them very briefly. Expect tonight that God will bless you as you offer up your evening prayer. Expect that the Lord will be with you tomorrow sustaining you amid all the cares and toils of the day. Expect for all the days of your active life that as your days, so shall your strength be. And when your declining years come, expect that consolation will be given to you to meet every emergency. In sickness, expect to receive sustaining Grace. In death, itself, expect the Lord’s very special Presence. Expect a glorious Resurrection! Expect the triumph that you shall share with Christ in His millennial Glory. Expect an eternity of bliss with Him as He has promised, and rest assured that none of these expectations shall be disappointed!  
I fear that there are some here who have no right to cherish any of these expectations. You have probably had disappointments about many things. I cannot pity you very much concerning the trivial disappointments of this life—but if you do not seek the Savior where He is found, there is a disappointment in store for you that might well fill all Christian hearts with tender pity and compassion. There is a man who has lived a life of selfish pleasure. He has been clothed in scarlet and fine linen and has fared sumptuously every day. But all of a sudden the voice of God declares that he must die. What will be his horror when he sees all his treasures melting away and himself doomed to depart out of this world as naked as when he entered it? Imagine the case of the man who has been what he calls religious, who has attended to all the ceremonies of his church, or who has been orthodox after the fashion of the sect to which he belongs—but who has had no new birth and, consequently, none of the life of God in his soul—no indwelling Spirit, no vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior! Yet he has expected to be ferried across the bridgeless river by one called Vain-Hope— and when the hour of death has come, God has opened his eyes to let him see his real position and the dread future that is awaiting him! Oh, the terror of that man when his vain and unfounded hopes are disappointed! We have read of some who have offered a great portion of their wealth if they might only be allowed to live another hour, but it was all in vain, for die they must! God save all of you, my dear Hearers, from such a doom as that! In order that it may be so, put not your trust in things below—be not like the inhabitants of Maroth who looked to the Philistines and the Egyptians to help them—and so waited in vain for the good that never came. But turn your eyes unto Him who says, “Look unto Me, and be you saved,” and then your expectations shall not be disappointed. So may it be, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HEBREWS 4.**

(This Exposition belongs to sermon No. 3182, Volume 56—“Boldness at the Throne,” but there was no space available for it there.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.)

Verse 1. Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Not only dread coming short, but dread the very appearance of it! Oh, that we might now enter into that rest and so clearly enjoy it that there should not even be a seeming to come short of it!

2. For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that  
heard it. [See Sermon #2089, Volume 35—PROFITABLE MIXTURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They were not united to it by  
faith. Consequently, as they did not receive the Word, it was taken away from them.  
3. For we who have believed do enter into rest. [See Sermons #866, Volume 15—  
REST—and #2090, Volume 35—A DELICIOUS EXPERIENCE—Read/download both sermons, free of  
charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Faith brings us into this rest, even as unbelief shut them out.

3. As He said, As I have sworn in My wrath they shall not enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. That is God’s rest, the rest of a finished work—and into that rest many never enter. The work by which they might live forever, the finished work by which they might be saved, they refuse, and so they never enter into God’s rest.

4, 5. For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, they shall not enter into My rest. There are many professing Christians who do not understand what it is to rest because the work of salvation is done. They do not even seem to know that the work is done! They understand not that dying word of the Lord Jesus, “It is finished.” They think there is something still to be added to His work to make it effectual. But it is not so.

6-8. Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, again He designates a certain day saying in David, Today after so long a time; as it is said, Today if you will hear the voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day. We read of this in the 95th Psalm, where David was urging those to whom he was writing to hear God’s voice, and not be like the unbelievers in the wilderness, so that the rest still remained to be entered upon by somebody. Joshua had not given them rest, or else David would not have spoken of entering into rest.

9, 10. There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God has from His. He says, “It is finished. I am no longer going to do my own works, I have done with them—I now trust the finished work of Christ— and that gives me rest. But as to all that wearied me, before, and made life a continual task and toil, it is now ended.” God is not a cruel taskmaster to His people. He gives rest to those who trust in Him—and some of us have entered into that rest.

11. Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Let us not repeat the story of unbelieving Israel in our own lives. Let us not live and die in the wilderness, but let us go in and take possession of the promised land, the promised rest, in the power of the Holy Spirit!

12. For the Word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This verse may be interpreted with reference to the Incarnate Word or to the Inspired Word—they are so closely united and related to one another that we need not attempt to separate them, but see Christ in the Word, and the Word in Christ—and learn that both Christ and the Word do for us all that the Apostle here declares!

13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. However great a revealer the Word of God may be, however clear a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, the God who gave the Word is even more so!

14. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. Shall we desert Him, now that He has gone into Heaven to represent us? Now that He has fought the fight and won the victory on our behalf, and gone up to Heaven as our Representative? God forbid!

15, 16. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are,  
yet without sin. [See Sermon #2143, Volume 36—THE TENDERNESS OF JESUS— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Let us,  
therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find Grace to help in time of need.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE NEED OF THE AGE

NO. 1952

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?  
Do not My words do good to him that walks uprightly?” Micah 2:7.**

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, what a stern rebuke to the people of Israel is contained in the title with which the Prophet addressed them—“O you that are named the House of Jacob”! It is as much as to say to them— “You wear the name, but you do not bear the character of Jacob.” It is the Old Testament version of the New Testament saying, “You have a name to live and are dead.” They gloried that they were the seed of Israel! They vaunted the peculiar privileges which came to them as the descendants of God’s honored and chosen servant Jacob! But they did not act in the same way as Jacob would have acted—they were devoid of Jacob’s faith in Jehovah, they knew nothing of Jacob’s power of prayer—and nothing of his reliance upon the Covenant.

The words of Micah imply that the descendants of Jacob in his day were proud of the name, “House of Jacob,” but that they were not worthy of it. Nothing is more mischievous than to cling to a name when the thing for which it stands has disappeared. May we never come to such a stage of declension that even the Spirit of God will be compelled, in speaking to us, to say, “O you that are called the Church of God!” To be named Christians, but not to be Christians, is to be deceivers or deceived! The name brings with it great responsibility and if it is a name, only, it brings with it terrible condemnation! It is a crime against the Truth of God if we dare to take the name of His people when we are not His people. It is a robbery of honor from those to whom it is due. It is a practical lie against the Holy Spirit! It is a defamation of the character of the bride of Christ to take the name of Christian when the Spirit of Christ is not among us! This is to honor Christ with our lips and disgrace Him by our lives!

What is this but to repeat the crime of Judas and betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Brothers and Sisters, I say again, may we never come to this! Truths, not names, facts, not professions, are to be the first consideration! Better to be true to God and bear the names of reproach which the adversary is so apt to coin, than to be false to our Lord and yet to be decorated with the names of saints and regarded as the most orthodox of Believers. Whether named, “the House of Jacob,” or not, let us be wrestlers like Jacob and like he, may we come off as prevailing princes—the true Israel of God!

When the Lord found His chosen people to be in such a state that they had rather the name than the character of His people, He spoke to them by the Spirit of the Lord. Was not this because their restoration must come from that direction? Was not their evil spirit to be removed by the Lord’s good Spirit? “O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that whenever the Church of God declines, one of the most effectual ways of reviving her is to preach much Truth concerning the Holy Spirit. After all, He is the very breath of the Church. Where the Spirit of God is, there is power! If the Spirit is withdrawn, then the vitality of godliness begins to decline and the energy thereof is near to dying out. If we, ourselves, feel that we are backsliding, let us turn to the Spirit of God, crying, “Quicken me in Your way.”

If we sorrowfully perceive that any Church is growing lukewarm, be it our prayer that the Holy Spirit may work graciously for its revival. Let us direct the attention of our fellow Christians under declension to the Spirit of God. They are not straitened in Him, but in themselves! Let them turn to Him for enlargement. It is He alone who can quicken us and strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. I admire the wisdom of God here, that when speaking by the Prophet, He rebukes the backsliding of the people and He immediately directs their minds to the Holy Spirit who can bring them back from their wanderings and cause them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. Let us learn from this Divine Wisdom and, in lowly reverence and earnest faith, let us look to the Spirit of the Lord.

In speaking to Israel upon the Spirit of God, the Prophet Micah uses the remarkable language in our text, upon which I would now speak to you. “O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to him that walks uprightly?” May the Holy Spirit help me to speak and you to hear!

I. And, first, I think we may consider these words to have been spoken TO DENOUNCE THOSE WHO WOULD CONTROL THE SPIRIT OF GOD. “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Can you hold Him a captive and make Him speak at your dictation?

On turning to the connection you will find that there were certain Prophets sent of God to Israel who were unpopular. The message which they brought was not acceptable—the people could not endure it and so we read in the sixth verse—“Prophesy you not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.” The words of these Prophets came so home to their consciences and made them so ashamed of themselves, that they said, “Do not prophesy! We wish not to hear you.” To these Micah replies, “Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened by you?”

There were some in those days who would altogether have silenced the Spirit. They would banish all spiritual teaching from the earth, that the voice of human wisdom might be not contradicted. But can they silence the Spirit of God? Has He not continually spoken according to His own will and will He not continue to do so? Is He not the free Spirit who, like the wind, blows where He wishes? If the adversaries could have slain with the sword all the messengers of God, would He not have found others? And if these, also, had been killed, could He not, out of stones, have raised up heralds of His Truth? While the Scriptures remain, the Holy Spirit will never be without a voice to the sons of men! And while He remains, those Scriptures will not be left without honest hearts and tongues to expound and enforce them! Is it possible for men anywhere to silence the Spirit of God? They may be guilty of the crime because they desire to commit it and attempt to do so, but yet, its accomplishment is beyond their reach. They may “quench the Spirit” in this and that man, but not in those in whom He effectually works. The Almighty Spirit may be resisted, but He will not be defeated! As well might men attempt to stop the shining of the sun, or seal up the winds, or still the pulsing of the tides, as effectually to straiten the Spirit of the Lord—

*“When God makes bare His arm,  
Who can His work withstand?”*

Jehovah speaks and it is done—who shall resist His Word? When His Spirit attends that Word, shall it fall to the ground? “My Word,” says He, “shall not return unto Me void”—and all the sinners on earth and all the devils in Hell cannot alter that grand decree! Every now and then there seems to be a lull in the history of holy work, a silence from God, as if He were wearying of men and would speak no longer to them. But before long, in some unexpected quarter, the voice of the Lord is heard once more—some earnest soul breaks the awful silence of spiritual death and again the adversary is defeated! Outbursts of the great Spirit of Life, and Light, and Truth comes at the Divine will—when men least look for it or desire it! When Jesus has been crucified, even then the Holy Spirit descends, and the victories of the Cross begin. No, my Brethren, the Spirit of the Lord is not silenced—the voice of the Lord is heard above the tumults of the people!

The apostate Israelites also tried to straiten the Spirit of God by only allowing certain persons to speak in His name. They would have a choice of their Prophets—and a bad choice, too. See in the 11th verse—“If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, I will prophesy unto you of wine and of strong drink, even he shall be the prophet of this people.” They had a liking for preachers who would indulge their lusts, pander to their passions and swell their pride with windy flatteries! This age also inclines greatly to those who have cast off the restraints of God’s Revelation and utter the flattering inventions of their own boasted “thought.” Your liberal spirits, your large-hearted men, your despisers of the old and hunters after the new—these are the idols of many! As for those who would urge upon men separation from the world and holiness to the Lord, they are Puritans and out of date! In Micah’s days, Israel would only hear false prophets—the rest they would not listen to. “What?” asks Micah, “is the Spirit of the Lord then to be shut up to speak to you by such men as you would choose? Is He not to speak by whomever He pleases?”

It is the tendency of churches in all ages to fetter the free Spirit. Now they are afraid that we shall have too many preachers and they would restrain their number by a sort of trades-union! In certain churches none must speak in God’s name unless they have gone through a certain humanly-prescribed preparation and have been ordained after a regulation manner—the Spirit of God may speak by the ordained, but He must not speak by others! In my inmost soul I treasure the liberty of prophesying. Not the right of every man to speak in the name of the Spirit, but the right of the Spirit to speak by whomever He pleases! He will rest on some rather than on others and God forbid that we should straiten His Sovereignty! Lord, send by whomever You will send! Choose whom You will to the sacred office of ministers of God! Among the poor and illiterate the Spirit of God has had voices as clear and bold as among the educated and refined—and He will have them still, for He is not straitened—and it is the way of Him to use instruments which pour contempt upon all the vainglory of men! He anoints His own to bear witness for His Truth by life and lips—these the professing church may criticize and even reject, saying, “The Lord has not spoken by these,” but the Word of the Lord will stand, notwithstanding the judgment of men! God’s true ministers shall be acknowledged of Him—wisdom is justified of her children. The Lord’s Spirit will not be straitened or shut up by all the rules, modes and methods which even good men may devise. The wind blows where it wishes and the power of the Spirit waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men!

Further, this people tried to straiten the Spirit of God by changing His testimony. They did not wish the Prophets to speak upon subjects which caused shame to them. They bade them prophesy smooth things. Tell us that we may sin with safety! Tell us that the punishment of sin is not so overwhelming as we have feared! Stand up and be advocates for the devil by flattering us with “a larger hope!” Hint to us that, after all, man is a poor, inoffensive creature who does wrong because he cannot help it and that God will wink at his sins! And if He does punish us for a while, He will soon set it all right! That was the style of teaching which Israel desired and, no doubt, they found prophets to speak in that manner, for the demand soon creates the supply! But Micah boldly asks, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Do you think that He will have His utterances toned down and His Revelation shaped to suit your tastes?

Brothers and Sisters, let me ask you, do you imagine that the Gospel is a nose of wax which can be shaped to suit the face of each succeeding age? Is the Revelation, once given by the Spirit of God, to be interpreted according to the fashion of the period? Is “advanced thought” to be the cord with which the Spirit of the Lord is to be straitened? Is the old Truth of God that saved men hundreds of years ago to be banished because something fresh has been hatched in the nests of the wise? Do you think that the witness of the Holy Spirit can be shaped and molded at our will? Is the Divine Spirit to be the pupil rather than the Teacher of the ages? “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” My very soul boils within me when I think of the impudent arrogance of certain willful spirits from whom all reverence for Revelation has departed! They would teach Jehovah wisdom! They criticize His Word and amend His Truth. Certain Scriptural doctrines are, indeed, discarded as dogmas of the medieval period! Others are denounced as gloomy because they cannot be called untrue. Paul is questioned and quibbled out of court and the Lord Jesus is first praised and then explained away. We are told that the teaching of God’s ministers must be conformed to the spirit of the age. We shall have nothing to do with such treason to the Truth of God! “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Shall His ministers speak as if He were? Verily, that same treasure of Truth which the Lord has committed unto us we will keep inviolate so long as we live, God helping us. We are not so unmindful of the words of the Apostle, “Hold fast the form of sound words,” as to change a syllable of what we believe to be the Word of the Lord!

Certain of these backsliding Israelites went so far as to oppose the testimony of God. Note in the eighth verse—“Even of late My people have risen up as an enemy.” It is sad when God’s own people become the enemies of God’s own Spirit, yet those who professed to be of the House of Jacob, instead of listening to the voice of the living God, began to sit in judgment upon His Word and even to contradict the same! The worst foes of the Truth of God are not infidels, but false professors! These men called themselves God’s people and yet fought against His Spirit. “What then,” asks Micah, “is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Will the Spirit of God fail? Will His operations on the hearts of men come to nothing? Will the Truth of God be put to shame and have no influence over human minds? Shall the Gospel be driven out of the world? Will there be none to believe it? None to proclaim it? None to live for it? None to die for it? We ask, with scorn, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

Brothers and Sisters, my confidence in the success of the old faith is not lessened because so many forsake it! “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which, by the Gospel, is preached to you.” If all the confessors of the faith could be martyred—even from their ashes, like a heavenly phoenix—the Truth of God would rise again! The Spirit of the Lord lives and, therefore, the Truth of God must also live. Is not all Truth of God immortal? How much more that which is the shrine of God! The Spirit’s witness concerning the sin of man, the Grace of God, the mission of Jesus, the power of His blood, the glory of His Resurrection, reign and advent—this witness, I say, cannot cease or fail! It is to be greatly lamented that so many have turned aside unto vanities and are now the enemies of the Cross, but fear not, for the victory is in sure hands! O you that would control the Spirit of God, remember who He is and bite your lips in despair! What can you do against Him? Go bit the tempest and bridle the north wind—and then dream that the Spirit of the Lord is to be straitened by you! He will speak when He pleases, by whom He pleases and as He pleases—and His Word shall be with power! None can stay His hand, nor say unto Him, “What are You doing?” Thus much upon the first use of our text.

II. The second use of it is this, TO SILENCE THOSE WHO WOULD CENSURE THE SPIRIT. Some even dare to bring accusations against the Holy Spirit of God! Read the text again—“O you that are named the House of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?“ If anything is amiss, is He to be blamed for it?

The low estate of the Church— is that to be laid at God’s door? It is true that the Church is not so full of life and energy and power and spirituality and holiness as she was in her first days and, therefore, some insinuate that the Gospel is an antique and an effete thing—in other words, that the Spirit of God is not so mighty as in past ages. To which the answer is, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?” If we are lukewarm, is that the fault of the Spirit of Fire? If we are feeble in our testimony, is that the fault of the Spirit of Power? If we are weak in prayer, is that the fault of the Spirit who helps our infirmities? Are these His doings? Instead of blaming the Holy Spirit, would it not be better for us to smite upon our breasts and chasten our hearts? What if the Church is not “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,” as once she was? Is not this because the Gospel has not been fully and faithfully preached and because those who believe it have not lived up to it with the earnestness and holiness which they ought to have exhibited? Is not that the reason? In any case, are these His doings? Can you lay the blame of defection and backsliding, of lack of strength, of lack of faith—at the door of the Holy Spirit? God forbid! We cannot blame the Holy One of Israel!

Then it is said, “Look at the condition of the world. After the Gospel has been in it nearly 2,000 years, see how small a part of it is enlightened, how many cling to their idols, how much of vice, error, poverty and misery are to be found in the world!” We know all these sad facts, but are these His doings? Tell me, when has the Holy Spirit created darkness or sin? Where has He been the Author of vice or oppression? From where come wars and strife? Come they from Him? Come they not from our own lusts? What if the world is still an Augean stable, greatly needing cleansing—has the Spirit of God in any degree or sense rendered it so? Where the Gospel has been fully preached, have not the Words of the Lord done good to them that walk uprightly? Have not cannibals, even during the last few years, been reclaimed and civilized? Has not the slave trade and other evils been ended by the power of Christian influence? How, then, can the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of the Gospel, be blamed?

Will you attribute the darkness to the sun? Will you charge the filthiness of swine to the account of the crystal stream? Will you blame the pest upon the fresh breeze from the sea? It were quite as just and quite as sensible. No, we admit the darkness and the sin and the misery of men. Oh, that our head were waters and our eyes a fountain of tears that we might weep day and night concerning these things! But these are not the work of the Spirit of God! These come of the spirit from beneath. He that is from above would heal them. He is not straitened. These are not His doings. Where His Gospel has been preached and men have believed it and lived according to it, they have been enlightened, sanctified and blessed. Life and love, light and liberty and all other good things come of the Spirit of the Lord—

*“Blessings abound wherever He reigns;  
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains,  
The weary find eternal rest,  
And all the sons of need are blessed.”*

But some have said, “Yes, but then see how few the conversions are nowadays! We have many places of worship badly attended. We have others where there are scarcely any conversions from the beginning of the year to the end of it.” This is all granted and granted with great regret, but, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?” Cannot we find some other reason far more near the truth? O Sirs, if there are no conversions, we cannot fall back upon the Spirit of God and blame Him! Has Christ been preached? Has faith been exercised? The preacher must take his share of blame; the Church with which he is connected must also inquire whether there has been that measure of prayer for a blessing on the Word that there ought to have been. Christians must begin to look into their own hearts to find the reason for defeat. If the work of God is hindered in our midst, may there not be some secret sin with us which hinders the operation of the Spirit of God? May He not be compelled, by the very holiness of His Character, to refuse to work with an unholy or an unbelieving people? Have you never read, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief”? May not unbelief be turning a fruitful land into barrenness? The Spirit Himself is not straitened in His power— but our sin has made Him hide Himself from us! The lack of conversions is not His doing—we have not gone forth in His strength. We shake off with detestation the least trace of a thought that should lay any blame to the Spirit of the Most High. Unto us be shame and confusion of face as at this day!

But it is also said that there is a lack of power largely manifested by individual saints. Where are now the men who can go up to the top of Carmel and cover the heavens with clouds? Where are the apostolic men who convert nations? Where are the heroes and martyr spirits of the better days? Have we not fallen upon an age of little men who little dare and little do? It may be so, but this is no fault of the great Spirit! Our degeneracy is not His doing. We have destroyed ourselves and only in Him is our help found! Instead of crying today, “Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord,” we ought to listen to the cry from Heaven which says, “Awake, awake, O Zion! Shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments.” Many of us might have done great exploits if we had but given our hearts to it. The weakest of us might have rivaled David and the strongest among us might have been as angels of God! We are straitened in ourselves—we have not reached out to the possibilities of strength which lie within our grasp. Let us not wickedly insinuate a charge against the good Spirit of our God, but let us in truthful humility blame ourselves.

If we have not lived in the Light of God, can we marvel that we are in great part, dark? If we have not fed upon the Bread of Heaven, can we wonder that we are faint? Let us return unto the Lord! Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire—and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord! He sets before us an open door, but if we enter not, we are, ourselves, to blame. He gives liberally and upbraids not, but if we are still impoverished, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss! Thus much, then, have I spoken, using the text to silence those who would censure the Spirit of God.

III. In the third place, our subject enters a more pleasing phase while I use it TO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD. My Brothers and Sisters, let us this morning with joy remember that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened!

Let this meet our trouble about our own straitness. What narrow and shallow vessels we are! How soon we are empty! We wake up on Sunday morning and wonder where we shall find strength for the day. Do you not sigh, “Alas, I cannot take my Sunday school class today with any hope of teaching with power! I am so dreadfully dull and heavy. I feel stupid and devoid of thought and feeling”? In such a case, say to yourself, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” He will help you. You purpose to speak to someone about his soul and you fear that the right words will not come? You forget that He has promised to give you what you shall speak. “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Cannot He prepare your heart and tongue?

As a minister of Christ I have constantly to feel my own straitness. Perhaps more than any other man I am faced by my own inefficiency and inability to address such an audience so often and to print all that is spoken. Who is sufficient for these things? I do not feel half as capable of addressing you now as I did 20 years ago. I sink as to conscious personal power, though I have a firmer faith than ever in the all-sufficiency of God. No, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! That promise is still our delight—“My Grace is sufficient for you.” It is a joy to become weak that we may say with the Apostle, “When I am weak then am I strong.” Behold, the strength of the Lord is gloriously revealed—revealed to perfection in our weakness! Come, you feeble workers, you fainting laborers, come and rejoice in the unstraitened Spirit! Come, you that seem to plow the rock and till the sand, come and lay hold of this fact that the Spirit of the Lord is Omnipotent! No rock will remain unbroken when He wields the hammer! No metal will be unmelted when He is the fire! Still will our Lord put His Spirit within us and gird us with His power, according to His promise, “As your days, so shall your strength be.”

This also meets another matter, namely, the lack of honored leaders. We cry at this time, “Where are the eminent teachers of years gone by?” The Lord has made a man more precious than the gold of Ophir. Good and great men were the pillars of the Church in former times, but where are they now? Renowned ministers have died and where are their successors? It is not an infrequent thing with the older Brothers and Sisters, for them to say, one to the other, “Do you see the young men springing up who will equal those whom we have lost?” I am not among those who despair for the good old cause, but certainly I would be glad to see the Elishas who are to succeed the Elijahs who have gone up! Oh, for another Calvin or Luther! Oh, for a Knox or a Latimer, a Whitefield or a Wesley! Our fathers told us of Romaine and Newton, Toplady and Rowland Hill—where are the like of these? When we have said, “where?” echo has answered, “where?” But herein is our hope—the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! He can raise up standard-bearers for His hosts! He can give to His Church stars in her firmament as bright as any that ever gladdened our fathers’ eyes! He that walks among the golden candlesticks can so trim the lamps that those which are dim shall burn with sevenfold splendor! He who found a Moses to face Pharaoh and Elijah to face Jezebel, can find a man to confront the adversaries today! To equip an army of apostolic men would be a small matter to the Creator of Heaven and earth! Let us have no fear about this. He that ascended on high, leading captivity captive, gave such large gifts unto men that unto the end of the dispensation they will not be exhausted! Still does He give evangelists, pastors and teachers according as the need of the Church may be. Let us cast away all fear as to a break in the succession of witnesses, for the Word of the Lord endures forever and it shall never lack a man to declare it!

Brethren, the great Truth of God now before us may prevent our being dismayed by the peculiar character of the age in which we live. It is full of a terrible unrest. The earthquake in the Riviera is only typical of a far greater disturbance which is going on everywhere. The foundations of society are quivering. The cornerstones are starting. No man can foretell what the close of this century may see. The age is growing more and more irreverent, unbelieving, indifferent. The men of this generation are even more greedy of gain, more in haste after their ambitions than those that preceded them. They are fickle, exacting, hungering after excitement and sensation. Here comes in the Truth of God—“The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.” Was not the Gospel intended for every age and for every condition of human society? Will it not meet the case of London and Ireland as well as the case of the old Roman empire in the midst of which it first began its course? It is even so, O Lord! Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted in You and You did deliver them! And we with joyful confidence fall back upon the same delivering power, saying in our hearts, “The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, He will bear us through!”

But, then, sometimes we are troubled because of the hardness of men’s hearts. You that work for the Lord know most about this. If anybody thinks that he can change a heart by his own power, let him try with anyone he pleases and he will soon be at a nonplus. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon—our trembling arm cannot roll away the stone of natural depravity! Well, what then? The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! Did I hear you cry, “Alas, I have tried to reclaim a drunk and he has gone back to his degradation”? Yes, he has beaten you, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do you cry, “But he signed the pledge and yet he broke it”? Very likely your bonds are broken, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He renew the heart and cast out the love of sin? When the Spirit of God works with your persuasions, your convert will keep his pledge.

“Alas!” cries another, “I hoped I had rescued a fallen woman, but she has returned to her iniquity.” No unusual thing is this with those who exercise themselves in that form of service. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He save the woman that was a sinner? Cannot He create a surpassing love to Jesus in her forgiven spirit? We are baffled, but the Spirit is not! “But it is my own boy,” cries a mother. “Alas, I brought him up tenderly from his youth, but he has gone astray. I cannot persuade him to hear the Word of God—I cannot do anything with him!” Dear mother, register that confession of inability and then, by faith, write at the bottom of it, “But the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.” Have faith in God and never let your discovery of your own weakness shake your firm conviction that with God all things are possible! It seems to me to be a fountain of comfort, a storehouse of strength. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel, nor conceive of the Holy Spirit as bound and checked by the difficulties which crop up in fallen human nature! No case which you bring to Him with affectionate tears and with an earnest faith in Jesus shall ever be dismissed as incurable. Despair of no man since the Lord of Hosts is with us!

“Ah well,” says one, “but I am oppressed with the great problem which lies before the Church. London is to be rescued, the world is to be enlightened. Think of India, China and the vast multitudes of Africa. Is the Gospel to be preached to all these? Are the kingdoms of this world to become the Kingdoms of our Lord? How can these things be! Why, Sirs, when I think of London, alone, a world of poverty and misery, I see the sheer impossibility of delivering this world from the power of darkness.” Do you prefer a theory which holds out no hope of a converted world? I do not wonder! Judge after the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears and the thing is quite beyond all hope. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Surely the good Lord means to convince the Church of her own powerlessness, that she may cast herself upon the Divine might! Looking around she can see no help for her in her great enterprise—let her look up and watch for His coming who will bring her deliverance! Amid apparent helplessness the Church is rich in secret succors. If the Spirit of God shall anoint our eyes, we shall see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of the Lord. Behold, the stars in their courses fight against our adversaries! The earth shall yet help the woman and the abundance of the seas shall yield their strength unto God. When the time comes for the Lord to make bare His arm, we shall see greater things than these—and then we shall wrap our faces in a veil of blushing confusion to think that we ever doubted the Most High! Behold, the Son of Man comes! Shall He find faith among us? Shall He find it anywhere on the earth? The Lord help us to feel in our darkest hour that His arm is not shortened!

IV. I must close by remarking that this text may be used TO DIRECT THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING AFTER BETTER THINGS. I hope that in this audience there are many who are desiring to be at peace with God through Jesus Christ. You are already convinced of sin, but you are, by that conviction, driven to despondency and almost to despair. Now notice this—whatever Grace you need in order to salvation, the Holy Spirit can work it in you. You need a more tender sense of sin. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can He not give it to you? You need to be able to perceive the way of salvation—can He not instruct you? You need to be able to take the first step to Christ—you need, in fact, to trust Him wholly and alone and so find peace in Him. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can He not give you faith? Do you cry, “I would believe, but I cannot tell how”? The Spirit will help you to believe! He can shed such light into your mind that faith in Christ shall become an easy and a simple thing with you. The Spirit of God is not straitened! He can bring you out of darkness into His marvelous light! If you are quite driven from all reliance on your own natural power, then cry unto Him, “Lord, help me!” The Holy Spirit has come on purpose to work all our works in us. It is His office to take of the things of Christ and to show them to us. Yield yourself to His gracious direction! Be willing and obedient—and He will lead you into all Truth!

Notice again—although you are under deep depression of spirit and you feel shut up so that you cannot come forth—yet the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. He is not weighed down nor discouraged. His name is The Comforter and He can comfort to purpose. Though you are, today, ready to lay violent hands upon yourself by reason of the trouble of your restless thoughts, yet is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Look to the strong for strength, even to your God. Does not the Lord cry to you, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else”? Your strength as well as your salvation lies in Him! When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Trust, implicitly trust, for the Spirit of God is not straitened! Your despondency and unbelief are not His doings, they are your own. He has not driven you into this misery. He invites you to come forth from it and trust the Son of God—and rest in the finished righteousness of Christ—and you shall come at once into light and peace!

May I invite you to remember how many persons have already found joy, peace and salvation by believing the teaching of the Spirit of God? In the text the question is asked, “Do not My Words do good to him that walks uprightly?” Many of us can bear testimony today that the Word of the Lord is not word only, but power! It has done good to us. The Gospel has not only been much to us, it has been everything to us. Personally, I do not believe and preach the Gospel because I have made a choice and have preferred it to any other theory of religion out of many others which might have been accepted. No. There is no other Truth to me! I believe it because I am a saved man by the power of it! The Truths of God revealed by the Spirit has new-created me! I am born again by this living and incorruptible Seed. My only hope of holiness in this life and of happiness in the life to come is found in the life and death, the Person and merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

Give up the Gospel? I may when it gives me up, but not while it grasps my very soul! I am not perplexed with doubt, because the Truth of God which I believe has worked a miracle in me. By its means I have received and still retain a new life to which I was once a stranger. I am like the good man and his wife who had kept a lighthouse for years. A visitor who came to see the lighthouse, looking out from the window over the waste of waters, asked the good woman, “Are you not afraid of a night when the storm is out and the big waves dash right over the lantern? Do you not fear that the lighthouse and all that is in it will be carried away?” The woman remarked that the idea never occurred to her. She had lived there so long that she felt as safe on the lone rock as ever she did when she lived on the mainland. As for her husband, when asked if he did not feel anxious when the wind blew a hurricane, he answered, “Yes, I feel anxious to keep the lamps well trimmed and the light burning, lest any vessel should be wrecked.” As to anxiety about the safety of the lighthouse, or his own personal security in it, he had outlived all that.

Even so it is with me! “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” From henceforth let no man trouble me with doubts and questionings! I bear in my soul the proofs of the Spirit’s truth and power and I will have none of your artful reasoning. The Gospel to me is TRUTH—I am content to perish if it is not true. I risk my soul’s eternal fate upon the truth of the Gospel and I know no risk in it. My one concern is to keep the lamps burning, that I may thereby enlighten others. Only let the Lord give me oil enough to feed my lamp so that I may cast a ray across the dark and treacherous sea of life, and I am well content. Now, troubled Seeker, if it is so, that your minister and many others in whom you confide have found perfect peace and rest in the Gospel, why should not you? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do not His Words do good to them that walk uprightly? Will not you also try their saving virtue?

In conclusion, just a hint to you. The Words of God do good to those who walk uprightly. If they do no good to you, may it not be that you are walking crookedly? Have you given up all secret sin? How can you hope to get peace with God if you live according to your own lusts? Give up the hopeless hope! You must come right out from the love of sin if you would be delivered from the guilt of sin. You cannot have your sin and go to Heaven—you must either give up sin or give up hope. “Repent” is a constant exhortation of the Word of God. Quit the sin which you confess. Flee the evil which crucified your Lord! Sin forsaken is, through the blood of Jesus, turned into sin forgiven! If you cannot find freedom in the Lord, the straitness is not with the Spirit of God, but your sin lies at the door blocking up the gangway of Grace. Is the Spirit of God straitened? No, His Words “do good to them that walk uprightly.” And if you, in sincerity of heart, will quit your sin and believe in Christ, you, also, shall find peace, hope and rest. Try it and see if it is not so. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Ephesians 3:8-21; 4:1-16.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—464, 958, 954.

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“IS THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD STRAITENED?”

NO. 2218

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, AUGUST 23, 1891, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1891.

**“O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Micah 2:7.**

THERE may be some who think they can convert the world by philosophy; that they can renew the heart by eloquence; or that, by some witchcraft of ceremonies, they can regenerate the soul. But we depend wholly and simply and only on the Spirit of God! He, alone, works all our works in us and, in going forth to our holy service, we take with us no strength and we rely upon no power except that of the Spirit of the Most High. When Asher’s foot was dipped in oil, no wonder he left a footprint wherever he went! But if his foot had not first been anointed, there would have been small trace of him and, unless we have the unction of the Holy One, and are endued with power from on high, in vain shall we seek to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, or to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that are bound!

We need the Holy Spirit to prepare us for our work. He first gives the desire to go forth to the field of service and only He can equip us for the fight. “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” Let us seek, then, to be charged with the Holy Spirit—to receive to the fullest the Divine influence—and go to our labor thus amply prepared. There is no preparation for the work of God like being with God! Go up into the solitude with Christ and then, when He calls you, you will be fit to go forth for Him and tell what you have seen with Him in the Holy Mount.

When we get at the work, our need remains. We long to see the people saved, but in order to that, they must be born again and this we cannot, ourselves, accomplish. Change a stone into flesh? Try that at home with a piece of stone on your table before you attempt it with the hard hearts of men! Create a soul between the ribs of death? Try that in a morgue before you pretend to create within a sinner, dead in sin, the spiritual life! Of regeneration we may say, “This is the finger of God.” If our religion is not supernatural, it is a delusion! If the Holy Spirit is not with you, you are like Jannes and Jambres, attempting to work a miracle without Jehovah’s aid—and you will be baffled and detected for an impostor. You will fail, like the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who tried to cast out devils. The devils do not know you—they know Jesus and they know the Holy Spirit— but at your idle efforts they mockingly laugh! Only those people who never do any spiritual work talk about what they can accomplish. When you get into the sacred service, you find how great your weakness is! You feel out of your depth when you come to deal with souls and you must have the Holy Spirit or fail!

We must not conclude that because so many good people give their time to God’s work, that necessarily the work is done. No, there is nothing done unless the Holy Spirit does it. We never personally go a step towards Heaven and we never lead another one inch in the way apart from the Holy Spirit! We must have the Holy Spirit and if we have Him not, all our machinery will stand still, or if it goes on, it will produce no effect whatever. I heard of a Christian man whose mill wheel was noticed to be in motion on a certain Sunday. The people going to worship greatly wondered about it, but one who went by set their minds at rest by pointing out that the wheel was only turning idly round because the water, by accident, was allowed to flow over it. And the man said, “It is very much like our minister and his sermons. There is no work being done, but the wheel goes round—clickety click, clickety click—though it is not grinding anything.” It also greatly resembles many an organization for spiritual service—the water is passing over it, glittering as it flows—but the outside motion does not join on to any human need, nor produce any practical result—and nothing comes of the click and hum—

*“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,  
With all Your quickening powers,”*  
or else all our service for the Lord is in vain.

I. The text asks this question, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” As we try and dwell upon it a little while, we remark, first, that THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY THE COMMANDS OF MEN, for in a previous verse we find that the people said to their Prophets, “Prophesy you not.” When men spoke in the name of God, these people had grown so besotted, through their evil doings, that they bade them hold their tongues! They did not want to hear any more about God. They had given Him up and they wished to have no more to do with Him! What was said by the Prophets was unpleasant. It provoked unhappy memories. It made them think of things that they would rather forget. So they said to the Prophets, “Prophesy you not.”

And here comes the question of the text. These men speak under the impulse of the Spirit of God. What do you think? Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened, shut up, put down, silenced by the commands of men? They thought so! They thought that they had only to say to these men of God, “Be quiet. If you speak again, we will put you in prison, or we will banish you, or we will cut off your heads.” By those means they thought to stifle the voice of the Spirit of God and make Him dumb in their midst! The question comes, “Have you done it? Can you do it? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

Beloved Friends, this can never be! The Spirit of God is not straitened, for any man in whom He dwells must speak. They may tell Him to be quiet and He may even, for a season, consent to be so. But one of old said, “His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing”—and he was obliged to speak out. If a man has made a message of his own, or if he has borrowed it from another, he may or may not speak it. But if God has given it to him to speak, speak it he must, and nothing can silence him! Throughout long ages men have felt moved of God to speak and they have had to speak in peril of their lives, but they have spoken all the same. When the light of the Reformation first came to England, those who received the Gospel were mostly very feeble folk. They felt the force of the movement and thought that it must have come from God, but they were not sure of their standing ground and the major part of them recanted when they were brought in presence of the fire, or even laid in prison.

Some of the best of them, during the early days of Henry the Eighth, having but a slight hold of the Truth of God, drew back, and the enemy thought that they would all be of this kind. And so he hunted and persecuted them. But, after a very little time, the very men who had been cowards when first they learned the Truth, were pricked in their conscience and they came forward, saying that they found it to be more unbearable to live after having recanted than they could find it to die—and in the power of God they stood up boldly to declare Christ! There was little Bilney, of whom Latimer speaks so lovingly—a man grandly taught in many things, but at first a trembler. He thought that he might be mistaken and so he drew back. But afterwards he gave himself up to die. And when opportunities were given to him to escape, he would not embrace them. He felt that he must die for his Master!

And there was Frith, who, when they brought him through Croydon and he was desired by the Archbishop of Canterbury (I mean Cranmer, who was in an almost similar spiritual state, himself, but then, by force of his position compelled to be a persecutor) to escape into the woods—the north wood or Norwood and elsewhere—made the notable reply, “The moment that you let me alone, I will go up to Lambeth myself. I am to die for Christ and if you make me fly away for a time, I will be back again, for I must acknowledge my Master.” The persecutors began to be surprised at this, but the reason was that the men grew surer of the Truth of God and, as they grew surer of it, they grew bolder to confess it—and confess it they must when once they felt the power of it in their souls! God will not leave Himself without a witness, be you sure of this, and if there should come a time of trembling, when even the brave hearts seem staggered and begin to fail, there will again come a time of confidence when men will step out and say, “I was a coward once, but now, in the name of the Most High, I will avow His cause and stand up for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the commands of men. He will make His servants speak!

Know, again, that if some of these servants are put to death, or silenced, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, for He will raise up others. He is never at a loss. They burned Huss, whose name was Goose, but he said that God would raise up a swan, a bigger bird than he! And that was Luther’s motto, his coat-of-arms—and they could never roast the swan, though they would have liked to have done so. Luther lived on, for God wanted such a witness as he and as long as God needed him, the hate of his enemies was vain! Thus it has been in all ages. Where did God find many of His first witnesses in the Reformation? In the places where you would have thought it least likely that there should have been any to bear testimony for Him—in the monasteries! He laid His hand on priests, monks and nuns—and He said to these, “Go and preach the Gospel of Christ” and they did it, and did it faithfully, even to the death. They fell before their persecutors, the Romanists, like mowed grass in the month of June—one swathe of martyrs, and then another, and then another—but though their enemies reaped on, they never reaped that field clean, for by the time they had got to one end, it was all green grass, up to their ankles again, at the other end!

God made men who could bear witness to His Word to grow faster than they could kill them! And so He will while the world stands. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. If the whole Church of God were to apostatize— and I should not be surprised if almost the entire visible Church were to do so, seeing that it has, to a great extent, done so already—it would make no difference whatever to the eternal purposes of God. Outside the professing church He would soon find His own people and soon build up for Himself a truer and better Church that would not be as the past, but would hold fast by the Gospel of the Grace of God with the energy and simplicity of faith. Therefore, fear not, but answer this question with confidence and say, “The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.”

But if those who believe in God’s name should die and if no more were raised up, the Spirit of our Lord would not, even then, be straitened—He could find other ways of reaching men’s minds. He could still speak by the Bible. Give us an open Bible and we shall never be in the dark. And He can speak by many a holy book that in the present evil age is despised. There are many good books, like the saints of old, wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins—old Puritans, “destitute, afflicted, tormented,” that will yet bear witness for Christ! Just remember how Guthrie’s, “Saving Testimony,” long forgotten in Scotland, was found by a shepherd lad, taken to a minister and read—and how there broke out, from the reading of that old book that had well-near gone out of date and notice—a blessed revival of evangelical religion!

And if all books were gone, the Spirit of God could act directly upon the hearts of men. He is not straitened! He can still call some Saul of Tarsus without a Bible and without a minister. And if the enemies of the Lord were so to conquer that the very name of Christian should be forgotten— still the Spirit of God could begin again and, out of nothing, “create a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.” Despair? What have we who know the might of God to do with despair? What have we to do, even, with doubt or fear? The Lord lives and His eternal Spirit will work His Divine purposes without fail.

II. Our second remark is equally emphatic. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY ANY CONCEIVABLE CAUSE—if not by the commands of men, certainly not by any other cause.

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by any change in Himself. The Holy Spirit, as very God of very God, might truly say of Himself, “I am the Lord, I change not.” He is today what He was at Pentecost, what He always was from that beginning which had no beginning. He is Divine, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, All-Wise, Infinite. He does as He wills. Therefore He is not straitened. He is not straitened by the spirit of the age, whatever that may be. I have heard a good deal about it and I believe that “the spirit of the age” is Satan. That is short and not very sweet—but that is the only spirit of the age that I know of. Ages have followed ages, but there has never been but one “Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.” He has appeared in different forms—the spirit of ignorance, the spirit of intolerance, the spirit of superstition, the spirit of envy, the spirit of infidelity, the spirit of speculation. All these work one and the same spirit, dividing unto his disciples severally as he wills. And though the spirit of evil is mighty, he must fly before the Spirit of God, who is infinitely more powerful and who is not to be hindered, hampered or straitened by the spirit of the age!

Certainly the Spirit of God is not to be straitened by the discoveries of science. Last night, I think, they found out something very new. They will probably be finding out something new tonight. With reference to my faith in Christ, it does not make the slightest difference what is discovered, nor should any true revelation of science unsettle any preacher of the Gospel. The more that is known of God’s works, the better! The more they are understood and rightly explained, the better! Let the Father’s Words be magnified. But the Gospel that God’s servants were bound to preach when our forefathers were in the utmost ignorance, is the same Gospel that we are bound to preach now, amid the dazzling electric light. If we had gone into the catacombs of Rome, illuminated by a few flickering lamps, we should have had nothing to preach down there but Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

And when we come together, now, in this enlightened 19th Century, we have still no other subject but Christ crucified, “the old, old story of Jesus and His love.” Modern discoveries need not make us tremble, for that the Spirit of God is not straitened by science is proved by the fact that the most scientific men have been subdued by His power. He is as able to convert the learned as the unlearned. He has often done it and we have had those who have seemed to know all about the earth and the heavens, too, who yet were little children at the feet of Christ. Where the Spirit of God comes, He is not straitened in that way.

Neither is He straitened by the worldliness of the great masses in the midst of whom we live. As we look round about on the people, we are almost broken-hearted about them and seem to think the world was never so hard as it is now—and that men were never so indifferent, never so wrapped up with worldly gain as they are now. Oh, yes they were! It is only another phase of the same evil. “The whole world lies in wickedness,” just where it has always lain. There is the same sin, the same hardness of heart, the same blindness, the same callousness—and the Word of God is as much able to work here in London as in old pagan Rome! It is as able to subdue our cities in England as it was to subdue Athens and Corinth and the other cities where Paul preached it. Let us have confidence that nothing about the people today—their poverty, their love of drink, their search after pleasure, their indifference, or anything else—has at all affected the power of the Holy Spirit over the minds of men!

And the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, even, by the skill of His enemies. Certainly they are now skillful beyond anything we have ever read of! We have those who pretend to preach the Gospel but, all the while, they are trying to stab it. They appear to give it a kiss, but they smite it under the fifth rib. Many, nowadays, claim to be evangelical, when they know that the very essence of the evangelical system is abhorrent to them. But the Holy Spirit is not straitened today, any more than when He met the sophistries of the Greek philosophers and overthrew them all! The simple Truth of God will win its way. The fog may darken and become so thick that a man cannot see his hand, but the Holy Spirit knows the road and He can see through the darkest midnight that the Church of God will ever have to endure! And He will bring out the righteousness and Truth of the Gospel as the light—and the glory thereof as a lamp that burns. He is not straitened by the skill of His enemies.

I do not know how to express all that I feel about this, but this I do know—that I cannot imagine anything that can really diminish the power of the Holy Spirit. If He is Divine, He is Omnipotent and, if Omnipotent, nothing can lay hands on Him to bind Him as the Philistines bound Samson. He would burst their bands asunder! He is the free Spirit of God and no power can hold Him—

*“When He makes bare His arm,  
What shall His work withstand?”*

III. But now I come to a very practical part of my subject, which is this—THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD MUST NOT BE TREATED BY US AS THOUGH HE WERE STRAITENED. How can we do this? In many ways. I mention nine.

If we act towards Him as if His holy Word would not, now, convert and sanctify, comfort and conquer, as it used to do, we are, in this, in a horrible position of practical unbelief! His holy Book, in days gone by, did great wonders. It was like Goliath’s sword, of which David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.” It was double-edged and even he that played with it might wound himself to spiritual death. Many have wrested the Word to their own destruction. “But surely the Word has not, now, the same power?” Try it! Give the Bible to the wicked, to the careless and the thoughtless. Read it to them. Induce them to read it and see if it does not still convert! When you are in great trouble, turn to the Book and pray the Holy Spirit to bless it, and see if it does not comfort you! In your darkest hour you shall find light in it! When you are ready to give up in despair, you shall be strengthened and return to your labor with hope, if you do but search it and believe its message. It is full of consolation.

Never think that the Spirit cannot bless the Word to you, as He used to do. He is not straitened. When you hear and do not profit, it is your hearing that is wrong, not His power that has failed. When you read the Bible and have not that enjoyment you once had, be sure that it is your own fault. The meat is as rich—you have lost your appetite. The Spirit of God is not straitened! There is as much Inspiration in this Book as when it was first penned. It is still Inspired and he that reads it aright still feels its inspiring influence, as God comes into his heart through His own Word. The Spirit of God in the Book and through the Book, is not straitened. Let us keep to it. Let us preach it more and more. Let us take care that our sermons are made out of the Bible, not out of our own heads! Then, speaking God’s Word, we shall see that the Spirit of God is not straitened.

We behave as if the Spirit of God were straitened, in the next place, if we conceive the present state of things to be hopeless. If you are ready to fold your arms and say that nothing can be done, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? The church to which you belong may be cold and dead and the ministry powerless, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Your own works seem to have no good results following from them and though you plod on, the service has become almost a monotony to you. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Perhaps I address some man, so far ungodly that he has no hope of salvation, yet still is anxious to be saved. Perhaps he says, “How can I ever become a Christian? How can I have a new heart and a right spirit?” Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He give you the tenderness you desire? Cannot He give you the desire that seems to be lacking? Cannot He give you faith in Christ at this very moment? Cannot He breathe into you, right now, that breath of spiritual life that shall make you a living soul, looking up to the Cross and finding life in the Crucified?

I pray, dear Friend, if you are under a horrible sense of sin—if you think yourself the worst wretch that ever poisoned the air and if you feel unfit to live as well as unfit to die—yet believe that the Holy Spirit can renew you and can turn the sinner into a saint and make you to glorify God even now, this instant! If not, you limit the power of the Holy Spirit and I come to you with this question, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” The case is desperate if it were not for the Divine hand. It is beyond all hope if there were no God. There is no balm in Gilead—there is no physician there—if there had been, the health of the daughter of my people would long ago have been recovered. Where, then, is the balm? Look upward for it! Where is the physician? Look upward for Him! There is the Christ of God, “mighty to save,” and there is the living Father Himself, and there is the almighty Spirit! Oh, that you would no longer be filled with suspicions as to the power of God! With God all things are possible. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Is the Lord’s arm waxed short? Trust that He can do all things and do all things for you whether you are a saint or a sinner! I shall have to come again to you with the question, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

Do you not think, again, that we very much act as if the Spirit of the Lord were straitened when we only look for little blessings? I am very glad to see 300 to 400 persons in a year converted and added to this Church and this has long been the case. But if I ever imbibed the idea that this were all that might be done, I would be straitening the Spirit of God! If you have had a number of conversions in the Sunday school—and I thank God that you have and you have never been without them—yet if you conceive that you have reached the maximum of success, I must come to you with this question, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” Dear Friends, there is no reason that I know of why the sermon that brings one sinner into the Light of God, should not bring a thousand into the Light, supposing a thousand sinners to be hearing it! The same power which saves one is precisely that power that would save a thousand—

*“The very Law which molds a tear,  
And bids it trickle from its source—  
That power preserves the earth a sphere  
And guides the planets in their course.”*

The same Law, the same Power operates to little and to gigantic ends. Oh, for a mighty belief in that God who “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”— and that Power is the Holy Spirit who cannot be straitened!

Why, then, should we not come up to the House of God with the prayer, “O Lord, work mighty marvels”? Is He not the God that does great wonders? Should we not expect Him to do large things? I know some will say, “Well, if I were to see a great many converted, I would be afraid that they would, many of them, go back.” But my experience tells me that there is no reason to believe that when many are converted there are more mistaken persons in the number, in proportion, than when few are converted. In fact, I think that I have noticed that the more that are received into the Church, the better is the quality. And the reason is this—that, when few are coming, there is a strong temptation to accept them with less discretion. But, when there are a great many, we can afford to be somewhat more rigid so that the more the merrier, and the more the sounder! I think that it is often the case. Let us believe that the Spirit of God can save a parish, can save a city, can shake London from end to end! Oh, that God would enlarge the capacity of our faith! “According to your faith be it unto you.” But we have not more than sixpenny-worth of faith and when we get as much as that represents, we think that we are getting rich! And yet there are mines of untold wealth of the Grace of God to be had. Oh, that we had the faith with which to take possession of them!

Again, dear Friends, do you not think that we also treat the Spirit of God as though He were straitened when we imagine that our weakness hinders His working by us? “Oh,” says one, “I have no doubt that God can bless a great many by you!” Well, dear Fiend, if you knew what I am often obliged to feel of myself, you would never talk so. I am the weakest of you all, in my own apprehension. Another says, “I know that I am inferior in ability, in knowledge, in opportunity.” Just so, dear Friend, and, therefore, you suppose that the Spirit of God cannot use you? Do you not see that though you think such a confession is an evidence of humility, you are straitening the Spirit of God? However weak and feeble you may be, He can use you! If you think that He cannot, you deprive Him of power in your apprehension. It is not yourself, you see, that you are lowering, you are really lowering the power of God! He can use a person who is very insignificant, very obscure, very unlearned, very feeble. No, He delights to do this, and He makes even those that are strong feel weak before He uses them, so that they say, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” He will use empty vessels and if you do not need emptying because you are already empty, then that is one little thing that needs not be done and God can begin with you at once! There is nothing in you—nothing! Now, if God will use you, He will manifestly have all the Glory. Believe that He can use you—and get to work and do something! Proclaim His Gospel! Tell it over and over again. Tell it where you have told it, or where you have never told it, and believe that God can use you—AND HE WILL! Otherwise, if you say, “He cannot use me,” I shall put the question to you again, “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

But I hear another say, “I think, dear Sir, you do not know where I live. If you did, you would not think there could be any very great blessing.” Where do you live? In No-Man’s-Ground? At the other end of the world? At Land’s End, just over the edge of the universe? Here is a word for the little places, little Churches, hamlets with scanty population, where only a few people come together for worship. Do not believe that the Spirit of the Lord is narrowed by the smallness of the place. Some of the greatest works for Christ have begun in hamlets and in small villages. The fire has commenced to burn there which has afterwards become a mighty conflagration, like the flames which are driven in terrible grandeur across the forests of America. It matters not how few begin, but where two or three are met together in Christ’s name there He is! And if He is there, He will soon, by means of that little company, be somewhere else, and He will make the fire to fly abroad to the utmost ends of the earth! If you have only two or three souls committed to your charge, you have quite as many as you will give good account of. Do not hunger for big congregations—hunger to save those you have! If the Lord will but bless you to the Sunday school class, or to the two or three children in your own family, you cannot tell what good will come of it, for the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the scantiness of the population!

A great many persons are guilty of thinking the Spirit of God to be straitened when they fancy that He must always work in one way. When I am seeing persons who come forward to confess their faith, I find they often begin by telling me how they were brought low under a sense of sin— and I like that old-fashioned way of conversion. But when I find one beginning by saying, “The Lord met me and filled my heart with joy and gladness under a sense of pardon, almost before I had any sense of sin, and the sense of sin followed after,” I say to myself, “Let the Lord do His work in His own way.” I am not going to make a pattern and lay them all on it and say that they must all be just that length, or else be stretched out a bit, or be cut shorter. No! Let the Lord save His own people in His own way! And if one is made to go down to the dark dungeon of law-work and gets whipped till he has not a bit of whole skin in his soul, I hope that it will do him good. But if another is gently led to Christ and does not know that there is a rod, but through love and kindness is led to rejoice in his Savior, I trust that he will remember it, and be glad all his days. Conversions are not run into molds. You cannot get a gross of conversions like a gross of steel pens. Each living child is different from any other living child. A great painter never paints exactly the same picture twice. There is always a difference, somewhere, be it ever so slight. And when there is a work for eternity done in a Church, it is done in very varied ways. If we begin to tie the Lord down to one way of work, we shall make a great mistake.

“Oh,” says one, “we meet together, a number of us, and anybody speaks who likes—and that is God’s way of working. I do not believe in a one-man ministry.” But we are in great danger of grieving the Spirit of God if we think that He only works with one set of men, with one order of government, or with only those who have none. Another man, who goes to hear one particular individual, says, “I am profited by Mr. So-and-So’s preaching and do not get so much good under anybody else. I do not like that other open way of worship.” Brethren, let them worship as they like! God blesses a one-man ministry and God blesses a twenty-man ministry. If the ministry is in the power of His Spirit, let it take what shape it likes. God is not bound by our rules and regulations—if you see God at work, bless His name that He is there and let Him work as He wills. You must not think that God works only on one set of lines. “Oh,” says one, “I always get a blessing from So-and-So.” Yes, you expect it, and you pray God to send it. “But I do not expect a blessing from such-and-such a man. He has such a curious way of going to work.” Very likely. God has some very strange servants and, may I add, He has some very strange children!

We have strange families, ourselves, sometimes. Some parents have very old boys and a number of God’s sons and daughters are the oddest children that ever were born. Yet He bears with them and surely we may bear with them, too. Some of the most useful people one has ever known have also been very eccentric and have gone their own way to work. If you do not like their way, do not go with them—go your own way. They will not like your way, but they must not blame you, neither must you despise them. As the Lord directs you and as you find the Word of God guides you, set to work for Him and believe that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! God blessed William Huntington, the coal-heaver, to many souls, though he preached a very strong Calvinism, while, at the same time, He was blessing some who preached a very weak Arminianism—but God blesses neither the Calvinism nor the Arminianism—but the Christ that is in the sermon! The true, eternal, evangelical Truth of God that is brought out, God Himself will bless to the souls of men! Let us not, therefore, speak of the Holy Spirit as tied to any set of men. “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

Once more—we act as if we did not believe in this Divine Truth concerning the Spirit of God when we think that some men are beyond His reach. Let us never imagine that those who have been sitting under the sound of the Word for years are so Gospel-hardened as to be past hope— or those who have gone deep into sin are too deeply-dyed ever to be cleansed—or those who have wandered from the fold are too far away ever to be recalled! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened, that we should despair of any whom God has permitted to remain on this side of His judgement bar? Have faith for the worst of men and the worst of women, too—great sinners, when saved, bring great Glory to that God whose Spirit leads them to the Truth.

And again, we may treat the Spirit of God as straitened if we cannot believe that He can bless us today. “I feel so gloomy,” you say. “I hope that I shall be better tomorrow.” Brother, why should you not be converted at this good hour? “Oh,” says some sister, “I mean to serve the Lord when I got a little older.” Do you? Well, you are a little older since I began to speak to you, and I think that your best time to begin is now. Believe in God’s nows. Believe that any moment is a good moment with God. “This day is a day of good tidings.” Why should not I, at this moment, dedicate myself afresh to God? Why should I not come to Christ, again, and ask Him to give me more life, more faith, more hope, more joy, more likeness to Himself now? “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?”

IV. On the fourth and last point, our words must be few, though the Truth of God affords much scope for instruction. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL PROVE THAT HE IS NOT STRAITENED and at the last all men shall acknowledge His power, whether they have bowed to it or not! He will be magnified in those who are saved and in those who are lost.

He will exact punishment for resistance . Those who now despise the messages which are sent to them will, at last, be left to their own devices. “My Spirit shall not always strive with man,” says the Eternal God. And continual rejection will, at last, end in the total withdrawal of His Presence and the eternal ruin of all who have resisted Him.

But notwithstanding the rejection of men, He will fulfill the Divine Decree. Man’s obstinacy shall not frustrate the purpose of God and the things which He has predestinated shall surely come to pass. In this shall be clear evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was not straitened. Not one of God’s chosen shall be suffered to continue in the way to ruin—they shall all be effectually called and enabled to embrace Christ as He is freely preached to them in the Gospel!

Thus, the third proof will be given, in that He will glorify Christ and prepare a people to welcome His Advent. The Gospel shall be preached among all nations and out of every tribe and people witnesses shall be gathered to await the glorious appearing of the victorious Christ which cannot be long delayed. Then it shall be seen how grandly the Spirit of the Lord has perfected both the number and the character of the Church, which, like a chaste virgin, shall be presented to the Lamb as the reward of His agony and intercession!

You that are not converted, but are longing to be, what are you waiting for, seeing that the Spirit of the Lord is thus always ready to work and will never be more able at another time than He is now? The great point with many is to precipitate decision, to bring them across the border. You are almost over it! You have often been so. You are almost persuaded. O Spirit of God, make them believe in Jesus now! May they turn their eyes to Him who hung upon the Cross and look, now, and live! What reason should there be why tomorrow should be better for repenting than today? In what way can 1892 be better than 1891? I am at a loss to think, but I can easily find a great many reasons why delays are dangerous, why delays are expensive, why delays will end in rejections! May God the Holy Spirit come and turn you to God now, lest, at last, you should share in that awful judicial blindness which falls on those who spurn His entreaties—lest the Gospel should be hid from you because you are lost—lest standing in the way of God’s purpose, you should be cut down as a cumberer of the ground! Lest, at last, you should miss being numbered with that glorious throng who are now being called away from their idols to serve the living God and to wait for His Son from Heaven!

Has He not said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? When may they come? Whenever they come He will not cast them out! What sort of people will He receive? “Him that comes”—any, “him,” that comes, no matter who he or she is! How do they come? They must just trust—trust Jesus! May the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Him now! The Lord bless you, for His name’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 4.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—454, 957, 972.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:  
During the past week MR. SPURGEON has not been making progress towards recovery. In fact, in most respects he has been going backward rather than forward. The increased inability to take necessary nourishment has produced great weakness and faintness, and left him very prostrate. As this note is being written, he appears to be again rallying. When weakest, he has been comforted by the assurance mentioned last week, that his life has been spared in answer to the prayers of Believers everywhere, and that the Lord will yet raise him up for further service. It may be many months before he will be fully restored and, meanwhile, perhaps the Lord will put the Church to the test and see how long His children can continue to plead for His servant who has been laid so much upon their hearts. “His ways are past finding out.” “He has done all things well.”

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2225 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A CLARION CALL TO SAINTS AND SINNERS

NO. 2225

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 11, 1891,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 2, 1891.

**“Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.” Micah 2:10.**

THERE is a miserable tendency in men to cling to things that are seen. Though that which we behold is only temporal and shadowy, lacking any true substance or permanence—though the things round about us can only endure for a little while and then will vanish away—yet we give our hearts to them and are ensnared by their false glitter and glamour. Like the poor birds that light on birdlime and cannot get away, we are entangled by the things of time and sense, instead of rising, as on eagle wings, to a higher sphere. Forgetting that the soul of man cannot be satisfied with the poor baubles of earth, nor his yearning heart filled with the fleeting joys of time, we often put away from us the things that are unseen and eternal. One of the most necessary words for us to hear at such a time is this, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

Suppose that the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt and were on the way to Canaan, instead of living in tents and moving as the fiery cloudy pillar guided them, had taken it into their heads to build houses and cities and temples wherever they stopped—as if they were to stop in the wilderness forever? Would they not have missed much by such a plan? In the wilderness, not only would all who came out of Egypt have perished, but their children and their children’s children would also have found graves in the desert, nor ever have seen the goodly land promised to their fathers. On the contrary, as you know, they lived in their canvas cities and when the cloud moved, every tent was struck, and they began the march. When the cloud halted, they rested under canvas, never knowing how long they would continue in any one place, always expecting that they would be on the move, again, seeing that they had not yet come to the land that flowed with milk and honey. They well knew that in the wilderness was no abiding place for them, for the sand which was all around them yielded them no meat—and if their food had not dropped from above, they would have had no supply from the barren desert. They were strangers and pilgrims with God—and sojourners—as were their fathers.

Now, our sad tendency is to be building cities, digging out foundations, laying courses of brick and saying, “Here I am going to rest. I have journeyed long enough and now I have come to a place where I can say, ‘Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take your ease—eat, drink and be merry.’” It is a sorry business when the heirs of Heaven wish to dwell in the wilderness and when men who have an inheritance on the other side of Jordan forget the land that God has given them by Covenant and seek to enjoy their portion in this life! We do not wonder that the ungodly do so—they may well make as much as they can of their little enjoyment here, for, unless they repent of their evil ways, that is all that they will ever have! I do not wonder that such as have their lot in this life should seek after carnal merriment, fleshly pleasures and the giddy dance. What more do they have? It is not astonishing to see the swine greedy at the trough, pushing one another aside as they struggle to get their mash. But when those who have been redeemed with a strong hand and an outstretched arm sink into worldly conformity, worse, because more deadening, than the slavery of Egypt, then, indeed, we see the sad havoc sin can work and mourn because of it.

Unawakened men have not a thought above these minor things and yet, if they could for once shake off the spell that has lulled to sleep their immortal spirits and turned them into comrades of the brutes, they would begin to feel that this is not their rest and would hear a voice saying to them, “Arise you, and depart.” Perhaps they would even answer, “I will arise and go to my Father. I will leave the husks with which I gladly would have filled myself, and I will eat of the bread, whereof in my Father’s house there is enough and to spare.” But the trumpet call to “arise” is not only needed by prodigals in the far country! Careless professors who once ran well, but have been hindered, and who now rest content with the world, as if they were to stay here forever, require to be awakened from their slumber. “Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” God means His Church to be a separated people on the earth. Our citizenship is in Heaven, yet too many of us and, perhaps, all of us, at times, fall into the ways of the unregenerate and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—even if we, ourselves, do not do them. Because of this slothful and carnal tendency, even in the best of us, it is continually necessary that the awakening call should come, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

I am going to talk, first, to God’s people and sound an alarm for them. Then I shall have a word for awakened sinners and shall also sound the trumpet in their midst.

I. First, I shall view the text as A CLARION NOTE FOR BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. As a soldier hears the bugle in the early morning and starts up ready for the duty of the day, so may every servant of Christ who hears these words, arise girded for service! The soldier, at the sound of the awakening call, must forsake the warmest bed and turn out to take his place in the ranks. With hope of a similar result would I sound the trumpet today. Let the clarion note ring out shrill and clear, “Arise you, and depart.”

To begin, I remark that there are occasions when this call comes especially to us. It may be heard in our everyday life above the din and bustle, but it is most needed when, perhaps, we are least inclined to listen to it. “Arise you, and depart.” This note needs to be sounded in the ears of saints when they begin to be comfortable. When you have been going up the Hill Difficulty with a very heavy pull, you have come to the arbor on the side of the hill which has a seat very hospitably provided by the Lord of the Way. There is a table put in front of the seat so that you can sit down and, if so minded, put your arms on the table and have a good nap. Now, these arbors are built for the refreshment of pilgrims, but they are not meant for them to sleep in! They may sit still and gather strength with which to go on up the hill. They may look back and be grateful that they have climbed so far. But they must not go to sleep! If they do, it will happen to them as it did to one Christian of whom Mr. Bunyan wrote, who lost his roll of assurance, there, and had to come back and search for it with many tears. If any of you are very comfortable just now and things are going well with you. If, after a long struggle, the tide has now turned and you are floating along without needing either oar or sail, I would caution you to beware—

*“For more the treacherous calm I dread  
Than tempests bursting over my head.”*

Dear child of God, when you begin to be very comfortable, unless you take care to be very grateful and sanctify your prosperity, you will be likely to drift into a sad state. I take down the trumpet and venture to come very close to you and, though it may seem a rude thing to blow a blast right in your ear, yet I will do it! And this is the sound—“Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.” God has given you many blessings, but you will turn them into curses if you make them to be your god. Jonah had a gourd, but when he made a god of his gourd, it was very soon withered! Take heed when all things go well with you here below, lest you begin to be glued to this world and find your comfort here. It will not do—God will not permit it! If you say, like David, in his prosperity, “I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong,” you may soon have to add like he, “You did hide Your face, and I was troubled.”

This note, also, is very necessary in the ears of Christian people when they begin to fraternize with the world. Nothing but evil can come of such association, for, “what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial?” But you will say, “We have had some nice company lately. We have invited to our house some very decent people. It is true that we had no family prayer that night—we could not bring out the Bible and read a chapter before them, for we did not know if they would like it. But, in spite of that, they were a nice sort of people. We are going to their house another night—we do not quite know how they will propose to spend the evening, but we shall have to put up with their way of doing things because, you see, if you are in the world, you must do as the world does.”

Now, Friends, I shall, without asking your leave, blow my trumpet on both sides of your head! And I shall give a very loud blast, too, as my friend, Mr. Manton Smith, sometimes does when he uses his silver cornet. “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted!” Beware when the world loves you, lest that which attracts them towards you is something that ought not to be there! Beware when men of the world are very fond of your society, for then surely you must have got out of touch with your Master, who says, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” It is well, if consistent with righteousness, to have everybody’s love, but when saints begin to be the admiration of the ungodly, depend upon it, there is something about them that God does not admire—there is an unhallowed conformity that is a signal of danger!

When the world patronizes the Church, the Church will need tenfold Grace to maintain her spirituality, just as on an ocean steamer any speed beyond a certain limit is only attained by an expenditure of power altogether out of proportion to the increase of the distance traveled. “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!” Such praise is not for good soldiers of Jesus Christ! If the enemy begins to love one of the king’s generals, the king may half suspect that his general is turning traitor. God save us from such treachery! “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” So again I sound the trumpet—“Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

Perhaps there are some who are neither beginning to be comfortable, nor to fraternize with the world, but to whom this trumpet note will still come with special emphasis, for the Lord’s people need this call when they dream of long life on earth. You may, perhaps, have lived a long time, now, without any sickness or illness. You are certainly getting a little gray, your hair tells of the passing of years. Still, your father lived to a good old age. So did your grandfather and you reckon that you, also, will live for a long time to come. You have heard, this last week, perhaps, of the deaths of several people who were younger than you, but you do not reckon upon dying. Far from it—you have not even made your will yet, nor have you anything in order for your departure. A long stretch of health has a tendency to make us think that we are immortal. But though we may imagine this to be the case, the worms do not think so! The wood which will make your coffin may already be sawn and the linen which will be your shroud may be all ready. There is a spot of land where you must lie unless the Lord should suddenly come to His Temple. Here, certainly, we have no continuing city and, therefore, we ought not to make this world our rest.

Dear Friends who have been here one Sabbath have been called away before the next came round—and some who have seemed to be best in health have been the very persons who have gone first. Therefore, my Soul, stand on tiptoe—be not flat-footed as some beasts are—have your wings always ready for flight so that if your Lord should come at cockcrow, or at daybreak, or at midnight, you shall be equally ready, at His bidding, to be up and away! I sound for myself and for my beloved friends, this clarion note—“Boot and saddle, up and prepare! Arise you, and depart.” To whom that note may come with greatest point I cannot tell, for I am no Prophet, but let it come to us all. Let none of us begin to strike root here below, for this is not our rest!

Having thus sounded this note, I make a second remark. There is an argument by which this call is greatly strengthened. The bugle note “Arise you, and depart,” is made doubly shrill by the statement that follows, “This is not your rest.” You see, that is given as a reason for our action. The word, “for,” which joins these two clauses of the text, is being used in the sense of, “because.” At times this argument appeals to us with special force. Of this reason and these seasons let me now speak.

Remember, child of God, that you have a rest of another sort. “This is not your rest.” “There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God.” That happy home, that flourishing business is not to be your abiding place. You would not like the change, I am sure, if the best portion here below might be yours forever instead of your dwelling place up above—

*“Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys,  
The glories of the place  
Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams  
Of His overflowing Grace.”*

What must it be to be there, where saints and angels find a Heaven in beholding the face of the Lord of Glory and paying their humble adoration before Him! O Sirs, if we had a palace here, below, and parks and gardens reaching too far for a man to travel through them in a day—yes, if we had all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—we would not even, then, say, “This is our rest,” nor consent to exchange Heaven for such things as these! What is there that we could possess on this round globe, with all its treasures, at all comparable with the eternal felicity, the rivers of pleasure that are at God’s right hand forevermore? As you attempt to make the comparison, you will, each one of you, say, “I must not and I cannot cleave to these poor things below, for my rest is not here. Thank God that it is not here!”

I think you will hear this call very distinctly when troubles come. When a man begins to have pain of body. When the one who is dearer to him than his life, sickens before him and is carried to the grave. When everything goes amiss with him in business and daily life, he does not, then, so much need my trumpet, for he already has heard the call sounding very loudly and there are many things saying to him, “This is not your rest.” He knows that it is not! He is so troubled that he begins to let loose of all earthly things. He is like one at sea, tossed up and down with the billows—wave upon wave comes rolling over him and he says, “Now I clearly see that this is not my rest.” Come, then, tried child of God, at this moment! Let this Word of God sound as sweet music to you rather than as a disturbing trumpet blast. Let it be as a heart-note that can lull you to peace. “This is not your rest.” Do not wonder, therefore, if you find thorns and thistles growing here—your paradise lies in another land where no thorn or trial shall be brought forth to trouble and annoy you—

*“There everlasting spring abides  
And never-withering flowers.  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours.”*

The troubles of this life cause us to hasten forward to cross that Jordan and the call is thus all the more powerful. “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

We hear this same note when success is enjoyed. I think that the time in which I have been most humbled before God and in which I have been lowest in spirit, is the time when mercies have been multiplied and I have met with some great success. Though it seems very strange, I look back upon the hours which have immediately followed some great triumph in the service of my Lord as the saddest which I have spent. I could fight my Lord’s battles with both hands, but when the day was won, those same hands seemed nerveless. When this House of Prayer was being built, I was able to face every difficulty, as it arose, full of earnestness, zeal and with unshaken confidence! But when the place was opened and the work completed, I felt like Elijah who was faint after he had done the Master’s service with the priests of Baal.

Ah, dear Friends, God has only to give you what you want to make you feel the emptiness of it! If you are His child, the more you have the less you will see in it. The child of God who has possessions in this life, is just the man who says, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!” When you look at that which has been bestowed, you say, “Why was I so anxious to get this? I thank God for it, as His gift, but there is nothing in it apart from His giving it to me! Toil and trouble and care come with increase of goods. This, this is not my rest.” If any young man here thinks that if he gets on in business and reaches a point when he can retire upon a competence, he will then have reached his rest, he is very greatly mistaken! If he is a child of God and if he gets all that his heart wishes for, he will find that there is nothing satisfying in it whatever. There is, in God, an all-sufficiency, but in all the things of this life, apart from the Grace of God, there is no solid satisfaction or rest!

Beloved, I am sure that we feel that this is not our rest when we have gracious seasons. Do we not sometimes sit in this House of Prayer and feel as if we would like to sit here forever? Last Sunday morning, when I had done preaching, Brother Stott said that he did not want to go. He said that his willing soul would stay in such a frame as this and I suspect that there were a great many more in the congregation who, like the preacher, felt the same! A Brother was describing to me the effect of a certain amusement upon him—a very proper amusement in which there was no wrong whatever—but he said, “Well, you know, I felt like a man who had gone out of a warm house into the cold. There was nothing in it for me, though I saw others very much enjoying it. But I have been used to better things than that and I cannot get on with it.” I believe that such is the experience of all God’s people who delight themselves in Him, with reference to the pleasures of the worldly.

You will generally notice that when the Believer gets near to God, tastes the unseen joys and eats the bread that was made in Heaven, all the feasts of earth, all its amusements and all its glories seem very flat, stale and unprofitable! It is like drinking ditch water after having slaked your thirst from the cool brooks that come from the snows of Lebanon! After having laid our heads on Jesus’ bosom, we feel, with regard to the world, “No, this is not our rest.” We have laid hold on something better, more substantial, more satisfying and enduring—and when we come to the best the world can give, we, somehow, turn our backs upon it and cry—“This is not our rest.”

Surely we feel this strongly and hear very clearly the clarion note, “Arise you, and depart,” when our many friends are taken Home. I can scarcely look upon any part of the Tabernacle without saying to myself, “Such a friend used to sit there, and such a friend there, and here, behind me, certain of my kind and good Elders and Deacons used to sit.” I cannot look round without missing many. When you got well on in years, you will find that your best friends are on the other side of the river and that some of the dearest you have had are gone before you. When you think of it, you say to yourself, “I, too, must arise and depart; for this is not my rest.” I have heard that sailors, when they leave England, drink to the health of those they leave behind them till they get a certain distance. And within so many weeks of the port to which they are sailing they change the toast and drink to the health of those that are before them, whom they hope soon to see. It might be better for the sailors and none the worse for their friends if they grasped the idea that such drinking tends to the health of neither, but such I understand is their custom and, undoubtedly there is such a change of outlook in the Christian life. I have nearly reached that state in which I am thinking more of those before me than of those behind me or with me! We are looking forward to the grand reunion when those who went before us shall again appear and we shall, with them, be welcomed by our Lord into everlasting habitations! With such anticipations we can rejoice to hear the bugle sound again and again, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”

In the third place, notice that there is a fact by which this call is further enforced. In the text there is another expression which puts confidence into this bugle note and gives us a new reason for continuing our pilgrim march. The reasons which exist in ourselves for answering the trumpet call are not the only ones—others may be found all around us—and I ask your attention to this for a moment. “This is not your rest: because it is polluted.” You cannot go out into the world without feeling that it is polluted—therefore heed well the Word of God which comes to you, “Arise you and depart.”

The call receives new strength by the pollution which is around us. Where do you live? You are a very happy man if you live in a part of London which is not defiled. Can you go down any of our streets without hearing conversation that makes you feel that the place is polluted? This region, indeed, I may say with deep sorrow, is polluted! And there are still lower depths. The newspapers bear daily testimony to the awful extent the pollution has reached. And the terrible poison seems to be continually spreading. Do you not feel, if you know anything of the Grace of God, that you cannot forever live in the midst of such evil? Even Lot, among the people of Sodom, “dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.” To him, one day, there came, by angelic messengers, the call to arise and depart! In his heart of hearts he must have been glad to get away! We, too, because of the pollution that surrounds us, should learn that this is not our rest.

But what shall I say of the way in which the call is enforced by the pollution which comes home to us, even the defilement of our own house, of our own business and of our own daily experience? I am sure that if you look well into it, you will see sin in even your holy things! And if there is sin in your holy things, certainly there will be much that grieves God and should grieve you in your ordinary daily life. Within your domestic circle you may have those that make you feel, “This is not your rest: because it is polluted.” You have those whom you love, for whom you pray with deep anxiety, who make you often realize that your relationships in life are both strained and stained. How many a godly man has to say with David, “Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure”! Yes, this is not our rest—the evil comes into such close contact with us that we long to be away from it all! We seek to arise and depart from the pollution which seems to cling to us like a wet garment. Thus the call is greatly enforced.

It becomes more forcible because of the holiness for which we sigh. Look at your own heart. Examine your own thoughts, your own words and even those actions which are right in motive. How often pride comes in! You say to yourselves, “I did that very well, indeed,” and then the good deed becomes polluted, for you trust in yourself and distrust God. And the little self-confidence, or the little lack of faith in God will soon pollute that which you bring to the Lord. Oh, no, we can never rest till we got where there is no sin!—

*“Then shall I see, hear and know  
All I desired or wished below,”*  
but we shall never be content until we get up where Satan cannot tempt and where corruption will be done with forever—  
*“Far from a world of grief and sin!*

*With God eternally shut in!”*  
Blow the bugle again! Ring out the note with clarion clearness—“Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted.”

In the fourth place, we must not forgot that there is a danger by which this call is rendered loudest. There is one more note that gives new intensity to it, when it is added, “Because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.” Upon this I will say to the children of God that the things of this world are our destruction. There is nothing here that helps us on our way to God. It is a wilderness at the very best—

*“Pricking thorns through all the ground,  
And mortal poisons grow.  
And all the rivers that are found  
With dangerous waters flow.”*

God keeps His own and preserves them to the end, but they get nothing out of this world save the discipline of avoiding it. Vain world! It is no friend to Grace! It does not help us on to God. Were it not for Grace, it would be our destruction!  
Look at the temptations around you. Are you ever forced to cry, “Good

Lord, help me”? Remember Bunyan’s pilgrim, Mr. Stand-Fast, when Madame Bubble encountered him? It was on the Enchanted Ground that she met him and offered him her purse and all manner of carnal delights. What did poor Stand-Fast do? In an agony he fell down and prayed! Because he was poor, he was tempted by her purse and his heart began to go after vanity—what could he do but kneel down and pray? Ah, this is not your rest! It is a place for wrestling rather than for resting! A place for prayer, not for sleep! It is not your rest, for it is polluted and, “because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction,” unless the Grace of God shall prevent it! Does not this consideration make the call become very loud?

Have you not felt the deadening influence of the world? Can you busy people be up and down the city, or in your shops all day, without feeling that these things tend to harden you? Grace comes in and raises you above it, but the thing, itself, and the care and the thought that you are obliged to give to it have a tendency to make you sink instead of rise. How grateful you ought to be for your Sabbaths! And how thankful you should be for this little sanctuary in the middle of the week, this appointed evening when you can steal away and shake the earth off your feet and brush the dust from your clothes and go back to your toil refreshed and strengthened! God grant us Grace to live above the world! The world, itself, will not help us—it will be our destruction if we do not arise and join the company who “Ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.” Thus the call waxes long and loud.

But it becomes loudest of all when we have to always mourn the fatal effect of worldliness in others. When I look over the Church Book, sometimes I cannot help shedding tears. There is the name of a Brother who used to pray so sweetly—where has he gone? There is the name of a Sister who used to be one of the most earnest followers of Christ—where is she now? I should hardly like to know where they are and yet they did once seem to run well. I remember a Brother who fell into gross sin, of whom I never heard any more, and one said, “If that man is not a child of God, I am not one, myself.” I could not help saying, “Hush, hush! Do not talk of staking your soul against any other man’s. You know but little about yourself and you do not know anything about him.”

I do not like to hear such a thing said and yet I have known some of whom I could almost have said the same! We have thought, “He must be a child of God” but, after all, the man has turned aside to crooked ways and proved that he never had the Grace of God in his heart. Ah, dear Friends, while those things happen, “this is not your rest.” As well seek for shelter in an enemy’s country, or seek rest in a storm at sea, as expect to find anything like rest here. No, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction,” unless the God of Infinite Love and Mercy shall keep you as the apple of His eye!

Thus I have spoken to those who are Believers in Christ. God bless them! Now I turn to others for the few minutes that remain.  
II. Secondly, my text may be viewed as AN AWAKENING NOTE FOR AWAKENED SINNERS. “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.” In dealing with this head, I want to say a word to those who are thoughtful, but are not yet Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire to take my silver trumpet and come to each one of you and sound in your ear that same note which I tried to sound in the ears of God’s people. “Arise you, and depart.” Get up! Sleep no more! Lie in indifference no longer! God help you to say, “I will arise and go to my Father”! You must clear out of your present position or you will be lost. The name of the place where you now dwell is the City of Destruction and if you would escape, you must run from it. Flee from the wrath to come!  
You are called upon to depart from sin and self. You must, through Divine Grace, be ready to quit self and the righteousness that is of self—and sin and the follies that go with sin. “Arise you, and depart.” O man, or woman, if you stay where you are by nature, you stay in a land which, like Sodom and Gomorrah, is given up to destruction by fire from Heaven! “Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.” You that are in a state of nature, a state of guilt and condemnation, arise you and depart. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”  
And here is the reason why you should thus arise and depart—you have found no rest in the world—“This is not your rest.” I put it to you— have you found any true peace in the ways of sin? Ah, if you have been awakened to see your state before God, you know that you are not happy! How can you be? An immortal soul contort with mortal things? “Too low they build who build beneath the stars.” He has a poor treasury who has not a treasury in Heaven. If all your possessions are here, it is a poor all, for you lose it when you die, or it may at any moment be taken from you while you live. You now have no rest. You know many men and women who may enjoy themselves as much as they can, so far as means are concerned, but they never really enjoy themselves at all. They used to get pleasure when they were younger, but now they go to the same places and they come away dissatisfied. I am glad of it. I am glad that the Lord will not allow them to find satisfaction in the joys of this life.  
And if you had a rest, here, you would soon have to leave it. What if you had to leave all you have tonight? What if, tonight, instead of my voice, it should be the angel who should sound the trumpet, “Arise you, and depart”? What if, instead of going home tonight, you went into the eternal state to meet your God and Judge? How would it be with you? How can you rest if you are unable to give a joyful answer to these questions? You are hanging over the mouth of Hell by a single thread and that thread is breaking! Only a gasp for breath, only a stopping of the heart for a single moment and you will be in an eternal world, without God, without hope, without forgiveness! Oh, can you face it? I pray God that you may not have a bronze countenance, but may feel that it is time for you to listen to the voice that says, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.”  
But another reason why you should hasten to flee is because of the sins of your life. You have polluted it. And what happens to you? Why, the older you get, the more polluted you are! What a mercy it is that men do not live eight or nine hundred years, now, as they used to do! What monsters of sin would be on the earth if men kept on doing evil at the rate some of them do now! Living 80 years, sinners get to be quite sufficiently putrid in talk and life. But if they lived 800 years, this world would almost be a second Hell! Well might God, in the olden days, wash the world clean when there were sinners upon it so ripe for destruction, so rotten in their lives! Because sin thus fouls your nest, “Arise you, and depart.”  
With all the earnestness of my heart would I urge you to arise from your sin and hasten away from your peril, for destruction threatens you. You that have sinned cannot afford to always live here, for, even now, your sins begin to come home to you. They will come home even more as you grow older. When sickness begins to take away your spirits and departed health leaves you without the possibility of your present joys, your state will be almost too terrible for contemplation! Oh, I would not be the man who has lived a sinful life and who is about to die without hope! A pack of wolves around a man must be nothing to it! I heard the other day of one, in India, who was thought to be dead and the Parsee method, you know, is not to bury their dead—they leave them naked in what are called the “Towers of Silence,” where there are vultures always waiting and, within three or four hours after a corpse is laid there, there is no flesh left upon the bones.  
One poor man, who was only in a swoon, was thought to be dead and was laid out in the tower. The vultures came and one or two of them tore his flesh so terribly that he started up as from a dreadful dream! There were the vultures coming to devour him while he was yet alive and, defending himself as best he could, he managed to escape. What a plight to be in, lying in the place of the dead, surrounded by the cruel beaks of those fierce, ravenous birds! But in a far more awful position is a sinner when his sins come home to him. Only the Lord can drive those vultures away and restore him to life and safety. He comes for your deliverance and it is His voice that says, today, “Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest.” Fly to Him now, for if not, this rest of yours that you seem to have, will destroy you! You will grow more worldly and more callous as the years go on!  
He that is filthy will become yet more filthy! As an old man, you will say, “It is no use talking to me. If I could have my curly hair back again and sit on my mother’s knee once more, I might feel something, but now I am given up to hardness.” The world will ruin you as the world has ruined its millions and is still ruining its thousands! Fly to Jesus, fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly this moment! God help you! I shall be well rewarded for having preached if but one soul should be awakened to flee away to Christ, my Lord! And why should not many more, in answer to our prayers? The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—854, 847, 848.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:  
The following letter from MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle will show friends the progress he is making. He bore the journey well and at the time this note was sent to the printers, there was, on the whole, a little improvement in his condition—

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood, October 3, 1891.

“DEAR FRIENDS—I write a line on Saturday because the bright sun has tempted me to get to the seaside and I could not write you in time if I did not write now. As I have lost almost entirely my powers of eating, I feel it is time to do something and I steal away to the sea in the hope that God will there revive me.

“Your sacred unity and zeal are daily a comfort to me. Oh, that I could be well and serve you without a pause! But perhaps I am worth all the more as a worker because I have so fully been a sufferer!

“I am sure you will continue your prayers for me. May our God bless every one of you!  
“Yours most lovingly,  
*“C. H. SPURGEON.”*

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1954 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE BREAKER AND THE FLOCK

NO. 1954

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel, I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The Breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their King shall pass before them,  
and the Lord at the head of them.”  
Micah 2:12, 13.**

YOU will remember, dear Friends, from our reading last Sabbath morning, [Sermon #1952, The Holy Spirit—The need of the Age] in the second chapter of the Book of Micah, that the Prophet was delivering reproofs and rebukes against a sinful people, a people who tried to straiten the Spirit and silence the voice of prophecy and refused to listen to the messengers of God. He threatened them with deserved punishment from the Most High. To our surprise, in the very midst of the threat, he delivers a prediction brimming with mercy! Not only is not the Spirit of the Lord straitened, but even the people of the Lord are not to be straitened, for One has come forth who will be to them both Liberator and Leader. Judgment is God’s strange work and He rejoices, even in the midst of threats, to turn aside and utter gracious words to obedient souls! Surely the brightest and most silvery drops of love that have ever distilled upon men have fallen in close connection with storms of Divine Justice. The acceptable year of the Lord is hard by the day of vengeance of our God. The blackness of the tempest of His wrath acts as a foil to set forth more brightly the Glory of His Grace. In this case the thunderbolts stay their course in mid-volley—when the Prophet is hurling destruction upon sin and sinners, he pauses to interpose a passage of promise most rich and gracious—a passage which I wish to open up to you at this time, as the Spirit of God shall enable me.

Certain willful persons were proudly confident that no enemy could reach them behind the walls of their cities, though the Lord declared that He would make Samaria a heap and would strip Jerusalem. They coveted fields and took them by violence and went on with their oppressions as if there had been no Judge of all the earth. The Lord warned them again and again—and assured them that they must not expect to be preserved from chastisement because they were the Lord’s people. They boasted that God would protect them, yes, they leaned upon the Lord and said. “Is not the Lord among us? No evil can come upon us.” He told them that Zion would be plowed as a field and Jerusalem would become heaps. They were by no means to escape the rod! Rather might they look for Grace after they had been severely chastened. They would be carried away into captivity, but yet there would come a day in which they would be gathered out of the places wherein they had been scattered and brought back to their own land. The Prophet cried to the daughter of Zion, “You shall go even to Babylon; there shall you be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem you from the hands of your enemies.”

Truly, the Lord forgets not to devise means to bring, again, His banished ones. The words of Micah in the passage before us agree with many others which fell from the lips of Prophets, for it is the way of the Lord to restore His chosen in the day of their repentance. Did He not say, by His servant Amos, “Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth”? He will preserve the chosen race even in their scattering and then, in His own appointed time, He will seek them out according to His own Words—“He that scattered Israel will gather him and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock.” These gathered ones were to be led back to their land under the guidance of a great Shepherd whose business it would be to break down all obstacles and clear the road for them, so that they might safely reach their resting place.

I have no doubt that the first fulfillment of this prophecy was given when Cyrus conquered Babylon and gave permission for Israel to return to their own land. Cyrus may be regarded as “the Breaker,” for the Prophet Isaiah wrote concerning him, “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.” Then the willing-hearted of Israel gathered together to rebuild the House of the Lord, and to this center, multitudes hastened, the Lord being with them and sending them prosperity. It was of these favored ones that we find a striking fulfillment of our text as to the noise made by the concourse of men. Ezra tells us that, “the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.” Then was this promise, in a measure, fulfilled.

But, Brothers and Sisters, the promises of the Lord are perennial springs forever overflowing with new fulfillments. In the latter days, the God of Israel, in abundant Grace, will remember His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and will gather together His ancient nation who are, at this time, a people scattered and peeled. These shall be converted to the Christ of God and then shall be accomplished the Word of the Prophet—“I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them.” The Son of David, whom their fathers slew, not knowing what they did, shall be made known to them as the promised Seed and then they shall look on Him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him. May this day soon come! Then shall the veil be taken away from their hearts and the cloud shall no longer hang over Israel’s head, but the Lord shall restore them and they shall rejoice in Him. The day comes when the Breaker shall go up before them and the King at the head of them—and they shall be brought again unto the inheritance of their fathers.

Even this will not exhaust the prophecy. I regard this passage as setting forth a vision of spiritual things in which Micah dimly saw the gathering together and the heavenward march of the true Israel, namely, the elect of God, whom He has given to His Son, Jesus, and whom the Lord Jesus has undertaken to save. “He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart” (Rom 2:29). As Paul, by the Spirit of God, interprets the whole story of the Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is clear that we, Brothers and Sisters, the children of the promise, are the true seed, even those who are born by Divine power and, as Believers, are the spiritual family of believing Abraham. If we have the faith of Abraham, we are the children of Abraham—and with us is the Covenant made—for the seed of Abraham is not reckoned according to descent by the flesh, otherwise would the Covenant blessing have fallen to Ishmael and not to Isaac, to Esau and not to Jacob!

The Covenant is to a spiritual seed, born according to Divine promise through Divine power. The line in which the Lord has determined that the Covenant blessing should run was ordered by Divine Sovereignty, “that the purpose of God according to election might stand.” The Lord purposed that they which are born after the Spirit should be the true heirs and not those that are born after the flesh. We, therefore, believe that to us, even to us who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, appertain the promises and the Covenant! It shall come to pass that all the elect of God shall yet be gathered together from the places where they have wandered in their sin and, for them, a clear way shall be opened up to the land of their inheritance. The Breaker, who is also their King and God, shall lead them through all opposition and bring them without fail to their quiet resting place. Even as at the first, all Israel was brought out of Egypt and safely led with a high hand and an outstretched arm through sea and desert, so shall the Lord Jesus lead the whole host of His redeemed to the place of His Glory. Has not the Lord God declared it—“The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”?

An august spectacle is set before us in our text! May our eyes be anointed of the Holy Spirit that we may behold its glories, so that our hearts shall leap for joy!

First, in the text I see the flock gathered—“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.” Secondly, we behold the champion Shepherd clearing the way of the flock—“The Breaker is come up before them.” He, with the arm of His strength, breaks all opposers and breaks up for them a way from their captivity. Thirdly, behold the flock advancing, with their great Shepherd at their head—“They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them.” Jehovah leads the van and the hosts of His redeemed march triumphantly after Him!

I. To begin then, Brothers and Sisters—here is THE FLOCK GATHERED—“I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you.”  
Who knows where God’s chosen are? Babylon was far off from Jerusalem, but our places of wandering are farther off from God than that. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way.” In the cloudy and dark day we have wandered to the uttermost ends of the earth. The Lord’s chosen ones lie wide of one another and they are far off from God, Himself. What a mercy it is that in the text we have a promise that they shall be Divinely gathered! “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.” Who else could gather them but the Lord? What power less than Divine could fetch such wanderers from their haunts and hidings? One is aloft yonder on the hillside in his pride and self-conceit. Another is down below in the despondency of his disappointment. One wanders in the pastures of worldliness, sporting himself in the plenty, thereof, and hard to be brought back for that reason. Another is entangled in the briars of poverty, half-starved and ready to die and hopeless of ever seeing the face of God with joy.  
They are everywhere, my Brethren—these lost sheep! They seem to have chosen, as if deliberately, the most dangerous places! They stumble on the dark mountains; they are caught in the tangled thickets; they have fallen into pits. O Sin, what have you done? Rather, what have you not done? For men seem to have gone to the utmost extreme of rebellion against God and to have done evil with both hands! Therefore does God, Himself, come to the rescue! He, Himself, shall assemble Jacob and gather the remnant of Israel! Driving with the terrors of His Law, drawing with the sweetness of His Gospel, He shall surely bring them in! By one instrumentality or by another and, in some cases, apparently, without instrumentality at all, He will bring them from all points of the compass to the place where He will meet with them—  
*“There is a period known to God  
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,  
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,  
Turn to the fold and enter in.”*  
This is the result of the Divine working and of that alone! Our hope for the salvation of God’s elect lies in the fact that it is God, Himself, who undertakes to gather them! Remember His Word by the Prophet Ezekiel—“For thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out.”  
Following the text closely, we notice that this gathering is to be performed surely. I dwell with great pleasure upon that word, “surely,” because it is spoken twice, “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.” There are no, “ifs,” where there is a God! There are no, “perhapses,” where Divine predestination rules the day! Let Jehovah speak and it is done. Let Him command and it shall stand firm. Inasmuch as He says, “surely,” twice, it reminds me of Joseph’s word to the Egyptian king—“And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God.” God will not change His purpose, nor turn from His promise, nor forget His Covenant—He will surely gather together His chosen people wherever they may be!  
O you that are buffeted by opposition and driven to sore distress in your holy service, be not dismayed, for the purpose of the Lord shall stand! You may fail, but the eternal God will not! Your work may be washed away like the work of little children in the sand of the seashore, but that which God does, endures forever! God shakes the earth out of its place, but who can move Him? When God says, surely, who shall cast doubt in the way? The Lord will, without fail, call out His redeemed from among men. As a worker and a soul-winner I grasp at these words, “I will surely gather the remnant of Israel,” and I feel that I shall not labor in vain, nor spend my strength for nothing. When the end comes and the whole business of salvation shall be complete, it shall be seen that the Lord has achieved His purpose. Jesus says, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,” and it shall surely be so. Therefore let us be of good courage and seek out the lost ones in full confidence that they must and shall be found.  
This leads us to notice that they shall be gathered completely. “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you.” Not some of the chosen, but all of them shall be brought out from the world which lies in the Wicked One. Not some of the redeemed, but each one of them shall be made to walk at liberty under the leadership of their Shepherd-King. The Lord will leave none of His sheep in their wanderings and surrender none to the lion or the bear. Dear Friend, sighing and crying afar off and thinking that God will never gather you, have faith in Him! Helpless as you are, trust Him to do His work as a Savior! It is written, “I will surely gather, O Jacob, all of you,” and you may not think that you have wandered beyond the reach of the infinite arms. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? You must not dream that you have sinned yourself beyond the power of Grace, for His mercy endures forever! Only look unto Christ and let your soul stay itself on Him and God will not overlook you in the day when He gathers His own! Though you are least in Israel and most unworthy of His regard, yet He has expressly said, “I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.” He will not forget you, you weakest of all the flock! You are necessary to the completeness of the company. If you are not there, how shall the Lord keep His Word, “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you”?  
Further, our text declares that the people shall be gathered unitedly. There shall be a wonderful union among them—“I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah.” Oh that the Lord would, in these days, more fully and evidently carry out this promise in the happy unity of His visible Church! Sinners hate each other while they wander in their different ways, but when the Lord brings them together, by His Grace, then love is born in their hearts! What enmities are cast out by the power of Divine Grace! When lusts are conquered, wars and strife cease. God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace. It is Grace which causes that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. I notice that sinners, when they are under conviction of sin, are not apt to quarrel with one another— and saints—when they behold the Savior and rejoice in pardoning love, come together in holy love!  
In that visible community which stands for the Church of God—I mean the combined external organization of Christendom—there are many divisions and fierce heart-burnings. But in the real Church of God, that spiritual body which the Holy Spirit inhabits, these evils are buried. The truly spiritual are really one in heart. You may meet with a man from whom you differ in many respects, but if the life of God is in him and in yourself, also, you will feel a kinship with him of the nearest kind. Often have I read books which have awakened in my soul a sense of true brotherhood with their authors, although I have known them to be of a Church opposed to many of my own views. If they praise my Divine Lord. If they speak of the inner life and touch upon communion with God. And if they do this with that unction and living power which are the tokens of the Holy Spirit, then my heart cleaves to them, be they who they may! Is it not so with you?  
When the Lord brings people to Himself, He brings them to one another. Though depraved nature divides and pride and self set men apart, yet the Lord overcomes these dividing elements by His renewing Grace— and His Divine Word is accomplished—“I will put them together!” When the Lord puts us together, no man can put us asunder. What is needed in the much-divided visible Church of God is that we should all come under the Divine hand more fully—that we should all feel the touch of the Divine Life and yield ourselves more completely to the teaching of the Divine Truth. Schemes of union are of small value—it is the spirit of union which is needed. Our Lord Jesus prayed, “that they all may be one; that the world may believe that You have sent Me,” and His prayer cannot fall to the ground! The Church is one in Christ and none can tear the seamless vesture. Yet, more openly as the days pass on, the Lord will gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52).  
This gathering together will be done happily—they are to be gathered “as the flock in the midst of their fold.” God’s gathering of His chosen is not to a place of barrenness and misery, but to a place of security and quietude, even to His appointed fold! The Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, makes us to lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside the still waters. He folds His flock and makes it to lie down in peace. He says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” He gives us all things richly to enjoy. O you that are wandering afar from God, there can be no rest for you until the Lord gathers you to the fold of which Jesus is the center and the Shepherd. When you come to Jesus, you shall find rest unto your souls, but not till then. “The peace of God that passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus,” but by Christ Jesus only! Christians are not a miserable company of restless spirits. They are not a pack of dogs howling at one another and smarting under the keeper’s lash—but they are a flock feeding in happy communion while Jesus in their midst finds for them a place where they may rest at noon! He so loves His own and so reveals Himself to His own that they are a happy people, highly favored and greatly honored. God has blessed them and they shall be blessed, let the world say what it will concerning them.  
One more note must be made on this head—they shall be gathered numerously—“They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.” The Lord’s camp is very great. If you have taken into your head the idea that the Lord has chosen for Himself a very small company and, that in the end, there will be only a few saved, dismiss the notion! The redeemed are a number that no man can number! A man can count to a very great extent and if the chosen are beyond the numbering of men, they are a multitude, indeed! The Prophet represents them as making a great noise by reason of their multitude. He alludes to “the busy hum of men,” the buzz of the crowd as when the bees are swarming. As in a city there is an indescribable sound by reason of the multitude who are making traffic in it, so shall there be a noise in the Church of a great concourse of men. Conceive of the noise heard at Bozrah, in the sheep country of Edom, when all the flocks of the country were gathered together to be numbered for the purposes of tribute. Listen to the indescribable noise of the bleating myriads! What a suggestion of the voices of the innumerable hosts of the redeemed when they shall finally be brought together and shall all, in fullest joy, lift up their voices!  
If all the gathered company were to pray together, what a sound of supplication would go up by reason of the multitude of men! But when they all sing—what a sound shall that be! Do you wonder that John said, “I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder”? It makes my eyes water to think of the incomparable armies of the redeemed gathered together in one place. Well might the Prophet turn poet when he began to picture that countless flock and speak of the “great noise by reason of the multitude of men”! I believe we shall not, any one of us, restrain our voices in that day when we shall meet together with our Lord at our head. I saw one stand up at the opening of this service to look around the Tabernacle, to see the multitude— and well he might—for it is a thing to do one’s eyes good to behold this vast assembly! But what shall be our joy when we shall stand up in the midst of the great company of the redeemed? We shall look far and wide and see no end of the great gathering! When they begin to sing, how will our spirits bear the swell of that majestic Psalmody? I know I shall find my best voice that day, when in the midst of the congregation of the faithful I shall sing praise unto the Lord my God! The “great noise by reason of the multitude of men” sets forth the enthusiasm of the praise and the immense number of the perfected ones who shall pour out their hearts before the Throne of God! Thus have I set before you, in a feeble way, the gathering of the flock.  
II. Follow me while, next, I speak of THE CHAMPION SHEPHERD clearing the way. “The Breaker is come up before them.” In the 10th verse the Lord says to His people, “Arise and depart, for this is not your rest: because it is polluted.” But we say to ourselves—How are they to depart from the place where they now are and press forward to the pastures on the hilltops of Heaven? They are as sheep. How can they find their way? How can they face their foes? How can they break down barriers? A flock is not fitted to tramp over pathless deserts infested by ferocious wolves. How shall the Church attain to the abodes of the perfected? Long leagues of distance must be traversed. Hills of guilt must be crossed and nights of blackest darkness must be experienced! Ah, Lord God! How can You expect that this, Your Church, which is like a flock of sheep, should find its way unto Yourself through all difficulties and adversaries? The answer to our fears is before us—“The Breaker is

ome up before them.” That great Shepherd of the sheep, whose name is “The Through-Breaker,” or, “The Breaker-Up,” makes a way for His people, yes, creates it by force of arms!  
Between us and Heaven once lay the tremendous Alps of sin. Not one of all the flock of God could climb those hills! All must perish who attempt to cross those awful barriers. The way to Heaven was effectually blocked by these Heaven-defying mountains, for no passes existed—even the eagle’s eyes could not discover a way. One sin might keep a man out of Heaven, but the multitudes of our iniquities, the blackness, the aggravation, the repetition of our offenses made the case hopeless to all human power or wisdom! I see those awful hills and wonder how the flock of God can hope to reach eternal bliss with those in the way. Behold He comes, “The Breaker,” before whom the mountains sink! “He, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree; and by that bearing He put them all away.” He took upon Himself the whole load of His people’s iniquities! He endured the entire weight of the crushing burden! And by His atoning death He cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea! The pass of the Atonement is our clear way to Glory. In the sepulcher of Jesus all our sins are buried. To as many as believe in Jesus Christ no sin remains—  
*“This Breaker once made sin to be,  
Broke from the curse His people free.  
He broke the power of death and Hell,  
And cleared the road for Israel.”*  
“In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.” The glorious Breaker, with His pierced hands, nailed feet and opened side, has worked a miracle of miracles by putting away sin through the Sacrifice of Himself! Jesus says, “I am the way”—and the way He is—the way which neither past nor present sin can effectually close. But, my Brothers and Sisters, if our sins were all forgiven us, there are other difficulties in the way, for we are without strength and the depravity of our nature is not readily overcome. Think of the hardness of our hearts, the waywardness of our wills, the blindness of our judgments, the readiness of our minds to yield to temptation! How can we force our way through such obstacles? Why, if the Lord would forgive me all my sin and give me Heaven on condition that I should find my way to it, mine would still be a hopeless case! Even the regenerate find that they have a hard struggle with the flesh— how can we win our way in the teeth of our fallen nature?  
Beloved, the Breaker has gone up before us! The Lord Jesus Christ assumed our Nature and was “tempted in all points like we are.” He overcame the adversary at every point of the conflict, that through His victory we might be more than conquerors! He sends forth the Holy Spirit to renew us in the spirit of our minds. He takes the stony heart out of our flesh. He rules the will, He governs the affections, He enlightens the understanding, He sanctifies the soul! And thus, though weak in ourselves, we are made strong in Him—so strong that we shall not perish in the wilderness, but shall pursue our pilgrimage till we cross the Jordan and stand in our lot at the end of the days! Because the Breaker has gone up before us, we shall break through the ramparts of sinfulness and cut our way to holiness and perfection!  
Yet even though this is so, that sin is forgiven and our corrupt nature overcome—there is still another difficulty—the Prince of Darkness has set himself to obstruct the way! He defies us to advance—he stands across the road and swears that he will spill our souls. By no means let us be afraid, for the Breaker is gone up before us and the enemy knows the force of His strong right hand. In the wilderness and in the garden, our Lord vanquished this great adversary and therein gave us full assurance that He will shortly bruise Satan under our feet! We need not fear all the devils in Hell—if, by faith, we have courage to resist them, they will flee from us. We shall reach the haven of our rest, the Heaven of our bliss. Our glorious Breaker, with the mace of the Cross, has broken the head of leviathan and made an open show of His adversaries. Thus was it spoken of our Lord at the gates of Eden concerning the old serpent—“You shall bruise his heel.” And now, by His ascension to Heaven, He has done the deed, leading captivity captive—  
*“Gone up as God’s co-equal Son,  
With all His blood-stained garments on,  
While seraphs sing His deathless fame,  
And chant the Breaker’s glorious name.”*  
This brings us face to face with the last enemy. Death blocks the way to eternal life. Be of good courage, the Breaker has also gone up before you in this matter! Jesus died—the Ever-Blessed bowed His head and yielded up the ghost. Listen yet again—He has risen from the dead! He slept, a while, in the cold prison of the tomb, but He could not be held with the bands of death and, therefore, in due time He arose! He arose in newness of life that all His own might also rise in Him. Come, be not afraid to die, for you will travel a well-beaten track! Be not afraid to go down into the heart of the earth, for there your Emmanuel has slept! Nor will He suffer you to go by this dark road alone. “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” He will go down into this Egypt with you and He will surely bring you up again! The Breaker goes up before you.  
But can I hope I shall ever enter the gates of Heaven? Those gates of pearl whose mild, pure radiance chides my perturbed and guilty heart— can I hope to pass their portal? Can I hope to stand where all is absolutely perfect? I shrink in the presence of such matchless purity! But, Brothers and Sisters, the Breaker has gone up before us! He has opened the kingdom of Heaven to all Believers! It will be safe for us to enter where He has gone—yes, we must enter—for where He is, there, also, shall His servants be! He will welcome each one of us with, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord; why do you stand outside?” Down those streets of pure gold like unto transparent glass we shall walk without fear! And up to that blazing Throne of purest light we shall pass without dismay, for Jesus has gone in before us. Behold Him!—  
*“He is at the Father’s side,  
The Man of Love, the Crucified.”*  
The way into the Holiest is now made manifest. The Breaker has torn the veil from the top to the bottom and given us free access to Heaven, itself!  
But I must pause. Certainly my matter is not exhausted—time alone restrains.  
III. Lastly, I have to show you for a minute or two THE FLOCK ADVANCING, their royal Breaker leading the way. As the Lord Jesus, in His death, Resurrection and Ascension, has gone up before us, so by His Grace we are led to follow Him from Grace to Glory. “They go from strength to strength.” He says to them, “Follow Me”—they know His voice—and as His sheep, they follow Him.  
Along the way which the great Champion clears, we find the whole of the flock proceeding. “The Breaker is come up before them,” therefore they keep to His footprints. “They have broken up and have passed through the gate and are gone out by it.” Behold, my Brethren, the vision of visions— the whole company of God’s elect following their triumphant Leader! Do you see yonder the pillar of fire and cloud leading the way through the desert? Do you see the host of Israel in glorious order marching to their predestined inheritance? Such is the Church of God as it is seen by spiritual eyes! All down the centuries, in every land, they are marching along that appointed road which Jesus, the Breaker, has cleared for them. You and I, I hope, are in that goodly company—sometimes our following is lame and halting, but yet we are not turned out of the way. To whom else could we go if we were to leave our chosen Leader? Faint we may be, but pursuing we will be! Oh, that we could keep closer to the Breaker! Oh, that He would break our hearts with His love! Oh, that all our evil habits might be broken by His Grace. We would follow our King where ever He goes! Yes, we are in that company, I trust, and God grant we may never stray from it! No other road is prepared by a great Breaker as this road is prepared. This is the King’s Highway and we will keep to it all our days.  
Observe that in the text the people of God are described as imitating their King, for it is written, “they have broken up.” He is the Breaker and are they breakers, too? Yes, they also have broken up. Christ is the great warrior for His people, but not without conflict will any one of them be crowned. It is so arranged in the wisdom of God that everything is so done for us as not to drive us into inaction, but to draw us into holy diligence. Christ’s warfare is repeated in His saints in their measure. The crown is of Grace, but we must strive for it! Christ has conquered sin, but we have to overcome through faith in Him. He has subdued the adversary, but we, also, shall have to wrestle with spiritual wickedness. “They have broken up.” Herein is condescending love. Christ might have saved us and there might have been nothing for us to do but display His Grace, but He intends to conform us to Himself, in conflict and in crown, in breaking up, and in going forth and in entering in. He makes us know the fellowship of His sufferings! Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us ask God to fulfill in us the words of the text, “They have broken up.” Let us be resolved to break down all sin. Let us be determined to overcome through the blood of the Lamb. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith! If we have it, let us use it to good purpose this day.  
Notice that as these people were led on by the Breaker—they persevered in following Him. “They have broken up; they have passed through the grate and are gone out by it.” They did a little at a time. They advanced step by step. They stopped at nothing, but went onward and upward. So do saints go from Grace to Grace, from faith to greater faith. Note the sentence—“they have broken up, they have passed through the gate and have gone out by it”—this looks as if they did it slowly but surely, gradually but grandly! So, when the Grace of God enters into the heart and we, the sheep of God, are made to follow Him, we are attentive to detail and notice each part of our obedience. You cannot, in Grace, any more than in anything else, do a great deal at once and do it effectually. I find that advance in Grace, if it is suppositious, can be rapid. But if it is real, it requires patience. Our Lord gives us line upon line, precept upon precept—here a little and there a little. Let us be sure, even if we are slow.  
But now I would have you dwell upon the fact that they are marching under royal leadership—“Their King shall pass before them.” Christ is always at the head of His own Church. Why? Because He loves it so that He cannot be away from it! He is at the head of His own flock because He has purchased it with His own blood! He will not send an angel to lead His chosen, but He, Himself, will watch over the objects of His everlasting love. He knows the necessities of His Church to be such as He, and He only, can meet. Therefore, as the King, He always remains at their head. Brothers and Sisters, let us always reverence, honor and obey Him! Our active, present King must be loyally and earnestly served. As Breaker, He did us service. As King we must render Him service! Remember how the Psalmist put it to the chosen bride—“He is your Lord, worship Him.” As a Church, we know no other Head! As the people of His pasture, we know no other Leader. Let us follow Him boldly and gladly!  
Let us give Him praise this day, yes, let us worship and adore Him, for He is Jehovah! He who is at our head is Lord! In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Is it not written, “The Lord shall go before you”? Let us rejoice because the Lord is our King and He will save us! Do you ever fear that the cause of truth and righteousness will fail? Shake this dust off! Banish such a thought! If Jehovah leads the van, who shall stand against Him? If Jesus Christ, once the Man of Sorrows, but now the King of Kings, is to the fore, He will reckon with our adversaries and make short work of their boasts! Therefore, follow quietly and unquestioningly as sheep follow the shepherd, and your way shall be prosperous. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge—therefore comfort one another with these words.  
I cannot express the joy I feel in the belief that I am one of the company which is following the Breaker’s lead! But my sorrow is that some of you are not of His flock. Oh, that you may belong to those of whom He says, “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: they, also, I must bring.” Oh, that He may bring you in speedily! Do you feel a desire towards Christ this morning? Have you any longings to be reconciled to God by Him? Then you may freely come with the confident assurance that he who comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out! He invites you to His Cross, yes, to Himself! Obey the gentle impulse which is now stirring your bosom. Jesus has come on purpose to seek and to save the lost—you are lost—therefore pray that He may save you.  
Should the enemy of all good tell you that if you should believe, yet you would never hold out to the end, remind him that the Breaker has gone up before His people and their King at the head of them and, therefore, you are not afraid of meeting anything upon the road which can beat you back from hope and Heaven! Join the army which marches under our victorious Joshua—and through sin, and Hell, and death the Breaker will clear your way! To Him be praise forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Isaiah 40:1-10 43:14-21.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—306, 372, 313.

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A VISION OF THE LATTER DAY GLORIES

NO. 249

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 24, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“And it shall come to pas in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted  
above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it.” Isaiah 2:2, & Micah 4:1.**

THE Prophets of God were anciently called Seers, for they had a supernatural sight which could pierce through the gloom of the future and behold the things which are not seen as yet, but which God has ordained for the last times. They frequently described what they saw with spiritual eyes after the form or fashion of something which could be seen by the eye of nature. The vision was so substantial that they could picture it in words, so that we also may behold in open vision, the glorious things which they beheld after a supernatural sort.

Let us imagine Isaiah as he stood upon Mount Zion. He looked about him and there were “the mountains that are round about Jerusalem” far out vying it in height, but yielding to Zion in glory. Dearer to his soul than even the snowcapped glories of Lebanon which glittered afar off was that little hill of Zion, for there upon its summit stood the temple, the shrine of the living God—the place of His delight, the home of song, the house of sacrifice, the great gathering place where the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord—to serve Jehovah, the God of Abraham. Standing at the gate of that glorious temple which had been piled by the matchless art of Solomon, he looked into the future and he saw with tearful eye, the structure burned with fire. He beheld it cast down and the plow driven over its foundations. He saw the people carried away into Babylon and the nation cast off for a season.

Looking once more through the glass he beheld the temple rising from its ashes, with glory outwardly diminished, but really increased. He saw on till he beheld Messiah Himself in the form of a little babe carried into the second temple. He saw Him there and he rejoiced. But before he had time for gladness his eye glanced onward to the Cross. He saw Messiah nailed to the tree. He beheld his back plowed and mangled with the whip. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,” said the Prophet and he paused awhile to bemoan the bleeding Prince of the House of

David. His eye was now doomed to a long and bitter weeping, for he saw the invading hosts of the Romans setting up the standard of desolation in the city. He saw the holy city burned with fire and utterly destroyed. His spirit was almost melted in him.

But once more he flew through time with eagle wings and scanned futurity with eagle eyes. He soared aloft in imagination and began to sing of the last days—the end of dispensations and of time. He saw Messiah once again on earth. He saw that little hill of Zion rising to the clouds— reaching to Heaven itself. He beheld the New Jerusalem descending from above, God dwelling among men and all the nations flowing to the tabernacle of the Most High God, where they paid Him holy worship.

We shall not, today, look through all the dim vista of Zion’s tribulations. We will leave the avenue of troubles and of trials through which the Church has passed and is to pass and we will come, by faith, to the last days. And may God help us while we indulge in a glorious vision of that which is to be before long, when “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flow unto it.”

The Prophet saw two things in the vision. He saw the mountain exalted and he beheld the nations flowing to it. Now will you use your imagination for a moment? For there is a picture here which I can scarcely compare to anything, except one of Martin’s magnificent paintings, in which he throws together such masses of light and shade that the imagination is left at liberty to stretch her wings and fly to the utmost height. In the present instance, you will not be able to outstrip the reality, however high you may endeavor to soar. For that which is in our text will certainly be greater than that which the preacher can utter, or that which you may be able to conceive.

Transport yourselves for a moment to the foot of Mount Zion. As you stand there, you observe that it is but a very little hill. Bashan is far loftier and Carmel and Sharon outvie it. As for Lebanon, Zion is but a little hillock compared with it. If you think for a moment of the Alps, or of the loftier Andes, or of the yet mightier Himalayas, this mount Zion seems to be a very little hill, a mere molehill—insignificant, despicable and obscure. Stand there for a moment, until the Spirit of God touches your eyes and you shall see this hill begin to grow. Up it mounts, with the temple on its summit, till it outreaches Tabor. Onward it grows, till Carmel, with its perpetual green, is left behind and Salmon, with its everlasting snow sinks before it. Onward still it grows, till the snowy peaks of Lebanon are eclipsed. Still onward mounts the hill, drawing with its mighty roots other mountains and hills into its fabric. And onward it rises, till piercing the clouds it reaches above the Alps. And onwards still, till the Himalayas seem to be sucked into its heart and the greatest mountains of the earth appear to be but as the roots that strike out from the side of the eternal hill. And there it rises till you can scarcely see the top, as infinitely above all the higher mountains of the world as they are above the valleys.

Have you caught the idea and do you see there afar off upon the lofty top, not everlasting snows, but a pure crystal tableland, crowned with a gorgeous city, the metropolis of God, the royal palace of Jesus the King? The sun is eclipsed by the light which shines from the top of this mountain. The moon ceases from her brightness, for there is now no night—but this one hill, lifted up on high, illuminates the atmosphere and the nations of them that are saved are walking in the light thereof. The hill of Zion has now outsoared all others and all the mountains and hills of the earth are become as nothing before her. This is the magnificent picture of the text. I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this—a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing—till all the high hills become absorbed and that which was but a little rising ground before, becomes a hill the top whereof reaches to the seventh heavens.

Now we have here a picture of what the Church is to be. Of old, the Church was like Mount Zion, a very little hill. What saw the nations of the earth when they looked upon it?—a humble man with twelve disciples. But that little hill grew and some thousands were baptized in the name of Christ. It grew again and became mighty. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands began to break in pieces kingdoms and now at this day the hill of Zion stands a lofty hill. But still, compared with the colossal systems of idolatry, she is but small. The Hindu and the Chinese turn to our religion and say, “It is an infant of yesterday. Ours is the religion of ages.”

The Easterns compare Christianity to some noxious atmosphere that creeps along the fenny lowlands. Their systems, they imagine, to be like the Alps, outsoaring the heavens in height. Ah, but we reply to this, “Your mountain crumbles and your hill dissolves. Our hill of Zion has been growing, and strange to say, it has life within its bowels. And grow on it shall, grow on it must—till all the systems of idolatry shall become less than nothing before it—till false gods being cast down, mighty systems of idolatry being overthrown—this mountain shall rise above them all. And on and on and on, shall this Christian religion grow, until converting into its mass all the deluded followers of the heresies and idolatries of man, the hill shall reach to Heaven and God in Christ shall be All in All.” Such is the destiny of our Church, she is to be an all-conquering Church, rising above every competitor.

We may more fully explain this in two or three ways. The Church will be like a high mountain, for she will be pre-eminently conspicuous. I believe that at this period the thoughts of men are more engaged upon the religion of Christ than upon any other. It is true and there are few that will deny it, that every other system is growing old—gray hairs are scattered here and there, although the followers of these religions know it. As for Mahomet, has he not become now effete with gray old age? And the saber once so sharp to slay the unbeliever, has it not been blunted with time and retired into its scabbard? As for the old idolatries, the religion of Confucius, or of Buddha—where are their missionaries—where are the old activities that made minor idolatries bow before them? They are now content to be confined within their own limit, they feel that their hour is come that they can grow no further, for their strong man is declining into old age.

But the Christian religion has become more conspicuous now than ever it was. In every part of the world all people are thinking of it. The very gates of Japan—once fast closed—are now open to it and soon shall the trumpet voice of the Gospel be heard there and the name of Jesus, the Son of the Highest, shall there be proclaimed by the lips of His chosen servants. The hill is already growing and mark you, it is to grow higher yet. It is to be so conspicuous that in every hamlet of the world the name of Christ shall be known and feared. There shall not be a Bedouin in his tent, there shall not be a Hottentot in his kraal, there shall not be a Laplander in the midst of his eternal snow, or an African in that great continent of thirst, that shall not have heard of Christ! Rising higher and higher and higher, from north to south, from east to west, this mountain shall be beheld. Not like the star of the north which cannot be seen in the south, nor like the “cross” of the south which must give way before the “bear” of the north—this mountain, strange to say it, contrary to nature— shall be visible from every land.

Far-off islands of the sea shall behold it and they that are near shall worship at the foot thereof. It shall be pre-eminently conspicuous in clear, cloudless radiance gladdening the people of the earth. This I think is one meaning of the text, when the Prophet declares, “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains. and shall be exalted above the hills.”

This, however, is but a small part of the meaning. He means that the Church of Christ shall become awful and venerable in her grandeur. It has never been my privilege to be able to leave this country for any time, to stand at the foot of the loftier mountain of Europe—but even the little hills of Scotland, where half way up the mist is slumbering, struck me with some degree of awe. These are some of God’s old works, high and lofty, talking to the stars, lifting up their heads above the clouds as though they were ambassadors from earth ordained to speak to God in silence far aloft. But poets tell us—and travelers who have but little poetry say the same—that standing at the foot of some of the stupendous mountains of Europe and of Asia, the soul is subdued with the grandeur of the scene.

There, upon the father of mountains, lie the eternal snows glittering in the sunlight and the spirit wonders to see such mighty things as these. Such massive ramparts garrisoned with storms. We seem to be but as insects crawling at their base, while they appear to stand like cherubim before the Throne of God, sometimes covering their face with clouds of mist, or at other times lifting up their while heads and singing their silent and eternal hymn before the Throne of the Most High. There is something awfully grand in a mountain, but how much more so in such a mountain as is described in our text, which is to be exalted above all hills and above all the highest mountains of the earth?

The Church is to be awful in her grandeur. Ah, now she is despised. The Infidel barks at her, it is all he can do. The followers of old superstitions as yet pay her but little veneration. The religion of Christ, albeit that it has to us all the veneration of eternity about it—“For His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting”—yet to men who know Him not, Christianity seems to be but a young upstart, audaciously contending with hoary-headed systems of religion. Yes, but the day shall come when men shall bow before the name of Christ, when the Cross shall command universal homage, when the name of Jesus shall stay the wandering Arab and make him prostrate his knee at the hour of prayer, when the voice of the minister of Christ shall be as mighty as that of a king, when the bishops of Christ’s Church shall be as princes in our midst and when the sons and daughters of Zion shall be every man of them a prince and every daughter a queen. The hour comes, yes, and now draws near, when the mountain of the Lord’s house in her awful grandeur shall be established on the top of the mountains.

There is yet, however, a deeper and larger meaning. It is just this—that the day is coming when the Church of God shall have absolute supremacy. The Church of Christ now has to fight for her existence. She has many foes and mighty ones too, who would snatch the chaplet from her brow, blunt her sword and stain her banners in the dust. But the day shall come when all her enemies shall die. There shall not be a dog to move his tongue against her. She shall be so mighty that there shall be nothing left to compete with her. As for Rome, you shall seek but find it not. It shall be hurled like a millstone in the flood. As for Mohamed’s lustful superstition, they shall ask for it, but the imposter shall not be found.

As for false gods, talk to the bittern and the owl, to the mole and to the bat and they shall tell you where they shall be discovered. The Church of Christ at that time shall not have kings of the earth to bind her and to control her, as if she were but a puny thing, nor shall she have them to persecute her and lift up their iron arm to crush her. But she, then, shall be the queen and empress of all nations.

She shall reign over all kings. They shall bow down and lick the dust of her feet. Her golden sandals shall tread upon their necks. She, with her scepter, with her rod of iron, shall break empires in pieces like earthen vessels. She shall say, “Overturn! Overturn! Overturn! Until He come, whose right it is. And I will give it to HIM.” The destiny of the Church is universal monarchy. What Alexander fought for, what Caesar died to obtain, what Napoleon wasted all his life to achieve, Christ shall have—the universal monarchy of the broad acres of the earth. “The sea is His and He made it and His hands formed the dry land.” The whole earth shall come and worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You have now, I think, the meaning of the text—the Church growing and rising up till she becomes conspicuous, venerable and supreme. And now let me pause here a moment, to ask how this is to be done.

How is this to be done? I reply there are three things which will ensure the growth of the Church. The first is the individual exertion of every Christian. I do not think that all the exertions of the Church of Christ will ever be able to reach the climax of our text. I think we shall see something more than natural agency, even though employed by the Spirit, before the Church of Christ shall be exalted to that supremacy of which I have spoken. But, nevertheless, this is to contribute to it. In the olden times, when men raised mounds to the memory of departed kings, it was usual to put a heap of stones over the tomb and every passerby threw another stone. In course of age those mounds grew into small hills. Now the Church of Christ in the present day is growing something in that way. Each Christian converted to Christ throws his stone. We each do our measure. By the grace of God let us each make sure of one stone being deposited there and strive to add another by laboring to be the instruments of bringing someone else to Christ. In this way the Church will grow. And as year after year rolls on, each Christian serving his Master, the Church will increase. And it shall come to pass in the last times, that even by the efforts of Christ’s people, owned by God the Holy Spirit, this mountain shall be highly exalted in the midst of the hills.

This, although all that we can do, is not, I think, all that we have to expect. We can do no more, but we may expect more. Besides, the Church of Christ differs from all other mountains in this—that she has within her a living influence. The ancients fabled that under Mount Etna Vulcan was buried. Some great giant, they thought, lay there entombed. And when he rolled over and over, the earth began to tremble and the mountains shook and fire poured forth. We believe not the fable, but the Church of God, verily, is like this living mountain. Christ seems to be buried within her. And when He moves Himself His Church rises with Him. Once He was prostrate in the garden. Then Zion was but a little hill. Then He rose and day-by-day as He is lifted up His Church rises with Him.

And in the day when He shall stand on Mount Zion, then shall His Church be elevated to her utmost height. The fact is, that the Church, though a mountain, is a volcano—not one that spouts fire, but that has fire within her. And this inward fire of the living Truth of God and living grace, makes her bulge out, expands her side and lifts her crest. And onwards she must tower, for the Truth of God is mighty and it must prevail—grace is mighty and must conquer—Christ is mighty and He must be King of kings. Thus you see that there is something more than the individual exertions of the Church. There is a something within her that must make her expand and grow, till she overtops the highest mountains,

But mark you, the great hope of the Church, although it is reckoned madness by some to say it, is the second advent of Christ. When He shall come, then shall the mountain of the Lord’s house be exalted above the hills. We know not when Jesus may come. All the prophets of modern times have only been prophets from the fact that they have made profit by their speculations. But with the solitary exception of that pun upon the word, I believe they have not the slightest claim upon your credit. Not even men who are doctors of divinity, who can spoil an abundance of paper with their prophesies of second Adventism—“Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels of God.” Christ may come this morning. While I am addressing you Christ may suddenly appear in the clouds of Heaven. He may not come for many a weary age. But come He must. In the last days He must appear. And when Christ shall come He will make short work of that which is so long a labor to His Church.

His appearance will immediately convert the Jews. They have looked for Messiah a king. There He is, in more than regal splendor. They shall see Him. They shall believe on Him. He will then tell them that He is the Messiah whom their fathers crucified. Then will they look on Him whom they have pierced and they will mourn for their sin and gathering round their great Messiah in glorious march they shall enter and be settled in their own land. They shall once more become a great and mighty nation, no, a Jew shall become a very prince among men, firstborn in the Church of God. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be converted and all kindreds and people shall serve the Son of David. Mark, the Church is to rise first

and when the Church has risen to eminence and greatness, the nations will flow unto her. Her rising will not be owing to the nations, but to the advent of Christ and after she has become great, conspicuous and supreme, then will the nations flow to her.

I am looking for the advent of Christ—it is this that cheers me in the battle of life—the battle and cause of Christ. I look for Christ to come, somewhat as John Bunyan described the battle of Captain Credence with Diabolus. The inhabitants of the town of Mansoul fought hard to protect their city from the Prince of Darkness and at last a pitch battle was fought outside the walls. The captains and the brave men of arms fought all day till their swords were knitted to their hands with blood. Many and many a weary hour did they seek to drive back the Diabolians. The battle seemed to waver in the balance, sometimes victory was on the side of faith and now and then, triumph seemed to hover over the crest of the Prince of Hell. But just as the sun was setting, trumpets were heard in the distance, Prince Emmanuel was coming, with trumpets sounding and with banners flying and while the men of Mansoul passed onwards sword in hand, Emmanuel attacked their foes in the rear. Getting the enemy between them two, they went on, driving their enemies at the swords point, till at last, trampling over their dead bodies, they met and hand to hand the victorious Church saluted its victorious Lord.

Even so must it is. We must fight on daily and hourly. And when we think the battle is almost decided against us, we shall hear the trump of the archangel and the voice of God and He shall come, the Prince of the kings of the earth. At His name, with terror they shall melt and like snow driven before the wind from the bare side of Salmon shall they fly away. And we, the Church militant, trampling over them, shall salute our Lord, shouting, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” Thus then, have I explained the first part of the text.

II. The second part of the text we have to consider, is this sentence— “AND ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT.” Here is a figure, perhaps not so sublime, but quite as beautiful as the first. Still endeavor to retain in your minds the picture of this stupendous mountain, reaching above the clouds, seen by all mankind, in either hemisphere, a wonder of nature which could not be accomplished by the ordinary rules of art, but which Divine wisdom will be able to perform. Well, wonder of wonders, you see all the nations of the earth converging to this great mountain, as to a common center. Once in the year all the people of Israel were desirous to go to the little hill of Zion. And now, once and for all, you see, not Israel, but all the nations of the earth coming to this great hill of Zion, to worship the Most High God.

The white sails are on the Atlantic and the ships are dying before the wind, even as the bird flits through the sky. What do they bear? What is their noble cargo? Lo, they come from far, bringing the sons and daughters of Zion from the ends of the earth. See there the camels, the great caravan passing over the pathless desert? What are these and what is their costly freight? Lo, they are bringing the daughters of God and the sons of Zion up to the Most High God, to worship Him. From all parts of the earth you see them coming—from the freezing cold and from the burning heat, from the far-off islands of the sea and from the barren sands they come. They come, all converging towards the great center of their high and holy worship. This we are not to understand of course, literally, but as a figure of the great spiritual fact that all the souls of men shall tend to Christ and to union with His Church.

Again, I beg you carefully to observe the figure. It does not say they shall come to it, but they shall “flow unto it.” Understand the metaphor. It implies first their number. Now our Churches are increased, converts drop into the Churches—drop after drop the pool is filled. But in those days they shall flow into it. Now it is but the pouring out of water from the bucket. Then it shall be as the rolling of the cataract from the hillside, it shall flow into it. Now our converts, however numerous, are comparatively few, but then a nation shall be born in a day. The people shall renounce their gods all at once. Whole nations shall all of a sudden, by an irresistible impulse, flow into the Church—not one by one—but in one vast mass. The power of God shall be seen in bringing whole nations into the Church of God. You have seen the river flowing onward to the sea, with its banks all swollen, bearing its enormous contribution to the boundless ocean. So shall it be in the last days. Each nation shall be like a river, rolling towards the foot of this great mountain, the Church of the living God. Happy, happy, happy day, when India and China with their teeming myriads and all the nations of the earth, with their multitude of tongues, shall flow into the mountain of God!

But the text conveys the idea not only of numbers, but of—(I know the exact word, but then I do not like to use it, for fear some should not know the meaning of it, it means that the nations of the earth shall come willingly to it)—spontaneously. That was the word I wanted to use. But why should we use big words, when we might find little ones? They are to come willingly to Christ. Not to be driven, not to be pumped up, not to be forced to it, but to be brought up by the Word of the Lord, to pay Him willing homage. They are to flow to it. Just as the river naturally flows downhill by no other force than that which is its nature, so shall the grace of God be so mightily given to the sons of men, that no acts of parliament, no State Churches, no armies will be used to make a forced conversion. “The nations shall flow unto it.” Of themselves, made willing in the day of

God’s power, they shall flow to it. Whenever the Church of God is increased by unwilling converts it loses strength. Whenever men join the Church because of oppression, which would drive them to make a profession of religion, they do not flow, the Church is weakened and not strengthened. But in those days the converts shall be voluntarily won— shall come in willingly by Divine Grace. They shall flow unto it.

But yet again, this represents the power of the work of conversion. They “shall flow unto it.” Imagine an idiot endeavoring to stop the river Thames. He gets for himself a boat and there he stands, endeavoring to push back the stream. He objects to it flowing towards the sea and with his hands he tries to put it back. Would you not soon hear laughter along the banks? Ah, Fool, to attempt to stop the stream! Now, the word “flow,” here conveys just the idea. “The nations shall flow unto it.” The Secularist may rise up and say, “Oh, why be converted to this fanatical religion? Look to the things of time.” The false priests may rouse themselves with all their anger to defy Christ and endeavor to keep their slaves. But all their attempts to stop conversion will be like an idiot seeking to drive back a mighty stream with his puny hands. “All nations shall flow unto it.” What an idea it is!

Oh, take your stand today, like Prophets of the Lord and look into the future! Today the Church appears like the dry bed of a torrent. Here I stand and I see a little water flowing in a secret and thread-like stream, among the stones. So little is it that I can scarcely detect it, but I take the glass of prophecy, I look far onward and I see a rolling mass of water, such as is sometimes seen in the rapid rivers of Africa. And there it is, coming with thundering sound. Wait for a few more years and that torrent, like Kishon’s mighty river, sweeping all before it, shall fill this dry bed and swell on and on and on, with tumultuous waves of joy, till it meets the ocean of Christ’s universal reign and loses itself in God! Here you see, then, you have more than your imagination can grasp. This stupendous mountain and all the nations of the earth—vast numbers with immense force—spontaneously coming up to the house of the living God.

Now, I shall close by a practical address, very brief and I trust very earnest. Is it not a great subject for praise that the nations of the earth may flow to the hill of God and to His house? If I were to tell you that all the nations of Europe were climbing the sides of the Alps, you would ask me, “And what benefit do they gain thereby? They must pass over the slippery fields of ice and they may lose their lives in the midst of the bottomless chasms that are overhung by the mighty precipices. They may suddenly be overwhelmed and buried in the all-destroying avalanche and should they reach the summit they must fall down exhausted. What is there that men should covet in those barren heights? Rarefied air and cold would soon destroy them, should they attempt to exist there.” Ah, but it is not so with God’s hill. There shall be no snow upon its summit, but the warmth and light of Jehovah’s love. There shall be no chasms in its side wherein souls may be destroyed, for there shall be a way and a highway, (the unclean shall not pass over it) a way so easy that the wayfaring man shall not err therein.

The mountains of which we read in Scripture were some of them such that if they were accessible no one would desire to climb them. There were bounds set round about Sinai, but had there been no bounds who would have wished to ascend it—a mountain that burned with fire and upon which there was a sound as of a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long? No, Brethren, we are not come to a mountain like Sinai with its supernatural thunders. We are not come to a hill bare and barren and bleak and difficult to climb, like the mountains of earth. But the hill of God, though it is a high hill, is a hill up which on hands and knees the humble penitent may readily ascend. You are come to a mountain which is not forbidden to you. There are no bounds set about it to keep you off, but you are freely bid and freely invited to come to it. And the God who invited you will give you grace to come. If He has given you the will to come, He will give you grace to climb the sides of the hill till you shall reach its upper glories and stand on its summit transported with delight.

While I am talking about the nations that will flow to Christ, might we not weep to think that there are so many in this congregation that are not flowing to Christ but are going from Him? Ah, Soul. What are the splendors of the Millennium to you, if you are His enemy? For when He tramples His foes in His hot displeasure, your blood shall stain His garments, even as the garments of the wine pressers are stained with the blood of the grape. Tremble, Sinner, for the advent of Christ must be your destruction though it shall be the Church’s joy and comfort. You say, “Come quickly.” Know you not that to you the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, for that day burns as an oven and they that are proud and do wickedly shall be as stubble and the fire shall consume them with burning heat?

Oh, you people that today hear the words of Jesus! You are now this day invited to come to the mountain of His Church, on which stands His Cross and His throne. You weary, heavy laden, sin-destroyed sin-ruined souls—you that know and feel your need of Jesus—you that weep because of sin—you are bid to come now to Christ’s Cross—to look to Him who shed His blood for the ungodly and looking to Him, you shall find peace and rest.

When He comes with rainbow wreath and robes of storm, you shall be able to see Him, not with alarm and terror, but with joy and gladness, for you shall say, “Here He is, the Man who died for me has come to claim

me. He who bought me has come to receive me. My Judge is my Redeemer and I will rejoice in Him.” Oh, turn, you English heathens—turn unto God! You inhabitants of London, some of you as vile as the inhabitants of Sodom, turn, turn to God! O Lord Jesus! By Your Grace turn everyone of us to Yourself! Bring in Your elect. Let Your redeemed rejoice in You. And then let the fullness of the nations flow unto You and Yours shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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MERCY FOR THE MEANEST OF THE FLOCK

NO. 3201

A SERMON  
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**“In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame, and I will gather the outcast, and those whom I have afflicted.”  
Micah 4:6.**

THIS is spoken, I suppose, in the first place, of the Jewish people who have been so afflicted on account of their sin that they almost cease to be a nation. They are driven here and there among the lands and made to suffer greatly. In the last time, when Christ shall appear in His Glory in the days of halcyon peace, then shall Israel partake of the universal joy. Poor, limping, faltering Israel, afflicted with tempest, shall yet be gathered and rejoice in her God!

However, I am sure that the text applies to the Church of God and we shall not do amiss if we also find in it promises to individual Christians. We will regard the text in those two lights as spoken to the Church and as spoken to individual souls.

I. First, then, AS REFERRING TO THE CHURCH OF GOD. “In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame, and I will gather the outcast, and those whom I have afflicted.”

The Church of God is not always equally vigorous and prosperous . Sometimes she can run without weariness and walk without fainting, but at other times she begins to limp and is lame. There is a deficiency in her faith, a lukewarmness in her love, doctrinal errors spring up and many things that both weaken and trouble her—and then she becomes like a lame person. And, indeed, Beloved, when I compare the Church of God at the present moment with the first Apostolic Church, she may well be called, “the lame.” Oh, how she leaped in the first Pentecostal times! What wondrous strength she had throughout all Judea and all the neighboring lands! The voice of the Church in those days was like the voice of a lion—and the nations heard and trembled. The utmost isles of the sea understood the power of the Gospel and before long the Cross of Christ was set up on every shore. Thus was the Church in her early days—the love of her espousals was upon her and her strength was like that of a young unicorn!

How the Church now limps! How deficient in vigor, how weak in her actions! If I compare the Church now with the Church in Reformation times, when, in our own land, our fathers went bravely to prison and to the stake to bear witness to the Lord Jesus! When, in Covenanting Scotland and Puritan England, the Truth of God was held with firmness and proclaimed with earnestness and, what is, perhaps, still better, when the Truth of God was lived by those who professed it—then was she mighty, indeed, and not to be compared to “the lame,” as I fear she is now in these days of laxity of Doctrine and laxity of life—when error is tolerated in the Church and loose living is tolerated in the world!

I might almost use the same simile for the Church, today, as compared with those early days of Methodism when Whitefield was flying like a seraph in the midst of Heaven—preaching in England and America the unsearchable riches of Christ to tens of thousands! When Wesley and others were working with undiminished ardor to reach the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low! Those were good days with all their faults. Life and fire abounded, the God of Israel was glorified, and tens of thousands were converted! The Church seemed as though it had risen from the dead and cast off its grave clothes, and was rejoicing in newness of life! We are not without hopeful signs today. There is not everything to depress, but much to encourage. At the same time, the Church limps— she does not stand firm and run fast. Oh, that God would be pleased to visit her!

Moreover, if I look at the text, I perceive that the Church not only is sometimes weak, but, at the same time, or at some other time, the Church is persecuted and made to suffer, for the text speaks of “the outcast.” And it has often happened that the Church has been driven right out from among men. It has been said of her, “Away with her from the earth! It is not fit that she should live.” But how wondrously God has shown His mercy to His people when they have been driven out! The days of exile have been bright days! The sun never shone more fairly on the Church’s brow than when she worshipped God in the catacombs of Rome, or when her disciples “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.” In our own country, those who met in secret, perpetually pestered by informers who would bring them before the magistrate for joining in prayer and song, often said, when they got their liberty, that they wished they had the days, again, when they were gathered together in the lonely house and scarcely dared to sing loudly! They had brave times in those days, when every man held his soul in his hand. When he worshipped his God not knowing whether the hand of the hangman or the headsman might not soon be upon him. The Lord was pleased to bless His people when the Church was driven out. If the snowy peaks of Piedmont, if the lowlands of Holland, if the prisons of Spain could speak, they would tell of Infinite Mercy experienced by the saints under terrible oppression—of hearts that were leaping to Heaven while the bodies were bruised or burning on earth! God has been gracious to His people when they have been driven out.

Sometimes trouble comes to God’s people in another way. The Church is afflicted by God Himself. It seems as if God had put away His Church for a time and driven her from His Presence. That has happened often in all Churches. Perhaps some of you are members of such Churches now, or have been. Discord has come in and the Spirit of peace has gone. Coldness has come into the pulpit and a chill has come over the pews. The Prayer Meetings are neglected, the seeking of souls is almost given up—the candlestick is there, but the candle seems to be gone, or not to be lighted. The means of Grace have become lifeless. You almost dread the Sabbath which once was your comfort. It is wretched for Christian people when it comes to this! And yet, in scores of villages and towns in England this is the case. The sheep look up and the shepherd looks down but there is no food for the sheep, neither does the shepherd, himself, know where to get the food because he has not been taught of God. It is a melancholy thing, wherever this has been the case, but I would encourage the saints to cry mightily for the return of God’s Spirit, for the restoration of unity and peace, earnestness and prayerfulness, that once again the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad and the desert may rejoice and blossom like the rose!

My Brothers and Sisters, may God never treat the Church in England as she deserves to be treated, for when I look around me and see her sins, they seem to rise up to Heaven like a mighty cry! We have been lately told in so many words, by an eminent preacher, that all creeds have something good in them—even the creed of the heathen—and that out of them all the grand creed is to be made, which is yet to be the religion of mankind! God save us from those who talk in this way and yet profess to be sent of God! They who know in their own souls what God’s Truth is, will not be led astray by such delusions. But God may visit His Church and chasten her sorely by depriving her of His Spirit for a while. If He has done so, or is about to do so, let us still pray that He may gather the outcast and afflicted.

I may not dwell longer upon these points, but hasten to notice the blessing that will come, in answer to prayer, upon Churches that are weak, or sorely persecuted. There are scattering times, no doubt, but we should always pray that we may live in gathering times, that we may be gathered together in unity, in essential oneness around the Cross, in united action for our glorious Master, and that sinners who are far away may be gathered in, too, and backsliders who have wandered may be restored! Pray for gathering times, Brothers and Sisters, and may the day come when the Lord will assemble the lame and will gather the outcast and afflicted.

Notice that the text speaks of a “day.” So we may expect that God will have His own time of benediction. “In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame.” I believe that to be a day in which we enquire after the Lord, a day in which we are prayerful, in which we become anxious, in which an agony lays hold upon the souls of Believers until the Lord shall return unto His people—a day when Christ is revealed in the testimony of the Church and the Gospel is fully preached—in that day will the Lord assemble the lame! May that day speedily come! But if we do not see the blessing tomorrow, let us remember that tomorrow may not be God’s day, and let us persevere in prayer till God’s day does come. There are better days in store for the Church—and before the page of human history closes, there will be times of triumph for her in which she shall be glorious—and God shall be glorified in her!  
II. I shall, however, pass from this first point about the Church, because I wish to speak to mourners, to melancholy ones. I trust I have a message of mercy to some that are desponding. We shall look on the text, secondly, AS REFERRING TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. “In that day, says the Lord, will I assemble the lame.” There are three characters described here. Let us look at each of them.

First, the soul that limps. Of course by that is intended those Christians who are very weak. Some are “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” It would be a great mercy if all God’s people were so, but there are some Christians who have faith of but a feeble sort. They have love to God, but they sometimes question whether they do love Him at all. They have piety in their hearts, but it is not of that vigorous kind one would desire. It is rather like the spark in the flax, or the music in the bruised reed. They are like Little-Faith and Miss Much-Afraid. They are alive, but only just alive. Sometimes their life seems to tremble in the balance and yet it is hidden with Christ in God and, therefore, it is really beyond the reach of harm! They are the weak ones and God speaks to such weak ones, and says, “I will assemble the lame.”

It not only means that they are weak, but that they are slow and limping persons. A lame person cannot travel quickly and, oh, how slowly some Christians move! What little advance they make in the Divine Life! They were little children ten years ago and they are little children now. Their own children have grown up to be men, but they themselves do not appear to have made any advance. They are just babes in Grace and still have need of milk. They are not strong enough to feed upon the strong meat of the Kingdom of God. They are slow to believe all that the Prophets and Apostles have spoken, slow to rejoice in God, slow to catch a Truth of God and perceive its bearing, but still slower to get the nutriment out of it and learn its application to themselves. But, slow as they are, I trust we may say of them that they are as sure as they are slow! What steps they do take are well taken. And if they come slowly, like the snail, yet they are like the snail in Noah’s days crawling towards the ark—they will eventually get in!

With this slowness there is also pain. A lame man walks painfully. Perhaps every time he puts his foot to the ground, a shock of pain goes through his whole system. And some Christians, in their progress in the heavenly life, seem afflicted in like manner. I meet with some Christians who are very sensitive and every time there is anything wrong they are ashamed and grieved. I wish some other Christians had more of that feeling, for it is an awful fact that many professors seem to tamper greatly with sin and think nothing of it at all. Better the sensitive soul that is fearful and timorous, lest it should in any way grieve the Spirit of God— with a watchful eye over itself and a conscience that is quick and tender as the apple of the eye—than such presumption and hardness of heart as others have! But some have this sensitiveness without the other qualities which balance it—and it makes their progress to Heaven a painful one, though a safe one. They do not look enough at the Cross. They do not remember that, “if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” They have not come to see that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to deliver us from all sin, so that indwelling sin shall not have dominion over us, because we are not under the Law, but under Grace. So their progress is painful. But, limping one, this word is for you, “I will assemble the lame, when I call My people together, I will call her; when I send an invitation to a feast, I will direct one specially to her. She is weak, she is slow, she is in pain, but for all that I will assemble her with My people.”

The allusion, perhaps, is to a sheep that has somehow been lamed. The shepherd has to get all the flock together and, therefore, he must bring the lame ones in, too. And the Good Shepherd of the sheep takes care that the lame sheep shall be gathered. I find that the original word has somewhat of the import of one-sidedness—a lame sheep goes as if it went on one side. It cannot use this foot, and so it has to throw its weight on the other side. How many Christians there are that have a onesidedness in religion and, unfortunately, that often happens to be the gloomy side! They are very properly suspicious of themselves, but they do not add to that a weight of confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back upon their past and seeing their own unfaithfulness, they forget God’s faithfulness! Looking upon the present, they see their own imperfections and infirmities—and forget that the Spirit helps our infirmities— and that if we had no infirmities, there would be nothing for the Spirit to do to glorify Himself in our weakness! When they look forward to the future, they see the dragons and the dark river of death, but they forget that promise, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” What a mercy it is that the Lord will not forget these one-sided limpers, but that even they shall be assembled when, with the Shepherd’s crook, He gathers His flock and brings them Home!

We may add to these, those who have got tired with the trials of the way. It is a weary thing to be lame. It saddens my heart to often see the sheep go through the London streets. They go limping along, poor things, so spent and spiritless. There are many Christians who are like they are—they seem to have been so long in trouble that they do not know how to bear up any longer. What with the loss of the husband and the loss of the child. What with poverty and many struggles and no apparent hope of deliverance. What with one sickness and then another in their own bodies. What with one temptation and then another temptation, and then a third, they feel very wearied by the way. They are like Jacob when he limped on his thigh. The blessing is that the Lord says, “I will assemble the lame.” Lay hold on that, you limping ones! I daresay you suppose you are the last one of the flock. You have got so tired and lame that you think that though all the others are close by the Shepherd’s hand, you are forgotten. You remember that the Amalekites in the wilderness fell upon the children of Israel and smote some of the hindmost of them and, perhaps, you are afraid that you will get smitten in that way. Let me remind you of a text—“The Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward.” Those that lead the way can rejoice that God goes before them, but you can rejoice that God is behind you, as we read again, “The glory of the Lord shall be your rereward.” He will take care that you shall not be destroyed.

But now, secondly, the soul that is exiled—“I will gather the outcast.” Perhaps I address someone here who has been driven out from the world. It was not a very great world, that world of yours, but still, it was very dear to you. You loved father, mother, brothers and sisters, but you are a speckled bird among them now. Sovereign Grace and electing love have lighted on you, but not on them. At first they ridiculed you when you went to hear the Gospel—but now that you have received it and they perceive that you are in earnest—they persecute you. You are one by yourself. You almost wish you did not live among them because you are farther off from them than if you were really away from them. Nothing you can do pleases them. There are sure to be a thousand faults and they fling the taunt at you when you fail, and say, “This is your religion!” You cry out, “Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech!” Do you remember what became of the man when the Pharisees cast him out? Why, the Lord met him and graciously took him in! Remember what Jesus said to His disciples, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” When I go to a man’s house and his dog barks at me, he does it because I am a stranger. And when you go into the world and the world howls at you—it is because you are different from worldlings and they recognize in you the Grace of God—and pay the only homage which evil is ever likely to pay to goodness, namely, persecute it with all their might!

Perhaps, however, it is worse than that. “I should not mind being driven out from the world,” you say, “I could take that cheerfully, but I seem driven out from the Church of God.” There may be two ways in which this may come about. Perhaps you have been zealous for the Lord God of Israel in the midst of a cold church and you have spoken, perhaps not always prudently. The consequence is that you have angered and vexed the brethren, and they have thought that you fancied yourself to be better than they, though such a thought was far from your mind. It is an unfortunate thing for a man to be born before his time, yet he may be a grand man. Some Christians in certain churches seem to live ahead of their brethren. It is a good thing but, as surely as Joseph brought down the enmity of his own brothers upon himself because he walked with God and God revealed Himself to him, so is it likely that you, if you are in advance of your brethren, will draw down opposition upon yourself which will be very bitter. Never mind if the servants repulse you! Go and tell their Master—do not go and grumble at them! Pray their Master to mend their manners. He knows how to do it!

But it is just possible that you have been driven out only in your own thoughts. Perhaps the members of the church really love you and esteem you, and think highly of you. But you have become so depressed in spirit that you do not feel that you have any right to be in the church. You have made up your mind that you will not be a hypocrite and, therefore, you have given up all profession. You have a notion that some of your fellow members think evil of you and wonder how ever such an one as you can come to the church. Oh, the many poor little lambs that come bleating around me with their troubles! And when I tell them, “I never heard anything against you in my life! I never heard anybody speak of you but with love and respect. I never observed anything in you but tenderness of conscience and a quiet holy walk with God,” they seem quite surprised!

Brethren, look after your fellow members—do not let them think you are cold to them. Some of them will think it whatever you may do. Some of you, Brothers and Sisters, are thought to be so proud that you will not look at people! If they did but know the truth, they would see that you are very different. Now, you lambs, do not be grieved about nothing. But you who are stronger than they, mind that you do not give any offense that can be prevented. It is impossible but that offenses will come, but “woe unto him through whom they come.” Let us be careful not to break the bruised reed, even by accidentally treading upon it. But, dear Brother or Sister, if that is your condition, let me tell you that you are not driven out—it is quite a mistake. But if you think so—go to your Lord. If you will tell Jesus, He will make up for any apparent change that may come over His people.

Ah, but I think I hear one say, “It is not being driven out from the world that hurts me, nor being driven out from the Church. I could bear that—but I am driven out from the Lord, Himself! I seem to have lost His company and losing that I have lost all—

*“‘What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.’”*

Thank God if you feel like that! If the world could fill your heart, it would prove that you are no child of God! But if the world cannot fill it, then Christ will come and fill it! If you will be satisfied with nothing but Him, He will satisfy you. If you are saying, “I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me,” you shall get the comfort you need. He never left a soul to perish that was looking to Him and longing for Him! Cry to Him, again, and this text shall be true to you, “I will gather the outcast.” May that Word come home to some of you! I do not know where you may be, but the Master does—may He apply the promise to your hearts!

One other person is mentioned here— the soul that is troubled—“those whom I have afflicted.” Yes, and in all Churches of God there are some dear, good friends that are more afflicted than others. They are often the best people. Are you surprised at that? Which vine does the gardener prune the most? That which bears the most and the sweetest fruit! He uses the knife most upon that because it will pay for pruning. Some of us seem scarcely to pay for pruning—we enjoy good health, but when trial comes, when the Lord prunes us, we may say—“Thank God! He means to do something with me after all!”

Perhaps this afflicted one is afflicted in body—scarcely a day without pain, scarcely a day without the prospect of more suffering. Well, if there is any child the mother is sure to remember, it is the sick one! And if there are any Christians to whom God is peculiarly familiar, they are His afflicted ones. “You will make all his bed in his sickness,” is said concerning a sick saint. The Lord makes your bed, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are suffering bodily pain!

Some are mentally afflicted. Much of the doubts and fears we hear about comes from some degree of mental aberration. The mental trouble may be very slight, but it is very common. I suppose that there is not a perfectly sane man among us. When that great wind blew, at the time of the Fall, a slate blew off everybody’s house—and some are more affected than others so that they take the black view of all things. This mental infirmity, for which they are not to be blamed, will probably be with them till they get to Heaven. Well, God blesses those who are thus troubled!

Then some are spiritually afflicted. Satan is permitted to try them very much. There is only one way to Heaven, but I find that there is a bit of the road that is newly stoned, a harder path to travel on, and some persons seem to go to Heaven all over the new stones—their soul is perpetually exercised—while God grants to others to choose the smoother parts of the way and go triumphantly on. Let those I have spoken of hear the Word of promise, “I will gather those whom I have afflicted,” for when God, Himself, gives the affliction, He will bring His servant through and glorify Himself thereby.

To close, let us regard this promise, “I will gather her,” as meaning, “I will gather My tried ones into the fellowship of the Church. I will bring My scattered sheep near to Me.” The Lord Jesus will gather His dear people into fellowship with Himself. “I will gather them every day around My Mercy Seat. I will gather them, by-and-by, on the other side of Jordan, on those verdant hilltops where the Lamb shall forever feed His flock and lead them to living fountains of waters.” Poor, tried, lame, afflicted, limping soul, the Shepherd has not forgotten you! He will gather all His sheep and they shall pass again under the hands of Him that counts them—there shall not be one missing! I cannot make out how some of my Brothers think that the Lord will lose some of His people— that there are some whom Jesus has bought with His blood who will get lost on the way to Heaven! It is an unhappy shepherd who finds some of his flock devoured by the wolf, but our Shepherd will never be in that strait with His sheep. He says, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” What do you say to that, you limping ones? What do you say to that, you, the last of all? He has given eternal life to you as much as to the strongest of the flock and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand! He will gather you with the rest of His sheep.

And when will He fulfill that promise, Beloved? He is always fulfilling it and He will completely fulfill it in the day when He is manifested. As this chapter describes Him, when He comes to make peace, and men beat their swords into plowshares, then will He gather you. Even now, when He comes as the great Peace-Giver, He gathers those whom are lame. When the storms of temptation lie still, awhile, and He shows Himself in the heart as the God that walked the sea of Galilee of old, then are His people gathered into peace—they rest in that day. Thank God, the most tried and troubled Believer has some gleams of sunlight. In winter time, sometimes, you know there comes a day which looks like a summer’s day when the gnats come out and think it is spring—and the birds begin to sing as if they thought that surely winter was over and past! In the darkest experience there are always some blessed gleams of light—just enough to keep the soul alive. That is in one measure the fulfillment of the promise, “I will assemble the lame...in that day.”

But the day is coming when you and I who have been limping, feeble and weak, shall be gathered, never to limp, never to doubt and never to sin again! I do not know how long it may be. Some of you are a long way ahead of me, according to your years, but we cannot tell. The youngest of us may go soonest, for there are last that shall be first, and first that shall be last. But there is such a day written in the eternal decrees of God when we shall lay aside every tendency to sin, every tendency to doubt, every capacity for tribulation, every need for chastisement—and then we shall mount and soar away to the bright world of endless day! What a mercy it will be to find ourselves there! Oh, how we shall greet Jesus with joy and gladness and tell of redeeming Grace and dying love that brought Home even the limping ones and the weakest and the feeblest!

I think those that are reckoned strong and do the most for God are generally those who think themselves weakest when it comes to the stripping time. I read of a man who had been the means of the conversion of many hundreds of souls by personal private efforts—I refer to Harlan Page. On his dying bed he said, “They talk of me, but I am nothing, nothing, nothing.” He mourned over his past life—to him it seemed that he had done nothing for his Master, that his life was a blank. He wept to think he had done so little for Christ while everyone was wondering how he had lived such a blessed and holy life! That man only is rich towards God who begins to know his emptiness and feels that he is less than nothing, and vanity.

Beloved, it is because those who serve God best often feel that they are lame, driven away, afflicted, and tossed with doubts and fears—it is because of this that this promise is put to the lowest case and the blessing given to the very meanest capacity! It is so in order that one who is strong may be able to come in, and when in depression of spirit say, “That promise will suit me! I will get a grip of it. I will come to God with it in my hands and at the Mercy Seat get it fulfilled to me, even to me.” The Lord grant you, Beloved, to be numbered among His jewels in that day!

What shall I say to those who know nothing about the Divine Life at all, who, perhaps, are saying, “Well, we never get to limping or doubting. We have a merry time of it”? Yes and so does the butterfly, while the summer lasts, but the winter kills it. Your summer may last a little while, but the chill of death will soon be on you—and then what is there for you but hopeless misery forever and forever? God give you Grace to fly to Jesus now and be saved with an everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MICAH 4.**

Verse 1. But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills and people shall flow unto it. [See Ser

mon #249, Volume 5—A VISION OF THE LATTER DAY GLORIES—Read/download the entire sermon,

free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God’s cause and Kingdom shall not be hidden away in a corner—“the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains,” an Alp upon other Alps, higher than all the other hills! The day is coming when the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be the most conspicuous thing in the whole world, “and people shall flow unto it.” The heathen, the people who knew nothing about it, shall flow to it like a great river!

2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. That is the way the Grace of God works in us—He teaches and then we not only learn—but we obey.

2, 3. For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off. The Kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, shall attract people and nations that were far off from the holy city where He lived and died.

3. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. They shall give up the study of the art of war. Their spirit shall be softened—in many cases renewed by Grace— and then they shall take to the useful arts. They shall not throw away their swords, but shall beat them into plowshares. They shall not hurl their spears into the earth, but shall bend them into scythes or pruning hooks. Oh, that the day were come when the wealth and ingenuity and power of nations were used in the pursuits of peace instead of in the arts of war! This is the tendency of the Kingdom of Christ, for wherever He comes, He makes peace. Nothing is more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than war—and when men are Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth—wars must cease.

4. But they shall sit, every man under his vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of Hosts has spoken it. The best evidence that this will be the case is that the Lord of Hosts, who has all power at His disposal, has said that it shall be so!

5. For all people will walk, everyone in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. When we learn to know God in truth, we do not give Him up, but we walk in His name forever and ever. God’s Covenant with us is an Everlasting Covenant, reaching beyond time and enduring throughout eternity. Some nations have discarded their idol gods, but those who really know and love the Lord will walk in His name forever and ever.

6. In that day, says the LORD will I assemble the lame. God will bring to Himself you that limp, that hesitate, that tremble, that fear—“I will assemble the lame.”

6. And I will gather the outcast. Hunted by Satan and harassed by care. Frightened by depression of spirit. “I will gather the outcast”  
6. And those whom I have afflicted. If God has laid His hand upon one of you so that you have a special affliction from Him you have this gracious promise that He will gather you to Himself!  
7. And I will make those who limped a remnant, and those who were cast far off, a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even forever. Little scattered communities, Churches which have been weak and feeble, shall have the strengthening of God and they shall be, through His Sovereign Grace, a remnant saved by Grace to His praise and Glory! Note how everything here is done by God—you keep on reading, “I will,” “I will, “I will.” Oh, those blessed, “I wills” of God! Our wills are often defeated and disappointed, but God’s, “I wills” stand fast forever!  
8. And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the Kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. So it did. “Beginning at Jerusalem,” was Christ’s order concerning the preaching of the Gospel after His Resurrection. The first servants of Christ were of that ancient people who might be called the “tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion.” Oh, that Christ would soon return in mercy to the—  
*“Chosen seed of Israel’s race,  
A remnant weak and small”—*  
and gather them to Himself, for that would be the fullness of the Gentiles, also!  
9. Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no King in you? Is your Counselor perished? Sometimes our prayers may be the utterance of our fears rather than of our faith—and then the question comes, “Is there no King in you? Is your Counselor perished?” Can we not trust to Him whose name is “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”?  
10. For pangs have taken you as a woman in travail. They are sharp pangs, but they lead to life and, therefore, they are blessed pangs after all!  
10. Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shall you go forth out of the city and you shall dwell in the field, and you shall go even to Babylon: there shall you be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem you from the hand of your enemies. It looks more like a threat than a promise that God would send His people to Babylon, but there they were to be delivered. And it oftentimes happens with us that we must be brought into captivity before we are set free—we must feel the weight of the iron bondage of sin and Satan before we are brought out into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free!  
11. Now also many nations are gathered against you that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eyes look upon Zion. All the enemies of Israel came together, hoping to destroy her. They saw that God had left her for a while in their hands, so they maliciously sought her destruction.  
12. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD. They had their own thoughts and they thought that the Lord meant what they meant—the entire destruction of the chosen race! So the Prophet says, “But they know not the thoughts of the Lord”—  
12. Neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. God let them come together, great hosts of them, like the sheaves of wheat upon the threshing floor. Then see what the Lord says—  
13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs brass; and you shall beat in pieces many people. She was to be like the ox that treads out the corn and she was to have horns of iron and hoofs of brass with which to break in pieces those that had oppressed her!  
13. And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. So that, when they expected to destroy her, she destroyed them! And there may come a day when all the great men and the wise men and the proud men of the world will come together to destroy the Church of Christ, but, oh, how mistaken they will be! For when their pride is at its height, then will the poor weak Church of Christ be suddenly strengthened by the Most High and she shall tread them under her feet and they shall be utterly defeated to the praise of the Glory of the God of Zion who lives forever and ever!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE EVERLASTING COUNSELOR

NO. 3066

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1907. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.  
“Has your Counselor perished?”  
Micah 4:9.

THIS question is addressed to the Church of God, for in the context it is written, “And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your Counselor perished? For pangs have taken you as a woman in travail.” The poor Church of God had lost its way—it was doubting with regard to its direction. It knew not where to turn—to the right hand or to the left. In an agony of deep distraction, it bowed its head in fell dismay and thought that its King had disappeared and its Counselor perished. Forth comes the Prophet Micah, full of the Spirit, and addresses this question to the tried children of God, “Has your Counselor perished?”

We have before us a question implying three things. First, a Doctrine, namely, that our Counselor has not perished. Secondly, a reproof, for we sometimes act as if our Counselor had perished. And, thirdly, an encouragement for, however we may be situated and whatever may have perished—our Counselor has not perished.

I. First, then, here is A QUESTION IMPLYING A DOCTRINE, namely, the Doctrine that the Church of God has a Counselor and that that Counselor has not perished.

In olden times, the Lord’s people, whenever they were in a difficulty, could always find direction. Any man who doubted whether he should build his house, or whether he should go to war, or whether in any matter of his business he should do this or that, could at once receive instruction and advice by referring to the high priest who wore the ephod. And, being moved by the Spirit, the high priest spoke with his hand on the Urim and Thummim and gave an authoritative answer. Thus David told Abiathar to bring the ephod, and when he asked the Lord, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” the Lord said, “They will deliver you up.” So in other critical periods of the history of the saints, you will find it recorded that they were constantly in the habit of going to the priest and seeking for direction. Some of us may bewail the loss of such priests. We may be thinking, “I know not which way to go. I have no direction, I have no means of obtaining guidance.” O Christian! Has your Counselor perished? Ah, no! The Doctrine is assuredly taught us in Scripture that the Church of God still has an Infallible Guide!

There are some things, Beloved, in which we do not need a guide. Concerning morality, for instance, we need no other guide than that of the Sacred Volume. Wherever our course has two phases to it and the one is morally wrong and the other morally right, we have no need of a counselor. We only need, by the help of God’s Spirit, to come to the Bible and we can always see which road to take. Whenever a thing is a sin, we need not appeal to Christ to know whether we shall commit it, for we are taught to avoid even the appearance of evil! If we consider that a thing is wrong, we have no right to do it, even though it might tend to our advantage in worldly affairs. We must not do evil that good may come, for if we were to do so, then indeed our damnation would be just! We have no occasion to ask whether we should go the road of sin or the road of righteousness. Is there not a sign clearly pointing, “This is the way”? When we see that it is the path which Christ has marked out, in which the holy Prophets have gone and that wherein Apostles followed, we know we ought to walk in it!

But the difficulty is when two things may be both right and we do not know which to choose—when there are two courses which seem to us to be indifferent as to moral propriety—when there is no Law against either and we can do as seems best to us without staining our profession as Christians, or forgetting to honor God in all our ways. We are in a great difficulty then. We know not what to do. We are resolved we will not commit a willful sin. Through Divine Grace we are determined that we will not sin to rid ourselves of our embarrassments, but we are in such a strait we do not know what to do. How are we to tell? Is there any means left in the Church of God whereby a distressed and entangled traveler on the road to Heaven may ascertain his way in the dubious paths of Providence, when it is left to his own choice?

We answer—Yes, there is. The Counselor has not perished. There are still appointed means whereby the members of the Church of Christ, individually, have found guidance. These means are not what some take them to be. For instance, they are not by casting lots. Mr. John Wesley very frequently cast lots to know what he should do. Now, I care not who it was that did so, it is all the same to me—it is tempting God. For a man to twist a piece of paper and say, “Black, I go. White, I stay,” is tempting God’s Providence. I remember a case that happened in the country when 12 jurymen were almost equally divided as to the guilt of a certain prisoner—and they had the impudence to appeal to God in the matter— and to toss up, “heads or tails,” whether the person was innocent or guilty! They were Christians, too, and they thought they were appealing to God for they said that the lot was the end of contention. It is true that lots have been sanctioned in olden times. God has acknowledged lots and has blessed them, but we know of nothing to countenance lots now. We have no right to think we can appeal to God in such a manner! God by his Providence can direct it and no doubt He does. “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” Still, God will take care that the direction will be such a painful one that we shall be chastised for our presumption in daring thus to appeal to Him. We do not believe in such things—“we have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place.”

Again, there are some persons who think they are counseled by God when they certainly are not. They will even come to their minister to ask his advice concerning things—when they have already made up their minds what they will do. We have heard a story of a good minister who was applied to by a young woman, to know what she should do in a certain matter. He could perceive full well that she had made up her mind, so he said, “Go outside and hear what the bells say.” The bells of course chimed in her ears, “Do it! Do it!” She went home and did it! A little while later, she found she had got into disgrace by doing it, so she came back to the minister and said, “Sir, you have advised me wrong.” “No, I did not,” said the minister. “You did not interpret the bells right— go and listen again.” She went outside and the bells said, “Never do it! Never do it!” There are many persons whom we might advise to listen to the bells, for they never seek counsel till they have made up their minds! They call it a guidance of Providence, whereas the truth is that they determine beforehand what they will do—and if our advice happens to suit them, they take it—but if not, they prefer their own opinion and give their inclination the benefit of a doubt.

Having thus exposed some of the fallacies in respect to guidance, you will ask me to tell you how our Counselor really does guide us. I will try to explain this to you briefly. There were two or three different manners whereby the Lord guided the children of Israel when they were passing through the wilderness which may serve to show us the methods of His counsel. One of them was the fiery cloudy pillar of His Providence. Another was the Ark of the Covenant which always went before them. Another was the advice of Hobab, the father-in-Law of Moses, who knew the best places to pitch the tents. And yet again they had the priest with Urim and Thummim who told them what they were to do. Each of these things has a spiritual meaning.

First of all, the fiery cloudy pillar of God’s Providence is often a very precious guide to God’s people. Beloved, there may be those among you who will not be able to understand my meaning and yet, if you live long enough, you will review with pleasure, in your old age, the Truth of God I am setting forth. Many a time when the night was dark, the hosts of Israel moved forward by the light of that pillar of fire. There was a necessity for them to proceed in one direction because there was no light in any other. So you will often find Providence going before you. Just now, you are in a dilemma. You are saying, “Which road shall I take?” Suddenly Providence stops one of the roads up. Well, you don’t need a guide, then, because there is only one road to go! You are saying, “Which of two situations shall I take?” One is taken by somebody else and there is only one left—so that you have no alternative but to follow the cloud! Look at that pillar of Providence and you will find it will guide you better than anything else! Seek, when you’re in difficulty and you know not what to do, to come before God and say to Him, “O Lord, show me by Your Providence what to do. Let events so turn out that I cannot avoid doing that which would be for the best. If there are two doors and I know not which is the proper one, shut one of them up, Lord, even though it should be the one I like best—and then I must go through the other—and so I shall be guided by Your Providence.”

But instead of that, my Hearers, we often run before the cloud and, as the old Puritans had it, “They who ran before the cloud went on a fool’s errand and they soon had to come back again.” Follow the cloud, Beloved! Ask Providence to give you direction. You have not, perhaps, looked to God in the matter, to see His hand in Providence. Good Mr. Milllet (of the Orphan Home) says, “In regard to placing out my children in situations for life. In regard to what servants I shall take into my house and whom I shall receive in my family, I always go and seek direction of God and exercise faith in His Word that, even in these little matters He will direct and guide me. And when I do so, I do not hear a voice from Heaven, but I hear something tantamount to it, in Providence, which teaches me that such-and-such a thing I ought to do, and that such-and-such a thing I ought not to do.” Do not expect, Beloved, to hear voices, to see visions and to dream dreams, but rather look at Providence—see how God’s wonder-working wheels turn round and, as the wheels turn, so do you! Whichever way His hand points, go there and thus God shall guide you, for your Counselor has not yet perished!

Again, there is not only the fiery cloudy pillar of Providence, but there is, next, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord resting in the Believer’s heart which often guides him. You know that the Ark is the type of Jesus, and Jesus often leads a Christian by His Holy Spirit immediately exercised upon the heart. Perhaps when you have read the lives of some eminent Quakers, you have laughed at what they conceived to be the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit “moving” them as they said, to go to certain places. Never laugh at that, Beloved. There is more in it than some of you imagine—some of you who are not moved by the Holy Spirit and who cannot understood it. Your nature is so hard and stubborn that you do not feel that gentle influence, that touch of God’s hand moving you to do a thing. But it is not a fancy, mark you—they who know most of spiritual life will attest its reality. I myself, sometimes, (I speak honestly what I know. I testify what I have felt) have been moved to do certain things from altogether unaccountable reasons, not knowing in the least degree why I was to do them, or understanding why such things would be profitable. Perhaps a text has come forcibly to my mind and I have been obliged to take a certain course which I found, afterwards, was for the best.

I remember one incident which was a turning-point in my life and led me to this place. I had determined that I would enter a college. I had made up my mind and resolved to see the principal. In fact, I had waited at his house some time to see him. But, by Divine Providence, though I waited in his house, he was shown into one room and I into another. He never knew that I was there and I never knew that he was there! So there we sat waiting for each other all the time—and I left without seeing him. I went home and the text came into my mind, “Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.” Day after day, week after week, I could neither rest, sleep, nor do anything without those words ringing in my ears, “Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.” And as I pondered them, I thought—I know what this means. I have been thinking of great things for myself, but I will no longer seek them. So I made up my mind the other way, and I said, “By God’s Grace, I will never go there.” Then I found rest for my spirit, by following God’s Word. I shall never doubt, as long as I live, that it was a Divine impulse—nor shall I ever cast away that thought from my mind. At any rate, it was such an impulse that my conscience could not be easy till I obeyed it. And you, Christians, who look at the inner life—you who live in much fellowship with God—will have Divine impulses. You will have Divine moving of the Holy Spirit. You will, at certain seasons, be moved to do a certain thing— and I beseech you, if you are so moved, however strange it may seem to yourselves, if you hear the whisper of the Spirit within you—go and do it at once!

There is a remarkable anecdote of an old Christian man who was stirred up, one night, to go to a certain house on a certain street. And though it was 15 miles away and it was eventide, he saddled his horse and rode with all haste to the place. He arrived at the city. The lamps were glistening and as he crossed the bridge, he paused at the sound of the river murmuring in his ears, as if to break the solemn stillness of the night. Still he felt a sacred impulse within him urging his steps forward till, at length he reached the street and the house. When he had arrived at the door and knocked, he waited a long time before there was an answer. Presently, down came a haggard-looking man who asked, “What are you after?” “Friend,” said he, “I am told to come and see you at this hour of the, night. Why, I cannot tell. I know the Lord has some message for your soul.” The man started. “Bless God,” he said. “I had this halter around my neck five minutes ago to hang myself. Verily you were moved to come here.” Then he cast the rope aside and exclaimed, “Now I know that the Lord has not forgotten me, because He has sent His servant to deliver me out of the hand of the enemy.” If this is not a case of being moved by the Holy Spirit, I leave it to those who are so incredulous, or rather, so credulous in their unbelief, as to doubt it! There are such things, Beloved. They may not often happen in so remarkable a manner but, depend upon it, such things are occasionally experienced. The Counselor has not perished and He does speak to the heart! He does put Divine impulses there. He does move the soul. He does make us do things of which we would not have dreamed. And thus a strong necessity may be laid upon our circumstances, or it may be laid upon our will, while our understanding is in either case kept in the dark, so that we are led in a way we think not, to prove that our Counselor has not perished!

But there was another mode of guidance. I told you that the children of Israel were guided by Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. He knew the places where to pitch their tents. He knew where the palm trees grew, he knew the shady side of the rock, he knew where the rippling rills flowed from beneath the rocky mountainside. He knew the best place of shelter from their foes. Hobab guided them and he was a type of the Gospel ministry. And those whom God has called to that honorable service will often be the means of guiding God’s people. We have known many come to God’s House seeking guidance and have heard them say that the minister described their case exactly. And they have gone away and said, “Although nobody could have told him about me, really, if I had told him all about myself, he could not have spoken more pointedly at me than he did.” Have I not had hundreds of cases of that sort? Why, I have had letters written to me telling me not to be so personal, when I never knew anything whatever of the person who felt offended! What? Do any of you object to my being personal? As long as I live I will be personal to all of you! And if there is an error in any man’s conduct, or judgment—by the help of God I will show him where he is wrong! Personal preaching is the best kind of preaching. We are not going to avoid personalities! We are striving to reach individual cases as much as possible, that every man may hear the Word of God in his own tongue—and hear it speaking to his own heart.

But how singularly, at times, you have heard your case described! You have gone to the House of God and sat down in the pew, and the minister has gone into the pulpit and taken a text just adapted to yourself. He begins to tell you what your exact position is and then he tells you the way you should go. You cannot help saying as you retire, “That man is a Prophet.” Yes, and so he is, for as you will remember, I have often told you this is the way to find out a true servant of the Lord. Daniel was acknowledged to be a true servant of the Lord because he could tell the king both the dream and its interpretation. The astrologers could only tell the interpretation after they had been told the dream. Many can give you advice when they know your case, but the true servant of the Lord does not need to be informed about your case—he knows it beforehand. You come up here unobserved by your fellow creatures, but what you have done in your closet, that the Lord has told His servant! What you have done in your business, that He has revealed to him in secret communion and it will be made manifest to your conscience. He will tell you your dream and the interpretation of it, too! And you will say, “Verily, he is a servant of the Lord God of Israel.” That is the way to tell a true Prophet of the Lord. And I beseech you believe no other. Do not go to the astrologer or the soothsayer who wishes to know your experience before he will open to you the future—but go where your experience is unfolded and where you have all your difficulties grappled with and removed! The Counselor has not perished! Though speaking not in visions, He still leads His people by Providence, by Divine impulses on the mind and by a holy ministry which is the oracle of the most high and living God! Still does the gracious Counselor deign to counsel His people!

And the children of Israel were also guided in another way—when the priest inquired of the Lord by the Urim and Thummim. There is a sacred mystery about this, “of which we cannot now speak particularly.” Still, I doubt not that by this ordinance, God put a very high honor upon the priesthood and conferred a great privilege on His people. Now the peculiar privilege of this dispensation is not the Urim and Thummim—it is the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to all His disciples, to all who believe on His name! Ah, Beloved, you know not much of counsel and guidance if you have not yet received the Holy Spirit! Observe how it is written, “The anointing which you have received of Him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you. But as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him.”

Do you ask me, “How does the Spirit of God guide us?” I answer, not by making fresh Revelations as the Swedenborgians pretend, but by shining upon the Word that has been revealed of old—and by shining in our hearts. So the Spirit witnesses with our spirits. So does He apply to us the promises. So does He open the Scriptures to our understanding and He opens our understanding to understand the Scriptures!

The blessed Spirit also makes intercession for us on earth even as Christ makes intercession for us in Heaven. Then He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. And He guides us by the old paths where we see the footprints of Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and martyrs. Such is the Doctrine implied in the inquiry of my text, “Has your Counselor perished?”

II. Then, secondly, THIS QUESTION SUGGESTS A REPROOF—“Has your Counselor perished?”  
It is a reproof because the child of God does not believe, doctrinally, that his Counselor has perished, but he does so practically. He at times runs of his own accord instead of waiting for the guidance of God. At other times he is afraid to move forward, even when the finger of Him who “is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,” has clearly pointed the way and made the vision so plain “that he may run that reads it.” How often does the child of God nurse his difficulties as Asaph did when he said, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” But then he adds, “until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” O Beloved, remember how Habakkuk, in a time of danger, stood upon his watch and sat upon his tower to see what the Lord would say to him! Remember what Hezekiah did with the letter which he received from the hand of the messengers of Sennacherib, king of Assyria! When he had read it, “he went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord.” Alas, alas! That, your lives should be constantly vexed with trifling cares instead of “casting all your care upon God.” The knowledge that “He cares for you” ought to drive all your anxious cares away!  
One reason why many of us are slow to take counsel of the Lord is this—we are not thoroughly emptied of our own conceits. Let me remind you of that memorable passage in the history of the children of Israel when they came to Kadesh and were proceeding along the borders of Canaan. The spies were sent forth by Moses to bring in their report of the land. And of the twelve, only two brought in a cheering report. The other 10 discouraged the hearts of the people with a pitiful tale of walled cities and their giant population. In vain does Moses admonish them, “Dread not, neither be dismayed.” In vain does he assure them, “The Lord shall go before you, He shall fight for you.” In vain does he call to remembrance the wonders which the Lord had done in Egypt before their eyes! Faint-hearted and desponding in this thing, they did not believe the Lord their God!  
Look again and you shall behold the counterpart. They were not more timid than they were presumptuous. The heart that is prone to resist is equally liable to presume. No sooner has the commandment been given to return into the wilderness than they gird on, every man, his weapons of war and go presumptuously up the hill to fight with the Amalekites and the Canaanites—and so they were smitten and fled before them. Who would imagine that the people who cringed at the mention of the sons of Anak yesterday, would dare to fly in the face of the Commandment of God on the morrow? With more humility they would have been braver men. Ah, Beloved! How closely we resemble those Israelites in measuring ourselves by ourselves! One day we feel so faint that we can attempt nothing for God. And another day our hearts beat so high that we could presume on anything! The young convert in particular will often complain that he is too weak in faith to pray—and then again he will boast that he feels so strong in faith that he could preach! The oldest of you have never yet learned the full meaning of these precious words, “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Ah, you may make a deal of ceremony about laying your great troubles before Him, but you do not seem to understand the length and breadth of “everything”—every little thing as well as every great thing! Paul could go into particulars and say, “Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do.” You seek counsel in foul weather but not when the sun shines. You consult the weather instead of watching “the cloud” to regulate your movements.  
The reproof is intended to rebuke our folly as well as our sin. “Has your Counselor perished?” What would you think of a captain out at sea, near a coast where there are many rocks—as on the British coast which is exceedingly dangerous—if he should say, “Now, sailors, reef your sails. You must be kept still on the ocean, for there are so many rocks, we don’t know which way to go”? Imagine him as he walks up and down the deck in melancholy anxiety and says, “Sailors, we can’t go on. I don’t know which way to steer. I can’t tell what to do!” What would the sailors say? “Sir, are all the pilots dead?” “No, they are not.” “Then run up a signal and fetch a pilot.” That is the way to steer through your difficulties but, very often, you are pacing up and down the deck and saying, “Oh, I shall never be able to steer through this narrow channel! I shall never be able to escape these dangers. I shall never be able to avoid that rock.” But run up the signal and fetch the Pilot! That is the way, for our Counselor has not perished. There is yet a Pilot on shore—He will see your signal and as sure as, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, you make known your requests unto God, He will guide you by His counsel—and afterward receive you to Glory!  
But you often act as if you had no Counselor. You run to one friend and then to another friend and you ask their advice. But let me tell you that if you asked advice of the creature all day long, to however many different counselors you went, you would have as many different pieces of advice! We have heard of a man who, in order to test the doctors and ascertain whether they were true, wrote, I think, to 400 of them for a prescription, giving them all the same case. And I think he had 380 different prescriptions, many of them diametrically opposite to one another—and not above two of them at all like each other in the smallest degrees. Astonishing, is it not, that there should be such division? But there is equal division of opinion when you come to ask advice of your friends. One says, “I would do it.” Another says, “I would not do it.” Some of old said, “This is the blind man.” Others said, “He is like he.” There were those, again, who denied his identity. But there were some who said, “The best way is to go to the blind man himself.” And he said, “I am he.” It is the wisest plan to go to the Master and ask Him, instead of going to our fellow men! You may go round and round and round and take all the advice you like, but you will obtain no guidance, nor direction. Rather follow the example of the disciples who went to Jesus when they were in difficulties. He will guide you through the desert and bring you safely to Heaven.  
“But,” says one, “how may I draw near to this great Counselor, for I am in deep distress?” Ah, then the question comes to you with full power as a reproof! Are you asking how you may find Him? What? Does He not abide with you? Do you not live with Him? Has your Counselor perished? Is He gone? Has He forgotten you? Or do you cease to remember Him— your Friend, your bosom Companion? Do you not hold to Him to walk with you and lodge with you? Do you not live in Him? Verily, this is a reproof to you, for you have lived as if your Counselor had perished! And if you ask, O Christian, how you may draw near, even to His seat, let me tell you there is the sacred ladder of prayer and faith up which you may climb, even to Heaven, and talk with Jesus! Let your difficulties be ever so great, go and tell them to your Lord!  
You say, “Why, He knows them. There is no necessity for telling them to Him.” I would have you all, when you are in doubt, go and tell the Lord what you are in doubt about. Go and cross-examine yourselves in prayer. Draw out your confessions. Tell Him all your circumstances. Do not say, “I need not utter them with my mouth, for He knows them”—but tell Him all about them! It will do you good and it will ease your aching hearts. God likes His people to make a clean breast of it. Speak it in plain English to God. Don’t go quoting human prayer-books, but breathe out the plaintive melody of your own sighs. Tell Him, “I am in such-and-such distress and I ask Your gracious guidance.” Don’t go around in circles, but go straight to the point. Tell Him what it is and when you have confessed your difficulty, the Lord will help you. Cast the anchor out and let the Pilot come on board. After that you may ship your anchor again and let the Almighty God of Jacob take the tiller, guide you over the stormy billows and land you in the haven of peace! The Counselor has not perished!  
Here, then, is a reproof which may be often of use to us. When we observe the temper and the conduct of Christian people we frequently think them ill-advised, as if they had no Counselor. Why so timorous and so craven-hearted when duty calls? Why is zeal so wild and so little tempered with discretion? Why does adversity cast you down so much? Why does prosperity make you vaunt yourselves and behave so unseemly? The answer to such questions, I suppose, is not to be found in any wanton disrespect to the Word of God, or the statutes of His mouth, but you draw not near to the Lord as your Counselor—you hold not sweet fellowship with Him! You may spell over His ancient oracles with diligent care and yet, if you have no communion with your Counselor, if you order not your cause before Him and fill your mouth with arguments, then the reproof belongs to you, “Has your Counselor perished?” He is an ever-living Advocate! His secret is with them that fear Him. Our blessed Master did not leave His disciples like orphans, to shift for themselves. Why, then, should you perplex yourself with strange fears and forebodings? Why run here and there to one and another for advice? “Has your Counselor perished?”  
III. Now, lastly, here is a word of comfort to the desponding. THE QUESTION IS INTENDED FOR ENCOURAGEMENT. “Has your Counselor perished?”  
There are many things that have perished. There is one of you now lamenting the loss of a dear, pious father. And another is groaning over the corpse of a mother. The yet unburied body of a husband lies within your house. Or perhaps your dead child is yet unconfined and you have come here to seek some cordial for your griefs. Well, these have perished—objects of your sweet affection! As a dream they have passed away and lo, they are not! The place that knew them once shall know them no more. You may weep, Mourner, for Jesus wept! Yet you may not despair. If they are gone, your Counselor has not perished. You have lost some friends, but your Counselor is not dead. Some of the private soldiers are slain, but the General is alive! Some of the common people have fallen prey to a disease, but the Counselor still lives. If anyone had met poor Little-Faith and said to him, “Well, Little-Faith, you have been met by the robbers—what have you lost?” “Oh, he would have said, “thank God! Thank God! Thank God!” “What for, Little-faith?” “Why, I have lost a great many things, but look here! I have not lost my jewels!” One of you goes home from business to your private house. As you go, you have to take a large bag with £500 in it. Going along, somebody comes behind you and steals your handkerchief. What do you say when you get home? “I did not like to lose the handkerchief, certainly, but never mind, the £500 are safe! I am glad they did not steal that.” So it is with you—some of your earthly comforts have been taken from you, but do not despair. “Has your Counselor perished?” “No, He has not. He is still my Counselor and He has not ceased to love me, nor has He ceased to live for me. His affection is not abated. His Grace is unchanged. His understanding is unsearchable. He knows the way that I take.”  
But another says, “I have not lost my friends by death. I could almost wish I had. But, Sir, they have deserted me. I am a minister. I had deacons who stood by me once, but now they have turned their backs upon me. I had an affectionate church, but there are some who, like Diotrephes, have loved the pre-eminence and turned against me.” Is that your state, Brother? I can pity, if I cannot sympathize with your trouble. I have not felt the same, for my people love their pastor and gather round him in every possible way. But I can tell you this for your comfort, your Counselor has not perished! What though your principal supporter is determined that you should leave the place? What if your familiar friend with whom you went to the House of God in company has betrayed you? Your Counselor has not perished! I think again I hear a whisper from one who says, “I am not a minister, but I am engaged in seeking the welfare of my people. I had helpers once. I thought I was doing good, but one by one they have all left and I am left alone, faint and cheerless.” You may wish them back for they were good men, but console yourself with this thought—your Counselor is not gone and He is able to support you! We have heard of an ancient orator who, when he was speaking, had only one auditor. All who had come to listen at the commencement went away—but he still kept on with his oration. When he closed, the question was asked him, how he could keep on when there was only one person to hear him. “It is true,” he said, “I had only one auditor, but that auditor was Plato, and that was enough for me.” So, you may have only one Friend, but that one Friend is Jesus and He is enough—a host in Himself—“The Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God!” O deserted Soul, you who walk in solitary places—you who have neither friend nor helper—your Counselor has not perished!  
And you sons of poverty, bereaved of your wealth. You children of indigence, bereft of all that you had. You whose health is weak and whose spirits are low and desponding—though you have lost wealth, health and friends—yes, though you are a total wreck now, there still remains one blessed reserve, “Has your Counselor perished?” No! Jesus lives! Write that down—Jesus lives! Then let every Believer in Jesus make his own application of that Truth of God! A great minister is dead, but Jesus lives! A kind friend is dead, but Jesus lives! My property is gone, but Jesus lives! My comfort has failed, but Jesus lives! And because He lives—He, Himself, has said it—I shall live also. “Where I am, there shall also My servant be.” Then trust Him and give no quarter to fear or despondency. Your life is secure! He will preserve you!  
O my Friends, my Friends, how much I mourn that there are some of you who are without a Guide! Oh, that I could picture that sad thought so that you might see your own unhappy case—without a Guide! See yonder desert? It is in the midst of Arabia. There are no trees, no shrubs, no cooling streams—nothing but the hot sky above and the burning sand beneath! And there is a man wandering there in awful solitude! Do you see him? He looks haggard, warn, forlorn. He is gazing on the ground to see if he can find a camel’s track, that he may follow it. He runs here and there seeking a path of escape, but he runs in vain! He turns round and round in a perpetual circle, while the fiery desert still encompasses him. Why does he wander thus? Because he has no guide! Watch him a while longer. He casts his eye around, but there is no hope. Deluded by the mirage for a moment, he thinks there are green plains around him, but alas, the vision mocks his hope! Stooping down to drink, he fills his mouth with hot sand. O Man! Why are you so foolish as to pursue the phantom? Because he has no guide! Watch him again. He lays himself upon the ground, the subject of despair. He groans and casts his eyes up at the death-bird wheeling in the air, expectant of his prey, for he has scented him from a distance and is come to devour him! Why does he not rouse himself? Because he has no guide!  
And now he is dead, the vulture is upon him and his flesh is cleared away by the horrid bird. And as you go through the desert, there is nothing but a bleached skeleton to tell the harrowing tale. Why did that man die? Because he had no guide! And so shall the wicked perish! But the righteous “shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.”  
God give you His Holy Spirit, that you may receive the instruction, listen to the reproof and enjoy the comforts of this Counsel evermore!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #57 New Park Street Pulpit 1

THE INCARNATION AND BIRTH OF CHRIST

NO. 57

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, DECEMBER 23, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

**“But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”  
Micah 5:2**

THIS is the season of the year when, whether we wish it or not, we are compelled to think of the birth of Christ. I hold it to be one of the greatest absurdities under Heaven to think that there is any religion in keeping Christmas day! There are no probabilities whatever that our Savior, Jesus Christ, was born on that day and the observance of it is purely of Popish origin. Doubtless those who are Catholics have a right to hallow it, but I do not see how consistent Protestants can account it in the least sacred! However, I wish there were ten or a dozen Christmas days in the year—for there is work enough in the world—and a little more rest would not hurt laboring people. Christmas is really a gift to us, particularly as it enables us to assemble round the family hearth and meet our friends once more. Still, although we do not fall exactly in the track of other people, I see no harm in thinking of the Incarnation and birth of the Lord Jesus. We do not wish to be classed with those—

*“Who with more care keep holiday*

*The wrong, than others the right way.”*  
The old Puritans made a parade of work on Christmas day, just to show that they protested against the observance of it. But we believe they entered that protest so completely, that we are willing, as their descendants, to take the good accidentally conferred by the day and leave its superstitions to the superstitious!

To proceed at once to what we have to say to you, we notice, first, who it was that sent Christ forth. God the Father here speaks and says, “Out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel.” Secondly, where did He come to at the time of His Incarnation. Thirdly, what did He come for—“To be ruler in Israel.” Fourthly, had He ever come before? Yes, He had. “Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

I. First, then, WHO SENT JESUS CHRIST? The answer is returned to us by the words of the text. “Out of you,” says Jehovah, speaking by the mouth of Micah, “out of you shall He come forth unto Me.” It is a sweet thought that Jesus Christ did not come forth without His Father’s permission, authority, consent and assistance. He was sent of the Father that He might be the Savior of men. We are, alas, too apt to forget that while there are distinctions as to the Persons in the Trinity, there are no distinctions of honor—and we do very frequently ascribe the honor of our salvation, or at least the depths of its mercy and the extremity of its benevolence, more to Jesus Christ than we do to the Father. This is a very great mistake! What if Jesus came? Did not His Father send Him? If He were made a Child, did not the Holy Spirit beget Him? If He spoke wondrously, did not His Father pour Grace into His lips that He might be an able minister of the New Covenant? If His Father did forsake Him when He drank the bitter cup of gall, did He not still love Him? And did He not, by-and-by, after three days, raise Him from the dead and at last receive Him up on high, leading captivity captive? Ah, Beloved, He who knows the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as he should know them, never sets One before Another! He is not more thankful to One than the Other, he sees them at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane and on Calvary all equally engaged in the work of salvation! “He shall come forth unto Me.” O Christian, have you put your confidence in the Man, Christ Jesus? Have you placed your reliance solely on Him? And are you united with Him? Then believe that you are united unto the God of Heaven, since to the Man, Christ Jesus, you are brother and hold closest fellowship! You are linked, thereby, with God the Eternal, and “the Ancient of Days” is your Father and your Friend! “He shall come forth unto Me.”

Did you never see the depth of love there was in the heart of Jehovah, when God the Father equipped His Son for the great enterprise of mercy? There had been a sad day in Heaven, once before, when Satan fell and dragged with him a third of the stars of Heaven and when the Son of God launching from His great right hand the Omnipotent thunders, dashed the rebellious crew to the pit of Perdition. But if we could conceive a grief in Heaven—that must have been a sadder day when the Son of the Most High left His Father’s bosom—where He had lain from before all worlds. “Go,” and the Father, “and Your Father’s blessing on Your head!” Then comes the unrobing. How do angels crowd around to see the Son of God take off His robes! He laid aside His crown, He said, “My Father, I am Lord over all, blessed forever. But I will lay My crown aside and be as mortal men are.” He strips Himself of His bright vest of Glory. “Father,” He said, “I will wear a robe of clay, just such as men wear.” Then He takes off all those jewels wherewith He was glorified. He lays aside His starry mantles and robes of light to dress Himself in the simple garments of the peasant of Galilee. What a solemn disrobing that must have been! And next, can you picture the dismissal? The angels attend the Savior through the streets, until they approach the doors. An angel cries, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors and let the King of Glory through!” Oh, I think the angels must have wept when they lost the Company of Jesus—when the Sun of Heaven bereaved them of all its light! But they went after Him. They descended with Him. And when His spirit entered into flesh and He became a Baby, He was attended by that mighty host of angels who, after they had been with Him to Bethlehem’s manger, and seen Him safely laid on His mother’s breast—in their journey upwards appeared to the shepherds and told them that He was born King of the Jews! The Father sent Him! Contemplate that subject! Let your soul get hold of it and in every period of His life think that He suffered what the Father willed—that every step of His life was marked with the approval of the great I AM. Let every thought that you have of Jesus be also connected with the eternal, ever-blessed God, for, “He,” says Jehovah, “shall come forth to Me.” Who sent Him, then? The answer is His Father!

II. Now, secondly, WHERE DID HE COME TO? A word or two concerning Bethlehem. It seemed meet and right that our Savior should be born in Bethlehem and that, because of Bethlehem’s history, Bethlehem’s name and Bethlehem’s position—little in Judah.

1. First, it seemed necessary that Christ should be born in Bethlehem because of Bethlehem’s history. Dear to every Israelite was the little village of Bethlehem. Jerusalem might outshine it in splendor, for there stood the Temple, the glory of the whole earth and “beautiful for situation—the joy of the whole earth was Mount Zion.” Yet around Bethlehem there clustered a number of incidents which always made it a pleasant resting place to every Jewish mind. Even the Christian cannot help loving Bethlehem! The first mention, I think, that we have of Bethlehem is a sorrowful one. There Rachel died. If you turn to the 35th Chapter of Genesis, you will find it said in the 16th verse—“And they journeyed from Bethel and there was but a little way to come to Ephratah. And Rachel travailed and she had hard labor. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not, you shall have this son, also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died), that she called his name Benoni. But his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephratah, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave, that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.” A singular incident, this—almost prophetic. Might not Mary have called her own son, Jesus, her Benoni, for He was to be the Child of Sorrow? Simeon said to her—“Yes a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” But while she might have called Him Benoni, what did God, His Father, call Him? Benjamin, the son of My right hand. Benoni was He as a Man. Benjamin as to His Godhead. This little incident seems to be almost a prophecy that Benoni—Benjamin, the Lord Jesus, should be born in Bethlehem!

But another woman makes this place celebrated. That woman’s name was Naomi. There lived at Bethlehem in later days, when, perhaps, the stone that Jacob’s fondness had raised had been covered with moss and its inscription obliterated, another woman named Naomi. She, too, was a daughter of joy and yet a daughter of bitterness. Naomi was a woman whom the Lord had loved and blessed, but she had to go to a strange land and she said, “Call me not Naomi, (pleasant), but let my name be called Mara, (bitter), for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” Yet was she not alone amid all her losses, for there cleaved unto her, Ruth, the Moabitess, whose Gentile blood would unite with the pure untainted stream of the Jew and should thus bring forth the Lord our Savior, the great King, both of Jews and Gentiles! That very beautiful Book of Ruth had all its scenery laid in Bethlehem! It was at Bethlehem that Ruth went forth to glean in the fields of Boaz. It was there that Boaz looked upon her and she bowed herself before her lord. It was there her marriage was celebrated. And in the streets of Bethlehem did Boaz and Ruth receive a blessing which made them fruitful, so that Boaz became the father of Obed and Obed the father of Jesse—and Jesse the father of David! That last fact gilds Bethlehem with glory—the fact that David was born there— the mighty hero who smote the Philistine giant, who led the discontented of his land away from the tyranny of their monarch and who, afterwards, by a full consent of a willing people, was crowned king of Israel and Judah! Bethlehem was a royal city because the kings were there brought forth! Little as Bethlehem was, it was much to be esteemed because it was like certain principalities which we have in Europe, which are celebrated for nothing but for bringing forth the consorts of the royal families of England! It was right, then, from history, that Bethlehem should be the birthplace of Christ!

2. But again—there is something in the name of the place. “Bethlehem Ephratah.” The word, Bethlehem, has a double meaning. It signifies, “the house of bread” and, “the house of war.” Ought not Jesus Christ to be born in “the house of bread”? He is the Bread of His people on which they feed! As our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, so do we live on Jesus here below! Famished by the world, we cannot feed on its shadows. Its husks may gratify the swinish taste of worldlings, for they are swine, but we need something more substantial. In that blessed Bread of Heaven, made of the bruised body of our Lord Jesus and baked in the furnace of His agonies, we find a blessed food! No food like Jesus to the desponding soul or to the strongest saint! The very meanest of the family of God goes to Bethlehem for his bread—and the strongest man, who eats strong meat, goes to Bethlehem for it, too. House of bread, where could our nourishment come from but you? We have tried Sinai, but on her rugged steeps there grow no fruits and her thorny heights yield no corn whereon we may feed. We have repaired, even, to Tabor, itself, where Christ was transfigured and yet there we have not been able to eat His flesh and drink His blood. But Bethlehem, House of Bread, rightly were you called, for there the Bread of Life was first handed down for man to eat!

But it is also called, “the house of war.” Because Christ is to a man, “the house of bread,” or else, “the house of war.” While He is food to the righteous, He causes war to the wicked, according to His own words— “think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Sinner, if you do not know Bethlehem as “the house of bread,” it shall be to you a “house of war.” If from the lips of Jesus you never drink sweet honey—if you are not like the bee, which sips sweet luscious liquor from the Rose of Sharon, then out of the same mouth there shall go forth against you a two-edged sword! And that mouth from which the righteous draw their bread, shall be to you the mouth of destruction and the cause of your ruin! Jesus of Bethlehem, house of bread and house of war, we trust we know You as our bread. Oh, that some who are now at war with You might hear in their hearts, as well as in their ears the song—

*“Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled.”*

And now for that word, Ephratah. That was the old name of the place which the Jews retained and loved. The meaning of it is, “fruitfulness,” or, “abundance.” Ah, well was Jesus born in the house of fruitfulness, for where comes my fruitfulness and your fruitfulness, my Brothers and Sisters, but from Bethlehem? Our poor barren hearts never produced one fruit or flower till they were watered with the Savior’s blood! It is His incarnation which fattens the soil of our hearts. There had been pricking thorns on all the ground—and mortal poisons, before He came—but our fruitfulness comes from Him. “I am like a green fir tree. From You is my fruit found.” “All my springs are in You.” If we are like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth our fruit in our season, it is not because we were naturally fruitful, but because of the rivers of water by which we were planted. It is Jesus that makes us fruitful “If a man abides in Me,” He says, “and My words abide in him, he shall bring forth much fruit.” Glorious Bethlehem Ephratah! Rightly named! Fruitful house of bread—the house of abundant provision for the people of God!

3. We notice, next, the position of Bethlehem. It is said to be “little among the thousands of Judah.” Why is this? Because Jesus Christ always goes among little ones. He was born in the little one “among the thousands of Judah.” Not Bashan’s high hill! Not on Hebron’s royal mount! Not in Jerusalem’s palaces, but in the humble, yet illustrious, village of Bethlehem! There is a passage in Zechariah which teaches us a lesson—it is said that the man on the red horse stood among the myrtle trees. Now the myrtle trees grow at the bottom of the hill—and the man on the red horse always rides there. He does not ride on the mountaintop. He rides among the humble in heart! “With this man will I dwell, says the Lord. With him who is of a humble and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word.” There are some little ones here this morning— “little among the thousands of Judah.” No one ever heard your name, did they? If you were buried and had your name on your tombstone, it would never be noticed. Those who pass by would say, “It is nothing to me. I never knew him.” You do not know much of yourself, or think much of yourself. You can scarcely read, perhaps. Or if you have some talents and ability, you are despised among men. Or, if you are not despised by them, you despise yourself! You are one of the little ones. Well, Christ is always born in Bethlehem among the little ones. Big hearts never get Christ inside of them! Christ lies not in great hearts, but in little ones. Mighty and proud spirits never have Jesus Christ, for He comes in at low doors. He will not come in at high ones. He who has a broken heart and a low spirit, shall have the Savior, but no one else. He heals not the prince and the king, but, “the broken in heart and He binds up their wounds.” Sweet thought! He is the Christ of the little ones! “You, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel.”

We cannot pass away from this without another thought here, which is, how “wonderfully mysterious was that Providence which brought Jesus Christ’s mother to Bethlehem at the very time when she was to deliver!” His parents were residing at Nazareth. And why should they need to travel at that time? Naturally they would have remained at home. It was not at all likely that His mother would have taken a journey to Bethlehem while in so peculiar a condition! But Caesar Augustus issues a decree that they are to be taxed. Very well, then, let them be taxed at Nazareth. No. It pleases him that they should all go to their city. But why should Caesar Augustus think of it just at that particular time? Simply because, while man devises his way, the king’s heart is in the hand of your Lord! Why, what a thousand chances—as the world has it—met together to bring about this event! First of all, Caesar quarreled with Herod. One of the Herods was deposed. Caesar says, “I shall tax Judea and make it a province, instead of having it for a separate kingdom.” Well, it must be done. But when is it to be done? This taxing, it is said, was first commenced when Cyreneus was governor. But why is the census to be taken at that particular period—suppose—December? Why not have had it last October? And why could not the people be taxed where they were living? Was not their money just as good, there, as anywhere else? It was Caesar’s whim, but it was God’s decree! Oh, we love the sublime Doctrine of Eternal Absolute Predestination! Some have doubted its being consistent with the free agency of man. We know well it is so and we never saw any difficulty in the subject. We believe metaphysicians have made difficulties. We see none, ourselves. It is for us to believe that man does as he pleases, yet notwithstanding, he always does as God decrees. If Judas betrays Christ, “thereunto he was appointed.” And if Pharaoh hardens his heart, yet, “for this purpose have I raised you up, to show forth My power in you.”

Man does as he wills, but God makes him do as he wills, too! No, not only is the will of man under the absolute Predestination of Jehovah— but all things, great or little, are of Him! Well has the good poet said, “Doubtless the sailing of a cloud has Providence as its pilot. Doubtless the root of an oak is gnarled for a special purpose, God compasses all things, mantling the globe like air.” There is nothing great or little that is not from Him. The summer dust moves in its orbit, guided by the same hand which rolls the stars along. The dewdrops have their father and trickle on the rose leaf as God bids them. Yes, the sear leaves of the forest, when hurled along by the tempest, have their allotted position where they shall fall, nor can they go beyond it. In the great and in the little, there is God—God in everything, working all things according to the counsel of His own will. And though man seeks to go against his Maker, yet he cannot. God has bound the sea with a barrier of sand and if the sea mounts up wave after wave, yet it shall not exceed its allotted channel. Everything is of God. And unto Him who guides the stars and wings sparrows, who rules planets and yet moves atoms, who speaks thunders and yet whispers zephyrs, unto Him be glory! For there is God in everything!

III. This brings us to the third point—WHY DID JESUS COME? He came to be “ruler in Israel.” A very singular thing is this, that Jesus Christ was said to have been “born the King of the Jews.” Very few have ever been, “born king.” Men are born princes, but they are seldom born kings. I do not think you can find an instance in history where any infant was born king. He was the prince of Wales, perhaps. But he had to wait a number of years—till his father died and then they manufactured him into a king by putting a crown on his head and a sacred chrism and other silly things. But he was not born a king! I remember no one who was born a king except Jesus. And there is emphatic meaning in that verse that we sing—

*“Born Your people to deliver*

*Born a Child, and yet a King.”*  
The moment that He came on earth, He was a king! He did not wait till His majority that He might take His empire—but as soon as His eyes greeted the sunshine, He was a king! From the moment that His little hands grasped anything, they grasped a scepter! As soon as His pulse beat and His blood began to flow, His heart beat royally and His pulse beat an imperial measure and His blood flowed in a kingly current! He was born a king. He came “to be ruler in Israel.” “Ah,” says one, “then He came in vain, for little did He exercise His rule—‘He came unto His own and His own received Him not’—He came to Israel and He was not their ruler, but He was ‘despised and rejected of men,’ cast off by them all and forsaken by Israel, unto whom He came.” Yes, but “They are not all Israel who are of Israel.” Neither because they are the seed of Abraham shall they all be called such. Ah, no! He is not ruler of Israel after the flesh, but He is the ruler of Israel after the spirit! Many such have obeyed Him. Did not the Apostles bow before Him and acknowledge Him as their King? And now, does not Israel salute Him as their Ruler? Do not all the seed of Abraham after the spirit, even all the faithful, for He is “the father of the faithful,” acknowledge that unto Christ belongs the shields of the mighty, for He is the King of the whole earth? Does He not rule over Israel? Yes, verily He does, and those who are not ruled over by Christ are not of Israel. He came to be a ruler over Israel!

My Brother, have you submitted to the sway of Jesus? Is He ruler in your heart, or is He not? We may know Israel by this—Christ is come into their hearts, to be ruler over them. “Oh,” says one, “I do as I please. I was never in bondage to any man.” Ah, then you hate the rule of Christ! “Oh,” says another, “I submit myself to my minister, to my clergyman, or to my priest—and I think that what he tells me is enough, for he is my ruler.” Do you? Ah, poor slave, you know not your dignity—for nobody is your lawful ruler but the Lord Jesus Christ! “Yes,” says another, “I have professed His religion and I am His follower.” But does He rule in your hearts? Does He command your will? Does He guide your judgment? Do you ever seek counsel at His handling your difficulties? Are you desirous to honor Him and to put crowns upon His heads? Is He your ruler? If so, then you are one of Israel, for it is written, “He shall come to be ruler in Israel.” Blessed Lord Jesus! You are Ruler in Your people’s hearts and You always shall be! We want no other ruler save You and we will submit to none other! We are free, because we are the servants of Christ. We are at liberty because He is our ruler and we know no bondage and no slavery, because Jesus Christ, alone, is Monarch of our hearts! He came “to be ruler in Israel,” and mark you—that mission of His is not quite fulfilled, yet—and shall not be till the latter-day glories! In a little while you shall see Christ come again, to be Ruler over His people Israel and Ruler over them not only as spiritual Israel but even as natural Israel, for the Jews shall be restored to their land and the tribes of Jacob shall yet sing in the halls of their Temple! Unto God there shall yet again be offered Hebrew songs of praise and the heart of the unbelieving Jew shall be melted at the feet of the true Messiah! In a short time, He who at His birth was hailed King of the Jews by Easterns and at His death was written King of the Jews by a Western, shall be called King of the Jews everywhere—yes, King of the Jews and Gentiles, also—in that universal monarchy whose dominion shall be co-extensive with the habitable globe and whose duration shall be coeval with time itself! He came to be a Ruler in Israel and a Ruler most decidedly He shall be, when He shall gloriously reign among His people with His ancients!

IV. And now, the last thing is, DID JESUS CHRIST EVER COME BEFORE? We answer, yes. For our text says, “Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.”

First, Christ has had His goings forth in His Godhead, “from everlasting.” He has not been a secret and a silent Person up to this moment. That new-born Child there has worked wonders long before now. That Infant slumbering in His mother’s arms is the Infant of today but it is the Ancient of eternity! That Child who is there has not made His appearance on the stage of this world—His name is not yet written in the calendar of the circumcised—but still though you wish it not, “His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.”

1. Of old He went forth as our Covenant Head in Election, “according as He has chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world”— *“Christ be My first elect, He said,  
Then chose our souls in Christ our Head.”*

2. He had goings forth for His people, as their Representative before the Throne of God even before they were begotten in the world! It was from everlasting that His mighty fingers grasped the pen, the stylus of ages and wrote His own name, the name of the eternal Son of God. It was from everlasting that He signed the compact with His Father that He would pay blood for blood, wound for wound, suffering for suffering, agony for agony and death for death on the behalf of His people! It was from everlasting that He gave Himself up, without a murmuring word, that from the crown of His head to the sole of His feet He might sweat blood, that He might be spit upon, pierced, mocked, torn asunder, suffer the pain of death and the agonies of the Cross! His goings forth as our Surety were from everlasting! Pause, my Soul, and wonder! You had goings forth in the Person of Jesus from everlasting! Not only when you were born into the world did Christ love you, but His delights were with the sons of men before there were any sons of men! Often did He think of them, from everlasting to everlasting He had set His affliction upon them. What? Believer, has He been so long about your salvation and will He not accomplish it? Has He from everlasting been going forth to save me and will He lose me, now? What? Has He had me in His hand as His precious jewel and will He now let me slip between His precious fingers? Did He choose me before the mountains were brought forth, or the channels of the deep scooped out and will He lose me now? Impossible!—

*“My name from the palms of His hands  
Eternity cannot erase!  
Impressed on His heart it remains,  
In marks of indelible Grace!”*

I am sure He would not love me so long and then leave off loving me. If He intended to be tired of me, He would have been tired of me long before now! If He had not loved me with a love as deep as Hell and as unutterable as the grave. If He had not given His whole heart to me, I am sure He would have turned from me long ago! He knew what I would be and He has had time enough to consider it—but I am His choice and that is the end of it. And unworthy as I am, it is not mine to grumble if He is contented with me. And He is contented with me—He must be contented with me—for He has known me long enough to know my faults! He knew me before I knew myself—yes, He knew me before I was myself! Long before my members were fashioned, they were written in His book, “when as yet there were none of them.” His eyes of affection were set on them. He knew how badly I would act towards Him and yet He has continued to love me—  
No! Since, “His goings forth were of old, from everlasting,” they will be, “to everlasting.”

*“His love in times past forbids me to think, He’ll leave me, at last, in trouble to sink.”*

Secondly, we believe that Christ has come forth of old, even to men, so that men have beheld Him. I will not stop to tell you that it was Jesus who walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, for His delights were with the sons of men. Nor will I detain you by pointing out all the various ways in which Christ came forth to His people in the form of the Angel of the Covenant, the Paschal Lamb, the Brazen Serpent, the Burning Bush and ten thousand types with which the sacred history is so replete! But I will rather point you to four occasions when Jesus Christ, our Lord, has appeared on earth as a Man, before His great Incarnation for our salvation. And, first, I beg to refer you to the 18th Chapter of Genesis, where Jesus Christ appeared to Abraham, of whom we read, “The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked and lo, three men stood by him. And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door and bowed himself toward the ground.” But whom did he bow to? He said, “My Lord,” only to one of them. There was one Man between the other two, the most conspicuous for His Glory, for He was the GodMan, Christ Jesus. The other two were created angels who, for a time, had assumed the appearance of men. But this was the Man, Christ Jesus. “And he said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, pass not away, I pray You, from Your servant. Let a little water, I pray You, be fetched and wash Your feet and rest yourselves under the tree.” You will notice that this majestic Man, this glorious Person, stayed behind to talk with Abraham. In the 22nd verse it is said—“And the men turned their faces from there and went towards Sodom”—that is, two of them, as you will see in the next Chapter, “But Abraham stood yet before the Lord.” You will notice that this Man, the Lord, held sweet fellowship with Abraham and allowed Abraham to plead for the city He was about to destroy. He was in the positive form of Man—so that when He walked the streets of Judea it was not the first time that He was a Man—He was so before, in “the plain of Mamre, in the heat of the day.”

There is another instance—His appearing to Jacob, which you have recorded in the 32nd Chapter of Genesis and the 24th verse. All his family were gone, “And Jacob was left alone and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh. And the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with Him. And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, unless You bless me. And He said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more, Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince have you power with God.” This was a Man and yet God! “For as a prince have you power with God and with men and have prevailed.” And Jacob knew that this Man was God, for he says in the 30th verse—“for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved.” Another instance you will find in the Book of Joshua. When Joshua had crossed the narrow stream of Jordan and had entered the promised land and was about to drive out the Canaanites, lo, this mighty Man-God appeared to Joshua. In the 5th Chapter, at the 13th verse, we read—“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked and, behold, there stood a Man over against him with His sword drawn in His hand and Joshua went unto Him and, (like a brave warrior, as he was), said unto Him, Are You for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, No, but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come.” And Joshua saw at once that there was Divinity in Him—for Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship and said to Him, “What says my LORD unto His servant?” Now, if this had been a created angel, he would have reproved Joshua and said, “I am one of your fellow servants.” But no—“the Captain of the LORD’S host said unto Joshua, Loose your shoes from your feet; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so.”

Another remarkable instance is that recorded in the third Chapter of the Book of Daniel, where we read the account of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego being cast into the fiery furnace, which was so fierce that it destroyed the men who threw them in. Suddenly the king said to his counselors—“Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” How should Nebuchadnezzar know that? Only that there was something so noble and majestic in the way in which that wondrous Man bore Himself—and some awful influence about Him, who so marvelously broke the consuming teeth of that biting and devouring flame—so that it could not so much as singe the children of God! Nebuchadnezzar recognized His Humanity. He did not say, “I see three men and an angel,” but he said, “I see four positive men and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” You see, then, what is meant by His goings forth being “from everlasting.”

Observe for a moment, here, that each of these four great occurrences happened to the saints when they there engaged in very eminent duty, or when they were about to be engaged in it. Jesus Christ does not appear to His saints every day. He did not come to see Jacob till he was in affliction. He did not visit Joshua before he was about to be engaged in a righteous war. It is only in extraordinary seasons that Christ thus manifests Himself to His people. When Abraham interceded for Sodom, Jesus was with him, for one of the highest and noblest employments of a Christian is that of intercession. And it is when he is so engaged that he will be likely to obtain a sight of Christ. Jacob was engaged in wrestling and that is a part of a Christian’s duty to which some of you never did attain— consequently, you do not have many visits from Jesus. It was when Joshua was exercising bravery that the Lord met him. So with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—they were in the high places of persecution, on account of their adherence to duty, when He came to them and said, “I will be with you, passing through the fire.” There are certain peculiar places we must enter to meet with the Lord. We must be in great trouble, like Jacob. We must be in great labor, like Joshua. We must have great intercessory faith, like Abraham. We must be firm in the performance of duty, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, or else we shall not know Him, “whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting.” Or, if we know Him, we shall not be able to “comprehend with all the saints what is the height, depth, length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge.”

Sweet Lord Jesus! You whose goings forth were of old, even from everlasting, You have not yet left Your goings forth! Oh, that You would go forth this day to cheer the faint, to help the weary, to bind up our wounds, to comfort our distresses! Go forth, we beseech You, to conquer sinners, to subdue hard hearts—to break the iron gates of sinners’ lusts and cut the iron bars of their sins in pieces! O Jesus! Go forth, and when You go forth, come to me! Am I a hardened sinner? Come to me. I need You—

*“Oh, let Your Grace, my heart subdue—  
I would be led in triumph, too!  
A willing captive to my Lord,  
To sing the honors of Your Word.”*

Poor Sinner! Christ has not yet left going forth. And when He goes forth, remember He goes to Bethlehem! Have you a Bethlehem in your heart? Are you little? He will yet go forth to you! Go home and seek Him by earnest prayer. If you have been made to weep on account of sin and think yourself too little to be noticed, go home, little one! Jesus comes to little ones. His goings forth were of old and He is going forth now! He will come to your poor old house. He will come to your poor wretched heart. He will come, though you are in poverty and clothed in rags—though you are destitute, tormented and afflicted—He will come, for His goings forth have been of old from everlasting! Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him! And He will go forth to abide in your heart forever!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3382 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

OUR LORD’S TRANSCENDENT GREATNESS

NO. 3382

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1913.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 2, 1866.

**“Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.” Micah 5:4.**

THERE can be no doubt but what the Prophet here spoke of the Messiah—of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not need to enter into any discussion of that subject here, but shall take it at once for granted that the passage means, “Now shall the Lord Jesus be great unto the ends of the earth.” This does not mean that Jesus Christ will be any greater than He always is essentially and naturally. As the Son of God, He is Infinite in Glory and can be no greater. As King of kings and Lord of lords, His Glory fills immensity. Before Him all intelligent spirits that are obedient to God pay their constant homage. He is so great that as we look up to Him, we can both rejoice in Him as our Brother and be humbled in His Presence when we reflect that He is our God. Jesus Christ is not to be greater, then, essentially than He now is. He is “God over all, blessed forever.” The greatness here spoken of is not one of essence, but of manifestation. Christ is to be made great in the judgment, hearts and understandings of men, as He is at all times really great in Himself. When we read in the text, “Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth,” we may remember that He is already great in Heaven. Albeit that man rejects Him—painful as the thought is that multitudes in this world have not even heard His name and that multitudes more only know it to revile it—yet there is a place where His name is great.

In every golden street that name is celebrated. The strings of every holy harp in Heaven are set to the melodies of His praise. All of “the melodious sonnets sung by angel hosts above” are to extol and magnify Him. They delight to do Him service. We may comfort ourselves with this thought when blasphemy abounds and the love of many grows cold. There is at least one shrine where He is always adored—one happier and better land where the sound of blasphemy never profanes Him—where He is loved, adored and reverenced by every creature!

And it is also sweet to remember that although Jesus Christ is not as yet great unto the ends of the earth, yet He is exceedingly great in the hearts of the multitudes of His people. When we meet here tonight, a comparatively little band, we are not the only worshippers of the Crucified. At this moment the sacred song is going up from tens of thousands of sincere hearts in this island. Across the Continent there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, but who delight to join with angels and archangels in singing the praises of Jesus. And far, far across the sea, men of our own kith and kin love Him as we do. No, no, where is there a place where the name of Jesus is not now known? As the wide sea is everywhere whitened with the sails of our commerce, so do these swift ships bear in them the servants of God!

The desert has been heard to ring with the songs of His praises! Adventurous missionaries have forced their way to what seemed to be impenetrable swamps and deserts that never could be trodden by the foot of man—and Jesus Christ’s name has been made known—at least as a witness against the people, even where it has not been received by the people. Little is the Light of God, but we thank God we have some Light! Few there are that find the narrow road, but still, there is a goodly company who, as they march along, sing of Jesus—the way, the truth and the life! “The whole world lies in the Wicked One,” but, like an oasis in the midst of the desert, we can see the Christian Church! Like a handful of salt scattered over a mass of putridity, like here and there a lamp hung up in the thick darkness, God has a chosen people and in their hearts Jesus Christ is great—and shall be great in time and in eternity!

But the text does mean this, that throughout the whole world—north, south, east, and west—Jesus Christ shall yet be made great! We will speak of this tonight, first, by showing that He deserves to be great. Then by reminding you that God has decreed that He shall be great. Thirdly, by asking you, my Brothers and Sisters, whether you do not also agree with that decree and now, in His strength, that you will make Him great. And then I shall close by asking whether there are not some here whose hearts, as yet unbowed to His dominion, shall tonight come and acknowledge His sway, that they also may feel and proclaim His greatness unto the ends of the earth. In the first place, what a task I have undertaken in endeavoring to show that—

I. JESUS CHRIST DESERVES TO BE MADE GREAT!  
Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, it needs an angel to set forth the Person of the Lord Jesus, and yet an angel might fail, for an angel was never washed in the Savior’s blood and never redeemed from wrath by Jesus the Substitute! What are my lips but poor, cold clay, and what are my words but air, and how shall I, then, set forth the Son of God, the Eternal One, “who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich”?  
Does the world ring with the name of the Conqueror? It was but a few years ago that everywhere the name of Napoleon was dreaded and men trembled at the very thought of that mighty destroyer of the human race. Ah, well, if a conqueror’s name always seems to have a spell about it which fascinates men with its glitter and its glare, I will say that Jesus is a greater Conqueror than all the Napoleons, or Alexanders, or Caesars who ever devastated the world, for He has overcome that which overcame them!  
Kings as they were, they were often the victims of great sin. Alexander drowned himself in the bowl long before he died, for he was the slave of drunkenness. But Christ has fought with sin and overcome it, leading it captive at His chariot wheels. Behold the conqueror, smitten in the breast by the skeleton hand, lies as motionless as the slave he slew! Death is the conqueror of conquerors, and casts noble dust upon the same grave as the poorest and most ignoble! But my Lord and Master has conquered death—  
*“He, Hell in Hell laid low,  
Made sin, He sin overthrew,  
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,  
And death, by dying, slew.”*  
My Master met Satan face to face and put His foot upon his neck. He met sin and trod it as men tread grapes in the winepress! He met Death, itself, the master of all, and rent the grave, rolled away the stone and proclaimed a Resurrection to the buried sons of men! This Conqueror is, and well does He deserve to be made great!  
Some men who will not applaud a conqueror will sometimes speak well of a deliverer. I saw on the triumphal arch at Milan, at the far end of the Corso, a well-deserved encomium on the man who, whether with or without his own will, helped at first to snap the chains of Italy. There was a grateful recognition on the part of Italy of the deeds of Victor Emmanuel and of Louis Napoleon—and the horses of triumph on the top of the Arch of Victory seemed well placed as a tribute to one who had helped to set a nation free, which long had felt the tyrant’s chain. It is said that when Macedonia was first set free, the Greeks were assembled at their games and they gave to him who freed Greece the name of “Sotea” or “Savior,” and the shouting was such that they said the birds fell dead, astonished! ‘Twas an exaggeration, but I can understand the joy of a nation when a savior comes to deliver them from bondage! But what shouts shall be equal to the praises of the Son of God! The fetters He has broken are the fetters of your souls! The dungeons from which He delivers are the dungeons of eternal fire! The rescue that He brings you is not for this life, only, but for the life to come! As everlasting as the age of God is the deliverance which Jesus brings! Sound, sound His name abroad! Daughters of music, give Him your sweetest notes. Look, the triumphant Hero comes! Now let every heart give forth its glad peal of holy joy for all that He has done! He deserves to be great, both as Conqueror and as Deliverer!  
In these more peaceful times, too, men are inclined to make those great who are full of learning. When a man has penetrated through the shell of ignorance and has gotten to the central core of knowledge, men say that he is great. We speak of a great geologist, a great mathematician, or a great astronomer. Men are proud of their fellow man when he has threaded the stars, walked with his staff above and become familiar with planet and with comet, as though they were his next of kin! But what shall I say of my Lord, for in Him dwells all “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”? To know Him is life and by His knowledge shall His righteous one justify many. If you get Christ, you get wisdom! His name is “wisdom.” Solomon, the wise one, called Him so. He is Wisdom without faintest folly, Knowledge without mistake. Oh, let Him, then, be made great!  
Great discoverers, too, are highly honored and valued. It was right of Her Majesty the Queen to confer knighthood upon those who had bound two lands together, moored two distant nations side by side, so that they could speak to each other in friendly terms. ‘Twas well done, good Sirs, to make the depths of the sea a highway for human thought! But what has Jesus done? He has not merely linked England and America together, but Heaven and earth! He has thrown a connecting cable between the sinner, far off from God, and the Eternal One who, hating sin, was far off from man. Now, through Him we can speak with God and, through Him, God returns an answer to the message of our misery and the sigh of our grief! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, Christ has established a communication which is swifter than the telegraph! “Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” He has bridged a gulf such as no human mind ever imagined could be bridged! As far as Hell is from Heaven was man from God—but Christ has bridged the chasm! The mountains of our sins are greater than a thousand Alps heaped on each other—and they stood between us and God—but the Cross has tunneled the mountains and there is now a highway for souls to come to God! Now shall He be great, indeed, if He gets His just deserts!  
Men also, now-a-days, are wise enough to think those great who show great generosity. She is great who goes into the hospital, devoting the prime of her days to the relieving of human misery. He is truly great who, having acquired wealth, gives it with more than a princely hand to build habitations for the poor. He is great who, having won a nation, gives it up as freely as he won it and who lives unrestrained by the smiles or frowns of kings and is the true, though uncrowned, king, the world’s hero, whom we all delight to honor! But oh, my Master, my Lord Jesus as much excels all these as the sun excels the stars! He gave not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but He gave Himself, His heart, His soul, His Deity! He gave such a jewel for us that if Heaven and earth were sold, they could not buy another like it! He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from iniquity! Speak of entering into hospitals? He came unto this great hospital—this huge leper house, the world—and He Himself took our infirmities, bore our sicknesses and by His stripes we are healed! Speak of the disinterestedness that has made men heroes from the mere love of their fellow men? What had Christ to gain? Oh, you lamps of Heaven, what had He to gain? Your splendor was enough for Him! What could He win but shame, disgrace, abuse, the spit on His face and the scourging on His shoulders?  
It was for the love of His enemies, the love of those who hated and despised Him and nailed Him to the Cross—it was for this transcendent, unparalleled love that Christ came to earth! He deserves to be great and I am sure that if you do not think that Jesus Christ is great, it is because you do not know Him—  
*“His worth, if all the nations knew,  
Surely the whole world would love Him too.”*

There is no biography that has ever been written that is like that given us by the four Evangelists. There is no story of human sacrifice that can rival it, or that can be mentioned in the same breath! Oh, men, it was for you He lived! Oh, men, it was for you He died!

The angels love Him, though for them He laid not down His life—and shall men, alone, be dumb, or earth, alone, fast close her mouth and refuse to praise Him? The very stones, surely, would speak, if we did not say, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Thus much upon a theme that defies our power to set forth fully. And now, in the second place, the text may be viewed as—  
II. A SOLEMN PURPOSE AND DECREE ON THE PART OF GOD.  
Christ shall be made great to the ends of the earth. There are idol-gods that are worshipped by the largest proportion of our race, but the idols He shall utterly abolish! The false prophets have more followers on earth than Christ has. There are more Muslims than Christians of all kinds. But the crescent of Mohamed must wane. The Papacy has still a firm hold upon the minds of millions, but, like a millstone which is hurled into the flood to rise no more, so must the anti-Christ of Rome be utterly cast away! Everything that stands in the place of Christ must be broken into a thousand shivers, for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet! Brothers and Sisters, the very signs of the times, as well as the Word of God, lead us to the comfortable belief that there should be a wider enlightenment of the human mind. It may be, certainly it may be, that the Lord will speedily come, but it does not seem to me at all likely that He will. We are to live anticipating His coming, as servants who know they will have to give an account when He does come. That is the practical bearing of the Doctrine upon our life, but there are many prophecies yet to be fulfilled which seem to show that He is not coming just now. I believe that there will be a gradual enlightenment of the human race. I see but little of it at present, but, still, He must be great unto the ends of the earth! Hard hearts will melt before the preaching of His Gospel. Perhaps they will melt suddenly. Perhaps a nation shall be born in a day. That preaching which now wins tens might, if God willed it, win hundreds, no, it might win thousands and hundreds of thousands! I have never seen any reason why, if God blesses half a dozen in the Tabernacle under a sermon, He should not bless the whole congregation! I do not see any reason why, if He blesses the preaching of the Word here, He should not bless it everywhere! No, I see a great many reasons why He should and I hope that He will—and that Pentecost will be outdone until we shall talk of that blessed day as being but a trifling beginning of a much greater result! Pentecost was only the feast of the first-fruits. It was not the harvest. The first-fruits were just one sheaf and, surely the harvest is to be much more than that! Let us, then, expect far greater things than even Pentecost knew!  
We would not be surprised if news should come, long before these heads of ours sleep among the sweet clods of the valley, that there has been an awakening through Germany and France—that the Gospel has spread all down the Apennines—that the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, has shaken Italy from end to end! That Turkey has submitted to the Cross! That the Euphrates has dried up its rebellion, that the multitudes of India have cast away Vishnu and Siva and bowed before Christ! That Confucius is no longer the great philosopher of China, but that the Man of Nazareth is the Teacher of millions in that strange people—that from Eastern Coast to Western—the people have set their faces towards Christ and desire to learn concerning Him! We may be living upon the threshold of mighty times. “There were giants upon the earth” in days gone by. There may be giants yet again and the Gospel which has crept along at a steady pace may yet take to itself its great power and, swift as the chariot of the sun, the light of Truth shall fly the whole world over! This, then, is God’s purpose and decree, “Now, shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”  
I want, now, in the third place, to ask Christians here—  
III. WHETHER, AS THIS IS GOD’S DECREE, IT HAS NOT OFTEN ALSO BEEN THE EXPRESSION OF OUR HEARTS?  
When you and I were first converted, did we not say that we would make Him great? And we did try to do it. We began to talk to our friends. We got a handful of tracts and gave them away. We tried to get into a little cottage to speak about Christ and our resolve then was that, as far as ever our power would go, we would make Christ great to the ends of the earth! Ah, we have fallen very sadly short of those first days. I am afraid we have not kept up our first love, but I wish that every Christian here would go back to that first moment when he received his pardon and say, “Yes, I have been loved much and, having had much forgiven, in God’s name, I will love Him much in return. And as far as I can, I will make His name great.”  
Since that period we have had some very happy seasons. I know that in this very House of Prayer we have sometimes felt that we could stay here forever. It has been like Heaven below to us, and then we have said, “Oh, what will I not give Him? I will consecrate my substance. I will use my tongue, my mind, my hands—I will do anything for Him—He has loved me so much that I cannot help talking about it! I will make my children and all my family know what a precious Savior He is.” Oh, I wish that we had come to this and that we not only said it, now and then, but that it was our prayer night and day and the one comfort of our hearts! Beloved, there are some of us who can say before God, the HeartSearching One, that the one thing we care about is to make Jesus Christ great. I have sometimes prayed from this platform a prayer which has made some of you wonder when I have asked that, if the crushing of me might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be done at once. Well, it is my daily feeling. I thank God that if it would more honor Him to cast me where He wills, if I might but be permitted to love Him and He will but love me, the thing may be done and He shall have all the praise! While Mr. Tennant was being greatly helped of God in preaching, it came to pass on a certain Sunday that a sermon which he had very carefully prepared suddenly went from his mind and, instead of preaching, he was compelled to be silent. It was a painfully humbling thing for him, but it was the means of the conversion of one of his hearers, who said, “Then I am to understand that as Mr. Tennant preaches so mightily sometimes to the people, but could not preach on this occasion, he must have been helped of God before—and so it has been God that has spoken to me.” This thought pricked the man to the heart. Oh, it were a good thing to be made a shame, a blessed thing to be a butt, a jest, a jeer, a byword—if Christ were but lifted up thereby!  
When Sir Walter Raleigh laid down his cloak and covered the mire for Queen Elizabeth’s sake, it was, I fear, but a courtier’s trick. But for Christians to be willing to lose their reputations and even their very lives to make Christ glorious—this is the only truly Christian way of living! God forbid that we should ever think about sparing or pampering self. I saw a good Christian Brother last Friday, whom God has greatly blessed. But, when working in a very bad part of London, he used to be constantly teased by abominable stories which were made up against him. I said to Him, “I see you have got something that no Evangelist can afford to have.” “What is that?” he said. “Why,” was the reply, “you have got a good reputation and you must get rid of it for Christ’s sake. That is to say, live a holy life and then let men call you ‘devil’ if they like. Let them lay every sin to your charge, but never heed them, never speak nor fight for yourself, but speak and fight for your Master! Contend for Him and think it to be your honor and your glory to become a butt, an outcast and as the offscouring of all things if Jehovah-Jesus may but wear the crown—and you can win but one single soul to Jesus Christ forever.”  
I think, then, that we are all agreed upon this point. We mean, God helping us, to hold fast to this and to do what we can that Jesus Christ may be great unto the ends of the earth!  
And now we can spend only two or three minutes in asking the question—  
IV. ARE THERE NOT SOME HERE TONIGHT IN WHOM JESUS CHRIST MAY BE MADE GREAT?  
Now, you good people who have never done anything wrong and who have got a very good righteousness of your own—I do not ask you to glorify Christ—because you cannot! If I wanted to praise up some doctor and said, “Now, here he is—he can cure all diseases! Will you come and help him to get a name?” I would know that you who were not sick could not help him, but the man who was most sick would be the very one that would get the doctor the best name if he could cure him! So when Christ’s name is to be lifted up and we want to preach Him so that He may be extolled, you who feel your guilt are the very men who can help us! Supposing now, Jesus Christ should take the drunk and wash out his mouth and make a sober man of him—and a Christian—would not that make Christ to be exalted? And ah, if there should be, even here, a woman of an evil and vicious life, and Christ should change her so as to make her chaste and honorable—oh, how great it would make Him to become! And if some black villain has crept in here and one who has said of himself that there is no hope of his being converted and no mercy possible for him—supposing he should find pardon and peace by believing in Jesus? And then suppose he become a preacher of His Gospel—would that not make Christ’s name to be made great? John Newton was once the vilest of the vile and oh, it made London wonder when the African blasphemer stood up in the pulpit of the church of St. Mary, Woolnooth, to preach the Christ and the Cross which he had so blasphemed! And oh, may God make London wonder yet again by taking some of the worst of the worst, and saving them, and making them proclaimers of the Gospel of His Grace! Why should He not do it? He has often done it. Are you willing and anxious that He should do it again? Then cry to Him and He will do it!  
Perhaps there is one here who has been a backslider. Ah, Backslider, you can make Christ’s name great if you come back to Him! Mr. Whitfield’s brother had once been a very sad backslider. He had gone far, far from the way of Christ. At last his conscience was pricked and he fell into despair. Sitting at tea one day with the Countess of Huntingdon, he said to the Countess, “I know what you have said is very proper, and I believe in the infinite mercy and goodness of God, but I do not believe in its application to me, for I am a lost man.” The Countess put down the tea and said, “I am glad to hear it, Mr. Whitfield! I am glad to hear it!” “Madam,” he said, “I did not think you would rejoice and glory in a thing so terrible as that!” “I am glad to hear you say you are lost, Mr. Whitfield,” she said, “for it is written that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.” His eyes sparkled and he said, “I thank God for that text, and for the extraordinary power with which it has now come into my heart.” He died that night and God had just sent him the word of peace in time to gather him into the fold. Why should not many of you who are lost glorify the name of Christ by trusting Him, for He came to seek and to save the lost?  
Andrew Fuller was once preaching in Scotland and there was a wicked, abandoned woman, whose life had been given up to all sorts of filthiness. She noticed that the church was very full and that many people were standing outside. So she asked what was doing. They told her that an Englishman was preaching. She desired to hear him—she pressed into the crowd, as some of you may have done tonight—and Mr. Fuller just then used this blessed expression, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” “Oh,” said the woman, “is there an invitation to the ends of the earth? Surely I am one of the ends of the earth!” She looked, according to the gracious command, and Christ got a good name in that Scottish parish through her being so wondrously saved! Oh, I wish He could be great to some of you who are in the ends of the earth! I feel as if I could give my eyes, both of them, if Christ could but be great with some of you!  
The devil has been great with you. He has had his bit in your mouth. He has ridden you, and will yet ride you down to Hell! Will you never kick against him? Oh, that Christ might come and lay hold upon your bridle and say, “You shall go no further,” so turning you into a new course and making you willing in the day of His power!  
Last of all, there may be one here who has been an infidel. If there is, I only hope that he will yet come to make Christ’s name great. I remember hearing that Mr. John Cooke, of Maidenhead, was once blessed to the conversion of a man when he was preaching upon the unpardonable sin. In the town where he preached there was a young man who was a member of a club which was very common some 50 years ago, but now happily, I hope, extinct, called, “The Hell-Fire Club.”  
The object of the club was to meet once or twice a week and each member of the club was to invent some new oath or be fined. The young man went to hear Mr. Cooke only with the design of picking up some new religious phrase that he might turn into a fresh blasphemy and so delight the unhappy men with whom he was accustomed to meet at the publichouse.  
The subject was, as I have said, the unpardonable sin. And Mr. Cooke showed what that sin was not, and who had not committed it—and the man found, as he listened, that he was one of those who had not committed it. He went home and fell, bathed in tears, before God, to think that he had gone so far, but had not been permitted to go quite as far as the unpardonable sin! That man became a Christian and a useful servant of the Lord Jesus. I will be bound to say that “The Hell-Fire Club” began to feel that Jesus Christ’s name was great! I wish that some of you who are practically Hell-Fire men and women might become Heaven ’s men and women and become so tonight! Oh, it would be a fine thing if you went home and your wife should find you saying—instead of cursing and swearing—“I think we must pray.” How struck she would be! There is a good woman here now with her husband—I think they are both to be received into fellowship tonight—and what a happy time it was for her— though even she then knew little or nothing about Christ—when one night, as they were going to bed, her husband knelt down and prayed! She had never heard such a thing before, but after a little while she thought she had better pray, too. You cannot do better, good woman, when the Lord blesses your husband, than to try to get a blessing, too. They could not long pray in quiet—and soon she asked how it had all come about—and so she learned that it came to pass that God had met with the husband. Oh, I wish He would meet with some of you! He has, in His love, turned many a lion into a lamb, and many a raven into a dove.  
Let us all pray this short prayer—  
*“Oh, Sovereign Grace, my heart subdue,  
I would be led in triumph, too!  
A willing captive to my Lord,  
To sing the triumph of His Word.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **REVELATION 12.**

Verse 1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. This is that woman of whom the promise runs, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” John saw this in a vision in the heavenly places. He saw the Church of God, enthroned, made glorious, clothed with the sun, having the brightness of Divine Light about her, with all that is variable, changeable as the moon under her feet, and upon her head the crown “that her Lord had given her”— twelve Patriarchs, twelve Prophets, twelve Apostles, a complete number of glorious lights kindled from Heaven!

2. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. That Child that is born of her, that Seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent’s head is first, Christ, and then all the first-born, of whom He is the great Representative.

3, 4. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her Child as soon as it was born. The spirit of evil in the heavenlies fighting with the power of light and goodness and Grace, a mysterious being with great power, high intelligence, seven heads, ten horns, and having mighty influence over multitudes of men, so that there were seven crowns upon his seven heads. “And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.” The crocodile, which, I suppose, was the earthly figure from which John’s dream sprang, has great force in its tail and Satan, doubtless of old, drew from heaven a number of its stars—other angels fell with him. And there are times in the heavens of the Church when the ministers fall—they seem to go in companies. Those who should be lights for God are into darkness and become teachers of heresy. “He did cast them down to the earth.” They lost their brightness, they betrayed their earthly origin. “And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her Child as soon as it was born.” Remember how he sought to slay Jesus and the like is the case of all the man-children born unto God, who will be of service in the Kingdom of God. The main attack of the dragon was against the Child—the main attack of the power of evil is against Christ and everything Christly. If he could destroy the Gospel, he would not care about the Church one whit—the woman might go if the Man-Child could be destroyed.

5. And she brought forth a Man-Child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her Child was caught up unto God, and to His Throne. That is the brief history of the birth of Christ and of His going from us. He “was caught up unto God, and to His Throne.” God will take care of the great principle of truth. If it cannot have a refuge on earth, He will find it a refuge in Heaven.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. The church of God was long in obscurity. You can hardly find it among the Albigenses and Waldenses. It was hidden away among the mountains. The Wycliffites, the Lollards and others held fast the Truth of God, but history scarcely records their names. The woman was in the wilderness, hidden away for many a day. “And there was war in heaven.” You are not to think of “heaven” as a place, but among the heavenlies. John, in a vision, saw the great contending powers of evil. He was like the Prophet when he saw a mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire.

7, 8. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in Heaven. You remember how our Lord, who is the true Michael, the only great Archangel, said at the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, “I beheld Satan as lightning falling from Heaven.” His power among the heavenlies is gone! He was cast out of the place called Heaven. So is he now, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the death of Christ, cast down from among the heavenly influences.

9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. This was done in the olden time as a matter of fact. It is done continually, spiritually, as Christ is lifted up and His Gospel gets the victory.

10. And I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. Always at it, this Prince of Evil pretending to goodness, and daring to bring accusations against the Holy One of God. But he is not permitted, now, to stand in the court—he is hurled from his high place. He used his place with a desperate pertinacity of malice, accusing the brethren day and night.

11, 12. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time. “Therefore rejoice you heavens, and you that dwell in them.” Let great joy be in the hearts of all spiritual beings, whether angels or men, for Satan is cast down from among them! But the battle is not over—the scene of it is only transferred from the heavenlies to the earthly. “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea, for the devil is come down unto you having great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time.” We may expect him to rage more and more as the time of his destruction comes nearer and nearer. He is like a bad tenant—he will damage the house out of which he is to be ejected. But he is to be ejected! And let God be glorified for it!

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the Man-Child. He had changed his place, but he did not change his nature—and so he still perseveres in his attack upon God.

14, 15. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. Read history and see what fierce and brutal persecutions were used like floods against the Gospel of Christ!

16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. It is poor help that the earth can give, and yet God has overruled to make it useful. The kings and the powers of this world have for their own reasons sometimes protected the Church. It was so in Luther’s day. The jealousy that was felt of the influence of the Court of Rome politically tended to the preservation of Luther and those round about him, so that the Gospel was not destroyed. “The earth helped the woman,” and we may expect that even those political disasters, which we often dread, will all tend that way. How often has priestly arrogance been put to the blush even for political reasons! We have nothing to do with that, but still we can see how God can overrule. It is always amiss when a woman begins to help the earth—she has nothing to do with that—let the Church leave the State alone. But sometimes it happens that in the political Providence of God the earth helps the woman.

17. And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have testimony of Jesus Christ. “And the dragon was angry with the woman.” If ever you meet with a church of God which the devil likes, it is good for nothing! But if it is a true Church of God—if it holds the Truths of God and if it walks in holiness, it will always be true! “And the dragon was angry with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed.” He had destroyed many already with that flood of persecution and he kept on a battle with the remnant of her seed, “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Into the deep mysteries of this passage I have not attempted to go, but have simply skimmed the surface. God bless the reading to us.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #560 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHRIST IS GLORIOUS—LET US MAKE HIM KNOWN

NO. 560

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1864. BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they shall abide: for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.” Micah 5:4.**

You have a very vivid idea of the sufferings of Christ. Your faith has seen Him sweating great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. You have looked on with amazement while He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them who plucked off the hair and He hid not His face from shame and spitting. With sorrowful sympathy you have followed Him through the streets of Jerusalem, weeping and bewailing Him with the women. You have sat down to watch Him when He was fastened to the tree. You have wept at His bitter complaint—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And you have rejoiced in His shout of victory—“It is finished!”

With Magdalene and Nicodemus you have followed His dead body to the tomb and seen it wrapped about with spices and left to its lonely sleep. Are your perceptions quite as keen concerning the Glory which did follow and is following? Can you see Him quite as distinctly when on the third morn the Conqueror rises, bursting the bonds of death with which He could not be held? Can you as clearly view Him ascending up on high, leading captivity captive? Can you hear the ring of angelic clarions, as with dyed garments from Bozrah, the Victor returns from the battle, dragging Death and Hell at His chariot wheels?

Do you plainly perceive Him as He takes His seat at the right hand of the Father, from this time forth expecting until His enemies be made His footstool? And can you be as clear this morning about the reigning Christ as you have been about the suffering Christ? Lo, my Brethren, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the Book and to loose the seven seals!” At this hour He goes forth, riding upon His white horse, conquering and to conquer. Lo, at His girdle swing the keys of Heaven and Death and Hell, for “the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

“God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” Behold Him, my Brethren, in His present plenitude of Glory and endeavor to get as clear a perception of it as you have had of His shame. Not only weep at His burial, but rejoice at His Resurrection! Not only sorrow at His Cross, but worship at His Throne! Do not merely think of the nails and of the spear, but behold the imperial purple which hangs so nobly upon His royal shoulders and of the Divine crown which He wears upon His majestic brow!

I want to conduct you in such a frame of mind through the glories of my text. First, bidding you observe the perpetual reign of Christ—“He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God” Then I shall beg you to observe that flowing from this is the perpetual continuance of His Church—“and they shall abide.” And then proceeding both from His continued reign and from the Church’s consequent perpetual existence comes the greatness of our King—“for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

I. At the outset, observe carefully THE PERPETUAL REIGN OF CHRIST. He lives, He reigns, He is King over His people. Notice first that His reign is shepherd-like in its nature. The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but our Master washed His disciples’ feet. Earthly monarchs are often tyrants. Their yoke is heavy and their language domineering. But it is not so with our King. His yoke is easy and His burden is light, for He is meek and lowly of heart. He is a Shepherd-King.

He has supremacy, but it is the superiority of a wise and tender Shepherd over His needy and loving flock. He commands and receives obedience, but it is the willing obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness. His power lies not in imperious threats, but in imperial loving kindness. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, for “men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed.” Never people had such a king before!

His service is perfect freedom! To be His subject is to be a king! To serve Him is to reign! Blessed are the people who are the sheep of His pasture. If they follow in His footsteps their road is safe. If they sleep at His feet no lion can disturb their peace. If they are fed from His hands they shall lie down in green pastures and lack nothing. If they abide close to His Person they shall drink rivers of delight. Righteousness and peace are the stability of His Throne. Joy and gladness are the ornaments of His reign. Oh, how happy are we who belong to such a Prince! You King in Jesurun, we pay You homage with loyal hearts. We come into Your Presence with thanksgiving, and into Your courts with praise, for You are our God and we are, by Your Grace, the people of Your pasture and the sheep of Your hands!

Notice that the reign of Jesus is practical in its character. It is said, “He shall stand and feed.” The great Head of the Church is actively engaged in providing for His people. He does not sit down upon the Throne in empty state, or hold a scepter without wielding it in government. No, He stands and feeds. The expression “feed,” in the original is like an analogous one in the Greek, which means to shepherdize, to do everything expected of a shepherd—to guide, to watch, to preserve, to tend as well as to feed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, is always actively engaged for the Church’s good. Through Him the Spirit of God constantly descends upon the members of the Church. By Him ministers are given in due season and all Church officers in their proper place. When He ascended up on high He received gifts for men. “And He gave some, Apostles. And some Prophets. And some Evangelists. And some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Our Lord does not close His eyes to the state of His Church.

Beloved, He is not a listless spectator of our wants. He is, this day, standing and feeding His people. They are scattered, I know—wide as the poles asunder—but our mighty Shepherd can see every sheep and lamb of His flock and He gives them all their portion of meat in due season. He it is that like a mighty breaker, goes forth at the head of His flock and they follow where He clears the way, “He shall stand and feed.” Oh, blessed carefulness and Divine activity of our gracious King! Always fighting against our enemies and at the same the shedding His kind and gracious influences upon His friends.

Consider again, for it is in our text, that this active reign is continual in its duration. It is said, “He shall stand and feed,” not, “He shall feed now and then and then leave His position.” Not, “He shall one day grant a revival, and then the next day leave His Church to barrenness.” Beloved, there is no such pastor as Christ. “I know My sheep,” He can say, in a very high and peculiar sense. He knows them through and through. He feels with them. In all their afflictions He is afflicted—He is one with them eternally. There is no such wakeful watchman as the Lord Jesus. Is it not written, “I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day.” Those eyes never slumber and those hands never rest! That heart never ceases to beat with love, and those shoulders are never weary of carrying His people’s burdens.

The Church may go through her dark ages, but Christ is with her in the midnight. She may pass through her fiery furnace, but Christ is in the midst of the flames with her. Her whole history through—wherever you find the Church—there you find the Church’s Lord. The Head is never severed from the body, nor is the watchful care of this gracious Husband towards His spouse suspended for an instant. I beseech you, labor to realize the noble picture! Here are His sheep in these pastures this morning and here is our great Shepherd with the crown upon His head, standing and feeding us all. No, not us all alone, but dispensing His tender mercies to all the multitudes of His elect throughout the whole world!

He is at this moment King in Zion, ruling and overruling, present everywhere and everywhere showing Himself strong in the defense of His saints. I would that our Churches could be more influenced by a belief in the abiding power, Presence and pre-eminence of their living and reigning Lord! He is no dead King whose memory we are bid to embalm, but a living Leader and Commander whose behests we must obey, whose honor we must defend. Do not fail to discern that the empire of Christ in His Church is effectually powerful in its action—“He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah.”

“Wherever Christ is, there is God. And whatever Christ does is the act of the Most High. Oh, it is a joyful Truth to consider that He who redeemed us was none other than God Himself! He who led our captivity captive was Jehovah-Jesus! He who stands today representing the interests of His people is very God of very God! He who has sworn that every one of His people whom He has redeemed by blood shall be brought safe to His Father’s right hand, is Himself, essential Deity!

O my Brethren, we rest upon a sure foundation when we build upon the Incarnate God. And O you saints of God, the interests of each one of you and of the one great Church must be safe because our champion is

God! Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King! He will save us! How can He fail or be discouraged? When He makes bare His arm, who shall stand against Him? Let us rehearse the mighty deeds of the Lord and tell of His wonders of old. Remember how He got victory upon Pharaoh and the pride of Egypt? Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?” Ten plagues of terrible majesty taught the boaster that the Lord was not to be despised and the humbled tyrant bade the people go their way.

With a high hand and an outstretched arm did the Lord bring forth His people from the house of bondage. When the proud high stomach of Egypt’s king again rose against the Most High, the Lord knew how to lay His adversary lower than the dust. I think I see the hosts of Mizraim with their horses and their chariots hurrying after the Lord’s fugitives! Their mouths are foaming with rage. “The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them.”

See how they ride in all their pompous glory, swallowing the earth in their fury! O Israel, where shall be your defense? How shall you escape from your tyrannical master? Be still, O seed of Jacob! Sons of Abraham rest patiently, for these Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see no more forever. With their horses and their chariots the fierce enemy descended into the depths of the sea, but the Lord looked upon them and troubled them. “You did blow with Your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” “The depths have covered them. They sank into the bottom like a stone.”

“Let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.” Surely it shall be so at the last with Jesus our King and all His saints. We also shall sing “the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb,” in that day when the archenemy shall be overthrown and the hosts of evil shall be consumed and they who hate the Lord shall become as the fat of rams. Into smoke shall they consume, yes, into smoke shall they consume away.

One other word remains—our Lord’s kingdom is most majestic in its aspect. You will observe it is written by the Prophet—“He shall feed in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God.” Jesus Christ is greatly to be reverenced. The familiarity with which we approach Him is always to be tempered with the deepest and most reverent adoration. He is our Brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but still He counts it not robbery to be equal with God. I know He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and He calls Himself today our Husband and makes us to be members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

But yet we must never forget that it is written, “Let all the angels of God worship Him,” and, “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Yes, Christ is majestic in His Church. I would, Brethren, we always thought of this. There is a Glory and a majesty about all the Laws of Christ and all His commands, so that whether we baptize at His command, or break bread in remembrance of Him, or lift up His Cross in ministry—in whatever we do in His name, which is in fact, what He does through us—there is an attendant majesty which should make our minds feel perpetually reverent before Him.

O that the world could see the Glory of Christ in the Church! O that the world did but know who it is that is in the midst of the few, the feeble, the weak, the foolish as they call them. O Philistia! If you did but know who is our Champion, your Goliath of Gath would soon hide his diminished head! O Assyria, if you did but know that the ancient might of Him who smote Sennacherib still abides with us, your hosts would turn their backs and yield us an easy victory! There is a true and mysterious Presence of Christ with His people, according to the promise, “Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

It is because the world ignores this that she despises and sneers at the Church of God. There is our comfort and our glory—we have a majesty about us, if we are the people of God, which is not to be denied. Angels see it and wonder—a majesty of indwelling Godhead—for the Lord is in the midst of us for a Glory and around us for a defense.

II. We will now occupy one or two minutes with THE CONSEQUENT PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH. Because of the unseen but most certain Presence of Christ as King in the midst of His people, His Church ABIDES—so says the text. Here reflect first, that a Church exists. What a wonder is this! It is, perhaps, the greatest miracle of all ages that God has a Church in the world! You who are conversant with human history will hear me out when I say that the whole history of the Church is a series of miracles—a long stream of wonders!

A little spark kindled in the midst of oceans and yet all her boisterous waves cannot quench it! Here is the great wonder which John saw in vision and which history reveals in solemn, sober fact. A woman, “being with child, cried, travailing in birth and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in Heaven. And behold a great red dragon... stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.” The Man-Child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron was brought forth and caught up to God and to His Throne.

As for the woman, the Church, she fled as on eagles’ wings to her wilderness shelter prepared of God, until, in great wrath, the dragon pursued and persecuted her. Apt enough is that metaphor, “The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the dragon was angry with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the Commandments of God and have the Testimony of Jesus Christ.” Yet, my Brethren, as surely as that glorious Man-Child, the Lord Jesus, lives and sits upon the Throne, so surely shall the woman, the poor afflicted Church, live on until the dragon’s time is over, and the King shall reign upon the earth!

To what trials, my Brethren, has not the Church of God been subjected? What new invention can Satan bring forth? The fire, the rack, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation, slander—all these have been tried—and in them all the Church has been more than conqueror through Him who loved her. False doctrine without, heresy and schism within! Hypocrisy, formalism, fanaticism, pretences of high spirituality, worldliness—these have all done their worst. I marvel at the wondrous ingenuity of the great enemy of the Church, but I think his devices must nearly

have come to an end. Can he invent anything further?

We have been astounded in these ages by the prodigy of an infidel bishop! We have been struck dumb with sorrow and amazement at a decree which declares that a Church professing to be a Church of Christ must permit men to be her ministers who deny the Inspiration of Holy Scripture! This is a new thing under the sun. Popery and infidelity are to be both legalized and fostered in a Church professing to be Christian and Protestant! What next? And what next? But what of all this? The Church, I mean the company of the Lord’s called and faithful and chosen, still exists. The Lord has His elect people who still hold forth the Word of Truth and in the most reprobate Church still He may say, “I have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”

Observe, the text says, “she abides,” which means not that she exists now and then by starts and spasms, but she exists always. This is wonderful! Always a Church! When the full force of the Pagan Emperors came like a thundering avalanche upon her, she shook off the stupendous load as a man shakes the flakes of snow from his garment and she lived on uninjured. When papal Rome vented its malice yet more furiously and ingeniously—when cruel murderers hunted the saints among the Alps—or worried them in the low country. When Albigenses and Waldenses poured out their blood in rivers and dyed the snow with crimson, she lived still and never was in a healthier state than when she was immersed in her own gore!

When after a partial reformation in this country the pretenders to religion determined that the truly spiritual should be harried out of the land— God’s Church did not sleep or suspend her career of life or service. Let the Covenant signed in blood witness to the vigor of the persecuted saints. Hearken to her Psalm amidst the brown heath-clad hills of Scotland and her prayer in the secret conventicles of England. Hear the voices of Cargill and Cameron thundering among the mountains against a false king and an apostate people! Hear the testimony of Bunyan and his compeers who would sooner rot in dungeons than bow the knee to Baal!

Ask me “Where is the Church?” and I can find her at any and every period from the day when first in the upper room the Holy Spirit came down even until now. In one unbroken line our Apostolic succession runs—not through the Church of Rome—not from the superstitious hands of priestmade popes, or king-created bishops, (what a varnished lie is the apostolic succession of those who boast so proudly of it)! But through the blood of good men and true, who never forsook the testimony of Jesus—through the loins of true pastors, laborious evangelists, faithful martyrs and honorable men of God—we trace our pedigree up to the fishermen of Galilee and glory that we perpetuate, by God’s Grace, that true and faithful Church of the living God, in whom Christ did abide and will abide until the world’s crash.

Observe, dear Friends, that in the use of the term, “Abide,” we have not only existence and continued existence, but the idea of quiet, calm, uninjured duration. It does not say she lingers, hunted, tempted, worried—but she abides. Oh, the calmness of the Church of God under the attacks of her most malicious foes! You crue1 adversary, the virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at you and laughed you to scorn! She abides in peace when the world rages against her. It is most noteworthy how in most instances the Church of God still keeps her foothold where she has been most savagely persecuted.

In modern times we find in Madagascar, after years of exterminating persecution, the Church of God rises from her ashes like the phoenix from the flames. The chief wonder is that she abides perfect. Not one of God’s elect has gone back! Not one of the blood-bought has denied the faith. Not one single soul which ever was effectually called can be made to deny Christ, even though his flesh should be pulled from his bones by hot pincers, or his tormented body flung to the jaws of wild beasts. All that the enemy has done has been of no avail against the Church. The old rock has been washed and washed and washed again by stormy waves and submerged a thousand times in the floods of tempest, but even her angles and corners abide unaltered and unalterable!

We may say of the Lord’s tabernacle, not one of the stakes there has been removed, nor one of her cords been broken. The House of the Lord, from foundation to pinnacle, is perfect still—“The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not.” No, nor a single stone of it, “for it was founded upon a Rock.” But why all this, dear Friends? Why is it that we have seen the Church endure to this day? How is it that we are confident that even should worse times arrive, the Church would weather the storm and abide till moons shall cease to wax and wane? Why this security?

Only because Christ is in the midst of her! You do not believe, I hope, in the preservation of orthodoxy by legal instruments and trust deeds. This is what too many Dissenters have relied upon. We certainly cannot depend upon creeds. They are good enough in their way, as trust deeds are, too, but they are as broken reeds if we rely upon them. We cannot depend upon Parliament, nor kings, nor queens. We may draw up the most express and distinct form of doctrine, but we shall find that the next generation will depart from the Truth of God unless God shall be pleased to give it renewed Grace from on high.

You cannot, by Presbytery, or Independency, or Episcopacy, secure the life of the Church—I find the Church of God has existed under an Episcopacy—a form of government not without its virtues and its faults. I find the Church of God flourish under a Presbytery and decay under it, too. I know it can be successful under an Independent form of Church government and can decline into Arianism quite as easily. The fact is that forms of government have very little to do with the vital principle of the Church! The reason why the Church of God exists is not her ecclesiastical regulations, her organization, her formularies, her ministers, or her creeds—but the Presence of the Lord in the midst of her!

And while Christ lives and Christ reigns and stands and feeds His Church, she is safe. But if He were once gone, it would be with her as it is with you and with me when the Spirit of God has departed from us—we are weak as other men and she would be quite as powerless.

III. But now, thirdly, flowing from both these, from the perpetual Presence of Christ and from the continued existence of His Church, is THE GREATNESS OF OUR KING. “Now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.” “Christ is great in His Church.” Oh, how great in our hearts where

He reigns supreme! My heart, it does leap at the sound of His name— *“Jesus, the very thought of You,  
With rapture fills my breast.”*

O for crowns! For golden crowns! Let us crown Him King in Zion! O for a well-tuned harp and for David’s feet, to dance before the ark at the very mention of Jesus’ name! Now shall He be great, indeed, in our hearts! But He is to be great to the ends of the earth. That is a promise of which we will say it is accomplished in a measure even now. Christ is made great till the conversion of every sinner. When the suppliant penitent cries, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and the peace-speaking blood comes dropping upon the troubled conscience and the soul bows meekly to accept the finished righteousness, then is Christ great! And He is great in the consecration of every one of His blood-bought saints—when they live for Him. When in their prayers they make mention of Him. When they give Him their heart’s music, their life’s light and their lips’ testimony.

When they feel that tribulation is joyous if endured for Him and the sternest toil a dear delight when undertaken for His sake—then Christ is great. Think, my Brothers and Sisters, this morning, how many ships are now furrowing the blue sea in which there are hearts which love the name of Jesus. Hark! Across the waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific I hear the sound of prayer and praise from many a vessel bearing the British flag. From many an islet of the sea the song is borne upon the breeze. And there across the waters in the land of our American Brethren, now so sadly chastened with war, multitudes of hearts beat as high as ours at the mention of the Savior’s name!.

Here across yon narrow Channel, in Holland, in Sweden, in Germany, in Switzerland and even in France and Italy, how many own His name and praise Him this day! We speak of our Queen’s dominions and say that the sun never sets upon them. We may in truth say this of our Lord Jesus— men of all colors trust in His blood. They who look upward to the southern cross and they who follow the Polar star alike worship His dear name. And when England ceases her strain of joy, in the hush of night, Australia takes up the song and so from land to land and from shore to shore, a sacrifice of a pure offering is brought to His shrine! It is accomplished, in some degree, but oh, how small the degree when we think of the thick darkness which covers the multitude of the people.

Again, it is a promise which is guaranteed as to its fulfillment in the fullest sense. Courage! Brethren, courage! The night is not forever, the morning comes! Watchman, what do you say? Are there not streaks reddening the east? Has not the God of Day, the Lord Jesus, began to shoot His Divine arrows of light upwards into the thick darkness? It is even so. As I think of the signs of the times, I would fondly hope that we shall live to see brighter and better days. “Now,” says the text, “shall He be great unto the ends of the earth.”

Prophet, I would that your “now” were true this day! Now, even now, let Him reign! Why does He tarry? Why are His chariots so long in coming? Will it be, my Brethren, that Christ will come before the world is converted? If so, welcome, Jesus! Or will the world be converted first? If so, thrice welcome the mercy! But whether or not, this we do know, He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river even unto the ends of the earth. They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him and His enemies shall lick the dust. The day shall come when the fifth great monarchy shall be co-extensive with the world’s bounds and everywhere the Great Shepherd shall reign.

But remember, dear Friends, that while this promise is thus guaranteed as to its fulfillment, it is to be prayed for as to its accomplishment. “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezek. 36:37). The mountain of the Lord shall be in the latter days, but mark you, though there is no sound of trowel or a hammer, there will be heard the sound of prayer and praise, as upward the mountain of God’s House shall ascend!

You know the picture. The Prophet had seen the Lord’s House standing, as it were, in a valley and as he looked upon it, presently it became a little hill. The ground began to heave and by-and-by it had swollen from a little hill into a lofty mountain and up it rose and grew more great before his eyes, till Alps were dwarfed and Himalayas were stunted and up it still went—not the House only—but the mountain, too, till infinitely higher than the projected tower of Babel, which man meant to be the world’s center! This House stood out clear and sharp above the clouds, having pinnacles high up in God’s Heaven and yet deep foundations in man’s earth and all nations began to flow to it as to the great center.

What a dream! What a vision! Yet such shall it be. The Church is, as it were, in a plain just now—she begins to move. Oh, stupendous movement! She begins to rise, her mountains swell and grow. She attracts observers. She cannot be held down. Who can attempt to restrain the swelling mass? Who shall prevent the gigantic birth? Up rises the mountain, as though swollen by some inward fire—and up it swells and swells and swells—till Earth touches Heaven and God communes with men. Then shall be heard the great hallelujah! The Tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them!

But then, and this is the conclusion, and I hope God may help me to press it on your hearts. All this is to be labored for as well as prayed after. My soul pants and pines to see Christ glorious in the eyes of men. Lives there a Christian here with soul so dead that he does not desire the extension of his Master’s kingdom? Sirs, is there one among you who counts it little to see Jesus Christ lifted up in men’s hearts? I know I speak to a people—and the Lord knows it—to many of whom Christ is the dearest of all which is beloved, the fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. Now, if Christ is to be glorified, He must be glorified by you. If His kingdom is to come, it must come through you.

God works, but God works by means. He works in you “to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” Souls are to be saved, but they are not saved without instruments. The feast is to be furnished with guests, but you are to go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. I know my Master is to have many crowns, but they are to be crowns for which you race and which you have fought—which you have won through His Divine Grace—and you place at His feet that He may honor you by wearing them upon His brow.

Now we, as a people, have been greatly blessed and helped of God and I believe the Master has a very high claim upon us. We, above all the Churches in the world, are indebted to the Grace and mercy of God and we ought to be doing something for the extension of the Savior’s kingdom.

We cannot boast of wealth. We cannot profess to build all over London a multitude of Churches as the Bishop hopes to do. Any scheme of raising three millions of money by us must be looked upon as being entirely a dream. We cannot attempt such a thing.

If London is to be converted by money we must give up the task. We have no mitered bishops, no queens to subscribe and no nobles and dukes and the like to add their thousands and their tens of thousands of pounds. We are a feeble folk. What, then, can we do for God? Why, do as much as the strong! What can we do for God? Do as munch as the mighty! No, my Brethren, our very weakness and want of power shall be our adaptation to God’s work! And He who often puts by the sword of Saul and the armor of the son of Kish will use David and his sling and his stone and strike Goliath’s brow.

I have been musing all this week upon that celebrated scene in ancient history which seems to me to be so much like the state of our Church just now. The story of Gideon, the son of Joash, threshing wheat in the winepress, because he was afraid to be seen. The Midianites having spoiled the land. Now we, as Baptists, have generally been too much afraid to be seen. We have threshed our corn somewhere away in the winepress—up a back court—down a narrow street. Any dirty hole would do to build a Chapel in—so long as people could not find it—the site was thought advantageous.

And if nobody could ever see it that was the place for our fathers and for some who still linger among us. It was threshing wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the enemy. Well now, I think the time has come that we should not be afraid of these Midianites any longer. Long has the Church of God been oppressed and kept back. She has been content to let the world devour her increase. There have been few additions to the Churches. They remain very much what they were twenty or thirty years ago.

But, my Brethren, some of us think that we have seen our fleece wet with dew, while all around was dry. And we believe the Lord has said to us, “The Lord is with you, you mighty men of valor.” We think we have had the Lord’s commission, “Go in this, your strength.” We do not expect all of you to go with us, for the people are too many. We expect that there are many of the trembling and faint-hearted who will step back from the battle—men who are took ill for their families, and must provide for them. Men who are saving up money and grudge their sovereigns and so on— these, of course, will stand back and so let them—such men encumber our march.

We fear that you are not all men who lap. But we have a few who care very little for the ease and repose of life and who snatch a hasty draught as they run and with heat and zeal and passionate earnestness run to meet the adversary. Now these we expect to go with us to the fray. In the name of the Lord, I proclaim a new crusade against the sin and vice of this huge city! What are we to do? The hosts of Midian are to be counted by millions. Here in this great city we have three millions of people and what if I were to say, two-and-half millions of them do not know their right hand from their left in matters of religion?

I believe I should speak too charitably—for if I could believe there were half a million true Believers in London, I should have vastly greater hopes of it than I have now. But, alas, that is not the case. Millions—millions are gathered in the Valley of Indecision who are not upon the Lord’s side! What can you and I do? We can do nothing of ourselves, but we can do everything by the help of our God. Where Christ is, there is might and where God is, there is strength! Let us, therefore, in God’s name, determine to plant new Churches wherever openings occur. Like Gideon’s men let us rally under our Church officers and follow where a warm heart leads the way.

Gideon took his men and bade them do two things—covering up a torch in an earthen pitcher, he bade them, at an appointed signal, break the pitcher and let the light shine and then sound with their trumpets, crying, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” This is just what all Christians must do. First, you must shine! Break the pitcher which conceals you! Throw aside the bushel which has been hiding your candle, and shine! Let your light shine before men! Let your good works be such that when men look upon you, they shall know that you have been with Jesus! There is much good done by the shining.

Then there must be the sound—the blowing of the trumpet. O dear Friends, the great mass of London will never hear the Gospel unless you go and blow the trumpet in their ears! Many who are members of this Church never heard a Gospel sermon until they heard some of you preaching in the street. “Why,” said one, “I never went to a place of worship. But I went down a street and there stood a young man at the corner. I listened to him and God was pleased to send the arrow to my conscience and I came into the House of God afterwards.”

Take the Gospel to them! Carry it to their door! Put it in their path! Do not suffer them to escape it! Blow the trumpet right against their ears! In the name of God, I pray you do this! Remember that the true war cry of the Church is Gideon’s war cry, “The sword of the Lord!” God must do it. It is God’s work! But we are not to be idle—instrumentality is to be used— “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” Mark you, if we only cry, “The sword of the Lord!” we shall be guilty of an idle presumption and shall be tempting God to depart from His fixed rule of procedure.

This is the cry of every lazy lie-in-bed. What good ever comes of saying, “The Lord will do His own work, let us sit still”? Nor must it be, “The sword of Gideon,” alone, for that were idolatrous reliance on an arm of flesh. We can do nothing of ourselves. Not, “The sword of the Lord,” only— that were idleness. But the two together, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.”

O my Brethren, God help you to learn this lesson well and then you will go forth shining and sounding, living and teaching, testifying and living out the Truth of God! You shall most assuredly make the kingdom of Christ to come and His name shall be honored if you will do this. It seems to me that now is a glorious opportunity. There is a spirit of hearing upon the people. Almost anyone may get a hearing who is willing to preach Christ. Now or never!

Sons of Jacob! You are to be like a lion among the flock of sheep and will you lie down and slumber? Up and every man to the prey! Sons of Jacob! You are to be as dew upon the grass and will you tarry for men and wait for the sons of men? No. In God’s name go forward and let something be done for God, and for His Christ, for a perishing age, for a dark world, for Heaven’s Glory, and for Hell’s defeat. Up, you who know the Lord!

You swordsmen of our Israel, up and at them and God give you a great victory and deliverance!

I want you to make some practical point of these things today. God has been pleased to put a sword into my hand and to give me my lamp and my pitcher. My College of young men is now become, in the Lord’s hands, a marvelous power for good. A blessing greater than I could have expected rests on this work. We are continually sending them out and God owns them in the conversion of souls. I have never seen any agency more blessed to the conversion of souls than the agency of our College. Without saying anything to depreciate other efforts, I do believe God has conferred on our Institution a crowning and special blessing and will continue to do so yet more and more.

I want you all, both hearers and readers of my sermons, to feel that this is your work and to help me in it while I continue to cry, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!” God works and therefore we work. God is with us and therefore we are with God and stand on His side. Inasmuch as many of these men raise Churches, we want you to help to build the places where the new congregations can be accommodated afterwards. And to that end we have strived to raise a fund of five thousand pounds to be lent out to these new Churches on loan to be repaid by installments without interest.

It is but a small sum, but it is as much as I think we can do and frugal care will turn it to good account. Some three thousand pounds have been promised by our seven shepherds and principal men. But there are many who have not promised anything yet and we shall be glad if they will come forward, for otherwise this useful fund cannot be raised. When this is done with, once and for all, we will go on and do something else for Jesus. Do break this pitcher! Get this done and let the light of this thing shine! We must be doing something for God.

I speak to you now upon the practical point and come to it at once. If you are content to live without serving God, I am not. And if you are willing to let these hours roll by without doing something to extend the kingdom of Jesus, let me be gone from you! Let me be gone from you to those of warmer spirits and of holier aspirations, for I must fight for God! There must be victories won for Him! We must extend the range of the Gospel! We must find places where souls can be brought to hear the Word. Hell shall not forever laugh at our inactivity and Heaven shall not eternally weep at our sloth!

Let us be up and doing and let this thing be done by the many—the few have already done their parts! Promises reaching over five years are asked of you, you can all do something. And then, every one of you, when you have done your share in this, go out personally and serve with your flaming torch of holy example and with your trumpet tones of earnest declaration and testimony—go out and serve your Lord! And God shall be with you and Midian shall be put to confusion and the Lord of Hosts shall reign forever and ever. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned.” Hear that note, O dead Souls, and live!

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WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD

NO. 1557

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

**“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God?”  
Micah 6:8.**

WE shall chiefly dwell upon the last line—“To walk humbly with your God.” Man asks, “Why should I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God?” and, as if he must set himself to answer his own question, he farther enquires, “Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Sacrifice of some sort is his idea—he supposes that he must supply the sacrifice himself and would gladly know what it should be. The answer which is given him chides him for the supposition that he is to answer his own question, for it begins thus—“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you.”

If we had been attentive to God’s voice we should not now be asking, “why should I come?” for He has already shown us the way. The worship of God is the subject of Revelation, not of invention. True religion is not a new design displaying each man’s taste, but a copy from a plan, framed and fixed by the Lord Himself. We are to follow a path well defined and not map out a course for ourselves. We are not like children crying in the dark after an unknown Father whom we seek by ways of our own, but we are as babes who follow where the warm hand of Love gently draws them. To us it is not night, for the true light has risen and is shining round about us—the Father has revealed Himself and we have an unction from the Holy One so that all things necessary for this life and godliness are lifted out of the region of the unknown and placed among the matters concerning which the Prophet says, “He has shown you, O man.”

The true worship of God is not left to be a matter of conjecture, to be worked out by a man’s thoughts from within, but it is a matter of distinct Revelation to be received by faith from above. Do we all know this? Are there not some among us, or at least around us, who desire a religion of their own? Is not this one of the special follies of the period? Let us escape from this snare! “He has shown you, O man, what is good.” Abstain, therefore, from further invention. When once we know from God, Himself, what His requirements are, it becomes treason to debate the question any further! The statement inspired by Infinite Wisdom satisfies every loyal heart. What God says is to be accepted as final fact—to raise further question is a shuffling method of calling God a liar.

He who still asks the road, virtually denies that God has shown it to Him. It is not altogether their humility which keeps certain minds in what they call a receptive condition, never dogmatic, never confident—or, as Paul more plainly puts it—“ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” To me it would be high presumption not to be sure and confident when God is the Teacher. To push further enquiries where Revelation speaks is either to deny the Revelation or to question its sufficiency. It cannot be that the declarations of God need to be supplemented by opinions and views of our own. “He has shown you, O man, what is good”—let this suffice us and, ceasing to theorize, let us practically obey!

Let us become disciples and in this frame of mind we shall gain one of the first essentials of true worship. True worship cannot, therefore, be will-worship and will-worship cannot be true worship. We are to bring to God that which God requires of us. We are to act towards God as He commands us and to accept from God that which He presents to us. Our approaches to the Most High are no longer to be a matter of our own taste and cleverness, but to be obedient movements of reverent faith, bowing before the solemn Word of the great King. “He has shown you, O man, what is good.” It is clear from the text before us that God has once and forever settled the way by which He is to be honored among men—and He has declared that it is not by outward rites and ceremonies. He pours contempt upon these in many Scriptures when He regards them by themselves.

In our text He says not a single word as to burnt offerings and calves of a year old. The question has been asked, but in His answer He makes no allusion to the rams and to the rivers of oil of which the questioner thought so much. No, but He says “What does the Lord require of you, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?” It seems, then, that it is far more important to do right than to perform the most imposing religious rites—better to act mercifully than to offer the most costly sacrifices. Much more value is attached to a man’s moral character than to all his outward religiousness, however far he may carry it. The upright and generous actions of daily life are better signs of a gracious heart than lavish gifts to the temple and its priests. God judges a man rather by what he does ordinarily among his fellows than by what he does sumptuously when he is gorgeously arrayed in his profession and stands in a chief place of the synagogue and is admired as a chief speaker, or a generous giver to the holy cause.

“To obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams.” Those who are acceptable with God are those who do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with Him. Every man who is a true Christian does justly. If faith does not make a man honest, it is not an honest faith! If our conversion has not made us upright, may the Lord convert us again! When a man’s heart is right with God, he longs to deal rightly with his fellow men and shrinks from the idea of taking undue advantage. He who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ will not knowingly and willfully defile himself with unjust gain. To his employees, his customers, his employer, he aims to do justly. Nor is this all, for he loves mercy. He tries to love his neighbor as himself. If there is an act of kindness to be done, he delights to do it—if there is misery to be helped, needs to be relieved, good to be bestowed, he says, “Let me have a hand in it, for it is good for me to do good.” The man who is loved by the All-Merciful is one who loves mercy. The God of Mercy cannot take pleasure in the churlish and brutal. The hard, the cruel, the grasping, the oppressing, the sternly unforgiving are not such as the Lord delights in.

Another point remains. It is the third thing and it is put third because it is of the highest importance—“to walk humbly with your God.” This is an inward thing, but little observed. It is observable enough in its consequences, but not in itself and, therefore, very apt to be overlooked. “To walk humbly with your God” is as necessary as to do justly and to love mercy, but few there are that do it and, therefore, at this time I would earnestly insist upon this vital, this essential point. I pray God the Holy Spirit to make humble walking with God to seem as important to you as it does to me and to me as important as it does to Him—for He puts it here in the very forefront of spiritual necessities.

I. First, Brothers and Sisters, we may say of the humble walk which God demands and accepts that IT IS EXCELLENT IN ITSELF. This is one of the things which is good, good morally, good in present effect, good in eternal results. Nothing is better for you, O man, than to walk humbly with your God. Notice every single word of our text, for under this head I will explain humble walking, that you may see its excellence. Humble walking with God signifies, first, a perception of God’s Being and Presence. In order to our acceptance with God, we must know that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. We must distinctly recognize that there is a God and that He is near us—that He is real and true and that we are living in actual nearness to Him.

We are to walk with Him and this cannot be done unless we know that He is near—men do not walk with myths, or ideas, or remote existences. To have a real God is the backbone of character and to keep company with Him day by day is the right arm of godliness. How many live as if God were a nonentity, a dream, a theological fable, a respectable fancy and no more? But the acceptable character is made and formed mainly by the fact that God is and that God surrounds us. It is only in the sunlight of God’s own Countenance, consciously experienced, that true holiness can be produced and ripened. The godly man is moved to action, helped in endurance, nerved with courage, fired with zeal, elevated with devotion and purified in life by the Presence of God. “You, God, see me,” is a great sanctifier!

The Lord said to Abraham, “Walk before Me and be you perfect”— otherwise there is no perfection. David said, “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living”—there is no other safe walking. We are never right unless God is the Friend of our pilgrimage, the Companion of our thoughts, the Rest of our weariness, the Home of our delight, the very Element of our life! Such nearness to God is good—do we know what it means? In addition, there must be an appropriating and accepting of this ever-present God as our God. The text says,” Walk humbly with your God.” Observe that. He must be our God. We must feel that if no other beings will worship Jehovah, we will do so with our whole hearts. “This God is our God forever and ever.” “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.”

We believe that Jehovah is our Creator, Preserver and Redeemer and if no other creature through whose veins life is throbbing will acknowledge Him as its God, we will, alone, adore and worship Him. We take Him to be our Ruler, Leader, Law-Giver, Helper and Confidence—and if all the world shall set up other gods, we, alone, will serve Jehovah. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” This firm allegiance is good and works towards all that is good. When a man feels that he can call God, his God and that he can take hold upon His Covenant, then is he strong for honor and virtue and all things that are pleasing unto God. Because God has entered into covenant with us in Christ Jesus and we have given ourselves over unto Him by a Covenant of Salt, therefore we stand firm against temptation and endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

Come, Brothers and Sisters, are your hearts thus fixed on God at this moment? Do your spirits walk with your God? Or are you at a distance from God, wandering away from Him? Have you forgotten that God is yours? Are you looking upon Him as another man’s God? Oh, you cannot be strong, clear and joyous in spirit till God is yours and all your life is spent with Him—till whether you roam, or rest, or sleep, or wake—you still abide with your own God and find your happiness in Him. As the fish abides in the ocean and the bird in the air and each calls the sea and the sky its own, so do we dwell in God and He is ours forever and ever! This is not all, the text sets forth the accepted man as always active in the Presence of His God.

“To walk” with God denotes an active habit, a communion in the common movements of the day. Some bow humbly before God in the hour of prayer. Others sit humbly in His Presence at the time of meditation and others string themselves up to draw near to God in seasons of religious excitement. But all this falls short of walking with God. Walking is a very common pace, an ordinary rate of progress and it does not seem to require great effort—but then it is a practical working pace, a rate at which a man can continue on and on and make a day’s journey by the time the sun is down. So walking with God means being with God always, being with God in common things, being with Him on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday—as well as on the Sabbath!

It means being with Him in the shop, with Him in the kitchen, with Him in the field, feeling His Presence in buying and selling, in weighing and measuring, in plowing and reaping—doing as unto the Lord the most common acts of life. This it is which is acceptable with the Most High and this is the man who has gotten into a right condition before His Maker— the man who “walks” with His God! Then comes in the qualifying word of, “humbly,” about which we have to speak most at this time. It was necessary to remind you of the other matters first. God must be recognized as always present, appropriated as our God and felt to be a power in all our life or else there can be no humble walking with Him. You must have the verb or there is no sense in the adverb—you must walk before there is any sense in the exhortation to walk humbly.

But now comes the humbling—we are to live towards God in all that we do in a lowly, reverent spirit. We are not bid slavishly to crouch, but humbly to walk. How lowly and penitently we are to walk, let gracious men remind us. If we are favored to walk with God as Abraham did, in all the sweet familiarity of friend with Friend, yet must we remember, as he did, that we are but dust and ashes. Our closest communion must take the form of worship. When we see our Lord, best, we must fall at His feet with awe. When our walk with God is closest and clearest, we must be overwhelmed with adoring wonder at the condescension which permits us to think of speaking with the Eternal One. To this reverence must be added a constant sense of dependence—walking humbly with God in the sense of daily drawing all supplies from Him and gratefully admitting that it is so. We are never to indulge a thought of independence from God, as if we were anything, or could do anything apart from Him.

Walking humbly with God involves a profound deference to His will and a glad submission to it—yielding both active obedience and passive acquiescence. Humble walking with God cries under cutting afflictions, “It is the Lord! Let Him do what seems good to Him.” When the Lord bids me serve Him, I must cry for Grace to run in the ways of His commandments! And when the Lord chastens me, I must beg for patience to endure His appointments. Walking humbly with God implies all this and much more than just now we could particularly state. May the Holy Spirit teach us all what a broken and contrite spirit means and keep us always low before the Lord. The practical result of all this inward humbling will be an acting towards others and a moving in all matters as under the influence of a humble spirit.

If a man once really comes to live and act as in the sight of God, his life must be one of eminent holiness and, if under a sense of God’s Glory, he abides in deep humility of spirit, we may expect to see about him all that is tender and quiet. Like his Lord, he will be meek and lowly in heart. He will not domineer over his fellow men. He will not be hard, cruel, unkind. He cannot be! He who feels that he must walk with great softness and tenderness before his God cannot trample on others as if they were only fit to be the dust of his feet. You will not see him supremely disdainful, carrying his head among the stars as though he were some great one. No, he has learned to walk humbly with God and he thinks of himself soberly, as he ought to think. For a man to put on humility before God and throw it off before men would be hypocrisy of the vilest kind. Alas, it is too often seen, but it is base to the utmost—flee from it as you would from forgery and counterfeit and, in very truth, “walk humbly with God.”

I cannot tell you all that my text means, nor if you know it, yourself, can you make others understand it. Still, they will know that it is something very admirable which makes you to be a good neighbor and a considerate friend, the comfort of the sorrowful, the helper of all. They may not understand from where the quiet spirit derives its gentle dew, but they will perceive its freshness, its sparkling purity and its goodness and wonder at its cause. True humility begets a gentleness, a tenderness, a Christlikeness which men may mock for a while, but which, for the most part, wins their hearts. The more instructed, the sooner they take knowledge of a meek-spirited man that he must have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

I do not prescribe to any man that he should try to walk humbly with his fellow man, for without great watchfulness his spirit may glide into meanness and he may lose conscientiousness in a desire to please. But if he will aim at walking humbly with God, he will get into such a proper spirit that he will be in his right position towards all his surroundings below and above—and his life will be such as will commend itself both to God and men. Thus I have tried to show, while explaining what was meant by walking humbly with our God, that it is a thing most excellent in itself. O Holy Spirit, work it in us for the lowly Savior’s sake!

II. Secondly, this walking humbly with God is very important, for IT IS A TEST OF SALVATION. The man that walks humbly with God is a saved man—the man who does not walk humbly with God should question his condition before God, for in proportion as he fails here—he fails altogether. We will ask a few questions concerning this matter. Friend, if you are walking humbly with God you have taken your right place as a sinner condemned by the Law, for certainly you have broken the Law and that Law requires absolutely perfect obedience which you have not rendered and never will render! God’s Law, then, has condemned you—have you condemned yourself? Have you taken your place as a condemned one and pleaded guilty before God?

If you have not done so, your view of yourself differs from God’s view of you. Your view of yourself is a proud one You are not walking humbly with God and you are not saved. He that never felt himself lost never felt himself saved—he who never confessed himself guilty has never been forgiven. He who has never accepted the sentence which dooms him has never received the pardon which absolves him. Mark this. Again, if you are walking humbly with God you have given Jesus Christ His right place. What is that? He came into the world to be the Savior of sinners and the only place He will deign to occupy towards you is that He shall save you and save you completely. Some say, “Yes, oh yes. Jesus shall be my Savior and do something toward my salvation.”

But He replies, “I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.” Christ will save us from the beginning to the end or He will have nothing to do with our salvation! He will have all the Glory of the work and the work itself must be all His own—from the foundation to the top stone—or else He will leave the ruin upon its own heap. Jesus will never consent to be a make-weight for our deficiencies. He will not come at our beck and call to be our lackey, to patch up our old rags and mend our clouted shoes. No! The Lord Jesus Christ must be everything and we must be nothing, or we shall never agree. Have you given Christ His due place, dear Friend? If you have not done so, your view of Christ and God’s view of Christ are very different and yours is a proud view, for you are putting yourself into the Savior’s place in some degree and you are not walking humbly with God.

It is dangerous to the last degree to be pushing the Lord of Glory into a corner so that we may occupy His Throne. The Lord our God is a jealous God and He is specially jealous of the prerogatives of His Son! If we are so vain as to rob Christ of His Glory and deck ourselves out in stolen honors, we shall quickly incur His hot displeasure. When our heart feels that the blood and righteousness of Jesus constitute her only plea, then is she walking rightly and humbly with God and all is well. One other question is a very important one—is salvation seen by you to be wholly of Grace? Do you, my Friend, judge salvation to be partly by your own works and merits? Do you think that you must at least contribute an ounce weight in the scale so that you must add at least a fraction to the Savior’s lump sum? Yes? Then it is a question whether you know anything about salvation.

I do not want to make doctrinal opinions a test, but it does seem to me that there is something wrong in the heart which looks for salvation anywhere but to the free favor of God. To walk humbly with God is to feel, “If ever such a poor, condemned soul as I am shall be saved, it must be by an act of free and Sovereign mercy, for if Justice has its way apart from mercy I am driven forever into the darkness of despair.” I am come to this pass, myself—that if salvation is at all of myself—if any merit is required of me, though it is as little as the small dust of the balance, or the drop that trembles in the bucket after it is turned upside down, I cannot find it. Grace must save me or I am lost! When the soul has come to that pass, it is walking humbly with God. But those who are, even in the smallest degree, out of the circle of Grace, are not walking humbly with God and they have grave cause to question their spiritual state.

This suggests to me another thought. I know several persons who seem to be seeking peace with God and mercy in Christ, but never get it because, as it seems to me, they are not walking humbly with God as to their intellect. The last thing that some men will do is to bow their understanding to the teaching of God. They are always carping and raising quibbles with God instead of believing Him. They need to be silenced as Job was before the manifested Glory of God, or they will die asking questions. Those mysterious Truths of God which relate to the Most High— such creatures as we are can never expect to understand! In the region of the Infinite there is ample space for faith, but reason loses her track. Faith is our privilege—let us exercise it freely towards the Lord.

In God’s great family is the comprehension of the Father’s mind to be a sine qua non of our affection for Him? Am I never to believe what my Father tells me till I understand it? Must all Your gold, great God, be tried in my crucible before I will accept it at Your hand? Are You a liar unless my brain prove You true? Am I, after all, to be lord over my own thoughts and are You to have no supremacy in the kingdom of my mind? Does any man fancy that his soul can ever be right while this is his theory? How can the heart stand in an even place and be at peace while it refuses to acknowledge the sway of God? We must yield our intellect to the superior intellect, permitting the drop to be borne along by the river! The Infallible speech of Him who cannot err must satisfy the obedient mind!

To the true heart there is no self-denial in agreeing that Omniscience shall stand instead of personal discovery; Infallible Revelation in the place of research and argument and the witnessing Spirit in the place of authority and evidence. Every Word of God is surer than the most certain deductions of mathematics or the clearest inferences of reasoning! God’s slightest hint, though it comes not to a positive declaration, is to be treasured up by us as a priceless gem! Well does the Apostle say, “The foolishness of God is wiser than men.” There is more light in God’s darkness than in man’s light! His every Word is Infallible, but as for the thoughts of man— we know that they are vanity. This seems to be a test, then, by which we may try whether we are saved or not. Are we walking humbly with God or not?

Are we trying to be something, to do something, to think something, or in some way or other to let it be manifest that we are not to be overlooked? If so, there is great fear that we are not yet right with Heaven. God says, “I Am and there is none beside Me.” Do we consent to shrink into nothingness, or are we eager to cry out, “I, too, am something! I must not be ignored, for I have my right and claims which may not be forgotten.” Beloved, I delight to hear the Divine Voice crying, “I Am,” and to run and hide myself beneath His eternal wings, cowering down beneath them, even as the little chicks hide beneath the mother and are as though they were not apart from her. It is good to shrink into a happy insignificance, to feel that we are nothing, save only as we are hidden away with Christ in God. God Is and as for our existence, it is but that of God displaying Himself in us—we are nothing—God is All in All.

When we are thus humbled we are saved. What is it to not be lost? The eternal burning of the Divine greatness has consumed the vainglory of the creature and that which remains has no cause to fear. With this man will God dwell forever on terms of peace, even with him who is of a humble and a contrite spirit and trembles at His Word.

III. I must pass on very briefly to say, in the third place, of walking humbly with God, that IT IS A SYMPTOM OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH. You can tell, dear Friend, not only whether you are saved, but afterwards, whether your new life is in a growing state, by examining whether you are walking humbly with God. Let me dwell upon that matter for a minute. We are healthy in soul if we have lowly views in reference to ourselves upon matters of Divine Grace. Come, now, what do you think of yourself this morning? Are you a fine fellow, a disciple, indeed, an example to others? Do you now account yourself to be a very experienced Christian, quite a useful member of the Church, an ornament to society, a person considerably looked up to and well worthy of a large measure of respect?

It would be very improper to put you in a back seat, or invite you to take a lower room, for are you not a prince in Israel? Among those who might be counted as pillars, you feel that you must be mentioned. But be careful what you are thinking! It is very easy to feel great. It is, by no means, an eminently difficult thing to be exalted. I have reached that point, myself, without great effort and I take no credit, but much shame for it. A sense of rising to be somebody is not a sign of health—it is a token of the reverse, sometimes, and may be the forerunner of most solemn catastrophes. Puffing up may mean bloating and swelling with deadly tumors, therefore beware of it!

Signs of health lie in quite another line. Will you try and follow me, for a minute, in a humbling meditation? Remember what you were a little while ago. Then, the thought that you would even be a member of the Church of Christ seemed too good for you! If anyone had said, “You will be numbered with God’s people. You will enjoy, with them, the sweets of pardoning Grace,” you would have said, “Then I do not care where they put me. If I am only one of the dogs under the Master’s table, I shall be perfectly satisfied to eat the crumbs.” Like the prodigal, we were ready to cry, “Make me as one of Your hired servants!” So long as we might but eat the bread from the Father’s table we had no care for honor.

Ah, you did not think you would be such a big man as you are now, did you? When you filled the swine trough and fed the unclean, yourself hungry and faint, you had no idea to what you would grow. God grant you may have every particle of boasting removed from you at this time as you remember the hole of the pit from which you were quarried! Taken from the dunghill and placed among princes, let our grateful hearts renounce all self-glory and magnify only the Lord! Another set of reflections may rise up on considering what you now are. What are you now? At your best— what have you to boast of? You are thought by others to be something very great and respectable, but what are the facts of the case as God sees them? You are a branch of the true Vine—yes, how much fruit do you bear?

Compare yourself with those branches that bring forth much fruit to God—and how thin and lean is your vintage! You are weighed down by the responsibilities which your position thrusts upon you, but are you bearing them worthily? Are you doing for God what some would do if they had your opportunities? Are you doing for Christ what once you thought you would do if you ever had the means? Are you now living according to your own notion of how a Christian should live—are you anywhere near it? Oh, my Brother, when you think of what you are now, there is more to make you blush than to make you boast! There is more to make you cover your face than to cause you to lift up your head! At least, such is my case.

Once more, I beg you to think of what you would be within a very short time if you were left by Divine Grace. We sometimes condemn men for their acts and are right in condemning them—and yet if we had been in their position we might have done much worse. “Oh,” says one, “what a mercy it is I have been kept these 30 years and have never dishonored my profession!” Yes, Brother, it is a mercy, a great mercy, a greater mercy than you dreamed! You do not happen to have a vixen for a wife, or a troublesome family, or a provoking neighbor—or you would have lost your character long ago. Domestic comfort may deserve more praise than any goodness on your part. It is a mercy for you that the evil person who used to have such influence over you was taken away, or else I do not know where you would have been!

Many an evil character has been the result of vicious influence. A great deal of apparent virtue may be due to our not happening to be tempted at the time when we are in a certain condition, or else if our tinder and the devil’s sparks had met, who knows but what the best of us might have been ablaze by now? Oh, how much we owe to preventing Grace! We are debtors both to the Providence and the Grace of God which have kept us out of harm’s way! When sometimes we have been compelled to condemn sin in a Brother and to speak very solemnly, as we are bound to do, we have remembered ourselves lest we, also, should be tempted—and we have remembered that Grace, alone, has kept us out of sin. “Such an one was drunk,” says one, “after making a profession of religion.” We do not exonerate him for a moment! It was a shameful crime, but oh, my Friend, had you been precisely in his condition—had you been once a victim to that degrading vice, met by the same company and in other respects surrounded as he was—you might have been intoxicated long before he became so!

Walk humbly with your God at any rate, my Friend. The true way to live is to give God all the glory and take to ourselves all the shame. When God gives us great temporal enjoyments, then let us think, “Why do I have these comforts while many of His servants are without them? Is it possible that He is giving me my portion in this life?” That will lay a cool hand on your hot forehead and forbid all pride in wealth! If God makes you rich, instead of doting on your riches, say to yourself, “How can I best use my substance for His Glory?” The working out of that practical question should be quite sufficient to keep you from self-esteem. He who truly serves the Lord will walk humbly with Him. Have you more talent than other people? You will be a great fool if you begin to rejoice in it, for serious responsibilities come with special ability. Remember you have to do more for God than other people and that thought should, by God’s Grace, be as ballast for your wide-spread sail. Great talent might be a sun to smite you if a sense of responsibility did not come in like a cloud to shield you.

Are you honored among men? Then say to yourself, “Ah, they do not know me or they might judge me otherwise. If I deserve their esteem for some things, yet there are many things which make me hang my head.” If we deserve all the gratitude of our fellows, we should still be deeply anxious not to take a grain of praise to ourselves lest God should be angry with us for robbing Him of His revenue of Glory. What have we that we have not received? We must always have lowly views of ourselves before God in regard to matters of Grace and it should be the same in reference to His Providence. For instance, if one of you shall have been much tried in business and have lost much money—suppose you are angry with God and quarrel with Him about it—is that walking humbly with Him? When we complain at the loss of children or friends, is not that the pride of our heart?

To walk humbly with God would lead you to say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him!” But a proud heart virtually cries, “God shall do as I like, or else He shall have no obedience from me! He shall always use His right hand and pour into my lap all that I desire, or else we will part company.” It is the hypocrite who will not always call upon God—a little trial cools his love. Ah, Friend, this will not do. Complaining and rebelling are not walking humbly with God! Humbly walking with God yields itself entirely to the Divine will and says, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Humbly walking with God will enable a man to receive Providences from God without expecting to understand why they came. “I cannot comprehend,” says a man, “why, in the very midst of my usefulness, I am laid aside.” Is God bound to tell you why? When you are denied an explanation, are you walking humbly with God? Has the father to tell his little son the reason for everything he does? Is that the way you govern your family? No, my Brothers, fathers have their honor and much more our heavenly Father! God gives no account of His matters. It is a part of my humbly walking with God to accept Providences of which I cannot see the object or design and to be grateful for them. When God sends, as it seems to us, the wrong Providence—when He does to us that which seems unwise and unkind, we are still to say, “He must be good to Israel and all His dealings must be wise and kind. I am but as a wild ass’s colt and know nothing and can judge nothing—God knows all things, so let His will be done.”

This is to walk humbly with Him. If the Lord turns His hand and multiplies your treasure and gives you the bright and sunny days, the elastic step and cheery heart, take heed that you walk humbly with Him. It is easy to think something of yourself when the purse is bulky—but fling away such folly! Hold your possessions loosely and say, “Lord, I am grateful for these, but if You, in the future, take them away, by Your Grace, I will not murmur. I do not suspend my love to You upon these outward things. I love You for Yourself and for Your richer Grace. My love is not held by the tenure of Your favoring me with health and strength. By Your Grace I will trust You though You slay me. Though You take all away, out of the very dust will I still praise You.”

I think I have thus shown that it is a symptom of spiritual health when a man can walk humbly with God.  
IV. And now, fourthly, we may say of this humble walking that IT IS A CAUSE FOR VERY GREAT ANXIETY. We must walk humbly, my Brothers and Sisters, but this is more easily said than done. This is no child’s play! Humility of spirit is a virtue which is likely to be overlooked—we pay some attention to doing justly and loving mercy, but walking humbly with God is so inward, so ethereal and so spiritual that we are apt to overlook it— yet it is the main thing and all our thoughts should go to the securing of it. You may, if you will, give all your substance to the poor and your bodies to be burned, but if you walk not humbly with God you have missed the essence of godliness.  
It is easy enough to keep up private devotion and family devotion and public devotion and to be regular at sacraments and sermons and to be everything that is moral and just and upright and yet, after all, to not be walking humbly with God and, therefore, a failure here is highly probable, but none the less terrible. Humble walking is so difficult to come at that thousands sit down content with that which looks like it, but is by no means the same thing. It is so easy to think yourself humble. To feign humility is, of all things, most shocking and yet to be truly humble is, of all things, most difficult. Have you never noticed how, when you fancied you were lowly before God, it was only that you were unbelieving or out of health? Do not mistake indigestion for humility!  
When you said to yourself, “Now I am on familiar terms with God and living near Him in communion,” it turned out to be presumption rather than faith. And supposed humility has, in like manner, full often condensed into despair. Are you now saying, “I think I am humble”? Is there ever a time when a man is so proud as when he judges that he is humble? “Ah,” you say, “but I cannot exalt myself, I am in such a condition of heart I must walk humbly with God.” My Beloved, I beseech you to be more on your guard, now, than ever, against pride, for a haughty spirit lurks in an assurance of humility like a lion in its den! The leaven of self is brought into our meal in the measure of a supposed necessity of humbleness. To be really lowly, really nothing before God, really to yield yourselves up to Him—this is such a work and such a difficulty that I commend you to attempt it in order that you may see how impossible it is to you apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, who, alone, can help us to walk humbly with God.  
V. With this I close, when I have said, in the fifth place, in praise of walking humbly with God, that IT IS THE SOURCE OF THE DEEPEST CONCEIVABLE PLEASURE. If you walk humbly with God you will feel safe. What can harm the man who sits at the feet of the great Lord and waits on His will? Ah, now you feel that, happen what may, nothing can harm you, for you are ready to bow before it and let the Lord, alone, reign. What peace it gives when you feel that if there is anything about you which grieves your God, you will gladly let it go—you have already surrendered it—you would not retain it for an hour! The tempest rolls overhead but all is calm below when the heart has learned full surrender and is even as a weaned child. Your spirit must rest, then—it cannot help resting—for it dwells in God!  
Into this quietness and rest there comes enjoyment, for the man that leaves everything to God finds joy in everything. Mercies which to others are commonplace are sweet to him. He marvels at the love which God displays in them all! As mercies come to him, he receives them with songs of thankfulness. He is grateful to think that he has bread to eat and clothes to wear, for he knows how unworthy he is. And when great mercies are showered on him, he sits down before God and cries, “Why this to me? What am I and what is my father’s house?” He is the man who joins Mary in her Magnificat, singing, “My soul does magnify the Lord.”  
He sings with the Psalmist, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul and all that is within me bless His holy name.” He sits at Heaven’s gate waiting to enter and he shall not long be detained outside, for as joy and peace and a heavenly mind have come to him, so shall they soon bring him to their Home. He who has learned to walk humbly with God shall soon see the face of God in His Glory! God teach us all this sacred art for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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MICAH’S MESSAGE FOR TODAY

NO. 2328

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 1, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 22, 1889.

**“Walk humbly with your God.”  
Micah 6:8.**

THIS is the essence of the Law of God, the spiritual side of it—its Ten Commandments are an enlargement of this verse. The Law is spiritual and touches the thoughts, the intents, the emotions, the words, the actions—but especially God demands the heart. Now it is our great joy that what the Law requires, the Gospel gives. “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.” In Him we meet the requirements of the Law, first, by what He has done for us and next, by what He works in us. He conforms us to the Law of God. He makes us, by His Spirit, not for our righteousness, but for His Glory, to render to the Law the obedience which we could not present of ourselves. We are weak through the flesh, but when Christ strengthens us, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Only through faith in Christ does a man learn to do righteously, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God—and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfill these three Divine requirements. These we fulfill perfectly in our desire—we would be holy as God is holy if we could live as our heart aspires to live—we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy and we would always walk humbly with God. This, the Holy Spirit daily aids us to do by working in us to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. And the day will come and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we shall serve Him day and night in His Temple and shall render to Him an absolutely perfect obedience, for, “they are without fault before the Throne of God.”

Tonight I shall have a task quite sufficient if I dwell only upon the third requirement, “Walk humbly with your God,” asking first, What is the nature of this humility? And secondly, Where does this humility show itself?

I. First, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS HUMILITY? The text is very full of teaching in that respect.  
And, first, this humility belongs to the highest form of character. Observe what precedes our text, “to do justly and to love mercy.” Suppose a man has done that? Suppose that in both these things he has come up to the Divine standard, what then? Why, then he must walk humbly with God! If we walk in the Light of God, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with Him, we still need to walk before God very humbly, always looking to the blood, for even then, the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses and continues to cleanse us from all sin. If we have done both these things, we shall still have to say that we are unprofitable servants and we must walk humbly with God. We have not reached that consummation yet, always doing justly and loving mercy, though we are approximating to it by Christ’s gracious help. But if we did attain to the ideal that is set before us and every act was right towards man—and more, every act was delightfully saturated with a love to our neighbor as strong as our love to ourselves—even then there would come in this precept, “Walk humbly with your God.”  
Dear Friends, if ever you should think that you have reached the highest point of Christian Grace—I almost hope that you never will think so— but suppose that you should ever think so, do not, I pray you, say anything that verges upon boasting, or exhibit any kind of spirit that looks like glorying in your own attainments, but walk humbly with your God! I believe that the more Grace a man has, the more he feels his deficiency of Grace. All the people that I have ever thought might have been called perfect before God, have been notable for a denial of anything of the sort— they have always disclaimed anything like perfection! They have always laid low before God and if one has been constrained to admire them, they have blushed at his admiration. If they have thought that they were, at all, the objects of reverence among their fellow Christians, I have noticed how zealously they have put that aside with self-depreciatory remarks, telling us that we did not know all, or we should not think so of them. And therein I admire them yet more. The praise that they put from them returns to them with interest!  
Oh, let us be of that mind! The best of men are but men at the best, and the brightest saints are still sinners, for whom there is still the Fountain open, but not opened, mark you, in Sodom and Gomorrah, but opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that even they may still continue, with all their lofty privileges, to wash, therein, and to be clean. This is the kind of humility, then, which is consistent with the highest moral and spiritual character. No, it is the very clothing of such a character, as Peter puts it, “Be clothed with humility,” as if, after we had put on the whole armor of God, we put this over all to cover it all up! We do not want the helmet to glitter in the sun, nor the armor of brass upon the knees to shine before men, but clothing ourselves like officers in civilian clothes, we conceal the beauties which will eventually the more reveal themselves.  
The second remark is this, the humility here prescribed involves constant communion with God. Observe that we are told to walk humbly with God. It is of no use walking humbly away from God. I have seen some people very proudly humble, very boastful of their humility. They have been so humble that they were proud enough to doubt God! They could not accept the mercy of Christ, they said. They were so humble. In truth, theirs was a devilish humility, not the humility that comes from the Spirit of God. Oh, no! This humility makes us walk with God and, Beloved, can you conceive a higher and truer humility than that which must come of walking with God? Remember what Job said, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”  
Remember how Abraham, when he communed with God and pleaded with him for Sodom, said, “I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.” “Dust”—that set forth the frailty of his nature. “Ashes”—as if he were like the refuse of the altar which could not be burnt up—which God would not have. He felt himself to be, by sin, like the sweeping of a furnace, the ashes, refuse of no value whatever—and that was not because he was away from God, but because he was near to God. You can get to be as big as you like if you get away from God, but

coming  
near  
to the Lord you rightly sing—  
*“The more Your glories strike my eyes,*

*The humbler I shall lie.”*  
Depend upon it that it is so. It might be a kind of weather gauge as to your communion—whether you are proud or humble. If you are going up, God is going down in your esteem. “He must increase,” said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus, “but I must decrease.” The two things go together— if this scale rises, that scale must go down. “Walk humbly with your God.”

Dare to stay with God! Dare to have Him as your daily Friend! Be bold enough to come to Him who is within the veil! Talk with Him, walk with Him as a man walks with his familiar friend—but walk humbly with Him. You will do so if you walk truly. I cannot conceive such a thing—it is impossible—a man walking proudly with God! He takes his fellow by the arm and feels that he is as good as his neighbor, perhaps superior to him, but he cannot walk with God in such a frame of mind as that! The finite with the Infinite! That alone suggests humility, but the sinful with the ThriceHoly? This throws us down into the dust.

But, next, this humility implies constant activity. “Walk humbly with your God.” Walking is an active exercise. These people had proposed to bow before God, as you notice in the sixth verse, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?” But the answer is not, “Bow humbly before God,” but, “Walk humbly with God.” Now, Beloved, when we are very actively engaged, pressed with business, one thing after another coming in, if the great Master employs us in some large concern—large, of course, only to us—if we have work after work, we are too apt to forget that we are only servants, we are doing all the business for our Master, we are only commission agents for Him. We are apt to think that we are the head of the firm. We would not think so if we thought steadily, for a moment, for we would know our right position. But in the midst of activity we get cumbered with much serving and we are too apt to get off our proper level.

We have, perhaps, to rule others, and we forget that we also are men under authority. It is easy to play the little king over the little folk, but it must not be so. You must learn not only to be humble in the closet of communion—and to be humble with your Bible before you—but to be humble in preaching, to be humble in teaching, to be humble in ruling, to be humble in everything that you do when you have as much as ever you can do! When, from morning to night, you are still pressed with this and that service, still keep your proper place. That is where Martha went wrong, you know—not in having much serving, but by getting to be mistress. She was, “Mrs. Martha,” and the housewife is a queen! But Mary sat in the servant’s place at Jesus’ feet. If Martha’s heart could have been where Mary’s body was, then had she served aright. The Lord make us Martha-Marys, or Mary-Marthas, whenever we are busy, that we may walk humbly with God!

Next, I do not think that it is far-fetched if I say that this humility denotes progress. The man is to walk—and that is progress—advancing. “Walk humbly.” I am not to be so humble that I feel that I cannot do any more, or enjoy any more, or be any better—they call that humility—but it begins with an “S” in English and the full word is SLOTH. “I cannot be as believing, as bold, as useful as such a man is.” You are not told to be humble and sit still, but to be humble and walk with God! Go forward! Advance! Not with a proud desire to excel your fellow Christians—not even with the latent expectation of being more respected because you have more Grace—but still walk, go on, advance, grow! Be enriched with all the precious things of God. Be filled with all the fullness of God. Walk on, always walk. Lie not down in despair! Roll not in the dust with desperation because you think high things impossible for you. Walk, but walk humbly.

You will soon find out, if you make any progress, that you have need to be humble. I believe that when a man goes back he gets proud. And I am persuaded that when a man advances, he gets humbler—and that it is a part of the advance to walk more and more and more humbly. For this the Lord tries many of us. For this He visits us in the night and chastens us, that we may be qualified to have more Grace and get to higher attainments, by being more humble, “for God resists the proud, and gives Grace to the humble.” If you will climb the mountainside, you shall be thirsty among the barren crags. But if you will descend into the valleys, where the red deer wander and the brooks flow among the meadows, you shall drink to your full! Does not the hart pant for the water brooks? Do you pant for them? They flow in the Valley of Humiliation! The Lord bring us all there!

Next, the humility here prescribed implies constancy—“Walk humbly with your God.” Not sometimes be humble, but always walk humbly with your God. If we were always what we are sometimes, what Christians we would be! I have heard you say, I think, and I have said the same, myself, “I felt very broken down and lay very low at my Master’s feet.” Were you so the next day? And the day after—did you continue so? Is it not very possible for us to be one day, because of our great debt to our Master, begging that He would not be hard with us and is it not possible, tomorrow, to be taking our brother by the throat? I do not say that God’s people would do that, but I do feel that the spirit that is in them may lead them to think of doing it—one day acknowledging your Father’s authority and doing His will—and another day standing outside the door and refusing to go in because the prodigal son has come home. “You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. I have been a consistent Believer, yet I never have any high joys, but as soon as this, your son, was come, which has devoured your living with harlots, you have killed for him the fatted calf. Here is a wretched sinner only just saved and he is in an ecstasy of delight! How can this be right?”

O elder son, O elder brother, walk humbly with your Father! Always be so under any circumstances. It is all very fine to have a lot of humility packed away in a box with which to perfume your prayers and then to come out and to be, “My Lord,” and some very great one in the midst of the Church and in the world. This will never do! It is not said, “Bow humbly before God now and then.” But as a regular, constant thing, “Walk humbly with your God.” It is not, “Bow your head like the bulrush under some conscious fault which you cannot deny,” but, in the brightness of your purity and the clearness of your holiness, still keep your heart in lowly reverence bowing before the Throne of God!

Once more, only, and then we will quit this part of the subject— the humility that is here prescribed includes delightful confidence. Let me read the text to you, “Walk humbly with God.” No, no, we must not maul the passage that way! “Walk humbly with your God.” Do not think that it is humility to doubt your interest in Christ—that is unbelief! Do not think that it is humility to think that He is another man’s God and not yours— “Walk humbly with your God.” Know that He is your God! Be sure of it— come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. Have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a doubt, that you are your Beloved’s and that He is yours! Rest not for a moment if there is any question upon this blessed subject. He gives Himself to you—take Him to be yours by a Covenant of salt that never shall be broken—and give yourself to Him, saying, “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine.” “Walk humbly with your God.”

Let not anything draw you away from that confidence. But then, in comes the humility. This is all of Grace! This is all the result of Divine Election! Therefore, be humble. You have not chosen Christ, but He has chosen you! This is all the effect of redeeming love—therefore, be humble. You are not your own, you are bought with a price, so you can have no room to glory. This is all the work of the Spirit—

*“Then give all the glory to His holy name, To Him all the glory belongs.”*

“Walk humbly with your God.” I lie at His feet as one unworthy and cry, “Why did this come to me? I am not worthy of the least of the mercies that You have made to pass before me.” I think this is the humility prescribed in the text. May the Spirit of God work it in us!

II. And now, secondly, with great brevity upon many points, I have to answer the question, WHERE DOES THIS HUMILITY SHOW ITSELF? I have what might be a long task—a Puritan would want an hour and a half more for the second part of the subject. Our Puritan forefathers preached, you know, by a glass, an hourglass which stood by them, and sometimes, when they had let one glass run out at the end of the hour, they would say to the people, “Let us have another glass,” and they turned it over, again, and went on for another hour! But I am not going to do that. I do not wish to weary you and I would rather send you away longing than loathing. Where, then, does this humility show itself? It ought to show itself in every act of life. I would not advise any of you to try to be humble, but to be humble. As to acting humbly, when a man forces himself to it, that is poor stuff. When a man talks a great deal about his humility— when he is very humble to everybody—he is generally a canting hypocrite. Humility must be in the heart and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

But now, especially, walk humbly with God when your Graces are strong and vigorous, when there has been a very clear display of them, when you have been very patient, when you have been very bold, when you have been very prayerful, when the Scriptures have opened themselves up to you, when you have enjoyed a grand season of searching the Word and, especially, when the Lord gives you success in His service, when there are more souls than usual brought to Christ, when God has made you a leader among His people and has laid His hand upon you, and said, “Go in this, your might.” Then, “Walk humbly with your God.” The devil will tell you when you have preached a good sermon—perhaps you will not have preached a good one when he tells you that you have, for he is a great liar—but you may go home wonderfully pleased with a sermon with which God is not pleased, and you may go home wonderfully humble about a sermon that God means to bless. But when there really does seem to be something that the Evil One tempts you to glory in, then hear this word, “Walk humbly with your God.”

Next, when you have a great deal of work to do and the Lord is calling you to it, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with your God. Do you ask, “How?” By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you are unfit in yourself—and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any! When you are weak, by acknowledging your weakness, you will grow strong. Lean hard upon your God, cry to Him in prayer. Do not open your own mouth, but from your heart pray, “Open, You, my lips, and my mouth shall speak forth Your praise.” Be intensely subservient to the Spirit of God. Yield yourself up to be worked upon by Him that you may work upon others. Oh, there is such a difference between a sermon preached by our own power and a sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! If you do not feel the difference, my Brother, your people will soon find it out—

*“Oh, to be nothing, nothing!*

*Only to lie at His feet!”*  
Then it is, when walking humbly with our God in service, that He will fill us and make us strong.

Next, walk humbly with God in all your aims. When you are seeking after anything, mind what your motive is. Even if it is the best thing, seek it only for God. If any man, or any woman, tries to work in the Sunday school, or if anyone preaches in the open-air, or in the House of God with a view of being somebody, with the idea of being thought to be a very admirable, zealous Brother or Sister, then let this word come into your ears—“Walk humbly with your God.” There is a word which Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which we need to have said to ourselves sometimes— “Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.” You young men of the College, do not always be hunting up big places. Be willing to go to small places to preach the Gospel to poor people. Never mind if the Lord sends you right down to the lowest slum—go and let your aim always be this—“I do not desire for myself anything great except the greatest thing of all, that I may glorify God!” “Walk humbly with your God.” You are the kind of man who will be promoted in due time if you are willing to go down. In the true Church of Christ, the way to the top is downstairs! Sink yourself into the highest place. I say not this that even in sinking you may think of the rising—think only of your Lord’s glory. “Walk humbly with your God.”

Walk humbly with God, also, in studying His Word, and in believing His Truth. We have a number of men, nowadays, who are critics of the Bible. The Bible stands bound at their bar, no, worse than that, it lies on their table to be dissected and they have no feeling of decency towards it. They will cut out its very heart. They will rend asunder its most tender parts, even the precious Song of Solomon, or the Beloved Apostle’s Gospel, or the Book of Revelation is not sacred in their eyes. They shrink from nothing— their scalpel, their knife—cuts through everything. They are the judges of what the Bible ought to be and it is deposed from its throne. God save us from that evil spirit! I desire to always sit at the feet of God in the Scriptures. I do not believe that, from one cover to the other, there is any mistake in it of any sort whatever, either upon natural or physical science, or upon history or anything whatever! I am prepared to believe whatever it says and to take it, believing it to be the Word of God, for if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. It may be to the man who is so wise that he can pick out the true from the false, but I am such a fool that I could not do that. If I do not have a Guide, here, that is Infallible, I would as soon guide myself, for I shall have to do so, after all. I shall have to be correcting the blunders of my guide, perpetually—but I am not qualified to do that and so I am worse off than if I had not any guide at all.

Sit down, Reason, and let Faith rise up! If the Lord has said it, let God be true and every man a liar! If science contradicts Scripture, so much the worse for science—the Scripture is true, whatever the theories of men may be. “Ah,” you say, “you are an old-fashioned fogey.” Yes, I am. I will not disclaim any compliment which you choose to pass upon me and I will stand or fall by this blessed Book! This was the mighty weapon of the Reformation—it smote the Papacy—and I shall not throw it down, whoever does. Stand still, my Brother, and listen to the voice of the Lord, and “walk humbly with your God” as to His Truth.

Walk humbly with God, next, as to mercies received. You were ill a short while ago and now you are getting well. Do not let pride come in because you feel that you can lift so many pounds. You are getting on in business. You wear a much better coat than you used to come here in, but do not begin to think yourself a mighty fine gentleman! Now you get into very good society, you say, but do not be ashamed to come to the Prayer Meeting along with the Lord’s poor—and to sit next to one who has not had a new coat for many a day. “Walk humbly with your God,” or else it may be that He will take you down a notch or two and bring you back to your old poverty—and then what will you say to yourself for your folly?

Next, walk humbly with God under great trials. When you are brought very low, do not kick against the pricks. When wave after wave comes, do not begin to complain. That is pride—murmur not, but bow low. Say, “Lord, if You strike me, I deserve more than You lay upon me. You have not dealt with me according to my sin. I accept the chastisement.” Let not the rebellious spirit rise when a child is taken away, or when the wife is taken from your bosom, or the husband from the head of the house. Oh, no—say, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.”

And next, walk humbly with God in your devotions, as between yourself and God in your chamber. Do you read? Read humbly. Do you pray? Pray humbly. Do you sing? Sing joyfully, but sing humbly. Take care, when your God and yourself are together, and no one else—that when you show Him your humble heart with deep humility—that it is no more humble than it is.

And then, next, walk humbly as between yourself and your brethren. Ask not to be head choir master. Desire not to be the principal man in the Church. Be lowly. The best man in the Church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on—the Brother who does not mind what happens to him at all so long as God is glorified. I have heard Brothers say, “Well, but you must stand up for your dignity.” I lost mine a long time ago and I never thought it was worth while to look for it! As to the dignity of the pastor, the dignity of the minister, if we have no dignity of character, the other is a piece of rag. We must try to earn our position in the Church of God by being willing to take the lowest place—and if we will do so, our Brethren will take care that, before long, they will say to us, “Go up higher.” In your dealings with weak Christians, with feeble Christians, do not always scold. Remember that if you are strong, now, you may very soon be as weak as your Brethren are.

And in dealing with sinners, “walk humbly with your God.” Do not stand a long way off, as if you loved them so much that distance lent enchantment to the view! Do you not think that, sometimes, we deal with sinners as if we would like to pluck them from the burning if there were a pair of tongs handy, but we do not care to do it if our own dainty fingers would be smutted by the brands? Ah, Beloved, we must come down from all lofty places and feel a deep and tender pity towards the lost, and so walk humbly with God!

Now, I have not time to go through all this subject as to your circumstances. If you are poor, if you are obscure, do not be pining after a higher place—“walk humbly with your God.” Take what He gives you. In looking back, rejoice in all His mercy and walk humbly at the recollection of all your stumbling. In looking forward, anticipate the future with delight, but do not be proudly imagining how great you will yet be made. “Walk humbly with your God.” In all your thoughts of holy things, be humble. Thoughts of God should lay you low. Thoughts of Christ should bring you to His feet. Thoughts of the Holy Spirit should make you grieve for having vexed Him. Thoughts of every Covenant blessing should make you wonder that such privileges ever came to you. Thoughts of Heaven should make you marvel that you should ever be found among the seraphim. Thoughts of Hell should make you humble—

*“For were it not for Grace Divine,  
That fate so dreadful had been mine.”*  
Oh, Brothers and Sisters, may the Lord help us to walk humbly with

God! This will keep us right. True humility is thinking rightly of yourself, not meanly. When you have found out what you really are, you will be humble, for you are nothing to boast of. To be humble will make you safe. To be humble will make you happy. To be humble will make music in your heart when you go to bed. To be humble, here, will make you wake up in the likeness of your Master, by-and-by. The Lord bless this word, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**MICAH 6.**

Verse 1. Hear you now what the LORD says. And yet some doubt the Infallible Inspiration of Scripture! I would commence every reading of the Scripture with such a word of admonition as this—“Hear you now what the Lord says.” That is what the Prophet said, but God spoke by the Prophet—“Hear you now what the Lord says.”

1. Arise, contend you before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. As men were hardened and turned away their ears, the Prophet was told to speak to the mountains, those mountains which had been disfigured with the shrines of idols, with altars on every high hill, or, perhaps, those higher hills that were never cultivated and that remained untouched by the defiling hands of men. God makes an appeal to these ancient things.

2. Hear you, O mountains, the LORD’S controversy, and you strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD has a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel. It was amazing condescension on God’s part that He should deign to come as a Defendant before the august court of the mountains and in the presence of the deep foundations of the earth. It is a noble conception—in poetry, most excellent—in grandeur, worthy of God. He made His appeal to the ancient hills to hear His pleading while He condescended to argue and ask His people why they had rejected their God and turned aside to idols. Then He pleaded with Israel.

3. O My people, what have I done unto you? “What but good, what but mercy, have I done unto you?”  
3. And wherein have I wearied you? Testify against Me. He asks them to give any reason whatever why they had turned away from Him. Beloved Friends, have any of you, who are the people of God, grown cold in your love to Him? Are you neglecting the service of the Most High? Are you beginning to trust in an arm of flesh? Are you seeking your pleasures in the world? Have you lost the love of your espousal, your first love to your Blessed Lord? Then hear Him plead with you! Be not as Israel was, but let the Lord speak to you rather than to the hills—“What have I done unto you? And wherein have I wearied you? Testify against Me.” O Lord, we have nothing to testify against You! We have very much to testify for You and we blush to think that we have not done so more often. Oh, that we had felt more love to You and had borne a bolder and more consistent testimony to Your love, Your Grace, Your faithfulness!  
4. For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of servants; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. God constantly refers to Israel’s coming out of Egypt—on every great occasion He begins, “I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” And to His people, the Lord still says, “I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery.” Is it not so? Do we not still delight in His redeeming work, in the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb and in the high hand and outstretched arm with which the Lord delivered us from the bondage of our sin? Remember that you, also, were a slave! Forget not who bought you and with what price! Remember who delivered you and led you out with mighty power! Remember this and let your cold love burn, again, and let your indifference turn to enthusiasm! O Lord, revive Your people! The Lord further says to His people, “I sent before you Moses (the Lawgiver), Aaron (the priest) and Miriam (the prophetess).” One to teach you, another to plead for you and to sacrifice for you, and the third to sing for you, to sing your song of gladness at the Red Sea. God has given to His people many ministries in many forms—and they are all concentrated in His Son who is everything to us. Oh, by the greatness of His gifts to us, let us come back to our former love to Him and to something more than that!  
5. O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that you may know the righteousness of the LORD. Balak endeavored to get Balaam to curse the people of God, but they could not be overcome by human power. He sought to destroy them by superhuman agency, but Balaam’s curses turned to blessings. God would not permit the false prophet to curse Israel and He has in our case turned the curse of the great adversary into a blessing. He has delivered us and our trials have strengthened us and taught us more of God. Will we not remember this? Shittim was the last encampment on the far side of Jordan. Gilgal was the first in the Promised Land—therefore they are united, here, with God’s righteousnesses to His people, for the word is in the plural. It is a remarkable idiom—“That you may know the righteousnesses of the Lord.” He is always righteous, in every way, towards everything and under every aspect! I wish we knew this, for sometimes we begin to think that He deals harshly with us. When we are severely tried, we begin to doubt the righteousness of the Lord. Remember all that He has done to you from the first day to the last, “that you may know the righteousness of the Lord.” Now the plaintiff takes up the case, but he, too, turns defendant, and asks what he can do to bring about a reconciliation.  
6, 7. Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? The people will give God everything but what He wants. They begin, you see, by saying that they will bring burnt offerings—they are ready to do that. The axe shall fall upon the head of numberless young bullocks, such as God demanded under the Law. The people are ready enough for that sacrifice—and as for rams, they will shed their blood by thousands! If oil is needed for the meat offering, rivers of it shall flow! When they have offered what God would have, they offer what He would not have—what God abhorred and loathed—for they offered to give their first-born for their transgressions! They insulted Jehovah with the sacrifices of Moloch, with human slaughter, offering their children to obtain atonement for their sins! They were willing to go, even, to that length, and to do anything but what God wants. And men will still give to God anything but what He asks for, majestic edifices, gorgeous services, ecstatic music, gold and silver—anything but what the Lord demands! Here is God’s answer:  
8. He has showed you, O man, what is good and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? It was a spiritual worship that the Lord required—not externals, not outward gifts—but the HEART! If you will bring an offering, bring yourself—there is no other gift that the Lord so much desires. The Prophet mentions three things that the Lord required of His people—“To do justly”—here are the equities of life. “To love mercy”—here are the kindnesses of life which are to be rendered cheerfully. The Prophet does not say, “to do mercy,” but to “love” it, to take a delight in it, to find great pleasure in the forgiveness of injuries, in the helping of the poor, in the cheering of the sick, in the teaching of the ignorant, in the winning back of sinners to the ways of God. “And to walk humbly with your God.” These are the things which please Him. And when we are in Christ and He becomes our righteousness, these are the sacrifices with which God is wellpleased. They make an offering of a sweet smell, a holy incense which we may present before Him. Talk no more of your outward ordinances, your will-worship with abundance of music, or human eloquence and learning and what-not. These things do not delight the Lord—no offering is acceptable unless the outward conduct shows that the heart is right with Him.  
9. The LORD’S voice cries unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see Your name: hear you the rod, and who has appointed it. God’s voice to His people is often uttered by means of their affliction—“Hear you the rod.” He wishes us to understand that judgments and calamities are His voice crying to the city. Oh, that we were men of wisdom, that we would hear what God has to say! Alas, Israel did not hear and Judah would not listen, even, to God’s own voice!  
10. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Here He comes to practical details. In Micah’s day, men had grown rich by oppression, by a lack of justice—they had wronged their fellow men—and God asked them whether they expected to be pleasing to Him when their houses were full of treasure which they had virtually stolen by giving scant measure and short weight. God condescends even to point out these minute particulars of moral conduct and so should His servants. It is not for us, His ministers, to be soaring into the clouds, to astonish you with the grandeur of our thoughts and words—but to come to your shops, to look at your bushelmeasures and your pecks, your yardsticks and your weights!  
11, 12. Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouths. They were, I suppose, very much what Orientals still are. You cannot trade with them without having need of more than two eyes. Their price has to be beaten down and their quantities must be counted. God would not have His people like this. He says nothing about the Moabites or the Babylonians doing this, but for His people to do it was very grievous to Him.  
13. Therefore also will I make you sick in smiting you, in making you desolate because of your sins. They lied and they cheated—so God would give them a sorry tongue, betokening their ill health. He would make their present distress to get worse and worse till they should be sick through their wounds.  
14. You shall eat, but not be satisfied. The satisfaction that comes to us through eating is of His mercy and when He wills, He can say, “You shall eat, but not be satisfied.”  
14. And your casting down shall be in the midst of you. “You shall feel an inward sinking—even when you have eaten, you shall be faint—as a man who has eaten nothing.”  
14. And you shall take hold, but shall not deliver; and that which you deliver will I give up to the sword. So that in every project they would be disappointed—in every design they would be frustrated because God would be against them.  
15. You shall sow, but you shall not reap; you shall tread the olives, but you shall not anoint you with oil; and sweet wine, but shall not drink wine. God can let men have every form of outward prosperity and yet make nothing of it. I fear that some, perhaps some present, have every outward religious blessing yet nothing comes of it. You hear sermons, you come to meetings, you tread the olives, but you are not anointed with the oil. The grapes are in the wine vat, but you drink not the wine. God save us from that sad condition!  
16. For the statutes of Omri are kept. They would not keep the statutes of God, but they kept the foul statutes of Omri, which appear to have been especially objectionable to God.  
16. And all the works of the house of Ahab, and you walk in their counsels. He was an arch rebel against God. Remember his murder of Naboth to get his vineyard? And these people followed his evil example.  
16. That I should make you a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people. Very hard was it to bear that reproach when there would be none of the comforts of the Spirit to go with it. There are some professors who bear the reproach of Christ, but will never share His crown—that is a fearful state of things. Gladly enough would we take up that reproach that we may be truly His. But if we profess to be God’s people and act inconsistently, we shall bear all the reproach, but have nothing to sustain us under it. O Lord, in Your mercy, save us from this!

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FAST-DAY SERVICE

NOS. 154, 155

**HELD AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE, SYDENHAM, ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.**

Being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a Solemn Fast, Humiliation and Prayer before Almighty God—in order to obtain Pardon of our Sins and for imploring His Blessing and Assistance on our Arms for the Restoration of Tranquility in India.

**BRIEF INVOCATION**  
O GOD, the God of Heaven and of earth, we do this day pay You reverence and meekly bow our heads in adoration before Your awful Throne. We are the creatures of Your hand. You have made us and not we ourselves. It is but just and right that we should pay You our adoration. O God, we are met together in a vast congregation for a purpose which demands all the power of piety and all the strength of prayer. Send down Your Spirit upon Your servant, that he, while trembling in weakness, may be made strong to preach Your Word, to lead forth this people in holy prayer and to help them in that humiliation for which this day is set apart.

Come, O God, we beseech You. We bow our hearts before You. Instead of sackcloth and ashes give us true repentance and hearts meekly reverent. Instead of the outward guise, to which some pay their only homage, give us the inward spirit. And may we really pray, really humble ourselves and really tremble before the Most High God. Sanctify this service. Make it useful unto us and honorable to Yourself. And O You dread Supreme, unto You shall be the glory and the honor, world without end. Amen.

Let us now praise God by singing the first Hymn. I shall read it through and then, perhaps, you will be kind enough to sing it through— *“BEFORE Jehovah’s awful throne,  
You nations bow with sacred joy.  
Know that the Lord is God alone  
He can create and He destroy.  
His sovereign power, without our aid,  
Made us of clay and formed us men!  
And when like wandering sheep, we strayed, He brought us to His fold again.  
We are His people, we His care,  
Our souls and all our mortal frame.*

**What lasting honors shall we bear, Almighty Maker to Your name?  
We’ll crowd Your gates with thankful songs, High as the Heavens our voices raise. And earth with her ten thousand tongues, Shall fill Your courts with sounding praise. Wide as the world is Your command, Vast as eternity Your love,  
Firm as a rock Your Truth must stand, When rolling years shall cease to move.”**

**EXPOSITION  
DANIEL 9:1-19**

1. “In the first year of Darius the Son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;  
2. “In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, whereof the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the Prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.  
3. “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.  
4. “And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the Covenant and mercy to them that love Him and to them that keep His Commandments,;  
5. “We have sinned and have committed iniquity and have done wickedly and have rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and from Your judgments.  
6. “Neither have we hearkened unto Your servants the Prophets, which spoke Your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers and to all the people of the land.  
7. “O Lord, righteousness belongs unto You but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day. To the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and unto all Israel, that are near and that are far off, through all the countries where You have driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against You.  
8. “O Lord, to us belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes and to our fathers, because we have sinned against You.  
9. “To the Lord OUR God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.”  
There is the first bright star which shines in the midst of the darkness of our sins. God is merciful. He is just—as just as if He were not merciful. He is merciful—as merciful as if He were not just and in very deed more merciful than if He were too lenient. My Brethren, we should rejoice that we have not this day to address the gods of the heathens. You have not today to bow down before the thundering Jove. You need not come before implacable deities who delight in the blood of their creatures, or rather, of the creatures whom it is pretended that they have made.  
Our God delights in mercy and in the deliverance of Britain from its ills. God will be as much pleased as Britain. Yes, when Britain shall have forgotten it and only the page of history shall record His mercies, God will still remember what He did for us in this day of our straits and our difficulties. As to the hope that He will help us it is a certainty. There is no fear that when we unite in prayer God will refuse to hear. It is as sure as that there is a God, that God will hear us. And if we ask Him aright, the day shall come when the world shall see what Britain’s God has done and how He has heard her cry and answered the voice of her supplications.  
10. “Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the Prophets.  
11. “Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your Law, even by departing, that they might not obey Your voice. Therefore the curse is poured upon us and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.  
12. “And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil—for under this whole Heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem.  
13. “As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us— yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your Truth.  
14. “Therefore has the Lord watched upon the evil and brought it upon us—for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He does—for we obeyed not His voice.  
15. “And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have gotten You renown, as at this day. We have sinned, we have done wickedly.” The Prophet in his prayer pleads what God has done for them as the reason why He should make bare His arm. He tells how God delivered Israel out of Egypt. And he therefore prays that God would deliver them from their present trouble. And, my Brethren, not Israel itself could boast a nobler history than we, measuring it by God’s bounties. We have not yet forgotten an armada scattered before the breath of Heaven, scattered upon the angry deep as a trophy of what God can do to protect His favored Isle.  
We have not yet forgotten a fifth of November, wherein God discovered many plots that were formed against our religion and our commonwealth. We have not yet lost the old men, whose tales of even the victories in war are still a frequent story. We remember how God swept before our armies the man who thought to make the world his dominion, who designed to cast his shoe over Britain and make it a dependency of his kingdom. God worked for us. He worked with us. And He will continue to do so. He has not left His people and He will not leave us but He will be with us even to the end. Cradle of liberty! Refuge of distress! Storms may rage around you but not upon you, nor shall all the wrath and fury of men destroy you—for God has pitched His tabernacle in your midst and His saints are the salt in the midst of you.  
16. “O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I beseech You, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain—because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are become a reproach to all that are about us.  
17. “Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Your servant and his supplications and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake.  
18. “O my God, incline Your ear and hear. Open Your eyes and behold our desolations and the city which is called by Your name—for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteousnesses but for Your great mercies.  
19. “O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O lord, hearken and do. Defer not, for Your own sake, O my God—for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”  
And now for a few moments let us endeavor to pray——“OUR Father, which are in Heaven,” we will be brief but we will be earnest if You will help us. We have a case to spread before You this day. We will tell our story and we will pray that You would forgive the weakness of the words in which it shall be delivered and hear us, for Jesus’ sake.  
O Father, You have smitten this our land, not in itself but in one of its dependencies. You have allowed a mutinous spirit to break out in our armies and You have suffered men who know You not, who fear neither God nor man, to do deeds for which earth may well blush and for which we, as men, desire to cover our faces before You. O Lord God, You could not bear the sin of Sodom. We are sure You can not endure the sin which has been committed in India. You did rain Hell out of Heaven upon the cities of the plain. The cities of India are not less vile than they, for they have committed lust and cruelty and have much sinned against the Lord. Remember this, O God of Heaven.  
But, O Lord our God, we are not here to be the accusers of our fellow man. We are here to pray that You would remove the scourge which this great wickedness has brought upon us. Look down from Heaven, O God and behold this day the slaughtered thousands of our countrymen. Behold the wives, the daughters of Britain, violated, defiled! Behold her sons, cut in pieces and tormented in a manner which earth has not beheld before. O God, free us, we beseech You, from this awful scourge! Give strength to our soldiers to execute upon the criminals the sentence which justice dictates. And then, by Your strong arm and by Your terrible might, we ask You to prevent a repetition of so fearful an outrage. We pray You, remember this day the widow and the fatherless children. Think You of those who are this day distressed even to the uttermost. Guide the hearts of this great multitude that they may liberally give and this day bestow of their substance to their poor destitute Brethren. Remember especially our soldiers, now fighting in that land. God, shield them! Be a cover from the heat! Will You be pleased to mitigate all the rigors of the climate for them? Lead them on to battle. Cheer their hearts—bid them remember that they are not warriors merely but executioners.  
And may they go with steady tramp to the battle, believing that God wills it that they should utterly destroy the enemy, who have not only defied Britain but thus defiled themselves among men. But, O Lord, it is ours this day to humble ourselves before You. We are a sinful nation. We confess the sins of our governors and our own particular iniquities. For all our rebellions and transgressions, O God have mercy upon us! We plead the blood of Jesus. Help everyone of us to repent of sin, to fly to Christ for refuge and grant that each one of us may thus hide ourselves in the Rock, till the calamity is over, knowing that God will not desert them that put their trust in Jesus.  
Your servant is overwhelmed this day. His heart is melted like wax in Your midst. He knows not how to pray. Yet Lord if You can hear a groaning heart which cannot utter itself in words, hear his strong impassioned cry, in which the people join. Lord save us! Lord arise and bless us. And let the might of Your arm and the majesty of Your strength be now revealed in the midst of this land and throughout those countries which are in our dominion. God save the Queen! A thousand blessings on her much-loved head! God preserve our country!  
May every movement that promotes liberty and progress be accelerated and may everything be done in our midst which can shield us from the discontent of the masses and can protect the masses from the oppression of the few. Bless England, O our God. “Shine, mighty God, on Your Britain.” And make her still glorious Britain, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” Lord accept our confessions. Hear our prayers and answer us by Your Holy Spirit! Help Your servant to preach to us. And all the glory shall be unto You, O Father, to You, O Son and You, O Holy Spirit. World without end. Amen and Amen.  
Let us now sing the second hymn. It is made up of verses selected from different Psalms, which I thought to be appropriate to the occasion— *“OUR God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.  
Under the shadow of Your Throne,  
Your saints have dwelt secure  
Sufficient is Your arm alone,  
And our defense is sure.  
Our foes insult us but our hope  
In Your compassion lies  
This thought shall bear our spirits up,  
That God will not despise.  
In vain the sons of Satan boast  
Of armies in array  
When God has first despised their host,  
They fall an easy prey.  
Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come  
Be You our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.”*  
Hoping to receive help from God’s Holy Spirit, I shall now proceed to address you from a part of the 9th verse of the 6th chapter of Micah——

SERMON

“Hear you the rod and who has appointed it.” Micah 6:9

THIS world is not the place of punishment for sin. Not the place. It may sometimes be a place but not usually. It is very customary among religious people to talk of every accident which happens to men in the indulgence of sin, as if it were a judgment. The upsetting of a boat upon a river on a Sunday is assuredly understood to be a judgment for the sin of Sabbath-breaking. In the accidental fall of a house, in which persons were engaged in any unlawful occupation, the inference is at once drawn that the house fell because they were wicked.

Now, however some religionists may hope to impress the people by such childish stories as those, I, for one, forswear them all. I believe what my Master says is true when He declared, concerning the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, that they were not sinners above all the sinners that were upon the face of the earth. They were sinners. There is no doubt about it. But the falling of the wall was not occasioned by their sin, nor was their premature death the consequence of their excessive wickedness.

Let me, however, guard this declaration, for there are many who carry this doctrine to an extreme. Because God does not usually visit each particular offense in this life upon the transgressor, men are apt to deny altogether the doctrine of judgments. But here they are mistaken. I feel persuaded that there are such things as national judgments, national chastisements for national sins—great blows from the rod of God—which every wise man must acknowledge to be either a punishment for sin committed, or a monition to warn us to a sense of the consequences of sins—leading us by God’s grace to humble ourselves and repent of our sin.

O, my Friends, what a rod is that which has just fallen upon our country! My poor words will fall infinitely short of the fearful tale of misery and woe which must be told before you can know how smartly God has smitten and how sternly He has chided us. We have today to mourn over revolted subjects, for today a part of our fellow-countrymen are in open arms against our government. That, of itself, were a heavy blow. Happily the government of this land is so constituted that we know little of revolutions except by name.

But the horrors of anarchy, the terrors of a government shaken to its foundations are so great, that should I preach alone upon that subject, you might hear the rod and cry aloud beneath its strokes. But this is as but the letting forth of water. A flood succeeds. The men that have revolted were our subjects and I challenge all the world to deny what I am going to say—they were our subjects rightly. Whatever the inhabitants of India might be (and undoubtedly that people have grave faults to find with us), the Sepoys had voluntarily given themselves up to our dominion.

They had themselves taken oaths of fealty to Her Majesty and their officers and they have no cause to murmur if they are made to endure the sentence uttered by a government of which they were the sworn and willing supporters. They were always petted, always rocked upon the knee of favoritism. Their revolt is not the revolt of a nation. If India had revolted, history might perhaps have taught us that she had patriots in her midst who were delivering her from a tyrannical nation. But in the present case it is only men who are impelled by a lust and ambition for an empire who have risen against us. And, ah, my Friends, what crimes have they committed!

Not today shall I detail their acts of debauchery, bloodshed and worse than bestiality—this tongue will not venture to utter what they have dared to do. You would rise from your seats and hiss me from the pulpit which I now occupy if I should but dare to hint at the crimes which have been

done by them—not in secret but in the very streets of their cities! And, again, equally as painful, we have now rebels to be executed. I look upon every gallows as a fearful chastisement. I regard every gibbet as being a dreadful visitation upon our land. And I think that whenever the arm of the ruler is outstretched for the punishment of death it must always be looked upon by the country as a serious affliction to it.

Just as the father thinks it a high affliction to chastise his child, so should a country ever esteem it to be a visitation when they have to punish, especially with the punishment of death. Now, these men must be punished. Both Heaven and earth demand it. I am no soldier, I love not war. I do not believe that this is a war at all, in the proper sense of the term. We are not fighting with enemies. Our troops are going forth against revolted subjects—against men who, by their crimes, by their murder and by other unmentionable sins, have incurred the punishment of death.

And as the arrest of a murderer by authority of the Law is not war, so the arrest of Indian Sepoys and their utter destruction is not war—it is what earth demands and what I believe God sanctions. But it is a horrible necessity. It is a dreadful thing to think of taking away the lives of our fellow subjects. We must look upon it as being an affliction—and, today, among the other evils that we bemoan, we must bemoan this—that the sword must be taken out of its sheath to cut off our fellow subjects by their thousands.

The rod, the rod, THE ROD has indeed fallen heavily! No mortal tongue can tell the anguish it has caused, nor perhaps can we yet dream where its ill effects shall end. Remember, however, the words of my text. It is a rod. But it is an appointed rod. Every deed that has been done against us has been appointed by God. God is most fully to be cleared from the sin of it but it is undoubtedly true that He has overruled and permitted it. The rod was ordained of God. I myself see God everywhere. I believe that “the foreknown station of a rush by the river is as fixed as the station of a king and the chaff from the hand of the winnower as steered as the stars in their courses.”

And I see God in this war. The wheels of Providence may revolve in a mysterious manner but I am certain that wisdom is the axle upon which they revolve—so that at last it shall be seen that God, who ordained the rod—only permitted it that greater good might follow and that His name might be exalted through the earth. The sin is man’s own deed, but the affliction that we suffer through it, God has ordained. Let us bow before it and let us now hearken to the exhortation of the text—“Hear you the rod and Him that has appointed it.”

I shall have your attention while as briefly as I can I endeavor to bid you hear this rod of God.  
First, let me remark it would have been as well if we had heard this rod BEFORE IT FELL upon us. God’s rod by the wise man may be heard before it smites. He that understands God’s moral government knows that sin carries punishment in its heart. A wise man believing Revelation, could have prophesied that God would visit us. The sins of the government of India have been black and deep. He who has heard the shrieks of tormented natives, who has heard the well-provoked cursing of dethroned princes might have prophesied that it would not be long before God would unsheathe His sword to avenge the oppressed.  
With regard to India itself, I am no apologist for our dominion there. With regard to the Sepoys, they are our voluntary subjects—they deserve the utmost rigor of the Law. From their own oath they were our subjects. And if they have revolted let them suffer the punishment of their treason. But had it been the Indian nation that had revolted, I would have prayed God that they might have been brought under British rule again for the sake of civilization. But I would not have preached a crusade against them, lest haply we should have been smiting patriots who were but delivering an oppressed country.  
My Brethren, I say it would have been as well if the rod had been heard before it fell. If in the midst of sin the Indian government had paused and endeavored to undo the evil, it would have been well for them—if instead of following the policy of creed they had followed the policy of right, they might have looked for Divine support. They never ought to have tolerated the religion of the Hindus at all. I believe myself (for it in no way infringes the Law of right) entitled to my religion. But if my religion consisted in bestiality, infanticide and murder, I should have no right to my religion, unless I were prepared to be hanged for it.  
Now, the religion of the Hindus is neither more nor less than a mass of the rankest filth that ever imagination could have conceived. The gods they worship are not entitled to the least atom of respect. Had they given a decent character to their demons we might have tolerated their idolatry. But when their worship necessitates everything that is evil, not religion but morality must put it down. I do not believe that in this land there ever ought to have been any toleration for the Agapemone, a place of lust and abomination, where sin is committed before which God’s sun might blush.  
Any religion that does not infringe upon morality is beyond the force of legislature. But when once religious teachers teach immorality and when once a religion compels men to sin, down with it! No toleration to it. It is impossible that there should be any quarter strewn to vice, even though embellished with the name of religion. If it is any man’s religion to blow my brains out, I shall not tolerate it. If it is any man’s religion to meet me as the thugs do and murder me, I shall not tolerate his Thugism. If it is a man’s religion to commit bestial acts in public, I for one would touch his conscience, but believing that he has none, I would touch him somewhere else.  
Such a religion as the religion of the Hindu, the Indian Government were bound, as in the sight of God, to put down with all the strength of their hand. But they have allowed it, in some cases they have even aided and abetted their filthy deeds. And now God visits them. And, I repeat, it would have been well if they had heard the rod before it fell. They might have perhaps avoided all this evil and certainly they would have avoided the remorse which some of them must feel in having thus brought it upon themselves.  
But it has fallen. The rod has smitten. The scourge has plowed deep furrows upon India’s back. What then? “Hear you the rod” that has fallen. Now, it is an opinion published by authority—and who am I, that I should dispute the great authorities of England?—that one part of the reason for this dreadful visitation is the sin of the people of England themselves. We are exhorted this day to humble ourselves for sin. Granting that as being a truth—and mark, I am not the originator of it. It is in the Proclamation—who am I, that I should dispute such a high authority as that?  
The Proclamation states it is our sin that has brought this on us. So they say—what, then, are our sins? Now, I will be honest with you—as honest as I can and I will try and tell you. What are the most glaring sins for which—if it is true that God is now punishing us—what are the most likely sins to have brought this visitation upon us?  
First, there are sins in the community that never ought to have been allowed. O Britain, weep for deeds which your governors have not yet strength of mind to stop. We have long been allowing the infamous nuisances of Holywell Street. Bless God they are pretty well done for! But now what do I see every night? If I return from preaching in the country— in the Haymarket and in Regent Street, what stares me before my eyes? If there is a crime for which God will visit England, it is the sin of allowing infamy to walk before our eyes thus publicly.  
I do not know whose fault it is—some say it is the fault of the police—it is somebody’s fault—that I do know and against that somebody I do now most solemnly protest. It is a most fearful thing that those who are honest and moral cannot walk the streets without being insulted by sin in the robes of the harlot. My voice perhaps this day may reach some who have power to repeat this protest powerfully and successfully. I see before me gentlemen who are the representatives of the press. I believe they will do their duty in that matter. And if they will sting as some of them can sting, right sharply, they perhaps may be able to sting a little virtue into some of our governors and that will be a good thing.  
But I do protest that this has been one of the causes why God has visited us, if indeed our sins have brought this evil upon us, as I verily believe. Look you, too, men and Brethren, at some of those amusements of yours, in which you are likely to indulge. God forbid I should deny you those of your amusements which are innocent but I must maintain that they should be always moral. When we know that lords and ladies of the land have sat in playhouses and listened to plays that were a long way from decent, it is time that some voice should be lifted up against them. These are glaring sins. I am not raking now for private faults. We have had these things before our eyes and there have been some that have dared to protest against them long ago. I say, these sins of the community in part have brought the rod upon us.  
But, my Friends, I am inclined to think that our class sins are the most grievous. Behold this day the sins of the rich. How are the poor oppressed! How are the needy downtrodden! In many a place the average wage of men is far below their value to their masters. In this age there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping stones to wealth. He builds a factory as he would make a cauldron. He is about to make a brew for his own wealth. “Pitch him in.” He is only a poor clerk, he can live on a hundred a year. Put him in!  
There is a poor time-keeper—he has a large family. It does not matter. A man can be had for less—in with him! Here are the tens, the hundreds and the thousands that must do the work. Put them in. Heap the fire, boil the cauldron, stir them up. Never mind their cries. The cry of the laborers kept back may go up to Heaven—it does not matter, the millions in gold are safe. The law of supply and demand is with us, who is he that would interfere? Who shall dare to prevent the grinding of the faces of the poor?  
Cotton lords and great masters ought to have power to do what they like with the people—ought they not? Ah, but you great men of the earth, there is a God and that God has said He executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. And yet the seamstress in her garret and yet the tailor in his den and yet the artisan in his crowded factory and yet the servants who earn your wealth, who have to groan under your oppression, shall get the ear of God and He will visit you. “Hear you the rod.” It is for this the rod falls on you.  
Mark, again, the sins of merchants. Was there ever an age when the merchants of England had more fallen from their integrity? The mass of them, I believe, are honest to the core. But I do not know who among them are so. We can trust none in these times. You heap up your companies and you delude your myriads. You gather the money of fools. You scatter it to the winds of Heaven and when the poor call upon you, you tell them it is gone—but where? O, England, you were once true, upright, honest! Men could not rightly call you, then, “Perfidious Albion.”  
But now, O Britain, alas, for you! Unless you do recover yourself, who can trust you? God will visit the nation for this and it shall be seen that this alone is one of the things which God would have us hear, when we hear the rod. There are many of you that are poor. I saw you smile when I spoke to the rich. I will have at you also. If we are to humble ourselves this day as a nation, you have cause also to be humbled. Ah, my God, what multitudes there are of men who deserve but little of their employers, for they are eye-servers, men-pleasers and do not with singleness of heart serve the Lord.  
Were men better workmen, their masters would be better. There are hundreds of you that are here today who are the best hands in all the world to prop up walls, when you ought to be busy at your own work— who, when your time is bought and paid for, steal it for something else. And how many there are in what are called the lower ranks—and God forgive the man that invented that word, for we are none of us lower than the other before the Judge of all the earth—how many are there that do not know what it is to look up to God and say, “Though He has made me a servant, I will discharge my duty and I will serve my master and serve my God with all my might.”  
Many are the sins of the poor. Humble yourselves with the rich. Bow your heads and weep for your iniquities. For these things God does visit us and you should hear the rod. It is impossible for me today to enter into all the sins of illiberality, of deceit, of bigotry, of lasciviousness, of carnality, of pride, of covetousness and of laziness which infest this land. I have tried to indicate some of the chief and I pray God humble us for all for them.  
And now, “Hear you the rod.” O Church of God, the rod has fallen and the Church ought to hear it. I am afraid that it is the Church that has been the greatest sinner. Do I mean by “the Church” that established by Law? No, I mean the Christian Church as a body. We, I believe, have been remiss in our duty. For many and many a year pulpits never condescended to men of low estate. Our ministers were great and haughty. They understood the polish of rhetoric, they had all the grandeur of logic. To the people they were blind guides and dumb dogs—for the people knew not what they said—neither did they regard them.  
The churches themselves slumbered. They wrapped themselves in a shroud of orthodoxy and they slept right on. And while Satan was devouring the world and taking his prey, the Church sat still and said, “Who is my neighbor?” and did not arouse herself to serve her God. I do hope that we have already seen the beginning of a revival. The last year has seen more preaching than any year since the days of the Apostles. We are stirring in ragged schools and in various efforts for doing good. But still the Church is only half awake. I fear she still slumbers. O Church of God! Awake! Awake! Awake! for verily the rod has fallen for your sake. “Hear you the rod and Him that has appointed it.”  
We have had many rods, Friends. We have had many great afflictions and we did bear them for a time. And now I close my sermon by saying, “Hear you the rod, when the rod SHALL AGAIN BE STILL.” We trust that in a little while our soldiers will carve us out peace and victory with their triumphant swords. We trust that perhaps this very day a great fight is being fought and a great victory being won. I seem to hear today the shout of the triumphant warrior. I think I hear the trump of victory even now. The hour of prayer is often the hour of deliverance.  
At any rate, we hope that before long this black cloud will be overblown and then I fear you will all forget it. You will pray today—will you pray when victory comes? You will buy some fireworks, will you not? That is how you will thank God! You had a victory over a potent enemy and peace was established—your votive offerings consisted of rockets and illuminations—grand offerings to the Dread Supreme! If a heathen were here he would say, “Their God is the God of humiliation, not the God of victory—their God is a God of trouble, certainly not the God of blessings, for they forget Him when they receive deliverance.”  
I remember, when last time the cholera swept through your streets— you hurried to your Churches and you prayed. Terror sat upon your countenances and many of you cried aloud for deliverance. It came. What did you do? Alas, for your piety! It was as the morning cloud and as the early dew—it passed away. It will be so again. It is but as the lashing of the water. It is smitten but it soon recovers itself and all marks are erased. It is so with this land. I fear it is so with each of us to a degree. How often have you and I been laid upon our beds with cholera, or with fever, or with some other disease which threatened to take us away! We prayed. We sent for the minister. We devoted ourselves to God. We vowed if He would spare us, we would live better.  
Here you are, my Hearer, just what you were before your sickness. You have forgotten your vow. But God has not forgotten it. Your resolutions were filed in Heaven and in the Day of Judgment God shall take them forth and say, “Here is one solemn Covenant broken. Here is another vow forgotten, another resolution made in sickness broken after recovery!” I do think that today will be a most solemn mockery if our humiliation ends today. With some of you it will not even begin today and therefore, it will not end, for it is not begun. But the mass who will pray today—will they pray in a week?  
Not they. They will go their way to heap again the fire wood of their sins upon the pile of vengeance and still stand by and weep, because the fire is burning, the fire which they themselves have kindled. Oh, my Hearers, permit me to charge home to your hearts. And would God that He would make the charge of my language against your consciences as heavy as the charge of British soldiers against the enemy! How many of you have been awakened, convicted of sin, of righteousness and of judgment? How many times have you vowed you would repent? How many times have you declared that you did hear the rod and that you would turn to God?  
And yet you have been liars to the Almighty. You have defrauded the Most High. And while the bill is due it still stands dishonored. Tremble! God may smite you yet. And if today you are despisers of Christ— remember you have no guarantee that you will be in this world another hour. You may before this sun is set stand before your Maker’s bar. What then? What then? What then? To perish forever is no light matter. To be cast into the flames of Hell is no little consideration. “Turn you, turn you, turn you. Why will you die, O house of Israel!”  
Repent! “The times of your ignorance God winked at but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” And remember that when He gives you repentance and faith He has appended the blessing to them. “Jesus Christ of the seed of David” was nailed to a Cross. He died that we might not die and to every Believer Heaven’s gate is open, to every penitent the path to Paradise is free. Sinner! Do you believe? If so, Christ has blotted out your sin. Be happy! Soul! Do you repent? You are safe. God has helped you to repent and inasmuch as He has done it, He has proved that He loves you.  
Oh, if I might but have some souls won to Christ today, what would I give? What is all this great gathering to me? It is an extra labor, that is all. For this I do not labor. God is my witness, I sought you not. Never once have I said a thing to court a smile from any man. When God first sent me to the ministry He bade me fear no man and I have not yet met the man to whom I have feared to tell of God’s Gospel. Nor have I sought to please you, nor have I sought to gather you here. I would preach the Gospel— may God give me some souls as my reward! And if but one poor sinner shall look to Jesus, clap your wings, you angels! Enough is done, for God is honored. I have done my sermon but I want to make an appeal to you to give liberally.  
Lives there a man in England who will this day refuse his help to those of his countrymen who have suffered? No. There does not live such a man—not such a Briton. Is there a miserable miscreant without a heart, who will—when God has given him enough—shut up his heart of compassion against those whose sons and daughters have been murdered and who themselves have escaped as by the skin of their teeth? No, I will not slander you by such a supposition. I cannot think that I have such a monster here. When the box shall pass round, give—give as you can afford. If it be a penny, let the working man give. You that are rich must not give pence, however.  
Many a man has said, “There is my mite.” He was worth a hundred thousand pounds and it was not a mite at all. If he had given a thousand it would only have been a mite to him. Give as you can afford. May God be pleased to grant a liberal spirit.

The following Chorus was then sung—  
*“GLORY, honor, praise and power, Be unto the Lamb forever.  
Jesus Christ is our Redeemer,  
Hallelujah. Amen.”*

After which, the benediction having been pronounced, the service terminated. There were upwards of 24,000 persons present at this service. And the amount collected towards the Indian Relief Fund amounted to nearly £500, of which £25 was given by Miss Nightingale. The Crystal Palace Company contributed £200 in addition—making a total of nearly £725.

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RIPE FRUIT

NO. 945

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 14, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My soul desired the first ripe fruit.”  
Micah 7:1.**

THE nation of Israel had fallen into so sad and backsliding a condition—it was not like a vine covered with fruit, but like a vineyard after the whole vintage has been gathered—there was not to be found a single cluster. Not one righteous man could be found, not one to be trusted or found faithful to God. The whole state had become like a field that has been closely reaped, in which nothing remains but the stubble—like a vineyard that has been completely stripped, in which there remains no vestige of fruit.

The Prophet, speaking in the name of Israel, desired the first ripe fruits, but there were none to be had. The lesson of the text, as it stands, would be that good men are the best fruit of a nation—they make it worth while that the nation should exist. They are the salt which preserves it, they are the fruit which adorns it and blesses it. Pray we then for our country, that God will continually raise up a righteous seed, a faithful band, who, for His name’s sake, shall be a sweet savor unto God, for whose sake He may bless the whole land.

But I mean to take our text out of its connection and use it as the heading of a discourse upon ripeness in Divine Grace. I think we can all use the words of Micah in another sense, when he said, “My soul desired the first ripe fruit.” We would desire not to be merely the green blade, we desire to be the full corn in the ear. We would not merely show forth the blossoms of repentance and the young buds of struggling faith, but we would go on to maturity and bring forth fruit unto perfection, to the honor and praise of Jesus Christ.

This morning, then, I speak about ripeness in Grace, maturity in the Divine life, fruit ready to be gathered—and our first point shall be the marks of this ripeness. The second, the causes that work together to create this ripeness. The third, the desirability of the ripeness. The fourth, the solemnity of the whole subject.

I. First, then, let us speak upon THE MARKS OF RIPENESS IN GRACE. Let us begin with the mark of beauty. There is a great beauty in a fruit tree when it is in bloom. Perhaps there is no more lovely object in all nature than the apple blossom. But this beauty soon fades—one shower of rain, one descent of hail, one puff of the north wind—and very soon the blossoms fall like snow. And if they remain their full time, speedily, indeed, in any case, they must withdraw from view.

Much loveliness adorns youthful piety. The love of his espousals, his first love, his first zeal, all make the newborn Believer comely. Can anything be more delightful than our first graces? Even God Himself delights in the beauty of the blossoming Believer. “I remember you,” says He, “the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” Autumn has a more sober aspect, but still it rivals the glory of spring. Ripe fruit has its own peculiar beauty. As the fruit ripens, the sun tints it with surpassing loveliness and the colors deepen till the beauty of the fruit is equal to the beauty of the blossom, and in some respects is superior.

What a delicacy of bloom there is upon the grape, the peach, the plum, when they have attained perfection! Nature far excels art, and all the attempts of the modeler in wax cannot reach the marvelous blends of color, the matchless tints of the ripe fruit, worthy of Eden before the Fall. It is another sort of beauty altogether from that of the blossom, yielding to the eye of the farmer, who has the care of the garden, a fairer sight by far. The perfumed bloom yields in value to the golden apple, even as promise is surpassed by fulfillment. The blossom is painted by the pencil of hope, but the fruit is dyed in the hue of enjoyment.

There is in ripe Christians the beauty of realized sanctification which the Word of God knows by the name of “the beauty of holiness.” This consecration to God, this setting apart for His service, this watchful avoidance of evil, this careful walking in integrity, this dwelling near to God, this being made like unto Christ—in a word, this beauty of holiness is one of the surest emblems of maturity in Grace. You have no ripe fruit if you are not holy.

If your passions are still not subdued, if still you are carried about by every wind of temptation—if still, “Lo here, and lo there,” will attract you to the right hand and to the left, you have not reached to anything like maturity—perhaps you are not even fruit unto God at all. But where holiness is perfected in the fear of God, and the Christian is at least striving after perfect holiness—and aiming to be conformed to the image of Christ—one of the marks of the ripe fruit is plainly present.

Another mark is never absent in a mature Believer—namely, the weight which is evidenced in humility. Look at the corn in the field, it holds its head erect while it is green, but when the ear is filled and matured, it hangs its head in graceful humbleness. Look at your fruit trees, how their blossoming branches shoot up towards the sky, but when they begin to be loaded with fruit, since the riper the fruit the greater its weight, the branch begins to bow, until it needs oftentimes to be propped up and to be supported, lest it break away from the stem. Weight comes with maturity, lowliness of mind is the inevitable consequence.

Growing Christians think themselves nothing. Full-grown Christians know that they are less than nothing. The nearer we are to Heaven in point of sanctification, the more we mourn our infirmities, and the humbler is our estimate of ourselves. Lightly laden vessels float high in the water, heavy cargo sinks the boat to the water’s edge. The more Grace, the more the need of Grace is felt. He may boast of his Grace who has none. He may talk much of his Grace who has little, but he who is rich in Grace cries out for more, and forgets that which is behind.

When a man’s inward life flows like a river, he thinks only of the Source, and cries before his God, “All my fresh springs are in You.” He who abounds in holiness feels more than ever that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwells no good thing. You are not ripened, my Brothers and Sisters, while you have a high esteem of yourself. He who glories in himself is but a babe in Christ, if indeed he is in Christ at all. When you shall see death written on the creature, and see all your life in Christ. When you shall perceive even your holy things to have iniquity in them, and see all your perfectness in Him who is altogether lovely. When you shall lie prostrate at the foot of the Throne, and only rise to sit and reign in Him who is your All, then are you ripening, but not till then.

Another mark of ripeness which everyone perceives in fruit, and by which, indeed, the maturity of many fruits is tested, is tenderness. The young green fruit is hard and stone-like. But the ripe fruit is soft, yields to pressure, can almost be molded, retains the mark of the finger. So is it with the mature Christian—he is noted for tenderness of spirit. Beloved, I think if I must miss any good thing, I would give up many of the Graces if I might possess very much tenderness of spirit. I am persuaded that many Christians violate the delicacy of their consciences, and there lose much of true excellence.

Do you not remember, my Brothers and Sisters, when you used to be afraid to put one foot before another for fear you should tread in the wrong place? I wish we always felt in that same manner. You remember when you were afraid to open your mouth lest, perhaps, you should say something that would grieve the Spirit? I would we were always so selfdiffident. “Open You my lips”—I am afraid to open them myself. “Open You my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.”

An extreme delicacy concerning sin should be cultivated by us all. When the Believer can listen to a song with a lasciviousness tone and does not feel himself indignant, let him be indignant with himself. When he can come across sin and feel that it does not shock him as once it did, let him be shocked to think that his conscience is being so seared. I would give you for a prayer—that verse from Wesley’s hymn—

*“Quick as the twinkle of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make,  
Awake my heart, when sin is near.  
And keep it still awake.”*

The sensitive plant, as soon as it is touched, begins to fold up its leaves. Touch it again and the little branches droop, until at last it stands like the bare poles of a vessel—all its sail of leaf is furled, and it seems as

if it would, if it could—shrink into nothing to avoid your hand. So should you be, so should I be, tender to the touch of sin, so as to say with the Psalmist, “Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law.” Such tenderness is a prominent mark of ripeness, and it should be exhibited, not only in relation to sin, but in other ways.

We should manifest tenderness towards the Gospel—glad to hear it, thankful even for a little of it. Glad to eat the crumbs from the Master’s table. Tenderness towards Christ so that the heart does leap at the sound of His name. Tenderness towards the motions of the Spirit so as to be guided by His eye. The Spirit often, I doubt not, comes to us and we do not perceive Him because we are heavy of hearing, we are dull of understanding. The photographer may place his plate in the camera, and the object to be taken may be long before it, and well focused, too—and yet no impression may be produced. But when the plate is made sensitive, thoroughly sensitive—then it receives the image at once.

O that your heart and mine might be sensitive to receive the impression of the Holy Spirit so that on us there shall be printed at once the mind and will of God! Dear Friend, bear this in your memory, and forget not that it shall be a token of your ripeness when the hardness is departing, when the heart of stone is being supplanted by the heart of flesh, and when the soul yields promptly to the Presence of Christ, and the touch of His Spirit.

Another mark of ripeness is sweetness, as well as tenderness. The unripe fruit is sour, and perhaps it ought to be, or else we should eat all the fruits while they were yet green. If pears and apples had the same flavor when they are but small, as afterwards, I am sure where there are children, very few of them would come to their full development. It may, therefore, be in the order of Grace a fit thing that in the youthful Christian some sharpness should be found which will ultimately be removed.

There are certain Graces which are more martial and warlike than others, and have their necessary uses—these we may expect to see more in the young men than in the fathers. And they will be toned down by experience. As we grow in Grace, we are sure to grow in charity, sympathy, and love. We shall have greater and more intense affection for the Person of “Him whom having not seen we love.” We shall have greater delight in the precious things of His Gospel. The doctrine which perhaps we did not understand at first, will become marrow and fatness to us as we advance in Grace. We shall feel that there is honey dropping from the honeycomb in the deeper truths of our religion.

We shall, as we ripen in Grace, have greater sweetness towards our fellow Christians. Bitter-spirited Christians may know a great deal, but they are immature. Those who are quick to censure may be very acute in judgment, but they are as yet very immature in heart. He who grows in Grace remembers that he is but dust, and he therefore does not expect his fellow Christians to be anything more. He overlooks ten thousand of their faults, because he knows his God overlooks twenty thousand in his own case. He does not expect perfection in the creature, and, therefore, he is not disappointed when he does not find it.

As he has sometimes to say of himself, “This is my infirmity,” so he often says of his Brethren, “This is their infirmity.” And he does not judge them as he once did. I know we who are young beginners in Grace think ourselves qualified to reform the whole Christian Church. We drag her before us and condemn her straightway. But when our virtues become more mature, I trust we shall not be more tolerant of evil, but we shall be more tolerant of infirmity, more hopeful for the people of God, and certainly less arrogant in our criticisms. Sweetness towards sinners is another sign of ripeness.

When the Christian loves the souls of men. When he feels that there is nothing in the world which he cares for so much as endeavoring to bring others to a knowledge of the saving Truth of God. When he can lay himself out for sinners, bear with their ill manners, bear with anything, so that he might but lead them to the Savior—then is the man mature in Grace. God grant this sweetness to us all. A holy calm, cheerfulness, patience, a walk with God, fellowship with Jesus, an anointing from the Holy One—I put all these together—and I call them sweetness, heavenly lusciousness, fullflavored of Christ. May this be in you and abound.

I hope I shall not weary you with these marks and signs. I shall not if you can find them in yourselves. Fullness, again, is the mark of ripeness, seen when the fruit is plumped out and arrived at its fair and full proportions. The man in Christ Jesus has a fullness of Grace. As he advances in the Divine life, all the Graces which were in him at his new birth are strengthened and revealed. I suppose that in the newly formed ear of wheat all the kernels are present, but they are not yet manifested. As the ear advances to maturity these grains begin to solidify and become more full.

So with the Believer. There is repentance in him, but not such repentance as he will have as he sees more the love of Christ in pardoning his sin. There is faith in him, certainly, but not such faith as he shall have when afterwards he shall boldly declare, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” There is joy in him at the very first, but not the joy which he will possess when he will rejoice in the Lord always, and yet again rejoice. Experience deepens that which was there before.

Young Christians have the first draughts, the outline of the image of Christ, but as they grow in Grace there comes the filling up, the coloring, the laying on of the deeper tints, the bringing out of the whole picture. This it is to grow mature when we know whom we have believed by acquaintance with Him, when we know sin by having struggled with it, when we know the faithfulness of God by having proved it, when we know the preciousness of the promise by having received it, and having it fulfilled

in our own souls—this it is to be a ripe Christian, to be full of Grace and Truth like our Master.

Only one other mark of ripeness, and a very sure one, is a loose hold of earth. Ripe fruit soon parts from the bough. You shake the tree and the ripest apples fall. If you wish to eat fresh fruit you put out your hand to pluck it, and if it comes off with great difficulty you feel you had better leave it alone a little longer. But when it drops into your hand, quite ready to be withdrawn from the branch, you know it to be in good condition.

When, like Paul, we can say, “I am ready to depart,” when we set loose all earthly things, oh, then it is that we are ripe for Heaven! You should measure your state of heart by your adhesiveness, or your resignation in reference to the things of this world. You have some comforts here, some of you have money, and you look upon it, and you feel, “it were hard to part with this”—this is green fruit. When your Grace is mature, you will feel that though God should give you even greater abundance of this world, you are still an exile longing for the better land.

“Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire beside You.” This is the mature Believer’s question. His song often is—

*“My heart is with Him on His Throne,  
And ill can brook delay;  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
‘Rise up and come away.’”*

It is a sure token of ripeness when you are standing on tiptoe, with your wings outspread, ready for flight. When no chain any longer binds you further to earth. When your love to things below is subordinate to your longing for the joys Above. Oh, it is sweet to sing with Dr. Watts—

*“Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of Your abode;  
I’d leave Your earthly courts, and flee  
Up to Your seat, my God.”*

When we get to this in our very hearts, we are getting ripe, and we shall soon be gathered. The Master will not let His ripe fruit hang long on the tree. Thus I have given you the marks of ripeness.

II. Briefly, Brethren, let us notice THE CAUSES OF THIS RIPENESS. So gracious a result must have a gracious cause. The first cause of ripeness in Grace is the inward working of the sap. The fruit could never be ripe in its raw state were it taken away from the bough. Outward agencies alone may produce rottenness, but not ripeness. Sun, shower, whatnot, all would fail—it is the vital sap within the tree that perfects the fruit. It is especially so in Grace.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, are you one with Christ? Are you sure you are? Are you sure your profession is connected with vital godliness? Is Jesus Christ formed within you? Do you abide in Him? If not, you need not think about maturity in Grace—you had need to do your first works and repent—and turn unto Him. Everything between Hell and Heaven which denotes salvation is the work of the Spirit of God, and the work of the Grace of Jesus. You not only cannot begin to live the Christian life, but you cannot continue in it except as the Holy Spirit enables you.

That blessed Spirit, flowing to us from Christ—as He is the Creator of the first blossom—so He is the Producer of the fruit, and is the Ripener of it until it is gathered into the heavenly garner. Your sacraments, your attendance at a place of worship, your outward bowings of the knee in prayer—these are all vanity and less than nothing—unless there is this vital sap of the inward, spiritual Grace.

When the Truth of God is present in the hidden part, outer influences help. Fruit is ripened by the sun. His beams impart or produce in the fruit its perfectness of flavor. Sunless skies cause tasteless fruit. How sweetly Christians grow when they walk in the light of God’s Countenance! What a ripening influence the love of Jesus Christ has on the soul! When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, how rapidly the Christian advances! I believe we ripen in Grace more in ten minutes when we live near to God than we might do in ten years of absence from His Presence.

Some fruit on a tree will not ripen fast, it is shielded from the sun. We have the cottagers pluck off the leaves from their vines in our chilly climate in order to let the sun get at the vine, and bring out the color and ripeness of the clusters. Even thus the great Husbandman takes away many of the leaves of worldly comfort from us, that the comfort of His own dear Presence may come at us, and ripen us for Himself. We cannot have too much joy in the Lord, we cannot get too near to Him. We may well sing—

*“When will You come unto me, Lord?  
O come, my Lord, most dear!  
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,  
I’m blessed when You are near.”*

The joy of the Lord is your strength, and the joy of the Lord is your perfectness.

Still, Brethren, the fruit is no doubt equally ripened, though not as evidently so, by the shower and by the dew. All heat and no moisture, and there must be scarcely any fruit. So the dew of God’s Spirit falling upon us, the constant shower of Grace visiting us, and what if I add, even the trials and troubles of life, which are like showers to us—all these teach us by experience, and by experience we ripen for the skies. Some fruit I have heard of, especially the sycamore fig, never will ripen except it is bruised.

It was the trade of Amos to be a bruiser of sycamore figs. They were struck with a long staff, and then after being wounded, they sweetened. How like so many of us! How many, many of us seem as if we never would be sweet till first we have been dipped in bitterness—never would be perfected till we have been smitten! We may trace many of our sharp trials, our bereavements and our bodily pains to the fact that we are such sour

fruit. Nothing will ripen us but heavy blows. Blessed be the Lord that He does not spare us. We would be ripe even if we were struck again and again. We cannot be content to continue in our sourness and immaturity—therefore, we meekly bless Him that He will strike us and make us ripe.

One idea I would correct before I pass from this—it is the notion that ripeness in Grace is the necessary result of age. It is not so at all. Little children have been ripe for Glory! Yes, there have been authentic cases of their ripeness for Heaven even at three years of age—strange things dying babes have said of Christ—and deeply experimental things, too. “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings” the Lord not only brings childlike praise, but He has “perfected praise,” or, as David has it, “You have ordained strength because of Your enemies.” “Many an aged Christian is not an experienced Christian, for his experience—though it may be the experience of a Christian—may not have been Christian experience of an advanced kind.

An old sailor who has never left the river is not an experienced mariner. An old soldier who never saw a battle is no veteran. Remember it is in the kingdom of God very much as it is with God Himself, one day may be as a thousand years. God can, as Solomon tells us, give subtlety to the simple and teach the young man knowledge and discretion. Years with Grace will produce greater maturity, but what I want to say is that years without Divine Grace will produce no such maturity. The mere lapse of time will not advance us in the Divine life. We do not ripen necessarily because our years fulfill their tale—gray hairs and great Grace are not inseparable companions.

Time may be wasted as well as improved. We may be petrified rather than perfected by the flow of years. Here it may be well to note that there is no reason why a young Christian should not make great advance towards this maturity, even while young. The Lord’s Grace is independent of time and age. The Holy Spirit is not limited by youth, nor restrained by fewness of days. Young Samuel may excel aged Eli. A holy babe is riper than a backsliding man. Timothy was more mature than Diotrephes.

Jesus can lead you, my youthful Brothers and Sisters, to high degrees of fellowship with Himself. He can make you to be a blessing even while yet you are young. I pray you aspire to the nearest place to Jesus, and like young John, lie in the Master’s bosom. Truly, the aged have the help of experience, and in any case they deserve our reverent esteem. But let neither old nor young imagine that the merely natural fact of age has any influence in the spiritual life. God’s work is the same in old and young, and owes nothing to the merely natural vigor of youth, or equally natural prudence of age.

III. Thus we have given you the causes of ripeness. Briefly let us show you THE DESIRABILITY OF RIPENESS IN GRACE. It is necessary to dwell on this head because many Christians appear to think that if they are just Believers it is enough. We do not in business think it enough if we barely escape bankruptcy. A man does not say, if his dear child has been ill in bed for years that it is quite enough so long as the child is alive.

We do not think that of our own bodies, that so long as we can breathe it is enough. If anyone were dragged out of the Serpentine and life was just in him, we should not feel it sufficient to discover the vital spark and there leave it. No, we pursue the processes of resuscitation till the person is perfectly restored. To be just alive as a Christian is horrid work. It is a poor state to be in to be always trying to see whether we are alive by putting the looking glass of evidences to the lips to see if there is just a trace of gracious vapor on the surface. It is a dolorous thing to be always groaning—

*“It is a point I long to know,  
Oft it causes anxious thought,  
Do I love the Lord or no?  
Am I His, or am I not?”*

Yet too many are content to continue in this ignominious condition. Brethren, it is desirable that you should get out of it, and come to ripeness in Grace by God’s Spirit, for, first, ultimate ripeness is an index of the health of your soul. The fruit which under proper circumstances does not ripen is not a good fruit—it must be an unwholesome production. Your soul can surely not be as it should be if it does not ripen under the influence of God’s love and the work of His Grace. The gardener’s reward is the ripe fruit. You desire that Christ should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied—do you think He will find that satisfaction in sour grapes?

Is He to find His recompense in griping apples? No, Sir. The gardener wants the mature productions of the soil and he does not count that he has a return for his labor till he gathers ripe fruit. Let the Redeemer find ripe fruit in you. Say with the spouse, “Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” Endeavor to imitate her when she said, “At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for You, O Beloved.” Present yourself to Him, and may He present you to the Father made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

It is the ripe fruit which proves the excellence of the tree. The tree may bear a name in very good repute, but if the fruit never ripens, very soon the gardener will remove it from the orchard. The Church’s repute among wise men is gained not from her raw and green members, but from her ripe Believers—these are they by whose steadfast holiness those whose verdict is worth the having will be ruled. I would have men compelled to own that the Church is a goodly vine and her fruit most pleasant to the taste.

To break the metaphor, the Church wants mature Christians very greatly, and especially when there are many fresh converts added to it. New converts furnish impetus to the Church, but her backbone and substance must, under God, lie with the mature members. We want mature Christians in the army of Christ to play the part of veterans, to inspire the rest with coolness, courage, and steadfastness. For if the whole army is made up of raw recruits the tendency will be for them to waver when the onslaught is fiercer than usual.

The old guard, the men who have breathed smoke and eaten fire before, do not waver when the battle rages like a tempest—they can die but they cannot surrender. When they hear the cry of, “Forward,” they may not rush to the front so nimbly as the younger soldiers, but they drag up the heavy artillery and their advance, once made, is secure. They do not reel when the shots fly thick, but still hold their own, for they remember former fights when Jehovah covered their heads.

The Church wants in these days of flimsiness and timeserving, more decided, thorough-going, well-instructed, and confirmed Believers. We are assailed by all sorts of new doctrines. The old faith is attacked by socalled reformers who would reform it all away. I expect to hear tidings of some new doctrine once a week. So often as the moon changes, some “prophet” or other is moved to propound a new theory, and believe me, he will contend more valiantly for his novelty than ever he did for the Gospel! The discoverer thinks himself a modern Luther—and of his doctrine he thinks as much as David of Goliath’s sword—“There is none like it.”

As Martin Luther said of certain men in his day, these inventors of new doctrines stare at their discoveries like a cow at a new gate—as if there were nothing else in all the world but the one thing for them to stare at. We are all expected to go mad for their fashions, and march to their piping. But do we give place?—no, not for an hour! They may muster a troop of raw recruits, and lead them where they would—but for confirmed Believers they sound their bugles in vain. Children run after every new toy. Any little performance in the street, and the boys are all agog, gaping at it.

But their fathers have work to do abroad, and their mothers have other matters at home. Your drum and whistle will not draw them out. For the solidity of the Church, for her steadfastness in the faith, for her defense against the constantly recurring attacks of heretics and infidels. For her permanent advance and the seizing of fresh provinces for Christ we want not only your young, hot bloods, which may God always send to us, for they are of immense service and we cannot do without them. But we need also the cool, steady, well-disciplined, deeply-experienced hearts of men who know by experience the Truth of God. Those that hold fast what they have learned in the school of Christ. May the Lord our God, therefore, send us many such. They are wanted.

IV. And now I shall close by calling your attention to THE GREAT SOLEMNITY OF THE SUBJECT. We have tried to treat it pleasantly, and to instruct after the Master’s example by parables, but there is much of weight here, much of deep and solemn weight. The first is to me, to you, professor of the faith of Christ, a solemn question—am I ripening?

I remember when a child, seeing on the mantel a stone apple, wonderfully like an apple, too, and very well colored. I saw that apple years after, but it was no riper. It had been in unfavorable circumstances for softening and sweetening, if it ever would have become mellow. But I do not think if the sun of the Equator had shone on it, or if the dews of Hermon had fallen on it, it would ever have been fit to be brought to table. Its hard marble substance would have broken a giant’s teeth.

It was a hypocritical professor, a hard-hearted mocker of little children, a mere mimic of God’s fruits. There are Church members who used to be unkind, covetous, censorious, bad-tempered, egotistical—everything that was hard and stony—are they so now? Have they not mellowed with the lapse of years? No, they are worse if anything—very dogs in the house for snapping and snarling, rending and devouring. They are great men at hewing down the carved work of the sanctuary with their axes, or at filling up wells and marring good pieces of land with stones. When the devil wants a stone to fling at a minister he is sure to use one of them.

Well, now, are these people Christians at all? Are they? Let your senses exercise themselves. I leave you each one to judge. If these are extreme cases, let me ask—are there not many in whom ripeness is certainly not very apparent? No growing downwards in humility, no growing upwards in fellowship with God, no doing more, no giving more, no loving more, no praying more, no praising more, no sympathizing more. Are you, then, a fruit unto God at all? Solemn question! I put it to myself as in the sight of God, and I ask you to do the same to yourselves.

Another question also rises up. There is constantly going on in every man, specially in every professed Christian, some process or other. And I believe that one of two processes will go on in us—the one is ripening, the other is rotting. Now rotting and ripening are exceedingly like each other in appearance up to a certain stage. You will sometimes find upon your tree a fruit which seems perfectly ripe and has all the signs of ripeness a month before the proper time, outstripping thus all the other fruit.

You must not think it is ripe. Cut it open, there is a worm inside. That noxious worm is to all appearances producing the same effect as the blessed sun and dew. So the worm of secret sin will eat out the heart of a professor, and yet it will outwardly produce in him the same quality of speech, the same apparent sanctity of life which the Holy Spirit truly produces in a real Christian—but still the fair outside conceals a foul interior. The whitewashed sepulcher is full of decay. That fruit which mimics ripeness is rotten. Leave it alone, and it will soon be a thing fit only for the dunghill.

My dear Friends, I have lived long enough, young as I am, to have seen some turn out to be very rotten hypocrites, though once they were in general esteem as more than ordinarily good men. I am sure we have all

admired and loved persons who after awhile have turned out to be utterly unworthy. They looked the more ripe because they were rotten—they were obliged to try and look like holy men because they feared that their real unholiness would be found out.

Just as some failing merchants make all the greater show to conceal their insolvency—you will rot if you do not ripen, depend on it. He that in the Church of God does not grow more heavenly will become more devilish. It is a hard thing to be in the hot house of an earnest Church without growing more rank if you do not grow more fruitful. Mind this, and God give you to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

One other reflection, and a very solemn one it is. While good fruits ripen, evil plants ripen, too. While the wheat ripens for the harvest, the tares ripen, also. They may grow together, and ripen together, but they will not be housed together. Dear Hearers, some of you have been in this place now for years, and you are not converted. Well, you are ripening, you cannot help that. Even weeds and tares come to maturity. “Let both grow together till the harvest.”

Look at these galleries and this vast area. I see before me three great fields of corn and tares. You are mingled while you grow. “Let both grow together till the harvest,” that is the ripening and the dividing time. You are all growing, all ripening. Then, when all are ripe in the time of harvest, He will say to the reapers, “Gather together first the tares, bind them in bundles to burn them. Gather the wheat into My barn.”

O Sinner, your unbelief is ripening and it will ripen into despair! Your enmity to God is ripening and it will ripen into everlasting rebellion against Him. Even now your heart grows harder and more stubborn, and your death in sin becomes more hopeless every hour you live. Remember there shall be no hope that your character will undergo improvement in another world. Then shall be fulfilled the saying which is written, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

Forever and forever the processes which ripen sin will continue to operate on condemned spirits, “where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” God grant you Grace to believe in Jesus Christ NOW—that you may receive the new nature—and having received it, may grow up into ripeness, so that God may be glorified. May we all be housed in the garner of ripe fruit in the King’s own Palace above! Amen and Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1819 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SWEET SILVER BELL RINGING IN EACH BELIEVER’S HEART

NO. 1819

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1885,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON DECEMBER 18, 1884.

**“My God will hear me.”  
Micah 7:7.**

WHAT a charming sentence! Can you say it? Only five words, but what meaning! Huge volumes of poetry have appeared from Chaucer to Tennyson, but it seems to me that the essence of poetry lies hidden in a marvelously condensed form within these few words! It shall take you many an hour to suck out all their sweetness. There is an almost inconceivable depth of meaning in them—and of richness of assured experience and of sweet conclusions of a hallowed faith they are full to the brim!

“My God will hear me.” There is more eloquence in that sentence than in all the orations of Demosthenes! He that can speak thus can say more than if he were able to truthfully declare that all worlds were his own, for he grasps God, Himself, and holds the present and the future in the hollow of his hands!

“My God will hear me.” It is prophetic, but the Prophet has taken upon himself no unusual power and neither does he intend his prophecy to be true of himself alone. He puts this Divine sentence into the mouth of every Believer! Every child of God may dare say that his God will hear him, for he may dare to say the truth! I feel as if I could not preach from the text and did not want to do so. It needs no aid of wit or words. For myself, I would be well content to exhibit this diamond with many facets by merely holding it up and letting the light fall on it and flash back from it in variety of brilliance.

“My God will hear me.” It is a choice song for a lone harp which is half afraid of the choir of musicians and loves to have its strings touched in solitude. I feel, as I repeat it, that I need to sit down and quietly enjoy it. As I see the cows lie in the meadow, quietly chewing the cud, so would I ruminate on these few but precious words. Let me hear the sounds again and again, till my tongue, learning their rhythmic melody, repeats as a matter of habitual delight, the assurance, “My God will hear me!”

A charming sentence, as I have said, but in what a strange place we find it! Just as they find gold in the dark mine and as we see stars in the black night, so do we find these rich words in the midst of floods of grief and woe! The man of God is pricked and torn by the briars of the age in which he travels. He is vexed and wearied with the bribery and corruption all around him. He cannot find peace either at home or abroad—no, not even in the bosom of her whom he loves. He is everywhere disquieted and driven to and fro—and yet it is just at that time that he cries, “My God will hear me.” From this I gather—and I gather it not from this, alone, but from my own personal experience—that it is generally when things are at their worst that we know most about the best. When we are disappointed of men, then we become most contented with our God. When earth-born springs are dry, then the eternal fountainheads flow more freely than ever. And as we drink of them, our soul is more satisfied than ever it had been before. God is good when goods are fewest. Heaven is warmest when earth is coldest. It is a great blessing for you, dear Friend, that you can say, “My God will hear me.” I do not mind much about your surroundings—they may be grievous and trying—but if they have helped to bring you to this pass—that you have a solid confidence that God will hear you—I congratulate you upon the priceless consequences, even though I may sorrow with you for the sufferings that have brought them to you! We do not weep over the mud which bespatters the gold-digger when he finds his nugget! And neither will we fret over the affliction which makes God to be more precious to our friends.

Again, come back to the short and sweet sentence of the text, and may it be inexpressibly delightful to our hearts while we meditate upon it for a while. “My God will hear me.”

I. The first thing I shall note at this time is THE TITLE. This is the bottom of the whole text, really, the true foundation of the confidence which is expressed in it. The title is “my God.” It is not God, alone, but God in Covenant with me, to whom I look for help. I shall be heard by “my God.”

I am afraid that some of you will have to draw back a little from the text at the very commencement. As I remarked the other day, to say there is a God is not much. It is the same as to say there is a bank—there may be a bank and you may be miserably poor. There certainly is a God, but that God may be no source of comfort to you. The joy of the whole thing lies in that word, “my.” “My God will hear me.”

Begin, then with the enquiry, put to your own soul—Can I truly think of God and call Him, “my God”? If so, that means election and selection. There were many gods in the day of the Prophet Micah—at least, men spoke as if there were. Men talked of this god and of that god. Each nation had its own peculiar deity and each man walked in the name of his god, and gloried in it. But the Prophet, in effect, says of Jehovah, the one living and true God, the God that made Heaven and earth—“This God is my God. Others may worship gods of wood, or of stone, or of silver, or of gold—but as for me, my heart shall only worship the great Invisible, whom none has seen, to whom none can approach. The eternal Creator, alone, will I adore.”

Now, every man at this present time has a god. Alas, how many make their belly their god! The golden calf is never without its crowds of devoted worshippers. Gods, today, are as numerous in England as in any heathen country! Let me then ask—have you taken the God who is your Maker, your Preserver, your Redeemer, to be the great object of your life? That is your god which rules your nature—that which is your motive power—that for which you live. Do you live for Jehovah as your God, or are you only living for yourself or for some temporary end and purpose? Will the object of your life die with your dying and be buried in your grave? Or can you say unto the living God, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You. You are my God forever and ever: You shall be my God even unto death!” If so, it supposes your election of this God beyond every other and I put it to you—is this election made? And made once and for all? Can you cry with Joshua, “As for me and my house we will serve Jehovah”? Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ your God for all time? Be it so! You shall never regret the choice!

“My God”—that supposes an appropriation by faith. Have you taken Jehovah to be your God? Have you boldly taken Him for your very own? In the Covenant of Grace, God gives over to His people, Himself—all that He is and all that He has—by a Covenant of salt. As the Believer becomes God’s portion, so the Lord becomes the Believer’s portion! He declares Himself to be ours and puts Himself at our disposal, exercising a boundless condescension of love in so doing. Our part in it is that we accept this Covenant gift and, by an act of faith, say, “This which God gives me, I, unworthy though I am, do freely accept. Though I deserve it not, yet as He has given Himself to me, I, with gladness, receive Him to be my God, my portion, world without end.”

Well do I remember the joyous day when my heart first took this possession to herself. It had appeared to be like a land of fire and terror and I desired it not. But when the Spirit of God had instructed and renewed me, then I perceived that God was as the land of Goshen—yes, as the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey! Yes, as the land Beulah, where the sun goes down no more forever, where all is joy, peace and love! Yes, as Heaven itself, for God is the very soul, center, source and fullness of bliss! My heart annexed this blessed territory with trembling joy. Yes, she seemed to have no other possession left except her God. From that hour she grew rich and remained so. What is there more for me but my God? How can I go an inch beyond, “my God, my Heaven, my All”?

Now, beloved Hearer, have you thus appropriated the Eternal God to be your own? Can you say, today, “First and foremost among my possessions is my God. I will not say that I have this and that, and ever so many other things, but I will sing, ‘My God, You are mine!’ Perhaps I could not say that I have much of this world’s goods, but I have the highest Good. If I have not all, yet I have the All-in-All who is more than all and He is everything to my spirit”? I trust you can say, “my God,” first, by your choice of Him and, secondly, by your appropriation of Him through faith. Wherever this is the case, it is the work of the Spirit of God and He must have our reverent love for thus enriching us.

“My God”—this signifies knowledge and acquaintance. Does it not? For unless the words are meaningless, you know who it is that you are talking of and you have had some acquaintance and dealings with Him. If I say, “So-and-So is my friend,” I give you to understand that I know him. And if I say, “Jehovah is my God,” I profess that I know Him and have fellowship with Him. You remember the inscription which Paul discovered upon an altar at Athens, “To the unknown God”? I would not have you worship there, my Brother, but I would have you understand that word of the Apostle, “After that you had known God, or rather were known of God.” There is an intimate knowledge subsisting between God and His people. “The Lord knows them that are His,” and all His people know Him, so that among them no one has need to say to his brother, “Know the Lord,” for they all know Him, from the least even to the greatest.

Now, what do you know of God? Have you ever spoken with Him? Has He spoken to you? Have you told Him your secrets? Has He revealed Himself to you, as it is written, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant”? Now, I am not talking about fancies. If any of you deem this to be fanciful, it is because you are strangers to the Covenant of Promise. I am speaking, now, to a people who know more than I can tell them of what this means. As for myself, I know something of nature and of the works of God’s hands, but my soul cares little for that knowledge compared with knowing HIM. Willingly and gladly I would forget all else I know if I might but know more of Him, for well am I persuaded that when old age comes on and memory fails me, that which my soul shall hold, as with a death grip, will not be historical remembrance, classical love, or theological learning, but what she knows by inward experience of the Lord her God!

When the veil shall drop upon all mortal shadows, to be uplifted upon eternal realities, then my heart shall care nothing for what she knew of things terrestrial! But she shall value beyond conception what she shall then know of the Immortal, the Invisible, the only wise God, her Savior! I am sure that I am speaking to many of you who can use the expression, “My God,” and mean by it that the God in whom you live and move and have your being is your Friend and your Father—that He dwells in you by the Holy Spirit—and that in Him you dwell as you hide yourselves in the wounds of Christ. Oh happy men and women that can, with knowledge and affection, say, “My God”! Unhappy are you who have neither part nor lot in this matter. Your sorrows shall be multiplied which hasten after another god, for your vanities will fail you! But as for you who know the Lord, to you shall joy increase even as the growing light of the rising sun!

If you have come as far as this, I am sure that you can follow me farther by admitting that the title, “My God,” implies an embrace of love. You know God as you know your child. And as you look at your boy, you cry, “My child, my child,” and you mean a great deal by that because your child is much more yours on account of the affection that you feel for him than any other possession that you have upon the face of the earth. You would lose everything else sooner than lose the darling of your bosom! The expression, “My God,” has an inexpressible amount of sweet affection wrapped up in it. I delight in that line of our old Psalm—

*“Yes, my own God is He.”*  
He is my very own! My God belongs to me as much as if He belonged to no other! My heart has twisted her tendrils around about Him as fast and firm as if no other tiny plant had dared to grasp Him. The Divine Father— oh, what joy lights up the soul when we think of that splendid Fatherhood, that infinite relationship of the Divine One to us, whom He has “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” How have we sometimes sung with David—

*“Such pity as a father has  
Unto his children dear,  
Like pity shows the Lord to such  
As worship Him in fear.”*

We love the Father and call Him, “My God.”  
And as for Jesus, the second Person in the Divine Unity, Incarnate  
God—does not your very heart leap at the sound of His name? Is there not  
all music condensed into two syllables in that name, “Jesus”? I know that  
it is so to you. He is your very own Christ, your Savior, forever and ever!  
And the blessed Spirit—do we not, with equal affection, lay hold upon  
Him, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Quickener, the Illuminator, the  
best of Friends, bearing with our ill behavior and still abiding in us, making us meet for the eternal Kingdom? Yes, Beloved, we do love our God! Do  
not our hearts say in our prayers, “O Lord, do not believe our actions, for,  
disobedient as we are, we do love You. Do not believe our forgetfulness, do  
not believe the lukewarmness which occasionally creeps over us, for You  
know all things, You know that we love You”? Such affection makes us  
cry, “My God!” We cannot comprehend Him, but we apprehend Him with  
the grip of hallowed love. We feel that we can never give Him up, even as  
He will never give us up. I am not what I ought to be, but I cannot give up  
my God! Hard as my heart feels, yet it melts with love to Him who has  
loved me from before the foundations of the world! Who shall separate me  
from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, my Lord?  
What a deal there is in the title! But we have not exhausted it by a long  
way—let us have another drink from the well. You feel that now the obedience of your life is rendered to Him most cheerfully, for this is a sure outcome of the heart’s crying, “He is my God.” A man cannot call God, his  
God in truth unless he desires to obey Him, for God is a name to adore, to  
reverence, to worship. He who speaks of God but never obeys Him is a  
practical atheist—he or she has no God! That man who talks about God in  
the synagogue, but who has no regard for Him in the market, makes Jehovah to be no better a deity than the idols of the heathen who are only  
gods in their own temples, even if there. The man upon whose heart and  
hands the Godhead has no kind of influence—such a man is a liar and  
knows not God, but renders to Him lip service which is to God’s dishonor,  
and not to His Glory. Yes, Beloved, if you are what you profess to be, you  
can declare, “With all my infirmities and imperfections, I desire that my  
whole life should be obedience to the Divine precepts. I wish in all things  
to do that which is right and good, and true and kind according to the  
mind of Christ, in which I see the mind of God, my Father.” Concerning  
these things let there be great searching of heart. Come and look in this  
mirror and see if you bear the features of “imitators of God as dear children”—for it will go hard with you if you turn out to be pretenders. Let me only add that this expressive phrase, “My God,” hints at a joy  
and delight in Him. As men would say—“my love,” “my choice,” “my treasure,” “my delight”—so does the Prophet say, “My God.” The very name  
wakes all the music of his soul! As when the sleeping flowers, being  
touched by the first beams of the rising sun, open their bright eyes to look  
on Him who is the foster-father of all their beauty and seem, each one, to  
say, “My King,” so do our hearts rejoice in the Presence of the Lord and  
our quickened spirits cry, “My God!”  
So much for the title. May it be written on your hearts by the Holy  
Spirit.  
II. The second point in our brief text is THE ARGUMENT, for I believe  
the title contains within itself a secret logical force. “My God will hear me.”  
As surely as He is my God, He will hear me. Why?  
Well, He will hear me, first, because He is God—because He is the living  
and true God. Those gods of stone cannot hear me, but my God will hear  
me. The gods that many men choose will not hear them in the day of  
trouble. To which of them will they call in the hour of their affliction? But  
my God will hear me! It is His memorial that He hears prayer. The oracles  
of the heathen were but liars. Those who sought the false gods did but  
dote upon lies—they were deceivers and deceived. But my God will hear  
me! As surely as He is God, He will answer prayer! If He does not answer  
prayer, then He is no more a God than Jupiter, or Saturn, or Venus. For  
us as Christian people and worshippers of the Most High, it is a Truth of  
God never to be questioned that Jehovah is the living and true God,  
whose memorial is that He hears the prayers of His people. “My God will  
hear me.”  
You see in what a tone of confidence this Prophet speaks—and why  
should not every child of God speak with the same confidence? The joy of  
religion lies in a hearty faith in it. You begin handling it with dainty fingers, criticizing it everlastingly, questioning this and questioning that with  
anxious debate of heart—and the consequence is that you miss its sweetness. It is nothing to your comfort till it is everything to your faith. You  
must believe it and the more thoroughly you believe it, the more will it  
prove itself true to you. The proof of the Gospel lies in the testing of it, by  
which I mean, in the practical proving and enjoying of it. Suppose you try  
to pray and do not believe in prayer? Well, you do not pray. You get nothing by such praying—you work a dry pump! You must have confidence in  
the Mercy Seat if the Mercy Seat is to be a place of refuge for you. “He that  
wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not  
that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” “He that comes  
to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”  
To my mind it seems the right thing to believe in the living God right up  
to the hilt—to believe in His promises without stint or limit. His Word is  
either true or false. If it is false, I will never preach it—if it is true, I will  
never doubt it! There let it stand like a column of brass—though all things  
else should fail, God must hear prayer. He may do this and He may do  
that, but He must hear prayer! My God will hear me because He is a true God and no liar and He has, Himself, declared, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” He has laid it down as unquestionable fact, “He that seeks, finds; he that asks, receives and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” How can He run back from this? Why  
should I imagine that He will lie?  
But why am I so sure, as a matter of argument, that God will hear  
prayer? The answer is again in the title, “My God.” Because He has made  
Himself my God, He will hear me. O you that are familiar with your God,  
who can therefore call Him by the dear title of, “My God,” you will see the  
overwhelming conclusiveness of this reasoning. To hear a petitioner is a  
small thing compared to giving yourself over to him. “My God will hear  
me,” for doubtless, if He has given Himself to be my God, He will hear me!  
He has done the greater thing, He will surely do the lesser! If, in infinite  
condescension, He permits me to call Him, “my God,” and I perceive all  
through His Gospel that He invites me to do so, then, surely, He will hear  
me! He that has said, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God,”  
will do the much smaller thing—He will, without doubt—hear them when  
they call upon Him. “You, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto  
your children. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy  
Spirit to them that ask Him?” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all  
things?”  
Is not that clear enough? He has given us Himself and His Son—how  
can He shut out our cries? After what He has done for us in the past, we  
cannot doubt that He will hear us. What? Give us cleansing by His blood  
and then not hear us? What? Give us the new birth and then not hear us?  
Did He bless us when we did not seek Him and will He not hear us when  
we do seek Him? What? Look after us when we were like stray sheep, deaf  
to all His calls—seek after us till He restored us—and then not hear us  
when we become the sheep of His pasture? Impossible! The argument is  
irresistible—My God will certainly hear me!  
Moreover, my God has heard me so many times, already, and, therefore,  
be it far from me to doubt His present and future favor. A Brother in  
prayer reminded us, just now, that we ought to have greater faith than the  
saints of the olden times because we have many more centuries of the Divine faithfulness to read of and to see. It is so, but I fear that observation  
seldom acts upon us so forcibly as actual personal experience. What shall  
I say to my beloved Brothers and Sisters who are getting old? They have  
had such experience. God has heard your prayers many times, my aged  
Brethren, and your faith is thereby confirmed. When we first began to  
pray, we were staggered if objectors questioned us. “You talk about God  
having heard your prayer.” “Yes,” we said, “He did hear us,” and we stated  
our case. The skeptic sneered and said, “That was merely a coincidence.” When we heard that remark for the first time, we were somewhat taken  
aback. We admitted that we could not draw an inference from two or three  
facts, for, perhaps, in later years there might be 30 facts which would tell  
the other way. But, my veteran Brothers and Sisters, we are not in that  
condition tonight, for some of us have had 30 or 40 years’ experience of God’s hearing prayer and our facts are as many as the hairs of our heads! Do opponents say that these are coincidences? We do not care to answer such perverse jangling! If they were in our position, they would not wish to answer such remarks. They would laugh and that is all that they would find in their hearts to do! A man puts on warm clothing and is not pinched by the frost. His acquaintance tells him that he does not believe in flannel and broad-cloth. He shivers in his unbelief and tells the well  
clad man that his comfort is a mere coincidence! Humorous, is it not? But if the objector gets frozen to death, the wit grows rather grim! When  
we have not prayed and have not received a blessing—and have been  
ready to perish—I suppose our failure has been a coincidence! And when  
we have betaken ourselves to our knees and have cried mightily to God,  
pleaded the promises, and God has answered us as visibly as if He had  
split the blue heavens and thrust out His almighty arm to help us—has  
that been a coincidence? I call such things plain answers to prayer, but  
those who have never experienced the like think me a fanatic! I will therefore let them use their own terms. We will not wrangle over words—“A rose  
by any other name would smell as sweet.” As to the delivering mercy of  
God—you may call it a coincidence if you like—but to us it will always be  
a blessed proof that the Lord hears prayer.  
Using this sweet title, containing, as it does, within itself a whole century of logic, we say, joyfully, “My God will hear me.” What bliss it is to  
have so sweet an assurance always at hand! It is a versicle of heavenly  
music—“My God will hear me.” The Lord has entered into Covenant with  
us that He will not turn away from us from doing us good and in that  
Covenant His hearing prayer is included. He could not be our Friend and  
be deaf to our appeals! He could not be in fellowship with us and shut out  
our cries! Listen to some of His own Covenant Words—“Call upon Me in  
the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me” (Psa 50:15).  
“He shall call upon Me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble;  
I will deliver him and honor him” (Psa. 91:15). “The Lord is near unto all  
them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill  
the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save  
them” (Psa. 145:18, 19). “And it shall come to pass that before they call, I  
will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa. 65:24). “Call  
unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things  
which you know not” (Jer. 33:3). Do you need more than this? The Lord  
has said it and He will make it good! He has never said to the seed of  
Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.  
Were not the Lord to hear prayer and bear His people through their  
troubles, He would, Himself, be a great loser. He would lose all that His  
wisdom has planned, all that His sovereignty has ordained, all that His  
love has

begun, all that His power has worked and all that upon which  
His heart is set! If Jehovah did not hear prayer, it were to Him as though a  
father no more heard the voice of his child—he would lose that which  
charms his fatherly mind and miss that which is a solace to his loving  
heart. If God does not hear me, He will lose me—and this I feel He will not  
do, for He has engraved me upon the palms of His hands, that I may never be forgotten of Him. O, yes, my God will hear me! His truth and honor cannot be imperiled by a refusal to hear the pleadings of His own  
child!  
III. Bear with me while I invite you, in the third place, to notice the FAVOR ITSELF. “My God will hear me.” You notice that in Scripture we do  
not often find the expression, “My God will answer me.” We do read that  
He answers prayer, but more frequently God is said to be the God that  
hears prayer. It is better for us to have a promise that God will hear us  
than a promise that God will always answer us. In fact, if it were a matter  
of absolute fact that God would always answer the prayers of His people  
as they present them, it would be an terrible Truth. I would shrink from  
ever praying again if I were absolutely sure that the Lord would answer  
my prayer, whatever it might be. I might curse myself seven times deep by  
a prayer within the next seven minutes, if there were no safeguards and  
limits to the promise of prayer being answered!  
It is neither desirable nor possible that all things should be left to our  
choice! So much do I feel this, that if my Lord should say to me, “From  
this hour I will always answer your prayer just as you pray it,” the first  
petition I would offer would be, “Lord, do nothing of the sort.” Because  
that would be putting the responsibility of my life upon myself, instead of  
allowing it to remain upon God. It were, in fact, to make me the master of  
the house and to make me my own shepherd—the very first thing I would  
wish would be to strip myself of such a power! I would cry, “Lord, do as  
You will about answering me; I will be well content if You will hear me.” I  
like that kind of hearing prayer of which Ralph Erskine says— *“I’m heard when answered, soon or late,  
Yes, heard when I no answer get—  
Most kindly answered when refused,  
And treated well when harshly used.”*  
It is enough for a praying heart that it has a hearing God.  
But notice, “My God will hear me.” It means, first, literally that He will  
hear me as a Listener. A good Brother of my acquaintance, a minister of  
the Gospel, going to preach from the text that God will hear prayer, called  
upon one of his poor people who said, when the visit was over, that she  
had greatly enjoyed his call. He thought to himself, “I have scarcely said a  
word and yet she says that I have done her good.” Turning to her, he enquired, “Sister, how can I have done you good, for I have hardly spoken  
with you?” “Ah, Sir,” she replied, “you have listened so kindly. You have  
heard all I had to say and there are very few who will do that.” Just so.  
People in deep trouble like somebody to hear them all through—even little  
children are comforted by telling mother all about it. We are in such a  
hurry with poor troubled spirits that we hasten them on to the end of the  
sentence and try to make them skip the dreary details. But to them this  
seems unkind, for their story is sacred and, therefore, they go slowly on  
with it till we are quite tired.  
I have often hurried on a poor despondent creature till I have seen the  
uselessness of it—it is always best to let them spin on. It does them good.  
To spill out the heart to a patient listener is a great relief to a burdened  
spirit—and the heart must do it in its own way. Here is a sweet assurance, “My God will hear me.” I may be very bad and what I say may be  
very broken. And I may groan a good deal and I may say the same thing  
over and over again—and my whole ditty may be very stupid—but, “My  
God will hear me.” He is in no hurry! He is the God of patience. He will listen to my dreary talk and endure each gloomy detail. I need not hold Him  
as the Ancient Mariner held the wedding guest who was unwilling to hear  
his weary rhyme of the sea—my God will willingly listen to me right  
through, from beginning to end, groans and all! “My God will hear me.” And then the Lord will listen as a Friend full of sympathy. Some people  
listen but do not hear. You tell them your story, but it does not help you a  
bit because their minds are no more moved by your case than if they were  
far away. They are just saying to themselves, “We will hear this poor old  
lady’s story; it will please her.” But it does not please her because she perceives that they have no sympathy, no feeling for her. The kind of person  
you like to tell your story to is one who weeps with you—who is really afflicted with your affliction. It is greatly comforting to have a person with  
you who feels just as you feel, who, when you are very stupid, seems to be  
stupid, too; who frets as you fret and groans in your groans. “Mother,” said a little girl, once, “I cannot make it out. Mrs. Smith says  
I do her so much good. Poor Mrs. Smith has lost her husband, Mother,  
and she is very sad. She sits and cries and I get up and lay my cheek on  
her cheek, and I cry and say that I love her. And then she says that she  
loves me and that I comfort her.” Just so. That is the truest form of consolation, is it not? “Weep with them that weep.” That is how God, my God,  
will hear me, feeling with me, sympathizing with me. “In all their affliction  
He was afflicted and the angel of His Presence saved them.” “I am with  
you, says the Lord.”—  
*“I feel in my heart all your sighs and your groans, For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones. In all your afflictions your Head feels the pain, They all are most needful, not one is in vain,”*“My God will hear me.” He will listen to me and He will sympathize with  
me.  
“My God will hear me.” That is, He will turn it over and discriminate in  
His own mind, and He will not allow me to be condemned by the hurried  
judgment of men. He will hear me as a judge patiently hears a case. Others will come in and clamor against me and refuse to listen to a word of  
explanation. But my God will hear me! That was a splendid utterance of  
the holy Patriarch, Job! He went a long way further than he knew he went  
when he said it—“I know that my Redeemer lives.” His unkind friends  
charged him very terribly and Job spoke up for himself, but he did not get  
on at it. He could not plead his own cause successfully and, therefore, in  
his desperation, he cried, “I have a God that will yet plead my cause, and  
if He does not do it while I am alive, yet I know that He lives! And though  
after my skin, worms devour my body, yet in my flesh shall I behold Him,  
and I shall be cleared from this misrepresentation! I shall be delivered  
from this suspicion. I know I shall! My God will hear me! He will hear my  
suit right through and do me justice and I shall behold Him, whom my  
eyes shall see, for myself, and not another.” Job felt assured of being cleared at last. Dear child of God, you may do the same! Your character shall not be injured by malicious tongues. They lie against you; they refuse you a hearing; they wrest your words; they empty the buckets of their  
contempt upon you, but your God will hear you!  
Then, at the back of that, of course, comes the conclusion of every loving heart that, as God will hear the case right through, so He will certainly  
hear as a Helper. “My God will hear me.” Now, child of God, go away with  
this promise in your hands and in your heart—“My God will hear me”—  
and then use it like a magic wand. Turn it whichever way you will and it  
will clear your path. You are going to preach the Gospel in a distant country, perhaps, and your spirit sinks as you sigh, “Who is sufficient for these  
things?” Lift up your heart to God and His Grace shall be sufficient for  
you and His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness, for your  
God will hear you! Or you have to go home, tonight, to a sick house and to  
lose one that is dear to you. You shall be sustained, for in your ear is this  
Word of God, “My God will hear me.”  
Or, perhaps, you yourself have to sicken and die. Do you enquire—  
“What shall I do in the swellings of Jordan”? Here is your happy answer,  
“My God will hear me!” I shall cry to Him and He will answer me. He will  
have a desire to the work of His hands. Yes, though I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, my God will hear me! And when I lie in the  
tomb, my God will remember me and He will call me up with sound of a  
trumpet—and my body shall live again! My God shall hear me singing His  
praises before His Throne! My God shall hear me, world without end, as  
my whole being shall lift up her joyous notes of, “Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
hallelujah,” unto Him who loved me out of the Pit and lifted me up to His  
own right hand!  
IV. My only sorrow about this text is my fear that it could not honestly  
fall from some of your lips—you could not truthfully say, “My God will  
hear me.” So I close by noting THE PERSON to whom it belongs—“My God  
will hear me.” Will He hear you? Dear Heart, are you cast down under a  
sense of sin? Do you seek forgiveness? He will hear you! Are you burdened  
because you cannot live without sin? Would you be free from all evil? He  
will hear you! Are you persecuted for righteousness’ sake? Are the men of  
your household turned to be your foes? He will hear you and cause you to  
rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for Jesus’ sake! Are you assured  
of the result of prayer? You shall not be disappointed. Your God will hear  
you! Have you been praying long? Cease not from importunity, but solace  
yourself with this sure belief—My God will hear me. Will you now come  
and cast yourselves into the arms of Jesus, the Crucified? Your God has  
heard you! Be of good cheer!  
O, my dear Hearer, have you a God? Strange question, but I press it  
even with tears—have you a God? If you have no God, of course you have  
nobody to hear you when the great floods of water prevail! My dear  
Hearer, if you make the world your god, it cannot hear you in the day of  
your trouble! You may be a very rich man and have large estates, but I  
would sooner occupy the place of the poorest believing pauper in the  
workhouse than take your position without a God and without a Throne of Grace! How do people live that have no God to go to? If a man were to say to me, “I never get a morsel of bread to eat at all,” I would wonder how he lived. But when a man says, “I never pray and God never hears me,” I am  
in equal wonder! How can the poor creature exist?  
These are hard times with a great many of you. You have not many  
worldly comforts. Indeed, some of you cannot even find work. What can  
you do without a God to fly to? I suppose your head aches, sometimes,  
like mine. I suppose cares and troubles eat into your mind as they do into  
mine. I suppose you have your difficulties and your knots that you cannot  
untie, just as I have mine. How do you keep your souls alive without a  
God? I pray God that I may never live a day without prayer and without  
trusting my God. How do you bear up, some of you? I do not wonder that  
you go and get drunk to drown your thoughts! I do not wonder that you  
need frivolities and theatricals and all sorts of childish toys to put your  
cares out of your minds, for you need something or other to help you forget the miseries which are coming upon you thick and heavy! Yet is it not madness to drive away wise thoughts? What a wretched  
business it must be to be in dread of your own thoughts! You dare not sit  
alone in your chamber for half-an-hour and think, because if you did you  
would begin to think of dying—and you could not bear to think of that  
without a God! You might even be driven to think of Hell and of a judgment to come—and that you could not endure. If you dare not think of  
them, how will you bear them? Oh poor souls! Poor souls! You are in a  
sad state, indeed! But you need not remain so. If any man wills to have  
God to be his own God, Grace has given him that will! If you desire Christ,  
you may have Him!  
What is the price? Nothing at all! Receive Him freely! Believe in Jesus  
Christ—that is, trust yourself with Him—and God is your God and you  
may go on your way full of joy and thankfulness! God bless you and comfort you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 7.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—622, 999, 981.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1819 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SWEET SILVER BELL RINGING IN EACH BELIEVER’S HEART

NO. 1819

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1885,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON DECEMBER 18, 1884.

**“My God will hear me.”  
Micah 7:7.**

WHAT a charming sentence! Can you say it? Only five words, but what meaning! Huge volumes of poetry have appeared from Chaucer to Tennyson, but it seems to me that the essence of poetry lies hidden in a marvelously condensed form within these few words! It shall take you many an hour to suck out all their sweetness. There is an almost inconceivable depth of meaning in them—and of richness of assured experience and of sweet conclusions of a hallowed faith they are full to the brim!

“My God will hear me.” There is more eloquence in that sentence than in all the orations of Demosthenes! He that can speak thus can say more than if he were able to truthfully declare that all worlds were his own, for he grasps God, Himself, and holds the present and the future in the hollow of his hands!

“My God will hear me.” It is prophetic, but the Prophet has taken upon himself no unusual power and neither does he intend his prophecy to be true of himself alone. He puts this Divine sentence into the mouth of every Believer! Every child of God may dare say that his God will hear him, for he may dare to say the truth! I feel as if I could not preach from the text and did not want to do so. It needs no aid of wit or words. For myself, I would be well content to exhibit this diamond with many facets by merely holding it up and letting the light fall on it and flash back from it in variety of brilliance.

“My God will hear me.” It is a choice song for a lone harp which is half afraid of the choir of musicians and loves to have its strings touched in solitude. I feel, as I repeat it, that I need to sit down and quietly enjoy it. As I see the cows lie in the meadow, quietly chewing the cud, so would I ruminate on these few but precious words. Let me hear the sounds again and again, till my tongue, learning their rhythmic melody, repeats as a matter of habitual delight, the assurance, “My God will hear me!”

A charming sentence, as I have said, but in what a strange place we find it! Just as they find gold in the dark mine and as we see stars in the black night, so do we find these rich words in the midst of floods of grief and woe! The man of God is pricked and torn by the briars of the age in which he travels. He is vexed and wearied with the bribery and corruption all around him. He cannot find peace either at home or abroad—no, not even in the bosom of her whom he loves. He is everywhere disquieted and driven to and fro—and yet it is just at that time that he cries, “My God will hear me.” From this I gather—and I gather it not from this, alone, but from my own personal experience—that it is generally when things are at their worst that we know most about the best. When we are disappointed of men, then we become most contented with our God. When earth-born springs are dry, then the eternal fountainheads flow more freely than ever. And as we drink of them, our soul is more satisfied than ever it had been before. God is good when goods are fewest. Heaven is warmest when earth is coldest. It is a great blessing for you, dear Friend, that you can say, “My God will hear me.” I do not mind much about your surroundings—they may be grievous and trying—but if they have helped to bring you to this pass—that you have a solid confidence that God will hear you—I congratulate you upon the priceless consequences, even though I may sorrow with you for the sufferings that have brought them to you! We do not weep over the mud which bespatters the gold-digger when he finds his nugget! And neither will we fret over the affliction which makes God to be more precious to our friends.

Again, come back to the short and sweet sentence of the text, and may it be inexpressibly delightful to our hearts while we meditate upon it for a while. “My God will hear me.”

I. The first thing I shall note at this time is THE TITLE. This is the bottom of the whole text, really, the true foundation of the confidence which is expressed in it. The title is “my God.” It is not God, alone, but God in Covenant with me, to whom I look for help. I shall be heard by “my God.”

I am afraid that some of you will have to draw back a little from the text at the very commencement. As I remarked the other day, to say there is a God is not much. It is the same as to say there is a bank— there may be a bank and you may be miserably poor. There certainly is a God, but that God may be no source of comfort to you. The joy of the whole thing lies in that word, “my.” “My God will hear me.”

Begin, then with the enquiry, put to your own soul—Can I truly think of God and call Him, “my God”? If so, that means election and selection. There were many gods in the day of the Prophet Micah—at least, men spoke as if there were. Men talked of this god and of that god. Each nation had its own peculiar deity and each man walked in the name of his god, and gloried in it. But the Prophet, in effect, says of Jehovah, the one living and true God, the God that made Heaven and earth—“This God is my God. Others may worship gods of wood, or of stone, or of silver, or of gold—but as for me, my heart shall only worship the great Invisible, whom none has seen, to whom none can approach. The eternal Creator, alone, will I adore.”

Now, every man at this present time has a god. Alas, how many make their belly their god! The golden calf is never without its crowds of devoted worshippers. Gods, today, are as numerous in England as in any heathen country! Let me then ask—have you taken the God who is your Maker, your Preserver, your Redeemer, to be the great object of your life? That is your god which rules your nature—that which is your motive power—that for which you live. Do you live for Jehovah as your God, or are you only living for yourself or for some temporary end and purpose? Will the object of your life die with your dying and be buried in your grave? Or can you say unto the living God, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You. You are my God forever and ever: You shall be my God even unto death!” If so, it supposes your election of this God beyond every other and I put it to you—is this election made? And made once and for all? Can you cry with Joshua, “As for me and my house we will serve Jehovah”? Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ your God for all time? Be it so! You shall never regret the choice!

“My God”—that supposes an appropriation by faith. Have you taken Jehovah to be your God? Have you boldly taken Him for your very own? In the Covenant of Grace, God gives over to His people, Himself—all that He is and all that He has—by a Covenant of salt. As the Believer becomes God’s portion, so the Lord becomes the Believer’s portion! He declares Himself to be ours and puts Himself at our disposal, exercising a boundless condescension of love in so doing. Our part in it is that we accept this Covenant gift and, by an act of faith, say, “This which God gives me, I, unworthy though I am, do freely accept. Though I deserve it not, yet as He has given Himself to me, I, with gladness, receive Him to be my God, my portion, world without end.”

Well do I remember the joyous day when my heart first took this possession to herself. It had appeared to be like a land of fire and terror and I desired it not. But when the Spirit of God had instructed and renewed me, then I perceived that God was as the land of Goshen—yes, as the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey! Yes, as the land Beulah, where the sun goes down no more forever, where all is joy, peace and love! Yes, as Heaven itself, for God is the very soul, center, source and fullness of bliss! My heart annexed this blessed territory with trembling joy. Yes, she seemed to have no other possession left except her God. From that hour she grew rich and remained so. What is there more for me but my God? How can I go an inch beyond, “my God, my Heaven, my All”?

Now, beloved Hearer, have you thus appropriated the Eternal God to be your own? Can you say, today, “First and foremost among my possessions is my God. I will not say that I have this and that, and ever so many other things, but I will sing, ‘My God, You are mine!’ Perhaps I could not say that I have much of this world’s goods, but I have the highest Good. If I have not all, yet I have the All-in-All who is more than all and He is everything to my spirit”? I trust you can say, “my God,” first, by your choice of Him and, secondly, by your appropriation of Him through faith. Wherever this is the case, it is the work of the Spirit of God and He must have our reverent love for thus enriching us.

“My God”—this signifies knowledge and acquaintance. Does it not? For unless the words are meaningless, you know who it is that you are talking of and you have had some acquaintance and dealings with Him. If I say, “So-and-So is my friend,” I give you to understand that I know him. And if I say, “Jehovah is my God,” I profess that I know Him and have fellowship with Him. You remember the inscription which Paul discovered upon an altar at Athens, “To the unknown God”? I would not have you worship there, my Brother, but I would have you understand that word of the Apostle, “After that you had known God, or rather were known of God.” There is an intimate knowledge subsisting between God and His people. “The Lord knows them that are His,” and all His people know Him, so that among them no one has need to say to his brother, “Know the Lord,” for they all know Him, from the least even to the greatest.

Now, what do you know of God? Have you ever spoken with Him? Has He spoken to you? Have you told Him your secrets? Has He revealed Himself to you, as it is written, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His Covenant”? Now, I am not talking about fancies. If any of you deem this to be fanciful, it is because you are strangers to the Covenant of Promise. I am speaking, now, to a people who know more than I can tell them of what this means. As for myself, I know something of nature and of the works of God’s hands, but my soul cares little for that knowledge compared with knowing HIM. Willingly and gladly I would forget all else I know if I might but know more of Him, for well am I persuaded that when old age comes on and memory fails me, that which my soul shall hold, as with a death grip, will not be historical remembrance, classical love, or theological learning, but what she knows by inward experience of the Lord her God!

When the veil shall drop upon all mortal shadows, to be uplifted upon eternal realities, then my heart shall care nothing for what she knew of things terrestrial! But she shall value beyond conception what she shall then know of the Immortal, the Invisible, the only wise God, her Savior! I am sure that I am speaking to many of you who can use the expression, “My God,” and mean by it that the God in whom you live and move and have your being is your Friend and your Father—that He dwells in you by the Holy Spirit—and that in Him you dwell as you hide yourselves in the wounds of Christ. Oh happy men and women that can, with knowledge and affection, say, “My God”! Unhappy are you who have neither part nor lot in this matter. Your sorrows shall be multiplied which hasten after another god, for your vanities will fail you! But as for you who know the Lord, to you shall joy increase even as the growing light of the rising sun!

If you have come as far as this, I am sure that you can follow me farther by admitting that the title, “My God,” implies an embrace of love. You know God as you know your child. And as you look at your boy, you cry, “My child, my child,” and you mean a great deal by that because your child is much more yours on account of the affection that you feel for him than any other possession that you have upon the face of the earth. You would lose everything else sooner than lose the darling of your bosom! The expression, “My God,” has an inexpressible amount of sweet affection wrapped up in it. I delight in that line of our old Psalm—

*“Yes, my own God is He.”*  
He is my very own! My God belongs to me as much as if He belonged to no other! My heart has twisted her tendrils around about Him as fast and firm as if no other tiny plant had dared to grasp Him. The Divine Father—oh, what joy lights up the soul when we think of that splendid Fatherhood, that infinite relationship of the Divine One to us, whom He has “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” How have we sometimes sung with David—

*“Such pity as a father has  
Unto his children dear,  
Like pity shows the Lord to such  
As worship Him in fear.”*

We love the Father and call Him, “My God.”  
And as for Jesus, the second Person in the Divine Unity, Incarnate  
God—does not your very heart leap at the sound of His name? Is there not all music condensed into two syllables in that name, “Jesus”? I know that it is so to you. He is your very own Christ, your Savior, forever and ever! And the blessed Spirit—do we not, with equal affection, lay hold upon Him, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Quickener, the Illuminator, the best of Friends, bearing with our ill behavior and still abiding in us, making us meet for the eternal Kingdom? Yes, Beloved, we do love our God! Do not our hearts say in our prayers, “O Lord, do not believe our actions, for, disobedient as we are, we do love You. Do not believe our forgetfulness, do not believe the lukewarmness which occasionally creeps over us, for You know all things, You know that we love You”? Such affection makes us cry, “My God!” We cannot comprehend Him, but we apprehend Him with the grip of hallowed love. We feel that we can never give Him up, even as He will never give us up. I am not what I ought to be, but I cannot give up my God! Hard as my heart feels, yet it melts with love to Him who has loved me from before the foundations of the world! Who shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, my  
Lord?  
What a deal there is in the title! But we have not exhausted it by a  
long way—let us have another drink from the well. You feel that now the  
obedience of your life is rendered to Him most cheerfully, for this is a sure  
outcome of the heart’s crying, “He is my God.” A man cannot call God,  
his God in truth unless he desires to obey Him, for God is a name to  
adore, to reverence, to worship. He who speaks of God but never obeys  
Him is a practical atheist—he or she has no God! That man who talks  
about God in the synagogue, but who has no regard for Him in the market, makes Jehovah to be no better a deity than the idols of the heathen  
who are only gods in their own temples, even if there. The man upon  
whose heart and hands the Godhead has no kind of influence—such a  
man is a liar and knows not God, but renders to Him lip service which is  
to God’s dishonor, and not to His Glory. Yes, Beloved, if you are what you  
profess to be, you can declare, “With all my infirmities and imperfections,  
I desire that my whole life should be obedience to the Divine precepts. I  
wish in all things to do that which is right and good, and true and kind  
according to the mind of Christ, in which I see the mind of God, my Father.” Concerning these things let there be great searching of heart.  
Come and look in this mirror and see if you bear the features of “imitators of God as dear children”—for it will go hard with you if you turn out  
to be pretenders.  
Let me only add that this expressive phrase, “My God,” hints at a joy  
and delight in Him. As men would say—“my love,” “my choice,” “my treasure,” “my delight”—so does the Prophet say, “My God.” The very name wakes all the music of his soul! As when the sleeping flowers, being touched by the first beams of the rising sun, open their bright eyes to look on Him who is the foster-father of all their beauty and seem, each one, to say, “My King,” so do our hearts rejoice in the Presence of the  
Lord and our quickened spirits cry, “My God!”  
So much for the title. May it be written on your hearts by the Holy Spirit.  
II. The second point in our brief text is THE ARGUMENT, for I believe  
the title contains within itself a secret logical force. “My God will hear  
me.” As surely as He is my God, He will hear me. Why?  
Well, He will hear me, first, because He is God—because He is the living and true God. Those gods of stone cannot hear me, but my God will  
hear me. The gods that many men choose will not hear them in the day  
of trouble. To which of them will they call in the hour of their affliction?  
But my God will hear me! It is His memorial that He hears prayer. The  
oracles of the heathen were but liars. Those who sought the false gods  
did but dote upon lies—they were deceivers and deceived. But my God  
will hear me! As surely as He is God, He will answer prayer! If He does  
not answer prayer, then He is no more a God than Jupiter, or Saturn, or  
Venus. For us as Christian people and worshippers of the Most High, it is  
a Truth of God never to be questioned that Jehovah is the living and true  
God, whose memorial is that He hears the prayers of His people. “My God  
will hear me.”  
You see in what a tone of confidence this Prophet speaks—and why  
should not every child of God speak with the same confidence? The joy of  
religion lies in a hearty faith in it. You begin handling it with dainty fingers, criticizing it everlastingly, questioning this and questioning that  
with anxious debate of heart—and the consequence is that you miss its  
sweetness. It is nothing to your comfort till it is everything to your faith.  
You must believe it and the more thoroughly you believe it, the more will  
it prove itself true to you. The proof of the Gospel lies in the testing of it,  
by which I mean, in the practical proving and enjoying of it. Suppose you  
try to pray and do not believe in prayer? Well, you do not pray. You get  
nothing by such praying—you work a dry pump! You must have confidence in the Mercy Seat if the Mercy Seat is to be a place of refuge for  
you. “He that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and  
tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the  
Lord.” “He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a  
rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”  
To my mind it seems the right thing to believe in the living God right  
up to the hilt—to believe in His promises without stint or limit. His Word is either true or false. If it is false, I will never preach it—if it is true, I will never doubt it! There let it stand like a column of brass—though all things else should fail, God must hear prayer. He may do this and He may do that, but He must hear prayer! My God will hear me because He is a true God and no liar and He has, Himself, declared, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.” He has laid it down as unquestionable fact, “He that seeks, finds; he that asks, receives and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” How can He run back from this?  
Why should I imagine that He will lie?  
But why am I so sure, as a matter of argument, that God will hear  
prayer? The answer is again in the title, “My God.” Because He has made  
Himself my God, He will hear me. O you that are familiar with your God,  
who can therefore call Him by the dear title of, “My God,” you will see the  
overwhelming conclusiveness of this reasoning. To hear a petitioner is a  
small thing compared to giving yourself over to him. “My God will hear  
me,” for doubtless, if He has given Himself to be my God, He will hear  
me! He has done the greater thing, He will surely do the lesser! If, in infinite condescension, He permits me to call Him, “my God,” and I perceive  
all through His Gospel that He invites me to do so, then, surely, He will  
hear me! He that has said, “They shall be My people, and I will be their  
God,” will do the much smaller thing—He will, without doubt—hear them  
when they call upon Him. “You, being evil, know how to give good gifts  
unto your children. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the  
Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” “He that spared not His own Son, but  
delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give  
us all things?”  
Is not that clear enough? He has given us Himself and His Son—how  
can He shut out our cries? After what He has done for us in the past, we  
cannot doubt that He will hear us. What? Give us cleansing by His blood  
and then not hear us? What? Give us the new birth and then not hear  
us? Did He bless us when we did not seek Him and will He not hear us  
when we do seek Him? What? Look after us when we were like stray  
sheep, deaf to all His calls—seek after us till He restored us—and then  
not hear us when we become the sheep of His pasture? Impossible! The  
argument is irresistible—My God will certainly hear me!  
Moreover, my God has heard me so many times, already, and, therefore, be it far from me to doubt His present and future favor. A Brother in  
prayer reminded us, just now, that we ought to have greater faith than  
the saints of the olden times because we have many more centuries of  
the Divine faithfulness to read of and to see. It is so, but I fear that observation seldom acts upon us so forcibly as actual personal experience. What shall I say to my beloved Brothers and Sisters who are getting old? They have had such experience. God has heard your prayers many times, my aged Brethren, and your faith is thereby confirmed. When we first began to pray, we were staggered if objectors questioned us. “You talk about God having heard your prayer.” “Yes,” we said, “He did hear us,” and we stated our case. The skeptic sneered and said, “That was  
merely a coincidence.”  
When we heard that remark for the first time, we were somewhat taken aback. We admitted that we could not draw an inference from two or  
three facts, for, perhaps, in later years there might be 30 facts which  
would tell the other way. But, my veteran Brothers and Sisters, we are  
not in that condition tonight, for some of us have had 30 or 40 years’ experience of God’s hearing prayer and our facts are as many as the hairs  
of our heads! Do opponents say that these are coincidences? We do not  
care to answer such perverse jangling! If they were in our position, they  
would not wish to answer such remarks. They would laugh and that is  
all that they would find in their hearts to do! A man puts on warm clothing and is not pinched by the frost. His acquaintance tells him that he  
does not believe in flannel and broad-cloth. He shivers in his unbelief  
and tells the well-clad man that his comfort is a mere coincidence! Humorous, is it not?  
But if the objector gets frozen to death, the wit grows rather grim!  
When we have not prayed and have not received a blessing—and have  
been ready to perish—I suppose our failure has been a coincidence! And  
when we have betaken ourselves to our knees and have cried mightily to  
God, pleaded the promises, and God has answered us as visibly as if He  
had split the blue heavens and thrust out His almighty arm to help us—  
has that been a coincidence? I call such things plain answers to prayer,  
but those who have never experienced the like think me a fanatic! I will  
therefore let them use their own terms. We will not wrangle over words—  
“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” As to the delivering  
mercy of God—you may call it a coincidence if you like—but to us it will  
always be a blessed proof that the Lord hears prayer.  
Using this sweet title, containing, as it does, within itself a whole century of logic, we say, joyfully, “My God will hear me.” What bliss it is to  
have so sweet an assurance always at hand! It is a versicle of heavenly  
music—“My God will hear me.” The Lord has entered into Covenant with  
us that He will not turn away from us from doing us good and in that Covenant His hearing prayer is included. He could not be our Friend and be  
deaf to our appeals! He could not be in fellowship with us and shut out  
our cries! Listen to some of His own Covenant Words—“Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me” (Psa 50:15). “He shall call upon Me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him” (Psa. 91:15). “The Lord is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Psa. 145:18, 19). “And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa. 65:24). “Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you know not” (Jer. 33:3). Do you need more than this? The Lord has said it and He will make it good! He has never said to  
the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.  
Were not the Lord to hear prayer and bear His people through their  
troubles, He would, Himself, be a great loser. He would lose all that His  
wisdom has planned, all that His sovereignty has ordained, all that His  
love has

egun, all that His power has worked and all that upon which  
His heart is set! If Jehovah did not hear prayer, it were to Him as though  
a father no more heard the voice of his child—he would lose that which  
charms his fatherly mind and miss that which is a solace to his loving  
heart. If God does not hear me, He will lose me—and this I feel He will  
not do, for He has engraved me upon the palms of His hands, that I may  
never be forgotten of Him. O, yes, my God will hear me! His truth and  
honor cannot be imperiled by a refusal to hear the pleadings of His own  
child!  
III. Bear with me while I invite you, in the third place, to notice the  
FAVOR ITSELF. “My God will hear me.” You notice that in Scripture we  
do not often find the expression, “My God will answer me.” We do read  
that He answers prayer, but more frequently God is said to be the God  
that hears prayer. It is better for us to have a promise that God will hear  
us than a promise that God will always answer us. In fact, if it were a  
matter of absolute fact that God would always answer the prayers of His  
people as they present them, it would be an terrible Truth. I would  
shrink from ever praying again if I were absolutely sure that the Lord  
would answer my prayer, whatever it might be. I might curse myself seven times deep by a prayer within the next seven minutes, if there were no  
safeguards and limits to the promise of prayer being answered! It is neither desirable nor possible that all things should be left to our  
choice! So much do I feel this, that if my Lord should say to me, “From  
this hour I will always answer your prayer just as you pray it,” the first  
petition I would offer would be, “Lord, do nothing of the sort.” Because  
that would be putting the responsibility of my life upon myself, instead of  
allowing it to remain upon God. It were, in fact, to make me the master of the house and to make me my own shepherd—the very first thing I would wish would be to strip myself of such a power! I would cry, “Lord, do as You will about answering me; I will be well content if You will hear me.” I like that kind of hearing prayer of which Ralph Erskine says— *“I’m heard when answered, soon or late, Yes, heard when I no answer get—  
Most kindly answered when refused,  
And treated well when harshly used.”*  
It is enough for a praying heart that it has a hearing God.  
But notice, “My God will hear me.” It means, first, literally that He will  
hear me as a Listener. A good Brother of my acquaintance, a minister of  
the Gospel, going to preach from the text that God will hear prayer,  
called upon one of his poor people who said, when the visit was over,  
that she had greatly enjoyed his call. He thought to himself, “I have  
scarcely said a word and yet she says that I have done her good.” Turning to her, he enquired, “Sister, how can I have done you good, for I have  
hardly spoken with you?” “Ah, Sir,” she replied, “you have listened so  
kindly. You have heard all I had to say and there are very few who will do  
that.” Just so. People in deep trouble like somebody to hear them all  
through—even little children are comforted by telling mother all about it.  
We are in such a hurry with poor troubled spirits that we hasten them  
on to the end of the sentence and try to make them skip the dreary details. But to them this seems unkind, for their story is sacred and, therefore, they go slowly on with it till we are quite tired.  
I have often hurried on a poor despondent creature till I have seen the  
uselessness of it—it is always best to let them spin on. It does them good.  
To spill out the heart to a patient listener is a great relief to a burdened  
spirit—and the heart must do it in its own way. Here is a sweet assurance, “My God will hear me.” I may be very bad and what I say may be  
very broken. And I may groan a good deal and I may say the same thing  
over and over again—and my whole ditty may be very stupid—but, “My  
God will hear me.” He is in no hurry! He is the God of patience. He will  
listen to my dreary talk and endure each gloomy detail. I need not hold  
Him as the Ancient Mariner held the wedding guest who was unwilling to  
hear his weary rhyme of the sea—my God will willingly listen to me right  
through, from beginning to end, groans and all! “My God will hear me.” And then the Lord will listen as a Friend full of sympathy. Some people  
listen but do not hear. You tell them your story, but it does not help you  
a bit because their minds are no more moved by your case than if they  
were far away. They are just saying to themselves, “We will hear this poor  
old lady’s story; it will please her.” But it does not please her because she  
perceives that they have no sympathy, no feeling for her. The kind of person you like to tell your story to is one who weeps with you—who is really afflicted with your affliction. It is greatly comforting to have a person  
with you who feels just as you feel, who, when you are very stupid,  
seems to be stupid, too; who frets as you fret and groans in your groans. “Mother,” said a little girl, once, “I cannot make it out. Mrs. Smith says  
I do her so much good. Poor Mrs. Smith has lost her husband, Mother,  
and she is very sad. She sits and cries and I get up and lay my cheek on  
her cheek, and I cry and say that I love her. And then she says that she  
loves me and that I comfort her.” Just so. That is the truest form of consolation, is it not? “Weep with them that weep.” That is how God, my  
God, will hear me, feeling with me, sympathizing with me. “In all their affliction He was afflicted and the angel of His Presence saved them.” “I am  
with you, says the Lord.”—  
*“I feel in my heart all your sighs and your groans, For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones. In all your afflictions your Head feels the pain, They all are most needful, not one is in vain,”*“My God will hear me.” He will listen to me and He will sympathize with  
me.  
“My God will hear me.” That is, He will turn it over and discriminate in  
His own mind, and He will not allow me to be condemned by the hurried  
judgment of men. He will hear me as a judge patiently hears a case. Others will come in and clamor against me and refuse to listen to a word of  
explanation. But my God will hear me! That was a splendid utterance of  
the holy Patriarch, Job! He went a long way further than he knew he  
went when he said it—“I know that my Redeemer lives.” His unkind  
friends charged him very terribly and Job spoke up for himself, but he  
did not get on at it. He could not plead his own cause successfully and,  
therefore, in his desperation, he cried, “I have a God that will yet plead  
my cause, and if He does not do it while I am alive, yet I know that He  
lives! And though after my skin, worms devour my body, yet in my flesh  
shall I behold Him, and I shall be cleared from this misrepresentation! I  
shall be delivered from this suspicion. I know I shall! My God will hear  
me! He will hear my suit right through and do me justice and I shall behold Him, whom my eyes shall see, for myself, and not another.” Job felt  
assured of being cleared at last. Dear child of God, you may do the same!  
Your character shall not be injured by malicious tongues. They lie  
against you; they refuse you a hearing; they wrest your words; they empty the buckets of their contempt upon you, but your God will hear you! Then, at the back of that, of course, comes the conclusion of every loving heart that, as God will hear the case right through, so He will certainly hear as a Helper. “My God will hear me.” Now, child of God, go away with this promise in your hands and in your heart—“My God will hear me”—and then use it like a magic wand. Turn it whichever way you will and it will clear your path. You are going to preach the Gospel in a distant country, perhaps, and your spirit sinks as you sigh, “Who is sufficient for these things?” Lift up your heart to God and His Grace shall be sufficient for you and His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness, for your God will hear you! Or you have to go home, tonight, to a sick house and to lose one that is dear to you. You shall be sustained, for  
in your ear is this Word of God, “My God will hear me.”  
Or, perhaps, you yourself have to sicken and die. Do you enquire—  
“What shall I do in the swellings of Jordan”? Here is your happy answer,  
“My God will hear me!” I shall cry to Him and He will answer me. He will  
have a desire to the work of His hands. Yes, though I go down into the  
valley of the shadow of death, my God will hear me! And when I lie in the  
tomb, my God will remember me and He will call me up with sound of a  
trumpet—and my body shall live again! My God shall hear me singing  
His praises before His Throne! My God shall hear me, world without end,  
as my whole being shall lift up her joyous notes of, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah,” unto Him who loved me out of the Pit and lifted me up to  
His own right hand!  
IV. My only sorrow about this text is my fear that it could not honestly  
fall from some of your lips—you could not truthfully say, “My God will  
hear me.” So I close by noting THE PERSON to whom it belongs—“My  
God will hear me.” Will He hear you? Dear Heart, are you cast down under a sense of sin? Do you seek forgiveness? He will hear you! Are you  
burdened because you cannot live without sin? Would you be free from  
all evil? He will hear you! Are you persecuted for righteousness’ sake?  
Are the men of your household turned to be your foes? He will hear you  
and cause you to rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer for Jesus’  
sake! Are you assured of the result of prayer? You shall not be disappointed. Your God will hear you! Have you been praying long? Cease  
not from importunity, but solace yourself with this sure belief—My God  
will hear me. Will you now come and cast yourselves into the arms of Jesus, the Crucified? Your God has heard you! Be of good cheer! O, my dear Hearer, have you a God? Strange question, but I press it  
even with tears—have you a God? If you have no God, of course you have  
nobody to hear you when the great floods of water prevail! My dear Hearer, if you make the world your god, it cannot hear you in the day of your  
trouble! You may be a very rich man and have large estates, but I would  
sooner occupy the place of the poorest believing pauper in the workhouse  
than take your position without a God and without a Throne of Grace! How do people live that have no God to go to? If a man were to say to me, “I never get a morsel of bread to eat at all,” I would wonder how he lived. But when a man says, “I never pray and God never hears me,” I am in  
equal wonder! How can the poor creature exist?  
These are hard times with a great many of you. You have not many  
worldly comforts. Indeed, some of you cannot even find work. What can  
you do without a God to fly to? I suppose your head aches, sometimes,  
like mine. I suppose cares and troubles eat into your mind as they do into mine. I suppose you have your difficulties and your knots that you  
cannot untie, just as I have mine. How do you keep your souls alive  
without a God? I pray God that I may never live a day without prayer and  
without trusting my God. How do you bear up, some of you? I do not  
wonder that you go and get drunk to drown your thoughts! I do not wonder that you need frivolities and theatricals and all sorts of childish toys  
to put your cares out of your minds, for you need something or other to  
help you forget the miseries which are coming upon you thick and heavy! Yet is it not madness to drive away wise thoughts? What a wretched  
business it must be to be in dread of your own thoughts! You dare not sit  
alone in your chamber for half-an-hour and think, because if you did you  
would begin to think of dying—and you could not bear to think of that  
without a God! You might even be driven to think of Hell and of a judgment to come—and that you could not endure. If you dare not think of  
them, how will you bear them? Oh poor souls! Poor souls! You are in a  
sad state, indeed! But you need not remain so. If any man wills to have  
God to be his own God, Grace has given him that will! If you desire Christ, you may have Him!  
What is the price? Nothing at all! Receive Him freely! Believe in Jesus  
Christ—that is, trust yourself with Him—and God is your God and you  
may go on your way full of joy and thankfulness! God bless you and comfort you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 7.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—622, 999, 981.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2069 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

MY OWN PERSONAL HOLDFAST

NO. 2069

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My God will hear me.”  
Micah 7:7.**

OBSERVE that the Prophet has no sort of doubt. He insinuates no “if” or “an” or “but” or “perhaps,” but he says it straight out as a fact of which he is infallibly convinced—“My God will hear me.” What a blessed thing it is that the child of God knows and feels that this is true! Wherever he may fail, he will succeed at the Throne! If all other friendly ears are closed, his Friend of friends will hear him. Lose your confidence in the power of prayer and I know not what remains for you. If you are obliged to say, “My God will not hear me”—if that is the language of your unbelieving spirit— your Achilles tendon is cut and you cannot stand with confidence, much less run with delight.

With faith in prayer you have Heaven’s infinite treasures at your disposal. But if you ask waveringly, you find that warning true, “He that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” You must know with absolute certainty that God is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or you will not be among those whom the Father seeks to worship Him. To be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” you must be strong upon your knees. “My God will hear me” is a sentence which you must know by heart.

It is a very wide question, that of God’s hearing the prayers of men, and I should need a considerable time to describe particularly whose prayers the Lord will hear and what prayers He will hear and how it is true that He always hears, whatever His answer may be. But it will be a far better thing if, without debate, you can personally say for yourself, “Let others say what they will and judge what they please in this matter, I am persuaded by the Spirit of all Grace that my God will hear me.” If, so far as you yourself are concerned, you have this assurance, your own feet are upon a rock and you need not trouble about the sand and the mire.

This assurance, “My God will hear me,” is better than all the aid of mortal men and a greater wealth than the mines of India could afford you. I desire to preach, not only from these few words but also from their connection. The position of the text in the Sacred Book is highly instructive. May the Author of the Book make it so at this time!

I. I shall try to speak, in the first place, UPON THE RESULTS OF CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER IN BELIEVERS. When they can truly say, “My God will hear me,” the best consequences will come of it. Think of what will happen to them.

To begin with, in the worst of times God is their resort. In reading the chapter we saw that the times were desperate. The nation had become rotten throughout. “The good man is perished out of the earth: and there

is none upright among men.” Justice was openly sold. Bribes were unblushingly taken and even openly demanded. In business all were dishonest. “The best of them is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.” In domestic life there was no trusting friend, or husband, or wife, or son, or daughter.

The whole land had become corrupt. And as the Prophet surveyed it with tears in his eyes, he could see nothing worth the looking upon, and he cried, “Therefore I will look unto the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.” His conviction that God would hear his prayer was his last comfort and it led him to close his eyes upon the spectacle of universal crime and look heavenward and heavenward only. When you have faith in prayer you will, in the cloudy and dark day, find consolation in looking to God who is the blessed sun from whom a brighter day will come.

Instead of being overcome by doubt you will gather up your faith, which otherwise might have been scattered among men, and you will place the whole of it upon God, who still remains true and faithful and holy. Men who have confidence in prayer have perpetual errands at the Throne, for they have abundant trials in the wickedness of men and they look for more abundant mercies from the Lord. If they are in straitened circumstances they run to their Father in Heaven to ask that their daily bread may be given them. And if they enjoy plenty, with equal earnestness they pray that their abundance may be sanctified.

In any case, the Believer has abundant reasons for praying without ceasing. If a man had no confidence in prayer, would he thus resort to God in the worst of times and in the best of times? Would he seek deliverance from evil things and the consecration of good things? I think not. We resort to God because He bids us do so. We accept His method of granting blessings and prayer because we conceive prayer to be a part of the Divine Decree. The same God that ordains to give a certain blessing has also ordained that we shall pray for it. We do not expect to change the will of God but we believe our prayer to be a part of His will. It is not contrary to predestination for us to pray—it is itself a part of it.

As coming events cast their shadows, so does a coming mercy cast upon our heart a desire to pray. That I should pray is as much the Divine purpose as that the asked-for blessing should come to me. The Word of the Lord concerning the Believer is, “He shall call upon Me and I will answer Him.” God’s Providence is thus like a two-leaved gate. Our prayer, and God’s act, work upon the one hinge of the eternal purpose.

Now, if a man had no confidence in prayer, he would not look to God in dark times. He would be searching everywhere else for some lower light which might be available. If the Lord’s ear is too high, or He Himself is too great, or too remote for our requests to be of any avail, let us go to the creature. We must draw from the cistern if we cannot get at the fountain. What else remains? If an appeal to the highest and the best is absurd, does not common sense direct us to abandon it and trust in those who will hear us? I know that Scripture says, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” And this makes me feel that there must be a power in trusting in God.

Brethren, we are in an evil case, if, indeed, prayer is a mere form. But we need not fall into despair for we are not in such a condition. We need not run to saints, or angels, or friends, for verily, there is a God that hears prayer. Saints in all ages have turned their eyes to the Lord, their God, and I cannot conceive of them as fools. And yet, what more foolish than to look to a God who cannot see the glance of faith, nor hear the voice of supplication, nor in any way practically sympathize with the trust of His worshippers? Beloved, we look to the Lord at all times, because He that made the eye, can certainly see—and He that made the ear, can assuredly hear—and He that has commanded us to pray, will not fail to regard us. I, for one, for this reason, solemnly declare, “Therefore will I look unto the Lord.”

Another blessing which we derive from the certainty that God hears our prayer is that our eyes are led to look to God with hope. Not only do we turn to the Lord because we have no other resort but because we look to Him with joyful expectation. The Prophet says, “Therefore will I look unto the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation.” We view our God, not as a forlorn hope, but as the sure source of salvation to us. Many things are taken from us, but hope remains forever in the box which is not that of Pandora but of Jehovah. It is one of the best of our blessings that we, “through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.” Our God is called “the God of hope.” We have hope that God will hear because He is Jehovah, the I AM. We know that He is and that He is equal to all emergencies, be they what they may. Even in death we say, “Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.”

When we cannot see any other grounds for hope, we find good anchorhold in the promise of the Lord, so that we cry, “My soul, wait only upon God. For my expectation is from Him.” It is He that has so often wrought deliverances for His praying people—we look for His mercy as men that watch for the morning. It is no small thing to keep hope alive in the human bosom—it is the direst of calamities when it dies out. From where does the suicide plunge into the dark wave, or the crimson gash that lets out a soul? Are not those gates of grim death opened as hope flies away? From where is that listlessness, that lethargy, that want of energy, that letting things drift to ruin? It is because hope has quit the helm and the ship is drawn upon the rocks. Kill hope in a man, and you have killed the man’s best self. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity. But “a wounded spirit who can bear?”

Now, a firm conviction that God will hear prayer is a buoy to a sinking hope. He will not give all up who believes that his God will hear him. He cannot be driven to desperation while the Mercy Seat continues a source of hope and he remains in possession of his reason. You will hear him argue with himself, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God—for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.” Surely, these are two choice blessings—to be enabled to look always to God and to look towards Him evermore with hope.

But we go further. A full conviction of the certainty that God will hear our prayers helps us to wait with patience. “I will wait for the God of my salvation.” He may not answer me today but He will hear me. Tomorrow may not bring me the expected deliverance but it will come. Though the vision tarry, I will wait for it. For it shall come and according to the reckoning of infinite wisdom it really will not tarry. Great is the punctuality of the living God. He never is before His time but He never is behind.

He is not only present when we need Him but we find Him, “a very present help in trouble.” We find it good to wait because we have no fear of being disappointed. A full conviction that prayer shall be heard makes us sit even with Job on the dunghill and bless the Lord who has taken away what before He gave. It makes us strengthen ourselves on the bed of languishing and sing with Jacob, “I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord.” It enables us with David to encourage ourselves in the Lord amid the ashes of our Ziklag. It helps us to go with Jeremiah into the low dungeon and yet to say, “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him.”

It enables us to hope with Jonah, when all hopes seem gone, till we at length bear witness, “Out of the belly of Hell cried I and You heard my voice.” In all difficulties and under all opposition, we shall be able to endure with patience the will of the Lord if we remain firm in the assurance that prayer is heard of the Lord. I often repeat Ralph Erskine’s ditty—

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

It is so. No good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly. And therefore, if an answer to prayer is withheld, it is because what we sought was not for our real good. A flat denial in form may be a full grant in essence since all our prayers are comprehended in, “Your will be done.” And this is the standing corrective for all that we ask amiss. If, then, in prayer we do not have our will of God in one way, yet we shall have it in another. For we evermore, in the inmost depths of our soul, are praying, “Nevertheless, not as I will but as You will.”

The Lord will either give us what we ask, or do some better thing for us. Believe in prayer with a tenacity that nothing can remove. Stand to it that He does hear you and be not staggered. Hope against hope and wait to the uttermost. Do not have a pretended and false faith in it but let the solid, solemn, immovable conviction of your inmost soul be, “My God will hear me.”

If you now pass on to the verse that follows the text, you will get another series of thoughts, showing the result of an assured conviction that God hears prayer. Observe that it gives us an answer to our enemies. “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: my God will hear me.” The foe has seen me fall and he has hastened to set his foot upon me. But I do not lie there in despair, surrendering myself to be destroyed by him, for “My God will hear me.” How bravely can we deride derision and pour scorning upon the scorners, even when they are in their glory, when we firmly believe that the Lord hears prayer!

They reckon that we are defeated, that we have no one to plead our cause, that we shall never be heard of again and they have very ingenious ways of telling us these cruel persuasions of theirs. We answer them by declaring boldly that our heavenly Father has heard our cries and that, before long, He will make this clear even to our foes. “Then my enemy shall see it and shame shall cover her which said unto me, ‘Where is the Lord your God?’ ”

We fight a waiting battle. Fabius saved Rome by waiting and we, also, are saved by the hope which waits upon the Lord and bides the time of the faithful promise. The saint is no Caesar, who boastfully writes, “Veni, vidi, vici.” His dispatches are written with the pen of patience and here is one of them, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait and in His Word do I hope.” We are of the tribe of Gad, of whom it is written, “A troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.” Cheering is that promise—“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholds him with His hand.”

Our adversaries had better not laugh till the affair is over. We have yet a weapon in reserve which we have not done with yet. That weapon is prayer. We answer their shouts of victory with this one sentence, “My God will hear me.” The tables will yet be turned, the trampler shall be trampled on and captivity itself led captive. We may have to wait long before the Lord takes up the quarrel of His Covenant, but He will avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them. As for me, my heart is quiet beneath the contumely which comes of defending the Lord’s Truth, for He will justify me before long.

And if He should not do so speedily, yet He will do it ultimately—yes, I am happy to wait even till after death, for I know that my Justifier lives and that, though after my skin worms devour this body, yet shall my Lord vindicate me and all others who have been faithful to His Truth. But where would be our patience under defeat? Where our answer to the adversary, if we were not sure that, beyond all doubt, God will hear prayer? We have left our case in His hands and now we are unmoved by sarcasm and ridicule, for our cause is safe in the keeping of the Eternal. Sneer still, you philosophic doubter, “My God will hear me.”

Again, our confidence in a prayer-hearing God sustains us with the bright prospect of rising when we are down. What says the Prophet? “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.” What if I have slipped? What if, through pressure of pain and sorrow, my spirits have sunk within me? What if I am a broken and crushed man? Yet I can pray and I do pray and my God will hear me. Therefore I shall arise again. Oh, blessed thought! The Christian may fall very low but underneath him are the everlasting arms. Since those arms are underneath, they will stay the fall and lift us up from it. We shall arise.

How high that rising who can tell? Even though we fall into the grave, blessed be God, we can fall no lower. And then comes the rising from among the dead, the rising to the Throne. It makes my spirit leap within me to think how this conviction that God hears prayer begets in us the joyful certainty that we cannot be left in the dust but we must arise and shake ourselves and put on our beautiful array. The God that has promised to hear us shall bring us again from Bashan—yes, He shall bring us

up again from the depths of the sea. Our downcastings are temporary. Our uprisings are eternal. We shall return with singing and everlasting joy shall be upon our heads. Faith sets us praying and praying sets all Heaven at work to draw us out of the pit and set us on high.

A firm conviction that the Lord hears prayer gives the soul confidence that light will come to it. The Prophet says, “When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.” This delightful expectation springs out of that little word, “My God will hear me.” If I am plunged in darkness I shall still pray. And as the Lord will hear me, He will give me light. Prayer lights candles where there are none. The moaning of oppressed Israel, though they were scarcely prayers, yet ended the long darkness of their Egyptian bondage. Peter lies in the dark, bound with chains. But the Church is praying for him in Mrs. Mark’s house and suddenly a light shines in the dungeon!

An angel awakens him with a touch on the side and leads him out into the street to his own company. My God—my Light. It cannot be that a Christian should be in the dark and not have his God with him. For if his God is with him it must be light round about him. Joy and comfort must spring up in the most barren misery if we know how to pray—the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, if the feet of supplication touch it. They said that where the Tartar’s foot fell the grass was withered. But we may say that where the Believer’s knee touches all is made fruitful. God keep us in this conviction.

I say again, if this goes, all goes—if there is no more power in prayer, religion is either null and void, or a mere piece of fanaticism, or a juggle of priest craft. If God’s answering prayer is but an idle daydream, where are we? Poor lone children crying in the dark to a Father who cannot hear us? Poor children apt to be entangled in the terrible machinery of events and to be whirled round and crushed by it, since no fatherly hand will be stretched out to rescue us? Mungo Park, in the desert, was refreshed by the sight of a bit of moss because it told him that God was near.

But all this is an error according to the modern theory that God either may not, cannot, or will not interpose in answer to His children’s cry. The reign of Law is proclaimed but the Law-giver is pushed back beyond our reach. We call but He does not hear—none but old-fashioned bigots can imagine that He does. Or if perhaps He hears, it is a still greater chance that He will not answer—so they say. If prayer seems to be answered it is a mere coincidence, a happy accident which pleases the pious mind. I am sick of repeating such cruel talk. Brothers and Sisters, we know better. We are as sure of the Law that our God hears prayer—we are each one personally as sure that “my God will hear me,” as we are sure that the law of gravitation binds matter in its place.

We have a personal Providence, a personal God and a personal God listening to our prayers. And we are persuaded, therefore, that all things must work together for good and we must come out of the darkness—but even in the darkness the Lord shall be a light about us. This supports our spirits under the greatest pressure and gives us songs in the night.

All those benefits I have spoken of are the results of holding firmly to the doctrine of effectual prayer. And to us most excellent results they are.  
II. And from this I pass on, secondly, to notice THE REASON FOR THE GREAT CONFIDENCE WHICH BELIEVERS EXHIBIT IN THE MATTER OF PRAYER. They speak not without reason when they say, “My God will hear me.” Why do we believe thus?  
We believe it first and mainly, because of the faithful Promiser. The character of the Lord God, who has promised to answer prayer, the truthfulness of the Lord Jesus, who has said, “If you shall ask anything in My name I will do it,” and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit who incites the prayer—in a word, the Character of God Himself constrains us to rely upon His word without a doubt. It is declared, over and over, in the inspired Scriptures of Truth, that “He that seeks finds. And to him that knocks it shall be opened.”  
We have the command, “Ask and it shall be given you.” We are told that, “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” We are assured that, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Yes, not only are we told this, but we have it set before us in actual instances, such as Elijah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel and multitudes of others. It is a matter of Covenant with God that He will hear His children’s prayers. “He shall call upon Me and I will answer him!” Is the Lord faithful? Is He true? Only let us get a reply to those two questions and the matter is settled.  
Is He the same God as in former ages? Can He, will He, still keep His word as before? We have but one form of answer to these queries—He is Jehovah and He changes not. I had rather have one little promise in the corner of the Bible to support my faith than I would have all the philosophies of scientific men to sustain my opinion. The history of philosophy is in brief the history of fools. All the sets of philosophers that have yet lived have been more successful in contradicting those that came before them than in anything else. It is well when the children of Ammon and Moab stand up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir utterly to slay and destroy them. The enemies of God are good at the business of destroying each other.  
Within a few years the evolutionists will be cut in pieces by some new dreamers. The reigning philosophers of the present period have in them so much of the vitality of madness that they will be a perpetual subject of contempt. And I venture to prophesy that before my head shall lie in the grave there will hardly be a notable man left who will not have washed his hands of the present theory. That which is taught today for a certainty by savants will soon have been so disproved as to be trod down as the mire in the streets.  
The Lord’s Truth lives and reigns but man’s inventions are but for an hour. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet. But as I have lived to see marvelous changes in the dogmas of philosophy—I expect to see still more. See how they have shifted. They used to tell us that the natural depravity of our race was a myth—they scouted the idea that we were born in sin and declared with mimic sentiment that every dear babe was perfect. Now what do they tell us? Why, that if we do not inherit the original sin of Adam, or any other foregoing man, we have upon us the hereditary results of the transgressions of the primeval oysters, or other creatures, from which we have ascended or descended. We bear in our bodies, if not in our souls, the effects of all the tricks of the monkeys whose future was entailed upon us by evolution.  
This nonsense is to be received by learned societies with patience and accepted by us with reverence, while the simple statements of Holy Writ are regarded as mythical or incredible. I only mention this folly for the sake of showing that the opponents of the Word of God constantly shift their positions, like quicksand at a river’s mouth. But they are equally dangerous, whatever position they occupy. In the announcement of heredity, philosophical thought has deprived itself of all power to object to the Biblical doctrine of original sin. This is of no consequence to us, who care nothing for their objections.  
But it ought to be some sort of hint to them. According to modern thinkers, what is true on Monday may be false on Tuesday. And what is certain on Wednesday may be our duty to doubt on a Thursday and so on, world without end. Every change of the moon sees a change in the teaching of the new theology. A good stout hypothesis in the old times served a man for a hobbyhorse for twenty years. But nowadays their sorry jades hardly last twenty months. Said I not well that the smallest promise of God is worth more than all that ever has been taught, or ever shall be taught, by skeptical philosophers and speculative theologians?  
Let God be true but every man a liar. Whatever may be the truth in science, God is true and on His promise we build our confidence. We will distrust the witness of all men and angels but we cannot, we dare not, distrust the Lord. I feel ashamed to add anything to the first overwhelming reason for faith, for that is enough and more than enough. Yet since faith is so often weak, we may place beneath it another prop. We believe in the power of prayer because of our past experience. Certain of us could not say less than, “My God will hear me,” for if we did we should be traitors to the witness of our lives.  
I shall not turn this into an experience-meeting but, if I did, what testimonies we could produce to answered prayer! I will not even quote a selection from the many great and special answers which I have personally received. But all the saints of God are one in their testimony upon this point. I take leave to say that praying people are as a rule as honest and truth-speaking a people as those gentlemen who deny the virtue of prayer. Well, these men, myself among them, solemnly declare that God has heard and answered our prayers. And we do not say this in moments of fanaticism when we are worked up into a delirium of devotion but we assert it soberly, as a plain matter of fact.  
If we were about to die we should assert this all the more earnestly. It is true to us as before God. Upon this statement, that God has heard and answered our prayers, we are prepared to speak as positively, solemnly and deliberately, as if we thought it right to call God to witness by an oath. We are not, therefore, prepared to have our witness summarily dismissed as of no value. We claim as men the right to be believed. At any rate, we shall hold to facts which we have ourselves experienced and to the truth which they prove. And if we are ridiculed for so doing, we shall bear it with equanimity. When the philosopher said that there was no such thing as matter, he who hurt his head against a post was convinced of the contrary.  
And when another great theorist said that there was no such thing as mind, he who had been heart-broken with sorrow could not be converted to the opinion. It is hard to argue against our experience and consciousness. We are case-hardened. The Creole Proverb says, “When the mosquito tried to sting the alligator, he wasted his time.” And the case is much the same when infidels deal with us. It would be needful to convince us that facts are not facts, that deliverances from trouble were not deliverances, that supplies of necessities were not supplies.  
I am ready to disbelieve my eyes, for they have often deceived me. I am ready to discredit my ears, for they have misled me. But I cannot disbelieve my personal experience, especially when it does not consist of a few scattered incidents but of a chain of facts. The Lord has listened to my voice when I have cried to Him and this I know as certainly as I know that I have lived upon this earth. Therefore I believe that “my God will hear me” in the present and in the future.  
Beloved, we are sure that God will hear us because we have towards God a sense of sonship. He is our Father and we know it. Hence we argue that if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, He also will give to us what we need at His hands if we cry to Him. Concerning this I need not argue. Granted the fatherhood of God, He must hear prayer. Deny that He is your Father and I do not say that He will hear you.  
Moreover, we believe in the power of believing prayer, because of the prevalence of our Intercessor. Jesus Christ Himself is pleading for us in the Presence of God. He has gone into Heaven on purpose that He might represent His people at the Throne of Grace and plead their cause. And we can never imagine that as our great High Priest, accepted of the Father, He pleads in vain. When we ask in His name and set His seal to our petitions, we must win our suit. We are bound to be as certain of this as of the continued life and boundless merit of our Lord. Our prayer is backed and endorsed by His adorable name and this makes it quite another thing than if it were the mere request of a sinful man. It must be heard. Jesus, when You take up my case, “my God will hear me.”  
Moreover, we have guidance in prayer, for the Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray. God Himself puts acceptable desires into our hearts and makes us to know what we should pray for as we ought. And surely such prayers cannot go unanswered. We pray to be helped to overcome sin. And this desire was implanted in us by the good Spirit—will it not be granted? We ask to be made holy and to be enabled to glorify God. Surely, God did not implant such desires in us to mock us by giving us aspirations which He never intended to fulfill! To make us hunger and thirst after blessings which He could not or would not give—would be to torment us before our time—and this we cannot impute to God.  
The leading of the Spirit which induces us to pray is no dancing will-o’the-wisp, uprising from the swamp of superstition conducting us to fanaticism. But it is a clear and sure light which has never been followed by any man without guiding him to peace and safety. Have any of you ever suffered injury by prayer? Did you ever rise from your knees a worse man for pleading with God? Did you ever go away from a company of faithful, pleading men, and feel that you were morally lowered by joining in their devotions? I am sure that you never did.  
If anything has helped you to fight against sin and to bear the burdens of life, it has been this drawing near to God. Therefore, I urge you, by the holy effect of prayer, to believe it to be among the things honest and true. Such a holy thing, implanted in you by God Himself cannot be a weed which He will pluck up and fling over the garden wall in contempt. God has never taught us prayer that it might be an imposition upon our credulity and a sport for His supreme intelligence. Such a suggestion is plain blasphemy and we mention it with abhorrence. That blessed exercise in which I have a hallowing and elevating fellowship with the Eternal cannot be a failure. Assuredly—“My God will hear me.”  
III. I close with a third head. Let us now CONSIDER THE EXERCISE OF THIS CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER. I have shown you the results of this confidence and some few of the reasons for it. Now let us see where the exercise of this confidence leads us. What are we doing when we carry this assurance into action?  
Our confidence that the Lord hears prayer is seen in our looking to Him first and foremost at all times. For our eternal salvation we look to God alone, accepting that Divine system in which, by water and by blood, we are saved from sin, through faith. Our confidence does not lie in our own resolves, or moral virtue, or spiritual attainments, but in Him to whom we cry in prayer, “Hold You me up and I shall be safe.” We are glad of the aid of friends in smaller concerns. But even there our first resort is to our God in Heaven, for we each one feel this to be his chief defense—“My God will hear me.”  
This leads us also to make sure that God is ours. We live by appropriating our God to ourselves. We may, without terror, see our property lessen and our friends desert us and our dearest relatives pass away. But it would be horror, indeed, if we lost our God and could no longer say, “My God.” Others may choose what they please as the object of their heart’s chief choice but we will pay no homage of the soul to any but Jehovah. “this God is our God forever and ever.” As another man’s God I cannot rest in Him but as, “My God,” I am assured that He will hear me. Thus, we are driven, by our confidence in prayer to grapple Him to our soul with hooks of steel. To say, “My God” is our Heaven below.  
This also impels us really to pray. Since God will hear us, we will pray to Him and we do. Alas, we have many sins in reference to prayer. Our slackness in prayer and our unbelief as to prayer are crimes for which we ought to cover our faces with shame. But when we walk with God aright, when we keep His Commandments and abide in His love, then He gives us life, joy and power in prayer and then we become conscious of success at the Throne. That power being bestowed upon us, we come to pray as naturally as a child cries. We ought to have set times for private prayer. It is most healthful that we should. But I question whether our best prayers are not those which are quite irrespective of time and season.  
When a man does not pray because it is seven o’clock in the morning but because he has a pressing need—when he does not pray because it is time to go to bed but because he feels drawn to speak with God, then he prays, indeed. When a man has a constant confidence in the prevalence of prayer he slips away from a trying business to seek guidance and support. The confident pleader, when he walks the street groaning in spirit, makes known his desire to the Most High. Perhaps Cheapside has been a Bethel to some of you and your shop has been a temple. The most living prayer bursts naturally from the swollen heart and does not come because of time.  
I have heard of a minister who put in the margin of his manuscript sermons, “Cry here.” And in another place, “Here lift up your eyes.” It must be very dreadful preaching when the emotion is made to order. And the same is true of praying. The fear is that you should not really pray when the clock says, “Now pray.” I do not think we can always keep the watch of the soul in exact time with the clock on the mantelpiece. Therefore I think that the most living prayer is that which comes by the movement of the Spirit of God just at that time when it is most of all required.  
“Let us pray” is, however, a voice which is never unseasonable. When would it be unfit for such an exhortation to be given? When would it not be profitable to pray? The Lord is always willing. Therefore let us be always praying in one form or another. Let us pray no matter what may be the trial, no matter what the joy, no matter what the company. Pray without ceasing, because it is always true—“My God will hear me.”  
You know how it was said of a holy man as he walked the streets, “There goes the man that can have anything of God that he pleases to ask.” This is the secret of a great life. Fail here and you fail everywhere. Prosper on the mount with your uplifted hands and Amalek in the valley is of no consequence. But how can we have this power if we have not the unquestioning confidence that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us? Brethren, to be strong and happy think about these words— “My God will hear me,” till you can say them with your whole soul.  
As for you, poor Souls, who cannot say, “My God,” shall I tell you that you may not pray? Far from it. If you have a desire to pray, encourage that desire. But mind that it is prayer and not a mere form. Let your heart go up to Him who says to you, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found.” Instead of telling you not to pray, I would direct you how to pray. You have need, first, to have a God to pray to, for till then you cannot say, “My God will hear me.”  
God can only be yours in the saving sense by Christ’s being yours. Jesus says, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” God becomes our God by faith which appropriates Him as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. Look to Jesus, for He is the Mercy Seat and so the way to God in prayer. The Gospel that we have preached to you is not, “Pray,” but, “Believe.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”  
Then, being saved, you will be able to pray with assurance of prevailing. Come to God by the blood of Jesus and so shall a sinner’s prayer be heard. Prayer is the vital breath of every saved man even as faith is the life-blood of his soul. At this moment come to God by Jesus Christ. You are a sinner condemned by sin—Christ came into the world to save sinners—accept the Savior—trust your soul with Him and ask that, for His sake, you may have the free gift of eternal life. You are an empty, poor, naked and miserable sinner—take the Lord Jesus, in all His fullness and blessedness, to be yours forever and then the great God will bow His ear to you, even to you and you, too, shall be numbered with those who have power with God.  
Here on this spot I charge you cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Let that request be silently offered, even though you dare not lift your eye to Heaven. Come, Brethren, let us all offer it and then there shall come to each of us a justification far sweeter and larger than if we should stand aloof from sinners and say, “God, I thank You, that I am not as other men.” O my Lord, hear this, my prayer, that those who hear or read this sermon may be able to say, even as Your unworthy servant most boldly says, “My God will hear me.” Grant it, I pray You, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—Forgive once again the intrusion of personal matters. If I do not insert a short notice as to my health, many friends are lovingly anxious and much correspondence is brought upon me. Let me, therefore, say briefly, “All is well.” My only ailment is in the injured knee and this improves daily. It is very slow work but yet very encouraging. I can now walk a few yards.

I hoped to be in my pulpit on February 17th but I resolved also to let the healing of the knee be my guide. For it would almost break my heart if I were to reach home lame and be near my Tabernacle and in the cold and yet unable to get to my pulpit. Pressed by many anxious friends, both here and at home, I think I am only acting reasonably when I postpone my coming home for one more week. I hope to preach at the Tabernacle on February 24th, if the Lord wills.

I deeply feel the great kindness of my Brethren at the Tabernacle and elsewhere, who have been fearful that I might bring on mischief to myself by beginning too soon. There is common sense, also, in their advice. I have balanced this, as in the sight of God, with my own ardent desire to use every moment for the Lord. And in the end, asking Divine guidance, I have given the verdict as above.

May some up to now unreceived blessing come upon my Hearers and Readers through the sermons which are preached upon my return! Yours, in Christian love,  
*C. H. SPURGEON.*  
MENTONE, January 31, 1889

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WOE AND WEAL

NO. 3239

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1911. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me, He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness.” Micah 7:9.**

Those who expect to find the road to Heaven smooth and unobstructed will discover little in the experience of the ancient saints to support the expectation. The Lord’s people have, in all ages, been tried people. Cowper well says—

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

*Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*Though, perhaps, to the youthful mind this may sound rather harsh, yet there is a large amount of comfort in it to the more advanced saint, for he says to himself, “Then my difficulties, my distresses, my tribulations, are no new thing. I am in the footsteps of the flock. I can see that I am travelling in the good old way that leads to God—

*‘The way the holy Prophets went,*

*The road that leads from banishment.’*  
Did I meet with no chastisement, I might fear that I was not a child of God, but inasmuch as I am made to smart under the rod, I may hopefully infer from it, if I feel the Spirit of Adoption within, that my Father has not forgotten me.”

All sorts of trials have beset the saints of God. Rough winds have blown upon them from all points of the compass and they have had bad weather in all seasons of the year. They have been plagued from within and assailed from without. The arrows of temptation have come upwards from the Pit and often the blows of the rod have came downward from the Throne. There is no form of sorrow, I suppose, which has not been experienced by the chosen of the Lord, though, blessed be His name, the Lord has delivered them out of it all!

Micah appears to have been troubled by a combination of difficulties and afflictions. He was grieved at the low estate of the Church—a combination which ought to affect some of us a great deal more than it does. Alas, there are some who will always be contented enough if their own house shall flourish, though God’s House should be utterly ruined! Micah loved the Church of God—and the low estate of it cut him to the quick. Moreover, the generation among whom he lived added to his grief. “The best of them,” he said, “is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge.”Doubtless he sympathized with the cry of David when he said, “Woe is me, that I sojourn Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” Ill company vexed his soul as the Sodomites vexed the soul of the righteous Lot. And it appears, from reading the Chapter though, that he also had a personal difficulty—probably in the matter of slander. He speaks of “her that is my enemy.” You may notice how he dwells upon it—upon himself being persecuted and maligned—but he implies his belief that God would arise and plead his righteous cause. Slander is no uncommon injury for the children of God to bear. That which false tongues glibly utter, ungenerous minds easily credit—and a pure conscience is exquisitely sensitive. The birds will pluck at the ripe fruits, whatever they may do with the sour ones. The longest trees cast the longest shadows and those who stand the highest are often said by men of the world to be the most base. God was slandered in Paradise—why should we expect to escape being slandered in the midst of this world of sinners?

It seems that in the midst of all this affliction which had befallen Micah—affliction far heavier than any words of mine can describe—the Prophet was led into meditation! And in this meditation he penned the words of our text, in which we may discern, first, what the Prophet felt. He Says, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.” Secondly, what he believed—“until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me.” And, thirdly, what he expected—“He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness.”

I. While tracing out WHAT THE PROPHET FELT, if we happen to be feeling the same, it may comfort us to hear the voice of a fellow pilgrim passing through the Valley of Death-Shade.

Doubtless he felt the smart of the rod. The tone of his utterance shows this. He speaks like a man who could not be callous, for his had been touched in his inmost soul. I think God intends that His people should feel the rod. If we had manifold temptations, but were never depressed in spirit by them, I question whether they would answer any good design. The “necessity” is not only for the trial, but for the “heaviness” which results from the trial, for you remember that the Apostle says, “If necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” There is a “necessity” that the rod should make the child smart. To play the Stoic under trouble is a very different thing from playing the Christian. In fact, it is the very opposite of it! Our great Savior did not stand at the grave of Lazarus and say coldly, “It is well,” without any show of emotion—but “Jesus wept.” So we are permitted, no, expected, to weep when God chastens us. Do not ask, dear Friends, that your nerves may became steel and you have sinews of iron. This would be no excellence—it is rather an excellence to be sensitive under the hand of God! I see not how, excepting by the blueness of the wound, the hurt can be made better. It is when the trouble really stings that it blesses—when the flail falls heavily upon the wheat that it separates the chaff from the pure grain! Expect not to play the bravado with God! Expect, rather, to have to humble yourself before Him and out of the depths to cry out, as others have done, unto the Most High! It is clear, from the language he uses, that the Prophet felt the smart of the rod.

It is equally clear that he readily perceived that the rod was held in the hand of God. Not all Christians can see this, especially in the case of slander. We generally exhaust our thoughts upon the second cause and vent our indignation upon the framer of mischief. We are angry with the person who has caused us our loss, or put us to shame, instead of knowing that God uses even the wicked to chastise His people! Beat a small dog and it will try to bite the stick—if it were a reasoning creature, it would try to bite you! Sometimes you and I are doggish and we snap at the instrument that makes us smart. We are irritated with the missile which has smitten us to our grief. Oh, that we would but look up and see that there is a hand—an unseen hand that wields the agencies of Providence—and realize that not a stroke comes upon the Christian but is given by his heavenly Father’s will! Would to God we were not so accustomed to generally stop at second causes! I am afraid that this is a part of the philosophy of the age. When the world was very ignorant, men used to pray for rain and thank God for it when it came—they believed that thunder was the voice of God and lightning was the glittering of His spear! Now we have grown so wise that we attribute all startling visitations to natural causes. We will scarcely pray to have cholera or plague removed, or ask for anything desirable as the bountiful gift of Heaven. The philosophy that puts God farther off from us than He used to be, would be better unlearned and a truer philosophy known.

At any rate, as far as personal sorrows are concerned, it would be a very sharp and trying experience to me to think that I have an affliction which God never sent me—that the bitter cup was never filled by His hands, that my trials were never measured out by Him, nor sent to me by His arrangement of their weight and quantity. Oh, that were bitterness indeed! But, on the contrary, the Prophet sees the hand of God in all his trials! And I pray that you and I may do the same. May we see that our heavenly Father fills the cup with loving tenderness and holds it out, and says, “Drink, My child. Bitter as it is, it is a love-potion which is meant to do you permanent good.” The discerning of the hand of God is a sweet lesson in the school of experience.

As he felt the smart and traced that smart to the hand of God, the Prophet discerned that he had sinned. “Because I have sinned,” he said. We do not always see that quite as clearly in health as we do in sickness. A night or two of weary tossing upon our bed will do more for us as to heart work and as to the depravity of our nature than a hundred sermons! To be despised and misrepresented, to have to creep into a corner away from one’s best friends because they are alienated from you, or to have to go to the grave with one after another of the dearest objects of one’s affection—these are sermons under which we cannot sleep and sermons, the responsibility of which we cannot shift to another. God’s children, if they are as they should be, are greatly profited and benefited in the discovery of sin by the affliction which God sends them. I had never known the loathsomeness there was in my heart if the spade of tribulation had not turned over the green sods of my profession and made me see therein holes and places where loathsome things did creep and crawl within. Do not shun the furnace, dear Friends! You certainly need not pray for it—you will have enough of it without praying for it—but if God sends it, do not be afraid of it. There is no more enriching place in the world to go to than to the Egypt of bondage, for you shall come up out of it with Jewels of silver and of gold. I am of Rutherford’s mind when he said that “Of all the wine in God’s cellar, birch wine may be the most bitter, but it is the best.” And so it is. You shall never see the stars shine with such splendor as at the North Pole where the sharp frosts and the long winter have taken away the light of the natural day. All the Arctic voyagers tell us that there seems to be an excessive sparkle about the stars there—as it is in the winter of trouble! We then see the sparkling of the Grace of God as a contrast to the evil which we discover in our own hearts.

Another thing the Prophet felt was the trouble he then experienced from God dealing with his sin. We must always discriminate between things that differ. God never punishes His people for sin in the sense of a loyal and vindictive infliction. That would be unjust, for Christ, their Substitute, was once and for all punished in their place. They owe no debts to Divine Justice, for all their debts were paid by Christ to the utmost farthing. But now they are placed under a different government. They are not summoned before a judge, but they are put under parental care—and like as a father chastens every child who he loves, so our heavenly Father chastens us. Again, I say not with a legislative punishment for sin, but with a father’s chastisement for our offenses.

Antinomians have gone the length of saying that there is no such thing as chastisement for sin. Very likely not, as far as they are concerned. I do not suppose that they were ever worth chastening, or that God ever took the trouble to chastise them. But He does chastise His own children and I think they who know their adoption will not be long before they get a very clear realization of it in the tingling of their flesh under the rod of the Covenant. Why, of all the blessings of the Covenant, the sharpest, but one of the best, is the rod. “Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Your Word,” said David—and that testimony of David’s is the testimony of all the saints! They will all tell you that they have to bless the hand of a chastening God quite as much as they have to bless the lips of a caressing God when He kisses them with the kisses of His mouth. No, the children of God cannot sin without smarting for it, even as God said to the children of Israel, “You, only, have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” If some boys were breaking windows in the street, tonight, and you went by, you might let them all alone save and except your own boy if you saw him there! And most likely you would make him smart for it. And when God goes through the world, as this is not the Day of Judgment, He winks at the sins of many sinners, but if He sees His people transgressing, He will not wink at them! I have often felt very glad when I have seen some of God’s people come down in the world to poverty. I have not rejoiced at their misfortunes, but I have been glad of the gracious discipline it indicated. I have sometimes said of such-andsuch a man, “If that man prospers, acting as he does in business, I shall know that he is not a child of God. If he is a child of God, he cannot do as other men do without making a terrible misadventure of it before long.” If you only want gain in this world do not be a Christian, nor pretend to be one! You cannot expect God and mammon to agree together. If you are a Christian, God will watch you more narrowly than others. If you are a king’s counsel, a little thing will be treason in you which would not have been treason in an ordinary subject. God expects great things where He gives great things—and if He honors us so much as to tell us the secret of His Covenant, He expects us to walk with the greatest possible circumspection. So, Christian, whenever you are in trouble, though it may not be distinctly the result of sin, yet you may well enquire whether it is so or not. Say with Job, “Show me why You contend with me.” At the bottom of our sorrow there is generally a sin—at the roots of our grief we shall find our guilt.

Observe one more point. The Prophet felt that since he could connect his suffering with his sins, he could bear it. “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.” ‘Twas a grand point in Aaron when he “held his peace.” In that case, “silence” was golden,” indeed! And when we distinctly see our trouble coming upon us and springing out of our wrong-doing, what can we say, what can we do but put our hand upon our mouth and humbly bow before God? I am persuaded, dear Friends, that we often make more trouble for ourselves by holding an argument with God about our trouble. When your child is stubborn, as long as he holds out and fights it out with you, you will not put away the rod. But when, with broken heart and weeping eyes, he confesses that you have done right and that he has been wrong, then your heart moves towards him and yearns with compassion! It is so with our God, so let us cast ourselves into His hands. It is a sweet thing to be able to say, “Well, Lord, do as You will with me.” It is not easy to say it when the pain is acute, or when the inward grief is very heavy—but it is a sweet relief to let the knife, as it were, into the gathering—it gives us ease to say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” You are not far from liberty when you are content to sit there in the dungeon till He wills to let you out! When you can say in your spirit, “Strike, Lord, if You will—only sanctify the rod to me! But go on striking if You so will—I will not say a single word against all that You do. ‘I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.’” Have you ever read Brooks’ Mute Christian Under a Smarting Rod? If you have not, you might do so with great profit, if you can get a copy of it. But better than reading that will be to go out, yourselves, and be “mute Christians under a smarting rod.”

If some of you do not know anything about this infliction, now, you will one day. You need not wish that the day may be very soon. But when it comes, remember what has been said to you, tonight, and “bear the indignation of the Lord” as the Prophet Micah did.

II. Let us enquire, briefly, in the second place, WHAT DID THE PROPHET BELIEVE?  
He believed that he had an Advocate above. Though he would not plead for himself, yet he says, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord...until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me.” Every Believer has at least two Advocates in Heaven. His Father, Himself, is his Advocate. “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Have you never felt your own heart plead for your child when you have said to him, “Now you are under my displeasure—go away, I do not want to see you again—go to your bedroom and stay there”? And if you have heard him moaning there, and sighing and crying, oh, your heart has ached to be with him! You have said to yourself, “Have I been too severe?” And though you may have come to the conclusion that you were not, but that it was necessary for his good, still your child does not need to plead for himself, for your heart pleads for him! “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” Oh, the tenderness of God’s heart, even when you feel the roughness of God’s hand! Oh to believe, Christian, that God is, as it were, doing despite to Himself when He smites you—that although His wisdom and His highest love appoint it—this tenderness of love would gladly let you go unchastened unless the knowledge and prudence of recognized love dictate that it was for your welfare that you should feel the smart! You have an Advocate in your Father, Himself, and then you have another Advocate whose office it is to plead for you—your blessed Lord Jesus! Could you want a better? In all your afflictions He is afflicted. He can sympathize with every pang that torments you, with every doubt that oppresses you—

*“He takes you through no darker rooms*

*Than He went through before.”*  
And at the Everlasting Throne, when you are being sifted like wheat, He is praying that your faith fail not, and so the rod passes away. And full often, what is worse than the rod, the axe, too, because the Intercessor pleads for us! Yes, we have an Advocate above to plead our cause!

And do you notice that the Prophet puts with the pleading above, activity on earth? He looks at his present trouble, which seems in his case to have been slander, and he says that the Lord, Himself, would execute judgment for him. When David took his sword in his hand and declared that not a single man of the house of Nabal would be alive by morning light, how furious was the son of Jesse as he marched at the head of his clan! And what a blessing it was when Abigail, the wise woman, knelt before him and stopped him, and said, “My lord fights the battles of the Lord.” David stopped and thought to himself that when he became a king, it would be no small consideration to be able to feel that he had not shed blood in haste—so he put up his sword and went his way. There was no need for David to slay Nabal, for ten days afterwards the Lord struck him and he died. Why, oh why, should we be in such a great hurry to fight our own battles?

Brothers and Sisters, if anybody should speak hard words of us, we are up in arms at once. “Oh,” says one, “I will have this wrong righted! My character is too precious to be lost in that way.” “Yes,” says another, “I will see the thing through! I will have the law after such-and-such people.” Well, now, be still, or go and fight the Lord’s battles, or let God fight for you! What is your name or your character, after all? Who will be any the better for your caring about such an insignificant creature as you are? Why, when you are dead and gone, the world will not miss you! It is amazing what great beings we are in our own esteem—and yet what little beings we really are, after all! When Mr. Whitelock was much troubled about the peril of England, his servant said to him, “Mr. Whitelock, did England get on pretty well before you were born?” “Oh, yes, John! Very well indeed.” “And do you think it will get on all right when you are dead?” “Yes, I think it will, John.” “Very well, then. If I were you, Sir, I’d leave it to God without troubling yourself about it.” The fact is, the longer I live, the more I feel that the very things which I fret about are the things that go wrong! But the other matters that I can just put on the shelf and leave with God always go right! A line in one of our hymns says—

*“‘Tis mine to obey; ‘tis His to provide.”*  
While we are trying to provide, we neglect to obey—and so the obeying and the providing both go awry! If it is a battle of your own, leave it alone! In everything else, if you want a thing done, do it yourself! But in the matter of your own character, if you need it defended, leave it alone! God will take care of it and the less you stir in that matter, the better will it be for you—and the more for God’s Glory!

What a sweet thing it is, then, to believe that you have One to plead for you above—and that the same Lord will vindicate your cause below! How blessed it is for you to live with the consciousness that you have left everything in His hands, casting your burden upon the Lord—and making it your only burden to pray to Him and serve Him all the days of your life!

III. Now, lastly, WHAT WAS IT THAT THE PROPHET EXPECTED? He said, “He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness.” Believer, will you also expect this—that God will bring you forth to the light? “Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart.” But if you are not of good courage, your heart will be weak. If Satan can persuade you that the night will never give place to the morning, then he can make an easy prey of you. But if you can say with Micah, “He will bring me forth to the light.” If you can still feel persuaded that God never did cast one of His chosen ones down without intending to lift him up again, that He never kills without making alive and never wounds without intending to heal. Why, then, your worst and multiplied afflictions can be borne with holy cheerfulness and confidence! “He will bring me forth to the light.” Oh, what a mercy it is to come forth to the light after you have been in the dark! How sweet the light is then! I have heard people, who have been very sick, say that after they have recovered, life has been a perfect joy to them. I know one who very seldom has a day free from pain—and when she does have such a day, it is a day, indeed! You can see by the very sparkling of her eyes how good a thing it is to live! It is almost worthwhile to suffer pain to have the joy of being delivered from it! And so, when a child of God has been tried, tempted, afflicted—and he once gets out of it—what joy and peace he has! If you are baptized in trouble, when you lift your head, again, you shall come out all the fairer and the brighter for the washing—and thank each billow that breaks over you for the good it has brought you as you come forth to the light. Then you shall be able to sing—  
*“‘For yet I know I shall Him praise  
Who graciously to me,  
The health is of my countenance,  
Yes, my own God is He.’*  
“He has succored me, before, so I can say to Him, ‘Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.’ If I cannot get the light of Your face, the very shadow of Your wings shall make me glad, for I shall feel that I am safe even under their shadow! O God, you will bring forth Your people to the light and they shall triumph in Your exalted right arm, O my delivering God!”  
Then the Prophet added, “and I shall behold His righteousness.” One might have half-forgiven him if he had said, after being slandered, “I shall behold my own righteousness—men shall see it, too, and they shall honor me the more because they treated me so unjustly for a time.” Oh, no, it is not so written! But, “I shall behold His righteousness.” To see the righteousness of God in having tried us. To clearly discern His wisdom, His goodness, His truth, His faithfulness in having afflicted us—and more and more to see how suited to our case is the fullness of righteousness which is treasured up in Christ Jesus—this is the Divine result from all our troubles! So may it be with us till the last wave of trouble breaks over us and we enter into everlasting rest!  
Dear Friends, I commend the text to you. May you live in the spirit of it, and may the Lord help you to glorify Him even as the Prophet Micah did!  
Alas I know that there are some here who have their troubles and they have no God to go to. How I pity you! The snow that falls tonight makes it very cheerless for you who have to be out in it—and the thaw makes the snow press through your boots till your very bones and marrow seem chilled. Thank God we can get the curtains drawn and sit around the fire—and even if the blast blows outside, it is all warm within. But what must it be to have no home to go to? What must it be to be a houseless wanderer on such a night as this? What must it be to pass by houses all alight and cheerful, and to say, “There is no ‘home, sweet home’ for me—I am an outcast and must tread these snowy streets all night”? I hope there is no such creature in London who will have to do so. One could pity such a poor wretch indeed! But think, my dear Friends, what it must be for your soul to have no home at the last—when the storm of wrath shall fall, to have nothing to comfort you—to be driven from God’s Presence! To have no Father in Heaven. To find no warmth of love in the Divine heart. To see the happiness of angels and the joy of glorified spirits—perhaps to see your own children in Heaven and to be, yourselves, shut out! Dear ones whom you loved on earth, divided from you by a great gulf forever! Happily, the Day of Grace is not yet over! The Day of Mercy is not yet past! The long eternal night has not yet set in! Hurry, Sinner! There is a home for you if you have Grace to knock at this door! The door is Mercy! To knock is Prayer! To step across the threshold is Faith! Trust the Lord Jesus and you need not fear, though all your life you should be tried. You need not fear the accumulated terrors of the latter days, whatever they may be, nor fear the dread trumpet of Judgment, nor the last tremendous day! Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus! Fly to Jesus now! May His Spirit draw you this night! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MICAH 7.**

The Prophet begins in a sorrowful strain and there is much that is sad in the chapter, yet there is also much of holy confidence in God.  
Verse 1. Woe is me! For I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit. It is a terrible thing for a good man to find good men growing very scarce and to see wicked men becoming more wicked than ever. It makes him feel his loneliness very keenly—and joy seems to be banished from his heart.  
2. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt, every man, his brother with a net. Those were sad times in which Micah lived. And yet, under some aspects, one might be willing and even glad to live in such times, for if ever one could be useful to one’s fellows, surely it would be then! God had need of a voice like that of the Prophet Micah in the days when His worship was forsaken and the true faith had almost died out among men! Unless God had left a Micah here and there, the land would have been as Sodom and have been made like unto Gomorrah. So the more unpleasant the age was to the good man, the more necessary and profitable was he to that age!  
3. That they may earnestly do evil with both hands. I wish the professed followers of Christ did good with both hands, that is, with every faculty, with every capacity, in every way and at every opportunity, just as wicked men “earnestly do evil with both hands.”  
3. The prince asks, and the judge asks for a reward; and the great man, he utters his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. Honesty seemed to have died out of the nation! The highest people in the land, who ought to have been beyond the power of bribery, sold the administration of justice to the highest bidder. Ah, those were evil times, indeed! 4. The best of them is as a briar: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of your watchmen and your visitation comes; now shall be their perplexity. Sin brings sorrow in its train and, as nations will have no future as nations, God deals with national sin here upon earth and visits it with national punishment! Now that sin had become so rampant in Israel, it would be the time of their perplexity—and when sins, like chickens, come home to roost, then will be the time of the sinner’s perplexity. He lets his sins fly abroad and thinks that like the wandering birds of the air, they will soon be gone and he shall never see them again—but they will all come home to him and he shall be made to bitterly rue the day in which he thought that he could make a profit by transgressing the righteous Law of the Lord!  
5. Trust you not in a friend. Put you not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of your mouth from her that lies in your bosom. So saturated with dishonesty had the nation become that the evil had penetrated even into domestic life, so that where all should have been in a state of mutual happy confidence, the Prophet felt bound to tell them that such confidence could not exist between those who appeared to be friends, or even between husbands and wives!  
6. For the son dishonors the father, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house. And this is still true in a measure, for without the fear of God, you will find that even the nearest and dearest relationships will not keep the unconverted from being the enemies of the godly. In that respect, a gracious man cannot trust her that lies in his bosom, if she is not a true child of God. Now mark the grandeur of faith. Set this white spot right in the middle of the black darkness of which we have been reading—  
7. Therefore I will look unto the LORD—There was nowhere else for the Prophet to look! According to what he tells us, all men had become false! “Therefore,” he says, “I will look unto Jehovah.”  
7, 8. I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. [See

Sermon #2069, Volume 35—MY OWN PERSONAL HOLD-FAST—Read/download the entire sermon,

free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. And this is all the light that God’s people need! Even if it is the darkness of a black Egyptian night into which our spirit has fallen, yet if God shall but appear to us, there shall soon be light for us! Dr. Watts truly sang—

*“In darkest shades, if He appears,  
My dawning is begun!  
He is my soul’s sweet morning star,  
And He my rising sun.”*

9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause, and executes judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light and I shall behold His righteousness. Listen to this testimony of the Prophet, tried child of God! Even when in your own household you find enemies, put your trust in God, for He will yet appear to deliver you. Let this be your joy! Sit still in humble patience and “bear the indignation of the Lord,” for even though trouble is laid upon you, it is not so heavy as it might have been—and it is not so severe as it would have been if the Lord had dealt with you in strict justice! Therefore in patience possess your soul and wait quietly before your God. Be not without hope. Expect that He will plead your cause and that He will execute judgment for you. Watch for His light, which will most surely come, and in which you shall behold not your own righteousness, but His!

10. Then she that is my enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD your God? My eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. This verse relates to the nation which, at that time, was oppressing Israel. She would have her turn of suffering, for she would be crushed beneath Jehovah’s foot as the mire is trodden in the streets!

11, 12. In the day that your walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day, also, He shall come even to you from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. This is what was to befall those who had sinned against God and oppressed His people— He would let loose the oppressors upon them and they would find foes in every quarter.

13. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings. That is an amazing expression, “the fruit of their doings.”All doings bear fruit of one kind or another, and sinful doings bear bitter and deadly fruit! Woe to the man who is made to eat the fruit of his own doings! That which men eat on earth they may have to digest in Hell—and there shall they lie forever digesting the terrible morsels which they ate with so much gusto here below!

14. Feed Your people with Your rod, the flock of Your heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. Sometimes there are pastures in the very center of woods—and God’s people in Micah’s day were like a little flock of sheep hidden away from their enemies in the midst of a wood, but God will bring them out, by-and-by, to far larger liberty. They shall yet have Bashan and Gilead to be their pasture, “as in the days of old.” And so the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a great nation—and they that were hidden away because of their many enemies, shall have such liberty that they shall worship and praise the Lord their God everywhere!

15-17 . According to the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt will issue unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf: They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of you. The day will come when there shall be such a fear of the people of God upon those who formerly persecuted them that they shall tremble before the Lord and be afraid of the very people whom once they derided and oppressed!

18. Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He never delights in anger, especially in anger against His own people. That is but temporary anger and is, after all, only another form of love—for the parental anger which hates sin in a dear child is but love on fire! May God never permit us to sin without being thus angry with us! We might almost beseech Him never to tolerate sin in us, but to smite us with the rod rather than allow us to be happy in the midst of evil. Perhaps the worst of horrors is peace in the midst of iniquity—happiness while sin is yet all round about us.

19. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us, He will sub  
due our iniquities; [See Sermon #1577, Volume 27—SIN SUBDUED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] and You will cast all their sins

into the depths of the sea. We read about their sins in the earlier part of the chapter—and what a horrible catalog of evils it was! Yet here we read, “Who is a God like unto You, that pardons inquiry?” Even those mountainous sins of which the Prophet writes, the Lord will tear up by their roots and cast them into the depths of the sea!

20. You will perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn unto our fathers from the days of old. There is our comfort! Our God is the Covenant-keeping God who will perform every promise that He has made. Even “if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Blessed be His holy name!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3317 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SWEET BOW

NO. 3317

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1912. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“He delights in mercy.”  
Micah 7:18.

Sons of men, rejoice that such a God has revealed Himself to you! This should cause a universal Hallelujah, the whole world over, as soon as ever it is heard! “He delights in mercy.” Clap your hands and rejoice before Him! Yes, exceedingly rejoice! The heathen did not find this out. Although they had many gods, differing one from another in character, none of them were ever gods of mercy! They were usually fierce demons—some of them only rejoicing in the exaction of human blood. Go this very day to Hindustan and see what gods man makes unto himself—gods more beastly, more cruel, more devilish than himself! Such is not the living and true God! Far from taking pleasure in the sufferings of creatures, He tells us plainly that He delights in mercy. It is not enough that He is merciful, but He delights in this high prerogative! While we may well suppose that every attribute of God gives Him pleasure in the exercise, mercy is supremely singled out as being especially His favorite! Mercy is the last attribute openly manifested—He exercised His power in making men before they sinned or needed mercy—and He displayed His wisdom in balancing the clouds and piling the hills before He needed to show mercy, for sin as yet had not come into the world. If I may say so, mercy is God’s Benjamin and He delights most of all in it. It is the son of His right hand, though, alas, in bringing it forth, it might well have been called the son of sorrow, too, for mercy came into this world through the sorrows of the Only-Begotten Son of God! He delights in mercy, just as some men delight in trade, some in the arts, some in professions—and each man, according to his delight, becomes proficient in pursuing a work for the very love thereof. So God is proficient in mercy. He addicts Himself to it. He is most Godlike, most happy if such a thing may be said of Him! When He is stretching out His right hand with His golden scepter in it, and saying to the guilty, “Come to Me. Touch this scepter and you shall live!” He delights in mercy!

Now, surely it would suffice were I to sound this trumpet again and again with its celestial monotone. If you heard nothing but the same unvarying notes and did but remember them, believe them and come to God in consequence of them—there would be enough of a sermon in the text without further exposition or comment. “He delights in mercy.” Nevertheless, as you are willing to listen, it will not be grievous to me to speak on such a lovely theme. Let me, therefore, mention some facts which prove it, answer some objections that are raised against it and warn you against some perversions of it and then endeavor to push home the great lessons which spring from it.

I. FACTS WHICH PROVE THAT GOD DELIGHTS IN MERCY. This is clear from the first dawn of promise. When our first parents sinned, He might, if He had pleased, without straining the words which He had spoken, have destroyed them both and so at once have put an end to the race of rebels. He had said, “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” If He had chosen to give to that a literal as well as a spiritual meaning, He might surely have put on the black cap and condemned our parents to perish on the spot! But why did He permit them to live and to become the parents of an innumerable race? Why, from that single pair, has He allowed the millions of the race to spring? Because every man that is born becomes a sinner and in everyone of these millions there is space for God’s mercy—these all furnish so many platforms, I might say, on which God might display His mercy—so many millions of black foils against which God shall put the sparkling sapphire of His mercy that its brightness may be more clearly seen! Surely, it is only because He delights in mercy that He spares this earth to swarm with sinners and to be covered over with multitudes of transgressors!  
That He delights in mercy is clear from the fact that oftentimes after His anger has grown hot, He has spared the offender when he has repented. God determined to destroy the race of Israel in the wilderness. “Let Me alone that I may destroy them.” But the prayer of Moses touched the tender part of God, namely, His mercy—and He said that He would spare the people for His Covenant and for His Prophet’s sake. Even Ahab, that most cruel of kings, when he had been threatened, humbled himself and God said to Elijah, “Go and say unto Ahab, Because he has humbled himself, this thing shall not be in his day.” And that great city of Nineveh, which had been given up to all manner of evil, God had said to Jonah, “Go and cry, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” But when they put themselves in sackcloth and repented at the Prophet’s warning, the Lord would not destroy the city, but spared the multitude for a season. Oh, I tell you, the tears and cries of men move the heart of the Most High! Not a prayer that ever comes from the most guilty breast, if it is but sincere, fails to enter into the ear of the God of Mercy! The tears of penitents force their way into His soul. He has a bottle for those precious drops! He has a ready record for all their groans and sighs. He has proved this in innumerable cases. He has drawn the sword from its scabbard and put it back again when the man has repented. He has lifted the axe, yet laid it down again when the farmer has pleaded and said, “Let it alone this year, also.” His sparing, even when His anger has grown hot, proves that He delights in mercy!  
Brothers and Sisters, I appeal to all of you in this present assembly! The fact that we are here tonight after all the provocations which we have given to God proves that He delights in mercy! Ah, I need not begin with the worst, the openly worst. Let me mention some of you who have been trained from your childhood in the paths of piety and yet you forgot God. You lived without Him—prayer was neglected, His day was a weariness— to go up to His house was a toil. And yet you have been spared though you were useless and unprofitable servants! He might have chased you out of the house and given you your portion among the tormenters, but He has borne with your ill manners and spared you to this hour! Ah, but there are some who have gone farther. They have broken His Laws! They have trampled on His statutes. Some have cursed His name—some here have done it! They have dared to imprecate damnation on themselves and have done it often. They have spoken against God, perhaps with impious and infidel lips. They have done worse than that—if worse can be! They have persecuted God’s children and that is to touch the apple of His eye, and to hurt Him in the most tender place! We seemed, some of us, in the days of our sin, as if we would ride steeplechase to perdition—as if nothing could stop the insanity of our suicidal resolve! We would sin even if sin were bitter to us. We would pursue our ruin at all risks and hazards and yet He cried, “How can I give you up?” He turned to plead with us! A mother’s voice pleaded— from the grave she pleaded! The fever came and preached to us on the sickbed and we heard it. The cholera came and preached—we heard its voice in the street—we saw its power in the frequent funerals that passed along through the city. The preacher came and spoke as best he could and besought you, as a brother, that you would turn—that you would not perish, but would turn to God! And all theses entreaties—these stretching out of the hand, this wooing and these tears which God has used upon you have all been in vain to now— and you have sinned and revolted yet more and more! Does He not delight in mercy to continue still to invite, still to mourn and not to cut it short by destroying you altogether?  
And the very best proof that God delights in mercy, I think, is to be found in the great number of persons who are saved. I say the great number of those who are saved, for he who says they are but few, contorts some passages of God’s Word and understands it not as a whole. Look yonder, if your eyes can see as mine can, by faith—you can no more count the spirits that rejoice before the Throne of God than you can count the stars in the sky, or the sand upon the seashore! Their music yonder is like great thunders, or like the mighty waves of the sea, for they are ten thousand times ten thousand, a company that no man can number, all having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Jesus, all saved by the mercy of our God! And here below, how many there are of us who are making our way to the Celestial City, led by the precious Christ who is our Captain—and in all of our cases the mercy of God is seen!  
Nor is the mercy of God to be discovered only in the numbers, but it is seen also in the character of those who are saved, for God does not select the most virtuous, the most chaste, the most honest, the most talented. He often takes—to make them monuments of His mercy—the vilest, the most abased and blasphemous! He lays hold upon the polluted publican instead of the proud Pharisee. He singles out the wandering prodigal before many who thought themselves far better! He lifts the poor off the dunghill and sets him among princes! Glory be to the Infinite Majesty of Eternal Grace that has snatched brands out of the burning, who has lifted men from the very gates of Hell and passed them through the gates of Heaven! The guilt of one soul might sink a world—the accumulated guilt of all the millions whom Christ redeemed will stand forever as a proof that God delights in mercy!  
Reflect a moment upon the conduct of those saved after they have tasted that the Lord is gracious, for albeit they are renewed, yet they are not perfect. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we ought to be ashamed to have to confess it tonight! Blushes should scarlet our cheeks, that we have been ungrateful, unbelieving, unfaithful! We have sinned against the gracious Father who has taken us into His family! We have sinned against the love of God, against the blood of Christ, against the sweet comforts of the Holy Spirit—and yet no child of His was ever cast away—no Believer in Christ was ever disowned of God! The mercy which once flowed to them, flows on forever, never pausing for an instant—because He delights in mercy!  
But think, and here is the main point, think with regard to these guilty ones who have been saved, at what an expense it was all done. He spared not His own Son! A son is most dear to a father, yet God so loved mercy that He gave the Only-Begotten to the smart and to the deathpang—to the Cross and the sepulcher—that Mercy might ride on the milk-white steed, a queen among the sons of men! Behold the Savior bleeding! I pray you let me portray Him to you with hands and feet pierced with nails. Mark His sufferings! View His agonies and let me tell you that this was all for the sons of men—that the mercy of the Everlasting Father, without bound and limit—might come to those who seek His face through Jesus Christ! Further proof, surely, is not needed. This is proof, overwhelming proof, that should confound despair, proof that should make unbelief impossible! He who gave His son to die must be a God that delights in mercy!  
II. SOME OBJECTIONS ARE OFTEN RAISED, which I shall very briefly meet.  
“If He delights in mercy,” says one, “why are some men lost?” Surely, Sir, God does not so delight in mercy as to tarnish His justice! If He did, there would be a slur upon His mercy, for sometimes it is not mercy to the many to forgive the few. It were no mercy for London to set free all the burglars and murderers. It were no mercy to England if every man who had committed murder were allowed to go red-handed without punishment! Punishment for the guilty is required even by mercy, itself. Remember, of all the lost, there is not one but has simply and barely the due reward of his sins. And if that had been roughly and evenly given to him, he would have known no reprieve that allowed him to live here, after his first offense! To full many of them, certainly to all of you, if finally lost, you will have had mercy presented to you. You have had Christ preached to you! You have been bid to come to Him! You have been assured, on God’s own authority, that if you trust Jesus, you shall be saved! Then if you do it not, lay not your ruin at the door of God’s mercy, but at the door of your own folly! If a man dies of fever because he will not take his medicine, who but he is at fault? If a man leaps over a precipice willfully, let him blame no one if he dashes himself to pieces! On the head of every lost one, his own condemnation lies, as yours will unless you turn to God and repent!  
“Ah,” says another, “but God is not always merciful, look at His severity sometimes—Korah, Dathan and Abiram are swallowed up—Sodom is destroyed by fire from Heaven.” Yes, Sir, and even Mercy saw this done without a tear in her eyes. What? Should Sodom go unpunished? Shall the bestial vice of which Sodom was guilty never be checked? Why, if this should spread among the sons of men, it would bring in its infernal train ten thousand times more damage than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah! The sin itself is infinitely worse than the fire which burned it up! There is mercy in the physician if he sees poison in the hand when he cuts it out and cauterizes the wound. And this is what God did with Sodom. He did, as it were, cut out the plague-spot and cauterize it, lest that filthy sin should spread over all mankind! As for Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their death was the life of others—they were pestilent traitors against the dominion of God and unless they had died, others would have revolted and have perished, too. Many of those things which we call severe judgments are only mercies in disguise. The great fire of London— how the preachers preached about that! I suppose there are hundreds

of sermons extant to prove that the great fire of London was a punishment upon London for its gluttony and covetousness! Why, what greater blessing ever befell the city than that fire, burning up as it did all those fever and pest dens where all kinds of malaria and disease constantly lay festering? Nothing could have been better! The deaths of some in the plague before the fire had called attention to the evil—and then the fire came and swept the evil away! I do not doubt that even cholera in our own times has been simply God’s great sanitary commissioner, sent to London to warn us to cleanse this and sweep away that, that so, on the whole, life may last longer and mercy may prevail. Judge not God, then, by your feeble sense! Wait awhile till you see His judgments in the long run and then you shall discern how they are always seasoned with mercy and love holds the sword!  
Should anyone say, with blank surprise, “If God delights in mercy, why is there such a thing as the unpardonable sin?” I think I would reply, with a burst of gratitude, “Is it not a great mercy that there is only one sin that is unpardonable?” There might have been a catalog of crimes for which forgiveness was impossible! There is but one—that one is only unpardonable because the person who commits it has so seared his conscience that he never asks for pardon. Any of you, man or woman, that sincerely asks for mercy, shall have it, whatever sin you may have committed! But that one sin strikes a cold chill about the heart and, henceforth, the man never desires mercy, but perishes an impenitent and a careless sinner!  
Should another say, “How is God merciful, when I feel in my own self that He cannot have mercy upon me?” I should reply, Your feelings are not to be trusted! Whatever despair may whisper, or doubts may suggest, one text of Scripture is worth 50 fears and doubts, or fifty thousand of either. You may be a black sinner, but He delights to wash you. You may have offended Him, year after year, and done despite to His Grace, but His arm is still not shortened that He cannot save. I care not how far you may have gone, I am sure He can come after you. Lost sheep, bleating on the mountains, the Shepherd can hear you and the Shepherd can reach you! You may fall into a pit but it shall not be so deep that He cannot bring you out! While life remains there is hope! Sin as you may have sinned, there is abundance of pardon with a gracious God. Oh, put not your thought so in opposition to the declaration of Heaven, but believe tonight that God is able and willing to forgive you—and come with a penitent prayer and find forgiveness now! All objections to the delight of God in mercy are but illusions of your brain—or delusions of your heart.  
III. THERE IS PERIL OF MISUSING THIS MERCY OF GOD, lest instead of leading us to repentance, it should plunge us deeper into sin. Though God delights in mercy, sin is no trifle in His estimation. Sin is an enormous evil, an evil so great that it never could have been prevented from destroying us all except by God, Himself, coming into this world, taking upon Himself our Nature and suffering to the very death in our place! Calvary tells us that sin is not a thing to be laughed at. It cost our Savior unutterable groans and griefs that can never be measured to deliver us from our guilt! And if the sinner comes not to Christ, it shall cost him endless tears! It shall cost him everlasting misery! His sins shall sink him to Hell forever! Oh, trifle not with sin because God is merciful! This is a cruel, brutal thing to do—to sin because Grace abounds. If you do so, you shall find that there is no Grace for you!  
Say not that because God is merciful a prayer or two on your dying bed will suffice. How do you know you may ever have a dying bed? Men fall dead in the streets! There was one who always said, “I shall set it all right at last. I shall say, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me,’ and it will be all right.” Returning home drunk one night, he spurred his horse over the parapet of a bridge into a deep river—and the last words he was heard to say was a sentence too blasphemous for me to repeat. And why may not you die so? You cannot tell. Put no trust in deathbed repentances—they are, of all things, the most deceitful! Every thief repents when he comes to the prison—and every murderer will leave a word of repentance on his pathway to the gallows! It is a sign of the heart being set right to cry and groan when you are coming near to your punishment. God is merciful to these who seek Him early, but procrastinators will find that He is just. “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, lest He swear in His wrath that you shall not enter into His rest.”  
Though God is merciful you are not, therefore, at liberty to despise the Lord Jesus and His salvation, for all His mercy flows to us through the silver pipe of Jesus Christ the Mediator. I speak advisedly—there is no mercy in Heaven or earth in the shape of saving mercy except through Jesus Christ! Unless you come to the Cross for it, you shall not have it. God has nailed up every other door but this. This one, alone, is left open—the door sprinkled with blood on the lintel and the two side posts, and on which is written, “Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall never perish, but have everlasting life.” There is an alternative. It is, “He that believes not, shall be condemned.” What? If he does this and that, or if he humbles himself, if he is virtuous? Yes, yes, God makes no exception! The sentence comes to kings and queens and emperors, as well as to crossing sweepers, paupers, or even to convicts, “He that believes not shall be condemned.” They shall take which they will. If they will have Christ and God’s mercy, so be it—God’s Grace has compelled them to take that. But if they will not have Christ, there is no mercy—no, not a drop of mercy—but wrath, righteous wrath against those that despise the Son of God!  
Nor must you think that the Doctrine of God’s Free Mercy at all comes into conflict with the Doctrine of God’s Electing Love. No, rather, by His election it is seen that God delights in mercy—thinking mercy, planning mercy before men needed mercy, in the Eternal Covenant—determining the persons upon whom mercy should come—selecting them, not because of any good in themselves, but entirely out of His own good pleasure, and thus proving His mercy! If God had sent into the world a Gospel full of conditions and of human doings, it would have been no Gospel to anybody, for no man could fulfill the conditions except by Divine Grace. But He has sent an unconditional Gospel! He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion upon whom He will have compassion—and in this great Free-Grace Gospel, the mercy of God is magnified to the fullest.  
IV. WHAT IS THE LESSON FROM ALL THIS? If God is so merciful let His ministers preach of His mercy.  
If God delights in mercy and not in sacrifice, do not let His ministers be dressing themselves up and performing genuflections, bowing to the east, winking with their eyes, making signs with their fingers, offering incense and I know not what besides! God is not a child to be amused with toys that are beneath the notice of babies. God delights in mercy. Let the pulpit, therefore, ring with mercy! Let the preacher be continually telling of mercy through the blood of Jesus! Mercy through faith in His name! Mercy for crimes of deepest dye, mercy that comes to us through the atoning Savior! This ought to be our daily message when we preach. We ought to remember that God delights in mercy. As God’s ambassadors let us proclaim most freely that which He has the most pleasure in, His mercy—His mercy—oh, His mercy, it endures forever!  
Christian people, here is a noble example for you. If God delights in mercy, and you are His children, be like He is—let mercy be your delight! Be merciful to the poor. Be merciful to the ignorant. Be merciful to the guilty. Never be the man to cast the first stone at the fallen woman, for your Master did not condemn her. Never be the man to pass by the naked and the poverty-stricken. Your Lord’s eyes were quick to detect the leper. Mercy well becomes the heir of the God of Mercy! And if you are not merciful, how can you expect to obtain mercy, or think to be numbered among the children of the Great Merciful One? To all of you I would say—take care, as you expect the mercy of God, to deal it out to others. Never say, “I won’t forgive,” for you seal your own condemnation when you do! And if you forgive not your brother his trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. You have chosen your own destruction when you shut the door against your child, or against your neighbor and say, “I will treasure up that enmity as long as I live.” I tell you, Sirs, your offerings at God’s altar are an abomination to Him until you have forgiven all of your fellows their trespasses! Your prayers cannot come up before God—they are most effectually hindered. How can you pray when one of the petitions which God puts into your mouth is this—“Forgive us our debts as we forgive them that are indebted unto us”? How can you, with one hand on your brother’s throat, lift your other hand and say, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”? Go your way, tonight, and if possible, before you close your eyes in sleep make your peace with any whom you have offended or who have offended you! As God delights in mercy, let the children of God likewise delight in mercy!  
Still, the great lesson I want to bring out is this—if God delights in mercy, then why should those who have offended Him be afraid to seek Him? He will hear your prayers be they ever so feeble or broken! He is ready to forgive you, however grossly you may have offended. Think of that! If He is so kind, why do you stay away from Him?  
Oh, come to Him, come now! ‘Tis all mercy today. You are not bidden to come to a judge, nor to advance to the bar where the sentence shall go against you—‘tis a sweeter note you hear—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” Oh, I wish I could lead you to the Lord! It is not in my power. His Spirit, alone, can do it, but ah, do come, and welcome! There is not a hard word in the whole of the Bible for a coming sinner! There is nothing to keep back a soul that desires to be at peace with God. God’s House is open! God’s heart is open! God’s table is spread! God waits to be gracious—no, He comes to meet the sinner that comes to Him! Are you willing to have Him and to have His mercy? If so, you may have it! Come, then—come and welcome, Sinner, come!—  
*“Lord You have won, at length I yield!  
My heart, by mighty Grace compelled  
Surrenders all to Thee!  
Against Your terrors long I strove, But who can stand against Your love? Love conquers even me!  
If You had bid Your thunders roll, And lighting’s flash to blast my soul, I still had stubborn been—  
But mercy has my heart subdued, A bleeding Savior I have viewed, And now I hate my sin.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 136; EPHESIANS 1**

Let us make this occasion a time of praise and thanksgiving! Let our hearts dance at the name of our God! Let our lips give expression thereto in joyful music!

Verse 1. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever. That is the beginning of our praise—the essential goodness of God from which all the streams of mercy flow. Oh, deep abyss of Infinite Love!

2, 3. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever. His greatness, which is beyond that of all potentates on earth or principalities in Heaven—this, also, is to be our joyous theme song! His greatness and His goodness together make us magnify His name.

4. To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever. Nothing is absolutely wonderful except God—all other things are dwarfed and diminished in wondrousness as compared with Him. The Seven Wonders of the World are trifles compared with the seven-million wonders of God!

5. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever. They boasted of the Colossus that strode across the sea, but what shall we say to the heavens that span not only the earth but all the universe? And in those heavens there is mercy to be seen as well as wisdom—the adaptation of the physical world to the circumstances of man— so that there is a relation between the weight of every dewdrop and the structure of the human body!

6-9. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that made great light, for His mercy endures forever. The sun to rule by day: for His mercy endures forever. The moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever. See how these ancient godly ones loved to dwell upon a thing! When the note was “light” they did not just sing it through and have done with it, but there were many repetitions in their music. But the music of today is “rattle through it as fast as you can, and quickly have done with it.” Our forefathers liked to linger a bit on these sweet praises of God. So did the Hebrews.” “Great lights!” Yes, but there must be the sun and the moon and the stars. They could never have enough of it—they rolled these sweet morsels under their tongue and then out upon their lips as they praised God!

10. To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever. Yet it was an awful judgment and it needs a reverent, lowly, saintly spirit to sing over even the judgments of God. Had certain theologians of the present time been present at the Red Sea, they would have cried in sentimental sympathy over the Egyptians! But instead of that, Miriam took a timbrel and said, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” The fates of sinful men are of small moment as compared with the Glory of God! Jehovah fills all things and when the heart is fully taken up with the Glory of God, it learns to sing even this stern refrain—“To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever.”

11-15. And brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever. See how they prolonged the strain— and what blessed exercise this is, to take mercies to pieces and examine all the details—and have a fresh verse for each particular of God’s goodness to us! Glory be unto His blessed name forever and ever!

16. To Him which led His people through the wilderness; for His mercy endures forever. Therefore He will lead you through the wilderness and bring you through great droughts—and your manna shall drop from Heaven, and your waters flow from the Rock. Sing, then, to His name, you that are in the wilderness!

17. To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever. That is a terrible and tragic matter, that smiting of kings. Yes, but these singers did not groan over it! There are no less than four notes over this.

18-23. And slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel, His servant: for His mercy endures forever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endures forever. The note descends a little from the martial strain of trumpet, from smitten kings and the drowned chivalry of Egypt. But though it sinks, how it sweetens! What a soft, clear sound there is about it.

24-26. And has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever. Who gives food to all flesh: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of Heaven: for His mercy endures forever. Glorious Redemption! That is always the choicest note of all. Ring that silver bell again! This is the Christian’s true promised land of great spiritual blessings. May we have faith enough to enter into the full possession of it. It is a very wonderful chapter!

Ephesians 1:1-2. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a sort of crossing of the Jordan to go into the land and get Grace and peace. Grace changes us, peace quiets us, and then we are over Jordan.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. They are all yours! He has not blessed you with a part of the blessings, but with all of them! They are all yours. Have you the courage and the faith to take possession of them? That is the point. If you have Grace and peace you are in the land. Now let your foot rest first on one blessing and then on another and appropriate them all to yourself.

4. According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. What an inheritance! To be made holy! Oh, that we might be perfected as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect, sanctified through and through! We are elected to this end—it is the very objective of the Divine choice that we may be without blame before Him in love.

5-6. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. To the praise of the Glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. See how Paul goes on taking one city after another of this heavenly Canaan? It was election. Now it is adoption. Now it is acceptance in the Beloved. He is a good Joshua for us if we will but really and truly follow Him and take possession of the promised land.

7-10. In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace; wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of time He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him. Oh, what a wonderful gathering that will be when all the things in Christ shall be gathered together! No division among the people of God! When the whole redeemed inheritance shall be one and we shall as one body possess it forever. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” Got it! God has given it to us! We have a right to it—we are the heirs of it in Christ!

11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will. He not only wills it, but He works it! When He wills to give His people a broad inheritance—of that large inheritance they shall certainly have for He “works all things after the counsel of His own will.”

12-14. That we should be to the praise of His Glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His Glory. You have got the Holy Spirit. He is God’s seal upon you that you are, indeed, saved men and women! In getting that, you have already received the earnest, that is, a part of the inheritance never to be taken back. A pledge has to be restored, but an earnest is kept forever! The Spirit of God is ours and in having Him we have all things!

15, 16. Therefore I, also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. Having got so much, you might get a great deal more.

17, 18. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the Glory of His inheritance in the saints. That is a wonderful passage! We are not only to know our inheritance in God, but God’s inheritance in us! Wonderful thing, and yet it is so! The Lord’s portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. Joshua gave each one of the people his own portion, but all the people were God’s portion! And today God delights in His people. He finds a solace in those whom He chose, in those whom He redeemed by blood, in those whom He brought near into daily fellowship with Himself!

19-23. And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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SIN SUBDUED

NO. 1577

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“He will subdue our iniquities.”  
Micah 7:19.

BUT lately I tuned my harp to the music of forgiven sin and we sang of pardon bought with blood, finding our key-note in the words of David— “Who forgives all your iniquities.” It was a sweet subject to all our hearts, for we all have a portion in it, seeing we are all sinful and have need to be forgiven—therefore did our souls dance to the high sounding cymbals as we rejoiced in the complete pardon which our gracious God has given to all who believe in Jesus. But, Beloved, the pardon of sin is not enough for us—we have another equally urgent need. If the Lord would forgive us all our sins we could not be happy with that alone. “Who forgives all your iniquities” is not perfect music till we add to it the next note, “who heals all your diseases.”

We feel that we have within us a tendency to sin and that tendency is our misery. From this tendency we must be emancipated, or we are no more free than the captive who has had the manacles removed from one wrist but feels the iron eating into the other arm! We wish to be delivered from every propensity to sin—yes, to be rescued altogether from its power. God has now given us a new life and this will never be easy till the last link of the chain of sin is utterly removed. Since our new birth there remains no rest for us short of being perfectly like our God in righteousness and true holiness. The heavenly Seed within us must and will grow—and as it increases in the soul, it will expel the power of evil, for it cannot endure the least particle of it.

We may now be called “the Irreconcilables,” for we can never be at peace with evil. We cannot tolerate sin. The thought of it pains us and when we fall into a sinful act we are cut to the quick. We thirst to be pure! We pant to be holy and we shall never be satisfied until we are perfectly so. We, dear Friends, who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit, find that we are by nature under the power of sin. It will not be an easy thing for us to escape from the terrible tyranny of sin—not without the putting forth of great power can the iron yoke be broken. What little experience we have had in the Divine Life leads us to see that there is an immense difficulty before us, making our upward progress one of conflict and labor. A dreadful power has our nature in subjection and that power cannot easily be overcome.

Ever since the Fall sin has taken possession of us. This flesh of ours lusts to evil—the propensities of our nature which are not, in themselves, sinful, are made by our depraved hearts to be the occasions of concupiscence and transgression. We cannot eat, or drink, or talk, or sleep but what there is a tendency to sin in each of these conditions. Out of the simplest movements of our being, evil can arise. Actions which are incidental to the very fact that we are men—actions which are neither morally good nor morally evil become, nevertheless, the nests in which sin lays its eggs and hatches them so that every propensity of ours, even that which is, in itself, natural and fitting, readily becomes polluted and depraved through the indwelling of sin in our nature.

Sin poisons the wellhead! Sin is in our brain—we think wrongly. Sin is in our heart—we love that which is evil. Sin bribes the judgment, intoxicates the will and perverts the memory! We recollect a bad word when we forget a holy sentence. Like a sea which comes up and floods a continent, penetrating every valley, deluging every plain and invading every mountain, so has sin penetrated our entire nature! How shall this flood be stopped? This enemy so universally dominant, so strongly entrenched— how shall it be dislodged? It has to be driven out somehow, every particle of it, and we shall never rest until it is. But by whom shall iniquity be subdued? How satisfactory the assurance of our text, “He will subdue our iniquities”!

We find that our inward enemies are assisted by allies from without. The world which lies in the Wicked One is always ready to assist his dominion within us. We cannot walk down a street but we hear language which pollutes us. We can scarcely transact business in our own counting houses without being tempted. If we stay at home there is temptation there and if we go abroad it is the same. The most retired are not free from sin, no, their very retirement may only be a sinful selfishness which shirks imperative duty. We cannot do good to others without running some risk, ourselves, and if we cease from godly endeavors because we would not jeopardize our own spiritual comfort, we are already taken in the snare!

We cannot mix in politics in any degree, with the purest desire for our country’s welfare, without breathing tainted air. We cannot try to curb the social evil but we feel that we are on treacherous ground—yet we may not flinch from duty because of its perils. We shrink like the sensitive plant that is touched by the finger—we fold and furl up all the feelings of our being because of the sin which touches us when we mingle with men. We often close up all the gates and windows of the soul because we are conscious that the enemies without are calling to the enemies within and saying, “We will conquer you yet!”

Moreover, that mysterious spirit, the devil, is always ready to excite our flesh and to urge on the world. I have beard that some people doubt his existence. Very likely they are so friendly with him that they would not like to betray him and so they deny that he hides in their hearts. But those who are his enemies do not try to conceal him, but acknowledge with sad humiliation of heart that they are very conscious of his power. A wind from him will come sweeping through our spirit in the calmest hour of devotion and in a minute we are disturbed and distracted! We have had our thoughts all going up towards Heaven and in a moment it has seemed as if they were all sucked down into the bottomless Pit, merely because that evil spirit has spread his dragon wing mysteriously over us and created a horrible downdraft which our poor brain could not at once resist.

We have to fight, then, not only with sin, but with the flesh, which, like a Gibeonite, has become a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the devil—we have to fight with the world which “lies in the Wicked One,” steeped up to the throat in sin. And we have to fight with Satan, himself. “We wrestle not with flesh and blood,” or else we would gird on the sword and go in for knocks and blows and cuts and thrusts and have the battle out! No, but we wrestle with “principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places.” And what is to become of such poor, frail, feeble, weak creatures as we are? Who can subdue these great and mighty kings? With so many in league against us, what can we do? What is to become of us?

My text is the answer to that question—“He will subdue our iniquities.” That same blessed God who has pardoned our sins will conquer them! They may fight against us, but He will be more than a match for them. Their fighting will end in their destruction. Omnipotence has marched into our hearts to trample down the power of sin. Eternal faithfulness has called in invincible strength and Divine Majesty to do battle against the serried hosts of darkness and we shall overcome! “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I am going to speak briefly upon seven points, if time shall hold out for me to do so, and each of these seven points will show phases of the energy of evil which God will subdue.

I. One of the first powers of evil which a man perceives when the heavenly life begins to breathe within him is THE FASCINATING POWER OF SIN. When Divine Grace in the soul is only like a little spark and has not come to its brightness, yet the man discovers with alarm that he is held under the enchantment of evil. I do not know any other word which quite gives my idea except that one. Satan casts a spell over men. They come and hear the Gospel and they are impressed by it—they see the reasonableness of the endeavor to escape from sin. They perceive the beauty of holiness and see that the way of God’s salvation is a very glorious one, namely, by faith in Jesus Christ, and they begin to yield.

But yet they neither flee from their sins nor lay hold on the salvation of Christ—they remain as persons besotted who act contrary to reason. In some cases one sin, in some cases another, seems to fascinate men like the eyes of the fabled basilisk. As certain snakes paralyze their victims by fixing their eyes upon them, so do certain sins paralyze those who are under their influence so that none can awaken them to escape. Sin makes men mad! Against their reason, against their best interests, they follow after that which they know will destroy them! They are slaves, though they wear no fetters of iron! They are captives, though no walls enclose them. The magic arts of evil have taken them in a net and wrapped them about with invisible bonds from which they cannot escape!

In many cases Satan exercises over men a kind of soporific power. He puts them to sleep. I do not know whether there is anything in mesmerism or not, but I know that there is a devilish sleep-creating charm which Satan casts over men. They are no sooner a little awakened, startled and persuaded to escape for their lives, than suddenly they fold their arms, again, and crave a little more sleep. They are nodding over a prospect which, a few hours ago, made their hair almost stand on end! They go back to do the deed which they dreaded and which they know to be evil and destructive. They forget the Savior whose charms began to influence them and renew their covenant with Satan from whom they had almost escaped.

In the matters of the soul you have not merely to get men awake, but to keep them awake. Over the Arctic traveler there comes a tendency to sleep in the cold—a tendency which he cannot resist. He may be awakened by his friends and shaken out of his torpor but, by-and-by, he is anxious to sleep again. They march him on between two, perhaps, and try to keep him awake, but still he cries, “Let me sleep!” He begs to be allowed to lie down and slumber. Such is the power of Satan over some of you who are present here—you wish that we would let you be quiet and go on in your sins without worrying you with our warnings. I have shaken you, sometimes—at least I have tried to do so—but then, after all, you have gone to sleep and you are still asleep, nodding with Hell beneath you and with the wrath of God abiding on you!

It seems as if you cannot be decided—you cannot be resolute—you cannot run away from sin but are held by mysterious bonds! You are held, worst of all, by a dreadful indifference which makes you slumber yourselves into Hell. Do you think one ungodly man, in his senses, would remain what he is and where he is while there is a hope of being renewed if it were not for some strange enchantment which is exercised upon him by sin? What art of wizard can equal the magic of sin? What other witchery can cast men into such insensibility? If I were to cry, “Fire! Fire!” in this place tonight, the most of you would rush to the first door or window, but yet when we tell you of what is infinitely worse—namely, of the wrath to come and the anger of Almighty God—you are in no great alarm, no, you sit at your ease and hear all about it.

The story of your future destiny is heard and heard till men think no more of it than of an old wives’ fable and still sleep on in their sin. I have known this witchery to enthrall men who have been somewhat awakened. By the month and by the year together they have been awakened and have been apparently very earnest. But, after all, sin has charmed them with its siren song and they have returned like the dog to its vomit, or the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Now, I am rejoiced to think that, if there is any life in you, if the Lord enables you to look to Jesus Christ, His Son, for salvation, He will subdue your iniquities.

Man, He will help you to escape from the magician’s wand! Sin shall no longer delude and ensnare you! He will so set eternal things before you by the power of the Divine Spirit that you will not dare to sleep any longer! He will so convince you of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come that He will slay the enchanter, break his spell and free you from his black arts. May the Lord set every fascinated one free at this good hour. May He pronounce the Word of God which will unbind the enchanter’s charm and we shall then have one fulfillment of the text, “He shall subdue our iniquities.”

II. A second form of the force of sin in most men is ITS DEPRESSING POWER. When men are really awake and no longer under the witchery of sin, then Satan, their flesh and the sin that dwells in them, conspire to make them think that there is no hope of salvation for them. The Evil One mutters, “It is no use your trying to be saved. You do not stand the smallest chance.” Jeeringly the Tempter cries, “Look at your sins! Look at your sins!” Satan, who before did not want us to look at sin, becomes, all of a sudden, eager that we should take to self-examination and confession! He who is the Father of Lies sometimes finds truth answers his purpose so well that he uses it with terrible effect! But even then he uses it to support a lie.

He suggests to the heart the thought, “If you had not sinned so much you might have been forgiven, but you have piled on the last ounce that has broken the back of Mercy—you will never be saved.” Then comes the second suggestion, “You know you have tried already. You kept yourself pretty steady for a time, but it all broke down. There is not the slightest use in venturing, again, upon this hopeless business. Depend upon it, there is a Divine decree against you—you are one of the reprobate! There is no hope for you at all. Don’t you see how false you are? You never make a resolve but you break it! You made an awful failure of it last time and you will again.” Then there comes up, again, in the soul the depressing thought, “Perhaps it is not true, after all, that there is any mercy for sinners. It is very possible that there is no such power in the blood of Jesus as the preacher wants you to think.”

Once get a man upon the rails of doubt and you can draw him on as far as you please. It is interesting to see a man go on doubting in the style I once followed. I doubted everything till at last I doubted my own existence! Now I have at least a little bump of common sense and I laughed outright at myself when I got as far as that—and the ridiculousness of the situation brought me back again to believe. To run right on to a reductio ad absurdum and prove the absurdity of your own unbelief is a very useful method of bringing a doubting spirit to a measure of belief. Yes, I know that this is the way of sin. It depresses the man. “I want to, but cannot believe,” he says. “I would have a hope, but I cannot believe that my name is among God’s elect ones. I cannot think that the blood of the Atonement was shed for me” and so on.

What is to be done when you feel this and wish to conquer it? What is to be done but to fly to a promise like this in the text, “He will subdue our iniquities”? Yes, this despondency of yours, the Lord Jesus will subdue! Believe that He is able to cut off Giant Despair’s head and dismantle his castle and set his prisoners free! Some have almost gone to the knife and to the halter in their despair and yet the Lord Jesus Christ has restored them to joy. Many a despairing soul have we had to deal with and we have seen the Lord vanquish its misery and chase away its sorrow! Satan did his best to keep the soul from the joy which it might have had then and there—to keep it from the feast which was spread for it, from the blessing which God had prepared for it—but he could not prevail, for the hour of hope had struck.

O, cast-down one, be comforted! The Lord will subdue your iniquities in this respect. If you will but look to Jesus Christ He will say to you, “Be of good comfort.” He will tell you that your sins are forgiven and breathe hope into your soul. This is a second blessed way in which God subdues our iniquities—by casting out their depressing power. This He does by showing what a glorious Savior Christ is—how He is Divine and, therefore, equal to any emergency—how His Atonement is of a value that never can be limited. He shows how He is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.”

This He does by applying the precious promises to the soul, by His own Holy Spirit, who leads men to believe in God despite their despair, hoping against hope! And thus the snare is broken and their iniquities are subdued. O glorious victory of all-conquering Love, sin’s iron yoke of dark despondency is broken and the captives lead their captivity captive. Hallelujah!

III. But now, thirdly, the Lord has power to subdue sin in another form of its force, namely, ITS DOMINEERING POWER. What a domineering thing sin is over men. Any one sin will lord it frightfully over a man. I know a man in his senses—at any rate, he has never been in Bedlam—in business he is as sharp and smart a man as can be and yet he drinks himself into foolishness, into madness and even into delirium tremens! He has done this several times and acknowledges to the madness and wickedness of the deed—and yet he will repeat his insane and suicidal course! He has drunk away all his estate—from a man of property he has descended to become a very inefficient worker. He has drunk away all his wife earns, for he does not earn much, himself, now, and he is mean enough to let the poor woman kill herself to provide him with food.

He drank a horse and cart a fortnight ago. He went out of the house upon a business errand for his wife, pulled up at a drink-shop, drank till his money was gone and so he sold the means by which his wife has kept him out of the workhouse! I dare say he is here—let this message pierce his heart—he knows that it is time. He never went home again till the last ear of that horse had been drunk. And yet he would not like anybody to say that he is a fool, though I beg leave to have my doubts. His sin domineers over him. Only let drink come to him and say, “Go and do a mad thing,” and he does it at once! Expense, pain, disgrace, disease, poverty and an early death—all these are demanded by the drink demon and his victims cheerfully pay the tax!

Why, now, if I were persuaded that it was the duty of any one of you to go and spend every penny that you have and starve your own children in order to support a child at the Orphanage, you would laugh at me, I dare say. I should be a very long while before I could persuade you to do such a thing as that. I am sure I should not wish you to do so, but even if it were right, I could not get you to do it. Yet things far more preposterous are done greedily at the bidding of drink. This devil of drunkenness comes to a man and he says, “Come along with me. Leave your fireside and your wife and little ones and associate with the lowest of the low. Come and spend everything you have upon stuff that will muddle your head, harden your heart and destroy your character. Sell your household furniture and drink till all your comrades call you a jolly good fellow. Pawn your children’s shoes, so that the little ones cannot even go to Sunday school.”

The man goes along as meekly as a lamb. And he has done that scores of times. He knows what a fool he is and yet he will do it again if he gets a chance. Oh, the domineering power of sin! It is not the one sin of drunkenness, only, for there are other men who are domineered by their lusts. It is a delicate question to talk about, but I dare say there are some here who are slaves to the vilest of lusts and it becomes me to be plain with them and assure them that persons living in fornication or adultery cannot inherit the kingdom of God! Then there is anger which carries men away as with a flood—they cannot restrain themselves—the least thing sets them off boiling with passion. They say they cannot get the mastery in this respect and it is perfectly true—but there is a stronger power than ours which can be brought in, by which the victory can be won.

Sin in some form or other has bound us hand and foot and made us slaves. Do you wish to be free? Do you wish to be delivered from the tyranny of sin? Then I do not advise you to do anything in your own strength in the hope that you can accomplish deliverance—but cry to Christ at once, whose precious blood can blot out the past and change you for the future. Give yourself up to Him and be made a new man in Christ Jesus. Oh, you did try to mend, you say. One of our kings used, by way of swearing, to say, “God mend me”! That was his regular expletive till somebody said that he had tried that oath long enough. He thought that God could more easily make a new one than mend him! That is just the truth about you. There is no mending you! You need to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. It will be, by far, the easier work of the two, though in itself it will be impossible to you. The Lord can do it! He can make you such a new man, woman, that you will not know yourself the next time you meet yourself—you will be so entirely new that you will begin to fight against your former self as your worst enemy.

Oh for an earnest cry at this good hour, “Lord, save me! I am sinking in the depths of my sin! Jesus, stretch out Your hand as You did to sinking Peter. Save me, or I perish!” Jesus will lift His royal hand and cause both winds and waves to lie still before Him, for it is written, “He will subdue our iniquities.” The domineering power of sin is readily broken when Jesus enters the heart, but never till then. We refuse to obey our lusts when we bow our necks to the pure and holy Savior. What a change He works! Speak, you who best can tell, you who have felt it! Ah, Lord, we bless You that it is even so—“You will subdue our iniquities.”

IV. Now, fourthly (for I must be brief on each point), there is another power about sin, namely, ITS CLAMORING POWER. I do not know any word, just now, which so nearly expresses what I mean. Some of us know that we are forgiven and we know that the domineering power of sin is broken in us and our old sins have been long washed away by the blood of Christ so that God does not know anything about them. You say that is a strange expression. It is no stranger than the Scriptures warrant, for the Lord says of our sins that He will remember them no more forever—and I believe that He means what He says.

But as for my transgressions, I remember them when God does not— and they come up before me and they howl at me. “You are saved?” asks one of my sins—“You?” “Remember what you did while yet a youth?” Sometimes thousand of them at once make an awful din and howl out, “Guilty! Guilty! Guilty and doomed to die!” Then one or two bigger sins than the rest take the lead, howling with a deep bass, “Condemnation! Condemnation! Condemnation!” I have tried to argue with these memories of sins. When the dogs have barked in that fashion I have tried to put them down. Conscience has come out with his big whip and he has whipped them till they howled more than ever. Conscience has said, “Why, even now that you are a Christian you are not what you ought to be. You still fall short of your own standard. You condemn yourself while you are preaching. You know you do.” Then all the dogs have howled again, as if they were only now beginning their horrid music.

You have never heard, perhaps, a whole kennel full of sins all howling at once, but it is a most awful noise at night. If you listen to the voice of these clamorous dogs, you will wish that you had never been born or could cease to exist. No voice that I know of, short of the one in the text, can make them lie still. But the Lord Jesus can subdue our iniquities and when He steps into the middle of these dogs they lie cowed at His feet! As He speaks with gracious words of pardon, the Hell-hounds vanish and, instead of their baying, you hear the sweet voice out of Heaven—“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

Did you ever experience this delightful change? It is something like the case of a newcomer at a court of law who one day went with a magistrate and sat on the bench. A prisoner was brought up and evidence was given and the counsel against the prisoner spoke. And this person said to his friend, the magistrate, “You may as well end it, the man is clearly guilty. Wind the case up and let’s go to dinner.” But the magistrate said, “You must listen and hear the advocate on the other side and the case will look very different.” When he listened to the advocate on the other side, he began to whisper, “I have my doubts about that, now.” As he listened further, he said, I am glad you did not condemn that man. What a mistake I made—he is as innocent as a new-born babe. That advocate has done his work wonderfully.” The prisoner was acquitted.

It is so with us. When our sins plead against us, we readily allow that we are hopelessly ruined. But, oh, when our blessed Advocate takes up His brief! When The Wonderful, The Counselor urges His plea and pleads that our sins were laid on Him—what a change comes over the face of things! The sin is admitted and then covered; lack of righteousness is acknowledged and then supplied; condemnation is recognized as just and then seen to be, with equal justice, put away forever! Picture yourself in court. There are the bills and they are put in evidence against you. “Do you owe those bills?” “Yes.” “Have you anything to say why you should not be treated as a defaulting debtor?” “No.” But when the man is able to reply, “Yes, the charges are all paid,” that settles the matter! And so when the Believer can say, “Lord Jesus Christ, You have paid all my debts for me.” And when Christ shows His wounds and says, “I have put them all away, for I bore them in My own body on the Cross”—oh, then the case is ended and the clamor of our iniquities is subdued and so the text is again true—“He will subdue our iniquities.”

V. But I shall have my time gone, otherwise I wanted to say that this text is true as to THE DEFILING POWER OF SIN. Do you know, Brothers and Sisters, that after we are quite forgiven and after the domineering power of sin has gone, yet the defiling power of sin is a great affliction to us? Our experience is embittered by the corruption of sins long ago dead which send forth a dreadful rottenness and make our thoughts a terror to us. Some of you were converted late in life and you have very much, I am sure, to trouble you in the influence of evil upon your memory. Perhaps this very night while I am speaking there has come up into your mind— though you cannot bear to think of it—some wretched scene in which you played a guilty part.

Even the holiest words, when you are in prayer, will sometimes suggest to you a loose song that you used to sing and a casual expression which has no special meaning to others will awaken a thousand vile memories in you! This is what I mean by the defiling energy of sin—it is a great plague to many Believers, especially to those converted after years of gross sin. In addition to that, many of you may have experienced the defiling power of sin in another form—when Satan has suggested blasphemous thoughts and abominable ideas to you. You cannot bear them! You are ready to fly to the ends of the earth to escape the venom of these hornets, but still they buzz around you and will not be quiet. You could almost tear your heart out of your body if you could thereby expel these vile suggestions, but they will not go. They descend in perfect floods—they are mud showers, or worse than that—fire showers. And they fall upon your poor brain and there is no getting out of the diabolical tempest.

Ah, I remember when words I never heard from human tongues rushed through my ears filling my heart with blasphemies which I never thought of—profane suggestions which made me tremble like a leaf as they poured through my poor brain! I could have died sooner than they should be there and yet they were rushing through my mind and bearing all before them. Many of God’s people are tried in that way. What is to be done? If old memories and satanic suggestions come upon you to defile you, what is to be done but to fly to this text—“He will subdue our iniquities”? Let us plead this in prayer. Lord, conquer my memory and wash it from the filth which clings to it! Put away its pollution from me, Lord. Chain up the devil and rebuke his suggestions. Let Your poor child have space for breath and time to sing and opportunity to pray! Save me, I beseech You, from the infernal suggestions which now torment me!

Some of you know nothing about this and I hope you will abide in happy ignorance of it. But those of you who do know it will perceive what I am talking about and you will triumph in this priceless promise, “He will subdue our iniquities.” Look to Jesus Christ for power over infernal suggestions and over evil memories and He will give you that mastery—and it may be you shall never again be tried in that way as long as you live—for frequently the Lord gives such sudden and decisive deliverance that between that one battle and Heaven, the Christian pilgrim pursues his way and never meets Apollyon again!

VI. We have now reached the sixth point. The Lord our God will subdue sin in ITS HAMPERING POWER. I am speaking, of course, to Christians in these latter points. There is a hampering power about sin. I will just hint at some instances of it. Many Believers might do a great deal of service for Christ and His Church, but they are hampered by shame. They are ashamed, afraid, alarmed where there is nothing to be troubled about. They indulge a foolish distrust of God. Their fear may once have been modesty, but it has grown rank till it is not, now, the kind of modesty which is wholesome. They might serve God, but they are ashamed to make the attempt—ought they not to be ashamed of such cowardice?

Some, again, are hindered in their joy and their peace by unbelief. They are always doubting, inventing fears, planning suspicions, compiling complaints. This comes of evil and leads to no good. It is a dreadful thing to be hampered from doing good and hampered from glorifying God by an inveterate tendency to unbelief. Others are hampered by frivolity. Many of us have merry spirits, but some are all levity. They were cradled in a bubble and made to ride upon thistle down. It is a pity when a man has no solidity of character and runs to froth, for this sin dwarfs his manhood and dries up his vigor. Oh that the Lord would subdue this form of iniquity!

Some I know, too, are very unstable—they are never the same thing two days together. They might have borne fruit if they had kept where they were, but they have been transplanted every week and so have never taken root. They have undertaken a dozen works, but they have done nothing. Unstable as water, they shall not excel. Some, again, are hampered by pride. There is no use in denying it—the natural tendency of many persons is to a silly pride. When they were children they could not have a new coat but they gloried in it—and since then they cannot have two pence more than their neighbors but they become almost unbearable!

I know some who I hope are Christians, but they have a dreadful tendency to swell—they will grow before your very eyes if anyone will but favor the process. They have always looked upon the many—the multitude—as being far inferior to them because their grandfather’s grandfather was either a knight, or a baronet, or a foreigner of unknown degree! They feel that they are superior sort of people. This is a great drawback to godly workers, especially when it makes them feel that they could not go among poor people. Those who do go visit the sick poor are often quite unable to reach their hearts because of their stiffness of manner.

Some professors are slothful. They have a torpid liver and are always afraid of doing too much. They are a lethargic, Dutch-built, broad-wheeled wagon sort of Christians and all their movements are slow in the work of the Lord. They do not move at all by express. Indeed, they are distressed by zeal and disgusted by enthusiasm! May the Lord subdue these iniquities for us! Others are hampered by a quick temper. They cannot take things calmly—they snap and snarl and scarcely know why. They boil over so soon—they are very sorry for it, directly, but that does not cure the scalds. Some must be forever fighting, for peace is stagnation to their burning spirits.

I have given a long list of these hampering sins. What is to be done with them? “Well,” says one, “I do not think we can do anything, Sir—these are our besetting sins.” Now, do not make any mistake about it, if there is any sin that gets the mastery over you, you will be lost! You are bound to conquer every sin—remember that. You may call it a besetting sin or not, but it must be either overcome by you or it will be your ruin. A man may plead that a certain fault is his besetting sin but I am not so sure of it. A sin that you willfully indulge—is that a besetting sin? Certainly not! If I had to cross Clapham Common tonight and three stout fellows beset me to take away whatever I had, I would do my little best in self-defense. That is what I call besetting a man!

A besetting sin is a sin that sometimes surprises a man and then he ought to fight and drive the besetting sin away! If I were to walk over the common every night, arm-in-arm with a fellow who picked my pocket, I should not say that the man “beset” me. No, he and I are friends, evidently, and the robbery is only a little dodge of our own. If you go willfully into sin, or tolerate it, and say you cannot help it—well, you have to help it or you will be lost! One thing is certain—either you must conquer sin or sin will conquer you—and to be conquered by sin is everlasting death!

Well, what is to be done? Fall back upon this gracious promise—“He will subdue our iniquities.” They have to be subdued! Jesus will do the deed and in His name we will overcome. If we are slothful, we will, in God’s strength, do 10 times as much as we should have done had we been naturally of an active turn. If we are angry we will school ourselves till we become meek. Some of the most angry men that I have ever known have come to be the meekest of men. Remember Moses, how he slew the Egyptian in his heat, and yet the man, Moses, became very meek by the Grace of God! You must overcome your sin, my dear Hearer, be that sin what it may. Whatever else you forget of this evening’s sermon I want to leave that in your heart—you must overcome sin!

By the blood of the Lamb it is to be done. By the power of Divine Grace it must be accomplished. Up! Slay this Agag that you thought to spare! Hew him in pieces before the Lord, or else the Lord will hew you in pieces one of these days. God give you Grace to get the victory.

VII. Now, the last and seventh point—God will deliver you from THE INDWELLING POWER OF SIN. Sin nestles in our nature. Its lair is in the jungle of our heart and if we are Believers in Jesus Christ we must hunt it out. The first thing the Lord does with this indwelling sin is to neutralize it. He puts in His indwelling Spirit to subdue it and overcome it. Next, He begins to drive it out. He said of the Canaanites, “By little and by little I will surely drive them out.” Thanks be to God, He has driven out certain of our sins already! I know that I speak to some who are not tempted, now, to vices that once ruled them with a rod of iron. You have conquered the grosser shapes of sin.

Brother, Sister, the day will come when there will not be one Canaanite left in the land—when, if you should search through and through there will be no tendency to sin, no wandering of heart, no error of judgment, no failure of righteousness, no inclination to transgression! You will be as perfect as your Covenant Head, Jesus Christ. Where will you be, then? Not here, I think! I notice that God always puts His jewels into fit settings and the proper setting for a perfect man is the perfect joy of Heaven! In a pure region the pure heart shall dwell! And you, Believer, shall go on towards that sacred height, till, one of these days, your Lord will say, “Dear Child, you have fought long enough with corruption and sin, come up here; the conflict is all over now.” You will look back, when you get up to Heaven, and you will say to yourself, perhaps—if you can have any such regrets—“I wish I had conquered those sins earlier, fought against them more earnestly, watched against them more vigilantly. Oh, that I had honored and glorified my Lord more!”

However, forgetting all about regrets, what a song we will raise when we find ourselves quite free from the power of sin! What a song! O, you badtempered Brother, when that anger is all gone and you will never be angry again, will you not sing? Ah you, Brother, a little inclined to laziness— when you find that you can serve God night and day, will you not sing? And some of us who are inclined to despondency—when our gloom is all gone and life becomes everlasting joy and sunshine, will we not sing? Yes, I was going to say—

*“Then, loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,  
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”*

I did utter that resolution once in the pulpit and when I came down the stairs an aged woman said to me, “You made a mistake in your sermon tonight.” “Dear soul,” I said, “I dare say I made a dozen.” “Ah,” she said, “but you made one great one. You said that you owed more to God’s Grace than anybody and, therefore, you would sing the loudest. But,” she said, “you won’t, for I shall.”

I find all my fellow Christians, both men and women, are resolved that they will sing the loudest to the praise of Divine Grace! This shall be Heaven’s only contest! There shall be a grand contention among the birds of Paradise which shall sing most sweetly of Free Grace and dying love. What a Heaven there will be and what music there will be in Heaven when our iniquities are subdued! How will the Lord look down with joy upon us all when He shall see us all made like His Son—perfect, faultless, glorious! Then we will sing, “He has subdued our iniquities. Oh, come let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously and all our iniquities has He cast into the sea.”

Anticipate that joy and begin to sing tonight—and let this be the matter of your song—“Thanks be unto God which gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.” May that victory be yours and mine. Amen.

MERCY, OMNIPOTENCE AND JUSTICE

NO. 137

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JUNE 21, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“The Lord is slow to anger and great in power  
and will not at all acquit the wicked.”  
Nahum 1:3.**

WORKS of art require some education in the beholder before they can be thoroughly appreciated. We do not expect that the uninstructed should at once perceive the varied excellencies of a painting from some master hand. We do not imagine that the superlative glories of the harmonies of the princes of song will enrapture the ears of clownish listeners. There must be something in the man, himself, before he can understand the wonders either of Nature or of art. Certainly this is true of character. By reason of failures in our character and faults in our life, we are not capable of understanding all the separate beauties and the united perfection of the Character of Christ, or of God, His Father. Were we as pure as the angels in Heaven, were we what our race once was in the Garden of Eden—immaculate and perfect—it is quite certain that we should have a far better and nobler idea of the Character of God than we can by possibility attain unto in our fallen state! But you cannot fail to notice that men, through the alienation of their natures, are continually misrepresenting God because they cannot appreciate His perfection. Does God at one time withhold His hand from wrath? Lo, they say that God has ceased to judge the world and looks upon it with listless phlegmatic indifference! Does He at another time punish the world for sin? They say He is severe and cruel. Men will misunderstand Him because they are imperfect and are not capable of admiring the Character of God!

Now, this is especially true with regard to certain lights and shadows in the Character of God which He has so marvelously blended in the perfection of His Nature. Although we cannot see the exact point of meeting, yet if we have been at all enlightened by the Spirit, we are struck with wonder at the sacred harmony! In reading Holy Scripture you can say of Paul that he was noted for his zeal—of Peter that he will always be memorable for his courage—of John that he was noted for his lovingness. But did you ever notice, when you read the history of our Master, Jesus Christ, that you never could say He was notable for any one virtue at all? Why was that? It was because the boldness of Peter did so outgrow itself as to throw other virtues into the shade or else the other virtues were so deficient that they set forth his boldness. The very feet of a man being noted for something is a sure sign that he is not so notable in other things. And it is because of the complete perfection of Jesus Christ that we are not accustomed to say of Him that He was eminent for His zeal, or for His love, or for His courage. We say of Him that He was a perfect character but we are not very easily able to perceive where the shadows and the lights blended, where the meekness of Christ blended into His courage and where His loveliness blended into His boldness in denouncing sin! We are not able to detect the points where they meet. And I believe the more thoroughly we are sanctified, the more it will be a subject of wonder to us how it could be that virtues which seemed so diverse were in so majestic a manner united into one Character!

It is just the same of God. And I have been led to make the remarks I have made on my text because of the two clauses thereof which seem to describe contrary attributes. You will notice that there are two things in my text—He is “slow to anger,” and yet He, “will not at all acquit the wicked.” Our character is so imperfect that we cannot see the congruity of these two attributes. We are wondering, perhaps, and saying, “How is it He is slow to anger and yet will not acquit the wicked?” It is because His Character is perfect that we do not see where these two things melt into each other—the Infallible Righteousness and Severity of the Ruler of the world and His loving kindness, His long-suffering and His tender mercies! The absence of any one of these things from the Character of God would have rendered it imperfect. The presence of them both, though we may not see how they can be congruous with each other, stamps the Character of God with a perfection elsewhere unknown.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to set forth these two attributes of God and the connecting link. “The Lord is slow to anger,” then comes the connecting link, “great in power.” I shall have to show you how that “great in power” refers to the sentence foregoing and the sentence succeeding. And then we shall consider the next attribute—“He will not at all acquit the wicked”—an attribute of justice.

I. Let us begin with the first characteristic of God. He is said to be “SLOW TO ANGER.” Let me declare the attribute and then trace it to its source.

God is “slow to anger.” When Mercy comes into the world, she drives winged steeds. The axles of her chariot wheels are glowing hot with speed. But when Wrath comes, she walks with tardy footsteps. She is not in haste to slay, she is not swift to condemn. God’s rod of mercy is always in His hands outstretched. God’s sword of justice is in its scabbard—not rusted in it—it can be easily withdrawn—but held there by that hand that presses it back into its sheath, crying, “Sleep, O sword, sleep. For I will have mercy upon sinners and will forgive their transgressions.” God has many orators in Heaven, some of them speak with swift words. Gabriel, when he comes down to tell glad tidings, speaks swiftly— angelic hosts, when they descend from Glory, fly with wings of lightning when they proclaim, “Peace on earth, good will towards men.” But the dark angel of wrath is a slow orator—with many a pause between, where melting pity joins his languid notes, he speaks and when but half his oration is completed, he often stops and withdraws himself from his rostrum giving way to pardon and to mercy—he having but addressed the people that they might be driven to repentance and so might receive peace from the scepter of God’s love.

Brothers and Sisters, I shall now try to show you how God is slow to anger.  
First, I will prove that He is, “slow to anger,” because He never smites without first threatening. Men who are passionate and swift in anger give a word and a blow—sometimes the blow first and the word afterwards! Oftentimes kings, when subjects have rebelled against them, have crushed them, first, and then reasoned with them afterwards. They have given no time of threat, no period of repentance. They have allowed no space for turning to their allegiance. They have at once crushed them in their hot displeasure, making a full end of them! Not so God—He will not cut down the tree that cumbers the ground until He has dug about it and fertilized it. He will not at once slay the man whose character is the most vile—until He has first hewn him by the Prophets, He will not hew him by judgments. He will warn the sinner before He condemns him. He will send his Prophets, “rising up early and late,” giving him “line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.” He will not smite the city without warning. Sodom shall not perish until Lot has been within her. The world shall not be drowned until eight Prophets have been preaching in it and Noah, the eighth, comes to prophesy of the coming of the Lord. He will not smite Nineveh till He has sent a Jonah. He will not crush Babylon till His Prophets have cried through its streets. He will not slay a man until He has given many warnings, by sicknesses, by the pulpit, by Providence and by consequences. He smites not with a heavy blow at once. He threatens first. He does not in Grace, as in Nature, send lightning, first, and thunder afterwards, but He sends the thunder of His Law, first, and the lightning of execution follows it. The Lictor of Divine Justice carries His axe bound up in a bundle of rods, for He will not cut off men until He has reproved them, that they may repent. He is “slow to anger.”  
But again, God is also very slow to threaten. Although He will threaten before He condemns, yet He is slow even in His threats. God’s lips move swiftly when He promises, but slowly when He threatens. Long rolls the pealing thunder, slowly roll the drums of Heaven when they sound the death march of sinners. Sweetly flows the music of the rapid notes which proclaim Free Grace and love and mercy. God is slow to threaten. He will not send a Jonah to Nineveh until Nineveh has become foul with sin. He will not even tell Sodom it shall be burned with fire until Sodom has become a reeking dunghill, obnoxious to earth as well as Heaven! He will not drown the world with a deluge, or even threaten to do it, until the sons of God, themselves, make unholy alliances and begin to depart from Him. He does not even threaten the sinner by his conscience until the sinner has oftentimes sinned. He will often tell the sinner of his sins, often urge him to repent, but He will not make Hell stare him hard in the face, with all its dreadful terror, until much sin has stirred up the lion from his lair and made God hot in wrath against the iniquities of man! He is slow even to threaten.  
But, best of all, when God threatens, how slow He is to sentence the criminal! When He has told them that He will punish unless they repent, how long a space He gives them in which to turn unto Himself! “He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing.” He stays His hand. He will not be in hot haste when He has threatened them, to execute the sentence upon them. Have you ever observed that scene in the Garden of Eden at the time of the Fall? God had threatened Adam, that if he sinned he should surely die. Adam sinned—did God make haste to sentence him? ‘Tis sweetly said, “The Lord God walked in the Garden in the cool of the day.” Perhaps that fruit was plucked at early morn. Maybe it was plucked at noontime. But God was in no haste to condemn! He waited till the sun was well near set and in the cool of the day came and as an old expositor has put it very beautifully, “when He did come, He did not come on wings of wrath, but He ‘walked in the Garden in the cool of the day.’” He was in no haste to slay! I think I see Him, as He was represented then to Adam, in those glorious days when God walked with man. I think I see the wonderful similitude in which the Unseen did veil Himself—I see Him walking among the trees so slowly—yes, if it were right to give such a picture—beating His breast and shedding tears that He should have to condemn man! At last I hear His doleful voice—“Adam, where are you? Where have you cast yourself, poor Adam? You have cast yourself from My favor, you have cast yourself into nakedness and into fear, for you are hiding yourself—Adam, where are you? I pity you! You thought to be God. Before I condemn you, I will give you one note of pity. Adam, where are you?” Yes, the Lord was slow to anger, slow to write the sentence even though the command had been broken and the threat was therefore of necessity brought into force! It was so with the Flood—He threatened the earth but He would not fully seal the sentence and stamp it with the seal of Heaven until He had given space for repentance. Noah must come and through his 120 years must preach the Word of God. He must come and testify to an unthinking and an ungodly generation! The Ark must be built to be a perpetual sermon! There it must be upon its mountaintop, waiting for the floods to float it, that it might be an everyday warning to the ungodly! O Heavens, why did you not at once open your floods? Fountains of the great deep, why did you not burst up in a moment? God said, “I will sweep away the world with a flood”—why, why did you not rise? “Because,” I hear them saying with gurgling notes, “because, although God had threatened, He was slow to sentence and He said in Himself, ‘Haply, they may repent. Perhaps they may turn from their sin.’ And therefore did He bid us rest and be quiet, for He is slow to anger.”  
And yet once more—even when the sentence against a sinner is signed and sealed by Heaven’s broad seal of condemnation—even then, God is slow to carry it out. The doom of Sodom is sealed. God has declared it shall be burned with fire. But God is tardy. He stops. He will, Himself, go down to Sodom that He may see the iniquity of it. And when He gets there, guilt is rife in the streets. ‘Tis night and the crew of worse than beasts besiege the door. Does He then lift His hands? Does He then say, “Rain Hell out of Heaven, you skies”? No, He lets them pursue their riot all night, spares them to the last moment and though when the sun was risen, the burning hail began to fall, yet was the reprieve as long as possible. God was not in haste to condemn. God had threatened to root out the Canaanites. He declared that all the children of Ammon should be cut off. He had promised Abraham that He would give their land unto his seed forever and they were to be utterly slain—but He made the children of Israel wait 400 years in Egypt—and He let these Canaanites live all through the days of the Patriarchs. And even then, when He led His avenging ones out of Egypt, He kept them forty years in the wilderness because He was reluctant to slay poor Canaan. “Yet,” said He, “I will give them space. Though I have stamped their condemnation, though their death warrant has come forth from the Court of King’s Bench and must be executed, yet will I reprieve them as long as I can.” And He stops until at last, Mercy had had enough and Jericho’s melting ashes and the destruction of Ai betokened that the sword was out of its scabbard and God had awaked like a mighty man—and like a strong man full of wrath! God is slow to execute the sentence even when He has declared it.  
And ah, my Friends, there is a sorrowful thought that has just crossed my mind. There are some men yet alive who are sentenced now. I believe that Scripture bears me out in a dreadful thought which I just wish to hint at. There are some men who are condemned before they are finally damned—there are some men whose sins go before them unto judgment—who are given over to a seared conscience. Concerning these it may be said that repentance and salvation are impossible. There are some few men in the world who are like John Bunyan’s man in the iron cage—can never get out. They are like Esau—they find no place of repentance, though like he, they do not seek it—for if they sought it they would find it. Many there are who have sinned “the sin unto death,” concerning whom we cannot pray. For we are told, “I do not say that you shall pray for it.” But why, why, why are they not already in the flames? If they are condemned; if Mercy has shut her eyes forever upon them; if she never will stretch out her hand to give them pardon—why, why, why are they not cut down and swept away? Because God says, “I will not have mercy upon them, but I will let them live a little while longer, though I have condemned them. I am reluctant to carry the sentence out. I will spare them as long as it is right that man should live. I will let them have a long life here, for they will have a fearful eternity of wrath forever.” Yes, let them have their little whirl of pleasure. Their end shall be most fearful. Let them beware, for although God is slow to anger, He is sure in it.  
If God were not slow to anger, would He not have smitten this huge city of ours, this behemoth city? Would He not have smitten it into a thousand pieces and blotted out the remembrance of it from the earth? The iniquities of this city are so great that if God should dig up her very foundations and cast her into the sea, she well deserves it! Our streets at night present spectacles of vice that cannot be equaled! Surely there can be no nation and no country that can show a city so utterly debauched as this great city of London if our midnight streets are indications of our immorality! You allow, in your public places of resort—I mean you, my lords and ladies—you allow things to be said in your hearing of which your modesty ought to be ashamed! You can sit in theatres to hear plays at which modesty would blush—I say nothing of piety. That the ruder sex could have listened to the obscenities of La Traviata is surely bad enough—but that ladies of the highest refinement and the most approved taste should dishonor themselves by such a patronage of vice is, indeed, intolerable! Let the sins of the lower theatres escape without your censure, you gentlemen of England—the lowest bestiality of the nethermost Hell of a playhouse can look to your opera houses for their excuse! I thought that with the pretensions this city makes to piety, for sure, they would not have so far gone and that after such a warning as they have had from the press, itself—a press which is certainly not too religious— they would not so indulge their evil passions! But because the pill is gilded, you suck down the poison—because the thing is popular, you patronize it—it is lustful, it is abominable, it is deceitful! You take your children to hear what yourselves never ought to listen to! You will sit in merry and grand company to listen to things from which your modesty ought to revolt! And I would surely hope it does, although the tide may for a while deceive you.  
Ah, God only knows the secret wickedness of this great city! It demands a loud and a trumpet voice. It needs a Prophet to cry aloud, “Sound an alarm, sound an alarm, sound an alarm,” in this city, for verily the Enemy grows upon us, the power of the Evil One is mighty and we are fast going to Perdition unless God shall put forth His hand and roll back the black torrent of iniquity that streams down our streets! But God is slow to anger and does still stay His sword. Wrath said yesterday, “Unsheathe yourself, O sword.” And the sword struggled to get free. Mercy put her hand upon the hilt and said, “Be still!” “Unsheathe yourself, O sword!” Again it struggled from its scabbard. Mercy put her hand on it and said, “Back!”—and it rattled back again. Wrath stamped his foot and said, “Awake O sword, awake!” It struggled yet again, till half its blade was outdrawn. “Back, back!”—said Mercy and with a manly push she sent it back rattling into its sheath—and there it still sleeps—for the Lord is “slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.”  
Now I am to trace this attribute of God to its source—why is He slow to anger?  
He is slow to anger, because He is Infinitely Good. Good is His name— “Good”—God. Good in His Nature—because He is slow to anger. He is slow to anger, again, because He is great. Little things are always swift in anger, great things are not so. The silly dog barks at every passerby and bears no insult. The lion would bear a thousand times as much. And the bull sleeps in his pasture and will bear much before he lifts up his might. The leviathan in the sea, though he makes the deep to be hoary when he is enraged, yet is slow to be stirred up, while the little and puny are always swift in anger. God’s greatness is one reason of the slowness of His wrath!  
II. But to proceed at once to the link. A great reason why He is slow to anger is because He is GREAT IN POWER. This is to be the connecting link between this part of the subject and the last and, therefore, I must beg your attention. I say that these words, great in power, connect the first sentence to the last. And it does so in this way. The Lord is slow to anger and He is slow to anger because He is great in power. “How say you so?”—asks one. I answer, he that is great in power has power over himself. And he that can keep his own temper down and subdue himself, is greater than he who rules a city, or can conquer nations. We heard but yesterday, or the day before, mighty displays of God’s power in the rolling thunder which alarmed us. And when we saw the splendor of His might in the glistening lightning when He lifted up the gates of Heaven and we saw the brightness thereof and then He closed them again upon the dusty earth in a moment—even then we did not see anything but the crumbs of His power, compared with the power which He has over Himself. When God’s power restrains Himself,

then it is power, indeed—the power to curb power—the power that binds Omnipotence is Omnipotence surpassed! God is great in power and, therefore, does He keep in His anger. A man who has a strong mind can bear to be insulted, can bear offenses because he is strong. The weak mind snaps and snarls at the little—the strong mind bears it like a rock. It moves not, though a thousand breakers dash upon it and cast their pitiful malice in the spray upon its summit. God marks His enemies and yet He moves not. He stands still and lets them curse Him, yet is He not wrathful. If He were less of a God than He is, if He were less mighty than we know Him to be, He would long before this have sent forth the whole of His thunders and emptied the magazines of Heaven! He would long before this have blasted the earth with the wondrous mines He has prepared in its lower surface, the flame that burns there would have consumed us and we would have been utterly destroyed! We bless God that the greatness of His power is our protection! He is slow to anger because He is great in power.  
And now there is no difficulty in showing how this link unites itself with the next part of the text. “He is great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked.” This needs no demonstration in words. I have but to touch the feelings and you will see it. The greatness of His power is an assurance and an insurance that He will not acquit the wicked. Who among you could witness the storm on Friday night without having thoughts concerning your own sinfulness stirred in your bosoms? Men do not think of God, the Punisher, or Jehovah, the Avenger, when the sun is shining and the weather calm. But in times of tempest, whose cheek is not blanched? The Christian oftentimes rejoices in it. He can say, “My soul is well at ease amidst this revelry of earth. I do rejoice at it. It is a day of feasting in my Father’s hall, a day of high feast and carnival in Heaven and I am glad—  
*“The God that reigns on high,  
And thunders when He pleases,  
That rides upon the stormy sky  
And manages the seas,  
This awful God is ours!  
Our Father and our love,  
He shall send down His Heavenly powers  
To carry us above.”*  
But the man who is not of an easy conscience will be ill at ease when the timbers of the house are creaking and the foundations of the solid earth seem to groan! Ah, who is he, then, that does not tremble? Yonder lofty tree is split in half. That lightning flash has smitten its trunk and there it lies forever blasted, a monument of what God can do! Who stood there and saw it? Was he a swearer? Did he swear, then? Was he a Sabbathbreaker? Did he love his Sabbath-breaking, then? Was he haughty? Did he then despise God? Ah, how he shook! Saw you not his hair stand on end? Did not his cheeks blanch in an instant? Did he not close his eyes and start back in horror when he saw that dreadful spectacle and thought God would smite him, too? Yes, the power of God, when seen in the tempest, on sea or on land, in the earthquake or in the hurricane, is instinctively a proof that He will not acquit the wicked! I know not how to explain the feeling, but it is nevertheless the truth—majestic displays of Omnipotence have an effect upon the mind of convincing even the hardened—that God, who is so powerful, “will not at all acquit the wicked.” Thus have I tried to explain and make bare the link of the chain.  
III. The last attribute and the most terrible one, is, “HE WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED.” Let me unfold this, first of all, and then let me endeavor to trace it, also, to its source, as I did the first attribute.  
God “will not acquit the wicked.” How can I prove this? I prove it thus. Never once has He pardoned an unpunished sin. Not in all the years of the Most High, not in all the days of His right hand has He once blotted out sin without punishment! “What?” you say—“were not those in Heaven pardoned? Are there not many transgressors pardoned and do they not escape without punishment? Has He not said, ‘I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities?’” Yes, true, most true and yet my assertion is also true—not one of all those sins that have been pardoned were pardoned without punishment! Do you ask me why and how such a thing as that can be the truth? I point you to yonder dreadful sight on Calvary! The punishment which fell not on the forgiven sinner fell there! The cloud of Justice was charged with fiery hail—the sinner deserved it—it fell on Him! But, for all that, it fell and spent its fury. It fell there, in that great reservoir of misery. It fell into the Savior’s heart! The plagues which should light on our ingratitude did not fall on us, but they fell somewhere and who was it who was plagued? Tell me, Gethsemane. Tell me, O Calvary’s summit, who was plagued? The doleful answer comes, “Eli, Eli, lama Sabacthani!” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It is Jesus suffering all the plagues of sin! Sin is still punished, though the sinner is delivered.  
But you say this has scarcely proven that He will not acquit the wicked! I hold it has proven it and proven it clearly. But do you need any further proof that God will not acquit the wicked? Need I lead you through a long list of terrible wonders that God has worked—the wonders of His vengeance? Shall I show you blighted Eden? Shall I let you see a world all drowned—sea monsters whelping and stabling in the palaces of kings? Shall I let you hear the last shriek of the last drowning man as he falls into the flood and dies, washed by that huge wave from the hilltop? Shall I let you see Death riding upon the summit of a crested billow, upon a sea that knows no shore and triumphing because his work is done—his quiver empty, for all men are slain, except where life flows in the midst of death in yonder Ark? Need I let you see Sodom, with its terrified inhabitants, when the volcano of Almighty Wrath spouted fiery hail upon it? Shall I show you the earth opening its mouth to swallow up Korah, Dathan and Abiram? Need I take you to the plagues of Egypt? Shall I again repeat the death shriek of Pharaoh and the drowning of his host? Surely, we need not to be told of cities that are in ruins, or of nations that have been cut off in a day. You need not to be told how God has smitten the earth from one side to the other when He has been angry and how He has melted mountains in His hot displeasure! No, we have proofs enough in history, proofs enough in Scripture that “He will not at all acquit the wicked.” If you wanted the best proof, however, you would borrow the black wings of a miserable imagination and fly beyond the world through the dark realm of chaos on—far on—where those battlements of fire are gleaming with a horrid light! If through them, with a spirit’s safety, you could fly and could behold the worm that never dies, the Pit that knows no bottom—and could you there see the unquenchable fire and listen to the shrieks and wails of men and women who are banished forever from God—if, Sirs, it were possible for you to hear the sullen groans and hollow moans and shrieks of tortured ghosts, then would you come back to this world amazed and petrified with horror and you would say, “Indeed, He will not acquit the wicked.” HELL is the argument of the text—may you never have to prove the text by feeling in yourselves the argument fully carried out. “He will not at all acquit the wicked.”  
And now we trace this terrible attribute to its source. Why is this? We reply, God will not acquit the wicked because He is good. What? Does goodness demand that sinners be punished? It does. The judge must condemn the murderer because he loves his nation. I cannot let you go free. I cannot and I must not. You would slay others who belong to this fair Commonwealth if I were to let you go free. “No, I must condemn you from the very loveliness of My Nature.” The kindness of a king demands the punishment of those who are guilty. It is not wrathful in the Legislature to make severe laws against great sinners. It is but love towards the rest that sin should be restrained! Yonder great floodgates which keep back the torrent of sin are painted black and look right horrible, like horrid dungeon gates, they frighten my spirit. But are they proofs that God is not good? No, Sirs. If you could open wide those gates and let the deluge of sin flow on us, then would you cry, “O God, O God! Shut the gates of punishment! Let Law again be established! Set up the pillars and swing the gates upon their hinges! Shut the gates of punishment that this world may not again be utterly destroyed by men who have become worse than brutes.” It needs for very goodness’ sake that sin should be punished. Mercy, with her weeping eyes, (for she has wept for sinners), when she finds they will not repent, looks more terribly stern in her loveliness than Justice in all his majesty! She drops the white flag from her hand and says—“No. I called and they refused. I stretched out my hand and no man regarded. Let them die, let them die”—and that terrible word from the lips of Mercy’s self is harsher thunder than the very damnation of Justice! Oh, yes, the goodness of God demands that men should perish if they will sin.  
And again, the Justice of God demands it. God is infinitely Just and His Justice demands that men should be punished unless they turn to Him with full purpose of heart. Need I pass through all the attributes of God to prove it? I think I need not. We must, all of us, believe that the God who is slow to anger and great in power is also sure not to acquit the wicked.  
And now, just a home thrust or two with you. What is your state this morning? My Friend—man, woman—what is your state? Can you look up to Heaven and say, “Though I have sinned greatly, I believe Christ was punished in my place?—  
*‘My faith looks back to see,  
The burden He did bear,  
When hanging on the cursed tree,  
And knows her guilt was there.’”*  
Can you by humble faith look to Jesus and say, “My Substitute, my Refuge, my Shield. You are my Rock, my Trust. In You do I confide”? Then Beloved, to you I have nothing to say, except this—Never be afraid when you see God’s power—for now that you are forgiven and accepted, now that by faith you have fled to Christ for refuge, the power of God need no more terrify you than the shield and sword of the warrior need terrify his wife or his child! “No,” says the wife, “is he strong? He is strong for me. Is his arm brawny and are all his sinews fast and strong? Then are they fast and strong for me. While he lives and wears a shield, he will stretch it over my head. And while his good sword can cleave foes, it will cleave my foes, too, and ransom me.” Be of good cheer—fear not His power.  
But have some of you never fled to Christ for refuge? Do you not believe in the Redeemer? Have you never confided your soul to His hands? Then, my Friends, hear me! In God’s name, hear me just a moment. My Friend, I would not stand in your position for an hour—for all the stars twice spelt in gold! For what is your position? You have sinned and God will not acquit you. He will punish you. He is letting you live—you are reprieved. Poor is the life of one who is reprieved without a pardon! Your reprieve will soon run out. Your hourglass is emptying every day. I see on some of you Death has put his cold hand and frozen your hair to whiteness. You need your staff—it is the only barrier between you and the grave, now, and you are, all of you, old and young, standing on a narrow neck of land between two boundless seas—that neck of land, that isthmus of life, narrowing every moment and you and you and you are yet unpardoned! There is a city to be sacked and you are in it—soldiers are at the gates. The command is given that every man in the city is to be slaughtered save he who can give the password. “Sleep on, sleep on. The attack is not today, sleep on, sleep on.” “But it is tomorrow, Sir.” “Yes, sleep on, sleep on, it is not till tomorrow. Sleep on, procrastinate, procrastinate.” “Hark! I hear a rumbling at the gates, the battering ram is at them. The gates are tottering.” “Sleep on, sleep on. The soldiers are not yet at your doors. Sleep on, sleep on. Ask for no mercy yet. Sleep on, sleep on!” “Yes, but I hear the shrill clarion sound, they are in the streets! Listen to the shrieks of men and women! They are slaughtering them, they fall they fall, they fall!” “Sleep on. They are not yet at your door.” “But listen, they are at the gate! With heavy tramp I hear the soldiers marching up the stairs!” “No, sleep on, sleep on, they are not yet in your room.” “Why, they are there, they have burst open the door that parted you from them and there they stand!” “No, sleep on, sleep on, the sword is not yet at your throat, sleep on, sleep on!” It is at your throat! You start with horror. Sleep on, sleep on! But you are a goner. “Demon, why did you tell me to slumber! It would have been wise in me to have escaped the city when first the gates were shaken. Why did I not ask for the password before the troops came? Why by all that is wise—why did I not rush into the streets and cry the password when the soldiers were there? Why stood I till the knife was at my throat? Yes, demon that you are, be cursed! But I am cursed with you forever!”  
You know the application, it is a parable you can all expound. You need not that I should tell you that Death is after you, that Justice must devour you, that Christ Crucified is the only password that can save you and yet you have not learned it! And with some of you, Death is nearing, nearing, nearing and with all of you he is close at hand! I need not expound how Satan is the demon, how in Hell you shall curse him and curse yourselves because you procrastinated—how, that seeing God was slow to anger, you were slow to repentance—how, because He was great in power and kept back His anger, therefore you kept back your steps from seeking Him. And here you are what you are!  
Spirit of God, bless these words to some souls that they may be saved! May some sinners be brought to the Savior’s feet and cry for mercy! We ask it for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #36 New Park Street Pulpit 1

WHAT ARE THE CLOUDS?

NO. 36

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“That clouds are the dust of His feet.”  
Nahum 1:3.**

IT is possible for a man to read too many books. We will not despise learning, we will not undervalue erudition—such acquisitions are very desirable. When his talents are sanctified to God, the man of learning frequently becomes, in the hands of the Spirit, far more useful than the ignorant and the unlearned. But at the same time, if a man acquires his knowledge entirely from books, he will not find himself to be a very wise man. There is such a thing as heaping so many books on your brains that they cannot work—pouring such piles of type and letters and manuscripts and papers and prints and pamphlets and volumes and tomes and folios upon your weary head—that your brain is absolutely buried and cannot move at all. I believe that many of us, while we have sought to learn by books, have neglected those great volumes which God has given us. We have neglected to study this great book—the Bible! Moreover, we have not been careful enough students of the great volume of nature and we have forgotten that other great book, the human heart. For my own part, I desire to be somewhat a student of the heart. And I think I have learned far more from conversation with my fellowmen than I ever did from reading. And the examination of my own experience and the workings of my own heart, have taught me far more of humanity than all the metaphysical books I have ever perused. I like to read the book of my fellow creatures—nothing delights me so much as when I see a multitude of them gathered together or when I have the opportunity of having their hearts poured into mine and mine into theirs. He will not be a wise man who does not study the human heart and does not seek to know something of his fellows and of himself. But if there is one book I love to read above all others, next to the book of God, it is the volume of Nature. I care not what letters they are that I read, whether they are the golden spellings of the name of God up yonder in the stars, or whether I read, in rougher lines, His name printed on the rolling floods, or see it hieroglyphic in the huge mountain, the dashing waterfall, or the waving forest.

Wherever I look abroad in Nature, I love to discern my Father’s name spelled out in living characters. And if we had any fields a little greener than Moorfields, Smithfield and Spafields, I would do as Isaac did—go into the fields at eventide and muse and meditate upon the God of Nature. I thought in the cool of last evening I would muse with my God, by His Holy Spirit, and see what message He would give me. There I sat and watched the clouds and learned a lesson in the great hall of Nature’s college. The first thought that struck me was this—as I saw the white clouds rolling in the sky, I thought I shall soon see my Savior mounted on the Great White Throne, riding on the clouds of Heaven to call men to judgment! My imagination could easily picture the scene when the quick and the dead would stand before His Great White Throne and hear His voice pronounce their changeless destiny. I remembered, moreover, that text in the Proverbs, “he that observes the wind shall not sow and he that regards the clouds shall not reap.” I thought how many a time myself and my brother ministers have regarded the clouds. We have listened to the voice of prudence and of caution. We have regarded the clouds. We have stopped when we ought to have been sowing because we were afraid of the multitude—or we refused to reap and take in the people into our churches because some good Brother thought we were too hasty about the matter.

I rose up and thought to myself—I will regard neither the clouds nor the winds, but when the wind blows a hurricane I will throw the seed with my hands, if perhaps the tempest may waft it still further! And when the clouds are thick, I will still reap and rest assured that God will preserve His own wheat, whether I gather it under clouds or in the sunshine. And then, when I sat there musing upon God, thoughts struck me as the clouds careered along the skies—thoughts which I must give to you this morning! I trust they were somewhat for my own instruction and possibly they may be for yours. “The clouds are the dust of His feet.”

I. Well, the first remark I make upon this shall be—the way of God is generally a hidden one. This we gather from the text, by regarding the connection, “the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of His feet.” When God works His wonders He always conceals Himself. Even the motion of His feet causes clouds to arise. And if these clouds are but “the dust of His feet,” how deep must be that dense darkness which veils the brow of the Eternal. If the small dust which He causes is of equal magnitude with our clouds—if we can find no other figure to image “the dust of His feet” than the clouds of Heaven—then how obscure must be the motions of the Eternal One, how hidden and how shrouded in darkness! This great Truth suggested by the text is well borne out by facts. The ways of God are hidden ones. Cowper did not say amiss when he sang—

*“He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.”*

His footsteps cannot be seen, for, planted on the sea, the next wave washes them out. And placed in the storm, rioting as the air then is, every impression of His chariot wheels is soon erased. Look at God and at whatever He has deigned to do and you will always see Him to have been a hidden God. He has concealed Himself and all His ways have been veiled in the strictest mystery. Consider His works of salvation. How did He hide Himself when He determined to save mankind? He did not manifestly reveal Himself to our forefathers. He gave them simply one dim lamp of Prophecy which shone in words like these, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” And for 4,000 years God concealed His Son in mystery and no one understood what the Son of God was to be. The smoking incense clouded their eyes and while it showed something of Jesus, it did hide far more. The burning victim sent its smoke up towards the sky and it was only through the dim mists of the sacrifice that the pious Jew could see the Savior.

Angels, themselves, we are told, desired to look into the mysteries of Redemption, yet though they stood with their eyes intently fixed upon it until the hour when Redemption developed itself on Cavalry, not a single angel could understand it. The most profound sage might have sought to find out how God could be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly, but he would have failed in his investigations. The most intensely pious man might meditate, with the help of that portion of God’s Spirit which was then given to the Prophets, on this mighty subject and he could not have discovered what the mystery of godliness was—“God manifest in the flesh.” God marched in clouds, “He walked in the whirlwinds.” He did not deign to tell the world what He was about to do—for it is His plan to gird Himself in darkness and “the clouds are the dust of His feet.” Ah, and so it always has been in Providence as well as Grace. God never condescends to make things very plain to His creatures. He always does rightly. And therefore He wants His people always to believe that He does rightly. But if He showed them that He did so, there would be no room for their faith!

Turn your eyes along the pages of history and see how mysterious God’s dealings have been! Who would conceive that a Joseph sold into Egypt would be the means of redeeming a whole people from famine? Who would suppose that when an enemy came upon the land, it would be, after all, but the means of bringing Glory to God? Who could imagine that a harlot’s blood should mingle with the genealogy from which came the great Messiah, the Shiloh of Israel? Who could have guessed, much less could have compassed the mighty scheme of God? Providence has always been a hidden thing—

*“Deep in unfathomable mines*

***Of never failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His Sovereign will.”***

And yet, Beloved, you and I are always wanting to know what God is about. There is a war in the Crimea. We have had some great disasters at Sebastopol and we are turning over the papers and saying, “Whatever is God doing here?” What did He do in the last war? What was the benefit of it? We see that even Napoleon was the means of doing good, for he broke down the aristocracy and made all monarchs respect the future, the power and the rights of the people. We see what was the result even of that dread hurricane, that it swept away a pestilence which would have devoured full many more. But we ask, “What is God doing with this world?” We want to know what will be the consequences. Suppose we should humble Russia, where would it end? Can Turkey be maintained as a separate kingdom? And ten thousand other questions arise! Beloved, I always think, “Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth,” and—as a good old friend of mine says—“Let them crack themselves, too, if they like. We will not interfere.” If the potsherds will go smashing one another, why, then, they must! We pray that old England may come off the safest of them all. But we are not much concerned to know the result. We believe that this war, as well as everything else, will have a beneficial tendency. We cannot see in history that this world ever went a step backwards. God is always moving it in its orbit. And it has always progressed even when it seemed retrograding.

Or, perhaps you are not agitated about Providence in a nation. You believe that, there, God does hide Himself. But then there are matters concerning yourself which you long to see explained. When I was in Glasgow I went over an immense foundry, one of the largest in Scotland—and there I saw a very powerful steam engine which worked all the machinery in the entire building. I saw in that foundry such numberless wheels running round, some one way and some another, I could not make out what on earth they were all about! But, I daresay if my head had been a little wiser and I had been taught a little more of mechanics I might have understood what every wheel was doing, though really they seemed only a mass of wheels very busy running round and doing nothing! They were all, however, working at something. And if I had stopped and asked, “What is that wheel doing?” A mechanic may have said, “It turns another wheel.” “Well, and what is that wheel doing?” “There is another wheel dependent upon that and that, again, is dependent on another.” Then, at last, he would have taken me and said, “This is what the whole machinery is doing.” Some ponderous bar of iron, perhaps, being grooved and cut, shaped and polished—“this is what all the wheels are effecting—but I cannot tell separately what each wheel is doing.” All things are working together for good. But what the things separately are doing, it would be impossible to explain.

Yet you, child of Adam, with your finite intellect, are continually stopping to ask, “Why is this?” The child lies dead in the cradle. Why was infancy snatched away? Oh, ruthless Death, could you not reap ripe corn— why snatch the rosebud? Would not a chaplet of withered leaves become you better than these tender blossoms? Or you are demanding of Providence, why have you taken away my property? Was I not left, by a parent, well-to-do, but some ravenous leech has swept all my substance away? It is all gone. Why this, O God? Why not punish the unjust? Why should the innocent be allowed to suffer thus? Why am I to be bereft of my all? Says another, “I launched into a business that was fair and honorable. I intended, if God had prospered me, to devote my wealth to Him. I am poor, my business never prospers. Lord, why is this?” And another says, “Here I am toiling from morning till night. And all I do, I cannot extricate myself from my business which takes me off so much from religion. I would rather live on less if I had more time to serve my God.” Ah, finite one! Do you ask God to explain these things to you? I tell you, God will not do it and God cannot do it—for this reason—you are not capable of understanding it! Should the ant ask the eagle where it dashes aloft in the skies? Shall leviathan be questioned by a minnow? These creatures might explain their motions to creatures. But the Omnipotent Creator, the uncreated Eternal cannot well explain Himself to mortals whom He has created! We cannot understand Him. It is enough for us to know that His way always must be in darkness and that we must never expect to see much in this world.

II. This second thought is GREAT THINGS WITH US ARE LITTLE THINGS WITH GOD. What great things clouds are to us! There we see them sweeping along the skies! Then they rapidly increase till the whole firmament gathers blackness and a dark shadow is cast upon the world. We foresee the coming storm and we tremble at the mountains of cloud, for they are great. Great things are they? No, they are only the dust of God’s feet! The greatest cloud that ever swept the face of the firmament was but one single particle of dust starting from the feet of the Almighty Jehovah. When clouds roll over clouds and the storm is very terrible, it is but the chariot of God, as it speeds along the heavens, raising a little dust around Him! “The clouds are the dust of His feet.” Oh, could you grasp this idea, my Friends, or had I words in which to put it into your souls, I am sure you would sit down in solemn awe of that great God who is our Father, or who will be our Judge. Consider that the greatest things with man are little things with God. We call the mountains great but what are they? They are but “the small dust of the balance.” We call the nations great and we speak of mighty empires, but the nations before Him are but as “a drop in the bucket.” We call the islands great and talk of ours boastingly—“He takes up the isles as a very little thing.” We speak of great men and of mighty—“The inhabitants of the earth in His sight are but as grasshoppers.”

We talk of ponderous orbs moving millions of miles from us—in God’s sight they are but little atoms dancing up and down in the sunbeam of existence! Compared with God there is nothing great! True, there are some things which are little with man that are great with God. Such are our sins which we call little but which are great with Him. And His mercies which we sometimes think are little, He knows are very great mercies towards such great sinners as we are. Things which we reckon great are very little with God. If you knew what God sometimes thought of our talk, you would be surprised at yourselves. We have some great trouble— we go burdened with it, saying, “O Lord God! What a great trouble I am burdened with.” Why, I think, God might smile at us, as we do sometimes at a little child who takes up a load too heavy for it (but which you could hold between your fingers) and staggers and says, “Father, what a weight I am carrying.” So there are people who stagger under the great trouble which they think they are bearing. Great, Beloved? There are no great troubles at all—“The clouds are the dust of His feet.” If you would but so consider them, the greatest things with you are but little things with God. Suppose, now, that you had all the troubles of all the people in the world, that they all came pouring on your devoted head—what are waterfalls of trouble to God?—“Drops in the bucket.” What are whole mountains of grief to Him? Why, “He takes up the mountains as the dust of the balance.” And He can easily remove your trials. Sit not down, then, you son of weariness and want and say, “My troubles are too great.” Hear the voice of mercy—“Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you, He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

You shall hear two Christians talk. One of them will say, “O my troubles and trials and sorrows, they are so great I can hardly sustain them. I do not know how to support my afflictions from day to day.” The other says, “Ah, my troubles and trials are not less severe, but, nevertheless, they have been less than nothing. I could laugh at impossibilities and say they shall be done.” What is the reason of the difference between these men? The secret is that one of them carried his troubles and the other did not. It does not matter to a porter how heavy a load may be if he can find another to carry it for him. But if he is to carry it all himself, of course he does not like a heavy load! So one man bears his troubles, himself, and gets his back nearly broken. But the other cast his troubles on the Lord. Ah, it does not matter how heavy troubles are if you can cast them on the Lord! The heavier they are, so much the better, for the more you have got rid of and the more there is laid upon the Rock! Never be afraid of troubles. However heavy they are, God’s eternal shoulders can bear them. He, whose Omnipotence is testified by revolving planets and systems of enormous worlds can well sustain you. Is His arm shortened, that He cannot save, or is He weary that He cannot hold you fast? Your troubles are nothing to God, for the very “clouds are the dust of His feet.”

And this cheers me, I assure you, in the work of the ministry. For any man who has his eyes open to the world at large will acknowledge that there are many clouds brooding over England and over the world. I received lately a letter from a gentleman at Hull in which he tells me that he sympathizes with my views concerning the condition of the Church at large. I do not know whether Christendom was ever worse off than it is now. At any rate, I pray God it never may be. Read the account of the condition of the Suffolk churches where the Gospel is somewhat flourishing and you will be surprised to find that they have had scarcely any increase at all in the year. So you may go from Church to Church and find scarcely any that are growing. Here and there a Chapel is filled with people. Here and there you find an earnest minister. Here and there an increasing church—here and there a good Prayer Meeting. But these are only like green spots. Wherever I have gone through England, I have been always grieved to see how the glory of Zion is under a cloud—how the precious saints of Zion, comparable to fine gold, have become like earthen pitchers—the work of the hands of the potter. It is not for me to set myself up as universal censor of the Church but I must be honest and say that spiritual life and fire and zeal and piety seem to be absent in ten thousand instances! We have abundance of agencies, we have good mechanism, but the Church nowadays is very much like a large steam engine without any fire—without any hot water in the boiler—without any steam! There is everything but steam, everything but life! England is veiled in clouds. Not clouds of infidelity. I care not one fig for all the infidels in England and I do not think it worth Mr. Grant’s trouble to go after them. Nor am I afraid of Popery for old England. I do not think she will go back to that—I am sure she never will. But, I am afraid of this deadness, this sloth, this indifference that has come over our Churches.

The Church needs shaking, like the man on the mountaintop does when the cold numbs him into a deadly slumber. The Churches are gone to sleep for lack of zeal, for lack of fire. Even those who hold sound Doctrine are beginning to slumber. Oh may God stir the Church up! One great black cloud only broken here and there by a few rays of sunlight seems to be hanging over the entire of this, our happy island! But, Beloved, there is comfort, “for the clouds are the dust of His feet.” He can scatter them in a moment. He can raise up His chosen servants who have only to put their mouth to the trumpet and one blast shall awaken the sleeping sentinels and startle the sleeping camp. God has only to send out, again, some Evangelist, some flying angel and the Churches shall start up once more and she who has been clothed in sackcloth shall doff her garments of mourning and put on a garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness. The day is coming, I hope, when Zion shall sit, not without her diadem, crownless, but with her crown on her head she shall grasp her banner, take her shield and, like that heroic maiden of old who roused a whole nation, shall go forth conquering and to conquer! We hope this much, because “the clouds are the dust of His feet.”

Yes, and what clouds rest on the world at large! What black clouds of Catholic superstition, Mohammedanism and idolatry. But what are all these things? We do not care about them at all, Brothers and Sisters. Some say that I am getting very enthusiastic about the latter-day Glory and the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ. Well, I don’t know. I get all the happier the more enthusiastic I am, so I hope I shall keep on at it, for I believe nothing so comforts a servant of God as to believe that his Master is coming! I hope to see Him. I should not be surprised to see Jesus Christ tomorrow morning. He may come then. “In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.” He who learns to watch for Christ will never be surprised when He comes. Blessed shall that servant be, whom, when his Lord comes, He shall find busy about his duty. But some say He cannot come yet. There are so many clouds and so much darkness in the sky it cannot be expected that the sun will yet rise. Is that a fair reason? Do the clouds ever impede the sun? The sun moves on despite all the mists—and Jesus Christ can come, clouds or no clouds. We do not need light before He appears. He will come and give us light, afterwards— scattering the darkness with the glory of His own eyes. But you say, “How are these idolatrous systems to be cast down?” God could do it in a minute if He pleased! Religion never moves by years and weeks. Even false religions grow like mushrooms—much more, true ones. False religions attained colossal proportion in a very few years. Take the case of Mohammedanism—the new-born faith of Islam became the religion of millions in an incredible short period and if a false religion could spread so quickly, shall not a true one run along like fire amidst the stubble, when God shall speak the word? Clouds are but “dust of His feet.”

A little while ago some of us were fretting about this Mormonism and we said, “It will never be broken up.” Some stupid fellows in America began to kill the poor Mormons and so carve them into saints, which was the very way to establish them! Christians trembled and said, “What can this be? We shall have Sodom over again.” But did you read the Times newspaper of Thursday last? You will there see a wonderful instance of how God can scatter the clouds and make them dust of His feet. He has caused to come out of the ground, near Salt Lake, at Utah, thousands of crickets and all kinds of noxious insects that devour the crops. Creatures that have not been seen in Utah before, with swarms of locusts, have made their appearance. And the people, being so far from civilized nations cannot, of course, carry much corn across the desert, so that they will be condemned to starve or else separate and break up. It seems to all appearance that the whole settlement of the Mormons must be entirely broken up and that by an army of caterpillars, crickets and locusts!

III. Now, one more remark. “The clouds are the dust of His feet.” Then we learn from that, that THE MOST TERRIBLE THINGS IN NATURE HAVE NO TERROR TO A CHILD OF GOD. Sometimes clouds are very fearful things to mariners. They expect a storm when they see the clouds and darkness gathering. A cloud, to many of us, when it forebodes a tempest, is a very unpleasant thing. But let me read my text and you will see what I mean by my remark that the most terrible things in Nature are not terrible to the saints. “The clouds are the dust of HIS feet”—of God’s feet. Do you not see what I mean? There is nothing terrible, now, because it is only the dust of my Father’s feet. Did you ever know a child who was afraid of the dust of his father’s feet? No. If the child sees the dust of his father’s feet in the distance, what does he do? He rejoices because it is his father and runs to meet him! So the most awful things in Nature, even the clouds, have lost all their terror to a child of God because he knows they are but the dust of his Father’s feet. If we stand in the midst of the lightning storm, a flash tears apart yon cedar, or splits the oak of the forest. Another flash follows, and then another, till the whole firmament becomes a sea of flame. We fear not, for they are only the flashes of our Father’s sword as He waves it in the sky. Listen to the thunder as it shakes the earth, causes the hinds to calve and discovers the forests. We shake not at the sound—

*“The God that rules on high,  
And thunders when He please,  
That rides upon the stormy sky,  
And manages the seas.  
This awful God is ours,  
Our Father and our Love.”*

We are not afraid, for we hear our Father’s voice. And what favored child ever quaked at his Father’s speech? We love to hear that voice. Although it is deep, bass, sonorous, yet we love its matchless melody for it issues from the depths of affection. Put me to sea and let the ship be driven along—that wind is my Father’s breath—let the clouds gather, they are the dust of my Father’s feet! Let the waterspout appear from Heaven, it is my Father dipping His hand in the laver of His earthly temple! The child of God fears nothing. All things are his Father’s. And now divested of everything that is terrible, he can look upon them with complacency, for he says, “The clouds are the dust of His feet”—

*“He drives His chariot through the sky,  
Beneath His feet His thunders roar!  
He shakes the earth, He veils the sky,  
My Soul, my Soul, this God adore—  
He is your Father and your Love.”*

Fall down before His feet and worship Him, for He has loved you by His Grace. You know there are many fearful events which may befall us. But we are never afraid of them if we are saints, because they are the dust of His feet. Pestilence may ravage this fair city once again. The thousands may fall and the funeral march be constantly seen in our streets. Do we fear it? No. The pestilence is but one of our Father’s servants and we are not afraid of it, although it walks in darkness. There may be no wheat, the flocks may be cut off from the herd and the stall—nevertheless famine and distress are our Father’s doings and what our Father does we will not view with alarm. There is a man there with a sword in his hand— he is an enemy and I fear Him. My father has a sword and I fear Him not. I rather love to see Him have a sword, because I know He will only use it for my protection.

But there is to come a sight more grand, more terrific, more sublime and more disastrous than anything Earth has yet witnessed! There is to come a fire before which Sodom’s fire shall pale to nothingness. And the conflagration of continents shall sink into less than nothing and vanity. In a few more years, my Friends, Scripture assures us, this earth and all that is therein, is to be burned up. That deep molten mass which now lies in the bosom of our mother Earth is to burst up—the solid matter is be melted down into one vast globe of fire. The wicked—shrieking, wailing and cursing, shall become a prey to these flames that shall blaze upward from the breast of Earth. Comets shall shoot their fires from Heaven. All the lightning shall launch their bolts upon this poor earth and it shall become a mass of fire. But does the Christian fear it? No. Scripture tell us we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air and shall be forever with Him!

IV. To conclude. The fourth observation is ALL THINGS IN NATURE ARE CALCULATED TO TERRIFY THE UNGODLY MAN. Ungodly men and women now present in this place of worship, it is a very solemn fact that you are at enmity with God. Having sinned against God, God is angry with you—not angry with you today, but angry with you every day, angry with you every hour and every moment! It is, moreover, a most sad and solemn fact that there is a day coming, ungodly Man, when this anger of God will burst out and when God will utterly destroy and devour you! Now listen to me for a moment while I try to make all Nature preach to you a solemn warning—and the wide world, itself, a great high priest— holding up its finger and calling you to flee for mercy to Jesus Christ, the King of kings! Sinner, have you ever seen the clouds as they roll along the sky? Those clouds are the dust of the feet of Jehovah! If these clouds are but the dust, what is He, Himself? And then, I ask you, O Man, are you not foolish in the extreme to be at war with such a God as this? If “the clouds are the dust of His feet,” how foolish are you to be His enemy! Do you think to stand before His majesty? I tell you, He will snap your spear as if it were but a reed. Will you hide yourself in the mountains? They shall be melted at His Presence and though you cry to the rocks to hide you, they would fail to give you anything of concealment before His burning eyes.

O do but consider, my dear fellow Creatures, you are at enmity with God! Would it not be folly if you were to oppose yourself to an angel? Would it not be the utmost stupidity if you were to commence a war even with Her Majesty, the Queen? I know it would, because you have no power to stand against them—but consider how much more mighty is the Eternal God. Why, Man, He could put His finger upon you at this moment and crush you as I could an insect. Yet this God is your enemy! You are hating Him, you are at war with Him! Consider, moreover, O Man, that you have grievously rebelled against Him. You have incensed His soul and He is angry and jealous and furious against every sinner.

Consider what you will do in that Great Day when God shall fall upon you! Some of you believe in a god that has no anger and no hatred towards the wicked. Such a god is not the God of Scripture! He is a God who punishes the ungodly. Let me ask the question of Inspiration—Can you stand before His indignation? Can you abide the fierceness of His anger? When His fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by Him, do you think, Sinner, it will be a good thing to be in the hands of the Almighty who will tear you in sunder? Will you think it easy to lie down in Hell with the breath of the Eternal fanning the flames? Will you delight yourself to think that God will invent torments for you, Sinner, to make your doom most cursed if you do not repent and turn to Him? What? Man! Are the terrors of Jehovah nothing to you? Do you not tremble and shake before the fierceness of His fury? Ah, you may laugh now. You may go away, my Hearer, and smile at what I have said—but the day shall declare it—the hour is coming—and it may be soon—when the iron hand of the Almighty shall be upon you! When all your senses shall be the gates of misery, your body the house of lamentation and your soul the epitome of woe. Then you will not laugh and despise Him!

But now to finish up, let me just give you one word more, for, Beloved, when we use these threats—why do we speak of them? It is but the word of the angel, who, pressing Lot upon the shoulder, said, “Look not behind you. Stay not in all the plain,” and then pointing to the fire behind, said, “On! On, lest the fiery sleet overtake you and the hail of the Eternal shall overwhelm you!” We only mentioned that fire behind that the Spirit might make you flee to the mountain lest you should be consumed. Do you ask where that mountain is? We tell you there is a cleft in the Rock of Ages where the chief of sinners may yet hide himself—“Jesus Christ for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven.” And whoever here, this morning, is a sinner, we now invite to come to Christ. You Pharisees who do not acknowledge the title—I have no Gospel to preach to you! You self-righteous, self-sufficient ones, I have nothing whatever to say to you except what I have said—the voice of threat. But, whoever will confess himself a sinner has the warrant this morning to come to Jesus Christ. Sinnership is the only title to salvation! If you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners, Christ died for you. And if you put your trust in Him and believe that He died for you, you may rely upon Him and say, “Lord, I will be saved by Your Grace.” Your merits are good for nothing! You can get no benefit by them. Your own work is useless. You err like the man in the prison working the treadmill—you never get anything by it—grinding oyster shells without any benefit to yourself. Come to Jesus Christ! Believe in Him. And after you have believed in Him, He will set you to working—working a new work! He will give you works, if you will have but faith—even faith is His Gift.

O may He give it to you now, my Hearers, for “He gives liberally and upbraids not.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized—and you shall be saved”—by His Grace!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2555 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE STRONGHOLD

NO. 2555

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 11, 1883.

**“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows them that trust in Him.”  
Nahum 1:7.**

HAVE you read this chapter through? It is a very terrible one—it is like the rushing of a mighty river when it is nearing a waterfall. It boils, seethes and flows with overwhelming force, bearing everything before it, yet, right in the middle of the surging flood, there stands out, like a green island, this most cheering, comforting and delightful text! Listen a minute to the Prophet’s words of terror. “The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers: Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languishes. The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His Presence, yes, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.”

Then, just as there has sometimes been a break and a delightful silence in the very midst of some tremendous chorus of sacred song, so here the thunder pauses, the hurricane is stopped and we hear the sweet music of this still small voice—“Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows them that trust in Him”—from which we may gather that there is always a hiding place for His people—His eyes of love are fixed on them even when they flash fire upon His adversaries! Nothing shall harm them, though the earth is removed and the mountains are cast into the midst of the sea! They may rejoice in the goodness of the Lord in the day of His fierce anger.

I invite you, dear Friends, to consider this text, and may the Holy Spirit make the meditation which will follow to be useful! There are three things, here, to be thought about. First let us think of God Himself—“The Lord is good.” Then let our minds ponder a little upon what God is to us—“a stronghold in the day of trouble.” And then we will change the theme a little and speak of God with us—“He knows them that trust in Him.”

I. First, then, let us think of GOD HIMSELF—“Jehovah is good.” It is well for us to be able to say so when the day of trouble is really upon us. It is one thing to sit under your vine and fig tree and sing, “The Lord is good.” It is quite another thing when the vine and fig tree have both been cut down and all your comfort is gone, to still say, “The Lord is good.” Do you not think that if we fail to say it the second time, it will look as if, after all, it was the vine and fig tree that were good, and not God? Or, at least, that our view of God’s goodness was very much derived from the fact of our being in so much comfort? It was an accusation which Satan brought against Job that he loved God for what he got out of him—“Have not You made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?” The devil is very apt to charge God’s people with having a cupboard love, but it is well for us to refute that accusation by loving, praising and adoring God when comforts fail, when the hedge is broken and when the things that we received with gratitude are, at length, in wisdom, taken away. Oh, what a rebuff the archfiend had when Job, on his dunghill scraping his sores and with his children dead and his property gone, yet said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

That is the spirit of our text. Here is a man of God, in the midst of the overwhelming flood, standing up and saying—“The Lord is good. The Lord is good.” There are some persons who, even in their theology, do not believe God to be good. “It cannot be,” they say, “that the wicked will be cast into Hell if God is good.” And they argue, therefore, the ungodly will not be punished. But the child of God says that though they will certainly be cast into Hell, God is good for all that. It is true that He will punish sin and punish it everlastingly, but God is good for all that. “No,” say others, “but if He is good, He cannot do so.” You may make unto yourselves another god and call him God, but the Christian says, “The Lord is good, Jehovah is good. He is good as I find Him—good as an angry God—good when I read such words as these, ‘With an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place, thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies.’” God is good, even then—He is always good! Let Him reveal Himself as He pleases, let Him do what He pleases—whatever I find He reveals about Himself, or whatever I see in Providence about Him, my heart is bowed down! Even when my understanding cannot understand, this firm piece of good sound doctrine is still true—“The Lord is and must be good.”

The goodness of God is seen in His very name, for what is His name, “God,” but short for good? We call Him God because we count the good. And so good is He that “there is none good save One; that is, God.” All other goodness that exists is but a spark from this great Sun, or else it is a lie! There never would have been any goodness in the world apart from God, nor can goodness continue to exist, much less increase, except as God, whose very name is good, shall continue to make that goodness flow forth from Himself unto the sons of men. God is essentially good. It is His very Nature to be good. He could not be otherwise than good. If you and I are good, it is not because of our nature that we are good. Alas, since the Fall, it is true that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing—and any goodness has to be imparted to us. But to God no goodness can be brought—from God all goodness must be fetched, for He is good, essentially!

And God is good independently. There are none that make Him good, or help Him to be so. If you and I are good in any way, it is by His Grace, by His teaching, by the example of friends, by Divine restraints, by gracious constraints. By a thousand helps and props our poor goodness stands, but His goodness stands of itself! None can make Him better. None keep Him back from being evil. He is good, He must be good and that entirely in and of Himself—essentially and independently good. I want you to think of this, because I want you never to get the notion in your head that God is good through certain means and under certain circumstances and conditions—or that the goodness of God depends upon the life of such an one, or upon your possession of such-and-such earthly goods. Oh, no! God is good independently of all these and if all these were swept away, God would be just as good and just as good to you! You may question it, but it should never be a matter of question. If every conduit pipe which now conveys to us streams of comfort from the fountainhead were broken and taken away, God could make the waters leap out of the rock, itself, and streams to flow in the desert immediately at our feet! As long as you have God, you have the essence of all good— and as long as God lives, whoever else dies, the goodness on which your soul is to feed has an independent existence.

Note, next, that God is eternally and unchangeably good. He cannot be better! He cannot be worse—He is absolutely perfect. There can be no improvement and there can be no depreciation in Him. He was good on your wedding-day, when He gave you the loved one to be the joy of your life. And He was just as good on that sorrowful day when the partner of your being was struck down. You thought God was good when your little child laughed in your lap and the house was glad with his merry ways, but He was just as good when the little coffin went silently out of the door, wet with parents’ tears. God was good to you when you walked abroad in the sunlight and every breath of air meant health to you—and He is just as good when every step is a weariness and your body is consuming away with sickness. He has not changed. Why, dear Heart, you have not changed toward your child, have you? Yet you are evil and shall not He who is all good be just as full of love to His children in dark dispensations as in bright times? Assuredly it is so! If you should live till infirmities are multiplied—if it were possible for you to exist till you had numbered the years of Methuselah, yet you would still find God to be just as good as in your young days when first your heart leaped at the sound of His name! Do not be afraid, therefore, of what is yet to be, for whatever comes, “Truly God is good to Israel”—truly, “His mercy endures forever,”  
Turn this little sentence over many times, and try to get the full meaning out of it. “The Lord is good”—good in each one of His Divine Persons. You do not doubt that the Father is good. He chose you before the world was. He gave His Son for you. He “has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” He is our Father—surely He is good, is He not? There is Jesus, the second Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity. Is He not good? He “loved me, and gave Himself for me.” He loved, lived, died, rose again and still lives pleading, preparing, waiting to come and take us to Himself. Is not Jesus good? That blessed Truth of God is beyond all question! Well, then, the Father is good and the Son is good. And the Holy Spirit—is He not good? Did He not first turn your eyes to Jesus? Did He not breathe into you the breath of spiritual life? And, since then, has He not been your Teacher, your Guide, your Helper, your Comforter, dwelling with you, suggesting your prayers, helping your infirmities? Oh, He is good! What evil did you ever have at His dear hands? Well, then, the Father is good, the Son is good and the Holy Spirit is good, so, in a threefold sense we may say, “The Lord is good.”

Now, to cheer your faith yet again, let me remind you that the Lord is good in all His acts of Grace. Was He not good when first He chose you, when there was nothing in you “to merit esteem, or give the Creator delight”? When you had fallen and lay all in ruins, yet “He loved you not withstanding all”—was He not good then? And when He planned the Covenant, “ordered in all things and sure,” the Covenant of Grace by which He could be just and yet be the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus—was He not good then? And when He gave His Son—His only Son— that He might die to make atonement for our sin, was He not good then? And when He washed us in the precious blood of Christ, clothed us with His perfect righteousness, adopted us into His family and, by our regeneration, gave us the nature as well as the privileges of children—when He promised to preserve us even to the end—was it not all goodness? And must we not say of all His acts of Grace, “The Lord is good”? Further, Brothers and Sisters, you may depend upon it that the Lord’s actions are all for our benefit. Good men, you know, are much the same all through—cut them where you please, there is something sound about them in every part. I am sure that it is so with God—it is not merely one portion of His Character that is good, but it is all good. Nor is it one set of His actions that are good, but all His acts are good.

That brings us to this point, that all His Providences are, have been and always shall be good. What is the Providence that grieves you just now? Perhaps you have been a great loser this week. Ah, but it is a good God that permitted you to be a loser. You have been bereaved. Ah, but it was not a demon that stole away your darling, but the good God permitted it—did it Himself, maybe, so He is good in that. “I should think Him good,” said one to me,” if anything else had happened to me except this.” No, Sister, He is good in that, for if you will have it that He is good in all except only the one thing in which He has dealt with you of late, then, truly, if He had done something else, you would have been of the same mind! You do not believe Him good, I tell you, unless He is all over and altogether good. The Lord has done for His people the best that could be done. He has not suffered any evil to harm them, neither has He denied them anything that would be for their good. It is still true, “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” A day shall come when these lips shall tell of God’s goodness in a much better style than they can at present—up there, in yonder golden streets! But, meanwhile, I have an opportunity I may not have again, for now I am permitted to say, though I have not been second in mourning to any of the bereaved this week, and though thrice the arrows have wounded me, yet the Lord is good and blessed be His name! Though physical pain and mental depression come together, yet the Lord is good.

When I was away in the South of France enjoying health and every comfort, I kept saying to myself and to my friend, “Let us praise God doubly now, for, maybe we shall be in the dark when we get home and, lest we should run short of praise, then, let us give the Lord an extra quantity now.” I felt so glad to be, as it were, laying up a little store of honey against the time when flowers would not be quite so plentiful. But I want to use up that store, now, and bless and magnify and adore the name of the Lord!

Let me say to you mourners and sufferers that your praises of God when you have no trouble are not worth half as much as they may be now. If you can sing His praises on the bed of sickness and extol Him in the fire of a sore bereavement, that will be grand! The praises of the angels, as they bow in perfect happiness, and say, “God is good,” must be very blessed. And the praises of men of God on earth, who are prospering in business and who have health and strength, and who say, “God is good,” are very precious. But you take me to one who is poor and needy, one who scarcely knows where his daily bread will come from—and when he says, “But God is good,” I think the Lord finds a sweeter note in that praise than He does even in the music of the angelic choirs! Then go to one who is racked with pain and suffering, and deprived of every comfort—yet I see her stretch out her bony hand and say, “The Lord is good, blessed be His name.” That is sweeter music still! But what praise to God there must have been from those martyrs who lay in prison rotting to death, or who were brought out to the stake and who, as they burnt, when every finger was a candle, yet still loved Him, praised Him, and extolled Him! Oh, that is such music as God, Himself, could not create directly and distinctly. God must go round about by redeeming love to get such melody as that1 He has not made a seraph that could so sing—it has to be a fallen and renewed being that could be capable of such love as that, and say, “The Lord is good.” I am trying to put this praise into your mouth, but may God put it into your heart! Dear Brother, dear Sister, let this be your continual song, “The Lord is good.”

II. Secondly, GOD IS GOOD TO US. What is He to us? “A stronghold in the day of trouble.”

It is well to know what God is under special circumstances. The special circumstances here mentioned are, “in the day of trouble.” Remember that it is only a day—it is not a week, nor a month—and God will not permit the devil to add an extra hour to that day. It is a “day of trouble.” There is an end to all our griefs. Well did one say—

*“When God appoints the number ten,*

*There never can be eleven.”*  
And when God measures out the bitter medicine to His people, there cannot be another drop of gall put into the cup.

But it really is “ the day of trouble.” See how the emphasis is laid there—“a stronghold in the day of trouble.” It is the most troublous day that a man has, that day in which the clouds return after the rain, that day in which he seems to have lost every comfort, and sorrows come one after another, like Job’s messengers, all bringing gloomy stories—each one more gloomy than those that went before—“the day of trouble.” There is such a day which occurs to most godly people, sooner or later, before they get to Heaven—“the day of trouble.” It seems to be trouble’s own day. Trouble has the day all to itself. From early in the morning to the last thing at night, it is trouble, trouble, trouble—“the day of trouble.” What is God then? He is a “a stronghold.” That is a grand word, “a stronghold”—that is, a fortress, a castle, a tower of defense—“in the day of trouble.”

So that, in the time of trouble, God guarantees safety to His people. They dwell surrounded as with impregnable bulwarks! “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.” Troubles are like enemies besieging them, but God is to them like a strong tower of defense in which they are perfectly safe!

What is more, they are often perfectly at peace. The enemy comes and spies upon them, throws up his earthworks and prepares his engines of war. But thus says the Lord, as He did to Sennacherib, “The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you and laughed you to scorn. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you.” Often, in the times of their greatest trouble, God’s people are so resigned, so acquiescent to their Lord’s will and, consequently so calm, so brave, that their peace is not in the least degree affected. I had a curious experience in conversing with two ladies who were very deaf. We went for a drive in a carriage and as soon as the rumbling of the wheels began, they could hear everything that I said, so we could easily carry on a conversation while there was a great noise, but inside their own drawing-room it was not so easy for them to hear. And I do believe that, sometimes, when God puts His people into a rumbling tumbler of affliction, they can hear His voice much better than at other times! It seems odd and strange, but it is strangely true—they are most at peace when in the thick of the fight, never so safe as when in danger—and never so much in danger as when apparently safe! God’s people are a mass of contradictions, a paradox and a riddle! Let the Believer read that riddle as he can, for no one else will. He has a stronghold in the day of trouble, giving safety and perfect peace.

Beside that, it is a stronghold defying the enemy. The foe comes tearing up the hill, ready to devour the people of God. What makes them safe against the adversary? Why, there is a bastion, a fortification, so that he cannot come near. He grins at the saints and bites his nails, like Bunyan’s Giant Pope! He threatens what he will do to them. Like Rabshakeh, he writes ugly letters, but he cannot really do anything. When a man hides behind the Most High, God Himself bids defiance to that man’s adversaries, and their rage is all in vain. There came a watery torrent down upon a little mill and threatens to sweep it away, but Wisdom fitted up a wheel and allowed as much of the water as might be needed to turn the wheel and grind the miller’s grain. As for the rest, it was turned aside. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise You: the remainder of wrath shall You restrain.” So will it be when that great torrent of trouble comes—a part of it shall be used to grind our corn and make us rich and fat in the things of God—the rest of it shall ran harmlessly by. We shall hear its noise, but that shall be all. Therefore, in patience let us possess our souls.

Once more, this stronghold means that God abides forever the same, always a sure refuge for the needy. Strongholds are not like temporary camps—fortifications are intended to stand from generation to generation and, in that sense, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble.” Remember what brave Luther did. I think I hear him saying, when the enemy raved and raged around him, “Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and spite the devil.” So they sang, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” and he verily laughed for joy in his holy confidence in his God.

And Luther’s God is our God—just the same God as He was then—and He deserves the same confidence from us as He had from Luther! Therefore, let us give it to Him now! Let us praise Him now! Instead of hanging our harps on the willows, let us say, “No, the willows have quite enough weight to bear without having our harps hung on them. And our harps were never made to be hung on willows.” Let us strike every string to the praise of that unchanging love which puts the burden on the back and even smites us in love and with wise intent. My Soul, bless you your Lord this very moment and rob Him not of His revenue of praise because you are sad!

III. Now, lastly, we are to think of GOD WITH US—“He knows them that trust in Him.”  
Of course the Lord knows everything, but there is an emphatic sense in that word, “know,” whenever it is applied to God’s people. Here it refers to His intimate acquaintance with them—their persons, their condition, their needs, their sufferings, their past, their present, their future. He knows all about them. We say, sometimes, to a person whom we do not care to meet, “I do not know you.” But we never say that to our own dear child, or to a friend whose concerns interest us. No, we try to know all about him—we wish to know in order that we may relieve and succor. In a far higher sense, Omniscience concentrates its all-perceiving glance upon each child of God. Your Father is looking at you, Beloved, with as intent a gaze as if there were nobody else in the world but you—yes, and no world, either, but only you. Think how He would know you if, in the whole universe, there were nothing but God and you—just in that way He knows you! He delights to know all about you, for He made you and He new-made you! You are a plant of His planting. He has watched over you and He has said, “I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” It is with the most intimate and intense knowledge that the Lord knows them that trust in Him.  
This knowledge also implies tender care. Just as a doctor who really cares for a patient, knows all about that patient by making a diagnosis of his condition and studying his symptoms from day to day till he gets to be thoroughly acquainted with him and does not prescribe for him at a venture, so does God care for you with an intense, loving, affectionate, earnest care—wishing to do you good, to make you better—and to turn everything to your benefit. If you are one of those that trust in Him, it is sweet for you to be able to say, “God knows all about me and He cares for me.” Do notice one word in the text, “He knows them that trust in Him”— not those that are perfect, not those that are doing certain works—but, “He knows them that trust in Him.”  
Those who trust in the Lord are not only the objects of His knowledge and care, they are also the objects of His approval. There is nothing in the world that God approves of more than faith. To trust God is the greatest of all works. “What shall we do,” said the Jews to our Lord, “that we might work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” To erect a row of almshouses, or to build a cathedral—is not that a big work? No, not compared with believing on Jesus Christ whom God has sent. This is the God-like work, the greatest work that we can do! Our action may not please God, however pleasing it may appear to us, but wherever there is faith, God is pleased. And remember, “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” So dear Friends, if you want to please God, trust Him, trust Him implicitly! Trust Him now with your sin, with your sorrow, with everything! The more you trust Him, the more pleasing you are to God. See what an opportunity you have of pleasing Him in times of great trial and trouble. If a person has a burden to carry which he is able to bear, selfreliance will serve his turn. But when he has a load upon him that he cannot carry, and he says, “O God, if You will strengthen me, I will carry it”—then it is that he is pleasing to God! If you are only reaching what you can reach, there is nothing notable in that—the real thing is to be doing what you cannot do—by believing in God to give you more strength than by nature you possess! To trust God while you are alive is good, but to say with Job. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” that is the very cream of faith! “He knows”—with approving knowledge—“all them that trust in Him.”  
Once more, dear Friends, this word, “know,” here means loving communion. We know one another by being with one another, sympathizing with one another, entering into one another’s thoughts and feelings. I have known in this sense some of the choicest of God’s people—and what a loss it is to lose those whom we have known so well! But God knows us. He knows our prayers and tears, He knows our wishes, He knows that we are not what we want to be, but He knows what we do desire to be. He knows our aspirations, our sighs, our groans, our secret lodgings, our own chastening of spirit when we fail—He has entered into it all. He says, “Yes, dear child, I know all about you. I have been with you when you thought you were alone. I have read what you could not read—the secrets of your own heart that you could not decipher. I have known them all, and I still know them.”  
And they who trust in the Lord shall have one more thing. That is, God will acknowledge them as His. At the Last Great Day, Christ shall say to some, “I never knew you.” Those that do not trust Christ, He will not acknowledge. In that dread hour when they will most of all need a Savior, He will say, “I never knew you.” But if you trust Him, He knows you now and He will acknowledge you then! Jesus Christ Himself cannot say to me at the last day, “I never knew you.” He must know me, for He knows how I have bothered and worried Him! He knows how I had the blood from His heart to wash my sins away and the robe of His righteousness to clothe me. I have needed all that He is to make anything of me and still, day by day I am a poor beggar who will not let Him go down the street without crying, “You, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Therefore He knows my name and Christ will never say that He does not know us if He does. Make Him acquainted with your name even now! Dear Sinner, go and tell the Lord your story and your history, your sin and your transgression. If you confess your sin to Him, He cannot say, “I never knew you.” Then go and cast yourself on Him with all your sin—then He will acknowledge you as His and will never disown you!  
“He knows them that trust in Him.” Trusting in Him gives us a wonderful hold on God. If you trust a man, he feels bound, if he is an honorable man, to be true to the trust reposed in him. If it were a poor person in the street, who had only a few shillings, and was afraid of being robbed, and he were to put his little bit of money in your hand, and say, “Good woman, will you take care of this money of mine?”—you would take care of it, would you not? You would do anything rather than lose it. And Christ will keep that which we have committed unto Him. Last Monday night, one of our Brothers, a neighboring minister, told us that, 45 years ago, he gave his soul to Christ and, he said, “It has been like a sealed envelope ever since.” I like that thought of the seal that has never been broken. The devil has never been able to get at the good man’s soul. It has been a sealed envelope ever since his conversion—and so it shall be until the day of his Lord’s appearing, when Christ shall break the seal and reveal to the assembled worlds what He has kept!  
Oh, give yourselves to Jesus, dear Hearts! Give yourselves to Jesus! Now that so many are being taken away from us to Heaven, I want to have a great number coming into the Church to fill up the vacuum. During the last few weeks that I have been ill and have been away, I have not been able to see any of you, but I intend, as soon as I can, to see such as wish to make a confession of their faith in Christ. I hope that there are many of you ready to come and that among the rest will be one or another able to say, “Yes, Sir, the Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. And I now know that He knows them that trust in Him—and I have the witness of the Spirit that I am one of that happy company.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 77.**

The Book of Psalms, though it is Divinely Inspired, is also marvelously human—it is everywhere instinct with life—and life in its most sympathetic forms. However glad you are, there is always a Psalm suitable for you to sing. And you are never so sad but a Psalm could be found to help you, in the very depths, to pour out your complaint before God. This 77th Psalm is the song of a man in deep depression.

Verse 1. I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and He gave ear unto me. It was only a cry. A monotonous cry, redoubled and full of sorrow. Yet the Lord gave ear unto him who cried. There were some who would have stopped their ears and have got out of the way, for the sound made them melancholy and they could not bear it. But the Lord gave ear unto His sad servant’s cry. Oh, how sweet is this! Though He hears the songs of angels and though the hallelujahs of the bloodbought in Glory never cease before Him, yet He stoops from His throne of majesty and listens to the cry of misery! “He gave ear unto me.” Are any of you troubled? Pour out your hearts before the Lord and He will give ear unto you as He did to the writer of this Psalm!

2 *.*In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. That was a very wise thing to do! Where else should he go, in the day of trouble, but to Him who sent the trouble, to Him who could help him to bear the trouble, to Him who could sanctify the trouble, to Him who could, if He pleased, remove the trouble? “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.” I have heard of some who fly to strong drink to drown their troubles—that will never do—it is like leaping into the fire to escape the flame! Some run to their fellow creatures for comfort—that is a poor way of acting—better by far do as the Psalmist said he did, “In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.”

2, 3. My sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled. Yet he says that he sought God. It is a grand thing when your faith leads you to seek God, even though He troubles you! It is better to knock at God’s door when He is angry than to go to any other door! Even if He shuts the door in your face, still wait upon Him. Though He may seem not to heed your cry, there is no door like that of God’s! Therefore, continue there. Yet there are times when even Believers in God are so conscious of sin, so conscious of departure from Him by unbelief towards Him, that, as they remember God, they are troubled.

3-5 *.*I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. You hold my eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. What God did with others of His people in their times of trouble, how He rescued them, the splendor of His power in the ages long since gone—these are among the things which the Psalmist considered. It is well, sometimes, to live in the past. If the present seems to be like a fire that has gone out, snatch a live coal from the altars of the past and set the fuel alight again.

6 *.*I call to remembrance my song in the night. “How I was once like a nightingale and learned to sing with a thorn at my breast. How, in former times, I triumphed in the hour of trouble and affliction.” It is good to remember all this, for, though past experience will not do to live upon, yet sometimes we are like the men with their barges when they push backwards to send the barge forward. We may think of the past to help us in the present.

6 **,**7*.*I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Come, what do you think? Will such a loving, faithful God as ours cast us off forever? Can you harbor such a thought concerning Him? Will He be favorable no more after all the favor He has already shown? Can He change? Will He deny Himself? Do you think that God will play fast and loose with you? “Will He be favorable no more?”

8 *.*Is His mercy clean gone forever? We sing, “His mercy endures forever!” Is that a lie? Can it be?  
8*.*Does His promise fail forevermore? Does it ever fail at all? And if it does tarry a while, will it always wait? Will God, at last, be found untrue? Come, children of God, in your trouble face these questions and answer them—for you must get comfort out of the only reply that you can give to them.  
9*.*Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is He the same God that He used to be? Or has He been overtaken with a fit of forgetfulness? Has He a failing memory, like yours and mine?  
9*.*Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah. Can it be? Has He not said, “as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you”? Can it be, then, that in anger He has shut up His tender mercies?  
10. And I said, This is my infirmity. And so it is. Worse than that, it is sometimes our iniquity, our sin, to think such hard things of God! But inasmuch as faith was there, battling, struggling and striving, the little temporary victory which unbelief seemed to gain was the result of infirmity.

10. But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. The glorious years of His electing love. The years in which He has loved His people and never changed that love. The years in which we, ourselves, have realized His Presence and been at His right hand enjoying, day by day, a sense of His love.

11, 12. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will meditate also on all Your works, and talk of Your doings. They will bear talking of, they will bear turning over and meditating upon, for they are full of comfort.

13, 14. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? You are the God that does wonders: You have declared Your strength among the people. Whenever the Hebrew mind was full of exulting joy concerning God’s greatness and might, it seemed inevitably to turn back to Egypt and the Red Sea. Just as we, Believers in Jesus, love to sing the song of the Lamb, so did these old Believers sing it by anticipation! We may fitly join with them and together we may sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Here is a part of it.

15. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. There is no song like that of redemption! Whatever our troubles may be—if we are trusting in Christ, we are a redeemed people! Whatever our sins or infirmities, or imperfections—we are a redeemed people, like Israel of old! They were redeemed by power, as well as by price, so we read—

16-18. The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Your arrows also went abroad. The voice of Your thunder was in the Heaven: the lightning lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. This is what Egypt saw when God turned the dark side of the cloud towards the Egyptians and greatly troubled them through that wild tempestuous night!

19, 20. Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. And so will He continue to lead His people by one and another, till all their wanderings are over and they rest in peace at His right hand forever. “Therefore, comfort one another with these words.”

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WHEN CAN WE FIND COMFORTERS?

NO. 2322

**INTENDED FOR, READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 20, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1889.

**“Where shall I seek comforters for you?”  
Nahum 3:7.**

IT is the business of the Prophet of God and of the minister of Christ to seek comfort for those who are in distress. “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” It is a part of our calling to seek, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to bring words of consolation to those who are heavy in heart. We have other work to do, but, still, this is a part of our commission. God would not have His people’s heads hang down. He would have their hearts full of joy and peace in believing, so He sends us, with tender, sympathetic words, to strive to comfort all that mourn.

I can truly say that while this is our duty, when we succeed in it, it is also our delight. To take the burden from the heavy heart is a great joy. Whenever I have comforted any mourners, I think that I have had even more comfort than the comforted ones! You cannot impart consolation to others without, at the same time, enjoying it, yourself, in some measure, at any rate. You put out your hands to open the door into the King’s banqueting house for another and, lo, your own fingers drip with sweetsmelling myrrh, from the handle of the door! Try to cheer another heart and you will go the nearest way to cheer your own. So then, I am glad that I have a text like this—only the gladness is sobered and saddened by the connection in which it stands and by the almost hopeless character of the question—“Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

I shall have only two divisions, tonight. First, sometimes, our work is very easy. Secondly, at other times, it becomes so hard as even to be impossible.

I. First, SOMETIMES OUR WORK IS VERY EASY, especially to those long practiced in it. To a young surgeon, a case of a broken bone may be a difficulty, but to one who has long been in his profession, it is a simple matter and he soon sets the bone.

Now, first, it is a comparatively easy thing to find comforts for true children of God in the day of their adversity. Dark days come to the brightest saints. A Christian may, perhaps, enjoy worldly prosperity for a long time and then the tide may turn, and the man may find all that he has melt away before his eyes. Nothing that he does may succeed. He may be brought very low, even to poverty. In such a case as that, it is not hard to comfort the child of God, for the Lord helps him to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” My Brother, your riches consist not in gold and silver—you have in Heaven a more enduring portion and if God, by impoverishing you of these grosser things, enriches you with more refined treasures, you will be a gainer— your loss will turn to your eternal profit. Therefore we comfort you readily enough with words like these.

The same is true with God’s people in bereavement. We come to them and tell them that it is the Lord who has done it and ask, “Shall He not do what seems good to Him?” In many cases we are able to tell them that they have not lost their relative or friend. Their beloved ones have only crossed the river a little before them and they will soon pass over the same stream and be forever joined where they shall part no more. Though it is some beloved child, or other dear relative, or even the partner of one’s bosom, or a much-beloved friend, yet to find consolation for mourners of that kind is not the hardest work that the pastor has to do. Refrain your eyes from weeping, especially keep back your heart from tears. They shall come again from the land of their captivity. They die but to live forever and you shall meet them before long!

And, dear Friends, it is not so very difficult to find comfort for children of God who are under the trial of persecution. There are still many of God’s people who endure the trial of cruel mockings and something worse than that. Some of you have to suffer in many ways for Christ’s sake. “Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.” Let not this trouble you— Christ has provided abundant consolation for all who suffer with Him, for they shall reign with Him forever and ever. They shall be—

*“Brightest of the saints in light,  
‘Midst the bright ones doubly bright.”*

They shall receive larger palms and brighter crowns than others who have suffered less for His dear name’s sake. We do not say about these dear Christians, “Where shall I seek comforters for you?” for we know where to point them to most effectual consolation!

Sometimes, we have to deal with fainting Christians, yet when we meet with them we do not find their case one of superlative difficulty. Every now and then, I suppose, almost all of us get into a condition in which our joy and comfort have to be looked for and can scarcely be found. Partly through ill-health, partly from the strain of high excitement, which is followed by a reaction, we got to be like Elijah, when he said, “Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” There are times when the pulse scarcely beats and the blood begins to cool and the heart is faint. Beloved, whenever we meet with you in that condition, we tell you that we have been in that state, ourselves. No, we remind you that our Lord, Himself, was in an agony and was greatly depressed in spirit. We have to assure you that the condition of your frames and feelings does not affect your safety in Christ. We have to remind you that, though you are changed, God is not changed. The promise, the Old Covenant, stands just as fast when you are down in distress as when you are on the high places of exultation. You are saved by faith, not by feeling—and when feeling ebbs out to the very last degree, still hold on to Jesus—sink or swim, still trust in Him! When you see no trace of His actual Presence with you, rely upon Him, all the same, and be of good cheer. This is not hard to say— and when the Spirit of God is with us, we find no lack of consolation for fainting saints.

Nor do we find ourselves much embarrassed by cases of disappointed workers. We hear them say, “Surely we have labored in vain and spent our strength for nothing. Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” But we tell them of many of God’s saints who labored long without seeing any immediate results and yet they were accepted of God. Jeremiah, the plaintive, Weeping Prophet, saw the people reject everything that he said, yet he was not rejected, but accepted of God! And among honorable men, there is none more excellent than the Prophet Jeremiah. Beloved, you may be sent to warn a people who never will be saved and yet you will be blessed. When Isaiah saw the seraphim, and in answer to God’s call, “Whom shall I send?” said, “Here am I; send me,” remember what his commission was—he was sent, not to bring the people to God, but to go and say to them, “Hear you, indeed, but understand not; and see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.”

He obeyed his commission as it was given to him and his Lord rewarded him. That may be your case. Besides, you are no judge of your own success! I think that it has been noticed by ministers, very often—so often as to be like a Baconian induction—that when we think that we preach worst, God usually blesses the people most, and that when we appear to have had the least power, God displays His ability more clearly than at other times! Therefore, when you go home weeping, while you have only sown in tears, you shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you! But you are no judge of what you do, yourself, and you cannot tell what the results of your work may be. If you see them not, the angels may have seen them and while you are weeping, they are rejoicing! At any rate, you are not responsible for the harvest—you are responsible for plowing and sowing. If you have done your work well, in the fear of God, what comes of it rests with God—not with you!

Sometimes, beloved Friends, we have the task of comforting dying Believers, and that is no very difficult thing. There is one whom I could mention to you who, not long ago, spent all that he had in taking a new business which he needed for his growing family. And he hoped to prosper in it. He had scarcely been in the house many weeks before his daughter was brought home to him and, when taken upstairs, she was found to be raving with madness! She was watched over carefully but, to the breaking of his heart, she had to be put away. Not long after, another, dear to his heart, was suddenly taken away. By-and-by, he, himself, fell ill and, at last, going to a physician, he was told that his case was a very serious one—he had better see a specialist. He saw the specialist, who told him that he had an internal cancer, that he might be operated upon, but that, in all probability, he would die under the operation. And he would advise him to live as long as he could.

That happened not long ago. If I were to introduce him to you, what kind of a man would you expect him to be, with his bereavements and with his prospect of soon dying probably a very painful death? You would suppose that he would look very dull, haggard, and so forth. There is not a more cheerful person beneath the cover of Heaven! And when he crawled up to London, the other day, to do some business, and some persons wondered that he did it, he said, “While I can, I will do my best in the place where God has put me. When I can get out no more, I will sit still and praise God. And when the time comes, I will die with my face towards the New Jerusalem.” That is how Christians live and that is how Christians die! We do not find, when we have to deal with a believer in Christ, that it is at all a difficult thing to cheer the heart either in the near or the distant prospect of death.

Nor, dear Friends, do we find ourselves much troubled in seeking to comfort repenting backsliders. It is grievous that any should backslide. It is horrible that the Church of God should have her name disgraced, that the Christ of God should have His religion spattered by the iniquities of professing Christians. But when the Lord touches the wandering heart and it breaks under a sense of guilt—and the man turns back to his God, we find it easy to say, “The Lord delights in mercy. Return, you backsliding children! God is willing to receive you, He is waiting to bless you.” The Word of God is full of consolation to backsliders who are seeking His face. Guilty as you are, the Lord says, “Return unto Me, for I am married to you.” He might well divorce you, but the Lord, the God of Jacob, says that He hates putting away. He will not cast off the people of His choice! He is glad to receive them back after all their uncleanness and filthiness. Yes, there is much comfort for returning backsliders and if there are any such here, tonight, I would put out my hand and say, “Come back, my Brother, my Sister—come and welcome to the Savior.”

And certainly there is no difficulty in trying to comfort seeking sinners. If any man is seeking the Savior, the Savior is seeking him— *“Your seeking His face  
Is all of His Grace!”*

He has begun with you, or else you would not have begun with Him, and now, if you will simply trust Him, only trust Him, you shall have immediate peace! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” That is a glorious passage. “He that believes on Him is not condemned,” is another blessed phase of the same comforting Truth of God. If you have received Christ, to you He gives the power to become one of the sons of God, “even to them that believe on His name.” There is a whole hive full of real honey for a soul that comes to Christ! You may even dip your hand in it, if you will, and eat as much sweetness as you please, for you will never exhaust it.

Thus I have explained how, sometimes, in seeking comforters, our work is easy.

II. But, dear Friends, AT OTHER TIMES IT BECOMES SO HARD AS TO BE IMPOSSIBLE. Nahum says, concerning Nineveh, “Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

Assyria, of which Nineveh was the capital, was an empire which existed entirely for itself. No Assyrian monarch ever thought of what would be for the good of the nations that he conquered. I should think that if anybody ever mentioned such a thing, he would have laughed at him, or he would have put out his eyes, or cut off his head! There was no idea that anybody else had any rights at all except the king of Assyria, for even his subjects were simply his puppets, destroyed by his will and pleasure. And Assyria was thus the incarnation of pure, or rather of impure selfishness. Well, when a selfish man goes down as Nineveh did, who comforts him? He never did anybody any good and he may say, if he likes, “I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me.” It is very hard, indeed, to say anything by way of comfort to a man who is broken down and who never cared for other people. Do not get into that state of mind, I pray you, dear Friends. I believe that selfishness is the front-door key of despair, for it never did any good to anybody. So, when it gets into trouble, nobody brings it comfort and everybody says, Who will bemoan you? “Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

The Assyrians also dealt very cruelly with others. On the great stones that Mr. Layard brought home, there are awful pictures of what was being done with the captives, heaps of heads cut off from men who had been taken in war, eyes gouged out, and all sorts of dreadful things with which I will not horrify you. And, consequently, when that cruel power was put down, who would wish to seek comfort for it? Oh, that we may be prevented from ever being cruel to others! If we are cruel to others, when our turn comes, there will be no comfort for us. These people plundered every nation wherever they went. They took away everything that they could and left them penniless. They devoured the fruits of the ground and cared nothing what desolation they left behind. And when the time came for them to be robbed and their capital to be despoiled, nobody thought of comforting them. They were left to reap what they had sown.

Besides that, they were famous for their pride, and that pride rose up into blasphemy. Remember how the Assyrian messenger, Rabshakeh, defied Jehovah? He said, “Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arphad? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of my hands that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?” So, when their corpses were all piled up in the streets, no nation wept for them, nobody cared for them. Oh, dear Friends, conduct your business in such a way that you do not crush the poor! Manage everything in such a way that you rob nobody. Be straight. Be just. Be kind. “Live and let live,” or else, if your turn to fall should come, one of these days, nobody will bemoan you, or be sorry for you! If you lift up your hand in proud blasphemy against God and He brings you down to the dust, you will be quoted as an instance of how the Justice of God overtakes the proud. The Lord keep us from all this! I cannot help mentioning it because it is in the chapter and has to do with the text. It is much better that you and I should go humbly on in laborious poverty and find our way to Heaven with good repute, than that we should become, even, kings of the earth and lords of all her wealth—and after all should be found to have lived only for self and to have cared for none besides—for then our downfall will be terrible in the day of the Lord’s vengeance.

But, besides this, there are other people whom we cannot comfort. There is a man in a good deal of trouble about his soul, so he says. He comes to me and, on talking with him, and probing him a bit, I find that he is living in the commission of a known sin. He says that he cannot believe. He cannot pray. He cannot get comfort. Of course he cannot while he indulges any known sin! “Where shall we find comforters for you?” God will not forgive you while you continue in that sin! Christ will not cleanse you from the guilt of it while you continue in the practice of it! You must part with sin, or we cannot comfort you. We will not even try to do so!

And, next, there are some who do not get any comfort, though they have left off sin, because they have never made restitution. If you have robbed or wronged anybody, when you come to Christ, do what Zaccheus did, who said that if he had taken anything from any man by false pretense, he would restore him four-fold. There was a minister in this city, a dear friend of mine, who preached a sermon upon the necessity of restitution when wrong had been done, and some of his friends told him that if he preached in that way he would drive the people away. But, during the week, he met in the street a man of about his own age, who said to him, “Were you not in Messrs. So-and-So’s warehouse once?” “Yes, I was.” Did you not lose a watch while you were there?” “Yes, I did.” Well, I was there at the same time. Do you remember me?” “What is your name? Oh, yes, I remember your name!” “I stole your watch. I came to hear you last Sunday night and I cannot rest till I have given you ten pounds to make restitution for that watch.” “No,” said my friend, “I do not want money.” “But I must make restitution,” said the other.

At last my friend explained that the watch was not worth ten pounds, though it might have been worth four. So the man gave him the four pounds—and he came back to his critics, and said—“I have made four pounds profit by that sermon, whatever you may have thought of it. I had forgotten all about my lost watch, but my sermon has brought me back the money for it.” The man who thus made restitution is now, I believe, an honorable Christian man. I do not see how he could have been so with that watch on his conscience, and I do not believe that, do what we may, we can give comfort to people who have wronged others till, to their very utmost, they have made restitution! How shall I comfort you, if you repent not of your robbery, but keep the proceeds of it?

Again, there is another sort of people whom we cannot comfort, people who seem very concerned to get pardon, but when you come to understand them, you discover that they are living in enmity against somebody—a brother, a mother-in-law, a cousin, or a friend whom they will not forgive. They keep on harboring hatred in their minds. I am grieved to say that it is not altogether an unusual thing to find fathers who will not forgive a daughter, or a son. They did not happen to marry the person you would have liked to choose for them and, of course, you have a perfect right, have you not, to make the selection for them? You thought you had a right to pick for yourself, but you will not give that right to your children—so you have a grudge against them on that account—and then you go whining to God to forgive you and yet you will not forgive your daughter! Here you are on your knees, crying, “Lord have mercy upon me,” yet you will not have mercy upon that friend who once did you wrong and whom you ought to have forgiven long ago! Now, remember, that it is of no use for you to pray, or do anything else if you will not, from your heart forgive those who have offended you—for neither will God, even for Christ’s sake—forgive you! There must be a clean sweep of everything like enmity out of your heart, or else you cannot be at peace with God. Enmity cannot lie down with love! Darkness cannot weld with light! You cannot enter into the peace of God till you are willing to forgive others. There are many people who get hung up on that nail—I wish they could get released from it, by God’s Grace.

We meet with some also who profess to be very anxious to be saved. Perhaps I have some such here, tonight, and yet they do not pray. You rise in the morning and you go to bed at night without a prayer! And all day long God is not at all in your thoughts. Do you expect, then, to be saved by accident? Do you really reckon that, one of these days, as you walk down the street, salvation will drop on you, whether you will or not? Beloved, if you desire this great Gift of God, ask for it! “He that asks, receives.” If you want to find this treasure, look for it! “He that seeks, finds.” If you would get Heaven’s door opened, I pray you, use the knocker! “To him that knocks, it shall be opened.” No prayer, no Bible-reading, no going to hear the Word of God with the earnest intent to find out what the way of salvation is, why, dear me, how can you escape if you neglect so great a salvation? You are evidently living in constant neglect! Nobody ever prospers in business who does not pay attention to it and no man can expect to enter into peace with God when he goes on in a sort of slipshod way, going sometimes to a place of worship, occasionally feeling a little earnest, but never seeking the Lord with his whole heart! You will have to be awakened out of this fatal lethargy! May the Spirit of God awaken you this very night! Resolve that you will not let the Angel go unless He bless you. May the great Master bring you to that state of mind at once!

There are others, and these are the people we have so often to deal with, who feel their sin and who really wish to be saved—and they do a great deal in the hope of being saved—but there is one thing they will not do. They will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They try to be saved by their prayers, as if there was any promise that God would save us for our praying. They try Bible-reading, for in the Scriptures they think they have eternal life—but they forget that eternal life is not in the Bible except as the Bible testifies of Christ and points to Christ—Christ is eternal life! They have been christened, they have been confirmed, they are members of churches and so on, and there they rest! No, they do not “rest.” They feel that there is still something needed which they have not yet obtained. That which is needed, my Friend, is that you should come and—

*“Cast your deadly doing down,*

*Down at Jesus’ feet,”*  
and trust in what He has done and then are you saved. That is the whole philosophy of salvation!

There are two ways of salvation. The one is self-salvation, and it is a dream, an empty thing, an awful disappointment. The other is Christ’s salvation—come, and put yourself wholly into His hands and say, “Save me, Lord. By profession, You are a Savior. Execute Your holy craft upon me and save me. Save me from my sin, the guilt of it. Save me from sinning, the practice of it. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, purify me from the love of evil and make me clean. You can do it, and You, alone, can do it.” Now, if you trust the Savior, you are saved. I will repeat again that declaration of Christ, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” But if you will not believe, I know of nothing whereby I can comfort you. If you will not have Christ, there remains nothing but condemnation for you! There can be no other Sacrifice for sin. You have insulted God by rejecting His Son and you must go before your God unsaved and unforgiven. Beware of such a doom as that!

Sometimes we have to feel what an awful thing it would be if we had to deal with a soul that was eternally lost. Then, indeed, we might say, in the language of our text, each word dripping with tears of blood, “Where shall I seek comforters for you?” Will any of my Hearers be lost? Will any here die without Christ? Will any here refuse the great salvation to the last? If so, what comfort could I administer to such? I shall have, on the contrary, to put it thus—“You know the way of salvation, but you chose the other road, yes, chose it deliberately. And if you have come into the place of wrath and death, who shall bemoan you? Who shall comfort you?” You made your choice and you must have your choice forever. All that you will suffer in the next world will be the fruit of your own sin. Hell is sin fully ripe. Drunkenness, lechery, dishonesty, lying, enmity—when these come to seed, they make Hell! They pain men enough in this world. And if the softening influences of Christianity were taken away and men were just left in the world to act according to their own passions and their own lusts, that would be all the Hell they would need!

You will have to feel forever, in every pang that you endure, “This is nothing but my old sin.” Whenever you are overwhelmed with woe in the next world, and look your own woe in the face, you will say to yourself, “Why, that is what I used to call, ‘pleasure,’ and it has come to me here in this shape! And I was told that I would say that. I was warned and yet I perished, despite the warning.” If you are lost, my Hearers, you will have refused the great Sacrifice of which you know, for to the best of my power, in the simplest words that I could find, I have set forth Christ among you evidently crucified—and I have said, “There is your only hope of salvation. Look to Jesus and live.” If you will not have God’s Gift. If you put far from you the Christ who alone has life eternal, you need not wonder when He leaves you to yourselves!

Besides, in that day some of you will especially have to remember how you stifled conscience. You have gone into some worldly pleasure on purpose to silence the voice of conscience. Sometimes, sitting in this House, you have been almost brought to decision. You have said, “Please God, when I get home, I will seek my chamber, and fall upon my knees before Him in prayer.” How often have you been brought very near the Kingdom of God and how terrible is it to be so near and then deliberately to turn back! Your blood will be upon your own heads and, truly, if it is so, “where shall I seek comforters for you?” Some of you would not be persuaded. You have had a mother’s tearful admonition. Teachers have pleaded with and for you in the most earnest way. You have had judgments, too, from God—sicknesses that have shaken every bone of your body! You have been brought to feel that there is a God and that He would deal with you. Remember that solemn prophecy, “He that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

I sometimes start in my sleep at the thought of one of my Hearers being in Hell. Ah, Sirs, if you do not care about your own souls, we, at least, will care about them for you! How can I be clear of the blood of you all, so many of you, and so often addressed? Do you wonder that I am often distressed beyond measure at my own position? It were better for me to have broken stones on the road than to have preached to you if I have been unfaithful to your souls! For then, in the next world, you will curse me and it shall be my Hell to bear the reproaches that you shall justly fling at me. But I beseech you, by the living God, and as you believe yourselves to be immortal beings, accept, tonight, His way of salvation, so simple and so easy!

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized”— which is the Christian method, the Biblical method of confessing your faith—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

I leave you all in God’s hands. Pray, dear Christian people, that everyone who has heard me, tonight, may be saved, and that this rainy night may be, indeed, memorable as the night in which many a sinner cried—

*“I do believe, I will believe,  
That Jesus died for me!  
That on the Cross  
He shed His blood,  
For sin to set me free.”*

Amen.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. **NAHUM 2:11-13, 3.**

This is a prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh. Remember that Assyria had been one of the great powers that swayed the world—a cruel, tyrannical empire—and God at last determined to destroy Nineveh which was its seat of government. In a high poetical strain, the Prophet cries out,

Nahum 2:11. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion’s whelp, and none made them afraid? You will remember how Mr. Layard took out of the ruins at Nineveh those immense lions that now stand in the British Museum. They were the very type of this great empire that boasted itself in its lion-like strength and ferocity. So the Prophet cries, “Where is the lair of the lion?”

12. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. They were always destroying and plundering, and carrying home the spoil, so that everybody was fattened with the plunder of the nations.

13. Behold, I am against you, says the LORD of Hosts. And whenever that is the case, a man does not need any other adversary! If God is against you, O my dear Hearer, what will become of you? Though you should have all the power of the world and possess robust health, abundant riches and keen wit, what can you do against God? “I am against you, says Jehovah of Hosts.” He throws down the gauntlet to Nineveh.

13. And I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions: and I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall no more be heard. It is time that they were stopped. You remember in what foul-mouthed language Rabshakeh addressed King Hezekiah and God now declares that there shall be no more such letters as his. God may allow evil to lord it over His people for a while, but He puts a hook in the mouth of the leviathan, by-and-by. He that restrains the sea and the waves thereof, Jehovah is His name, and He restrains the wickedness of men!

Nahum 3:1. Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departs not. Assyria became a great empire through violence, falsehood and robbery. The soldiers had no respect for justice. They trod out the last spark of liberty and crushed all nations under their feet.

2, 3. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifts up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is no end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses. When the Medo-Babylonian army came against the great city, it inflicted a terrible slaughter, killing the inhabitants without mercy, making a very holocaust of human bodies. But, inasmuch as it was a den of criminals, this horrible execution was well deserved. Yet is the story dreadful.

4, 5. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that sells nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against you, says the LORD of Hosts. These people had been steeped in sin of the worst kind. They had led other nations into it and had practiced the witchcrafts which God abhors. Therefore, again, Jehovah says, “I am against you.” When God is in arms against a triumphant nation, He soon makes an end of it.

5, 6. And I will discover your skirts upon your face, and I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon you, and make you vile, and will set you as a gazing stock. See what God can do! They were the proudest of the proud and now He makes them the scorn of the scorner, and sets them as a gazing stock. May God never deal in that way with any proud man, here! He can easily do it—when we set ourselves up to be little gods, He can soon make us utterly mean and contemptible—and bring us down to nothing at all. It is His way to deal thus with the proud.

7. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon you shall flee from you, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? Where shall I seek comforters for you? If you could go, today, and see the vast heaps of Kouyunjik, and of the great monuments of that mighty city all destroyed and crumbling into powder, you would know something of what God can do! It does not look likely to you that London can ever become a heap of ruins and yet it may be, for its sins reek up to Heaven as the sins of Nineveh did! The Lord can strike this city as He smote that.

8. Are you better than populous No Amon, that was situated among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? The Prophet quotes the destruction of the city called No Amon, probably Thebes, as an instance of what God can do.

9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite. There seemed to be no measure to her strength. If she needed assistance from other nations, she had only to call them in and the mercenary tribes were ready to defend her.

9, 10. Put and Lubim were your helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. So one city is a warning to another. No Amon in Egypt is a warning to Nineveh in Assyria, and both of these a warning to our city, and a warning to every man who is proud, haughty, domineering and oppressive to the poor—great in his own wisdom and careless for the comfort of others!

11. You also shall be drunken: you shall be hid, you also shall seek strength because of the enemy. Nineveh never dreamed of doing that! She said, “I am a queen, I shall see no sorrow! I am the greatest of all cities.”

12. All your strongholds shall be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs: if they are shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. As figs do when they are ripe. These castles, towers, fortresses, built to stand the siege, would be no sooner attacked than they would fall into the hands of the enemy!

13. Behold, your people in the midst of you are women. You see, on those great Assyrian stones, the strong men that are sculptured, there, with their enormous muscles, telling of gigantic force. When God came to deal with them, they became weak and cowardly.

13, 14. The gates of your land shall be set wide open unto your enemies: the fire shall devour your bars. Draw you waters for the siege. The Prophet challenges them to defend themselves.

14. Fortify your strongholds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick kiln. That was to mend the walls whenever they were broken. They did this with great industry. “Do it,” says God, “yet you shall not be able to stand.”

15-17. There shall the fire devour you; the sword shall cut you off, it shall eat you up like the cankerworm: make yourself many as the cankerworm, make yourself many as the locusts. You have multiplied your merchants above the stars of Heaven: the cankerworm spoils, and flees away. Your crowned are as the locusts, and your captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun arises they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. What marvelous poetry is this! How terrible! Their soldiers, their rulers, their captains, were as many as the locusts and the grasshoppers, but when they were needed, all these hosts would flee away. What cannot God do when He comes out to fight with men? “The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name.” He brings confusion to His enemies. Oh, fight not against Him! Beloved, let us be at peace with Him, the strong and mighty God. Let us confess our faults to Him, acquaint ourselves with Him and be at peace.

18. Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria. They who should have taken care of the people, the chief governors, neglected them. They who should have defended the people were out of the way when they were needed—“Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria.”

18. Your nobles shall dwell in the dust: your people are scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathers them. Let not the same be said of London. Are there any who can say, “No man cares for my soul”? Let them not be without a helper—

*“Oh, come, let us go and find them!  
In the paths of death they roam.  
At the close of the day ‘twill be sweet to say, ‘I have brought some lost one home.’”*

Brothers and Sisters, awaken yourselves—be shepherds to the people of this modem Nineveh and seek to gather the scattered flock of Christ!

19. There is no healing of your bruise; your wound is grievous. Thank God we have not come to that point—yet there is still healing for the bruised sinner! Though the wounds of our people are grievous, there is a balm for them! We know where it is and what it is—let us not be slow to tell them about it.

19. All that hear bruit of you shall clap the hands over you. I think that is the old Norman-French word, “bruit,” signifying noise or tumult, that has been left in our Bible.

19. For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually? Nineveh had been so wicked and had done so much evil that when men heard that it was destroyed, they would even clap their hands for very joy that such an evil-doer was out of the way! I know not to what purpose I was moved to read this passage, but it is specially meant for someone, to whom may God apply it by his Spirit!

THE SIGHT OF INIQUITY  
NO. 2711

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY JANUARY 27, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1858-9.

**“Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?” Habakkuk 1:3.**

IN this discourse, it will be my endeavor to assign some reasons why God causes His people to see iniquity in themselves and in others  
I. We wi1l begin with the first part and enquire, WHY DOES GOD CAUSE US TO SEE INIQUITY IN OURSELVES? What is the reason of the discoveries which the Holy Spirit sometimes makes to us, of the evil of our hearts? It is well known, to all who love the Lord, that there are seasons when the Holy Spirit takes us into the darkest chambers of our being and there reveals to us evils which, perhaps, we had never suspected. “Son of man,” He says, “I will show you what great abominations there are within you.” He lays bare the loathsome kennel of the human heart and lets us look at all our deformity and depravity. He takes us to the rock from where we were hewn and to the hole of the pit from where we were dug. He bids us look with horror upon our natural state and see that awful and hideous corruption that still remains in our hearts—even though we have been regenerated by Him. Why does He do this? We will answer the question in several ways.  
Sometimes, He does it to confirm us in the Doctrines of Grace. My Brothers and Sisters, Arminianism is the natural religion of us all. I think one of the surest ways in the world to put down all our selfsufficiency and all our erroneous views of the Gospel is for God, the Holy Spirit, to show us our own depravity. A man may talk glibly concerning free will as long as he knows nothing about himself—but when the Lord has shown him what he is by nature, he will say no more about that matter. Or if he talks about it as a mere theory, he will not believe it in his inmost spirit. A man untaught of the Spirit says that sinners, of their own free will, turn to God. He says that they do, by their own strength, at least to a great degree, though assisted by the Holy Spirit, keep themselves and that, to some extent, their final perseverance is dependent on their own diligence, and is not left entirely in the hands of God.  
But I am sure that if the Spirit takes him into the secret chambers of his heart and lets him see his own iniquity, he may go on talking about his own free will, but he will come out singing of God’s Free Grace, for he will say, “O Lord, if You had not begun the good work in me, it never could have originated in such a filthy pool as my heart! And if You do not carry on the work from first to last, it will soon come to a standstill. If I am not robed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, I must stand naked before Your bar. And if the work is not entirely Your own or if You are to be turned away by any sin or sinfulness in the creature, then, O Lord, I know I must perish!” And this right view of the subject will drive him to believe in discriminating Grace, in irresistible vocation, in Omnipotent keeping and in the Infallible perseverance of all the Children of God!  
It is noteworthy how the belief of one of the Doctrines of Grace naturally leads to the belief of all the rest. The system of the Gospel is so logical, its Truths fit so well into one another, that you cannot get a right knowledge of one of them without, at once, or in a very short time, discovering the others! The Lord begins by teaching us His foundation Truth of our utter depravity—He burns it into our conscience by bitter experience and by terrible discoveries of our sinfulness—and He knows right well that the other doctrines will follow and that, when this Truth is really understood by us, it shall not be long before we have orthodox views of the whole Covenant of Grace and the great system of the Gospel of Jesus. This, I think, is one reason why the Lord gives His people revelations of their own iniquity and defilement, that they may be sound in the faith and may believe nothing but the Doctrines of Grace.  
Moreover, I believe that He does this to keep them humble. If our Master did not sometimes let us have a look at ourselves, we would be fearfully proud. The old Puritans used to say that God has given the peacock black feet, that he may not be proud of his bright feathers and that, in like manner, he has allowed His people to have the black feet of their own sinfulness, that they may not glory in any of the Graces which God the Holy Spirit has given them. And that while they have those Graces, so bright and beautiful, they may still look down on their own natural depravity, and humble themselves before God. We are all, by nature, as proud as Lucifer. If any man thinks himself to be incapable of pride, he is very proud, indeed. “Ah,” says one, “I know I can never be flattered.” But, Sir, you flatter yourself to an extraordinary degree when you say that! Pride is natural to us all—it is woven into the warp and woof of our being. We shall never get rid of it till the worm has eaten up our flesh— nothing will ever cover up our pride except our winding-sheets—and when our bodies are wrapped up in them, and our souls are caught up to dwell with God, then, but not till then, shall pride be thoroughly cast out of us! Our communion with Christ, our progress towards Heaven, our increased knowledge, our good works—al1 these things have, through the evil heart of our unbelief, a tendency to puff us up, though, in truth, being all given to us by the Spirit, there is no legitimate cause for pride in any of us! And therefore, God, to keep His people in their right place, humbles them with discoveries of their own sinfulness. If their ships had all sail and no ballast, they would soon be wrecked. So, when God fills His people with abundant revelations, He also sends them a thorn in the flesh—the messenger of Satan is sent to buffet them that they may walk humbly with God and bow their heads in submission before Him— knowing themselves to still be unclean, apart from the work of Christ Jesus their Lord, which He has worked out for them.  
Beloved, you can bear me witness that when you have had sad discoveries of your own heinous guilt, you have been deeply humbled. Sometimes your good works have been a great evil to you because you have prided yourself upon them, and so brought yourself to the edge of the precipice of presumption. But manifestations of your guilt, brought home to your conscience by God’s Spirit, have been of essential service to you by teaching you not to be high-minded, but rather to fear and to remember that your standing in Grace is not of yourself and, therefore, you must not boast. That is another good reason, if there were no other, why we may bless God for showing us our own iniquity.  
A third reason why God sometimes shows His people their own wickedness is to make them submissive in the hour of trouble. A Pharisee, of all people in the world, would be the worst man to be in Job’s position. If I must be in a hospital, I would rather be there as a publican, than as a Pharisee. For a Pharisee, nothing would be good enough—he would think his pangs and miseries were great, indeed, for so righteous a man to have to endure! He would think he had no right to suffer. But the poor publican would say, “I am a great sinner and these miseries are not a millionth part of what I deserve to suffer. These aches and pains are nothing compared with what I merit at the hand of God. Therefore I will bear them all with submission. Why should a living man complain? I am still out of Hell and, therefore, I must not murmur.”  
Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we have a great difficulty to keep murmuring down! There is very much meaning in that old English word, murmur. Just sound it—it is mur-mer. Any child can say that! It is one of the easiest words to speak and that is why, I think, we have that word for complaining and grumbling, because murmuring is such a very easy thing. Anyone can murmur, anyone can grumble, anyone can complain. Murmuring seems to have been bred in the bones of the children of Israel, for, in the wilderness, they were almost always murmuring—murmuring for water when they were thirsty, murmuring for bread, then murmuring for meat, murmuring because the Anakims were tal1—murmuring first, for one thing, and then for another! They were always at it. They were continually murmuring for 40 long years in the wilderness.  
Yes, and many of us are all too apt to imitate them. But the surest way to cure us of murmuring is to let us know our own evil. A man who has been taught to realize his own wickedness and his own evil disposition will be less likely to murmur than anyone else. The poor wretch who has had the rope round his neck and has been ready to be hanged, when he gets his pardon and goes his way—you will not find him murmuring at the fare that is provided for him! He will say, “Oh, it is such a wonder to me to be alive at all! It is such an act of mercy that I have had my life spared, that this dry bread becomes like royal dainties, and this cup of cold water tastes to me like the richest wine might do to another man.” The Lord thus often take His children into the stripping-room and into the starving-room, and lets them see that all their afflictions are less than they deserve—that their troubles are but as the small dust of the balance compared with the mountains of tribulation and anguish which they deserve to have received in Hell!  
Again, when the Lord reveals to us our iniquity, it is to put us on our watchtower. When He shows us the sin that is in our heart, it is like a captain pointing to a few skirmishers who have just come before an army that is advancing. “There, my men,” says the captain, “you see those soldiers—they are the advance guard of the enemy. Look sharply after them, for there is a great army behind them, so be on your watch.” Thus the Holy Spirit points out to us our evil desires and corruptions. He wakes us up to see them and when we have seen them, he says to us, “Take care! This little that I have shown you is to warn you of a great army that is behind. These few evil ones that have just appeared to your vision are but the outriders of a host of black things that are ready to attack you, so, be always upon your watchtower, be constantly looking out for foes.” I think that soldiers need to have a few alarms on their march. If they had none, they might become careless and relax discipline—and then they might be enticed into a defeat—be surprised and cut off. But when they have a few enemies to harass them on the flank and rear, they are more likely to be watchful and to keep a sharp look-out, so that, in case of a sudden attack, they would be ready to repel the foe. The absence of enemies is apt to breed a slothfulness which disables—times of ease seldom suit God’s soldiers. Holidays ruined the army of Hannibal and it is for our good that God stirs up the Amalekites to make us ready for the battle lest we should be surprised by even worse adversaries!  
I will give only one more answer to this first question and then I will pass to the other point. The Lord often shows us our iniquity to make us value salvation all the more. You know that the man who thinks the most of a doctor is generally the man who needs him most. When we are well, we often make jokes concerning doctors—we talk about their killing the people and so on—but when we get ill, we send for them! We laugh at them while in health, but we are glad to make use of them when sick. So it is with the Lord’s people—they may, perhaps, think lightly of Christ when they do not see or feel any present need for Him—but when they discover their own leprosy, then it is that they value the Great Physician! When they realize their own ruin, then it is that they prize the God-given remedy. It is a great service to us, sometimes, to show us our bankrupt schedule. Every man has had a bankrupt’s schedule because we are all bankrupts by nature. We set up in trade for ourselves and we soon became bankrupts. We never paid even a farthing in the pound, but our Lord Jesus Christ paid it all for us—yet we would not know how great was His Grace in doing so, did He not remind us of our debts and of how very poor we are in our own hopes of meeting debts so immense, so infinitely beyond all our powers to discharge.  
God says to His children, “I brought you out of prison, but you do not think much of My deliverance, today, so I will take you back to prison and let you see once more what kind of place it is. And then you will think more of the Breaker who broke your chains and set you free. I have opened a fountain that sparkles with Living Water. You have been drinking of it day by day till you are full, but you do not know its value. Come, I will put you in the hot, howling wilderness and you shall feel the pangs of thirst—you shall have all the water in your bottle spent—then you will know the preciousness of the rippling Fountain which Grace has opened for thirsty sinners! You have been feasting every day at My table. You have scarcely known what hunger is. I will put you, again, in the desert of conviction and make you hunger after righteousness—and then you will prize the bread that came down from Heaven, and think more of Jesus Christ, My Son, than you would have done had it not been for this showing of iniquity and grievance.”  
All these things of which I have spoken are matters of heart experience to all true Believers. Many persons do not know the plague of their heart. But you who love the Lord will acknowledge that however quaintly I have put these things, there is great truth in them. It is even so—we have had very solemn times, all of us who believe in Jesus—since we first knew the Lord. There have been times when we could not tell our right hand from our left in spiritual matters. If anyone had asked us, “Are you the Lord’s?” we dared not have answered, “Yes, we are,” for our corruptions were so strong, and unbelief had become so rampant, and poor faith seemed to be so slumbering, like the fire in the ashes, that we could not tell whether there was any fire or not!  
O Brothers and Sisters, do we not remember when we have sometimes knelt down in anguish, and cried, “O Lord, I long to have this point decided, “am I Yours, or am I not? If it is so, why am I thus? Why this wrestling of two armies in the Shulamite? Why is it that these contentions and these wars are carried on in my spirit? Show me why You contend with me, and why my sin contends with me! O Lord, show me where I am vile”? And have we not found that these times of sore conflict have been of essential benefit to us? We have grown strong by these griefs! The sight of iniquity has made us wiser, more cautious, more prudent, more humble, more affectionate—and made us more firm in our belief in our Savior than we had ever been before!  
II. Now I will try to answer the question of the text in another sense. “Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?”  
Sometimes, the iniquity and grievance are not in ourselves but IN OTHERS. Some of you may not have much of this world’s goods. You, perhaps, live in a house where there are very ungodly people—down in your court the Sabbath is always broken. In the street where you reside, you seldom hear anything on the Sabbath except oaths, curses, profanity and everything which constitutes a breach of the day of rest. And others of you, by your very connections, are called to mix with evil companions whose speech, instead of being seasoned with salt, seems seasoned with brimstone, flavored only with blasphemy and having perpetually in it the very brogue of Hell! There are some of you who are called to labor with workmen who, instead of endeavoring to help you to Heaven, seem trying, like Christian’s neighbors and wife, of whom you read in, “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” to pull you back to the City of Destruction. You are, perhaps, asking this question, “O Lord, why am I in such a condition? Why has Your Providence put me where I am thrown into contact with evil men? ‘Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?’” I will tell you three or four reasons why the Lord acts thus towards you.  
The first is, to let you see what you might, yourselves, have been. John Bradford—you have probably heard the story a hundred times—when he used to see people going past his window, on the way to Tyburn, to be hanged, said, “There goes John Bradford,

but for the Grace of God. If it had not been for the Grace of God, John Bradford, too, would have been hanged.” When you hear men swearing, you can say, “That is what I would have done if the Lord had not kept the door of my lips.” When you see men taken up for robbery, you can say, “That is what I might have been if God had not kept me from sin.” When you hear of the drunken brawl or the murderous affray, put your hand on your heart and say, “Ah, the same sort of evils might have come out of this heart of mine, for human hearts are very much alike. ‘As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.’ There is not much difference, by nature, between one heart and another, so that man is a picture of what I might have been if the restraining hand of God had not kept me back from sin.”  
You know that, sometimes, drunks help to make men sober. Occasionally, drunks are good Apostles of temperance, for, when they come reeling through the streets, in all their bestial stupidity, a man very naturally says, “What a fool that fellow makes of himself!” And it leads him to say, “I must avoid that evil thing because I would not make myself so foolish as he is.” I think it was the old Greek lords who used to make their slaves drunk in order to keep their children from the vice—by letting them see how disgraceful a drunk looked.  
Thus, perhaps, God allows wicked men to come in our way to make us see the evil of sin, that we may turn from it, pass by it, abhor it and not indulge in it. I have no doubt that the wickedness of men may be employed under the Divine Wisdom and the overruling hand of God for the sanctification of His own people. Just as sometimes a book that is full of bad spelling is one of the best things for teaching a child how to spell well—by leading him to correct the mistakes in spelling—so the Lord permits us to see this other kind of bad spe1ling in order to teach us how to spell aright. We have to correct ourselves by the evils of others and to learn from their wrong-doing to avoid the sins into which they have fallen. Wrecks may sometimes be made into beacons—the ruin of one man may be a warning to another. It is so with the Christian, for he knows how to use his sight of iniquity and of grievance, as he beholds it in others, as a reason for avoiding the same iniquity in himself.  
In the next place, God sometimes al1ows us to see the sins of others, to teach us to admire His Sovereignty which plucked us as brands from the burning. We look at our neighbors and see them drinking down sin as a greedy ox drinks down water, and we say, “What has made us to differ from them?” Grace—Free Grace. And then we ask, “Why has Grace come to us, and not to them? Why have these favors been given to us, and not to the rest of mankind?” And we are obliged to say, with Christ, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight.” When only one member of a family is converted, what a proof that is of Divine Sovereignty! When there is a holy mother with an ungodly husband, and wicked children, what an illustration that is of the Sovereignty of God, in that one is taken, and the others are left! And when, in a house, two women have been grinding at the mill, and one has accompanied her grinding with the songs of Zion, and the other has accompanied hers with the voice of cursing, what a proof there has been of the Sovereignty of God who, “has mercy on whom He will have mercy,” for, “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.”  
Yes, Christian, God has put you in the very midst of sin to make His Grace the more conspicuous. If you ride in the country and you see a field of wheat, you will very likely not notice one of the ears at all. But as you are going along, you see a hedge and, by some chance or other, a grain of wheat has been dropped into the ground under the hedge—and from it a single ear of corn has grown up through the brambles—and there it stands alone. Very likely you nudge your friend who is riding with you, and say, “There is an ear of wheat growing up among the rambles.” It seems the more astonishing and notable from the place where it is growing! So, I think a Christian in the Church of Christ is not a thing to be wondered at so much. The Sovereignty of God is not so much seen among the righteous by themselves as it is when we find the Christians growing up amid the bushes and brambles of an ungodly world—and proving themselves to be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”  
Whoever noticed glowworms in the daytime? But, in the night, you will see them shining among the leaves! They were there by day, I daresay, but nobody saw them! But in the night, with their little lamps glowing, everyone admires them. So the Christian, when he is in good company, is a blessed man and great instance of Divine Love—but when, in the order of Providence, he is put into a dark place where there is little of Gospel Light and Truth—then it is that his lamp begins to be most useful and he is more noticed than he ever was before. This is why the Lord sometimes puts His people there, to make His Sovereignty, His power, His might and His Grace the more apparent. Even as men sometimes set jewels in foils to show their brightness and put dark spots in their picture to make the lights more apparent, so the Lord, in His Providence, permits His people, sometimes, to sojourn in evil places. Like Lot, to dwell in Sodom, and like Abraham, to go down among the Egyptians, or with the Philistines, in order that Divine Grace may be displayed—and the Lord’s name may be exalted!  
I have another answer and, I think, a better one, to the question of the text—“Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?” Why, my Brothers and Sisters, God shows us the sin of our fellow men, that we may set more earnestly to work, and that we may be the means of saving souls and extending the Kingdom of Righteousness. When a captain takes his soldiers out to look at the enemy, it is like what I heard of a celebrated Scotchman, whose words I am scarcely able to pronounce correctly. “Now, lads,” he said, “there they are! If you dinna kill them, they’ll kill you.” That was their choice and so it is with us. God brings us to walk in this city, where harlotry and vice are to be seen on every side, almost at noonday. Now then, soldiers of the Cross, if you dinna kill them, they’ll kill you. If you do not stand up for your Master and keep the banner of the Cross in the air, the enemy will be more than a match for you! I have been struck, sometimes, when I have looked in a window, and seen pamphlets full of all manner of obscenity and infidelity and wickedness—and they have had the most blessed effect upon my mind, for I have thought—“Well, if there is so much wickedness, so much the more reason is there why every minister should be in earnest, and why every Christian should seek with all his might to do good.”  
Some of you live in very nice villas in the country. You do not go among the poor people and you do not know what they are like. If you were to walk through some of the back slums and narrow alleys of London, you would say, “Oh, I never thought there could have been such places upon Earth!” And if you could go where I have sometimes gone, up an old creaking staircase where you have to stoop your head for fear of hitting it against a beam. And go into a room and see a whole family there. And go into another room and see a whole family there—and go a little further and see another family all crowded and packed together— and then hear their language and see their utter ignorance of everything concerning Christ, almost as unenlightened as the Hottentots in their kraals in Africa—you would go away after seeing them, and say, “There is great reason that we should all be in earnest. We ought to be up and doing, Sirs. We ought to be working well for our Master after such a sight as this!”  
Oh, but instead we cover up our iniquity in this land a great deal! We border all London with fine streets so that when a foreigner rides through them, he says, “What a grand city it is!” A varnished hypocrisy! What is there behind those streets? What will you find behind those palaces at the West-End? The very lowest places upon earth, where the poor are stowed away together by hundreds! We border the city with something that looks respectable, but, alas, for the internals of this city—how much of wickedness and sin dwell there! I bless God that there are some of you who are obliged to live where you see the wickedness of this city. I thank God that some of you cannot go to your houses at night without seeing wickedness on the road. “Why,” you ask, “do you bless God that there is this wickedness?” No, I do not, but I bless God that you have to see it, because you will be the people who will go to others and say, “Strive for the salvation of men. Work, I beseech you, to do good, because the world is still full of wickedness and the dark places even of this city are full of the habitations of cruelty.”  
It is a long time since I have made a good speech at a public meeting, but I do remember doing it once. I stepped out as one of the speakers was delivering a very pretty oration, and I went into a neighboring house to speak with a woman who wished to join the church. It was not in London. When I entered the house, there was the husband horribly drunk. He had got his wife up in a corner and, with all his might, was trying to beat and bruise her—he was even tearing her arms with his nails till the blood freely flowed from her arms and face. Two or three friends rushed in and dragged him away. She said she had endeavored, in all meekness, to persuade him to allow her to go to the House of God that night, and the only reason why he treated her so badly was because he said she would be always going to that place of worship.  
And when I had seen that sight and looked on the poor, bleeding woman, with tears in her eyes, I went back into the place and spoke like a man who had got his heart and his whole body full of fire! I could not help it—I was all on flame against the sin of drunkenness and sought, with all my might, to urge the members of the Church to do all they could to scatter the Light of the Gospel in a neighborhood which was so dark and black and filthy and abandoned. And I think it would do all of us good, when we are about to preach, if we were, sometimes, to be dragged through some of the worst parts of London—to let us see the wickedness of it. It would do our Sunday school teachers good, many of them, for they would then be more in earnest with their children. And I think it would do good to some of our old friends who sit and sleep through almost all the service and are never much more than sleeping partners in the concern! If they did but know how the battle was going on—how tough the struggle and how stern the conflict—they would wake up from their slumbers and go forth to the battle! And they would stand shoulder to shoulder and deal blow after blow against the common enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the welfare of man!  
Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, we need to know more of the evil of men, to make us more earnest in seeking their salvation! For if there is anything in which the Church is lacking more than in any other matter, it is in the matter of earnestness. Whitefield said, in one of his sermons “O my God, when I think how this wicked city is perishing, and how many are dying for lack of knowledge, I feel as if I could stand on the top of every hackney coach in the streets of London to preach the Gospel.” Why did he say that? Why was his zeal so burning? Because he had seen the sinfulness of men and marked their follies. We shall never be thoroughly in earnest till we are thoroughly aware of the evil that is before us. When the horse sees the precipice, he throws himself back and will not madly dash himself down. So is it with the Church of Christ—if she could see the evil that is before her, she would surely draw herself back, with energy, to save her own children from plunging into the yawning gulf!  
Yes, Sirs, you have iniquity in your very midst and at your doors! You have iniquity everywhere round about you and yet, how few of you are striving to do anything for Christ! You are asked to help in this great battle, but you have so many other things to do, you cannot help us. You are asked to do something in this cause, to give it a little of your time— but you cannot manage it. You are asked to speak, but you have so little ability, you cannot do it. One half of the people who call themselves Christians need to be asked 50 times to do a thing and then, when they agree to do it, they are not worth having, because they are only pressed men—they are not one half so good as volunteers! I would that all of us knew the evil state of this world and the wickedness of men—and then I think that all of us who love the Savior would start up from our seats and each one would say, “Here am I! Let me be a volunteer against the enemy! Let me, in my measure, whatever little measure that may be, go forth to serve my God, to practice virtue and, by a holy example and by every other means, seek to stem the raging torrent of the iniquity of the age.”  
Now, my dear Friends, in closing, allow me just this one remark to another class of hearers. There is one who, but a little while ago, was an abandoned sinner. He could drink, he could swear, he could break the Sabbath and curse God. One day he stepped into the House of God and the Lord met with him, and now he is in misery—such as he cannot describe. His heart is all broken, his conscience is as if it had been lashed with the tenfold whip of the Law of God and as if salt had then been rubbed into his wounds. He is smarting all over with the wounds of his conscience, inflicted by the angry and fiery Law of God. He is crying, in his agony, “O Lord, I must perish, I know I must! I see such wickedness in my soul, that I must perish and be cast away.” No, poor Soul, no—that is not the right answer to the question of the text!  
The question is, Why does the Lord show you iniquity? I will give you the right answer. It is in order that He may deliver you from it. If God has broken your heart, He has broken it on purpose to give you a new one. If He has killed you by the Law, He has killed you on purpose to make you alive by the Gospel. If He has wounded you in your conscience, He has done it that He may have room to pour in the oil and the balm of Christ Jesus. If He has stripped you, He has only pulled off your rags that He may put on you a perfect robe of spotless righteousness. And if He has cast you into the ditch, so that your own clothes abhor you, as Job words it, it is that He may take you to the Fountain filled with blood and give you a perfect washing!  
When the Lord pulls a man down, He does it in order that He may build him up again! When He breaks a man’s heart, it is not for the mere breaking’s sake—it is that He may make it anew! If you have misery in your conscience on account of sin, God has had dealings of love with you and He has purposes of love concerning you. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” If you are a convinced sinner, Jesus died for you, for He died for sinners. If you can truly say that you are a sinner, I can tell you that Christ Jesus hung upon the Cross for you. Look at Him there, bleeding—every drop of blood says to you, “I drop, poor Sinner, for you.” Look at that gash in His side, from where flows the double stream of water and blood—it say, “Sinner, this stream runs for you.” Are you a sinner? If so, Christ died for you and He has not died in vain—you shall be saved. If you do but know yourself to be a bona fide sinner, a real one, no mere complimentary sham sinner, but a real actual one who means what he says, when he declares himself to be guilty and vile— then, as the Lord lives, Jesus Christ died for you on Calvary! You shall behold His face with joy! You shall be numbered with the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in Heaven, and you shall sing eternal hallelujahs around the Throne of God and the Lamb!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 1:1-5.**

Verse 1. There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. That was Job’s character before the trial which made him famous. Perhaps if it had not been for that trial we would never have heard of him. Now, as the Apostle James wrote, “You have heard of the patience of Job.” God, by great afflictions, gave to His servant that usefulness for which he had possibly prayed, without knowing how it would come to him. A long-continued life of prosperity may not so truly glorify God as a life that is checkered by adversity. And God, who intended to put honor upon His servant, did as kings do when they confer the honor of knighthood—they strike with the back or flat of the sword—so God smote the Patriarch Job that He might raise him above his fellow men. The Lord intended to make him Job, the Patient One, but to that end He must make him Job the Sufferer.

From this Book I learn what Gospel perfection is. We are told that Job was perfect and upright, yet I am sure that he was not free from tendencies to evil—he was not absolutely perfect. As old Master Trapp says, “God’s people may be perfect, but they are not perfectly perfect.” And so it certainly was with Job. There were imperfections deep down in his character which his trials developed and which the Grace of God, no doubt, afterwards removed. But after the manner of speech that is used in Holy Scripture, Job was a “perfect” man. He was sincere, thoroughhearted, consecrated, and he was also “upright.” He leaned neither this way nor that way—he had no twist in him, he had no selfish ends to serve. He was “one that feared God.” Everybody could see that and, consequently, he hated evil with all his heart.

2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. It was a great privilege to have such a family as this, but it brought to Job great responsibilities and many anxieties.

3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. A man may be a good man and a rich man, but it is not usually the case. I am afraid that what Mr. Bunyan says is all too true—

*“Gold and the Gospel seldom agree—*

*Religion always sides with poverty.”*  
Yet it should not be so, for God can give a man Grace enough to use all his substance to his Lord’s Glory. I wish that it were more often the case that we could see a holy Job as well as a godly Lazarus—a company of men who would prove their consecration to God by never allowing their wealth to become their master—but being master of all their substance and realizing constantly that it is all the Lord’s. This, after all, is the noblest heritage a man has with the exception of his God. Job, in adversity, could possess his soul in patience because, in his prosperity, he had not let his riches possess him, but he had possessed them.

4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. This showed that it was not drunken riotousness, or they would not have wanted their sisters—the sweet, gentle, delicate influence of their sisters would tend to keep their feasting what it should be. Besides, they were the sons of a man of God and so they would know how to keep their feasting within due bounds. Yet we are all mortal and fallible—and feasting times are dangerous times. The Puritans used to call fasting, “soulfattening fasting”—but feasting they might call “soul-weakening feasting.” Solomon truly said, “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.” There is always a risk about feasting and Job was, therefore, a little afraid about how his sons might have behaved.

5. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts, Thus did Job continually. They might have spoken unadvisedly with their lips. They might have even taken God’s name in vain. There might have been something about their conduct which was not altogether proper—so their father desired to put the sin of it away. Observe Job’s resort to burnt offerings. He lived before the Jewish law was given, yet he felt the instinct concerning the need of a sacrifice which every believing heart feels when it approaches the holy God. I pray you never give up that idea of coming to God by means of a sacrifice, for there is no other way of access. We may think as we will, but there is nothing else that will ever quiet the conscience and bring us near to God, but the Divinely-appointed Sacrifice. And Job knew this. He did not think that his sons could be cleansed by his prayers, alone, but he must offer burnt sacrifices according to the number of them all, that they might, each one, have a share in the blessings which those sacrifices typified.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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WATCHING TO SEE  
NO. 2622

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 14, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26, 1882.

**“I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he may run that reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.  
Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”  
Habakkuk 2:1-4.**

I KNOW that, on Thursday nights, there is a large number of friends here who are engaged in the work of the Lord, and sometimes it is meet to address them, mainly, because, if the bread be put into the hands of the disciples, they will pass it on to the multitude. In the day of battle, if the command is given to the officers, they will repeat it to the various sections of the army, and so the whole mass shall be moved forward with one aim and objective. Habakkuk was, like ourselves, called of God to labor for the good of the people among whom he dwelt. He was one of the later Prophets who came to warn God’s ancient people before the Lord meted out their last terrible measure of chastisement. He saw, in vision, his country given up to the Chaldeans, and he pleaded with God about the matter. He had a burden on his heart which pressed very heavily upon him. He saw the nation crushed beneath the oppressors and he asked, “Why is this?” The Lord replied, “Because of the iniquity of the people.” Habakkuk understood that, but then it occurred to him that the Chaldeans, who were treading down the people, were themselves far greater sinners—that, certainly, in the matter of oppression and bloodthirstiness, they were a far more guilty people than those whom they came to punish! So he used this fact partly as an argument with God that He would withdraw the Chaldeans and overthrow them. And partly he set it before the Lord as a difficulty which troubled his mind. He said, “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity: why look You upon them that deal treacherously and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he?” Habakkuk was puzzled, as David had been before him, and as many a child of God has been since. He felt as if he could not do his work rightly, so, in his perplexity, he came to consult God concerning it. And having laid the case before the Lord, he made use of the memorable and instructive words which we are now to consider under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. So, first, dear Friends, we shall notice, in our text, THE ATTITUDE OF THE LORD’S SERVANT.  
That is expressed in the one word, “watch.” When you are puzzled— when you are troubled, when you do not know what to do, then may God help you to say, “‘I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.” Before we can do any real service for God, we must first of all receive our commission from Him. We cannot teach others aright unless we are, ourselves, taught of God—and His truest servants are those who continue waiting upon Him that they may receive from Him the words which afterwards they are to speak to the people in His name. Habakkuk is a model to us in this respect. Troubled in heart, he resolves to set himself to watch his God and to listen for the message he is afterwards to deliver.  
We learn from him that the attitude of the Lord’s servant towards God is, first, an attentive attitude. “I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me.” If we have a deaf ear towards our Lord, we must not marvel if He gives us, also, a dumb tongue. If we will not hear what God speaks, we may not expect to be able, ourselves, to speak in His name. Or, if we pour forth a flood of words, yet we may not expect that they will be such as He will approve and bless. O dear Friends, if we would work for God in the right spirit, we must begin as Jesus did, of whom it was written in prophecy long before He came to the earth, “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakens morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ears and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.” In the fullness of time, Jesus came forth and taught to others what he had thus learned in secret, and, if we would teach others, we must first be taught by the Spirit of God.  
How much more we might know if we were only willing to listen to the Lord’s messages! There is, in the Word of God, a voice which is often inaudible because we are so engrossed with other things. There is, also, the voice of the Christian ministry which oftentimes speaks to us, but it is like the cry of one in a wilderness—it is not heard by us. There is, too, a voice in God’s Providence. How much the Lord says to his flock by every stroke of his rod and by every blessing of His daily Providence! There is a voice from every grave—a message in every bereavement when friends are taken away. There are voices everywhere speaking to those whose ears are open. Above all, there is the blessed Spirit always waiting to communicate to us the things of God by that soft mysterious whisper which none know but those who are, themselves, spiritual—and which they know at once to be the very voice of God within their spirits. Brothers, we must be attentive! We must not allow a single sound from the Lord to escape us. Some men seem God must speak thunder and lightning before they will ever hear Him, but His true children sit at His feet that they may catch the slightest movement of His lips and not let a single syllable from the Lord fall to the ground. The attitude of the Christian worker must be one of attention.  
But, next, it must be a patient attitude. Observe what Habakkuk says, “I will stand my watch.” Not merely, “I will be upon my watch for a moment,” but, “I will take my place like a sentinel who remains on guard until his time of watching is over.” Then the Prophet puts it again, “I will set myself on the tower”—as if he took his position firmly and resolutely upon the tower, there to stand and not to stir till he had seen and heard what God the Lord would have him see and hear. Do you think, dear Friends, that we are sufficiently resolved to know our Master’s will? Do we frequently enough get upstairs alone and, with our open Bibles, search out what God would have us learn? And do we pray over the Word till we have wormed ourselves into the very heart of the Truth of God—till we have eaten our way into it, as the weevil eats its way through the shell, and then lives upon and in the kernel? Do we do this? Do we set ourselves upon the tower, determined that we will not go forth to speak for the Lord till the Lord has spoken to us, lest we go upon a fool’s errand, to deliver our own inventions, instead of proclaiming the message that comes from God Himself?  
Your attitude, my Brother, if you are a servant of the Lord, is that of attention and patience.  
To which I may add that it is often a solitary attitude. “I will stand my watch.” The Church has gone to sleep, but, “I will stand my watch.” Like flocks of sheep, they lie all around us, the multitudes of souls for whom we have to care, but there are still shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, to whom the Glory of the Lord is often revealed when the sheep perceive it not. The city lies wrapped in slumber and no sound is heard among her ten thousand sleepers, but there is one who knows no sleep, nor gives slumber to his eyelids, for he is the appointed watchman of the night and he keeps to his tower and sets himself in his place, firmly resolved that till the morning breaks there shall be somebody to keep guard over the city. Well, sometimes, I say, watchmen have to be quite alone. O Brothers, it would be better for us if we had more solitude! It often becomes necessary to us because we cannot find kindred spirits that can watch with us a single hour. The higher you get up in the Church of God, the more solitary you will be. For the sheep, there are many companions, but even for an under-shepherd, there are but few. As for that Great Shepherd of the sheep, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, the Good Shepherd, you know that His most favored Apostles could not watch with Him even one hour, but He had to endure His terrible agony in Gethsemane alone. And such of His servants as He honors most will know best what is the meaning of Gethsemane, the olive press and the solitude which often accompanies the stern watch that the faithful servant of God must keep.  
Never mind if all others around you say that you are hot-headed, zealous, enthusiastic, foolish and I know not what! Say to yourself, “I will stand my watch.” What if they should think that you carry things much too far and have too much religion, or are too consecrated? Reply, “I will set myself upon the tower, and will still watch, for that is my business even if I must attend to it alone.” The man who has God for his Companion has the best of company! And he that is a solitary watcher for the Most High God shall, one day, stand amidst yon shining legions of angels, and he will, himself shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of his Father. Expect, therefore, if you are a servant of the Lord, to sometimes have to watch alone—and be thankful for that position if God honors you by calling you to occupy it!  
Observe, further, that the attitude of the child of God who is called to be a prophet to his people—as I know that many of you are—is one in which the mind must be entirely engrossed. The true servant of the Lord thinks of nothing else than this—“I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what the Lord will say unto me.” He is wholly taken up with that one matter! Many of you have your secular callings to follow, but, without neglecting them, you can still, in spirit, be watching and waiting to hear the voice of God, for God speaks to us not only when we are in the study, or kneeling in prayer by our bedside, but He has ways of talking with us while we are going along the road and so He makes our hearts to burn within us. He can speak with us in the thick of the greatest throng and, perhaps, some of us were never more conscious of the voice of God than amid the rushing of ten thousand spindles, or in the midst of the crowded street! At such times, the noise and turmoil of this busy world have not been able to drown the gentle voice of God within our spirit. May you, Beloved, be thus engrossed! If you intend to serve the Lord, give your whole soul to the learning of His Truth and the hearing of what He has to say to you, that you may afterwards be able to tell to others what you have, yourselves, been taught of God.  
Observe, also, that the Prophet was entirely submissive to the will of God. He put himself into this attitude, that he might hear whatever God would say to him, and that his only thought, all the while, should be, “What shall I answer when I am reproved?” We need to be, as much as possible, like clean white paper for God to write upon. Our mind is often far too much occupied and too prejudiced to receive a clear impression of the will of the Lord. How many make up their mind as to what they will see in a text and so they never learn what the passage would teach them if it were allowed to speak freely to them. If you would serve God, say to your soul, “I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and I will give both my ears and all my heart to understand what God would have me know, and to learn what He would teach me.” May this be the happy privilege of us all!  
The last remark I will make upon this first head is that the attitude of the Lord’s servant was eminently practical. The Prophet did not watch and wait merely that he might know the secrets of the future, or be able to prophesy, or show his wonderful knowledge. No, but he wanted to know what he should answer when he was reproved. He knew that when he went out into the world, men would begin to reprove him for being a Prophet—they would rebuke him for his zeal and his earnestness! And so he waited that he might have the right answer to give, with meekness and fear, to all who opposed him. That should be your wish and mine, Beloved, for, if we serve God faithfully, we are sure to meet with objectors. Well, if this opposition is only against us, it does not matter much, but, alas, sometimes their critical and cruel remarks are against the Truth of God itself, and, worst of all, against our blessed Lord! In such a case it is well to have something with which we can stop the mouths of the snarling dogs. It is a blessing to have heard God’s voice, for, if you repeat the message He speaks to you, even the echo of God’s voice will break the rocks in pieces and cause the cedars of Lebanon to split in two! There is nothing that can stand against the Word of the Lord! In the 29th Psalm, David says, “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty” and, if we have heard that voice, and know how, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to echo its mighty tones, they will strike the objector dumb! And even when he hates the Truth of God, he will still be compelled to feel what force there is in it. So the servant of the Lord says, “I will watch and wait to hear what God will say to me, for then I shall know what to answer when I am rebuked and reproached for the Truth’s sake.”  
This, then, is to be the attitude of the children of God. Get away to your watchtowers, Brethren! Get away to your tower by the brook Jabbok and wrestle with the Angel! Get away to the top of Carmel and put your head between your knees and cry unto the Lord until the heavens are covered with clouds, and the thirsty earth is refreshed with rain! “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much,” but they who do not hear God’s voice cannot effectually pray, for God will not hear their voice if they will not hear His. If we have been deaf to Him, He will be deaf to us. The communion necessary to prevailing prayer renders it absolutely essential that we should first set ourselves to hear the voice of God and then, again, it shall be said that the Lord listened to the voice of a man, for the man first listened to the voice of the Lord!  
II. The second part of our subject is, THE WORK OF THE LORD’S SERVANT.  
We have seen what Habakkuk’s attitude was. The next verse tells us about his work—“The Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that reads it.” It was not long before the waiting Prophet heard God speak and if you and I wait upon Him, it will not be long before we hear something that will be worth our waiting for and, especially, we shall receive plain directions as to our duty!  
Habakkuk was, first, to see the vision. The first

ame for a Prophet was, “a Seer.” You, my Brother, cannot be a teller of the good tidings of salvation unless you are first a seer. Mind that you see well all that is to be seen. Use your eyes to the best advantage and also to be able to see what God sets before you. It is curious how the different senses are mingled in these verses. Did you notice the expression in that first verse, “I will watch to see what He will say unto me”? When God speaks to us, we can hear with our eyes as well as with our ears. There is an inner sense which sees the meaning of the Lord’s language, and the inner ear hears the very tones in which that meaning is expressed. So, the Prophet was first to be a seer—he was to wait to see what God would say unto him.  
Then, next, he was to “write the vision,” that is, to make it known and, Beloved, when you and I have seen or heard anything which God has revealed to us, let us go and write it down or make it known by some other means. God has not put the treasure into the earthen vessel merely for the vessel’s own sake, but that the treasure may afterwards be poured out from it, that others may thereby be enriched! You have not been privileged to see, merely to make glad your eyes, and to charm your soul—you have been permitted to see in order that you may make others see—that you may go forth and report what the Lord has allowed you to perceive. God does not usually favor His servants with visions that they may keep them to themselves. Paul hid for 14 years one that he saw, but he was obliged to let it out at last and, I suppose, that if he had had more visions, he would not have been able to keep that one concealed so long. John no sooner became the seer of Patmos than he heard a voice that said to him, “Write.” He could not speak to others, for he was on an island where he was exiled, but he could write—and he did. And, often, he who writes, addresses a larger audience than the man who merely uses his tongue. It is a happy thing when the tongue is aided by the pen of a ready writer and so gets a wider audience and a more permanent influence than if it merely uttered certain sounds and the words died away when the ears had heard them. The first thing which you have to do, if God has called you to serve Him, is, after hearing what He has said to you, to make it known to somebody else—“Write the vision.”  
And take care, dear Friends, that, in the spreading of the Truth of God, you use as permanent a means of doing so as you can. “Write the vision,” that is to say, if you cannot write with a pen, if you have not that special gift, yet write it on men’s hearts! Do not merely speak it, but seek to reach the inmost soul of your fellow beings and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, write the Truth there! God help you not merely to sound it in their ears, but to write it on the fleshy tablets of their heart—and to leave the Truth of God deeply engraved upon their memory! I have sometimes been greatly favored in this way. Indeed, it has often been the case, for I almost daily meet with persons who say, “We remember hearing you preach more than 20 years ago, and we remember what you said.” And they will quote something which they then heard. I remember visiting, in one of our hospitals, a man who had heard me years before. He said to me, “While I was lying here, one night, I thought I heard the very tones of your voice”—and he told me some similes that I had used when he listened to me. I am glad to be successful in producing permanent impressions upon my Hearers, but I wish I could be more so. Mr. Jay used to say that in preaching, we must say things that will “strike and stick.” It is well when we can do so and I urge you, who are the servants of the Lord, to be sure that when you teach the Truth, you so teach it that it shall be permanently learned under your instruction. “Write the vision...upon tablets.”  
Then the next duty of the servant of God is to “make it plain.” I have sometimes thought that certain ministers fancied that it was their duty to make the message elaborate—to go to the very bottom of the subject and stir up all the mud they could find, there, till you could not possibly see them, nor could they see their own way at all. I could not help, the other morning, comparing some preaching to a boy who was in front of me, one summer’s day, wanting a penny, and sweeping the crossing for me in such a fashion that he enveloped me in clouds of dust in order to clear my way! Have I not seen preachers do just the very same thing? They tell people all the difficulties they have discovered in the Bible— which difficulties most of their Hearers would never have heard of unless their ministers had told them—and they raise a cloud of dust in order to make a pathway for a poor troubled soul! We would rather that they let the dust lie still, for we, ourselves, raise enough dust without their help!  
“Write the vision, and make it plain.” I suggest that as a motto to you who preach in the open air and to you who speak in the lodging houses or anywhere else. “Make it plain.” It is wonderful how plain we must make the Gospel before some people will be able to understand it. They have no idea what we mean by many of the expressions that we use. The most common language among Christians is often an unknown dialect to worldlings—they cannot make heads or tails of it. You and I, speaking together of our Christian experience, perfectly understand one another, but if we were to say the same things outside to the majority of the people, we might just as well preach to them in Dutch! If you have a loaf of bread and you want to feed a hungry child with it, it is hopeless to try to put that loaf of bread inside the child just as it is. Crumble it up, Brother, crumble it up as small as you can! And pour over it some of the nice warm milk of your own hearty love—and in that way the child and the loaf will come into contact before long! There is no way of getting many great Truths of God in the lump into most people’s minds—we must break them up into small pieces, or, to use the words of the text, when we “write the vision,” we must “make it plain.”  
Another important point is to make it practical. I have heard this text misquoted a great many times, “that he that runs may read it.” Kindly look at the passage and see whether that is correct. It does not say, “that he that runs may read it,” but it does say, “that he may run that reads it.” That is a different thing and that is what we want to see. But I have known some people who have had the Gospel delivered to them and they have slept that heard it! There has been something about the prophet’s very tone, and voice, and manner that has tended to fill the ears with somniferous influences. “Ah,” said one to me, “I cannot help believing in mesmerism and so would you if you could see how our minister mesmerizes the people all round the gallery every Sunday! They can sleep soundly enough after he has been preaching a little while.” Now, dear Brothers, if we want to do any good to our fellow creatures, we must hear God’s voice ourselves—and that will not send us to sleep, but it will wake us up! and then we must go and tell the people very plainly what we have heard, and also tell it to them so earnestly “that he may run that reads it.” I believe that I could easily make some of you run if I were to take up a telegram from the table and read, “Mr. So-and-So’s house is on fire. He is requested to hurry home as fast as possible.” Away he would go down the aisle as soon as the words were out of my mouth! You see, that message is something that concerns him personally, something that may mean great peril to his property, so he runs that reads it, or hears it read! I wish I could always preach about the wrath to come in such a way that every unsaved man who heard me would take to his heels and run for his life from the City of Destruction! Or that I could so speak about the glories of Heaven and the preciousness of Christ, that men would straightway run to Him, even to the Holy One of Israel, whom God has glorified! Let us always try to write on men’s hearts in a good running hand, that he that reads the message may at once begin to run to escape from judgment and to find the Savior and to enter into eternal life!  
There, child of God, is your attitude, and there is your work.  
III. Now, in the third place, the next verse brings out our difficulty, that is, THE TARRYING OF TRUTH, “for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”  
We preach a Gospel whose chief glory lies in the future. The blessings which we proclaim have a most important bearing upon the present, but the stress and emphasis of them relate to the future and, therefore, it is that, oftentimes, men reject our testimony because, to them, the time is not yet, or they doubt its truth because they do not at once see the results produced which we foretell.  
Brethren, every promise of God’s Word has its own appointed time of fulfillment and every doctrine or privilege has its own allotted hour. There is an election of Grace, but we shall not know all who are included in it till we shall meet the whole company of the faithful at the right hand of God! There is a redemption by blood, but the fullness of that redemption will not affect these mortal bodies until the trumpet of the Resurrection has sounded out its mighty blast over land and sea! Then shall we see how Christ has redeemed the bodies as well as the souls of His chosen ones. Take any blessing that you please and the same rule applies. Although there is much in the Covenant of Grace to be enjoyed, today, there is much more that is yet to come.  
The servant of God is still a prophet. He says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”—that is a prophecy! He says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you”—that is a prophecy! He says, “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever”—that is a prophecy! He says, “The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”—that is a prophecy! And the testimony of Jesus is still the spirit of prophecy and each prophecy has an appointed time in which it will be fulfilled.  
And, further, it is absolutely certain to be fulfilled. There is no word which God’s servant rightly speaks for his Lord which will not come true. Ye have not followed cunningly-devised fables and, therefore, you need not speak your Master’s message as though you were old wives rehearsing the gossip of a country village! You are telling what God the Holy Spirit has revealed in the Word and applied to your own soul—therefore, tell it boldly! Now, then, you are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech sinners by you, and you are to go and pray them, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God! Do you not see, dear Brothers, the position you are to take up? May you be helped to take it up! You are a prophet and your prophecy has a time for fulfillment—and it is absolutely certain to come to pass!  
But, sometimes, it apparently tarries. You tell men of the blessedness that comes of true religion and they say, “There is such-and-such a Believer who is very sorrowful.” “Oh, yes,” you reply, “in his case the vision is tarrying.” “There is such-and-such a child of God who does not enjoy the Light of the Lord’s Countenance.” Just so. We did not say that he always would, but we do say that he will, one day, walk in the Light of God. “Ah,” says one, “I have been seeking the Lord for years, but I have not obtained peace and comfort.” Just so—He did not promise that you would obtain the blessing immediately. It may be that, for a while, you shall “walk in darkness, and see no light,” to test your faith. But, though the vision may seem to tarry, it will not really tarry—it will come in God’s good. time. Oh, how often have you and I, struggling to live by faith and to glorify God, geo into a maze and we have said, “We shall get out of it.” But we did not get out of it for a long time. “Oh,” we have said, “surely God will deliver us!” Yet, for a while, He did not deliver us. We even got into still worse trouble than before and then the arch-enemy began to whisper—

*“The Lord has forsaken you!*

*Your God will be gracious no more”—*  
and what little faith we had began to waver, for we said, “We did not think that we should be tried like this! We thought we would come out of the darkness much sooner than this.” But now, Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon those past exercises and experiences, what do you say of them? Did the Lord tarry, after all? “Well,” you reply, “He tarried as I would like Him to always tarry—

*‘He hid the purpose of His Grace,*

*To make it better known.’*  
He allowed the clouds to collect more thickly to give all the heavier shower of blessing, by-and-by. He did permit me to begin to sink. He did let me nearly go down, but it was only to make me know how weak I was, that I might the more firmly cling to His hand when He plucked me out of the waves and bade me stand still by His side.”

I can personally say, at the present moment, that I would not like to have had one ache less, or one depression of spirit less, or one affliction less of any sort. I would rather not have any more—as everybody says— but yet I am glad that my “rathers” count for nothing with God and that I have not any permission or need to manage for myself! How much better everything is arranged by Him! As for the past, it is all right and, blessed be His holy name, it has been so right that it could not be better! It has not only been good, but it has been better. Yes, it has been best of all! So shall every child of God find it. You may say, “This life of faith is difficult. This hanging on so long, almost by one’s eyelashes—will it not soon come to an end?” The end will come at the right time—

*“God is never before His time:  
He is never too late.”*

Remember how Israel went out of Egypt at the appointed time? It is written, “And it came to pass the same day, that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies,” and on that same day when Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Grace shall know that it is better for you to be delivered, you shall be delivered to the praise of the glory of God’s Grace!

IV. The fourth verse gives us our last point, but I will only just hint at what I would have said if there had been more time. THIS TARRYING OF TRUTH BECOMES A TESTING OF THE PEOPLE because that Gospel which we are to tell does not bring forth all its fruit at once to those who hear us. What then? Why, this is the winnowing-fan, this is the sieve, this is the way by which God discerns between the righteous and the wicked!

As for the wicked man, he says, “I do not see any present good coming out of religion. Look at that poor, miserable, sighing, groaning, povertystricken Christian over there! What good has his religion ever done him? I do not believe in it.” Just so. Now we know who and what you are, for our text says, “His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” He is so proud that he judges God’s Word and condemns it! He will not have Christ to reign over him. He will not believe God. He will not wait for God and the reason is that his soul is not upright in him. Follow him home and you shall see, in his life, that his soul is not upright in him. The man who judges God is one whom God will judge and who shall not be able to stand in the Day of Judgment. I will not say that every man who rejects Christ is necessarily immoral, but I will say that, in nine cases out of ten, it is so and that when you trace an infidel’s life, there is something there that accounts for his infidelity. He wants a cover on his unbelief for that is something he has good need to cover! There is something about his daily walk that does not agree with holiness—some darling sin that spoils his hope of being saved as a Christian. So he tries, as much as he can, to get a hope out of lies, out of contradicting God. “His heart is not upright in him.”

But how does this test discern the righteous? Why thus—“The just shall live by his faith.” You know that a Christian, a holy man, a just man, a justified man talks thus—“Yes, if God has spoken anything, it is true. If God has said that, it will be fulfilled. I will wait. Troubles may multiply, cares may come like a deluge, but I will wait. I am sure that God is true and I will wait and watch for the unfolding of His purposes. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I will never give up reliance upon Him.” Now, that man is a just man, and that is the man who will live! It is always well when these three things go together—righteousness, faith, life. They ought not to be found apart. They should always be together.

“The just man”—that is, the righteous man—“shall live.” Ah, there is no true life without that righteousness! “Shall live by his faith”—and there is no true life without faith and no true righteousness without faith. These three go together—may we all have them and may it be your joy and mine to keep on telling others what God has revealed to us, that we may thus gather out His own believing people, His elect and redeemed ones, while the graceless will, perhaps, despise and hate what they may see and so will ripen for the flames of Hell! God grant, of His Grace, that they may yet be delivered, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**HABAKKUK 2:1-11.**

Verse 1 *.*I will stand my watch, and set myself on the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. “I shall look to God and I shall also look to myself. There shall be an expectation as I gaze upward to my Lord and there shall also be an examination as I look within at my empty, guilty, good-for-nothing self.”

2. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that reads it. The Prophets were accustomed to write their messages upon wax tablets and the Lord bade Habakkuk thus write what he had seen. God would have both His Law and His Gospel plainly revealed to men so that they might know and understand His will. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “We use great plainness of speech.” And the Lord would have all His servants do likewise. It is not for us to bury the Gospel under a mass of fine words, but to set it forth in the simplest and clearest possible language—for it is not the power of human words that God blesses, but the Truth, itself, as it is applied to the heart by His Spirit.

3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Is that a contradiction—”Though it tarry...it will not tarry”? No. To us it appears to tarry, but, in God’s way of reckoning, it does not really tarry. To our impatient spirits it seems long in coming, but God knows that it will not be a moment beyond the appointed time.

4. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. This grand text was quoted by Paul when he wrote his Epistles to the Romans, the Galatians and the Hebrews. It proves that Old Testament saints understood New Testament life! David and Abraham lived by faith, even as Paul and Peter and the other Apostles did.

5. Yes also, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man, neither keeps at home, who enlarges his desire as Hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathers unto him all nations, and heaps unto him all people. This was spoken of the Chaldeans, an ambitious nation so exceedingly greedy that it seemed as if the whole world would not be large enough to satisfy their voracious appetite. Their great kings enlarged their mouths like Gehenna and they seemed as insatiable as the very jaws of Death itself. They heaped up nation upon nation to make a huge empire for themselves.

6. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increases that which is not his? How long? And to him that loads himself with thick clay! That which is said of ambition may also be said of covetousness. What an idle task it is for a man to go on perpetually hoarding—heaping together more than he can possibly enjoy, as if it were made for nobody but for one man, and he must grasp all the wealth of the world. There is scope enough for the loftiest ambition when you seek the nobler joys of Grace. There is room for a sacred covetousness when you “covet earnestly the best gifts,” but, in every other respect may these two things—ambition and covetousness—be always thrust far from us!

7. Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite you, and awake that shall vex you, and you shall be for booty unto them? So it happened to Chaldea that the nations which they had spoiled, by-and-by, grew strong enough to take vengeance upon them and to spoil them in their turn. Usually, when men do wrong, it comes home to them sooner or later. The chickens they hatch come home to roost at night, at any rate, if not before. Towards the end of life, a man begins to gather the fruit of his doings, or, if he does not reap it in this world, certainly he will in the world to come.

8, 9. Because you have spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil you; because of men’s blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. Woe to him that covets an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! He fancies, when he gets rich by oppressing others, that he will, himself, rise out of harm’s way. He says that he will make the main chance sure. He who has plenty of gold fancies that he will be able to preserve himself from sorrow, but this is what God has to say about that matter—

10, 11. You have consulted shame to your house by cutting off many people and have sinned against your soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. These Chaldeans were great builders, as we know by the vast ruins that still remain. And most of their buildings were erected by labor exacted from the people whom they oppressed. They received no wages for their work, so even today, from the ruins, the stone cries out of the walls and the beams out of the timber answers it. Let all men know that, sooner or later, God will execute justice even upon the greatest nations! If they will be destroyers, they shall be destroyed. Their evil policy shall, by-and-by, sweep them away. “There is a something in the world,” says one, “that makes for righteousness.” Indeed there is, only it is more than a something—it is God himself who is always working in all things towards the vindication of His own righteous and holy Law.

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NO. 1749

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“But the just shall live by his faith.”  
Habakkuk 2:4.**

This text is three times employed by the Apostle Paul as an argument. Read Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38—in each of these cases it runs, “The just shall live by faith.” This is the old original text to which the Apostle referred when he said, “As it is written, The just shall live by faith.” We are not wrong in making the Inspiration of the Old Testament to be as important as that of the New, for the truth of the Gospel must stand or fall with that of the Prophets of the old dispensation. The Bible is one and indivisible—you cannot question the Old Testament and retain the New. Habakkuk must be inspired, or Paul writes nonsense.

Yesterday, 400 years ago, [November 10, 1483] there came into this wicked world the son of a miner, or refiner of metals, who was to do no little towards undermining the Papacy and refining the Church. The name of that baby was Martin Luther—a hero and a saint. Blessed was that day above all the days of the century, which it honored, for it bestowed a blessing on all succeeding ages through “the monk that shook the world.” His brave spirit overturned the tyranny of error which had so long held nations in bondage. All human history since then has been more or less affected by the birth of that marvelous boy! He was not an absolutely perfect man—we neither endorse all that he said nor admire all that he did— but he was a man upon whose like men’s eyes shall seldom rest!

He was a mighty judge in Israel, a kingly servant of the Lord. We ought to more often pray to God to send us men—men of God, men of power. We should pray that, according to the Lord’s infinite goodness, His ascension gifts may be continued and multiplied for the perfecting of His Church, for when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and received gifts for men. And “He gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” He continues to bestow these choice gifts according to the Church’s needs and He would scatter them more plentifully, perhaps, if our prayers more earnestly ascended to the Lord of the Harvest to thrust forth laborers into His harvest. Even as we believe in the crucified Savior for our personal salvation, we ought to believe in the ascended Savior for the perpetual enriching of the Church with confessors and evangelists who shall declare the Truth of God.

I wish to take my little share in commemorating Luther’s birthday and I think I can do no better than use the key of the Truth of God by which Luther unlocked the dungeons of the human mind and set bondage hearts at liberty. That golden key lies in the Truth briefly contained in the text before us—“The just shall live by his faith.” Are you not a little surprised to find such a clear Gospel passage in Habakkuk? To discover in that ancient Prophet an explicit statement which Paul can use as a ready argument against the opponents of Justification by Faith? It shows that the cardinal doctrine of the Gospel is no new-fangled notion! Assuredly it is not a novel dogma invented by Luther, nor even a Truth of God which was first taught by Paul!

This fact, Justification by Faith, has been established in all ages and, therefore, we find it here, among the ancient things, a lamp to cheer the darkness which hung over Israel before the coming of the Lord! This also proves that there has been no change as to the Gospel. The Gospel of Habakkuk is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! A clearer light was cast upon this Truth of God by the giving of the Holy Spirit, but the way of salvation has, in all ages, been one and the same! No man has ever been saved by his good works. The way by which the just have lived has always been the way of faith. There has not been the slightest advance upon this Truth—it is established and settled—always the same, like the God who uttered it.

At all times and everywhere, the Gospel is and must forever be the same. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” We read of “the Gospel” as of one—never of two or three gospels—as of many. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Christ’s Word shall never pass away. It is also noteworthy that this Truth of God should be so old and should continue so unchanged, but that it should possess such vitality. This one sentence, “The just shall live by his faith,” produced the Reformation! Out of this one line, as from the opening of one of the Apocalyptic seals, came forth all that sounding of Gospel trumpets and all that singing of Gospel songs which made a sound like the noise of many waters in the world. This one seed—forgotten and hidden away in the dark medieval times—was brought forth, dropped into the human heart, made to grow by the Spirit of God and, in the end, to produce great results.

This handful of corn on the top of the mountains so multiplied that the fruit thereof did shake like Lebanon and they of the city flourished like grass of the earth! The least bit of the Truth of God, thrown anywhere, will live! Certain plants are so full of vitality that if you only take a fragment of a leaf and place it on the soil, the leaf will take root and grow. It is utterly impossible that such vegetation should become extinct, And so it is with the Truth of God—it is living and incorruptible—and, therefore, there is no destroying it! As long as one Bible remains, the religion of Free Grace will live! No, if they could burn all printed Scriptures, as long as there remained a child who remembered a single text of the Word, the Truth would rise again!

Even in the ashes of truth the fire is still living, and when the breath of the Lord blows upon it, the flame will burst forth gloriously. Because of this, let us be comforted in this day of blasphemy and of rebuke— comforted because though “the grass withers and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the Word by which the Gospel is preached to you. Let us now examine this text which was the means of enlightening the heart of Luther, as I shall explain to you, by-and-by.

I. I shall, at the outset, make a brief observation upon it—A MAN WHO HAS FAITH IN GOD IS JUST. “The just shall live by his faith.” The man who possesses faith in God is a just man—his faith is his life as a just man. He is “just” in the Gospel sense, namely, that having the faith which God prescribes as the way of salvation, he is, by his faith, justified in the sight of God. In the Old Testament (Gen. 15:6) we are told, concerning Abraham, that, “he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” This is the universal plan of justification. Faith lays hold upon the righteousness of God by accepting God’s plan of justifying sinners through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ—and thus she makes the sinner just.

Faith accepts and appropriates for itself the whole system of Divine righteousness which is unfolded in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. Faith rejoices to see Him coming into the world in our nature and, in that nature, obeying the Law of God in every jot and tittle, though not Himself under that Law until He chose to put Himself there on our behalf. Faith is further pleased when she sees the Lord, who had come under the Law, offering up Himself as a perfect Atonement and making a complete vindication of Divine Justice by His suffering and death. Faith lays hold upon the Person, life and death of the Lord Jesus as her only hope—and in the righteousness of Christ she arrays herself. She cries, “The chastisement of my peace was upon Him and by His stripes I am healed.”

Now, the man who believes in God’s method of making men righteous through the righteousness of Jesus, and accepts Jesus and leans upon Him, is a just man! He who makes the life and death of God’s great Propitiation to be his sole reliance and confidence is justified in the sight of God and is written down among the just by the Lord Himself. His faith is imputed to him for righteousness because his faith grasps the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. “All that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” This is the testimony of the Inspired Word—who shall deny it?

But the Believer is also just in another sense which the outside world better appreciates, though it is not more valuable than the former. The man who believes in God becomes, by that faith, moved to everything that is right, good and true. His faith in God rectifies his mind and makes him just. In judgment, in desire, in aspiration, in heart, he is just. His sin has been freely forgiven him and now, in the hour of temptation, he cries, “How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” He believes in the blood-shedding which God has provided for the cleansing of sin and, being washed therein, he cannot choose to defile himself again. The love of Christ constrains him to seek after that which is true, right, good, loving and honorable in the sight of God.

Having received, by faith, the privilege of adoption, he strives to live as a child of God. Having obtained, by faith, a new life, he walks in newness of life. “Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin.” If any man lives in sin and loves it, he has not the faith of God’s elect, for true faith purifies the soul. The faith which is worked in us by the Holy Spirit is the greatest sin killer under Heaven! By the Grace of God it affects the inmost heart; changes the desires and the affections; and makes the man a new creature in Christ Jesus. If there are on earth any who can truly be called just, they are those who are made so by faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Indeed, no other men are “just” save those to whom the holy God gives the title—and of these the text says that they live by faith.

Faith trusts God and, therefore, loves Him. And, therefore, obeys Him. And, therefore, grows like He. It is the root of holiness, the spring of righteousness, the life of the just!

II. Upon that observation, which is vital to the text, I dwell no longer, but advance to another which is the converse of it, namely, that A MAN WHO IS JUST HAS FAITH IN GOD. Or else, let me say, he were not just, for God deserves faith and he who robs Him of it is not just. God is so true that to doubt Him is an injustice—He is so faithful that to distrust Him is to wrong Him—and he who does the Lord such an injustice is not a just man. A just man must first be just with the greatest of all beings. It would be idle for him to be just to only his fellow creatures if he did a willful injustice to God. I say he would be unworthy of the name of just. Faith is what the Lord justly deserves to receive from His creatures—it is His due that we believe in what He says—and specially in reference to the Gospel.

When the great love of God in Christ Jesus is set forth plainly, it will be believed by the pure in heart. If the great love of Christ in dying for us is fully understood, it must be believed by every honest mind. To doubt the witness of God concerning His Son is to do the sorest injustice to Infinite Love. He that believes not has rejected God’s witness to the unspeakable Gift and put from Him that which deserves man’s adoring gratitude, since it, alone, can satisfy the Justice of God and give peace to the conscience of man. A truly just man must, in order to the completeness of his justness, believe in God and in all that He has revealed.

Some dream that this matter of justness only concerns the outer life and does not touch man’s beliefs. I say, not so—righteousness concerns the inner parts of a man, the central region of his manhood—and truly just men desire to be made clean in the secret parts and, in the hidden parts, they would know wisdom. Is it not so? We hear it continually asserted that our understanding and beliefs constitute a province exempt from the jurisdiction of God. Is it, indeed, true that I may believe what I like without being accountable to God for my belief? No, my Brothers and Sisters! No single part of our manhood is beyond the range of the Divine Law! Our whole capacity as men lies under the sovereignty of Him that created us and we are as much bound to believe aright as we are bound to act aright!

In fact, our actions and our thoughts are so intertwisted and entangled that there is no dividing the one from the other. To say that the rightness of the outward life suffices is to go clean contrary to the whole tenor of the Word of God. I am as much bound to serve God with my mind as with my heart! I am as much bound to believe what God reveals as I am to do what God enjoins! Errors of judgment are as truly sins as errors of life. It is a part of our allegiance to our great Sovereign and Lord that we yield up our understanding, our thought and our belief to His supreme control. No man is right until he believes right. A just man must be just towards God by believing in God and trusting Him in all that He is, and says, and does.

I see not also, my dear Friends, what reason there is for a man to be just towards his fellow men when he has given up his belief in God. If it comes to a pinch and a man can deliver himself by a piece of dishonesty, why should he not be dishonest if there is no higher law than that which his fellow men have made? If there is no Judgment Seat, no Judge and no hereafter, why should he be concerned? A few weeks ago a man deliberately killed his employer, who had offended him. And as he gave himself up to the police, he said that he was not in the least bit afraid nor ashamed of what he had done. He admitted the murder and acknowledged that he knew the consequences very well. He said he expected to suffer about half-a-minute’s pain upon the gallows and then that would be the end of him and he was quite prepared for that.

He spoke and acted in consistency with his belief or his non-belief—and truly there is no form of crime but what becomes logical and legitimate if you take faith in God and the hereafter away from man. That gone, break up your commonwealth—there is nothing to hold humanity together! Without a God, the moral government of the universe has ceased and anarchy is the natural state of things. If there is no God and no judgment to come, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. If necessary, let us steal, lie and kill!

Why not? If there is no law, no judgment and no punishment for sin—I forget—nothing can be sinful! If there is no lawgiver, there is no law! And if there is no law, then there can be no transgression! To what a chaos must all things come if faith in God is renounced! Where will the just be found when faith is banished? The logically just man is a believer in some measure or other—and he that is worthy to be called “just” in the Scriptural sense, is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God unto us righteousness!

III. But now I come to the point upon which I mean to dwell. Thirdly, BY THIS FAITH THE JUST MAN SHALL LIVE. This is, at the outset, a narrow statement. It cuts off many pretended ways of living by saying, “The just shall live by faith.” This sentence savors of the strait gate which stands at the head of the way—the narrow way which leads into eternal life. At one blow this ends all claims of righteousness apart from one mode of life. The best men in the world can only live by faith—there is no other way of being just in the sight of God! We cannot live in self-righteousness. If we are going to trust to ourselves, or anything that comes of ourselves, we are dead while we so trust—we have not known the life of God according to the teaching of Holy Writ.

You must come right out from confidence in everything that you are or hope to be. You must tear off the leprous garment of legal righteousness and part with self in any and every form. Self-reliance as to the things of religion will be found to be self-destruction! You must rest in God as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ and there, alone. The just shall live by faith. Those who look to the works of the Law are under the curse and cannot live before God. The same is also true of those who endeavor to live by sense or feeling. They judge God by what they see—if He is bountiful to them in Providence, He is a good God. If they are poor, they have nothing good to say of Him, for they measure Him by what they feel, taste and see. If God works steadily to a purpose and they can see His purpose, they commend His wisdom. But when they either cannot see the purpose, or cannot understand the way by which the Lord is working unto it, straightway they judge Him to be unwise. Living by sense turns out to be a senseless mode of life, bringing death to all comfort and hope—

*“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His Grace,”*  
for only by such trust can a just man live.

The text also cuts off all idea of living by mere intellect. Too many say, “I am my own guide! I shall make doctrines for myself and I shall shift them and shape them according to my own devices.” Such a way is death to the spirit. To be abreast of the times is to be an enemy to God! The way of life is to believe what God has taught, especially to believe in Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin, for that is making God to be everything and ourselves nothing. Resting on an Infallible Revelation and trusting in an Omnipotent Redeemer, we have rest and peace. But, on the other unsettled principle, we become wandering stars for whom is appointed the blackness of darkness forever. By faith the soul can live—in all other ways we have a name to live and are dead.

The same is equally true of fancy. We often meet with a fanciful religion in which people trust to impulses, to dreams, to noises and mystic things which they imagine they have seen— all of it is fiddle-faddle! And yet they are quite wrapped up in it. I pray that you may cast out this chaffy stuff— there is no food for the spirit in it. The life of my soul lies not in what I think, or what I fancy, or what I imagine, or what I enjoy of fine feeling, but only in that which faith apprehends to be the Word of God! We live before God by trusting a promise, depending on a Person, accepting a Sacrifice, wearing a righteousness and surrounding ourselves with God— Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Implicit trust in Jesus, our Lord, is the way of life—and every other way leads down to death. It is a narrowing statement—let those who call it intolerance say what they please—it will be true when they have execrated it, as much as it is now!

But, secondly, this is a very broad statement. Much is comprehended in the saying—“The just shall live by his faith.” It does not say what part of his life hangs on his believing, or what phase of his life best proves his believing—it comprehends the beginning, continuance, increase and perfecting of spiritual life as being all by faith. Observe that the text means that the moment a man believes he begins to live in the sight of God. He trusts his God; he accepts God’s revelation of Himself; he confides, reposes, leans upon his Savior—and that moment he becomes a spiritually living man, quickened with spiritual life by God the Holy Spirit!

All his existence before that belief was but a form of death. When he comes to trust in God, he enters upon eternal life and is born from above. Yes, but that is not all, nor half all—for if that man is to continue living before God; if he is to hold on to his way in holiness—his perseverance must be the result of continued faith. The faith which saves is not one single act done and ended on a certain day—it is an act continued and persevered in throughout the entire life of the man! The just not only commences to live by his faith, but he continues to live by his faith! He does not begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh, nor go so far by Grace and the rest of the way by the works of the Law. “The just shall live by faith,” says the text in Hebrews, “but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

Faith is essential all along every day and all the day, in all things. Our natural life begins by breathing and it must be continued by breathing. What the breath is to the body, that is faith to the soul. Brothers and Sisters, if we are to make advances and increase in the Divine life, it must still be in the same way! Our root is faith and only through the root comes growth. Progress in Grace comes not of carnal wisdom, or legal effort, or unbelief. No, the flesh brings no growth unto the spiritual life and efforts made in unbelief rather dwarf the inner life than cause it to grow. We become no stronger by mortifications, mourning, works, or striving, if these are apart from simple faith in God’s Grace—for by this one sole channel can nourishment come into the life of our spirit. The same door by which life came in at the first is that by which life continues to enter.

If any man says to me, “I once lived by believing in Christ, but I have now become spiritual and sanctified and, therefore, I have no longer any need to look as a sinner to the blood and righteousness of Christ,” I tell that man that he has need to learn the first principles of faith! I warn him that he has drawn back from the faith, for he who is justified by the Law, or in any other way beside the righteousness of Christ, has fallen from Grace and left the only ground upon which a soul can be accepted with God. Yes, up to Heaven’s gate there is no staff for us to lean upon but faith in the ever-blessed Savior and His Divine Atonement! Between this place and Heaven we shall never be able to live by merits, or live by fancies, or live by intellect—we shall still have to be as children taught of God—as Israel in the desert depending wholly on the great Invisible One. Ours it is, forever, to look out of self and to look above all things that are seen, for “the just shall live by his faith.”

It is a very broad sentence, a circle which encompasses the whole of our life which is worthy of the name. If there is any virtue; if there is any praise; if there is anything that is lovely or of good repute, we must receive it, exhibit it and perfect it by the exercise of faith. Life in the Father’s house; life in the Church; life in private; life in the world must all be in the power of faith if we are righteous men. That which is without faith is without life! Dead works cannot gratify the living God! Without faith it is impossible to please God. I beg you to notice, in the third place, what a very unqualified statement it is. “The just shall live by his faith.” Then, if a man has but a little faith, he shall live. And if he is greatly just, he shall still live by faith.

Many a just man has come no further than striving after holiness, but he is justified by his faith—his faith is trembling and struggling and his frequent prayer is, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief”—yet his faith has made him a just man! Sometimes he is afraid that he has no faith at all! And when he has deep depression of spirits, it is as much as he can do to keep his head above water. But even then his faith justifies him. He is like a boat upon a stormy sea—sometimes he is lifted up to Heaven by flashing waves of mercy—and another he sinks into the abyss among billows of affliction. What? Is he, then, a dead man? I answer, Does that man truly believe God? Does He accept the record concerning the Son of God? Can he truly say, “I believe in the forgiveness of sins,” and with such faith as he has, does he cling only to Christ and to none beside? Then that man shall live! He shall live by his faith!

If the littleness of our faith could destroy us, how few would be numbered with the living? “When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” Only here and there and now and then, a Luther appears who really does believe with all his heart. The most of us are not so big as Luther’s little finger—we have not so much faith in our whole soul as he had in one hair of his head! But yet even that little faith makes us live. I do not say that little faith will give us the strong, vigorous and lion-like life which Luther had—but we shall live. The statement makes no distinction between this and that degree of faith, but still lays it down as an unquestionable Truth of God—“the just shall live by faith.” Blessed be God, then, I shall live, for I believe in the Lord Jesus as my Savior and my All! Do you not, also, believe in Him? Yes, and is it not singular that this unqualified statement should not mention any other Grace as helping to make up the ground on which just men live?

“The just shall live by his faith.” But has he not love? Has he not zeal? Has he not patience? Has he not hope? Has he not humility? Has he not holiness? Oh, yes, he has all these and he lives in them—but he does not live by them, because none of these so intimately connects him with Christ as does his faith! I will venture to use a very homely figure because it is the best I can think of. Here is a little child, a suckling. It has many necessary members, such as its eyes, its ears, its legs, its arms, its heart and so forth. And all these are necessary to it, but the one organ by which the tiny baby lives is its mouth, by which it sucks from its mother all its nourishment. Our faith is that mouth by which we suck in fresh life from the promise of the ever-blessed God. Thus faith is that which we live by! Other Graces are necessary, but faith is the life of them all. We do not undervalue love, or patience, or penitence, or humility any more than we depreciate the eyes or the feet of the baby. Still, the means of the life of the spiritual man is that mouth by which he receives Divine food from the Truths of God revealed by the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture. Other Graces produce results from that which faith receives, but faith is the Receiver-General for the whole isle of man.

This, dear Friends, to proceed a little farther, is a very suggestive statement—“The just shall live by his faith”—because it wears so many meanings. First, the righteous man is even to exist by his faith. That is to say, the lowest form of Grace in a righteous character is dependent upon faith. But, Brothers and Sisters, I hope you will not be so foolish as to say—“If I am but a living child of God, it is all I need.” No, we wish not only to have life, but to have it more abundantly! See yonder man rescued from drowning? He is yet alive, but the only evidence of it is the fact that a mirror is somewhat bedewed by his breath—you would not be content to be alive for years in that poor fashion, would you? You ought to be grateful if you are spiritually alive even in that feeble way, but still, we do not want to remain in a swooning state—we wish to be active and vigorous!

Yet even for that lowest life you must have faith. For the feeblest kind of spiritual existence that can be called life at all, faith is necessary. The just who barely live, who are feeble in mind, who are scarcely saved, are, nevertheless, delivered by faith. Without faith there is no heavenly life whatever. Take the word, “life,” in a better sense, and the same will apply— “The just shall live by his faith.” We sometimes meet with very poor persons who say to us in a pitiful tone, “Our wages are dreadfully scant.” We say to them, “Do you really live upon so small a sum?” They answer, “Well, Sir, you can hardly call it living, but we exist somehow.” None of us would wish to live in that style if we could help it. We mean, then, by “life,” some measure of enjoyment, happiness and satisfaction. The just, when they have comfort, joy and peace, have them by faith. Thank God, peace of heart is our normal state because faith is an abiding Grace. We sing for joy of heart and rejoice in the Lord and, blessed be the Lord, this is no novelty to us! But we have known this bliss and still know it by faith alone.

The moment faith comes in, the music strikes up—if it were gone the owls would hoot! Luther can sing a Psalm in spite of the devil, but he could not have done so if he had not been a man of faith. He could defy emperors, kings, popes and bishops while he took firm hold upon the strength of God, but only then! Faith is the life of life and makes life worth living. It puts joy into the soul to believe in the great Father and His everlasting love; in the efficacious Atonement of the Son and in the indwelling of the Spirit; in resurrection and eternal glory! Without these we were, of all men, most miserable. To believe these glorious truths is to live—“The just shall live by his faith.” Life also means strength. We say of a certain man, “What life he has in him! He is full of life! He seems always alive.” Yes, the just obtain energy, force, vivacity, vigor, power, might and life by faith.

Faith bestows on Believers a royal majesty. The more they can believe, the more mighty they become. This is the head that wears a crown! This is the hand that wields a scepter! This is the foot whose royal tread does shake the nations! Faith in God links us with the King, the Lord God Omnipotent! By faith the just live on when others die. They are not overcome by prevalent sin, or fashionable heresy, or cruel persecution, or fierce affliction—nothing can kill spiritual life while faith abides—“The just shall live by faith.” Continuance and perseverance come this way. The righteous man, when he is put back a while, is not baffled. And when he is wounded by enemies, he is not slain. Where another man is drowned, he swims. Where another man is trampled under foot, he rises and shouts victoriously—“Rejoice not over me, O my enemy! If I fall, yet shall I rise again!”

In the fiery furnace of affliction he walks unharmed through faith. Yes, and when his turn comes to die and, with many tears, his Brothers and Sisters carry his ashes to the tomb, “He, being dead, yet speaks.” The blood of righteous Abel cried from the ground to the Lord and it is still crying down the ages, even to this hour. Luther’s voice, through 400 years, still sounds in the ears of men and quickens our pulses like the beat of drum in martial music—he lives! He lives because he was a man of faith. I would sum up and illustrate this teaching by mentioning certain incidents of Luther’s life. Upon the great Reformer, Gospel Light broke by slow degrees. It was in the monastery that, in turning over the old Bible that was chained to a pillar, he came upon this passage—“The just shall live by his faith.” This heavenly sentence stuck to him, but he hardly understood all its bearings.

He could not, however, find peace in his religious profession and monastic habit. Knowing no better, he persevered in so many penances and mortifications so arduous, that sometimes he was found fainting through exhaustion. He brought himself to death’s door. He must make a journey to Rome, for in Rome there is a fresh church for every day and you may be sure to win the pardon of sins and all sorts of benedictions in these holy shrines. He dreamed of entering a city of holiness, but he found it to be a haunt of hypocrites and a den of iniquity! To his horror, he heard men say that if there was a Hell, Rome was built on top of it, for it was the nearest approach to it that could be found in this world! But he still believed in its Pope and he went on with his penances, seeking rest, but finding none.

One day he was climbing upon his knees the Sancta Scala which still stands in Rome. I have stood amazed, at the bottom of this staircase, to see poor creatures go up and down on their knees in the belief that it is the very staircase that our Lord descended when He left Pilate’s house! Certain steps are said to be marked with drops of blood—these the poor souls—I almost said, fools—kiss most devoutly. Well, Luther was crawling up these steps one day when that same text which he had met with before, in the monastery, sounded like a clap of thunder in his ears, “The just shall live by his faith.” He rose from his prostration and went down the steps never to grovel upon them again. At that time the Lord worked in him a full deliverance from superstition and he saw that not by priests, nor priestcraft, nor penances, nor by anything that he could do was he to live, but that he must live by his faith.

Our text of this morning had set the monk at liberty and set his soul on fire! No sooner did he believe this than he began to live in the sense of being active. At this time a gentleman named Tetzel, was going about all over Germany selling the forgiveness of sins for so much ready cash. No matter what your offense, as soon as your money touched the bottom of the box your sins were gone! Luther heard of this, grew indignant and exclaimed, “I will make a hole in his drum,” which assuredly he did—and in several other drums! The nailing up of his Theses on the church door was a sure way of silencing the indulgence music! Luther proclaimed pardon of sin by faith in Christ without money and without price—and the Pope’s indulgences were soon objects of derision.

Luther lived by his faith and, therefore, he who otherwise might have been quiet, denounced error as furiously as a lion roars upon his prey. The faith that was in him filled him with intense life and he plunged into war with the enemy. After a while they summoned him to Augsburg and to Augsburg he went, though his friends advised him not to go. They summoned him, as a heretic, to answer for himself at the Diet of Worms. And everybody bade him stay away, for he would be sure to be burned—but he felt it necessary that the testimony should be borne and so, in a wagon he went from village to village and town to town, preaching as he went! The poor people came out to shake hands with the man who was standing up for Christ and the Gospel at the risk of his life. You remember how he stood before that august assembly and though he knew, as far as human power went, that his defense would cost him his life, for he would, probably, be committed to the flames like John Huss, yet he played the man for the Lord his God?

That day in the German Diet, Luther did a work for which ten thousand times tea thousand mothers’ children have blessed his name and blessed, yet more, the name of the Lord his God! To put him out of harm’s way for a while, a prudent friend took him prisoner and kept him out of the strife, in the castle of Wartburg. There he had a good time of it, resting, studying, translating, making music and preparing himself for the future, which was to be so eventful. He did all that a man can do who is outside of the fray, but, “the just shall live by his faith,” and Luther could not be buried alive in ease—he must be getting on with his lifework! He sends word to his friends that he who was coming would soon be with them, and all of a sudden he appeared at Wittenberg. The prince meant to have kept him in retirement somewhat longer, but Luther must live—and when the Elector feared that he could not protect him, Luther wrote him, “I come under far higher protection than yours; no, I hold that I am more likely to protect Your Grace than Your Grace to protect me! He who has the strongest faith is the best protector.”

Luther had learned to be independent of all men, for he cast himself upon his God! He had all the world against him and yet he lived right merrily—if the Pope excommunicated him, he burned the bull! If the Emperor threatened him, he rejoiced because he remembered the Words of the Lord, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh.” When they said to him, “Where will you find shelter if the Elector does not protect you?” He answered, “Under the broad shield of God.” Luther could not be still! He must speak and write and thunder! And oh, with what confidence he spoke! Doubts about God and Scripture he abhorred! Melancthon says he was not dogmatic. I rather differ from Melancthon, there, and reckon Luther to be the chief of dogmatists! He called Melancthon the, “soft treader,” and I wonder what we should have done if Luther had been Melancthon and had trod softly, too?

The times needed a firmly assured leader and faith made Luther all that for years, notwithstanding his many sorrows and infirmities. He was a Titan, a giant, a man of splendid mental caliber and strong physique, but his main life and force lay in his faith. He suffered much in exercises of the mind and through diseases of body. And these might well have occasioned a display of weakness, but that weakness did not appear, for when he believed, he was as sure of what he believed as of his own existence and, therefore, he was strong. If every angel in Heaven had passed before him and each one had assured him of the Truth of God, he would not have thanked them for their testimony, for he believed God without the witness of either angels or men! He thought the Word of Divine Testimony to be more sure than anything that seraphim could say! This man was forced to live by his faith, for he was a man of stormy soul—and only faith could speak peace to him.

Those stirring excitements of his brought on him, afterwards, fearful depressions of spirit—and then he needed faith in God. If you read a spiritual life of him, you will find that it was hard work, sometimes, for him to keep his soul alive. Being a man of like passions with us, and full of imperfections, he was, at times, as desponding and despairing as the weakest among us. And the swelling grief within him threatened to burst his mighty heart. Both he and John Calvin frequently sighed for the rest of Heaven, for they loved not the strife in which they dwelt, but would have been glad to peacefully feed the flock of God on earth and then to enter into rest. These men dwelt with God in holy boldness of believing prayer, or they could not have lived at all. Luther’s faith laid hold upon the Cross of our Lord and would not be stirred from it. He believed in the forgiveness of sins and could not afford to doubt it.

He cast anchor upon Holy Scripture and rejected all the inventions of clerics and all the traditions of the fathers. He was assured of the Truth of the Gospel and never doubted but what it would prevail though earth and Hell were leagued against it. When he came to die, his old enemy assailed him fiercely, but when they asked him if he held the same faith, his, “Yes,” was positive enough! They needed not to have asked him—they might have been sure of that. And now, today, the Truths of God proclaimed by Luther continue to be preached and will be till our Lord, Himself, shall come! Then the Holy City shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, because the Lord, Himself, shall be the Light of His people! But till then we must shine with Gospel Light to our utmost. Brothers and Sisters, let us stand to it that as Luther lived by faith, even so will we—and may God the Holy Spirit work in us more of that faith. Amen and Amen!

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PRIDE THE DESTROYER  
NO. 2591

**A SERMON  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 27, 1883.

**“Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.”  
Habakkuk 2:4.**

HABAKKUK had to prophesy to the people that God would eventually deliver them out of the hand of the Chaldeans and send them better times. But he warned them that although the vision would come and, as far as God was concerned, it would not really tarry, yet they would grow impatient under their suffering and they would say that the vision did tarry. And so, indeed, it would seem to do while they were suffering—and the Prophet here hints at the reason why God’s merciful deliverances may sometimes be delayed. The Lord is willing to give mercy directly, for He delights not in judgment. If it were according to wisdom, we would have nothing from God’s hand but that which is pleasant and sweet, for He would not cause any one of His creatures a needless pain—and He is full of gentleness and tenderness and mercy.

The reason why the vision tarried in Habakkuk’s day, and the mercy was slow in coming, was that the trials of the people might act as a test of their character. In order to separate the precious from the vile, God used the winnowing fan of affliction, that the chaff might be blown away and the pure wheat remain. Often, in national trials, the furnace is heated exceedingly hot and the fire is blown upon with a fierce blast in order that the gold may be divided from the dross. It is always God’s purpose to put a division between Israel and Egypt, between him that fears the Lord and him that fears Him not. You and I cannot make that division. In this world it is very dangerous work to try to pull up the tares, for we are very apt to pull up the wheat, also. When, at last, we shall haul our big net to shore, then may we begin to separate the contents and put the good into vessels and cast the bad away.

But now, if we were to try to sort the contents of the drag net, we would probably throw away as many of the good as of the bad, and save as many of the bad as of the good! We cannot do the separating work, but God is constantly doing it and often, in times of trouble, trial becomes a very searching test of men. Those who looked like true Believers while all was smooth and bright, have given up their confidence in God when trial has been fierce and long-protracted. This is the patience of the saints, but, alas, this is often the impatience of mere professors—and God thus makes men see what they really are! They perceive what is in their hearts when they are exposed to long-continued and severe affliction. See, then, one reason why troubles come upon both the righteous and the wicked—that men’s true character may be discovered and that the secrets of their hearts may be revealed.

It happened in this case, and it happens in a great many other instances, that the fierce heat of the furnace of trouble separates men into two classes. One class is composed of men who are high and lifted up in heart. Our text says, “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” Then there is another class, namely, the just. And of these the text says, “The just shall live by his faith.” My dear Friends, when trial comes on us—as it surely will—may you and I be able to bear it! May we prove to be men and women who can endure it and if it is so, we shall live by faith! That will be our distinguishing mark. But if any of us are proud and have lofty ideas concerning ourselves, “the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts.” Let us bear this great Truth of God in mind as we come to the direct consideration of our text.

I. I shall speak first upon these words of the Lord to Habakkuk as REVEALING A GREAT SIN. “His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” The great sin is the sin of pride, the lifting up of the soul in rebellion against the Lord.

This sin of pride is often forgotten and many persons do not even think it is a sin at all. Here is a man who says that he is absolutely perfect. Does he know what the sin of pride really is? What prouder being can there be than one who talks like that? “Oh, but,” he says, “I am humble.” Is there any soul living that is so proud as he is who says he is humble? Is not that the acme and climax of pride? Another says, “I hate flattery.” Did not one say to Julius Caesar that he hated flatterers, “being then,” as the world’s poet says, “most flattered”? Yes, assuredly, that soft silken voice that says, “You never give way to pride, you are of a lowly spirit, you are never lifted up. In fact, you hardly appreciate yourself highly enough and nobody else does because you are so humble!” Why, that is the worst kind of pride! It has only put on the sheepskin instead of coming out in its true wolfish garb!

Pride, to begin with, I am afraid, may be set down as the sin of human nature. If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world and you wall find it there. And then go and search among the poorest and the most miserable and you wall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar’s rags as in a prince’s robes and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature—it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk? If anyone held up his hand and said, “I am one,” I would answer, “That is Number One in the widest street of the whole city of Self-Conceit,” for, when we fancy that we have clean escaped from pride, it is only because we have lost the sense of its weight through being surrounded with it! A man who bears a bowl of water feels its weight but if he goes right into the water, it will be all over him, and yet he will not notice the burden of it. He who lives in pride up to the neck—no, he who is over head and heels in pride is the most likely to imagine that he is not proud at all!

Pride takes all manner of shapes. You and I, I daresay, have very different forms of pride. Perhaps my pride does not hold any relationship to your pride and your pride, of course, is a very right sort of pride. “It is what I call a proper pride,” says one. Yes, that is your sort of pride. Mine, I admit, is a very improper one. I frankly make that confession, I cannot and dare not think that it has any propriety about it at all—it is a miserable, wretched affair! So is yours, I think, and you would agree with me if you could but see it as it really is. But pride takes all manner of shapes. Have you ever seen it in the man of property? He is a very important individual. It may be that his property is not very large but, still, considering the village in which he lives, he is quite a big man—and on the vestry—why, he is as big as an emperor! You and I do not, perhaps, think much of him, but that does not matter to him, for in his own estimation he is a very great man. Then there is a London merchant. If he has succeeded in life, what a great man he is—how proud, how exclusive! How he looks down upon his fellow men! How could you, being of an inferior grade, venture into his pew and sit side by side with him? He carries his pride even into the House of God! We have seen it there and mourned over it, but it is easy enough for a man to become proud of his possessions.

Another man, with no possessions, is proud of his bodily strength. He is very strong. Let anybody wrestle with him and he shall see what a Samson he is! And, oh, how vain-glorious he grows, and how proud— proud of his strength of muscle and sinew and bone! Another man is proud of his talent. If he has not acquired any wealth by it, yet he ought to have done so. If the world has not yet recognized him as a genius, he has recognized himself most distinctly! He is a very first-class man in his own line of things. Listen to him as he boasts of what he has learned! We have known others boast of their character. When we have explained what “a sinner” means, they have been kind enough to say, in a complimentary sort of way, “Yes, we are all sinners.” But they did not mean that they had really sinned at all. No, not they! They had a fine, splendid, unworn righteousness that was “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” You know the good people I mean, always able to glory that they have kept the Law of God from their youth up, and have done what they ought to have done—that is a form that pride very frequently takes.

Even in people who know the Lord, see what relics of pride there will often be! Remember what Mr. Bunyan said on one occasion—after he had done preaching, a Brother came to him and said, “You have preached an admirable sermon.” “Ah,” said Bunyan, “you are too late! The devil told me that before I got down the pulpit stairs.” A good Brother prayed at the Prayer Meeting very sweetly, very devoutly. And when he had finished, there came a soft whisper in his ear, “You have quite recovered that Prayer Meeting from its dullness—what a wonderful man you are!” And when we have not ventured to do anything of the sort in public, if we get five minutes’ communion with God in secret prayer, then up comes Satan, again, and says, “Oh, you are growing in Grace! You are a wonderful Christian.” If you cannot realize your Lord’s Presence and you are humbled and bowed to the dust because you have not that enjoyment of God which you used to have, then Satan comes, and says, “How tender of conscience you are! How jealous of yourself! How watchful you have been!” And up go your topsails and all your flags of pride are flying in the breeze as you think what a fine saint you are! So, you see, it is as I said, pride takes many shapes.

Now, in all cases, pride is most unreasonable. There is never in a poor sinner any reason why he should be proud. Suppose a man is wealthy? Well, who gave that wealth to him? And having it, now, how much of it can he carry away with him? And is wealth always a testimonial to the character of its possessor? Is it not sometimes given to the very basest of mankind? And though it is, in some cases, the reward of honesty, of industry and of perseverance and self-denial, yet even then it does not always bring comfort to a man’s heart—and we can ask him, “What have you that you have not received?” Of all forms of pride, this pride of wealth is one of the most wicked! Suppose a man boasts of his talent? For what has he to pride himself in that? Did he make his own talent? Suppose that his skull happens to be a little bigger than his neighbor’s and that there are certain organs there more fully developed than in others—did he create his own brain? Did he give himself his own capacities? There is a great deal in our descent and in our birth gifts, but, being gifts, these are not things for us to pride ourselves upon—for them we must give all the glory to God, for certainly they come from Him! And what if a man has a spotless character? Yet he who is most honest to himself knows that there are, even within him, secret things opposed to his God—and things to be repented of.

And what if we have Grace? O my Brothers and Sisters, the worst thing in the world would be to be proud of our Grace, or of our Graces, because these come to us as a bare act of charity! Shall the beggar be proud because he is a bigger beggar than others? Will a man who is very deeply in debt say, “I have reason to be more proud than you because I owe ten times as much as you do”? Yet that is just the condition of every man who has any Divine Grace—he owes it all to God—and he who has the most Grace is the most in debt to his Lord! I think that the more God’s glories strike our eyes, the humbler we shall be. And the more Grace we receive, the more we shall be like Peter when his boat was full of fish and it began to sink—and he cried, under a sense of his own unworthiness—“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Yes, as we get weighed down with mercy, we shall begin to sink in our own esteem! There can never be any reasonableness in our dreaming that there is in us any cause for pride.

And to close this part of my discourse, let me remind you that wherever pride is found, it is always hateful to God. Why, pride is even hateful to men! Men cannot bear a proud man and, therefore, a proud man who has any sense left often sees that it is so, and he tries to affect manners of modesty. He will seem to be humble when he really is not, if he has the suspicion that all about him will dislike him if they know him to be proud. But God cannot stand pride—it is a part of His daily business to put down the proud. When He lifts up His hands, it is either to bless the humble or else to abase the proud. “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty.” He intends that the pride of all human glory shall be stopped, so He lifts His great battle-ax and crashes through the shield of the mighty. He fits His arrow to the bow and finds out the joints of the harness of the proud—and they fall before Him. God cannot endure them, for pride is a stab at Deity—it is an attack upon the undivided Glory of God. “My Glory will I not give to another.” He would as soon give it to graven images as to men! And He will not let either false gods or proud men have it! It is to Himself, and to Himself, alone, that all praise and honor and glory must come.

Thus much, then, about the great sin revealed in our text. Let us pause a moment or two for silent prayer before we pass on to the next part of our subject.

II. Now let us think how THIS GREAT SIN BETRAYS A SAD EVIL— “Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.”  
If he is a proud man, he is not an upright man. If he thinks highly of himself, there is something out of the perpendicular. If a man says, “I do not need to make confession of sin, I do not need to come to Christ as a guilty sinner,” then, Friend, I must tell you that you do not know the truth. If you knew certain things, truthfully, you would change your tune. For instance, a man who says, “I have kept the Law,” does not know what the Law means. Perhaps he supposes that those ten great Commandments only refuse him certain outward things—but he does not know that they are all spiritual—that, for instance, if the Commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery,” it is not merely the act of adultery that is forbidden, but every sin of the kind. Every tendency to lewdness— every unchaste word or thought—for so Christ explains it, “I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” This makes the Law of God look very different from the mere casual reading of it that many give.  
If it says, “You shall not covet,” any thought of a desire to gain that which is my neighbor’s, by unlawful means, in discontent with God’s Providence comes under that Law. So is it with all the Commandments— they are spiritual, they are far-reaching and when a man understands their true character, he cries—“O my God, I have, indeed, broken Your holy Law! How could I have kept it? From the first moment when I sinned, my fallen nature has incapacitated me from ever keeping this thrice-holy Law of Yours.”  
If a man really knows the true character of the Law of God, it may be that he does not know the truth about himself—does not know that he is foolish—does not know that the very springs of his nature are corrupt— does not know that out of the polluted fountain of his unregenerate heart there can only come corrupt streams. When he really begins to know himself as he is in the sight of God, then he cries, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” But not till then. Hence, our text says, “His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” That is, it is not according to the Truth of God—he does not know the Truth, he does not judge according to the Truth—he judges according to a false standard.  
This expression may also mean that he does not seek the Light of God. You can often notice that if a man has a high opinion of himself, he is extremely good and excellent and does not need to be saved by Grace. He does not want to be told too much about himself. He likes to go to a place of worship where they prophesy very smooth things and if he ever strays in where there is very plain talk, he says that the preacher is too personal. The Hindu thinks it is wicked to kill an insect, or to take life of any kind—and that he will surely not enter into his happy paradise if he does. When the missionary showed a Hindu, by means of a microscope, how many living creatures there were in a single drop of the water which was in a glass on the table, in order to convince him of the impossibility of avoiding the destruction of life if he drank the water, what did the Hindu do? Why, he smashed up the microscope! That was his way of answering it! And so, sometimes, if the Truth of God is put very plainly so that men cannot escape from the force of it, not wishing to know the uncomfortable Truth, they turn upon their heels and find fault with the preacher and refuse to hear any more from him!  
Now, he that does not want to knew all the Truth of God is not upright, for, as our Lord said to Nicodemus, “Everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” But he that is upright in heart courts the light! He invites the inspection, even, of God Himself, for he dreads above all things the possibility of being self-deceived. O dear Friends, this pride, if we have it, betrays its dire evil by a lack of uprightness in not desiring the Light of God!  
And, yet further, there is another form of this lack of uprightness. A man whose soul is lifted up with pride has his whole religion warped so that there is nothing upright about him. Have you ever heard him pray? “God, I thank you that I am not as other men are.” This is the sum and substance of his prayer, for pride has warped it. If he praises God, it is not as a sinner saved by Grace—he sings something about what he has done and what he has become—and always the first point in his conversation is, “See what I am! See what I am!” Pride warps him everywhere, so that he cannot do a single action that is not affected by it. If he gives alms to the poor, he has his penny in one hand, but his other hand is holding to his mouth a trumpet so that he may blow it at the corner of the street so that everybody may know how generous he is! He spoils all that he does because his soul is lifted up with pride—which warps his whole life.  
I believe, dear Friends, that a heart of this kind will never stand the test of the coming days. Have you ever noticed that when Paul quotes this verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he makes a very significant addition to it? He says, “The just shall live by faith: but if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” That is a kind of hint to us that when the heart of a man is lifted up with pride, in due time he will draw back. I will tell you, dear Friends, what I have seen many times. I have seen men, members of Christian Churches, undoubtedly very earnest, very generous, indeed, all that you could wish them to be. They have prospered in worldly affairs, but where are they now? One of the severest tests that can be applied to any man is to let him be made wealthy! Well might our Savior say, as the rich young man turned away from Him, “How with much difficulty shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God.” The true children of God can bear even this test, but there are many professors who cannot. Wealth is a refining pot that tests the sincerity of their profession. This is how it acts. The man has grown too respectable to worship where he used to meet with a few poor godly people—he must go to some place where there is a higher class of society. It is true that there is no Gospel preaching where he goes and that there is all the hypocrisy of semi-Romanism, but the elite of the neighborhood go there and so must he! If he happens to meet any of his old friends with whom he seemed to be so glad to have communion in years past, he scarcely recognizes them! He does not know them in the Lord. He has gone clean away from them. Is not that often the case? And why is it so? Because the gentleman always was a person of importance and now, having grown wealthy, he is still more important! So he goes away from those who would be his best friends. That is because his soul is not upright in him.  
I have also seen just the opposite of this man. I have seen persons grow very poor after being in circumstances of comparative comfort. Before they were poor, they seemed to be very earnest Christians, but, after a while, when poverty had overtaken them, they did not like to come among their old friends because their clothes were not quite as new and their house was not on quite as good a street—and they were going down in the world. Instead of clinging to Christ all the more. Instead of following after the Lord and making sure of a heavenly inheritance when the world was slipping away from them, they have turned back and have renounced whatever semblance of faith they ever possessed. And the reason is because their soul was lifted up with pride and was not upright. They never were truly brought low and humbled before God and so, when the testing time came, away they went! Now, dear Friends, such a test as this will be applied to all of you. You will either go up or go down. Or else, if you remain in the same station of life, the test in your case will be time. You will grow weary in the ways of God. You will want some fresh thing unless the Lord has truly humbled you and brought you to live by faith in Him. But if the Lord has worked effectually in you, by His Grace, then He may make you as rich as He likes, or as poor as He likes, or let you live as long as Methuselah if He likes, but you will stand fast to your profession because the root of the matter is in you. God grant that it may be so!  
III. Thirdly, and very briefly, PRIDE OF HEART DISCOVERS IN MEN A SERIOUS OPPOSITION. Let me read the whole of our text. “Behold the proud, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but—but the just shall live by his faith.” And the but, here, seems to imply that as long as a man’s soul is lifted up with pride, he will never truly know anything about faith and never come to live by faith.  
For, first, the gentleman is too great to live by faith. He will not even give himself time to consider what faith means! He is so busy in the City. He has to look after such a number of things. He is so important a person that he cannot trouble his head about faith. Teach a Sunday school child, teach a servant girl, teach an old woman, teach a laborer if you please, but as for himself—well, to tell the whole truth, he does not care about religion. He says that he cannot bring his mind down to such a thing as that! His notion is that he is altogether too great a man to give himself to the consideration of this matter. Now, these are the people that destroy their own souls because they will not be candid enough to enquire and learn what the way of salvation is—  
*“Were I so tall to reach the pole,  
And grasp the ocean with a span,”*  
I would wish to know what God has to say to me. And if I could grow as holy as the archangel, I would still delight to sit at Jesus’ feet and hear what He has to reveal to me. But there are some who are too big for that kind of thing—they will never believe in Christ, for they are too great, even, to consider what faith is!  
And, next, there are some who are too wise to ever believe. They read certain “high-class modern literature” and their minds have grown very expansive. They know how to sort out that which is philosophical and that which is not. They can judge their Creator—they are more infallible than the Holy Spirit—they sit in trial upon Prophets and Apostles—and upon the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself! They pick and choose what they will believe and what they will reject. Such people do not believe to the saving of the soul—of course they do not—for it is essential to faith that you become as a little child. And until you do so, you cannot have true faith in Christ.  
There are some who are not so much burdened with worldly wisdom, but they fancy that they are too good to be saved. I know that the notion

with some people is that salvation is only for very wicked people—for those who have been to prison, those who have egregiously sinned against the rules of society. Do you not know, my dear Hearer, that there is the same way of salvation for you who have been amiable and excellent and moral, as there is for the drunk and the thief? Do you not know that there is only one gate to Heaven for the murderer, if he is saved, and for you who have kept the Commandments from your youth up? “You must be born again,” is a necessity for the children of saints as well as for the children of sinners! “You must be washed in the precious blood,” is as true for the very best of fallen humanity as for the very worst! By these stern Truths of God, the axe is laid to the very root of the tree of selfrighteousness! Oh, that men did but think of this! But they are so good— so very good—that they cannot imagine that they are to be saved like the very chief of sinners! And so they reject the only way of salvation.  
And I have known some, too, who are now too “advanced” to continue to live by faith. They do not want to come to Christ just as they did at first—they are so now “advanced” that they stand on a different footing from what they did. Well, I can only say to such that I believe that this is nothing but pride of heart. As for myself, I will, by God’s Grace, never go one inch beyond the position of Jack the Huckster—  
*“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.”*  
This is the only ground upon which I dare set my feet! They always begin to slip and slide beneath me when I get beyond that. Christ for me, first and last, Alpha and Omega, the Beginner and Finisher of faith! I believe that every other ground of standing is a quicksand that will swallow a man up. “The just shall live by his faith” and if any are getting so proud that they are living by their feelings, or living on their old experiences, I think that we may stand in doubt of them and they have reason to stand in doubt of themselves! There was one who used to say that he was not half so much afraid of his sins as he was of what he conceived to be his good works, for his sins had humbled him full often, but what he thought were his good works had puffed him up and done him much more mischief. I am more afraid of a lofty pride of self than of anything else under Heaven. He that is down need fear no fall, but he that rises very high in his own esteem is not far from destruction! “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”  
IV. I close my discourse with this last point. Our text, after having spoken against pride, DIRECTS US TO A VERY PLEASING CONTRAST— “The just shall live by his faith.”  
There is a man with an upright heart, an honest tongue, a careful hand, an obedient walk. He is a really just man. Are there such? There are none that are perfectly just, but there are many who may be called just in the Scriptural sense of the term. They walk before God and are perfect, even as was said of Job, “That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” Blessed be God, there are tens of thousands of His people that are just men and women whom He has taught to serve Him to do as they would be done by, seeking to do to others as they would have others do to them! There are plenty of such. It is a beautiful sight to see a really just man. May we live in such company! May we die in such company!  
Now, whenever you come to talk with these just men, you will find that they are truly humble. They do not live upon their works. The more holy a man is, generally the more he depreciates himself. You do not hear a just man saying, “I am living before God by my alms, by my prayers, by my repentance, by my fasting, by my Church attendance, by my Chapel attendance.” You never hear anything of the sort—a just man disclaims his own righteousness, thinks nothing of it—and wraps himself up in the righteousness of Christ, and says that he is “accepted in the Beloved.”  
Our text says that this man “shall live by his faith.” That is to say, when trial comes and the proud man dies, the just man lives on. Where is the man who had such a lofty idea of himself? Ah, where is he? He is gone, but this man of faith lives on. You know the story of the two martyrs. They had both witnessed a good confession and, at last, they were laid by the heels in prison to wait for a few days and then to be burnt. One of them said to his fellow, “I am so afraid lest, when I come to the stake, the sharp pain should make a coward of me and I should turn away, and deny my Savior.” “Oh,” replied the other, “I have no fears about that! My faith in God is so firm that I am sure He will help me through. I am confident in what I have believed. I shall die like a man. I am not at all afraid of the fire.” “Ah,” said the first, “I lie awake at night, for fire is a dreadful thing, and I wonder how I shall act when I begin to burn. I do love the Lord, I know. And I do trust Him. But if I turn aside, it will be an awful thing! I am so afraid, for my flesh is very weak.” The other answered, “I cannot bear to hear you talk like that. Here I am, full of confidence and full of faith. I never have any such feelings as you have. You are very imperfect—I have gone far beyond you.”  
When they came to the stake, our poor tempted friend burned splendidly, blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord! And the great, selfconfident boaster recanted—and saved his wretched life! His soul, which was lifted up, was not upright in him. But the just man lived, in the very best sense, by his faith, and triumphed even amidst the flames! I shall not be amazed if many who have their topsails up, are blown out of the water and into the water—and wrecked when the great winds of temptation are out—while many who are creeping along, afraid of the tempest, with nothing but bare poles, will outlive the storm!  
It is not the man who is great in his own sight that is great in the sight of God. It is he that is broken and contrite, little and weak and trembling, and yet who believes in Jesus and casts himself upon the great love of God in Christ who shall live. Yes, and he shall so live that when he comes to die, he shall die full of life and he shall enter into eternal life. I know that I am addressing some who say that they are afraid to die and they think that they cannot be God’s people because of that fear. Do not distress yourself in that way, my dear Friends! Perhaps you are not called to die just yet and you have, therefore, not yet had Dying Grace given to you—but you will have it when the time comes! A dear Friend of mine had been for many years in great bondage because he thought that he was afraid to die. God brought him out of that bondage in rather a singular manner. He happened to be in a London printing office, one day, and, next door, a wholesale chemist’s took fire. There were a great many explosions and the place was burning furiously. He was upstairs and others began running down to make their escape.  
My old friend was as cool as possible—he walked downstairs, he was in no hurry and, though there was great danger and everybody thought that the whole place and all that were in it would be burnt, he was quite calm. He said that when he reached the street, he stood and looked at the fire and said to himself, “Now, when I seem to be in danger of death, I am perfectly calm and happy. So, when I really come to die, that is how I shall be—I am sure that I shall, for I have tested and proved it.” And you timid, nervous people, have you not found out for yourselves that if ever you get into an accident, you are often the bravest people there? You feeble trembling ones seem strengthened up at the moment and so shall it be when you come to die if you are Believers in Jesus Christ! He that loved you will not leave you in your last minutes! Would you leave your wife, would you leave your child, would you leave your husband, if you saw any of these dear ones in the agonies of death? No, if you were a thousand miles away, you would come home to them to wipe the death sweat from their brows and moisten their parched lips! And do you think that our blessed God will be absent when we come to die? No. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” He will be there and Jesus will be there and the Holy Spirit will be there—and so we who believe in Jesus shall die in peace.  
Remember how rapidly our lives are passing away. One after another, from this congregation, goes into eternity every week. Do not go into eternity without Christ, I beseech you! “When shall I go?” you ask. Ah, that I cannot tell. You know how, all through the year, our friends keep on going. There is not a week passes without it being said to me, “Soand-So is gone.” I ask, “Did I know him? Whereabouts did he sit?” I look at the spot and I remember—“Yes, it was that gray-headed old man in that seat over yonder.” Or, “that young man with a wife and three or four children.” Yes, they are gone and if they were not saved, they are gone where hope can never reach them, where they are past all invitation, where they must forever wring their hands in anguish because they would not have Heaven and Christ on Free-Grace terms.  
“Well, dear Sir, we are going to think about these things.” Are you? Will you tell me when you are going to think about them? I would rather that you stated a time, even if it were a year to come. It would be a dangerous thing to put it off so long, would it not? But, oh, if you keep your promise, I would rather that you said, “a year to come,” than that you should keep on, year after year, postponing your decision! Remember that you who are unsaved need three things. First, you need the pardon of sin—and it is scarcely necessary for me to repeat in your ears that you can only get it by coming to Christ. You desire also to be heard in prayer, your very heart sighs after that favor and you know there is but one Throne of Grace and only one Being who can present your petitions so that they shall be granted. And you also long to have a sight of God, a comforting sight of Him as your reconciled Father—and you know that you can never have that except through Jesus Christ.  
These three things are to be found in Christ and they are not to be found anywhere else. If there is anyone here who wants Christ, I am so glad if he knows who Christ is and what are the treasures that are stored up in Him. It is a great thing to have this knowledge but, oh, it will be a terrible thing, bringing far greater responsibilities and involving sevenfold guilt, if you know where these things are and what they are—and yet do not seek to possess them yourselves. I leave with you the last words of my text, praying that they may describe you—“The just shall live by his faith.”

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THE MIDDLE PASSAGE  
NO. 1474

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 18, 1879, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(In commemoration of the completion of the 25th year of his Ministry over the Church meeting in the Tabernacle). **“O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid; O Lord, revive**

***Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.”  
Habakkuk 3:2.***

HABAKKUK had the sadness of living at a time when true religion was in a very deplorable state. The nation had, to a great extent, departed from the living God. There was a godly party in the kingdom, but the ungodly and idolatrous faction was exceedingly strong. The Lord threatened judgment on the people on account of this and it was revealed to the Prophet that an invasion by the Chaldeans was near at hand. The Prophet, therefore, was filled with anxiety as to the future of his country because he saw its sinful condition and knew where it must end. The book of his prophecy begins with the earnest question of intercession, “O Lord, how long?” His spirit was stirred within him at the sin of the people and his heart was broken by a vision of the chastisement which the Lord had ordained.

It becomes all who bear witness for God to thus be stirred in soul when they see the name of God dishonored and have reason to expect the visitations of His wrath. A man without a heart of compassion is not a man of God. Yet Habakkuk was a man of strong faith, a happy circumstance, indeed, for him in evil times, for if faith is needed in the fairest weather, much more is needed when the storm is gathering! And if the just must live by faith even when the morning begins to break, how much more must they do so when the shadows are deepening into night? Those who have tender hearts to weep over the sins of their fellows also need brave hearts to stay themselves upon God.

Habakkuk’s name, by interpretation, is the embracer and I may say of him that he truly was one who saw the promises afar off and was persuaded of them and embraced them. He took fast hold upon the goodness of the Lord and rested there. In reading his book, one is struck by the way in which he realized the Presence of God. Fitly does he entitle his book, “the burden which Habakkuk the Prophet did see,” for in the vividness of his apprehension he is eminently a “seer.” He perceives the Presence of God and bids the earth keep silent before Him. He beholds the Divine ways in the history of the chosen people and feels rottenness entering into his bones and a trembling seizing him.

God was very real to him and the way of God was very conspicuous before his mental eyes. Hence his faith was as vigorous as his reverence was deep. It is in his prophecy that we read that wonderful Gospel

sentence upon which Paul preaches many sermons, “The just shall live by faith”—and it is in this prophecy, too, that we find that notable resolution of Faith when, under the worst conceivable circumstances, she says or sings, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the ‘God of my salvation.’”

Now, Beloved, it will be well for us if we have much of Habakkuk’s spirit and are grounded and settled by a strong confidence in God. If so, while we may have somber views, both as to the present and the future, we shall be freed from all despondency by casting ourselves upon Him whose ways are everlasting. His goings forth of old were so grand and glorious that to doubt Him is to slander Him! His Nature is so unchangeable that to reckon upon the repetitions of His gracious deeds is but to do Him the barest justice.

In the text which I have selected this morning with an eye to the celebration of the 25th year of our happy union as pastor and people, I see three points upon which I wish to dwell. The first is, the Prophet’s fear—“O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid.” The second is the Prophet’s prayer—“O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.” And the third is the Prophet’s plea— “In wrath remember mercy,” coupled with the rest of the chapter in which he practically finds a plea for God’s present working in the report of what He had done for Israel in the olden times.

I. First, then, I want you to NOTICE THE PROPHET’S FEAR—“I have heard Your speech, and was afraid.” It is the fear of solemn awe—it is not dread or terror, but reverence. Read it in connection with the 20th verse of the preceding chapter—“But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him. O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid.” All else was hushed and then, in the solemn silence, he heard Jehovah’s voice and trembled. It is not possible that mortal men should be thoroughly conscious of the Divine Presence without being filled with awe. I suppose that this feeling in unfallen Adam was less overwhelming because he had no sense of sin, but surely even to him it must have been a solemn thing to hear the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

Though filled with a childlike confidence, yet even innocent manhood must have shrunk to the ground before that majestic Presence. Since the Fall, whenever men have been favored with any special Revelation of God, they have been deeply moved with fear. There was a great Truth of God in the spirit of the old tradition that no man could see God’s face and live, for such a sense of nothingness is produced in the soul by consciousness of Deity that men so highly favored have found themselves unable to bear up under the load of blessing. Isaiah cries, “Woe is me! For I am undone; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!” Daniel says, “There remained no strength in me.” Ezekiel declares, “When I saw it, I fell upon my face.” And John confesses, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”

You remember how Job cried unto the Lord, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Why I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Angels, who climb the ladder which Jacob saw, veil their faces when they look on God! And as for us who are at the foot of that ladder, what can we do but say with the Patriarch, “How dreadful is this place”? Albeit that it is the greatest of all blessings, yet is it an awful thing to be a favorite with God! Blessed among women was the Virgin Mother, to whom the Lord manifested such high favor, but for this very reason to her it was foretold, “Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also.” Blessed among men was he to whom God spoke as a friend, but it must be that a horror of great darkness should come upon him. It is not given to such frail creatures as we are to stand in the full blaze of Godhead, even though it is tempered by the mediation of Christ, without crying out with the Prophet, “I was afraid.” “Who would not fear You, O King of nations?”

Habakkuk’s awe of God was quickened by the “speech” which he had heard. “O Lord, I have heard Your speech,” which is, by some, rendered, “report,” and referred to the Gospel of which Isaiah says, “Who has believed our report?” But surely the meaning should rather be looked for in the context and this would lead us to interpret the “report” as relating to what God had done for His ancient people when He came from Teman, cleaving the earth with rivers and threshing the heathen in anger. The Prophet had been studying the history of Israel and had seen the hand of God in every stage of that narrative—from the passage of the Red Sea and the Jordan on to the casting out of the heathen and the settlement of Israel in Canaan.

He had heard the speech of God in the story of Israel in the silence of his soul. He had seen the deeds of the Lord as though newly enacted and he was filled with awe and apprehension, for he saw that while God had great favor for His people, yet He was provoked by their sins. And though He passed by their transgressions many and many a time, yet He did chasten them and did not wink at their iniquities. The Prophet remembered how God had smitten Israel in the wilderness till the graves of lust covered many an acre of the desert! He remembered how He had smitten them in Canaan, where tyrant after tyrant subdued them and brought them very low. He remembered the terrible judgments which the Lord had sent, one after another, thick and threefold upon His guilty people, fulfilling that ancient Word of His, “You, only, have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.”

He saw that burning text, “I the Lord your God am a jealous God,” written in letters of fire all along the history of Jehovah’s connection with His elect people and so he cried, “O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid.” Probably, however, Habakkuk alludes to another source of apprehension, namely, the silent speech of God within his prophetic bosom, where, unheard by men, there were intimations of coming vengeance which intimations he afterwards put into words and left on record in the first chapter of his book. The Chaldeans, a people fierce and strong were coming up. They were a bitter and hasty nation, terrible and dreadful. They were swifter than leopards and fiercer than evening wolves.

These were hastening towards Judah as mighty hunters hurry to the prey and in the spirit of prophecy Habakkuk saw the land parched beneath the hoofs of the invading horses; princes and kings led away into captivity; the garden of the Lord turned into a desolate wilderness and Lebanon, itself, shorn of its forests by the hand of violence. The fear of this frightful calamity made him tremble, as well it might, for Jeremiah himself scarcely found tears enough to bewail the Chaldean woe!

Now, my Brethren, when the Lord leads His servants to look from their watchtowers and to guess the future by the past, we are also afraid. When we see God’s chastisement of a sinful people in years gone by and are led to prognosticate the probable future of a sinful people in the present day, then do our hearts fail us for fear lest the Lord should avenge Himself upon the guilty nation in which we dwell! We are also afraid for ourselves with great fear, for we, also, have sinned. Thus, you see, the Prophet’s fear was made up of these three things—first, a solemn awe inspired by the near Presence of the Lord who cannot look upon iniquity, lest haply He should break forth upon the people as a consuming fire. Secondly, an apprehension drawn from the past report of God’s ways which He had made known to Moses and His acts to the children of Israel, lest He should again smite the erring nation. And then, thirdly, a further apprehension which projected itself into the future, that the Lord would execute the threats which He had so solemnly uttered by His Prophets and permit the Chaldeans to treat His people as though they were so many fishes of the sea to be taken in their net and devoured.

Putting those three things together, I advance to the Prophet’s special subject of fear which has been generally overlooked but is very conspicuous in the text. The Prophet was afraid because of the particular period of national life through which his people were passing. They had come, if I read his prayer correctly, to “the midst of the years,” or the middle period of their history. Habakkuk’s ministry was not exercised in the first ages when Moses and Samuel prophesied, nor yet in these latter days wherein we live, upon whom the ends of the earth have come. He probably ministered 600 years before the coming of Christ—somewhere in the very center of human history—if that history is to make a week of thousands as to its years as many have imagined.

With regard to the Israelite people, they were now far removed from the day, “when Ephraim was a child.” They were in their middle life when the best things ought to have been developed in them. The heroic age was gone and that unpoetical, matter of fact era was come in which men labored in the very fire and wearied themselves for very vanity and, therefore, like a tender intercessor, the Prophet cries, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.” The application to ourselves which I want to make this morning is drawn from the fact that we, also, as a Church, have reached “the midst of the years.” Under the present pastorate we are like mariners in mid ocean, distant 25 leagues, or rather years, from the place of our departure and making all sail for the further shore.

As to any service we may expect, personally, to render, we are certainly in the midst of the years if not near to their end. In the course of Nature we could not expect that more than another 25 years of service could be compassed by us [Brother Spurgeon died January 6, 1892, less than 13 years later.—eod] nor are we so foolish as to reckon even upon that! We have, at any rate, come to middle life in our Church relationship now that we celebrate our silver anniversary. Brothers and Sisters, there is about “the midst of the years” a certain special danger and this led the Prophet, as it shall lead us at this time, to pray, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.”

Youth has its perils, but these are past! Age has its infirmities, but these we have not yet reached! It is ours, then, to pray against the dangers which are present with us “in the midst of the years.” The middle passage of life with us as individuals and with us as a Church is crowded with peculiar perils. Have you never noticed how previous dispensations have all passed away in their prime, long before they had grown gray with years? Upon the golden age of Paradise and perfection the sun went down before it was yet noon! The Patriarchal period saw a few of its hoary fathers wearing the veneration of centuries, but in a few generations men with lengthened lives had grown so skilled in sin that the Flood came and swept away the age before it had yet began to fade!

Then came the Jewish state with its judges and its kings—and scarcely have we read that Solomon built a great house for the Lord before we perceive that Israel has gained the zenith of her glory and her excellence declines. Even so was it in the Christian Church of the first ages, so far as it was a visible organization. It began well—what hindered it? It was in full health and strength when it defied the lions and the flames and laughed emperors to scorn! But before long Constantine laid his royal hand upon it and the Church became sick of the king’s evil—the cruelest of all diseases to the Church of God. This malady, like a canker, ate into her very heart and defiled her soul so that what should have been a spiritual empire chastely wedded to the Lord Christ became the mistress of the kings of the earth!

Her Middle Ages were a night of darkness which even yet casts its dread shade across the nations. It seems as if the middle passage of communities cannot be safely passed except by a miracle of Divine Grace. The morning comes with a dawn of bright beams and sparkling dews, but before long the sun is hot and the fields are parched, or the sky is black with clouds and the glory of the day is marred. This is a matter of constant anxiety to the lover of his race who knows the jealousy of God and the frailty of His people, lest in the midst of the years the people should turn aside from their faithfulness and forget their first love and, therefore, the Lord should be provoked to remove their candlestick and leave them to their own devices. O Lord, my God, grant this may not happen unto this, Your Church!

What, then, are the dangers of this middle passage? First, there is a certain spur and stimulus of novelty about religious movements which, in a few years, is worn out. I well remember when we were called, “a nine days wonder,” and our critics prophesied that our work would speedily collapse! Such excitement had been before and had passed away—and this would be one among other bubbles of the hour! The nine days have lasted considerably longer—may nine such days follow them in God’s

infinite mercy! Now, whatever detractors might say, we know that there was then a life, an energy, a freshness about everything which was done by us as a Church which we could hardly expect to continue with us for all these years.

Youthful novelty has certainly gone and the danger is that a community should be greatly weakened by the ceasing of that force which, in some cases, has been all the power possessed. Lady Huntingdon, in a letter to Mr. Berridge, deplored the fact that every new work, after a season, seemed to grow lifeless. Berridge remarked that in this the primitive Churches were much like our own and that after the former rain which falls at seed-time there is often a dry interval until the latter rain descends. I fear the good man’s remark is sadly correct. From an admirable fervor, many cool down to a dangerous chill! This is to be bemoaned where it has occurred and it is to be feared where, as yet it has not happened, for such is the natural tendency of things. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, I have prayed to God that when what is called the esprit de corps is gone from us, the Esprit de Dieu may still abide with us! I have prayed that when the spirit which grows out of our association with each other declines, we may be sustained by the Spirit which unites us all to the Lord Jesus!

The middle passage becomes difficult, then, because things grow ordinary and commonplace which before were striking and remarkable. I do not know that this would matter much if it were not too often the case that with the stimulus of novelty certain other excitements also vanish. We tremble lest the people who prayed mightily at first should restrain prayer before the Lord; lest those who made many self-sacrifices should think that they have done enough; and lest those who have consecrated themselves unto the Lord should imagine that they began upon too high a key and cannot keep up the music to such a pitch. We tremble lest a people who have loved the souls of men and have been like mighty hunters before the Lord after sinners, may suddenly dream that they are excused from more effort and may leave others to do mission work for their Lord. It is an ill day when a feeling of satisfaction begins to creep over us, but this is one of the perils of “the midst of the years.” I pray the reliance on God in which we began should never depart from us.

It often happens, in the commencement of religious movements, that men are weak and few and feeble and despised—but they trust in God and so they grow strong—and their strength becomes their overthrow. The tendency of our proud nature is to cease from childlike confidence in God when once it feels strong enough to rely upon itself! The Lord says not by many nor by few—and if even for a moment we should glory in our numbers and think that now we are powerful for the achievement of any work which we may undertake—we shall grieve the Spirit of God and He may, in holy jealousy, leave us to barrenness. This is to be dreaded beyond all things!

My Brethren, it is a glorious thing to be weak, that we may have the strength of God resting on us! It is a glorious thing to be poor and mean and despised, that the Lord may take such weak instruments and get unto Himself Glory by the use of them! But it is a grievous evil if in the mid-day of prosperity, the Church should vex the Spirit of God by selfconfidence and cause Him to withdraw His sacred succors! Another danger arises out of the pride of achievement. When men are beginning to work for Christ, they feel that they cannot do anything without Him and they trust in God to give them strength—and He answers their humble cry and does great things by them. But when a good work is worked, we are apt to feel, “We have won our laurels. We have borne the burden and the heat of the day and we may now rest.” This is fatal to progress! We shall do no more when we imagine that we have done enough!

You know the story of the painter who broke his palette, put down his brush and told his wife that he would never paint again for the artistic faculty had departed from him? When she enquired how he was aware of the sad fact, he answered, “The last picture I produced realized my ideal and satisfied me and, therefore, I am certain that I have lost my power as a painter.” It certainly is so that we are fit for Christ’s service only as long as we feel that we have as yet done nothing and are merely at the beginning of our purposed service. Those who pine for greater exploits have not yet spent themselves, but the danger lies in saying, “I have finished my day’s work. Soul, take your ease.” From my heart I dread the middle hour of life’s day, both for myself and you, for therein so many think it no ill, like the Italians, to take a siesta, or mid-day sleep—and then it is that the enemy is upon them!

There is, too, a pride of experience which is apt to grow upon churches and individuals, like moss upon old trees, when men are “in the midst of the years.” They feel—“We are not now the young, simple, silly people that we once were. We are not now to be overcome by temptation or misled by error. We shall, beyond all doubt, remain sound in faith and pure in life even to the end.” It is from the egg of carnal security that the canker worm of backsliding is hatched—therefore we must mind what we are doing “in the midst of the years.” Besides, I think, dear Brethren, all Christians must be conscious that after a continuance in doing well we are apt to be assailed by weariness.

Apart from our Lord’s promised aid we faint—we die in the long race which He has set before us. Labor leads to lassitude, and suffering to impatience. Grace is needed to prevent the decays of Nature. When the natural spirits sink, we grow depressed and complain that our warfare is hard and our travail bitter. And with this there is apt to mingle a sense of disappointment because we have not achieved all that our sanguine hopes expected. We scarcely rejoice that something has been done because so much remains unaccomplished! When the mind is thus wearied, the spirit faints at the prospect of a further and, perhaps, a heavier strain—and this makes the central regions of life wonderfully trying to Zion’s pilgrims. We are apt to be slack in the service of God by reason of what we have already done, though, we must confess, that is very little. Satan knows how to take advantage of our fainting moments—to make cowards of us if he can. Therefore be aware of his devices.

If we have stood like watchmen on the walls for years, the tendency is to relax our vigilance. If we have borne a protest for many years, the thought will suggest itself that it will be folly to be singular any longer

and wise to yield to the current of the times. Then the enemy sneeringly whispers, “Who are you and what have you done with all your testifying and separate walking and Puritanical precisions? All that you have accomplished is insignificant enough! The world still lies in the Wicked One and error is still rampant! Give up the battle, for you cannot win!” In the midst of the years, what with weariness and lack of faith, the heart is apt to yield to the infernal suggestion! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let a mighty prayer go up from the whole Church to our Redeemer God, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.”

II. Thus have I indicated the prophet’s fear and now I would conduct you, secondly, to consider THE PROPHET’S PRAYER—“O Lord, revive Your work.” His first request is for revival. He means, “Lord, put new life into us. Your cause began with life, but the tendency of all around it is to make it die, therefore, Lord, quicken it anew, give it another birthday and restore all the force and energy of its first love. Give us a new Pentecost, we beseech You! Give all the spiritual endowments which came with the tongues of fire and so enrich us anew. Revive us! Help us to begin again! Start us anew in life.”

That is the petition and it seems to me to be one of the wisest requests that ever fell even from a Prophet’s lips! Let us use it. Lord, now that we have been 25 years together, let us feel as fresh as if the race were now beginning. Give us back the dew of our youth that we may do our first works and something more. Let us have, with the maturity of age, the freshness of youth! And let us run without weariness in Your ways because Your Spirit has quickened us. Our dependence is upon You, even for life itself! Breathe on us once more! And that life, as I understand it, is to come upon God’s people themselves—“Revive Your work.” What is God’s work? Why, it is God’s people! For we are His workmanship!

True revival must first come upon the Churches themselves. In all Churches there is much that is not God’s work and we do not ask to have it revived, but rather that it may be put away. But wherever there is anything that is God’s work—any of the mind of Christ any sincere prayer, faith, hope, love, consecration—we earnestly cry, “O Lord, revive Your work.” Only living saints are, in the exact sense of the word, capable of revival—we can only revive those in whom life is already found. O Lord, quicken Your people! He means God’s work in each one of us, for we each need revival—may the Lord send it to us now so that if gray hairs are upon us here and there, and we know it not, we may become young again through His free Spirit! If the fountain of our life runs low, may the Lord touch the secret springs and flood us again with holy zeal. To save us from the perils of “the midst of the years” we need to have life anew imparted to us.

But the Prophet also refers to God’s work by His people as well as in them. May the Lord put new life into His cause. It is an awful thing to see a dead Church. I have seen such a thing with my own eyes. I remember very well preaching in a chapel where the Church had become exceedingly low and somehow the very building looked like a sepulcher, though crowded that one night by those who came to hear the preacher. The singers drawled out a dirge while the members sat like mutes. I found it hard preaching—there was no go in the sermon—I seemed to be driving dead horses.

After the sermon I saw two deacons, the pillars of the Church, leaning against the posts of the vestry door in a listless attitude and I said, “Are you the deacons of this Church?” They informed me that they were the only deacons and I remarked that I thought so. To myself I added that I understood, as I looked at them, several things which otherwise would have been a riddle. Here was a dead Church comparable to the ship of the ancient mariner which was manned by the dead! Deacons, teachers, minister, people—all dead—and yet wearing the semblance of life—

*“The helmsman steered, the ship moved on, Yet never a breeze up blew;  
The mariners all began to work the ropes, Where they were known to do.  
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools  
We were a ghastly crew.”*

May the Lord save us from becoming such a ghastly crew! Now, to prevent our getting into that state, and we easily may—so that instead of devotion there shall be routine and instead of life and energy there shall be dead orthodoxy and dull propriety—we must cry, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years.”

The Prophet further asks for a fresh Revelation of the Lord—“In the midst of the years make known.” When You have made us live, then shall we have power to know and, therefore, make Your Truth known to us. Did he not intend by this petition that the Lord should make known that the work was His own? “Revive Your work in the midst of the years make known,” that men may not say, “this was only an excitement which the spirit of the people carried on for a few years,” but may be forced to confess that this is the finger of God because it continues and abides. O Lord, in our case make the world know that it is Your work because You do not forsake it!

Convert multitudes again! Build up the Church again! Increase the people again! Multiply the joy again! Pour out the Holy Spirit upon Your witnesses again with signs following! But I think he chiefly means make known Yourself. In the midst of the years make known Yourself, O Jehovah! Reveal in the midst of Your Church, Your power to save! Make known the Person and Sacrifice of the Well-Beloved in whom Your Grace and vengeance strangely join. Make known the power of the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and afterwards comforts by leading the sinner to the Cross. Make known Yourself, Eternal Father, as You receive prodigals into Your bosom and kiss them with the kiss of love and make high festival concerning their return to You! The Prophet longed that God would be seen in the midst of His people and this, above all things, is our hearts’ desire!

Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, it is vain and idle for us to think that any good can come of human speech or human song or human worship of any kind apart from God Himself being there! There must be supernatural power put forth or men will never turn from darkness to light, nor rise from death to life. What is the Church worth if the Lord is not known in

the midst of her? Write Ichabod upon her walls, for the Glory has departed when her God has gone! The Prophet virtually prays that God would do again for His Church what He did for her in the olden times. We have just read the whole chapter—what a wonderful poem it is! We can only, in a very prosaic way, condense its meaning.

First, with the Prophet, we exult in the manifestation of the Divine Glory. “His Glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise, and His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hands.” Thus was Jehovah seen and our heart’s prayer is, “Lord, show Yourself in this way again! Once more display Your Glory. Stretch out Your hands which have the horns of power going forth from them. Exalt Yourself in the conversion and the salvation of men that the multitude may see how glorious is the Lord our God.”

Observe how the Prophet speaks of God’s power against His enemies. The Midianites came up upon Israel in such numbers that, like grasshoppers, they could not be counted. But the Lord smote them and utterly cut them off. Hear how the Prophet describes their overthrow—“I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.” And well they might, when Jehovah came forth to smite them! Now our prayer is that the Lord would shine forth so gloriously in the midst of His Church that the powers of superstition and skepticism may be made to tremble at His Presence! I have looked upon their tents and I have seen them multiplying their idols and their gods! I have looked upon their curtains within which they have spoken proud words of carnal wisdom against the Most High—and my heart has said, “Let the Lord dwell in the midst of His people and manifest His power as in former ages and these tents shall be in affliction and utterly pass away.”

Moreover, the Prophet sees all Nature and Providence subservient to God and so he grandly sings, “Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was Your anger against the rivers? Was Your wrath against the sea that You did ride upon Your horses and Your chariots of salvation? If God is with His people, all things are on their side—the stars in the heavens fight for them—the wheels of everlasting Providence full of eyes revolve with watchful wisdom, working out purposes of benediction. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” And all this, the Prophet says, was done for the saving of His people! Pharaoh and his horses were drowned in the sea, but as for Jehovah, when He went to save His people, the seas could not overwhelm Him, “You did walk through the sea with Your horses, through the heap of great waters.”

Can you not see the horses and the chariot plowing through the midst of the sea, while the Eternal King darts His arrows on either side that He may deliver His people? This is the language of imagery, but the facts surpass all poetry! God can be with a people and He can leave them—but when He is with them, their power is exalted by His power and majesty and the Truth which they uphold is as a banner borne aloft to continuous victory! Only we must wait upon the Lord in prayer and seek His face in faith, crying from our hearts, “O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known.”

III. In the third place, let us consider THE PROPHET’S PLEA, that it may be our own this morning. He had first this plea—“Lord, it is Your work; therefore revive Your work.” We take the words out of his mouth and pray in like manner, “Lord, if this is our work, end it. If it is man’s work, break it down! But if it is Your work, revive it.” Have we not said unto our souls that we will preach and we will believe nothing but what is revealed of God in the Scripture? Have we not promised we will not yield one hair’s breadth to the opposers of Revelation because of their so-called science and thought? Is it not so?

We have lifted the old banner of our fathers and preached the doctrines of the Grace of God where the very center is Christ crucified, a Substitute for believing men! This has been our one theme, our staple subject in preaching and ministering at all times. Now, Lord, if this is not Your Truth, for Your name’s sake, blight it and let us follow it no more! But if it is Your Truth, set Your seal to it here and in every other place where the name of Jesus is proclaimed! This is good pleading! “It is Your work. We cannot do it! We will not attempt to do it, but Lord, if it is Yours, You must do it—we hold You to it by humble faith.”

But the best plea is the one he mentions, “In wrath remember mercy.” That is a plea which suits all of us! Mercy, mercy, mercy! You might well smite both the shepherd and the sheep, but have mercy! You might well take away the candlestick and leave us in the darkness, but in wrath remember mercy! You see the coldness of heart and the inconsistency of life of some of Your professed people and You might, therefore, give up Your Zion to desolation, but, Lord, remember mercy! Remember it, for You know it, for mercy is a dear attribute of Yours. Remember Your mercy in the Everlasting Covenant when You chose Your people. Remember Your mercy in the seal of that Covenant when Your only-begotten Son was given up to death! Remember all the mercy You have had upon us these many years of our provocation! Remember mercy and still favor us, not because we have any good thing in us or about us that can deserve Your love, but for Your mercy’s sake. Out of Your free rich Sovereign Grace, for mercy’s sake still “revive Your work in the midst of the years.” It is good pleading—be sure to use it.

One more plea is implied in the rest of the chapter, namely, “You have worked great wonders, O Lord, do this again in the midst of the years.” Here have You heard our prayers. Lord, hear our prayers in the midst of the years! Hear them now! Here have You helped the feeble against the strong. Lord, strengthen us again! Here have You brought the chief of sinners to Jesus’ feet. Lord, do the same again! That is our prayer. By all Your glorious marching through the wilderness when You led your people and scattered their foes before them; when the rocks gave them water and the heavens dropped with bread. By all the wonders of Your Grace to Your people of old, since they are still Your people, “revive Your work in the midst of the years.”

With this I finish, observing that when the Prophet had pleaded and his soul was at rest, he sat down and there were three things which remained upon his mind. Peering into the future he saw the sheen of the Chaldean

helmets and the brightness of their cruel swords. He saw the whole land turned into a wilderness—and as he watched, he saw that the fig trees did not blossom, the vines brought forth no fruit, the olives withered. He heard no lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep. He saw that famine covered all the land and he said, “Lord, let it all come as I have seen; but Your ways are everlasting, and in the thick darkness You have always worked Your will. You have never been defeated and You have never failed Your people. Therefore, as for me, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

That is the posture in which I want you all to be found. We have been assured by people who think they know a great deal about the future that awful times are coming. Be it so. It need not alarm us, for the Lord reigns! Stay yourself on the Lord, my Brothers and Sisters, and you can rejoice in His name. If the worst comes to the worst, our refuge is in God! If the heavens shall fall, the God of Heaven will stand! When God cannot take care of His people under Heaven, He will take them above the heavens and there shall they dwell with Him! Therefore, as far as you are concerned, rest, for you shall stand in your lot at the end of the days.

And then there came over Habakkuk a second spirit. Now, he said, seeing God has worked all these wonders of old, and is capable of doing them over again, I will go back to my work despite the lowering clouds, for, “the Lord God is my strength and He will make my feet like does’ feet”—like the gazelle’s feet upon the crags of the mountains—“and He will make me to walk upon my high places.” O for this assurance of safety and strength in the Lord! We are in the middle passage, but if we have faith in God all is safe! We may go and leap in our duties over the mountains and the hills and not be afraid that our foot shall slip!

We fall without our God, but with God our feet shall never slide! He keeps the feet of His saints and when the wicked shall be silent in darkness, then shall the strength of the Lord be seen! Having thus felt that he could always trust God whatever might happen and that he should be upheld whatever might occur, what does Habakkuk say? He goes home about his business and what is the one business he is set upon? He indicates it in his last sentence, which is not a sentence at all, but the final words of his prayer. “To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.” He seems to say, “All that remains for me is but to love and sing and wait until the angels come to bear me to their King.” “All that I have to do, now,” he seems to say, and I want you to say the same, “is just to feel that all is safe in the Eternal hands.”

As for me—  
*“I’ll praise Him while He lends me breath, And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my nobler powers! My days of praise shall never be past, While life, and thought, and being last, Or immortality endures.”*

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SPIRITUAL REVIVAL—THE NEED OF THE CHURCH  
NO. 2598

**A SERMON  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT WHITEFIELD’S TABERNACLE, TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD, AT THE CENTENARY COMMEMORATION,  
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 11, 1856.

**“O LORD, revive Your work.”  
Habakkuk 3:2.**

ALL true religion is pre-eminently the work of God. If He should select out of His works that which He esteems most of all, He would select true religion. He regards the works of Grace as being even more glorious than the works of nature and He is, therefore, especially careful that this fact shall always be known, so that, if any dare to deny it, they shall do so in the teeth of repeated testimonies that God is, indeed, the Author of salvation in the world and in the hearts of men, and that religion is the effect of Grace and is the work of God. I believe the Eternal might sooner forgive the sin of ascribing the creation of the heavens and the earth to an idol, than that of ascribing the works of Grace to the efforts of the flesh, or to anyone but Himself. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is anything in the heart which can be acceptable to God except that which He, Himself, has first created there. When I deny God’s work in creating the sun, I deny one Truth of God, but when I deny that He works Grace in the heart, I deny a hundred Truths in one, for, in the denial of that one Truth that God is the Author of good in the souls of men, I have denied all the Doctrines which make up the great articles of faith—and I have run in direct opposition to the whole testimony of Sacred Scripture!

I trust, Beloved, that many of us have been taught that if there is anything in our souls which can carry us to Heaven, it is God’s work and, moreover, that if there is anything that is good and excellent found in His Church, it is entirely God’s work from first to last! We firmly believe that it is God who quickens the soul which was dead, positively “dead in trespasses and sins.” That it is God who maintains the life of that soul and God who consummates and perfects that life in the home of the blessed, in the land of the hereafter. We ascribe nothing to man, but all to God! We dare not, for a moment, think that the conversion of the soul is effected either by its own efforts or by the efforts of others. We know that there are means and agencies employed by God, but we also hold most firmly that the work is, from its alpha to its omega, wholly the Lord’s. We believe, therefore, that we are right in applying our text to the work of Divine Grace, both in the heart of man and in the Church at large. And we think that we can have no subject more appropriate for our consideration than the prayer of the text—“O Lord, revive Your work.”

Trusting that the Spirit of God will help me, I shall endeavor to apply the text, first, to our own souls personally. And, then to the state of the Church at large, for it greatly needs that the Lord should revive His work in its midst.

I. First, then, I will apply the text TO OUR OWN SOULS PERSONALLY. In this matter, we should begin at home. We too often flog the Church when the whip should be laid on our own shoulders. We drag the Church, like a colossal culprit, to the altar. We bind her hands fast and try to execute her at once, or, at least, we find fault with her where there is none and magnify her little errors, while we too often forget our own imperfections. Let us, therefore, commence with ourselves, remembering that we are a part of the Church and that our own need of revival is, in some measure, the cause of that need in the Church at large. I directly

charge the great majority of professing Christians in these days—and I also take the charge to myself—with a need of revival of piety. I shall lay the charge very peremptorily, because I think I have abundant grounds to prove it. I believe that the mass of nominal Christians in this age need a revival! And my reasons are these.

In the first place, look at the conduct of too many who profess to be the children of God. It ill becomes any man who occupies the pulpit to flatter his hearers and I shall not attempt to do so. The evil lies with those who unite themselves with Christian Churches and then practically protest against their own profession. It has become very common, nowadays, to join a church—go where you may, you find professing Christians who sit down at some Lord’s Table or other, but are there fewer cheats than there used to be? Are there less frauds committed? Do we find morality more prevalent? Do we find vice entirely at an end? No, we do not! The age is as immoral as any that preceded it. There is still as much sin, although it is more cloaked and hidden. The outside of the sepulcher may be whiter, but within, the bones are just as rotten as before—society is not improved one whit! Those men who, in our popular magazines, give us a true picture of the state of London life, are to be believed and credited, for they do not stretch the truth—they have no motive for so doing— and the picture which they give of the immorality of this great city is positively appalling! It is a huge criminal, full of sin, and I fearlessly assert that if all the profession in London were true profession, it would not be nearly such a wicked place as it is! It could not be, by any manner of means.

My Brothers and Sisters, it is well known—and who dares deny it who is not too partial, and who will not speak willful lies—it is well known that it is not in these days a sufficient guarantee even of a man’s honesty that he is a member of a church! It is a hard thing for a Christian minister to say, but I must say it. Someone must say it and if friends do not say it, enemies will—and it is better that the truth should be spoken in our own midst, that men may see that we are ashamed of it, than that they should hear us impudently deny what we must know to be true! O Sirs, the lives of too many members of Christian Churches give us grave cause to suspect that there is none of the life of godliness in them at all! Why that reaching after money, why that covetousness, why that following of the crafts and devices of a wicked world, why that clutching here and grasping there, that grinding of the faces of the poor, that treading down of the workman and such like things, if men are truly what they profess to be? God in Heaven knows that what I speak is true—and too many here know it themselves! If they are Christians, at least they desire revival! If there is any spiritual life in them, it is but a spark that is covered up with heaps of ashes! It needs to be fanned, yes, and it needs to be stirred, also, that hopefully some of the ashes may be removed and the spark may have a place to live!

The Church as a whole needs revival in the persons of its members. The members of Christian Churches are not what they once were. It is now fashionable to be religious—persecution is taken away and, ah, I had almost said that the gates of the Church were taken away with it! The Church has, with few exceptions, no gates now—persons come in and go out of it just as they would march through St. Paul’s Cathedral and make it a very place of traffic, instead of regarding it as a select and sacred spot, to be apportioned to the holy of the Lord, and to the excellent of the earth—in whom is God’s delight. If this is not true, you know how to treat it. You need not confess to sin you have not committed. But if it is true, and true in your case, oh, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God! Ask Him to search and try you, that if you are not His child, you may be helped to renounce your profession lest it should be to you but the gaudy pageantry of death—and mere tinsel and gewgaw in which to go to Hell! If you are His, ask that He may give you more Grace, that you may abandon these faults and follies and turn to Him with full purpose of heart, as the effect of a revived godliness in your soul.

Again, where the conduct of professing Christians is consistent, let me ask the question, does not the conversation of many a professor lead us either to doubt the genuineness of his piety, or else to pray that his piety may be revived? Have you noticed the conversation of many who think themselves Christians? You might live with them from the first of January to the end of December and you would never be tired of their religion by what you would hear of it. They scarcely mention the name of Jesus Christ at all! On Sabbath afternoon, all the ministers are talked over— faults are found with this one and the other—and conversation takes place which they call religious because it is concerning religious places and Christian people. But do they ever—

*“Talk of all He did, and said,  
And suffered for us here below.  
The path He marked for us to tread,  
And what He’s doing for us now”?*

Do you often hear the question addressed to you by your Christian Brother, “Friend, how does your soul prosper?” When we step into each other’s houses, do we begin to talk concerning the cause and Truth of God? Do you think that God would now stoop from Heaven to listen to the conversation of His Church, as once He did, when it was said, “The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name”? I solemnly declare, as the result of thorough and, I trust, impartial observation, that the conversation of Christians, while it cannot be condemned on the score of morality, must often be condemned on the score of Christianity! We talk too little about our Lord and Master!

That ugly word, “sectarianism,” has crept into our midst and we must say nothing about Christ because we are afraid of being called sectarians! Well, Brothers and Sisters, I am a sectarian and hope to be so till I die and to glory in it, for I cannot see, nowadays, that a man can be a Christian, thoroughly in earnest, without winning for himself that title! Why, we must not talk of this doctrine because, perhaps, such an one disbelieves it! We must not mention such-and-such a Truth in Scripture because such-and-such a friend doubts or denies it! And so we drop all the great and grand topics which used to be the staple commodities of godly talk and begin to speak of anything else because we feel that we can agree better on worldly things than we can on spiritual! Is not that the truth? And is it not so common a sin with some of us that we have need to pray unto God, “O Lord, revive Your work in my soul, that my conversation may be more Christ-like, more seasoned with salt and more pleasing to the Holy Spirit”?

My third remark is that there are some whose conduct is all that we could wish, whose conversation is for the most part as becomes the Gospel of Christ and savory of truth—but even they will confess to a third charge, which I must now sorrowfully bring against them and against myself, namely, that there is too little real communion with Jesus Christ. If, thanks to Divine Grace, we are enabled to keep our conduct tolerably consistent and our lives unblemished, yet how much have we to cry out against ourselves because of our lack of that holy fellowship with Jesus which is the mark of the true child of God! Brothers and Sisters, let me ask you how long it is since you have had a love-visit from Jesus Christ? How long since you could say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feeds among the lilies”? How long is it since He brought you into His banqueting house and His banner over you was love? Perhaps some of you will be able to say, “It was but this morning that I saw Him. I beheld His face with joy and was ravished with His Countenance.” But I fear the most of you will have to say, “Ah, Sir, for months I have been without the shining of His Countenance!” What have you been doing, then, and what has been your way of life? Have you been groaning every day? Have you been weeping every minute? “No.” Then you ought to have been! I cannot understand how your piety can be of any very brilliant order if you can live without the sunlight of Christ and yet are happy.

Christians will sometimes lose the realization of Jesus. The connection between themselves and Christ will be, at times, severed as to their own conscious enjoyment of it, but they will always groan and cry when they lose that Presence. What? Is Christ your Brother and does He live in your house and yet you have not spoken to Him for a month? I fear there is little love between you and your Brother if you have had no conversation with Him for so long. What? Is Christ the Husband of His Church and has she had no fellowship with Him for all this time? Brothers and Sisters, let me not condemn you, let me not even judge you, but let your own conscience speak! Mine shall and so shall yours. Have we not too much forgotten Christ? Have we not lived too much without Him? Have we not been content with the world instead of desiring Christ? Have all of us been like that little ewe lamb that drank out of its master’s cup and fed from his table and lie in his bosom? Have we not rather been content to stray upon the mountains, feeding anywhere but at home? I fear that many of the troubles of our heart spring from lack of communion with Jesus. Not many of us are the kind of men who, living with Jesus, learn His secrets. Oh, no, we live too much without the light of His Countenance and are too content when He is gone from us! Let us, then, each of us—for I am sure we have, each of us, need in some measure—put up the prayer, “O Lord, revive Your work.”

Ah, I think I hear one professor saying, “Sir, I need no revival in my heart. I am everything I wish to be.” Down on your knees, my Brothers and Sisters, down on your knees and plead for that poor soul! He is the man who most needs to be prayed for! He says that he needs no revival in his soul, but he needs a revival of humility, at any rate! If he supposes that he is all that he ought to be and if he knows that he is all he wishes to be, he has very mean notions of what a Christian is, or of what a Christian should be—and very untrue ideas concerning himself! Those are in the most hopeful condition who, while they know they need reviving, yet groan under their present sad state and pray to the Lord to revive them.

Now I think I have in some degree substantiated my charge—I fear with too-strong arguments—so now let us notice that the text has something in it which I trust that each of us has. There is not only an evil implied in these words, “O Lord, revive Your work,” but there is an evil evidently felt. You see, Habakkuk knew how to groan about it. “O Lord,” he said, “revive Your work.” Ah, we, many of us, need reviving, but few of us feel that we need it. It is a blessed sign of life within when we know how to groan over our departure from the living God. It is easy to find hundreds who have thus departed, but you must count by ones and twos those who know how to groan over their departure! The true Believer, however, when he discovers that he needs revival, will not be happy. He will begin at once that incessant and continuous strain of cries and groans which will, at last, prevail with God and bring down the blessing of revival! He will, days and nights in succession, cry, “O Lord, revive Your work.”

Let me mention some groaning times which will always occur to the Christian who needs revival. I am sure he will always groan when he looks upon what the Lord did for him of old. When he recollects the Mizars and the Hermons, and those places where the Lord appeared of old to him, saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” I know he will never look back to them without tears. If he is what he should be as a Christian, or if he thinks he is not in a right condition, he will always weep when he remembers God’s loving kindnesses of old. Whenever the soul has lost fellowship with Jesus, it cannot bear to think of “the chariots of Amminadib.” It cannot endure to remember the King’s banqueting house, for it has not been there for so long! Or when it does think of them, it says—

*“Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?  
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But now I find an aching void  
The world can never fill.”*

When one who is in this state hears a sermon which relates the glorious experience of the Believer who is in a healthy condition, he puts his hand upon his heart and says, “Ah, such was my experience once, but those happy days are gone. My sun has set and those stars which once lit up my darkness are all quenched. Oh, that I might again behold my Lord! Oh, that I might once more see His face! Oh, for those sweet visits from on high! Oh, for the grapes of Eshcol once more!” If this is your condition, my Friend, you will sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon, you will mourn when you remember your goings up to Zion when the Lord was precious to you, when He laid bare His heart and was pleased, also, to fill your heart with the fullness of His love. Such times will be groaning times, when you, “remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.”  
Again, to a Christian who needs revival, ordinances will also be groaning times. He will go up to the House of God, but he will say to himself when he comes away, “Ah, how changed it all is! When I once went with the multitude that kept holy day, every word was precious. When the song ascended, my soul had wings and up it flew to its nest above the stars! When the prayer was offered, I could devoutly say, “Amen.” The preacher now preaches as he did before, and my Brothers and Sisters are as profited as they used to be, but the sermon is dry and dull to me. I find no fault with the preacher. I know the fault is in myself. The song is just the same—as sweet the melody, as pure the harmony—but ah, my heart is heavy, my harp strings are broken and I cannot sing.” So the Christian will return from those blessed means of Grace, sighing and sobbing because he knows he needs revival.

More especially at the Lord’s Supper he will think, when he sits at the Table, “Oh, what seasons of communion I once had here! In breaking the bread and drinking the wine, my Master was most blessedly present.” He will remind himself how his soul was lifted even to the seventh Heaven and the building became to him “the House of God, and the gate of Heaven.” “But now,” he says, “It is only bread, and dry bread, to me. It is simply wine and tasteless wine, with none of the sweets of Paradise in it. I drink, but it is all in vain, for I have no precious thoughts of Christ. My heart is so heavy that it will not rise. My soul cannot heave a thought even half way to Him!” And then the Christian will begin to groan again, “O Lord, revive Your work.”

Those of you who know that you are in Christ, but who feel that you are not in a healthy spiritual condition because you do not love Him enough, and have not that faith in Him which you desire to have, I would just ask you this—Do you groan over it? Are you groaning over it now? When you feel that your heart is empty, is it, “an aching void?” When you see that your garments are stained, are you ready to wash those garments with tears if that would do any good? When you realize that your Lord is gone, do you hang out the black flag of sorrow and cry, “O my Jesus, my precious Jesus, are You gone forever?” If you can, then I bid you do it, and may God be pleased to give you Grace to continue to do it until a happier era shall dawn in the reviving of your soul!

I remark, in the last place upon this point, that the soul, when it is really brought to feel its own sad state because of its declension and departure from God, is never content without turning its groaning into prayer and without addressing the prayer to the right quarter—“O Lord, revive Your work.” Some of you, perhaps, will say, “Sir, I feel my need of revival. I intend to set to work this very afternoon, as soon as I shall retire from this place, to revive my soul.” Do not say it and, above all things, do not try to do it, for you will never do it! Make no resolutions as to what you will do—your resolutions will as certainly be broken as they are made— and your broken resolutions will but increase the number of your sins! I exhort you, instead of trying to revive yourself, to offer prayer to God. Say not, “I will revive myself,” but cry, “O Lord, revive Your work.” And let me solemnly tell you, you have not yet felt what it is to decline, you do not yet know how sad is your state, otherwise you would not talk of reviving yourself! If you knew your own position, you would as soon expect to see the wounded soldier on the battlefield heal himself without medicine, or convey himself to the hospital when his limbs are shot away, as you would expect to revive yourself without the help of God! I bid you not do anything, nor seek to do anything until, first of all, you have addressed Jehovah, Himself, by mighty prayer and have cried out, “O Lord, revive Your work.” Remember, He that first made you, must keep you alive. And He that has kept you alive can alone impart more life to you! He that has preserved you from going down to the Pit when your feet have been sliding, can alone set you again upon the Rock and establish your goings. Begin, then, by humbling yourself—giving up all hope of reviving yourself as a Christian! But also begin at once with earnest supplication to God, saying, “O Lord, what I cannot do, You do! O Lord, revive Your work!”

Christian Brothers and Sisters, I leave these matters with you. Give them the attention they deserve. If I have erred, and in anything judged you too harshly, God shall forgive me, for I have meant it honestly. But if I have spoken truly, lay it to your hearts and turn your houses into a Bochim. Weep as in the olden time—men apart, and women apart, husbands apart, and wives apart. Weep, weep, my Brothers and Sisters, for it is a sad thing to depart from the living God! Weep, and may He bring you back to Zion, that you may one day return like Israel, not with weeping, but with songs of everlasting joy!

II. And now I come to the second part of the subject, upon which I must be more brief. In THE CHURCH ITSELF, taken as a body, this prayer ought to be one incessant and solemn liturgy—“O Lord, revive Your work.”

In the present era there is a sad decline of the vitality of godliness. This age has become too much the age of form, instead of the age of life. I date the hour of life from this day one hundred years ago, when there was laid the first stone of this building in which we now worship God. Then was the day of life Divine and of power sent down from on high! God had clothed Whitefield with power. He was preaching with a majesty and a might of which one could scarcely think mortal could ever be capable! Not because he was anything in himself, but because his Master girded him with strength. After Whitefield, there was a succession of great and holy men. But now, Sirs, we have fallen upon the dregs of time. Men are the rarest things in all this world—we have hardly any men in the government to conduct our politics—and we have scarcely any men in religion. We have the things that perform their duties, as they are called. We have the good and, perhaps, the honest things who, in the regular routine, go on like pack horses with their bells in the old style. But men who dare to be singular, because to be singular is generally to be right in a wicked world, are not very many in this age. Compared even with the Puritan times, where are our divines? Could we marshal together our Howes and our Charnocks? Could we gather together such names as I might mention about 50 at a time? I think not. Nor could we bring together such a galaxy of Grace and talent as that which immediately followed Whitefield. Think of Rowland Hill, Newton, Toplady and numbers of others whom time would fail me to mention! They are gone. Their venerated dust rests in the grave. Where are their successors? Ask where and echo shall reply, “Where?” God has not yet raised them up, or, if He has done so, we have not yet found out where they are.

There is, nowadays, much preaching, but how is it often done? The preacher says, “O Lord, help Your servant to preach and teach him by Your Spirit what to say!” Then out comes the manuscript and he reads it! We have other preaching of this order—it is speaking very beautifully and very finely, possibly eloquently, in a sense—but where is there, now, such preaching as Whitefield’s? Have you ever read one of his sermons? You will not think him eloquent—you cannot think so. His expressions were rough and frequently unconnected—there was very much declamation about him, it was a great part, indeed, of his speech—but wherein lay his eloquence? Not in the words he uttered, but in the tones in which he delivered them! In the earnestness with which he spoke them, in the tears which ran down his cheeks and in the pouring out of his very soul! The reason why he was eloquent was just what the word means—he was eloquent because he spoke right out from his heart—he caused the Truth of God to flow out of the innermost depths of his soul. When he spoke, you could see that he meant what he said. He did not speak like a mere machine, but he preached what he felt to be the Truth of God and what he could not help preaching! If you had heard him preach, you could not but help feeling that he was a man who would die if he could not preach—and that with all his might he called to men, “Come to Jesus Christ, and believe on Him.”

That kind of preaching is just the lack of these times! Where is earnestness now? It is neither in the pulpit nor yet in the pew in such a measure as we desire it. And it is a sad, sad age when earnestness is scoffed at, and when that very zeal which ought to be the prominent characteristic of the pulpit is regarded as enthusiasm and fanaticism! I pray God to make us all such fanatics as most men laugh at, such enthusiasts as many despise. To my mind, it is the greatest fanaticism in the world to go to Hell—and the worst folly upon earth to love sin better than righteousness! And I think that they are anything but fanatics who seek to obey God rather than man, and to follow Christ in all His ways. To me, one sad proof that the Church needs revival is the absence of that solemn earnestness which was once seen in Christian pulpits.

The absences of sound doctrine is another proof of our need of revival. We can turn back to the records of our Puritan forefathers, to the Articles of the Church of England and to the preaching of Whitefield, and we can say of their doctrine, it is the very thing we love! And the doctrines which were then uttered are—and we dare to say it everywhere—the very same doctrines that we proclaim now! But because we proclaim them, we are thought singular and strange! And the reason is because sound doctrine has, to a great degree, been abandoned! It began in this way. First of all, the Truths of God were fully believed, but the angles of them were taken off a little. The minister believed in election, but he did not use the word for fear it should, in some degree, disturb the equanimity of the deacon in the green pew in the corner. He believed that all were, by nature, depraved, but he did not say so positively, because if he did, there was a lady who had subscribed so much to the Chapel who would not come again! So, while he surely did believe it and did preach it in some sense, he rounded it off a little.

Afterwards , it came to this—ministers said, “We believe these doctrines, but we do not think them profitable to preach to the people. They are quite true. Free Grace is true. The great Doctrines of Grace that were preached by Christ, by Paul, by Augustine, by Calvin and down to this age by their successors, are true—but they had better be kept back— they must be very cautiously dealt with. They are very high and dreadful doctrines and they must not be preached! We believe them, but we dare not speak them out.” After that, it came to something worse. They said within themselves, “Well, if these doctrines will not do for us to preach, perhaps they are not true, after all.” And going one step further, they did not actually say so, perhaps, but they began to hint that they were not true—and then they went on to preach something which they said was the truth. And now, if they could, they would cast us out of the synagogue, as if they were the rightful owners of it and we were the intruders! So they have gone from bad to worse. And if you read the standard divinity of this age and the standard divinity of Whitefield’s day, you will find that the two cannot, by any possibility, be made to agree together! We have, nowadays, what is called a “new theology.” New theology? Why, it is anything but a Theology—it is an ology which has cast out God and enthroned man! It is the doctrine of man—not the doctrine of the everlasting God. Therefore, we need a revival of sound doctrine once more in the midst of the land.

And the Church at large also needs a revival of downright earnestness in its members. You are not the men to fight the Lord’s battles—you have not the earnestness, the zeal which the children of God once had! Your forefathers were oak men, but you are willow men. Our people, what are they, many of them? Strong in doctrine when they are with strong doctrine men, but they waver when they got with others—and they alter as often as they change their company! They are sometimes one thing and sometimes another. They are not the men to go to the stake and die for the Truth of God! They are not the men who know how to die daily and so are ready for death whenever it comes.

Look at our Prayer Meetings, with only here and there a bright exception. There are, possibly, six old women present—scarcely ever do enough male members come to pray four times. Prayer Meetings they are called—spare meetings they ought to be called, for sparely enough are they attended! And very few there are who go to our Fellowship Meetings, or to any other meetings that we have to help one another in the fear of the Lord. Are they attended at all as they should be? I would like to see a newspaper printed, somewhere, containing a list of all the persons who went to those meetings during the week in any of our Chapels. Ah, my Friends, if they should comprise all the Christians in London, you might find that a very few Chapels would hold them all! We have not earnestness, we have not life as we once had! If we had, we would be called worse names than we are now—we would have viler epithets thrown at us if we were more true to our Master! We should not have all things quite so comfortable if we served God better. We are getting the Church to be an institution of our land—an honorable institution. Some think it a grand thing when the Church becomes an honorable institution, but it shows that the Church has swerved from the right course when she begins to be very honorable in the eyes of the world! She must still be cast out, she must still be called evil and still be despised until that day when her Lord shall honor her because she has honored Him—when He shall honor her, even in this world, in the day of His appearing!

Beloved, do you think it is true that the Church needs reviving? Yes, or no? “No,” you say, “at least not to the extent that you suppose. We think the Church is in a good condition. We are not among those who cry, ‘The former days were better than these.’” Perhaps you are not. You may be far wiser than we are and, therefore, you are able to see those various signs of goodness which are, to us, so small that we are not able to discover them. You may suppose that the Church is in a good condition. If so, of course you cannot sympathize with me in preaching from such a text and urging you to use such a prayer as this, “O Lord, revive Your work.” But there are others of you who frequently cry, “The Church needs reviving.” Let me bid you, instead of grumbling at your minister, instead of finding fault with the different parts of the Church, to cry, “ O Lord, revive Your work.” “Oh,” says one, “that we had another minister! Oh, that we had another kind of worship! Oh, that we had a different sort of preaching!” Just as if that were all—but my prayer is, “Oh, that the Lord would come into the hearts of the men you have! Oh, that He would make the plans you use to be full of power!” You do not need fresh ways or new machinery—you need life in those that you have!

There is an engine on the railway, but the train will not move. “Bring another engine,” says one, “and another, and another.” The engines are brought, but the train does not stir. Light the fire and get up steam, that is what you need—not fresh engines! We do not need fresh ministers, or fresh plans, or fresh ways, though many might be invented to make the Church better—we only need life and fire in those we have! With the very man who has emptied your Chapel, the same person that brought your Prayer Meeting low, God can yet make the Chapel to be crowded to the doors and give thousands of souls to that very man! It is not a new man that is needed—it is the life of God in him! Do not be crying out for something new—it will no more succeed, of itself, than what you have! Cry, “O Lord, revive Your work!”

I have noticed, in different churches, that the minister has thought first of this contrivance, then of that. He tried one plan and thought that would succeed. Then he tried another, but that was no good. Keep to the old plan, my Friend, but seek to get life into it! We do not need anything new—“the old is better”—let us keep to it, but we need life in the old. “Oh,” men cry, “we have nothing but the shell.” And they are going to give us a new shell. No, Sirs, we will keep the old one, but we will have the life in the shell! We will have the old plans, but we must, or else we will throw the old away, have the life in the old! Oh, that God would give us life! The Church needs fresh revivals. Oh, for the days of Cambuslang again, when God’s Word was preached with power! Oh, for the days when, in this place, hundreds were converted under Whitefield’s sermons! It has been known that 2,000 credible cases of conversion have happened under one solitary sermon! Oh, for the age when eyes would be strained and ears would be ready to receive the Truth of God and when men would drink in the Word of Life, as it is, indeed, the very Water of Life which God gives to dying souls! Oh, for the age of deep feeling—the age of thorough-going earnestness!

Let us ask God for it! Let us plead with Him for it! Perhaps He has the man or the men somewhere who will yet shake the world! Perhaps even now He is about to pour forth a mighty influence upon man which shall make the Church as wonderful in this age as it ever was in any age that has passed. God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen,

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #725 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A MESSAGE FROM GOD TO HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE

NO. 725

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 16, 1866, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“O Lord, I have heard Your speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.”  
Habakkuk 3:2.**

“O LORD, I have heard Your speech!” This is the language of reverent obedience and is a fit preface to a fervent prayer. If we are not willing to hear God’s voice, we cannot expect Him to hear our voice. It is an admirable preparation for prayer, first to hearken diligently to what God the Lord shall speak, and then to be obedient to His commands. He who would hear God speak needs not to wait long, for God speaks to men continually by the Scriptures, which are given to us by Inspiration. Alas that we should be so deaf to its teachings! This wonderful volume, so full of wisdom, is so little read that few of us could dare to gaze upon its pages and say, “O Lord, in this Book I have heard Your speech.”

At other times, the Lord speaks by Providence. Both national Providences and personal Providences have a meaning. Providences that are afflicting, and Providences which are comforting all have a voice. But, alas, I fear that oftentimes to us Providence is dumb because we are deaf. How often, in our stubbornness, we are like the horse and the mule which have no understanding, and when God speaks to us we do not regard Him? He therefore multiplies our afflictions, and holds us in with the bit and bridle of adversity because we will not be governed by gentler means. Look, my Brethren, at the Providence of God throughout the whole of your lives, and I am afraid few of you can say of it, “O Lord, in Providence I have heard Your speech.”

The God of Heaven speaks to men by His Holy Spirit. He does this, at times, in those common operations of the Spirit upon the ungodly, which they, as did also their fathers, resist. The Spirit strives with men. He calls, and they refuse. He stretches out His hands, and they regard Him not. The unregenerate man is like the deaf adder that will not hear, charm we ever so wisely. Even when the Holy Spirit speaks to us, His people, we are not always willing and obedient. And though we have ears to hear we frequently quench the Spirit. We grieve Him. We neglect His monitions, and, if we do not despise His teachings, yet too often we forget them, and listen to the follies of earth instead of regarding the wisdom of the skies. I am afraid that in looking into our own hearts and studying them in connection with the operations of the Holy Spirit, not one of us could dare to say, without exception, “O Lord, I have heard Your speech.”

In the text before us we meet with a Prophet whose ears had been spiritually opened and who, therefore, heard the still, small voice of Jehovah where others perceived neither sound nor utterance. There are times even with us when, being under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we hold near communion with our God. Then are our hearts like wax to His seal, receiving the impression of the Divine Mind! Are you not conscious of having been in such a state? It must be so, dear Hearer, in a measure, with all the Lord’s servants! But especially must it be often so with those of us who are called to bear His messages to the people!

I have most solemnly sought to hear the speech of Jehovah in my own soul before I came into this pulpit, and pray that His Divine power may enable me to convey that speech to you. I have been afraid, this week, as I have heard the voice of God in this land. Trembling has taken hold upon me as Jehovah has spoken in thunderclaps and made the whole land to echo with His terrible accents! I may be to some of you as an interpreter, and you who are spiritual men, you will discern and judge whether I have heard the speech of God or not. If you shall find it to be God’s voice to you, I hope you will be led to the farther carrying out of the language of the text in that much-needed prayer, “O Lord, revive Your work.”

There are three things in the text—an alarming voice, an appropriate prayer, and a potent argument—“in wrath remember mercy.”  
I. Hear, with solemn awe, THE ALARMING VOICE! The speech of God demands your humblest attention. We need not enter into particulars of the heavy tidings which came to the ear of Habakkuk when he set upon the tower and watched to see what the Lord would say to him.  
Our business, this morning, is to tell you, in all solemnity, what the voice of God has been saying to us. In my lonely meditations I heard a voice, as of one that spoke in the name of the Lord. I bowed my head to receive the message, and the voice said, “Cry,” and when I said, “What shall I cry?” the answer came to me as to Isaiah of old, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.”  
Then I thought I saw before me a great meadow reaching far and wide, and it was like a rainbow for its many colors, for the flowers of summer were in their beauty. In the midst of it I marked a mower of dark and cruel aspect, who with a scythe most sharp and glittering, was clearing mighty stretches of the field at each sweep and laying the fair flowers in withering heaps. He advanced with huge strides of leagues at once, leaving desolation behind him, and I understood that the mower’s name was Death!  
As I looked I was afraid for my house, and my children, for my kinsfolk and acquaintance, and for myself also—for the mower drew nearer and nearer—and as he came onward a voice was heard as of a trumpet, “Prepare to meet your God.” Moreover, as I mused on I heard a rumbling in the bowels of the earth, as though the Destroyer were traversing the dark pathways which the miner has dug, and doing his fearful work among the stones of darkness which are at the roots of the mountains. I wondered with sore amazement, and behold, there came up from the mouth of the pit a thundering cloud of vapor, of smoke and fire, and dust, and rushing whirlwind, which told to wailing women that they were widows and their children fatherless! And the Angel of Death again cried in my ears, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.”  
I have come here this morning sorely afraid and much bowed down because of the mortality of man, and the certainty of death. We shall soon be gone, every one of us, to his grave. If not by such an alarming catastrophe as that which has amazed and troubled us during this week, yet by the common processes of decay. You whom I now see before me are the meadows, and death is in your midst! You are the flowers, and I hear the terrible blast, which, alas, must wither even you! I see you, but there is no joy in my eyes, for the cheek of beauty shall pale, and the eyes of youth shall grow dim, and the sinews of the strong shall fail them, and the arms of the mighty shall be powerless in the tomb!  
As the autumn leaves are gone, so are our fathers! And as the floods hasten to the ocean, even so are we hastening away. An irresistible torrent hurries us to our doom! A mighty wind from the Lord sweeps us forever onward. While we thus quietly consider it, the great mystery is being enacted—a thousand graves are being dug and a thousand corpses are being laid in new-made sepulchers! At this moment hundreds are wading into the cold, chill stream of Jordan—passing into the disembodied state to hear the judgment of the Great King.  
As I thought upon this matter, and desired to hear God’s speech therein, I saw a precipice whose frowning steep overhung a sea of fire. Leading up to its brink I saw a road exceedingly broad. A road which was crowded from side to side with a thronging multitude who pressed and trod one upon another in their raging zeal to reach the summit of the crag. They went gaily on, merrily laughing, singing to sprightly music, many of them dancing, some of them pushing aside their fellows that they might reach sooner than was imperative upon them the end of which they knew so little. As I looked at that end which none of them could see, I saw a waterfall of souls falling in ceaseless, headlong stream into depths unutterably profound!  
As the crowd came on, rank by rank, to the edge of this precipice, they fell, they leaped over, or were dashed from the treacherous crag and descended amid cries and shrieks surpassing all imagination into a lake of fire where they were submerged with an everlasting baptism— overwhelmed with destruction from the presence of the Lord! I thought I heard their groans and moans, their shrieks and sighs as they first caught sight of the terrible abyss and would have shrunk back from it but were quite unable, for the time to pause was past.  
Even now I see before my eyes that terrific Niagara of souls descending by thousands every hour into the gulf unknown. This is the broad road of which we had heard so often, where multitudes delight to walk. “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they that go in it.” Sure and terrible is the doom of everyone who treads there. Oh that men would forsake it at once and forever! Alas! Alas! Are not the great mass of our fellow citizens beneath the scepter of our Queen traveling on this broad road? Even if we could conceive that all who attend the places of worship were in the narrow way that leads to eternal life—if we could be charitable enough to believe that—yet look at the multitude of outsiders!  
Look at this city, with far more than a million for whom the sound of the church-going bell is meaningless! They know not God, neither regard Him! To them the name of Christ is but a word to curse or to ridicule! They are going, my Brethren, men of the same country as yourselves, men of the same race and tribe, speaking our own language—they are going downward to destruction! Among them your own children! Perhaps your wives, your husbands, your sons, your daughters, your parents—going in that motley crew, onward, swiftly onward, towards their dreadful end! My God will cast them away! Their end will be destruction! They will be driven from the Presence of the Lord forever!  
Let these two thoughts, my Brethren, burn in your souls until all coldness and indifference are consumed. Men die, and their souls are lost! Men die and their bodies are laid in the grave, but their souls descend into Hell! Scarcely were the first death a thing to be mourned over, if it were not for the second! It might be superfluous to shed so much as a single tear for all the men that died if we knew that they rested in the arms of Jesus and were forever blessed. But this is the sting of death, its bitterness, its wormwood and its gall—that sinners are condemned by Justice, and driven by Vengeance from the Presence of Mercy into the place where hope can never follow them! Christian Brothers and Sisters, hear this voice of God and be afraid!  
Over and above all this, there came upon me a horror of great darkness as I perceived something even more terrible than this! You will say to me, “How can it possibly be more terrible?” In certain aspects it seemed so to me. Hear it and judge. What if it is true that within the last twelve months the Church of the living God has scarcely made the slightest approach to an advance? What if this is true as respects a far longer period? Let the first sad fact rise before us with its proof. For the last twelve months no apparent increase has been made to the number of professed disciples of the Lord Jesus.  
Do you ask me for the proofs? I can prove it, alas, too surely. Our own body, the Baptist denomination, is, upon the whole, and all things considered, in as sound and healthy a state as any Christian community now existing. I am persuaded that in some respects it is more sound and more healthy. But do you know what will have been the increase during the twelve months of the entire denomination in England, Scotland, and Ireland, so far as we can ascertain it? Well, with the exception of London and the county of Glamorgan, in Wales, there will be no increase worthy of the name. In many parts of Wales, where we are strongest, there will be a positive decrease, and I think, in fifteen counties of England, we shall have lost numbers instead of making any advance!  
And when the whole are put together, the good with the bad, and this London of ours, wherein God has greatly blessed us of late, is counted with the rest, our entire increase for all the Churches with all their ministers will not make up four thousand souls. It is true that our statistics are not very accurate, but if they were more accurate I believe the result would be more unfavorable. This is the more fearful to me to contemplate, because the increase of the denomination, which, by God’s Grace, we might naturally look for merely from the increase of population, should have been very much more than this.  
If other Christian Churches have not increased more, and I am persuaded that most of them have increased less, far less than we have, then I am correct in saying that positively the Church of God in Great Britain and Ireland, instead of making any real advance, has, in proportion to the increase of population, absolutely gone back! And I believe it would be accurate and truthful, and could be borne out by statistics, that if at this day there were taken a census of the number of persons who commune at the Lord’s Table, it would be found to be smaller instead of larger than the number at the corresponding period of last year.  
As for abroad, what have our missions done? Brethren, if there were but one soul we ought to rejoice, but the result of missions has been of late so terribly little as to call for great searching of heart. Is it not a fact that there are missionaries of ten years’ standing who have never had a convert? Is it not also a sad fact that the number of members in all our native Churches is probably less now than it was twelve months ago? Where is the nation that has been born in a day in this year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six? Where are the kings that have bowed down before King Jesus? Where are the nations that have called Him “Blessed”?  
Is there so much as one little tribe, however insignificant, that has owned Christ during the past year? Not one, not one! There has been no visible advance! The armies of the living God have rather suffered a repulse than gained a victory, and instead of the morning coming and the light arising, and the sun advancing to a noonday height, it seems as though at the best he stood still, if the light did not even retrograde. Surely there is a voice from God here, and as I hear it I am afraid.  
Meanwhile, what kind of an age has this been in which we have lived? Is it so impassive and thoughtless that progress is impossible? Are we living in one of those dark ages in which mind is rocked to sleep and the soul is stupefied? Has this last year been one in which the sleepiness of the human intellect has prevented our presenting the Truth of God to the sons of men? I think not! I believe, Brethren, that this year has been one of the most wakeful in the annals of human history! At this moment London is like the city of which the Prophet said, “It is full of stirs.” There are political stirs in which the Christian minister finds no theme for sorrow, for when men’s minds are but awake for anything there is then an opportunity for the propagation of the Truth of God.  
Truth dreads nothing so much as a sleepy audience! Give her but minds on the wing, and she will train them to the skies. This has been a year in which both upon politics and religion the human mind has been active, and had the Christian Churches been filled with the Spirit, and therefore zealous and faithful, I cannot comprehend that she would, at the close of the year, have had to cry, “Who has believed our report?” We have indulged the fancy that we have had a general revival, and that our churches are in a healthy state, but is it so? Let our non-success answer the question! In the meantime, while truth slumbers, the legions of evil spirits cease not their mischievous endeavors.  
How swiftly have the locusts of priest-craft ascended from the smoke of the bottomless pit and covered the land! While we are compelled to fear that evangelical Truth has made no advance, we cannot say this of ritualism, for its progress has been perfectly astounding! Though a Prophet should have told us that this Anglican Popery would have made so great an advance in so short a time, we would have said, “Impossible! England is soundly Protestant! She will never bear to have incense smoking under her nose, and to see the millinery of the Church of Rome flaunted before her face!”  
But she has borne it, and she likes it well. Despite much that has been said concerning Puseyism being non-English, we are inclined to question the statement. Where are the greatest crowds in the Establishment? Are they not at the feet of these priests of Baal? Do not rank and fashion gather most readily in those places where their senses are delighted while their souls are deluded? Yes, through the means of our Popish establishment there has been an onward rush of error which is perfectly appalling! Watchman, when they ask you, “What of the night?” can you say, “the morning comes”?  
You that love the Savior, will you open your ears to catch the meaning of all these things? Men dying! Men perishing! The Church slumbering and error covering the land—does not God say something in all this? Do you not hear out of this thick darkness the voice saying, “O My people, I have somewhat against you”? Did I not hear the Lord saying, “They shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands?” I saw the Church of God folding her hands, given to slumber, saying, “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.”  
And all the while she was suffering multitudes to perish for lack of knowledge, leaving the banner of Truth to be moth-eaten, or to be trailed in the mire, and permitting the friends of error to ride roughshod over all the land! As I saw her thus I said within my heart, Surely the Lord will chasten such a people as this! And I feared that He would send judgments upon His Church, and perhaps take away her candlestick out of the place, and give the light unto another people that might serve Him more faithfully!  
Then I felt as Habakkuk did. I heard the voice of the Lord, and I was afraid. I was afraid for my fellow men, thinking of the multitudes of them that had already gone beyond recall to the land of darkness and to the regions of doom, and for the millions hastening to the same end! I was afraid for the Christian Church, lest it should have a name to live and be dead, lest the Lord should give up the Church in Britain as He did His Church in Shiloh, of which He said, “Go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel.”  
I feared lest He might do for the Church in Britain as He has to the church in Rome—given it over to become an antichrist, and an abomination before the eyes of God and men! I was afraid, with exceedingly great fear, for my fellow ministers, for I feared that all this people could not have perished without their being guilty of some of their blood! How could all this ignorance have remained in this land if the preachers had been faithful? I fear that the blood of souls will be required at the hands of many a minister. What do I see? A gathering of ministers. And what is this I see upon their garments? I

see blood on them!  
I see blood sprinkled on gray heads, and alas, I see blood upon the brows of young men who have but lately entered into the work—blood upon them all! Here do I much fear for myself, lest I, also, addressing this multitude so constantly, should have much blood upon my clothes because of my many responsibilities! O God! It is enough to make us afraid! Why look, my Brethren, when God’s servants were truly active, as the first twelve were, did the cause stand still? Did they win here and there a soul, and have now and then a conversion? Did the cause of Christ go back like an army put to the rout? On the contrary, did they not as soon as ever they received the Truth of God use it like a fire-brand to set the nations on a blaze?  
They met with persecutions which do not stand in our way. They were assaulted by threats of death which we have not to brave, and yet nothing could stand against their indomitable zeal! The Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit rested on them and they went on conquering and to conquer! And what are we? Oh we are cold and dead where they were full of fire and life! We are the degenerate sons of glorious fathers. Do you think the Church could have had it said that she remained a year without increase if there were not blame somewhere? You may remind me of Divine sovereignty, if you will, but I remember that Divine sovereignty always acts with wisdom and with love, and that the Lord has not said to us, “Labor in vain.” If we had labored, and if all the Christian Church had labored as they should have labored, I believe the promise would have been proved, “Your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”  
II. When one is thus bowed down with the voice of God, the most natural prompting of the regenerate soul is to pray. So we turn to the second part of the text which has in it AN APPROPRIATE PRAYER. I wish I had power this morning to make you feel the weight of what I have already brought before you! I know I have not put it in such language as I should have chosen, but it seems to me to be perfectly dreadful that there should be this constant dying, this constant ruin, this constant spread of error— and no progress in the Church. I am sure when I heard it, if a messenger had told me that I was a beggar, that I had lost everything on earth, I would have been more pleased with such an announcement than to know that God’s Church had not increased in the space of twelve months.  
It seems to me to be a thing to mourn over, a thing to make us go to God with a humble heart and to feel as if one had been sorely chastened by the Most High. For the Lord knows some of us have worked with all our might, and we hope it is not pride when we say the blame does not rest with us, and yet the question must go to us all. We must deal faithfully with ourselves and not be flattered. We would honestly enquire, How much of this lies at my door? How much of this burden of God ought I to bear today?  
Certainly enough to lead us to such prayer as that before us! Habakkuk, being bowed down, first turns himself to God. His first word is, “O Lord.” To the Most High we must carry both our own and our Church’s troubles. Habakkuk turns not to another Prophet to ask of him, “My Brother, what shall we do?” He turns to the Master, “O Lord, what will You do?” It will be well for us to confer with one another as to the causes of defeat and the means for securing success, but all conference with flesh and blood is idle unless it be preceded by solemn conferences with God. For God’s Church, God is needed! For God’s work, God’s own arm must be made bare!  
Is it not delightful to notice how heavy trials drive us to God when we might not have gone to Him otherwise? The little child, when walking abroad, runs before his father. But if he meets some strange man of whom he is afraid, he runs back and takes his father’s hand—so should it be with us. If God had prospered all our Churches, and everything had gone on as we had desired, we might, perhaps, have grown self-confident, and have said, “O Lord, You have given us power in ourselves.”  
But now that we see the contrary, let us run back to closer fellowship and nearer communion with our God than ever! And taking hold upon the arm of His strength, let us stir Him up by our continued and fervent prayers. Notice next that the prayer of Habakkuk is about God’s Church. He knew that there were dark days coming over Palestine, but he does not pray about that land in particular. “O Lord,” he said, “revive Your work.” Certain would-be prophets tell us that many wonders will occur in 1866 and 1867, though I notice a propensity to postpone the whole business to 1877. Is this postponement intended that there may be ten years longer in which to sell their books?  
But whatever is to come—whether the Turkish empire is to be destroyed, or Louis Napoleon is to annex Germany or whether Rome is to be swallowed up by an earthquake—it does not seem, to me, to matter so much as the turn of a button! The great thing to a Christian is not the fate of earthly empires, but the state of the heavenly kingdom. As to what is to become of this principality or that empire—what have you and I to do with these things? We are the servants of a spiritual King whose kingdom is not of this world! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, and break each other as they will—our business is with King Jesus and His throne!  
It is delightful to see the Prophet rising beyond the narrow range of the Jew, getting out of nationalities and praying, “O Lord, revive Your work.” That is the one ship we care for in the storm, that one vessel in which Jesus Christ is riding at the helm, the Captain of salvation, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas. Let the nations mix in dire confusion as they will, God rules over all and brings out His Church in triumph from all the strife of earth. The one anxiety of our souls should be the blood-stained banner of the Cross! Will it wave high? Will King Jesus get to Himself the crown, for we have neither will nor wish beyond that.  
So, Christian men, if you have heard God’s voice in the great judgments that are abroad, let those judgments lead you to pray, “Lord, remember Your Church—Your Church in England, Your Church in America, Your Church in France, Your Church in Germany, Your Church anywhere, Your Church everywhere. O God, look upon Your elect ones! Let the separate ones, scattered through all nations, receive of Your benediction! As for all else, in Providence, we leave it to Your will, for You know what is best.”  
Observe next that the Prophet uses a word which is singularly discriminative: “O Lord, revive Your work.” He does not say, “Lord, prosper my work.” How often do I go to God in concern about the work that is going on in this Tabernacle! I am thankful for all the blessing we have seen, and I grow increasingly anxious lest the Lord should withdraw His hand. But when one looks abroad upon the world, and upon all the Lord’s people in different denominations, one cannot pray, “Lord, prosper my work!” At least, one can pray that, but then cover that over with another—“O Lord, revive YOUR work.”  
For what about my work? Well, as far as it is mine it is very faulty. And what about the work of the Baptists? Well, there is doubtless much that is wrong about it. And what about the work of the Methodists, and the work of the Congregationalists, and so on? May God prosper them according as they walk in His Truth! But the way to come to the core of our prayer is to cry, “O Lord, revive Your work! Whatever is of You, whatever is Your Truth, whatever is Your Spirit’s work in the hearts of men, whatever is genuine conversion and vital godliness—Lord, revive it!”  
Cannot you, dear Friends, in the presence of death which we have been speaking of, and in the presence of judgment, and in the presence of the fact that the Christian Church has not been increased these twelve months, shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self, or with party, and now pray, “Lord, revive Your work, and if Your work happens to be more in one branch of the Church than in another, Lord, give that the most reviving! Give us all the blessing, but let Your own purposes be accomplished, and Your own glory come of it and we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown. ‘O Lord, revive Your work.’ ”  
Note that the particular blessing he asks for is a revival of God’s work, by which we mean, in our time, that there should be a revival of the old Gospel preaching. We must have it back! It comes to this—our ministers must return to the same Gospel which John Bunyan and George Whitfield preached. We cannot get on with philosophical gospels—we must bring together all these new geological gospels and Neological gospels, and semiPelagian gospels, and do with them as the people of Ephesus did with the books—we must burn them, and let Paul preach again to us! We can do without modern learning, but we cannot do without the ancient Gospel! We can do without oratory and eloquence, but we cannot do without Christ Crucified! Lord, revive Your work by giving us the old-fashioned Gospel back again in our pulpits!  
It is to be lamented that there are so many who are considered not to be bad preachers who scarcely ever mention Christ’s name, and are very loose concerning atonement by His precious blood. You will hear people say they have gone to such-and-such a Chapel, and whatever the sermon might have been about it certainly was not about the Gospel. Oh may that cease to be the case! May our pulpits ring with the name of Jesus! May Christ be lifted up and His precious blood be the daily theme of the ministry! Oh that thousands might be brought to put their trust in the Lamb slain, and to find salvation by faith in Him whom God has appointed to be the Savior of men!  
This, however, would not bring back a revival unless there came with it a revival of the Gospel spirit. If you read the story of the Reformation, or the later story of the new Reformation under Whitfield and Wesley, you are struck with the singular spirit that went with the preachers. The world said they were mad! The caricaturists drew them as being fanatical beyond all endurance. But there it was, their zeal was their power! Of course the world scoffed at that of which it was afraid. The world fears enthusiasm—the sacred enthusiasm which love to Christ kindles—the enthusiasm which is kindled by the thought of the ruin of men and by the desire to pluck the firebrands from the flame! The world fears the enthusiasm which believes in the Holy Spirit, which believes that God is still present with His Church to do wonders! This is what the world dreads, and what the Church wants. Pray for it! Pray to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire! O Lord, send forth Your unconquerable Spirit! O God, revive Your work!  
You perceive that the Prophet desires this gift at once. He does not say, “at the end of the years,” but “in the midst of the years.” His prayer is for a present and immediate revival of genuine religion. Let it be ours, not from the teeth outward but from the heart outward to pray for revival! Let us long for it with heart and soul and strength, and God will give it to us! Once more note that the prayer of Habakkuk is a very intelligent one, for he indicates the means by which he expects to have it fulfilled—in the midst of the years make known. It is by making known the Gospel that men are saved, not by mere thumping of the pulpit and stamping of the feet, but by telling out something which the understanding may grasp and the memory may retain.  
To publish the doctrine of a reconciled God! To tell men that the Lord has laid Hell upon Jesus by punishing Him instead of us! To proclaim that there is life in a look at the Crucified One! To tell them that the Holy Spirit creates men new creatures in Christ Jesus! To give a full and comprehensive view of the Doctrines of Grace—these are some of the surest ways, under God, of promoting a revival of religion! I cannot talk to you but I think I could pray to God, and I hope many of you will do so today. O God, send us a revival! This will purge the blood of souls from our garments—nothing else will! This will roll back the tides of error—nothing else can! This will give to the Christian Church triumph of an unusual kind! This will cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the deep—nothing else can or will!  
Gracious God, revive Your work!  
III. And now we close with A POTENT ARGUMENT. He uses the argument of mercy—“in wrath remember mercy.” If God were to say to the Churches in England, “I will have nothing to do with you. You have been so idle, so worldly, so purse-proud, so prayerless, so quarrelsome, so inconsistent that I will never bless you again.” If God were to say that, the churches of God in England might remain as astounding monuments of the justice of God towards the people who forsake His ways.  
Sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the Brethren, it does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us, and the means which God has given us, the Church generally, (there are blessed exceptions!), has done so little for Christ that if “Ichabod” were written right across its brow, and it were banished from God’s House, it would have its just deserts. We cannot, therefore, appeal to merit—it must be to mercy. O God, have mercy upon Your poor Church, and visit her and revive her. She has but a little strength. She has desired to keep Your Word. Oh, refresh her! Restore to her Your power, and give her yet to be great in this land.  
Mercy is also wanted for the land itself. This is a wicked nation, this England. Its wickedness belongs not to one class only, but to all classes. Sin runs down our streets. We have a fringe of elegant morality, but behind it we have a mass of rottenness. There is not only the immorality of the streets at night, but look at the dishonesty of business men in high places! Cheating and thieving upon the grandest scale are winked at. Little thieves are punished, and great thieves are untouched! This is a wicked city, this city of London, and the land is full of drunkenness, and the land is full of fornication, and the land is full of theft, and the land is full of all manner of Popish idolatry!  
I am not the proper prophet to take up this burden, and to utter a wailing. My temperament is not that of Jeremiah, and therefore am I not wellcalled to such a mission. But I may at least, with Habakkuk, having heard the Lord’s speech concerning it, be afraid and exhort you to pray for this land, and be asking that God would revive His work in order that this drunkenness may be given up. That this dishonesty may be purged out. That this great social evil may be cut out from the body politic as a deadly cancer is cut out by the surgeon’s knife.  
O God, for mercy’s sake, cast not off this island of the seas! Give her not up to internal distraction! Leave her not in darkness and blackness forever, but “revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.” While I have been addressing Christians, my object has been to bless the ungodly, too, and I do trust that some here who are not converted will enquire, “What, then, is God’s voice to me?” May you be led to seek salvation, and remember you shall find it—for whoever trusts Christ shall be saved!  
If there is a man, woman, or child among you who will now humble himself under the hand of God and look to the crucified Savior, you shall not perish! Neither shall the wrath of God abide upon you, but you shall be found of Him in peace in the day of His appearing. God accept this humble weak testimony for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

A WARRANT FOR YOUR APPREHENSION

NO. 2235

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 20, 1891,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1891.

**“The word of the Lord is against you.”  
Zephaniah 2:5.**

The word of the Lord was against the land to which these words were spoken. The whole verse reads, “Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy you, that there shall be no inhabitant.” This contest could have only one end, for behind “the word of the Lord” was the Lord Himself. “Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!” Who shall dare to oppose His sovereign will? All forces are at His command and they are foolish, indeed, who say to Him, “What are You doing?” I have not come here, however, to speak to you simply about the land of the Philistines and the sinners who dwelt there. The burden of my sermon is concerning men and women who are now living and to whom I may truthfully say, “The Word of the Lord is against you.” May you wake up to see the truth of this terrible sentence and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be at once moved to flee from the wrath to come!

The Philistines were one of the Canaanite nations and they were so prominent that they gave their name to the whole country. Palestine was the land of the Philistines. These people had a fine physical development and among them were persons of unusual stature. There were giants in their cities—Goliath of Gath is the one most familiar to us because of his encounter with David—but there were many others. They were, moreover, a very warlike race. When God brought His people out of Egypt into the land of promise, the five lords of the Philistines were to be destroyed and their cities were to be taken by the Israelites. But they were not destroyed and neither were their cities captured, for the Israelites had not faith enough and the Philistines were men of courage and stubbornly defended their country. They even came to be the oppressors of Israel and, becoming a great and powerful nation, held the Hebrews in subjection for many a year. Even when Israel was strong and brought Philistia under tribute, the Philistines constantly revolted and harassed the Israelites. They were always against God and against God’s people—and though Jehovah waited long and patiently, that they might have space for repentance, yet they repented not. When this prophecy was given, their cup was full. They had so sinned against God that, at last, the day of their doom came and the Prophet Zephaniah, in the name of God, said to them, “The word of the Lord is against you.”

I do not know that anybody else was against them. They were a people who feared nobody and, for many years, when they were attacked, first by one and then by another, they held their own. They had strongly-fenced cities, some of which stood, after the time of Christ, even in the age of the Crusaders, so that they had no reason to fear the other nations of the earth. They could maintain their rights against all comers and it seemed as if they would never be moved. But prosperity is often deceitful. Their fancied security was only like a thin crust over a lava bed—and the volcano lay beneath ready to burst forth at any moment.

They had one overwhelming cause for dread, though they knew it not. They could conquer all nations, but a foe was marching upon them, against which they would fight in vain. When the Prophet delivered the message, “The word of the Lord is against you,” he rang the knell of their doom. What an adversary is this, “The word of the Lord”! This enemy is more powerful than Egypt, or Assyria, or any of the tribes of men on the face of the earth. It is more terrible, too, than the voice of the storm. Many times the Lord had thus scattered those that opposed themselves against Him—“The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning and discomfited them.” Those who have the Word of the Lord against them have an enemy to fear more dreadful than the most fearful convulsion of Nature, more terrible than the simoom of the desert, the sirocco of the plain, or the Euroclydon of the sea! The Prophet does not attempt to show the Philistines by what instrumentality God would break them in pieces, whether by plague, or famine, or pestilence, or war. He simply says, “The word of the Lord is against you.” That is enough. He states the cause—the effects are sure to follow.

Today, as the result of the warfare mentioned in my text, Philistia is swept away and its cities are destroyed. Gaza and Ekron, Ashdod and Askelon have perished by the judgment of God. I have not time to give you the evidence of travelers to prove that the prophecy against them has been kept to the very letter. Where it seemed as if it had failed, there has been only a more complete fulfillment of the sentence against the Lord’s enemies.

My main business at this time, is not, however, with the Philistines. God’s Word is against a good many other people besides them and I am going to try to talk to some of them in words of solemn warning. My message to many must be, “The Word of the Lord is against you.” Oh, that God may help me so to speak that your life may be changed and that the Word of God may be against you no longer! Hearken, then, to this word, you that are living in sin, you that are refusing the Savior, you that are delaying the time of repentance, you that have backslidden, you that are opposing the Gospel—“The Word of the Lord is against you.” I would like to get hold of some man who is in this terrible condition of rebellion against God and hold him by the hand while I speak to him, in a kind and friendly and fraternal way, this solemn word of warning—“The Word of the Lord is against you.”

First, I shall simply state the general fact, that it is so—the Word of the Lord is really against many men and women. Secondly, I shall endeavor to make it clear that if you are living with the Word of the Lord against you, it is a very terrible thing. And, thirdly, if you are awakened to see your danger, I shall try to set before you what can be done in the matter.

I. First, concerning many people, my text is literally true, “the Word of the Lord is against you.” It is so. Just as surely and as sorrowfully as we can say, today, that the law of England is against some of the people in England, we can affirm that the Word of the Lord is against many of the inhabitants of the earth. The Word of the Lord will not, cannot change— and there it stands, bearing testimony against many, who, in due time, unless they become partakers of the Grace of the Lord Jesus, shall be overwhelmed and destroyed without remedy!

I am quite sure that “the Word of the Lord” is against some of you, because you are against the Word of the Lord. There is war between you and this wonderful Book. You do not enjoy the reading of it, no, perhaps, you have even come to hate it! You oppose it—possibly you even wish there were no Bible. Perhaps you have been drinking in theories of Inspiration that make it to be practically no Bible—deposing it from its rightful position as a full and authoritative guide in all matters of faith and practice. If you do not accept it as such, you are against it! If this is true of you, I fear that it is because you do not understand the Bible. God’s Word carries within itself the evidence of its Truth. It teaches men who are not encased in prejudice. It enlightens those who will open their eyes to see. You cannot be against it unless you have a clear suspicion that it is against you! The fact is, the Bible does not please you—it does not let you sin with impunity—it presents to you a way of salvation that does not pander to your pride, or flatter your intellect. Therefore, you do not like the Book. “The Word of the Lord is against you.” Now, be you sure of this, that if you are against the Word of the Lord, it is because the Word of the Lord is against you.

Again, I am sure that the Bible is against you, for you do not care to read it. Your conscience will be with me when I urge this reason, for many of you know well that you have a strange distaste for the Bible. Can you tell me why, in some countries, Romanists are forbidden to read the Scriptures? Why do the priests or their emissaries take from the people the Bibles which the booksellers have scattered? The reason is to be sought for in the false teaching and superstitious observances of the Church of Rome! If you went into a shop to buy an article and the first thing that the man did was to turn down the gas or blow out the candle, you would say to yourself, “He is going to sell me bad wares and he does not want me to have too much light lest I should find him out.”

The reason why the priest of the Catholic church is against the Bible is because the Bible is against him. Now it is just so with you. You would read the Book willingly enough if you were agreed with it, but because it is too truthful, too faithful and exposes your faults too much, therefore you do not like it and you do not read it. How long is it since some of you have read even a chapter of Scripture? How long is it since you have thought over one gracious text? Oh, my dear Friends, if I probe you, if I press this matter upon some of you, it will be clear enough that the Word of God is against you, for you, yourself, know that it is and, therefore, do not read it. You do not want to be plagued by it. It condemns your sins. It disturbs your false security. It robs you of your sleep in evil. “The Word of the Lord is against you”—your neglect of the Word shows that this is true.

And truly the Word of the Lord must be against you, for it must be against sin and you delight in sin. If you live in sin and love sin, should God send you a Book to pacify your conscience in such a state? If that which is unjust, intemperate and unholy, is hidden in your heart, and is practiced in your life, would you expect the Holy Spirit to write a Book to help you on in such a way as that? It is blasphemy to think that it could be so! All through the Book sin is uniformly and universally condemned, from the day when Adam was driven out of the Garden because of his transgression, until the flood came upon guilty man because “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” On Sinai the same Truth was thundered out. This was the burden of the Prophets’ messages. The Word of God is always against sin and many times the warning is given, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” If you are a sinner steeped in sin, depend upon it that this Book is against you and ought to be against you You could not wish it to be otherwise if you are a rightminded person. You will say, “Whatever I may be, I do not want the Bible tampered with, to make it suit my ungodly life, nor do I wish Holy Scripture to favor me in an evil pursuit.”

This Book must be against some of you because you have refused Christ. God has given His dear Son to die to save men. He has appointed the one way of salvation to be through faith in the precious blood of Christ. If you will not have the appointed way. If you refuse the ordained Savior, this Book may well quarrel with you, for you quarrel with God! What? The blood of His dear Son given to redeem and yet you reject it? Mercy dressed in crimson to save you and yet you fly from it? Love Incarnate in a bleeding Savior and yet you spurn it? Perhaps you imagine that you are good enough to be saved without Christ, but what infamous pride this is on the part of a poor sinful worm of the dust! Perhaps your whole confidence is in your own good works and you hope they will be found sufficient without the blood of Calvary—that is presumptuous arrogance and vain conceit for a man who is born in sin and shaped in iniquity! Truly “the Word of the Lord” cannot side with you!

If it is given to reveal Christ as the Savior of men, it cannot take the part of him who refuses that Savior, slights the blood of Christ and does despite to the Spirit of Grace. Oh, my dear Friend, when I used to read the Bible and had not yet looked to Christ, how sternly it used to speak to me! It had an angry look. It threatened me. It seemed to draw a sharp sword and thrust it into my heart! I bless the Bible for being severe with my unbelief! It was the wound of a friend which it gave me—when I was wounded, I fled to Christ for cure. If the Word of God were not against you in your rejection of Christ, it could not be the Word of God and, if you did not know it to be against you, it would be an unhappy thing for you to be rocked in the cradle of unbelief and allowed to remain far from God without a warning. Until you believe in Christ, be you sure of this—“the Word of the Lord is against you!”

Even if you do not read God’s Word and thus discover that it is against you, your conscience tells you that it ought to be. Many men and women who are sitting here, if they did but begin to think, would say, “I must be wrong. God’s Book, which is Truth, itself, must be against me.” Men will not allow conscience to speak, but if they do, it soon bears testimony in the same line as God’s own Word, for you cannot very readily make your conscience a false witness. There are some who preach, today, that all men will be saved, whether they believe in Christ or not. I remember what a certain hearer said to a minister who preached that doctrine—“Sir, if what you have preached today is true, we do not need you. Indeed, we do not need any minister at all—we can get along all right without one. And if what you have preached is not true, we do not need you—so in either case we have no need of your ministrations.” The hearer knew that what the minister had preached was not the Truth of God—conscience confirmed the declarations of the Word of God.

The Word of God would be true, however, whether conscience confirmed it or not, but conscience does tell men that it cannot be the same with the wicked as with the righteous—it cannot be the same with those who reject the Savior as with those who accept Him. You cannot silence that voice within the heart! A Unitarian minister who preached that wild doctrine of universal salvation which is so popular just now, once met an old-fashioned Baptist preacher who was not a well-educated man, but who had a crowded congregation—while his learned friend had only a dozen or two to hear him eloquently discourse. The Unitarian said, “I cannot make out how it is that there is such a difference in our congregations—you get so many to hear you, and I get so few. I preach a very pleasing doctrine. I tell the people that all will be right with them all at last. I do not worry them with any doctrines of repentance and faith and Atonement—and yet they will not come to hear me.

“You preach a very dreary doctrine and you tell the people that unless they repent they shall perish and be cast into Hell, and yet they crowd your place to hear you. How is that?” “Well,” said the old man, “I think it is, my Friend, because they have a shrewd suspicion that what I say is true, and that what you say is not true.” There he hit the nail on the head! It is so. The conscience of men bids them distrust the word which tells them that there will be no difference between the righteous and the wicked! God has somehow written on the heart of man this judgement— “Sin must be punished. It cannot be the same with the godly and the ungodly at the last.” Hear that voice of your conscience! Listen to it and it will tell you that “the Word of the Lord is against you.”

One thing more. You who live in sin and will not have a Savior may be sure that “the Word of the Lord is against you.” Your efforts to harden your heart prove it. The struggle you have to make in order to keep all things quiet within your own bosom leaves no room for doubt that, “the Word of the Lord is against you.” Sometimes, when you are being spoken to about your soul, you do not like it. You feel irritable. You make some jest, or you utter some blasphemy, or repeat some old worn-out slander to stiffen yourself to reject the Word of God. And when you get home it takes you all your time to press down the sparks which the Gospel has kindled in your heart! You are kept very busy trying to stamp them out, for you know that you have some inflammable stuff in your soul—and you are afraid that there will be a fire within. If you did not think the Word of God was against you, you would not have to make such a vigorous effort to prevent its having its due effect upon your mind! Oh, that you would yield, young man! Oh, that you would let God’s Word do its will with you, young woman! Oh, all you of whom it is true—“The Word of the Lord is against you”—I pray that you would let it break you in pieces, wound you, kill you and then make you alive and heal you!

II. In the second place, I want to say that if “the Word of the Lord is against you,” IT IS A VERY TERRIBLE THING. When the word of Pharaoh was against the Israelites, they suffered cruel bondage, but the Word of the Lord was stronger than the word of the mighty despot—and when He spoke by Moses and Aaron, His people were brought out free. When the word of King Saul was against David, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. But the Word of the Lord was confirmed to him and he was delivered from the hand of his enemy and, at last, seated on the throne. When the word of Nebuchadnezzar was against the three Hebrew youths, they were cast into the burning fiery furnace—but the Lord delivered them, as He also delivered Daniel when the word of Darius was against him. But when “the Word of the Lord is against you,” its judgment is more to be dreaded than the bondage of Egypt, more to be feared than the fiery furnace or the den of lions, for there is none that can deliver you from the power of the Lord, whose Word has gone forth against you. If this is your case, you are truly in a terrible state!

If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” you have great cause for trembling, for it cannot be bribed. Many a wealthy man has escaped the punishment he deserved because he has used his silver and his gold judiciously. It cannot be so easily done, now, in this country, as it used to be, though there is still a gift that blinds the eyes and many a man of position has escaped his deserts because of his wealth. But you cannot bribe the Word of God, though there are some who seem to try to do it! They live a whole life regardless of God and His Word, amassing money by fair means or foul, and then, when they cannot use it further, they leave it for some religious purpose in the hope of thus meriting favor with God, taking care all the while, generally, to have their own name lastingly associated with the gift! But there is nothing which you can give that will be taken by the Word of the Lord as a payment for your wrong. It will speak and it will effect its purpose in spite of all your bribes!

If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” you may well be dismayed as you remember that it will never be changed. You cannot, by any possibility, so long as you are what you are, make it cease to be against you! If a man is against me, today, he may be my friend tomorrow. The wind does not always blow from the same quarter. Tides that flow will also ebb, but God’s Word never changes. From everlasting to everlasting it never turns an inch aside from the straight path. If you remain the same and that Word is against you, it will be against you in life and against you in death—against you at the Day of Judgement—and against you through all eternity. Oh, my dear Hearer, it is a dreadful thing to have this immutable, unchanging Word of God against you!

It is a terrible position, again, to have the Word of the Lord against you because it cannot be escaped. You may get away from the Queen’s writ by flying to the Continent. You may escape a warrant of arrest by fleeing to certain countries, though I scarcely know where you can now go—but how can you escape from the Word of God? That Word changed chaos into order! That Word came into the thick darkness and there was light! “He spoke, and it was done.” The Word of the Lord can come into your bedchamber. If you journey to the ends of the earth, the Word of God can find you out, even though you never read it! It can reach you even if you should become a seven-fold infidel! You cannot change the threat by disbelieving it, nor escape the vengeance by professing that there is no such thing! The Psalmist’s words about God’s Omnipresence apply, also, to the Word of the Lord—“Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hands lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” The Word of the Lord is everywhere—it cannot be escaped.

Furthermore, it is a terrible thing to have the Word of the Lord against you, for it cannot be resisted. If a man is against you, you can fight it out with him. You may oppose force to force and cunning to cunning—but if the Word of the Lord is against you, what power have you? By His Word were the heavens made! By His Word the heavens and the earth shall pass away and be dissolved! How can you fight against the Word of God? As well might Pharaoh fight with the plagues that Jehovah sent upon him. God’s Word is too strong for you. “Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth,” but strive not you with Him who has all power and whose Word is “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

And now let me speak to you very solemnly. If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” what a state you must be in, for God is Love and He will not say a word against a man if He can help it. God is gracious, tender, loving—and when God Himself has to be against a man, the condition of that man’s heart must be something very terrible—his state of life must be so depraved as to demand that Love should give place to Justice. Why, this Book of God was written for sinners, written to cheer penitent hearts, and if it is against you, what a state you must be in! Here is food prepared for an invalid—if you cannot eat it—if it turns your stomach, how diseased you must be! If the medicine becomes poison; if the sweet is sour; if the Light of God, itself, is darkness to you, O wretched madman, you have come into an evil plight, indeed! God have mercy upon you! If God’s Word is against you, you are in an awful state, indeed!

Not only is this true, but what a sad state you will soon be in! Whether you believe it or not, you will soon be dead and, dying, you will pass into another world. And, being there, you will come to the seat of judgment to be tried for the things done in the body. You will need witnesses in your favor and this Book will be called to give its testimony. What will it say about you? If the Book could speak, it would say, “Great God, he never read me! I bear witness to his neglect of You, for he never read me.” And many a text of Scripture would rise up in that last day and say, “I was preached to him! His mother quoted me to him. His sister wrote this in a letter. A friend sent him this verse and pleaded with him to take it to heart, but he heeded none of them.” If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” the Law of God will say, “He knew me and he broke me!” The Gospel will say, “He knew me and he refused me!” The Bible, itself, will say, “He understood something of me, but he ridiculed me.”

It will go hard with a man who has such testimony against him at the bar of the Great Judge. Let me have the Bible on my side and I will fearlessly face the whole world. But if the Bible is against me, I must be conquered. If it is against me in the Last Day, I must be speechless. He whom the Word condemns has the foretaste of that final condemnation which shall be his in the next state unless, by Sovereign Grace, he shall be constrained to turn to God before it is too late! I cannot speak as I would on this awful theme, but I am trying to plead with you from my very soul. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit would send home the Word of God to many!

Remember, my dear Hearers, there is not a wasted word in this Book. Whatever God says will happen to the ungodly, will happen to them. Judgment is God’s strange work, but what He threatens, He will certainly perform. How terrible will it be when the threats of His Word come to pass! See, even in the verse from which our text is taken, a glimpse of what it may mean. First, there is woe. “Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast.” Then there is destruction, “I will even destroy you.” When the woe is past, there is utter destruction—“There shall be no inhabitant.” Oh, the woe of having the Word of the Lord against you! Behold, again, how those cities which Christ would have blessed so highly were cursed when they rejected His message. “Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! Woe unto you, Capernaum!” These repeated, “woes,” sound like a funeral knell! Today those cities are wholly swept away because the Word of the Lord was against them.

Learn, also, from the history of Jerusalem, how surely the Word of the Lord against a man or against a city is fulfilled. Christ was rejected by the people of Jerusalem, so that it is not surprising that, “when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it,” for He knew what a terrible doom awaited the guilty capital. Well might that demented man, of whom Josephus tells us, go through the streets of the city, when it was being besieged by Titus, and call out in tones of horror, “Woe, woe to Jerusalem!” Rest assured that the Lord will “render to every man according to his deeds.” Those who obey His Word shall be forever blessed. But those who have the Word of the Lord against them shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

I have been accused, sometimes, of picturing the wrath to come in too horrible a way, but I have never described it more sternly than Christ, Himself. It was His gentle lips that declared, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” It was He who spoke of a place “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” It was He who uttered the most awful words about the wrath to come. I pray you, do not wish to know, in your own experience, all that “the wrath to come” may mean! Flee from it! Seek rather to know what salvation means—and God help you to obtain it even now! If I am addressing any person who feels that the Word of God is against him, I do beseech and conjure him not to rest any longer in that condition! If you have a quarrel with God’s Word, you are wrong! God’s Word cannot be in error. If the Word of God offends you, you must be offended, or, rather, you have offended against it. It will never beg your pardon—you must beg its pardon, or, rather, seek forgiveness from the Lord whose Word is against you, and who is, Himself, also against you! Said I not truly that when “the Word of the Lord is against you,” it is a terrible thing? If that is your position, may it soon be changed!

III. Now I come to my third and last point. If it is true that “the Word of the Lord is against you” and that it is a terrible thing to be in such a state, WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE MATTER? Is there any way of escape, any loophole through which deliverance may come? If the Word of God cannot be bribed, changed, escaped, or resisted, what are we to do, since we cannot sit calmly beneath the curse of God?

I think that the first thing to be done, if you would escape out of this direful position, is to confess that you are wrong. There is a writ out against you. You have run away from it. Come home! Submit yourself to the court. Be willing to be put under arrest. There is no other right course. I knew one who, being charged with embezzlement, fled the country. He still has to stay away. If he had submitted himself to whatever punishment might have come upon him, he would have passed through it long ago. But now he still remains under the censure of the law and cannot return. Now, you runaway from God, come home at once! Sinner, against whom the Lord has issued His warrant, yield yourself to the officer of Divine Justice at this moment! You need not move from your present position—but just where you are—humbly whisper in your heart, “Lord, I am guilty. I submit to Your Word. Whatever Your Word says, is true, and I will no longer fight against it. But here, bowing my head, I confess that the wrong is with me, not with Your Word. I confess that.” Have you made this confession? Then it is well, for if, “the Word of the Lord is against you,” your only hope lies in taking the side of the Word of the Lord and against yourself!

But when a man gives himself up to justice, he has next to stand his trial. If “the Word of the Lord is against you,” it is against you in your present position, in your present character and you must change your position. Come, then, and escape the hostility of the Word of the Lord by altering your attitude towards it! If you have loved sin, repent and hate it. May God the Holy Spirit work in you a loathing of evil things which the Word condemns, for when you are no longer a sin-lover, but a sinloather, the Word that was against you will be for you! God has no thunderbolts for those who hate their sins. If your soul and sin are divorced, your soul and mercy may be married, but not otherwise. When you give up your sin, God will give up His suit against you. If you turn not, He will whet His sword—but if you turn, He will sheathe that sword and speak comfortably to you.

Another change must take place. You must no longer stand in yourself, but in Another. The Word of the Lord is against you, but what if you could change places with Another, on whose side the Word of the Lord is, and in whom you could lawfully and rightly stand? What if Christ stood in your place and you should stand in Christ’s place? Then this Word would not condemn you, but it would acquit you! And more than that, it would defend you against all your adversaries. Behold a miracle of mercy! Christ Jesus, the innocent Son of God, dies for the guilty sons of men, that they may be covered with His righteousness and accepted in His name! This is the pith and marrow of the Gospel—“I stand in Christ’s place because He stood in mine. The Law cannot be against Him, for He fulfilled it and made it honorable. The Word of the Lord cannot be against Him, since He hid it in His heart, that He might not sin against God. And if I come to be in Him, where the Word is hidden, it can no longer be against me.”—

*“Confounded, Lord, I wrap my face,  
And hang my guilty head,  
Ashamed of all my wicked ways,  
The hateful life I’ve led.  
I yield—by mighty love subdued;  
Who can resist its charms?  
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,  
Into my Savior’s arms.”*

Let me say to you further, that if you have, up to now, had the Word of the Lord against you, be very careful to be right with the Word. In seeking to be saved, avoid, above everything, a sham salvation. When a man has a bad sore, it is a mischievous thing to let it heal with proud flesh in it. To cover over a wound may be to create seven dangers instead of one. Come to the Word of God and search yourself. Use the lances, take the probe, examine into the depth of your wound and sore. Let your prayer be, “O God, let me never be comforted apart from Your Word. Let me have no foundation apart from Christ to build upon! Let me never think that I am saved unless Christ is my Savior.” My dear Hearer you would be better off hungry than to eat poisoned meat! And you would be better off in despair than get comfort that does not spring out of the Word of God! If you think that you are saved and yet find that “the Word of the Lord is against you,” you may be sure that you are not saved and should hasten to cast away your false confidence as quickly as possible! You can never be saved unless you are right with the Word of God—

*“This is the judge that ends the strife,  
Where wit and reason fail.  
My guide to everlasting life  
Through all this gloomy vale.”*

One more thing and I have done. If to have the Word of God against you is an overwhelming calamity, how happy are they who have the Word of the Lord with them! I have heard of two Romanists, a man and his wife, who purchased their first copy of the Scriptures. The man began to read it and, one night, as he sat beside the fire with the open Book, he said, “Wife, if this Book is right, we are wrong.” He continued reading and a few days afterwards he said, “Wife, if this Book is right, we are lost.” More eager, now, than ever to see what the Word of the Lord was, he studied the Book until, one night, he joyfully exclaimed, “Wife, if this Book is true, we are saved.” The same word that showed them that they were undone, revealed also the Gospel of salvation! This is the glory of the Word of God—it is against us until it leads us out of our sins and then we find that death becomes the gate of life to our souls—and the Word of God is on our side!

The same Word that reveals the terrors of the Lord, also says, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” I believe on the Son of God as my Savior, therefore I have everlasting life! The Word of the Lord is now for me and assures my deliverance. It further says, “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved.” When I read this, my heart sings for joy, for the Word of God which was against me, now justifies me! Again it says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” As I tremble because it is written, “He that believes not shall be damned,” I rejoice because the same Word says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” I believe, and I have been baptized—therefore I am saved! If you have the Word of God for you, you need no other advocate. Even your own conscience may be lawfully overridden by the Word of the Lord. “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things.”

This is the sum of the whole matter! Come just as you are and trust Christ as your Savior! Leave your sin and seek after holiness. Have done with your own willfulness and seek the meek and lowly mind that was in the Man of Sorrows. In a word, come and lie at Jesus’ feet and lift your tearful eyes to His loving gaze, and say—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Your kind arms I fall.  
Be You my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my All.”*

Trust Christ! Trust Him now! Trust Him only! Trust Him wholly! Trust Him forever and you shall be eternally saved! As surely as the Bible is true, you are safe for time and for eternity if you believe in Jesus!

God bless this feeble word of mine! I have tried to preach the Word of God faithfully, that, at the day of account, I may be clear of the blood of all men. I shall not, then, be asked whether I spoke eloquently, or whether I had energy of mind or power of voice—but I shall be asked if I warned you to escape from sin and seek the Savior! And that, by the Grace of God, I have done to the utmost of my power. I wish that I knew how to persuade men to seek the Lord. Oh, that I could learn the art of reading the hearts of men! What do you want with fine speeches? Escape for your lives! What do you want with polished phrases and rounded periods? “Lay hold on eternal life.” Repent! Believe the Gospel and be saved! O God, the Holy Spirit, lead men to this blessed decision at this very moment, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 26.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—501, 520, 589.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
BELOVED READERS—This sermon was preached with great anxiety for the souls of those who heard it. And now that it comes forth from the press, I again lift my heart to God with the prayer that it may awaken many who are slumbering in indifference. Believing readers will greatly oblige me if they will place their copies in the way of persons for whose salvation they are pleading with God. It may be that the Lord will use this discourse to the end they so much desire. My silent Sabbaths breed in me a great hunger for the salvation of those to whom I can only speak through the press. Oh, that my Lord would honor me by making me fruitful in this winter of my weakness!

I have a word for this season which I must not forget. Christmas is near. Our orphan children must have their festival, though I cannot have the joy of presiding at it. Will my kind friends remember my family of 500, keep up the general funds, and add some little treat for the boys and girls?

I am sending a Christmas letter to all the subscribers whose names we have on our list, but as we may miss some, let them not feel that they are left out. I invite their thoughtful consideration of the matter. Direct to the Secretary, Stockwell Orphanage, Clapham Road, London, and thus gratify Your old friend,  
*C. H. Spurgeon,*  
Mentone, December 12, 1891.

[Brother Spurgeon went Home to the Christ he loved so much on January 31, 1892—EOD.]  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1580 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

AN INDICTMENT WITH FOUR COUNTS

NO. 1580

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“She obeyed not His voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.”  
Zephaniah 3:2.

HERE ARE FOUR heavy counts of a terrible indictment against Jerusalem and the Jewish people. Is it not sad to reflect that Jerusalem was the city of the great king and yet fell from its high estate? It was the place of the great Temple—there the light of God shone forth while other nations were in darkness—there the solemn worship of God was celebrated while false gods were being adored elsewhere! And yet its sin provoked the Lord till He gave it up to the Destroyer. It is clear, therefore, that no degree of Light and no amount of privilege can keep a people alive and right before God. If the heart is not changed, if the Grace of God goes not with outward ordinances, those who are exalted to Heaven may yet be cast down to Hell.

The putrefaction of the best produces the worst and when a city which has been favored as Jerusalem has, become a den of unclean beasts, then it is a den, indeed! Neither Nineveh, nor Babylon, nor Tyre, nor Sidon could equal in criminality this once chosen city of the great king. Let us not, therefore, as a nation, begin to exalt ourselves because of our privileges, for if we do not prove worthy of them, the candlestick will be taken out of its place and our darkness will be all the darker because of the Light of God we have lost. If we walk not before the Lord obediently, it may please Him to make this island as great a scene of destruction as the mounds of Babel or the rock of Tyre.

We usually take Jerusalem to be the type of a church and it is one of the fullest types of the one true Church—“Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all.” We may therefore regard the fate of Jerusalem as being a special warning to churches. In a Church is God’s dwelling place—there is the Light of knowledge, there is the fire of sacrifice—out of it has God shined. But a Church may sadly decline. There is a church which is now worthy of the name of Antichrist—she went further and further astray till she has made a man to be her head and called him infallible! She has set up many lords and gods, saints and saintesses and innumerable objects of worship—even bones and rotten rags! There is a church against whom this indictment might be laid today—“She obeyed not His voice”—she did not hear the Gospel!

“She received not correction”—when Reformers came she sought their blood. “She trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God, but she went after others and set up other intercessors than Christ and rejected the true Head of the Church. Other churches may fall into the same sin unless they are guarded by spiritual power. Remember Laodicea and how she was spit out of the mouth of Christ because she was neither cold nor hot! Remember Sardis which had but a few names in it that were undefiled! Where are those cities and those churches, now? Let desolation answer. It might be said of them as of Gilgal, of which the Lord said, “Go you there to the place where My name was at the first, and see if there is one stone left of it upon another which has not been cast down.”

Oh that we as a Church and all our sister Churches may walk before the Lord with holy jealousy as to doctrinal correctness, practical holiness and inner spiritual life! But, if not, our end will be miserable failure! If the salt of Divine Grace is not in a Church it cannot be an acceptable sacrifice to God, nor can it long be kept from the corruption which is natural to all masses of flesh! What are one people more than another? And what is one community more than another? We are men by nature, prone to the same evil, and we shall fall into the same transgression unless the Lord that keeps Israel shall keep us—and therein is our confidence—that He does neither slumber nor sleep.

This text is not only applicable to a nation and to a Church, but to individuals among God’s own people, though, of course, only in a degree. Some of God’s people follow Christ afar—their spiritual life is better seen in their fears than in their confidences! They are always trembling. Their hands are slack, their hearts are faint. We trust they are alive unto God, but that is all we can say. I fear it may be said of them, “She obeyed not His voice”—the gentle whisper of Divine Love falls upon a deaf ear. Oh, how often, Brothers and Sisters, has God spoken and we have not hearkened so as to obey His voice!

I fear, too, that there are times when we have not “received correction”—when affliction has been lost upon us. We have risen from a sickbed worse than when we went to it! Our losses and crosses have provoked us to murmuring rather than to heart-searching. We have been bruised as in a mortar among wheat with a pestle and yet our folly has not departed from us. And this is a very provoking thing—when we despise the rod and the hand that uses it—and turn not at the smiting of the Lord. Yet it is so with some of God’s people—they obey not His voice, they receive not correction and, therefore, it comes to pass that at times “they trust not in the Lord.” They try to bear their trials themselves. They go to friends for advice and they inherit a curse, for it is written, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.”

They get into a withered state like the heath in the desert. They see not when good comes because they trust in man. Must not some of us plead guilty here? To add to our faults, whenever we have backslidden we have “not drawn near to the Lord our God.” The joy and the strength of the Christian life are found in living near to God, living like sheep close to the shepherd, never wandering, but lying down in green pastures to which He leads the way, Himself, better than the pasture, our joy and our delight! But, alas, it may be said of some, “You have restrained prayer before God.” “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you?”

Your transgressions and your iniquities have hidden your God from you! He walks contrary to you because you walk contrary to Him. This is too, too often the case with even those who trust in Jesus and have passed from death unto Life—and whenever it is the case, it means sorrow. He that is no child of God, but a hypocrite, may wander as far from the path of integrity as he chooses without having to suffer for it till the last day. But a child of God cannot sin without smarting for it. Is it not written, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for your iniquities”? Our Father whips His own children! The boys in the streets may do as they please, but our great Father is sure to chasten those He loves. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.”

At this time I do not intend to use the words of our text in any of those ways, but to take it as it may refer to unconverted persons, for it very clearly, without the slightest strain, describes many who are living far away from God and I shall want you to give me your attention for a little time while I notice four great sins. When these are mentioned I shall try to dig into the text to bring out of it four hidden consolations—they are not apparent on the surface—but when faith applies the microscope and looks into the center of the text, it discovers four things by which the penitent sinner may be encouraged to come to Christ.

I. First, here are FOUR MANIFEST SINS. I wonder whether the fact that my text is in the feminine is intended, in the Providence of God, that this sermon may be especially adapted to a woman? I cannot tell, but I should not wonder. I may have been moved to this text on purpose that some poor wandering sister may feel as if God specially directed it to her sex. It says she—“She obeyed not His voice.” Whatever belongs to any of our race may be taken by all, since in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. However, I point out the fact and pray God that His Word may be directed as He wills by the Holy Spirit.

The first sin is not hearkening to God’s voice. Many have never hearkened to God’s voice throughout a long life. They have heard it—they could not help that—but they have never given heed. They have never lent an attentive ear, saying, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” He has spoken to many here present in warnings. He has said, “My daughter, if you do this, it will lead you to grief and sorrow. If you remain hard and careless, it cannot end well. Nothing can be right at the last which is not right now—wrong must bring woe with it.” Sometimes this warning has come home into the heart but the person of whom I am speaking has stifled it and said, “No, but I will go after my own way and follow my own pleasure.”

That warning has come, perhaps, in the silence of the night or in the very midst of the sin. A something that checked, a pulling of the rein—but the sinner could not be held in, no, not with bit nor bridle—he has taken the bit between his teeth and dashed on in sin! Oh, remember, you that have neglected Divine warnings—you may have forgotten them, but God has not! When you who love your children have spoken to them and warned them, they may have gone their way and quite forgotten “what mother said,” but mother remembered it. Her tears flowed and wrote the memorial of her rebukes upon her face. And God forgets not warnings He has tendered to the sons of men.

I address some, however, who have not only received warning and rejected it, but they have received much teaching. You were in a Sunday school class while yet a girl. You knew the plan of salvation very early in life and you know it now, but still you have not obeyed the voice. There is Christ, but you have not touched His garment’s hem. There is the Fountain filled with blood of which you have been accustomed to sing, but you have never washed in it. There is the Bread of Life, but you have never fed on it and, in consequence, you live not unto God. Oh, it is a sad thing when it can be said, “She obeyed not His voice.”

To some who are here present, God’s voice has come by way of expostulation. There are many expostulations in the Word of God such as this— “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, oh house of Israel?” “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” “Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up.” “Say unto Him, take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, and love us freely.” Some of you had many such expostulations addressed to your heart and conscience, but you have not obeyed His voice. And then at the back of this have come invitations, sweet invitations. In the Bible you have read them; in hymns you have sung them; from the pulpit you have heard them; from kind friends you have received them.

Oh, how sweetly does Jesus bid the hungry and the thirsty come to Him; the heavy laden and such as are bowed down, to come and find rest in Him! You used to feel, at one time, as if you would yield to these invitations. But you did not and this sin lies at your door, a stumbling block in the way of your peace—“She obeyed not His voice.” When men fail to do right, they usually commit the wrong which is the reverse of it. You have listened to other voices, the siren voice of temptation has enchanted you, the voice of flattery has puffed you up, the voice of Satan has beguiled you, the voice of the flesh has fascinated you, the voice of the world has wooed you and has held you captive.

While we lay this indictment before you, some of you cannot help saying, “He means me. It is even so with me.” The Lord give you repentance and open your ears, for is it not written, “Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David”? Oh, Divine Spirit, let not men be deaf any longer, but touch them with Your finger that they may hear the voice of God and live!

That is the first count of the indictment and the second one is like unto it and grows out of it—“she received not correction.” When men refuse God’s voice, they soon become more hardened and reject His correction like a horse which does not answer to the rein and, by-and-by, even kicks at the whip and will not be ruled at all. The Lord’s correction comes to us, sometimes from His word, when He speaks in anger and reminds us that His wrath abides on the man that believes not in Christ. Oh, there are heavy tidings from the Lord for you that are impenitent! This Book is not a book to play with, it is full of the terrors of the Lord against such as go on in rebellion against Him!

Perhaps you have been made to tremble as you have read your Bible and have seen how the Lord pronounces a solemn curse against the man that goes on in his iniquity. But the correction may also have come to you from your own conscience, quickened by the Word of God. You have come to be uneasy. You start in your sleep with dreams that alarm you. If you are as I once was, everything you look upon seems to have a mouth to accuse you! I remember when the Lord’s corrections were very heavy upon me. I could not see a funeral but what I wondered when I, too, should be carried to the grave. I could not pass a churchyard without the reflection that I should soon be there and when I heard the passing bell, it seemed to tell me that I should soon be judged and condemned, for I had no hope of pardon. These are corrections of God and I pray you regard them.

Possibly, however, you have endured affliction. You are not well. You have been made to look into eternity through death’s door. Perhaps one or another of your friends has died. You now wear the garb of mourning. God has corrected you. You have had a loss which you thought you could scarcely survive, it was so severe. “Despise not you the chastening of the Lord,” but hear His rod and listen to what He has to say to you in it. Remember, God may smite you worse than He has done, for these few aches and pains He can find something more sharp and smarting. If one child has gone, He can take another, even from your breast! If one relative has died, another may follow, for the great Archer has many arrows in His quiver and when one suffices not, He speedily wings another in its painful flight. I pray you beware and let it not be said of you, “She received not correction,” or, “He received not correction,” but may you be willing to listen while God is thus dealing with you.

This leads to a third crime, in which lies the very essence of deadly sin—“She trusted not in the Lord.” She would not come and trust in Christ for salvation! She would believe in her own righteousness. She would not trust in Christ to help her to overcome sin. She said she was quite able to purify herself. Oh, many a young man has started fair for Heaven to all appearances, but it has been in his own strength and, like Pliable, he has no sooner stumbled into the Slough of Despond than he has turned his back on the heavenly city and returned to the place from which he set out. Beware, I pray you, of having anything to do with a hope that is not based upon trust in God in Christ Jesus! Your religion is vanity and an insult to high Heaven unless it is based on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Where there is no faith in Jesus, peace is presumption. He that dares to hope till he has believed in Christ, hopes in vain.

But ah, there are some who are driven to do many apparently gracious things—but yet this one thing they will not do—they will not trust in the Lord. I have known this to be sadly the case with some in great affliction. She did not trust in the Lord—she was a widow, but she did not trust in the Lord! She had many little children. She knew not where to find them bread, but she did not trust in the Lord! She was sick and ill, herself, but she trusted not in the Lord. She was laid at death’s door. She was in the infirmary, in the hospital—but she trusted not in the Lord. Her heart was very heavy and she said she wished she could die, but she trusted not in the Lord! Her friends did not help her—those who ought to have been kind were cruel. But she trusted not in the Lord! She was driven into a corner and yet she did not trust in the Lord.

Yes, and this is a great sin, for surely God takes away our props and dependences on purpose that we may throw our whole weight on Him! But there are some who will have nothing to do with this trusting, neither for time nor for eternity, neither for body nor for soul. Woe unto any man, be he even a child of God, if he once gets off the pathway of faith, for when we walk by sight we shall see things which shall make us wish we were blind! Only when we trust shall we be able to say, “I am not confounded nor ashamed, nor shall I be, world without end.” This is sad—“She trusted not in the Lord.”

The fourth crime was, “She drew not near to her God.” There was no prayer. There was much talk about her trouble; much talk about what she would like to do—but there was no asking of God, no going into the chamber and spreading the case before Him and pleading His mercy. There was no thought of God! The mind did not get near to Him. The desires rambled round in a thousand devious paths, but did not come to God. Oh, it is hard to get some of you to think of God! I try and preach as best I can and try to find striking words to make you think of God, but, oh, how often do I fail! The choicest ways I use defeat themselves! May it not be so now! Let it not be said of you any longer that “she drew not near to her God.” We ought to think of Him! We ought to seek Him! We ought to come to Him as little chicks when there is a hawk in the air and they hear the call of the mother hen—they are soon hidden away under her feathers!

We ought to run in prayer, that it might be true of us, “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” If you had a child that in its troubles ran out into the street and when its little heart was heavy went away to strangers and never told father or mother its sorrow, you would feel very hurt. This is God’s quarrel with His rebellious people, that they will go to Satan, himself, before they will come to Him! No, think not that I run too far and use an extravagant expression, for Saul did this when God answered him not. He offered no penitent petitions, but resorted to a witch for help! Many would penetrate into the recesses of the unseen world and tamper with spiritual mysteries sooner than they will go to God. Silly women will believe a fortune teller, but will not trust the Savior. Is it so with any of you? Then let this word of accusation sink deep and confess your transgression unto the Lord!  
Putting the four sentences together—“She obeyed not His voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to God”—what then? Why, “woe unto her!” Read the first verse of the chapter and there you have it. As I was coming here that word, “woe,” “woe,” “woe,” seemed to ring in my ears and I wondered where it came from. I will tell you. It is a word that goes to be made into a worse word. Let me pronounce it for you, “woe”—and that leads to something woe-erse—worse! And to the woe-erst the worst of all. It is bad, lamentable, destructive, ruinous, painful, wretched, miserable woe, worse, worst! I wish I could pronounce the word as my Master did when He said, “Woe unto you, Bethsaida; woe unto you, Chorazin; woe unto you, Capernaum.” I should hardly like to say it as He did, for He had a Light to judge which I have not—“Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,” and so on.

But that, “woe,” as He pronounced it must have sounded terribly, softly, sadly, sternly piercing to the heart! Ah, how will the angels sound it at the last? Hear it now, lest you hear it at the last! “One woe is past and, behold, another woe comes!” When the Judge of all the earth shall break the seals and pour out the vials and the ungodly sons of men shall see the star, Wormwood, and shall drink of the bitterness of the wrath of God— WOE—it means sorrow here! No rest! No satisfaction! Woe, woe, even at this day unto the man that trusts not in God! But what it means in the next world—to be driven from the face of Christ, to be followed with a “woe” which shall have eternal echoes—woe, woe, woe! I would gladly stop and cry with Mr. Whitfield, “The wrath to come! The wrath to come! “Escape from it while yet life lasts and Jesus pleads with you, for otherwise this shall fall like a thunderbolt from the hand of the angry Judge!”

“Woe to her. She obeyed not His voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.” Then all this will turn to woe, the voice disregarded will ring again, “Son, remember! Son, remember! Woe, woe!” As for the correction which was disregarded, oh how light and gentle it will seem compared with the strokes that will then fall upon the rejecters of Christ! Every correction will then turn to woe! And the not trusting in the Savior, the unbelief—what woe that will bring! The not drawing near to God—what woe that will cost when we shall see ourselves afar off and between us and God a great gulf fixed so that none can come to us, no, not so much as to bring a drop of water to cool our tongue! And neither can any go from us, or escape from the place of woe.

II. To help any who would escape from this woe, I shall spend a minute in noticing THE FOUR HIDDEN CONSOLATIONS WHICH LIE IN THIS TEXT. I do not intend to enlarge upon them because I want the previous part of this discourse to abide in your minds—but there are four hidden consolations. The first is, if I have not obeyed His voice yet, it is plain He does speak, He speaks to me. My Soul, my Soul, God is not dumb. Can you be deaf? Still does He invite you, still does He call you, still does His good Spirit strive with you! This voice of mine, tonight, I hope will be God’s voice to some of you. Be encouraged! He has not given up on you, but still calls. When the sentence of death is pronounced there are no warnings given and since you are having another call, I would encourage you to hope.

The next is, “She received not correction.” Then all my troubles and afflictions are meant to bring me to Christ. They are all sent in love to my soul and I ought to look at them as such. My Friend, where are you? I do not know where you are, or to whom I am speaking, but I do pray you see that God, who seems to have dealt very harshly with you, is only driving you to mercy! His voice has been harsh and His hand has been heavy, but in love He corrects you! Oh listen to Him! Come to Him! A judge does not correct a criminal doomed to die. God does not correct a soul, with a view to its reclamation, if He has given it up altogether!

Notice the next sentence. “She trusted not in the Lord.” Is it a crime, then, that I did not trust in the Lord? Then I may trust Him and I will, for that which is a sin not to do, I must have a right to do—and if it is laid to my charge, “She trusts not in the Lord,” oh, sweet mercy! Sweet mercy, I may trust! This is why the Scripture says, “He that believes not shall be damned,” as if to assure you that you certainly may believe, because you will be damned if you do not! Come, then, and let even the black side of the text wear a smile for you and lead you to trust your God since He blames you for not doing so!

Then there was the last crime. “She drew not near to God.” What, then, does God make it a fault that I do not draw near to Him? Oh, I wish the Spirit of God would put it into your heart to say, “That shall not be my fault any longer—

*‘I’ll to the gracious King approach,  
Whose scepter pardon gives.  
Perhaps He may command my touch,  
And then the suppliant lives.’*

I thought I might not come, but now I see I am condemned for not coming, then I will come! I will delay no longer, I will come to Jesus, determined that if I perish I will perish at His feet!”

Have hope, my Friend, for none did ever perish there! May God set His seal to this word of expostulation for Jesus’ sake. Amen.  
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A SERMON FOR THE TIME PRESENT

NO. 1990

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 30, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack. The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty. He will save, He will rejoice  
over you with joy. He will rest in His love; He will joy over you with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful over the solemn assembly, who are of you, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.” Zephaniah 3:16-18.**

HOLY Scripture is wonderfully full and abiding in its inner sense. It is a springing well where you may draw and draw again, for as you draw, it springs up forever new and fresh! It is a well of water springing up everlastingly. The fulfillment of a Divine promise is not the exhaustion of it. When a man gives you a promise and he keeps it, there is an end of the promise—but it is not so with God. When He keeps His Word to the fullest, He has but begun—He is prepared to keep it, and keep it, and keep it forever and ever! What would you say of a man who had wheat upon his barn floor and threshed it until he had beaten out the last golden grain, but the next day he went and threshed again and brought back as much as the day before? And what if, on the day after, again taking his flail, he went to the same threshing and again brought back his measure as full as at the first, and so on for all the days of the year? Would it not seem to you as a fairy tale? It would certainly be a surprising miracle! But what should we say if, throughout a long life, this miracle could be prolonged?

Yet we have continued to thresh the promises of God ever since faith was given us—and we have carried away our full portion every day! What shall we say of the glorious fact that the saints in all generations, from the first day until now, have done the same? And of that equal Truth of God, that as long as there is a needy soul upon earth, there will be upon the threshing door of the promises the same abundance of the finest of the wheat as when the first man filled his measure and returned rejoicing? I will not dwell upon the specific application of the text before us. I do not doubt that it was specially fulfilled as it was intended and if there still remains some special piece of history to which this passage alludes, it will again be fulfilled in due time. But this I know, that those who have lived between whiles have found this promise true to them! Children of God have used these promises under all sorts of circumstances and have derived the utmost comfort from them!

And this morning I feel as if the text had been newly written for the present occasion, for it is in every syllable most suitable to the immediate crisis. If the Lord had fixed His eyes upon the condition of His Church just now, and had written this passage only for this year of Grace, 1887, it could scarcely have been more adapted to the occasion! Our business shall be to show this, but I would aim at much more. Let our prayer be that we may enjoy this marvelous portion of the sacred Word of God and take intense delight in it. As God rests in His love, so may we rest in it this morning. And as He joys over us with singing, so may we break forth into joyous Psalms to the God of our salvation!

I am going to begin with the last verse of the text and work my way backwards. The first head is, a trying day for God’s people. They are sorrowful because a cloud is upon their solemn assembly and the reproach thereof is a burden. Secondly, we will note a glorious ground of consolation. We read in the 17th verse, “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty. He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love; He will joy over you with singing.” And, thirdly, here is a brave conduct suggested thereby—“In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack.”

I. Beginning at the 18th verse, we notice A TRYING DAY FOR GOD’S PEOPLE. The solemn assembly had fallen under reproach. The solemn assemblies of Israel were her glory—her great days of festival and sacrifice were the gladness of the land. To the faithful, their holy days were their holidays. But a reproach had fallen upon the solemn assembly and I believe it is so now at this present moment. It is a sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies the brilliance of the Gospel Light is dimmed by error. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people and those who ought to preach the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, are preaching doctrines which are the imaginations of men and the inventions of the age! Instead of the Revelation of God, we have philosophy, falsely so-called! Instead of Divine Infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, today and forever is taught as the production of progress, a growth, a thing to be amended and corrected year by year. It is an ill day, both for the Church and the world, when the trumpet does not give a certain sound—for who shall prepare himself for the battle?

If added to this, we should see creeping over the solemn assembly of the Church a lifelessness, an indifference and a lack of spiritual power—it is painful to a high degree. When the vitality of religion is despised and gatherings for prayer are neglected, what are we coming to? The present period of Church history is well portrayed by the Church of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot and, therefore, to be spewed out of Christ’s mouth. That Church gloried that she was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, while all the while her Lord was outside, knocking at the door, a door closed against Him! That passage is constantly applied to the unconverted, with whom it has nothing to do—it has to do with a lukewarm Church, with a Church that thought itself to be in an eminently prosperous condition—while her living Lord, in the doctrine of His atoning Sacrifice, was denied an entrance! Oh, if He had found admission—and He was eager to find it—she would soon have flung away her imaginary wealth and He would have given her gold tried in the furnace and white raiment with which she might be clothed! Alas, she is content without her Lord, for she has education, oratory, science and a thousand other baubles! Zion’s solemn assembly is under a cloud, indeed, when the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles is of small account with her.

If in addition to this, worldly conformity spreads in the Church so that the vain amusements of the world are shared in by the saints! Then is there reason enough for lamentation, even as Jeremiah cried—“How is the gold become dim!” Her Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, have become blacker than coal. “All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.” If there is no longer a clear distinction between the Church and the world, but professed followers of Jesus have joined hands with unbelievers, then may we mourn, indeed! Woe worth the day! An ill time has happened to the Church and also to the world. We may expect great judgments, for the Lord will surely be avenged on such a people as this! Know you not of old that when the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they were joined unto them, then the flood came and swept them all away? I need not pursue this subject further, lest our burdens take from us the time which is demanded for consolation.

It appears from the text that there were some to whom the reproach was a burden. They could not make sport of sin. True, there were many who said that the evil did not exist at all! And others who declared that it was not present in any great degree. Yes, and more hardened spirits declared that what was considered to be a reproach was really a thing to be boasted of, the very glory of the century! Thus they huffed the matter and made the mourning of the conscientious to be a theme for jest. But there was a remnant to whom the reproach of it was a burden—these could not bear to see such a calamity. To these the Lord God will have respect, as He said by the Prophet—“Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.”

The majority drank wine in bowls and anointed themselves with their chief ointments, but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos 6:6). But some were pressed in spirit and bore the Cross, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. God’s people cannot bear that Christ’s atoning Sacrifice should be dishonored! They cannot endure that this Truth of God should be trod under as mire in the streets. To true Believers, prosperity means the Holy Spirit blessing the Word to the conversion of sinners and the building up of saints. And if they do not see this, they hang their harps on the willows. True lovers of Jesus fast when the Bridegroom is not with His Church—their glory is in His Glory and in nothing else! The wife of Phinehas, the son of Eli, cried out in her aging agony, “The glory has departed,” and the reason that she gave was once because of the death of her husband and his father, but, twice, because, “the Ark of God is taken.” For this she named her newborn child, Ichabod—“The glory is departed from Israel, for the Ark of God is taken.” The most bitter pain of this godly woman was for the Church and for the honor of our God! So it is with God’s true people—they lay it much to heart that the Truth of God is rejected.

This burdened spirit is a token of true love to God—those who love the Lord Jesus are wounded in His wounding and vexed with the vexing of His Spirit. When Christ is dishonored, His disciples are dishonored. Those who have a tender heart towards the Church can say with Paul, “Who is offended and I burn not?” The sins of the Church of God are the sorrows of all living members of it. This also marks a healthy sensibility, a vital spirituality. Those who are unspiritual care nothing for Truth or Grace— they look to finances, numbers and respectability! Utterly carnal men care for nothing spiritual and, so long as the political aims of Dissenters are progressing and there is an advance in social position, it is enough for them. But men whose spirits are of God would sooner see the faithful persecuted than see them desert the Truth! They would sooner see Churches in the depths of poverty, full of holy zeal, than rich churches dead in worldliness! Spiritual men care for the Church even when she is in an evil case and cast down by her adversaries—“Your servants take pleasure in her stones and favor the dust thereof.” The House of the Lord is, to many of us, our own house. His family is our family! Unless the Lord Jesus is extolled and His Gospel conquers, we feel that our own personal interests are blighted and we, ourselves, are in disgrace. It is no small thing to us— it in our life!

Thus have I dwelt upon the fact that it is an ill day for God’s people when the solemn assembly is defiled—the reproach thereof is a burden to those who are truly citizens of the New Jerusalem—and because of this, they are seen to be sorrowful. The Lord here says, “I will gather them that are sorrowful over the solemn assembly.” They may well be sorrowful when such a burden is laid on their hearts. Moreover, they see in a hundred ways the ill effect of the evil which they deplore. Many are lame and halting—this is hinted at in the promise of the 19th verse—“I will save the lame.” Pilgrims on the road to Zion were made to limp on the road because the Prophets were “light and treacherous persons.” When the pure Gospel is not preached, God’s people are robbed of the strength which they need in their life journey. If you take away the bread, the children hunger. If you give the flock poisonous pastures, or fields which are barren as the desert, they pine and they become lame in their daily following of the Shepherd. The doctrinal soon affects the practical.

I know many of the people of God living in different parts of this country to whom the Sabbath is very little of a day of rest, for they hear no Truths of God in which rest is to be found—they are worried and wearied with novelties which neither glorify God nor benefit the souls of men! In many a place, the sheep look up and are not fed. This causes much disquietude and breeds doubts and questions—and thus strength is turned to weakness and the work of faith, the labor of love and the patience of hope are all kept in a lame state. This is a grievous evil and it is all around us. Then, alas, many are “driven out,” of whom the 19th verse says, “I will gather those who are driven out.” By false doctrine many are made to wander from the fold. Hopeful ones are made to stray from the path of life and sinners are left in their natural distance from God. The Truth of God which would convince men of sin is not preached, while other Truths which would lead seekers into peace are beclouded and souls are left in needless sorrow. When the Doctrines of Grace and the glorious atoning Sacrifice are not set clearly before men’s minds, so that they may feel their power, all sorts of evils follow! It is terrible to me that this dreadful blight should come upon our Churches, for the hesitating are driven to destruction, the weak are staggered and even the strong are perplexed! The false teachers of these days would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect! This makes our hearts very sorrowful. How can we help it?

Yet, Beloved, all the time that the people of God are in this evil case, they are not without hope, for close upon all this comes the promise of the Lord to restore His wandering ones. We have the sense twice over—“I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.” “I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, says the Lord.” The adversaries cannot silence the eternal testimony! They hung our Lord, Himself, on a tree. They took down His body and buried it in a tomb in the rock. And they set their seal upon the stone which they rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher. Surely, now, there was an end of the Christ and His cause! Boast not, you priests and Pharisees! Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! When the appointed time had come, the living Christ came forth! He could not be held by the cords of Death. How idle their dreams! “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord does have them in derision.” Beloved, the reproach will yet be rolled away from the solemn assembly—the Truth of God will yet again be proclaimed as with trumpet tongue! The Spirit of God will revive His Church and converts as many as the sheaves of the harvest shall yet be gathered in! How will the faithful rejoice! Those who were burdened and sorrowful shall then put on their garments of joy and beauty! Then shall the ransomed of the Lord return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads! The conflict is not doubtful. The end of the battle is sure and certain. I think I even now hear the shout, “The Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

II. Secondly, let as think of something which shines like a star amid the darkness. The second verse of the text presents A GLORIOUS GROUND OF CONSOLATION. Here is a rich text, indeed! This passage is like a great sea, while I am as a little child making pools in the sand which skirts its boundless flood. A series of discourses might well be founded on this one verse—I mean the seventeenth.

Our great consolation in the worst times lies in our God . The very name of our Covenant God—“The Lord Your God”—is full of good cheer! That word, “The Lord,” is really JEHOVAH, the Self-Existent One, the Unchangeable One, the Ever-Living God who cannot change or be moved from His everlasting purpose! Children of God, whatever you have not got, you have a God in whom you may greatly glory! Having God, you have more than all things, for all things come of Him. And if all things were blotted out, He could restore all things simply by His will. He speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast! Blessed is the man that has the God of Jacob for his trust and whose hope is Jehovah! In the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength. Let us trust in Him forever! Let the times roll on—they cannot affect our God. Let troubles rush upon us like a tempest, but they shall not come near unto us now that He is our defense. Jehovah, the God of His Church, is also the God of each individual member of it—and each one may, therefore, rejoice in Him. Jehovah is as much your God, my Brothers and Sisters, as if no other person in the universe could use that Covenant expression!

O Believer, the Lord God is altogether and wholly your God! All His wisdom, all His foresight, all His power, all His immutability—all Himself is yours! As for the Church of God, when she is in her lowest estate, she is still established and endowed in the best possible sense—established by the Divine decree and endowed by the possession of God All-Sufficient! The gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. Let us exult in our possession! Poor as we are, we are infinitely rich in having God! Weak as we are, there is no limit to our strength, since the Almighty Jehovah is ours! “ If God is for us, who can be against us?” If God is ours, what more can we need? Lift up your heart, you sorrowful one, and be of good cheer! If God is your God, you have all you can desire. Wrapped up within His glorious name we find all things for time and eternity, for earth and Heaven. Therefore in the name of Jehovah we will set up our banners and march onward to the battle! He is our God by His own purpose, Covenant and oath—and this day He is our God by our own choice of Him, by our union with Christ Jesus, by our experience of His goodness and by that spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.”

To strengthen this consolation, we notice, next, that this God is in the midst of us. He is not a long way off, to be sought with difficulty, if haply we may find Him. The Lord is a God near at hand and ready to deliver His people. Is it not delightful to think that we cry not to God across the ocean, for He is here? We look not up to Him from afar, as though He dwelt beyond the stars, neither do we think of Him as hidden in the fathomless abyss—but the Lord is very near. Our God is “Jehovah in the midst of you.” Since that bright night in which a Babe was born at Bethlehem and unto us a Son was given, we know God as, “Emmanuel, God With Us.” God is in our Nature and, therefore, very near to us. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Though His bodily Presence is gone, yet we have His spiritual Presence with us always, for He says, “Lo, I am with you always.” He walks among the golden candlesticks. We also have the immediate Presence of God the Holy Spirit. He is in the midst of the Church to enlighten, convince, quicken, endow, comfort and clothe with spiritual power. The Lord still works in the minds of men for the accomplishment of His purposes of Grace.

Let us think of this when we are going forth to Christian service—“The Lord of Hosts is with us.” When you call your class together in the Sunday school, say to your Lord, “If Your Presence go not with me, carry me not up from here.” Ah, Friends, if we have God with us, we can bear to be deserted by men! What a Word of God that is, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”! Shall not the army shout when the King, Himself, is in their ranks! Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered! When He is with us they that hate Him must flee before Him! Be it our concern so to live that we may never grieve away the Spirit of God. Beloved, there is such abundant consolation in the fact of the Presence of God with us, that if we could only feel the power of it at this moment, we should enter into rest and our Heaven would begin below!

Let us go a step further and note that our consolation is largely to be found in the fact that this God in the midst of us is full of power to save. “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save.” That is to say, “Jehovah, your God, is mighty to save.” His arm is not shortened! He is still “a just God and a Savior.” Nor is He merely able to save, but He will display that ability—“He will save.” Come, my Brother, we see around us this and that to discourage us—let us, like David, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God! We may very well forget all difficulties, since the God who is in the midst of us is mighty to save! Let us pray, then, that He will save—that He will save His own Church from lukewarmness and from deadly error—that He will save her from her worldliness and formalism. He will save her from unconverted ministers and ungodly members! Let us lift up our eyes and behold the power which is ready to save and let us go on to pray that the Lord may save the unconverted by thousands and millions! Oh, that we might see a great revival of religion! This is what we need before all things. This would smite the enemy on the cheekbone and break the teeth of the adversary! If tens of thousands of souls were immediately saved by the Sovereign Grace of God, what a rebuke it would be to those who deny the faith! Oh, for times such as our fathers saw when first Whitefield and his helpers began to preach the life-giving Word of God!

When one sweet voice was heard clear and loud, all the birds of paradise began to sing in concert with him, and the morning of a glorious day was heralded. Oh, if that were to happen again, I should feel like Simeon when he embraced the heavenly Babe! Then would the virgin daughter of Zion shake her head at the foe and laugh him to scorn. It may happen— yes, if we are importunate in prayer it must happen—“God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.” Let us not seek power of rhetoric, much less of wealth, but let us look for the power which saves! This is the one thing I crave! Oh, that God would save souls! I say to myself, after being badgered and worried through the week by the men of modern thought—“I will go my way and preach Christ’s Gospel and win souls.” One lifting up of Jesus Christ Crucified is more to me than all the quibbling of the men who are wise above what is written! Converts are our unanswerable arguments! “Happy is the man,” says the Psalm, “that has his quiver full of them: they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” Blessed is the man who has many spiritual children born to God under his ministry, for his converts are his defense. Beholding the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. If souls are saved by the Gospel, the Gospel is proved in the surest manner. Let us care more about conversions than about organizations! If souls are brought into union with Christ, we may let other unions go!

We go yet further and we come to great deeps—behold God’s joy in His people. “He will rejoice over you with joy.” Think of this! Jehovah, the living God, is described as brooding over His Church with pleasure! He looks upon souls redeemed by the blood of His dear Son quickened by His Holy Spirit and His heart is glad! Even the infinite heart of God is filled with an extraordinary joy at the sight of His chosen. His delight is in His Church, His Hephzibah. I can understand a minister rejoicing over a soul that he has brought to Christ. I can also understand Believers rejoicing to see others saved from sin and Hell. But what shall I say of the infinitelyhappy and eternally-blessed God finding, as it were, a new joy in souls redeemed? This is another of those great wonders which cluster around the work of Divine Grace! “He will rejoice over you with joy.” Oh, you are trembling for the Ark of the Lord—the Lord is not trembling, but rejoicing! Faulty as the Church is, the Lord rejoices in her! While we mourn, as well we may, yet we do not sorrow as those that are without hope, for God does not sorrow—His heart is glad and He is said to rejoice with joy—a highly emphatic expression!

The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, imperfect though they are. He sees them as they are to be and so He rejoices over them, even when they cannot rejoice in themselves. When your face is blurred with tears, your eyes red with weeping and your heart is heavy with sorrow for sin, the great Father is rejoicing over you! The prodigal son wept in his father’s bosom, but the father rejoiced over his son. We are questioning, doubting, sorrowing, trembling—and all the while, He who sees the end from the beginning knows what will come out of the present disquietude and, therefore, rejoices! Let us rise in faith to share the joy of God! Let no man’s heart fail him because of the taunts of the enemy. Rather let the chosen of God rouse themselves to courage and participate in that joy of God which never ceases, even though the solemn assembly has become a reproach! Shall we not rejoice in Him when He, in His boundless condescension, deigns to rejoice in us? Whoever despairs for the cause, He does not—therefore let us be of good courage.

It is added, “He will rest in His love.” I do not know any Scripture which is more full of wonderful meaning than this! “He shall rest in His love,” as if our God had, in His people, found satisfaction! He comes to an anchorage—He has reached His desire. As when a Jacob, full of love to Rachel, has, at last, ended the years of his service and is married to his wellbeloved and his heart is at rest. So is it spoken in parable of the Lord, our God—Jesus sees of the travail of His soul when His people are won to Him! He has been baptized with His Baptism for His Church and He is no longer straitened, for His desire is fulfilled. The Lord is content with His eternal choice, content with His loving purposes, satisfied with the love which went forth from everlasting. He is well pleased in Jesus—well pleased with all the glorious purposes which are connected with His dear Son and with those who are in Him. He has a calm content in the people of His choice, as He sees them in Christ. This is also a good ground for our having a deep satisfaction of heart. We are not what we world be, but then, we are not what we shall be. We advance slowly, but then, we advance surely. The end is secured by Omnipotent Grace. It is right that we should be discontented with ourselves, yet this holy restlessness should not rob us of our perfect peace in Christ Jesus. If the Lord has rest in us, shall we not have rest in Him? If He rests in His love, cannot we rest in it? My heart is comforted as I plainly see in these words, unchanging love, abiding love, eternal love—“He will rest in His love.” Jehovah changes not! Being married to His people, “He hates putting away.” Immutability is written on His heart. The turtledove, when he has once chosen his mate, remains faithful throughout life and if the beloved dies, he will, in many cases, pine away with grief for her, for his life is wrapped up in hers. Even so our Lord has made His choice of His beloved and He will never change it—He died for His Church and so long as He lives, He will remember His own love and what it cost Him—“Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” “He will rest in His love.”

The love of God to us is undisturbed—“The peace of God, which passes all understanding”—dwells with His love. He is not disquieted about it, but peacefully loves and is never moved. The calm of God is wonderful to contemplate—His Infallible knowledge and Infinite power put Him beyond fear or question. He sees no cause of alarm as to His redeemed, nor as to the cause of Truth and the reign of righteousness! As to His true Church, He knows that she is right, or that He will make her right. She is being transformed into the image of Jesus and He rests in the full assurance that the image will, before long, be complete. He can carry out His own purposes in His own way and time. He can see the harvest as well as the sowing, therefore He does “rest in His love.” You have seen a mother wash her child and as she washes its face the child, perhaps, is crying, for it does not, for the present, enjoy the cleansing operation. Does the mother share the child’s grief? Does she also cry? Oh, no! She rejoices over her baby, and rests in her love, knowing that the light affliction of the little one will work its real good. Often our griefs are no deeper than the cry of a child because of the soap in its eyes. While the Church is being washed with tribulations and persecutions, God is resting in His love! You and I are wearying, but God is resting.

“He shall rest in His love.” The Hebrew of this line is, “He shall be silent in His love.” His happiness in His love is so great that He does not express it, but keeps a happy silence. His is a joy too deep for words! No language can express the joy of God in His love and, therefore, He uses no words. Silence in this case is infinitely expressive. One of the old commentators says, “He is deaf and dumb in His love,” as if He heard no voice of accusation against His chosen and would not speak a word of upbraiding to her. Remember the silence of Jesus and expound this text thereby.

Sometimes, also, the Lord does not speak to His people—we cannot get a cheering word from Him. And then we sigh for a promise and long for a visit of His love. But if He is thus silent, let us know that He is only silent in His love! It is not the silence of wrath, but of love! His love is not changed, even though He does not comfort us—

“ *His thoughts are high, His love is wise,  
His wounds a cure intend.  
And though He does not always smile,  
He loves unto the end.”*

When He does not answer our prayers with His hands, He yet hears them with His heart. Denials are only another form of the same love which grants our petitions. He loves us and sometimes shows that love better by not giving us what we ask than He could do if He spoke the sweetest promise which the ears have ever heard. I prize this sentence—“He shall rest in His love.” My God, You are perfectly content with Your Church, after all, because You know what she is to be. You see how fair she will be when she comes forth from the washing, having put on her beautiful garments. Lo, the sun goes down and we mortals dread the endless darkness, but You, great God, see the morning and You know that in the hours of darkness dew will fall which shall refresh Your garden. Ours is the measure of an hour and yours the judgment of eternity! Therefore we will, by Your Grace, correct our short-sighted judgment by Your Infallible knowledge and rest with You.

The last Word is, however, the most wonderful of all— “He will joy over you with singing.” Think of the great Jehovah singing! Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song? Father, Son and Holy Spirit together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which He bears to His people that He breaks the eternal silence— and sun and moon and stars—with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy! Among Orientals a certain song is sung by the Bridegroom when he receives his bride—it is intended to declare his joy in her and in the fact that his marriage has come. Here, by the pen of Inspiration, the God of Love is pictured as married to His Church and so rejoicing in her that He rejoices over her with singing! If God sings, shall we not sing? He did not sing when He made the world. No, He looked upon it and simply said that it was good. The angels sang, the sons of God shouted for joy— creation was very wonderful to them—but it was not much to God who could have made thousands of worlds by His mere will. Creation could not make Him sing and I do not even know that Providence ever brought a note of joy from Him, for He could arrange a thousand kingdoms of Providence with ease!

But when it came to redemption that cost Him dearly. Here He spent eternal thought and drew up a Covenant with Infinite wisdom. Here He gave His only-begotten Son and put Him to grief to ransom His beloved ones. When all was done and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of His redeemed, then He rejoiced after a Divine manner! What must the joy be which recompenses Gethsemane and Calvary! Here we are among the Atlantic waves. The Lord God receives an accession to the Infinity of His joy in the thought of His redeemed people. “He shall rejoice over you with singing.” I tremble while I speak of such themes, lest I should say a word that should dishonor the matchless mystery, but still, we are glad to note what is written and we are bound to take comfort from it. Let us have sympathy with the joy of the Lord, for this will be our strength.

III. I close with a brief word upon THE BRAVE CONDUCT SUGGESTED THEREBY. Let us not sorrow under the burdens which we bear, but rejoice in God, the great Burden-Bearer upon whom, this day, we roll our load. Here it is—“In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not; and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack.”

There are three things for God’s people to do. The first is, to be happy. Read verse fourteen—“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.” Any man can sing when his cup is full of delights. The Believer, alone, has songs when waters of a bitter cup are wrung out to him! Any sparrow can chirp in the daylight—it is only the nightingale that can sing in the dark. Children of God, whenever the enemies seem to prevail over you, whenever the serried ranks of the foe appear sure of victory, then begin to sing! Your victory will come with your song!

It is a very puzzling thing to the devil to hear saints sing when he sets his foot on them. He cannot make it out—the more he oppresses them, the more they rejoice! Let us resolve to be all the merrier when the enemy dreams that we are utterly routed. The more opposition, the more we will rejoice in the Lord! The more discouragement, the more confidence! Splendid was the courage of Alexander when they told him that there were hundreds of thousands of Persians. “Yet,” he said, “one butcher fears not myriads of sheep.” “Ah!” said another, “when the Persians draw their bows, their arrows are so numerous that they darken the sun.” “It will be fine to fight in the shade,” cried the hero! O Friends, we know whom we have believed and we are sure of triumph! Let us not think, for a single second, if the odds against us are 10,000 to one, that this is a hardship! Rather let us wish that they were a million to one, that the Glory of the Lord might be all the greater in the conquest which is sure!

When Athanasius was told that everybody was denying the Deity of Christ, he then said, “I Athanasius, against the world”—Athanasius contra mundum became a proverbial expression! Brothers, it is a splendid thing to be quite alone in the warfare of the Lord. Suppose we had half-a-dozen with us. Six men are not much increase to strength and, possibly, they may be a cause of weakness, by needing to be looked after. If you are quite alone, so much the better—there is the more room for God! When desertions have cleaned the place out and left you no friends, now every corner can be filled with Deity. As long as there is so much that is visible to rely upon and so much to hope in, there is so much the less room for simple trust in God—but now our song is of the Lord, alone—“For great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you.”

The next duty is fearlessness—“Fear you not.” What? Not even a little? No, “Fear you not.” But surely I may show some measure of trembling? No, “Fear you not.” Tie that knot tight about the throat of unbelief! “Fear you not”—neither this day, nor any day of your life. When fear comes in, drive it away, give it no space! If God rests in His love and if God sings, what can you have to do with fear? Have you never known passengers on board ship, when the weather was rough, comforted by the calm behavior of the captain? One simple-minded soul said to his friend, “I am sure there is no cause for fear, for I heard the captain whistling.” Surely, if the captain is at ease, and with him is all the responsibility, the passenger may be still more at peace! If the Lord Jesus at the helm is singing, let us not be fearing! Let us have done with every timorous accent. O rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. “Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you.”

Lastly, let us be zealous—“Let not your hands be slack.” Now is the time when every Christian should do more for God than ever. Let us plan great things for God and let us expect great things from God. “Let not your hands be slack.” Now is the hour for redoubled prayers and labors! Since the adversaries are busy, let us also be busy. If they think they shall make a full end of us, let us resolve to make a full end of their lies and delusions. I think every Christian should answer the challenge of the adversaries of Christ by working double tides, by giving more of his substance to the cause of God, by living more for the glory of God, by being more exact in his obedience, more earnest in his efforts and more importunate in his prayers. “Let not your hands be slack” in any one part of holy service! Fear is a dreadful breeder of idleness, but courage teaches us indomitable perseverance. Let us go on in God’s name. I would stir up the members of this Church and all my Brothers to intense zeal for God and the souls of men. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

Would God that all were on Christ’s side out of this great assembly! Oh, that you would come to Jesus and trust Him and then live for Him in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation! The Lord be with us. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Zephaniah 3.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—46, 731, 18.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2720 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE SAVIOR RESTING IN HIS LOVE  
NO. 2720

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 31, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON.**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A THURSDAY EVENING, EARLY IN THE YEAR 1859.

**“He will rest in His love.”  
Zephaniah 3:17.**  
ONE of our sweetest hymns commences with this verse —

*“How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord, Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word! What more can He say than to you He has said, You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

Well might the poet have put that question if he had risen up from reading this third chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah! O people of God, open your ears and your hearts while Jehovah thus speaks to you by the mouth of His ancient Prophet, “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of you: you shall not see evil anymore. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack. The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” The words are very simple, but the promises they convey are so weighty that the verses roll along like the triumphant periods of a jubilant poem! The Truth of God, even when told in the simplest words, is very much akin to the loftiest poetry and I might, without the slightest hesitation, declare that there never was any poem composed by human intellect which could match for a moment, in the sweetness of its notes, the succession of precious promises which God here proclaims in the ears of His chosen ones!

We cannot, on the present occasion, enter into the wondrous depths of the promises here revealed. We would need, indeed, a long period of time before we would be able to explain them and, possibly, the whole of life will scarcely be sufficient for us to fully realize these great Truths of God in our own experience. We will, therefore, at once turn to the few words I have chosen as my text, “He will rest in His love,” and we shall consider these words as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ and as relating to His Divine and matchless love which He has manifested toward His people in the wondrous works of Grace which He has accomplished for them and in them.  
“He will rest in His love.” This short sentence is capable of several interpretations and each view we take of it has in it something extremely delightful.

I. Here is, first of all, THE DOCTRINE THAT CHRIST WILL ALWAYS STAY FAITHFUL TO THOSE UPON WHOM HE HAS SET HIS HEART’S AFFECTION.

The love of human beings is a fitful and flickering flame. It may be set, for a season, with apparent constancy upon a certain object, but you can never tell how long it will remain steadfast. However firm, however true and however fervent it may seem to be—and even may really be—yet trust it not so implicitly as to come under that ancient sentence, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord.” Trust not too much to any friend whom you may have! Put not all your confidence in any man, for the best of men are but men at the best, and the firmest of men are subject to the infirmities and the frailties of their race!

But God’s love is no flickering flame! It does not flare up for a little while, like the crackling of thorns under a pot, and then die out in darkness. It is not to be set forth by the image of a fool’s mirth which lasts but for a little season. It begins, it waxes vehement, it diminishes not, but it grows from strength to strength till what seemed at first to be but a single spark, becomes a mighty flame—and what was a flame becomes like the beacon lights of war, and what was but as a beacon becomes as the sun itself, in the fierceness of its heat and in the majesty of its goings!

There are some who teach that Christ’s love may be set upon a man and yet that it may afterwards be removed from him. Where, then, remains the comfort of God’s people if their teaching is true? But, thank God, it is not true, for the promise of the text is that Jesus “will rest in His love.” If their doctrine is according to the Scriptures, where is the value of Christ’s affection at all? In what respects can He be said to stick closer than a brother? How can it be true that many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it? If these men are right, must not the Apostle Paul have been wrong when he declared that he was persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in the whole of creation should ever be able to separate the saints from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord? Shall we imagine that the Apostle was mistaken and suppose that this erroneous teaching is the Truth of God? Shall we turn away from the positive testimony of Holy Scripture and believe the lies of men in its place, especially when that Scripture is itself so full of consolation to God’s people that if it can ever be proved to be untrue, they may put their hands upon their loins in agony of woe, and go to their graves full of misery and despair?

But, Beloved, you know right well that Jesus Christ’s love, when once it has engraved your name upon His hand and His heart, will never allow that name to be erased! You believe and you believe aright, that he who has a portion in the heart of God has an eternal portion! He who can claim for himself a share of the Father’s love, of the Son’s redemption, and of the Spirit’s care, need never be afraid that all the thievish hosts of Hell shall rob him of his Divine inheritance. For look here, Brothers and Sisters, what is there to separate you and me from Jesus Christ’s love, which has not been already tried?

Can sin ever make Jesus cease to love me? If so, He would have ceased to love me long ago. If there is any iniquity that I can commit that would divide me from Christ’s love, I think that I would have been separated from Him long before this, for, in looking back upon my own life, I am compelled, with shame and confusion of face, to fall upon my knees and confess that He has had a thousand reasons for thrusting me out of doors if He had chosen to do so, and He might have framed millions of excuses if He had resolved to blot my name out of the Book of Life. He might have said, “You are unworthy of Me and, therefore, I will be unmindful of you.”

Further, if Christ had intended to cast us away because of our sins, why did He ever take us on? Did He not know, beforehand, that we would be rebellious, and did not His Omniscient eyes see all our sins and detect all our follies? Are we ungrateful? He knew that we would be. Are our sins extremely heinous? He knew how heinous they would be. He could foresee all—every spot that was to be upon us, was upon us before His Omniscient eyes when He chose us. Every fault that we would commit was already committed in His estimation. He foreknew and foresaw all, yet He chose us just as we were. If He had intended to abandon us and cast us away, would He ever have accepted us at all? If Jesus meant to divorce His bride, foreknowing all her faults, would He ever have married her? If He determined to cast away His adopted child, since He knew that child’s unfaithfulness, would He ever have adopted him? Oh, think not, Beloved, that Christ would have done all that He has done for nothing, that He would have come from Heaven to earth and have even gone from the Cross to the grave, and allowed His spirit to descend into the shades of Hades on a bootless errand! Would He not have started back and said, “I know My bride will prove to be unworthy, therefore I will not marry her”? But since He has married her and has put the red ring of His own Atonement on her finger, and has been faithful to her, what shall ever cause Him to divorce her? What can ever induce Him to cast from His bosom her whom He died to save? It must be true that, “He will rest in His love,” for He has hitherto rested in it, though He has had much to mourn over in His chosen ones.

Our sin, then, has not divided and, we believe, never shall divide us from the Savior’s love. What remains? Will sorrow ever separate us from our Savior? Can tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword separate us from the love of Christ? No, for all these things do but make the Savior manifest His love to us the more. If Christ loves His people well in prosperity, He never loves them any less in their adversities. Do you believe that Christ loves His children when they are arrayed in purple and that He will forsake them when they wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented? If so, you know not the heart of Jesus. He loves His people well enough everyday—but if He sees them stretched upon the rack and about to die for His sake, if it is possible, the infinity of His love must then surpass itself! Well said the Apostle, when he had mentioned all these sufferings and pains, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

Sin and sorrow, therefore, are perfectly incapable of tearing us from the heart of Christ, for He must, “He will rest in His love.” And this Truth of God will seem all the more plain and clear if we just pause a moment and think of our relationship to God the Father and to God the Son. Is not every Christian, God’s child? And did you ever know a true father who hated his own child? You may have known such a father, but it was not fatherly for him to hate his own son. Have you known a father who has cursed his son and driven him from his home—and declared that he was not his child? You may have known some men of that kind, or you may have heard of such unnatural creatures, but, mark you, the father’s curse could not make his child not his child—he was still his father’s son, even when he was cursed by him. Not even the foulest words that ever came from the most embittered heart could ever take away that child’s right to call that man his father—a child is a child forever if he is once a child—and a father is a father forever if he is once a father.

Now, Beloved, in the usual course of nature, we find that men will do anything for their children that they possibly can. Here is a poor creature, born into the world nearly an idiot—it has not its right senses—it is nearly blind and deaf, and its parents know that even if they can bring it up, it will always be a trouble to them. Yet you see with what studious care the father and mother endeavor to save the poor child’s life. While others say, “If it were to die, it would be a happy release,” both father and mother feel that they would be losers by its death. “Ah,” said one good old divine, “if a father could have a child that had lost eyes and ears, and feet and hands and though he could not breathe in a natural fashion, though he could not feed without some extraordinary means for the digestion of his food—even then his father would do his best to keep him alive—and so surely shall it be with that great Father who, when He speaks of Himself, and of us, always puts His Fatherhood far higher than ours, as Christ did when He said, ‘If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?’ And I may truly say if an earthly father does not wish to lose his child—if he would endeavor to save his child’s life though it was loaded with ten thousand diseases—how much more shall our Father who is in Heaven see to it that none of His little ones shall perish, but that every one of them shall be preserved?” Do you not see that because we are God’s sons, we are, therefore, Jesus Christ’s brothers and, “He will rest in His love”?

But there is yet another thought, for we also have a relationship to Christ and, therefore, “He will rest in His love.” We have never yet heard of a man who hated his own flesh. Strangely wicked as it is, we have heard of men who have hated their flesh in the mystic sense of the marriage tie and who have driven their wives from them with all manner of brutality and cruelty. She whom the husband promised to cherish and to nourish, he has driven away, yet he has never thus treated his own flesh. The man may have become cruel and unnatural towards her who is his own flesh by marriage, but not towards his own literal flesh. Now, Jesus Christ has taken His people into such a connection with Himself that they are nearer to Him even than the wife is to the husband—they are as near to Him as our own flesh and blood are to our own head. What will not a man do to save his hand, or the least member of his body? Would he ever cease to care for even the feeblest portion of his frame? No, men are generally careful enough of their own flesh and blood—much more, therefore, will our Lord Jesus Christ protect the members of His mystical body, for we are His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. And will Christ lose His own fullness? Shall His body be dismembered? Shall the head become a bleeding head, and the trunk become a corpse? Shall any one member be left to die, to burn, to be destroyed? Oh, no! As surely as we are brought into this relationship with Christ, so surely are we saved beyond any danger! This is one meaning of the text and most consolatory to the tried, tempest-tossed child of God.

II. I think, however, that there is another very sweet meaning to it— that is, CHRIST HAS LABORED IN HIS LOVE AND HE NOW RESTS IN IT.

Let me draw a picture for you. Here is a man who loves his hearth, his home, his country, and his Queen. The sound of battle is heard in the land, so he girds his sword upon his thigh and marches forth to defend all that is dear to him. He fights, he struggles—his garments are stained with blood—and he is wounded. It is love—love of his own safety, of his family and of his country that has made him fight so bravely. And now that the deed is done, he comes back to his home. The foe has been swept from the white cliffs of Albion and the land of liberty is still free— Britons are not slaves. The man retires to his house and you see how quietly he sleeps, how joyously he sits down under his own vine and fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. With what joy does he now look upon the faces of those whom he has defended and upon the home for which he has fought! What satisfaction does it give him to know that the honor of his country is still unstained and his land is still the home of the free! Now he rests in his love—that which made him fight, now gives him joy—that which impelled him in the day of battle to do great deeds of heroism is its own sweet reward! Now he rests because the battle is fought, the victory is won and he, therefore, rejoices in the very love which once caused him to labor.

Now see the Lord Jesus Christ laboring in His love. Love fetched Him from His Throne in Heaven. Love disrobed Him of His glories. Love laid Him in Bethlehem’s manger. Love led Him through this weary world for 33 years. Love took Him to Gethsemane. Love oppressed Him till He sweat great drops of blood. Love made Him the great Standard-Bearer in the fight. Love made Him stand erect, the focus of the war, when the storm gathered round His brow and every arrow of the foeman found a target in His heart. Love made Him—

*“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,  
Confident of victory.”*

Love made Him bow His head and give up the ghost, that He might redeem His people from their sins. Now He is more than conqueror—He rises to Heaven and He rests in His love! Oh, what a wondrous rest that is! If rest is sweet to the laboring man, how much sweeter to the bleeding Man, the dying Man, the crucified Man, the risen Man? If rest is sweet after toil, how sweet must be the rest of Jesus after all the toils of life and death, the Cross and the grave! If victory makes the soldier’s return joyous, how joyous must have been the return of that conquering Hero who has led captivity captive, and received gifts for men! Truly does our Lord Jesus “rest in His love.”

Do you not see that the very thing that drove Him to labor now makes a pillow for His head? That which made Him strong in the day of battle makes Him joyous in the hour of victory? And that is the love which He bears to His people, for, lo, as He sits down in Heaven, He thinks within Himself, “I have done it, I have finished the work of My people’s redemption. Not one of them shall ever perish. No drop of the hail of God’s vengeance can fall on them, for it has all fallen on Me. I have been smitten, I have borne the curse and, now, they cannot be cursed, they are delivered.” And then His holy mind roves on in meditation, “I have taken away the curse, and I have given them the blessing. I have brought many of them to know and love Me and, in due season, I will bring all the rest. They shall come that are ready to perish, for I must have every one of my blood-bought sheep with Me forever. They shall be blessed on earth and, by-and-by, I shall have them where I am and they shall feed in these rich pastures. They shall lie down where the wolf cannot come and where desolation cannot enter. The time shall come when I shall have their very bones resuscitated, when their flesh that has lain in the dust, shall live again to be with Me—and so shall they all, every one of them, body, soul and spirit regain all the inheritance that they had lost and, with all that double portion which I have gained for them, share the spoil, and wave the palm, and be more than conquerors through what I have done for them.” This thought gives sweet rest to the Savior who once labored here below and who, now, in Heaven, “rests in His love.”

III. I find that Dr. Gill gives this as one of the meanings of the text, for he is always noted for giving a great variety of meanings to a text. And, sometimes, nobody knows which is the true one. When he is going to explain a passage of Scripture, he says, “It does not mean this, it does not mean that, and it does not mean the other.” Probably nobody ever thought it did mean anything of the kind! After he has mentioned several things which it does not mean, he mentions some that it may mean, and then, last of all, he tells us what it actually does mean! He says our text means, “HE SHALL SOLACE HIMSELF IN HIS LOVE.”

There is something very sweet in love. Whether it is sweeter to be loved or to love, I know not, but, certainly, when the two experiences meet together, they are like two noble rivers which have flowed through a rich and fertile country and then combined to make some great lake, or inland sea—then are they broad waters indeed. Now Christ sees our love—the love which He has put into us meets the love which He has poured out towards us—and in both of these He finds a sweet solace. He solaces Himself in love—this cheers and comforts Him. Some men, when they would be cheered on earth, drink the wine which stirs their blood. Some men find comfort in company and the noisy, thoughtless talker makes them glad. Others, when they would be solaced, turn to books— these are their joys. Others, when they would be satisfied, rattle their gold, look over their mortgages, their estates, their bonds and things of that kind. And there are some men who in this world have nothing sweeter for solace than the love of those who are near and dear to them. The man who loves his home and his family, and finds his little earthly Heaven around his own hearth is one of the happiest men I know. Treasure that thought for a moment—and think of Christ as taking delight in His family.

I never yet heard that Christ rests in His power. He has great power— look what He has done. He has built the heavens. He has stretched out the earth and He upholds the clouds with His might. But He never rests there. I know, too, that He has great wisdom—He knows all things in the ages past, in the time present, and in the centuries yet to come. He can unravel mysteries and foretell all things, yet I never heard that He rested in His wisdom. There is a great crowd of angelic spirits, always waiting in His courts above and He, as King, sits in the very center of them all. And before Him principalities and powers cast their crowns—but I never heard that He rested even in their homage. No, our Lord Jesus Christ is like the man who loves his family—He rests in the midst of His own beloved ones—His spouse’s bosom, the place where He hears His children cry, where He listens to their prayers, the door at which He receives their thanksgiving and bestows His blessing, the house where they wait on Him and He waits on them, where they commune with Him and He communes with them—that is the place where He rests! He rests in His love, in the midst of the objects of His love—there it is that He finds His own eternal satisfaction, the solace of His heart.

Is not that a sweet thought? It has ravished my soul, while turning it over, to think that Jesus Christ should ever find His rest among the poor sons of men! Long ago it was said of Him, “His delights were with the sons of men,” and now that is His rest, too. Oh, how pleasant it is for us to know that our Lord will not sleep anywhere but in the house of His Beloved and beneath no other tree will He recline but beneath the trees of His own right-hand planting! It is very easy for me to say of Christ, “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons,” but it is surprising that He should ever say the same of me! I can say of Him, “I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” But it is amazing for Him to say the same of me, or to turn to some poor saint and say to him, “O Soul, you are weary, but you are My rest, and I am your rest. You are sick, but you are My health, and I am your health. You are sad, but you are My joy, and I am your joy. You are poor, but you are My treasure, and I am your treasure. You are nothing, and yet you are My fullness, and I am your fullness!”

Oh, what a host of precious thoughts we can meditate upon here! We have started a whole covey of sweet things and we might profitably stand still and admire them. It is not merely one sweet thought, but many that are included in this one precious Truth of God, “He will rest in His love.” He never rested till He found that all His love was given to us and He will never completely rest till all our love is given to Him!

IV. The Hebrew conveys to us yet another idea. In the margin we read, “HE WILL BE SILENT IN HIS LOVE.”

Why is this? What can silence have to do with love? One old divine thinks that Christ means, by this expression, to say that His love is so vast that it can be better heard by His saying nothing than by His attempting to express it. What a great deal Christ has said, in the Scriptures, about His love, and yet listen, O spouse of Christ, the love that He has not spoken is ten times more than anything He has yet said! Oh, yes, there is much love which He has brought out of the treasure house and given to you, but He has much more like it in that Divine heart of His. Some drops of His love you have already received, but those bright clouds on high, those storehouses of His Grace contain treasures of which you have never yet even dreamed! When you read one of the promises, you say, “Ah, this is indeed precious!” Yet, remember that what our Lord has revealed in His Word is not a tenth of what He has not said! He has said many rich things, but there are still richer things. He has not said them, He cannot say them because they are not sayable, they are unutterable, they cannot be declared—at least, not at present. When you get to Heaven, you will hear them, but you cannot hear them here.

You know that the Apostle Paul said, when he was caught up to the third Heaven, he heard words which it was not lawful for men to utter. Perhaps he then heard more of the Savior’s love, as though Christ said to him, “I tell you this, but you must not tell it to anyone else—it is not lawful to utter it down below. I have made you a great vessel and you can hold this Revelation, but as for the rest, they are only little vessels—do not tell them anymore, it would burst them. Do not expose them to too great a heat of love, it would consume them—they would die if they knew more—they cannot understand more. I have told them so much of My love that if they only understood all I have told them, they would not be able to live on earth—their hearts would burst for joy and they would be obliged to flee to Me above. Therefore I tell them no more, for they cannot bear it.”

So that, you see, there is great preciousness in this rendering, “He will be silent in His love,” as if He could not say it, therefore He would not try to say it. He would just leave it alone. One poet, after praising God with all his might, finds that he can go no further and winds up thus— “Come, then, expressive silence, tell His praise.” That is just the meaning of the text, as if Christ would say, “I have said a great deal, but My people cannot understand. I will say no more. I shall only now say, ‘Come, then, expressive silence, tell My love.’”

There is, however, a meaning that is, perhaps, even more correct. “He will be silent in His love,” may mean that He will be silent about His people’s faults. From the connection of the text, it looks like this. “The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of you: you shall not see evil any more.” It looks as if He meant to say He would be silent about their sins. There stands Christ in Heaven today, pleading for His people. Listen! He says nothing to accuse them. Satan may accuse, but Christ never will. The good that His people do is magnified, multiplied, perfected and then presented before the Throne of God—but as for the sins of His people, He has cast them behind His back and all He says concerning those sins is this, “I behold no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel; My anger is turned away from them; I have blotted out like a cloud their iniquities and, like a thick cloud, their sins.”

Sometimes love makes a man silent. If you hear anything said against one whom you love and you are asked, “Is it not so?” you say, “Well, I am not compelled to bear witness against one whom I love and I will not do so.” You know that our law does not demand of a wife that she shall give evidence against her husband. And, certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ will never give any evidence against His spouse—“He will be silent in His love.” If He were called upon and asked, “Has Your spouse sinned?” His declaration would be, “I am the Sin-Offering on her behalf. I am her Substitute. I have been punished in her place. I can say, ‘You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you.’” There will not be a word of accusation from Him! She says of herself, “I am all black.” He will not deny it, but He will not affirm it. He says, “There is no spot in you” and He goes on to say that she is all fair in His sight.

O glorious silence! “He will be silent in His love.” So I am inclined to believe it will be at the Last Great Day, when the books shall be opened. Christ will read out the sins of the wicked recorded against them, but, as for the sins of His people, “He will be silent in His love.” I sometimes think that it will be so, though I cannot speak with authority. “No,” He will say, “upon you be the curse—you who lived and died without washing in My blood in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. But as for these, My people, they have had their sins blotted out and I will not read what is obliterated. I will be silent in My love.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **LUKE 24.**

Verses 1-4. Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Brothers and Sisters, they might have been much more perplexed if they had found the body of Jesus there, for then His promises would not have been fulfilled and all their hopes would have been blighted forever! Unbelief is often the mother of needless perplexity. The Resurrection of Christ is plain enough to us now, but to those who had seen Him die and whose faith was so very weak, it was a cause for perplexity that they could not find His dead body. They meant to embalm it. They had brought sweet spices with them for that purpose. It was well that it was in their heart, although it was an unwise and needless project. Yet I doubt not that the Lord thought those spices were very sweet and that He accepted them because of the love they represented and, sometimes, you and I, in our ignorance, have tried to do for Christ what He would not wish to have us do, but He has understood our motive and accepted our intention, albeit that there was a mistake lurking behind it.

5-8. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spoke to you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words. It is well to know Christ’s words, even though we often forget them, because we could not remember them if we had not once known them. Even though our leaky memory lets so much run through, there will be enough remaining in the soul to come back with great sweetness, by-and-by, in some time of special need. Thus, those holy women, who had often ministered to Christ, “remembered His words.”

9-12. And returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the Apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran to the sepulcher. He must go and see for himself, impetuous spirit that he was. So he “ran to the sepulcher.”

12. And stooping down, he beheld the linen cloths laid by themselves and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. Thus that notable day wore on. Christ had risen, but His people had not risen to full belief in Him—they were still in the grave of distress and doubt, though their Master had left the grave of death.

13-15. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. Where two, whose hearts are right, and whose talk is heavenly, keep company with one another, Christ is very likely to make a third! Sometimes, when He does not come to one, He reveals Himself to two, as He said to His disciples, “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” And often, when two Believers agree in communion, there is a sweet magnetic force about their fellowship which brings the Savior to them and retains Him in their company.

16. But their eyes were restrained that they should not know Him. Oh, these eyes of ours! They let us see a great deal that we had better not see, but there are some things which we might almost die to see, which we see not. I doubt not that often, spiritual beings are about us, but we do not discern them and, certainly, the Master Himself oftentimes draws near, yet our eyes are restrained and we do not see Him. This may even happen at the Communion Table—we may see the signs and symbols, but see not Christ, the signified and symbolized One. It is ill when it is so.

17-25. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that you have one to another, as you walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said to Him, Are You only a stranger in Jerusalem, and have not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not. Then He said unto them, O fools. I feel sure that He said that word very gently—not as you and I might say it, in a pet. Yet, truly, as we read the story, we cannot help feeling that they were very foolish and stupid. Their own tale convicts them. So no wonder Christ said unto them, “O fools”—

25, 26. And slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses—At the very Pentateuch—

27. And all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. We may well wish that we might have been there. What a privilege it was for those two disciples—a walk and a talk combined! But what heavenly talk—all concerning Himself! I know that you, dear Friends, never relish a discourse unless Christ is foremost in it, but when Christ is the only Subject, and even Scripture itself is made subordinate to the display of Christ, then are you well content!

28. And they drew near unto the village, where they went. And sorry, I have no doubt, they were to do so. One would like to walk on to all eternity with Christ thus talking by the way!

28-30. And He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. That was the old sign, well known to them and to Him—that blessing and breaking of the bread.

31. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. It is sometimes so with us—we have just recognized our Lord, and, lo, He is gone!

32. And they said, one to another, Did not our heart burn within us— Oh, blessed heartburn!  
32, 33. While He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour—They could not stay away from their fellow disciples—they must tell such glorious tidings as they had, so “they rose up the same hour.”  
33-36. And returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen, indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them. That is usually His way—while we are talking about manifestations of Christ in the past, He often comes again among us and gives us a new revelation of Himself.

36-41. And said unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy—That is a singular combination. At first, they believed not for grief—but now the pendulum swings the other way—and they believe not for joy! There is a kind of unbelief that is begotten of excessive delight. We know something to be true and yet there comes the recoil and the doubt, “Surely it is too good to be true; can it really be so?” See how Jesus convinced them that He was not a spirit—“while they yet believed not for joy.”

41. And wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? “Anything to eat?”  
42, 43. And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. That was proof positive that He was still composed of flesh and bones—a real Person—and no phantom.  
44-51. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. He went away in the act of blessing, and He has never left off blessing His people from that day to this.  
52, 53. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

THE ABIDING OF THE SPIRIT THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH

NO. 1918

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, Son of Josedech, the High Priest, and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work: for I am with you, says the Lord of Hosts: according to the word that I  
covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you: fear you not.”  
Haggai 2:4, 5.**

SATAN is always doing his utmost to stop the work of God. He hindered these Jews from building the Temple and today he endeavors to hinder the people of God from spreading the Gospel. A spiritual temple is to be built for the Most High and if, by any means, the Evil One can delay its uprising, he will stop at nothing. If he can take us off from working with faith and courage for the Glory of God, he will be sure to do it. He is very cunning and knows how to change his argument and yet keep to his design—he little cares how he works, so long as he can hurt the cause of God. In the case of the Jewish people on their return from captivity he sought to prevent the building of the Temple by making them selfish and worldly, so that every man was eager to build his own house and cared nothing for the House of the Lord. Each family pleaded its own urgent needs. In returning to a long-deserted and neglected land, much had to be done to make up for lost time and, to suitably provide for itself, every family needed all its exertions. They carried this thrift and self-providing to a great extreme and secured for themselves luxuries, while the foundations of the Temple, which had been laid years before, remained as they were, or became still more thickly covered up with rubbish.

The people could not be made to bestir themselves to build the House of God, for they answered to every exhortation, “The time is not come; the time that the Lord’s House should be built.” A more convenient season was always looming in the future, but it never came. Just now it was too hot. Further on it was too cold. At one time the wet season was just setting in and it was of no use to begin. And soon after, the fair weather required that they should be in their own fields. Like some in our day, they saw to themselves, first, and God’s turn was very long in coming— therefore the Prophet cried, “Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this House lie waste?”

By the mouth of His servant, Haggai, stern rebukes were uttered and the whole people were awakened. We read in verse 12 of the first chapter, “Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Josedech, the High Priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the Prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord.” All hands were put to the work. Course after course of stone began to rise and then another stumbling block was thrown in the way of the workers. The older folks remarked that this was a very small affair compared with the temple of Solomon, of which their fathers had told them. In fact, their rising building was nothing at all and not worthy to be called a Temple.

The Prophet describes the feeling in the verse which precedes our text. “Who is left among you that saw this House in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” Feeling that their work would be very poor and insignificant, the people had little heart to go on. Being discouraged by the humiliating contrast, they began to be slack and, as they were quite willing to accept any excuse, and here was an excuse ready-made for them, they would soon have been at a standstill had not the Prophet met the wiles of the archenemy with another Word from the Lord. Nothing so confounds the Evil One as the Voice of the Eternal!

Our Lord, Himself, defeated Satan by the Word of the Lord and the Prophet Haggai did the same. The subtle craft of the enemy is defeated by the Wisdom of the Most High which reveals itself in plain words of honest statement. The Lord cuts the knots which bind His people and sets them at liberty to do His will. He did this by assuring them that He was with them. Twice the Voice was heard—“I am with you, says the Lord of Hosts.” They were also assured that what they built was accepted and that the Lord meant to fill the new house with Glory—yes, He meant to light it up with a Glory greater than that which honored the Temple of Solomon! They were not spending their strength for nothing, but were laboring with Divine help and favor! Thus they were encouraged to put their shoulders to the work—the walls rose in due order and God was glorified in the building up of His Zion.

The present times are, in many respects, similar to those of Haggai. History certainly repeats itself within the Church of God as well as outside of it and, therefore, the messages of God need to be repeated. The words of some almost-forgotten Prophet may be re-delivered by the watchman of the Lord in these present days and be a timely word for the present emergency. We are not free from the worldliness which puts self first and God nowhere, otherwise our various enterprises would be more abundantly supplied with the silver and the gold which are the Lord’s, but which even professing Christians reserve for themselves! When this selfish greed is conquered, then comes in a timorous depression. Among those who have escaped from worldliness, there is apt to be too much despondency and men labor feebly as for a cause which is doomed to failure. This last evil must be cured. I pray that our text may, this morning, flame from the Lord’s own mouth with all the fire which once blazed about it. May faint hearts be encouraged and drowsy spirits be awakened, as we hear the Lord say, “My Spirit remains among you: fear you not.”

I shall enter fully upon the subject, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, by calling your attention to discouragement forbidden. Then I shall speak of encouragement imparted and, having done so, I shall linger with this blessed text which overflows with comfort and shall speak, in the third place, of encouragement further applied. Oh that our Lord, who knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, may cheer the hearts of seekers by what shall be spoken under this last head of my discourse!

I. To begin with, here is DISCOURAGEMENT FORBIDDEN. Discouragement comes readily enough to us poor mortals who are occupied in the work of God, seeing it is a work of faith, a work of difficulty, a work above our capacity and a work much opposed.

Discouragement is very natural— it is a native of the soil of manhood. To believe is supernatural—faith is the work of the Spirit of God. To doubt is natural to fallen men, for we have within us an evil heart of unbelief. It is abominably wicked, I grant you, but still it is natural, because of the downward tendency of our depraved hearts. Discouragement towards good things is a weed that grows without sowing. To be faint-hearted and downcast happens to some of us when we are half drowned in this heavy atmosphere, and it also visits us on the wings of the east wind. It takes little to make some hands hang done—a word or a look will do it. I do not, therefore, excuse it, but rather I condemn myself for having a nature prone to such evil.

Discouragement may come and does come to us, as it did to these people, from a consideration of the great things which God deserves at our hands and the small things which we are able to render. When in Haggai’s days the people thought of Jehovah and of a Temple for Him—and then looked upon the narrow space which had been enclosed and the common stones which had been laid for foundations—they were ashamed. Where were those hewn stones and costly stones which, of old, Solomon brought from afar? They said within themselves, “This house is unworthy of Jehovah—why are we laboring thus?” Have you not felt the depressing weight of what is so surely true? Brothers and Sisters, all that we do is little for our God—far too little for Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. For Him that poured out His soul unto death on our behalf, the most splendid service, the most heroic self-denial are all too little and we feel it is so.

Alabaster boxes of precious ointment are too insignificant a gift. It does not occur to our fervent spirit to imagine that there can be any waste when our best boxes are broken and the perfume is poured out lavishly for Him. What we do fear is that our alabaster boxes are too few and that our ointment is not precious enough. When we have done our utmost in declaring the Glory of Jesus, we have felt that words are too poor and mean to set forth our adorable Lord. When we have prayed for His kingdom, we have been disgusted with our own prayers—and all the efforts we have put forth in connection with any part of His service have seemed too few, too feeble for us to hope for acceptance. Thus have we been discouraged. The enemy has worked upon us by this means, yet he has made us argue very wrongly. Because we could not do much, we have half resolved to do nothing! Because what we did was so poor, we were inclined to quit the work altogether! This is evidently absurd and wicked. The enemy can use humility for his purpose as well as pride. Whether he makes us think too much or too little of our work, it is all the same to him—so long as he can get us off from it.

It is significant that the man with one talent went and hid his Lord’s money in the earth. He knew that it was but one and, for that reason, he was the less afraid to bury it. Perhaps he argued that the interest on one talent could never come to much and would never be noticed, side by side with the result of five or 10 talents—and so he might as well bring nothing at all to his Lord as bring so little. Perhaps he might not have wrapped it up if it had not been so small that a napkin could cover it. The smallness of our gifts may be a temptation to us. We are consciously so weak and so insignificant, compared with the great God and His great cause, that we are discouraged and think it vain to attempt anything.

Moreover, the enemy contrasts our work with that of others and with that of those who have gone before us. We are doing so little as compared with other people—therefore let us give up. We cannot build like Solomon, therefore let us not build at all. Yet, Brothers and Sisters, there is a falsehood in all this, for, in truth, nothing is worthy of God! The great works of others and even the amazing productions of Solomon all fell short of His Glory! What house could man build for God? What are cedar, marble and gold as compared with the Glory of the Most High? Though the house was “exceedingly magnificent,” yet the Lord God had of old dwelt within curtains and never was His worship more glorious than within the tent of badgers’ skins. Indeed, as soon as the great Temple was built, true religion declined! What of all human work can be worthy of the Lord? Our little labors do but share the insignificance of greater things and, therefore, we ought not to withhold them. Yet here is the temptation from which we must pray to be delivered.

The tendency to depreciate the present because of the glories of the past is also injurious. The old people looked back to the days of the former Temple, even as we are apt to look upon the times of the great preachers of the past. What work was done in those past days! What Sabbaths were enjoyed, then! What converts were added to the Church! What days of refreshing were then vouchsafed! Everything has declined, decreased, degenerated! As for the former days, they beheld a race of giants who are now succeeded by pigmies! We look at one of these great men and cry—

*“Why, man, he does bestride the narrow world Like a Colossus! And we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs and peep about To find ourselves dishonorable graves.”*

But, Brothers, we must not allow this sense of littleness to hamper us, for God can bless our littleness and use it for His Glory. I notice that the great men of the past thought of themselves even as we think of ourselves. Certainly they were not more self-confident than we are. I find in the story of the brave days of old, the same confessions and the same lamentations which we utter now. It is true that in spiritual strength we are not what our fathers were—I fear that Puritan holiness and truthfulness of doctrine are dying out, while adherence to principle is far from common—but our fathers also had faults and follies to mourn over and they did mourn over them most sincerely. Instead of being discouraged because what we do is unworthy of God and insignificant compared with what was done by others, let us gather up our strength to reform our errors and reach to higher attainments! Let us throw our heart and soul into the work of the Lord and do something more nearly in accordance with our highest ideal of what our God deserves of us. Let us excel our ancestors. Let us aspire to be even more godly, more conscientious and more sound in the faith than they were, for the Spirit of God remains with us.

Brethren, it is clear that discouragement can be produced by these reasons, and yet they are a mere sample of a host of arguments which work in the same direction—therefore discouragement is very common. Haggai was sent to speak to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the High Priest, and to all the remnant of the people. The great man may become discouraged—he that leads the van has his fainting fits and, even Elijah cries, “Let me die!” The consecrated servant of God whose life is a priesthood is apt to grow discouraged, too. Standing at God’s altar, he sometimes trembles for the Ark of the Lord. The multitude of the people are all too apt to suffer from panic and to flee at the sight of the enemy. How many are they who say, “The old Truths of God cannot succeed! The cause of orthodoxy is desperate—we had better yield to the modern spirit”?

This faint-heartedness is so common that it has been the plague of Israel from her first day until now! They were discouraged at the Red Sea at the mere rattling of Pharaoh’s chariots! They were discouraged when they found no water. They were discouraged when they had eaten up the bread which they brought out of Egypt. They were discouraged when they heard of the giants and of the cities walled to Heaven. I need not lengthen the wretched catalog. What has cowardice not done? The fearful and unbelieving have brought terrible disasters upon our camps. Discouragement is the national epidemic of our Israel. “Being armed and carrying bows,” we turn back in the day of battle. This is as common among Christians as consumption among the inhabitants of this foggy island. Oh that God would save us all from distrust and cause us to conduct ourselves like men!

Wherever discouragement comes in, it is dreadfully weakening . I am sure it is weakening because the Prophet was bid to say three times to the governor, High Priest and people, “Be strong.” This proves that they had become weak. Being discouraged, their hands hung down and their knees were feeble. Faith girds us with omnipotence, but unbelief makes everything about us hang loose and limp. Distrust and you will fail in everything! Believe and, according to your faith, so shall it be unto you. To lead a discouraged people to the Holy War is as difficult as for Xerxes’ commanders to conduct the Persian troops to battle against the Greeks. The vassals of the great king were driven to the conflict by whips and sticks, for they were afraid to fight—do you wonder that they were defeated? A Church that needs constant exhorting and compelling accomplishes nothing. The Greeks had no need of blows and threats, for each man was a lion and courted the encounter, however great the odds against him.

Each Spartan fought con amore—he was never more at home than when contending for the altars and the hearths of his country! We need Christian men of this same sort who have faith in their principles, faith in the Doctrines of Grace, faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—and who, therefore, contend earnestly for the faith in these days when piety is mocked from the pulpit and the Gospel is sneered at by professional preachers. We need men who love the Truth of God—to whom it is dear as their lives! We need men into whose hearts the old Doctrine is burned by the hand of God’s Spirit through a deep experience of its necessity and of its power! We need no more of those who will parrot what they are taught, but we need men who will speak what they know! Oh, for a troop of men like John Knox, heroes of the martyr and Covenanter stock! Then would Jehovah of Hosts have a people to serve Him who would be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

Discouragement not only weakens men, but it takes them off from the service of God. It is significant that the Prophet said to them, “Be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work.” They had ceased to build! They had begun to talk and argue, but they had laid down the trowel. They were extremely wise in their observations, criticisms and prophecies—but the walls did not rise. One person knew exactly how big the former Temple was. Another declared that their present architect was not up to the mark and that the structure was not built in a scientific manner. One objected to this and another, to that. Everybody was wiser than all the rest and sneered at old-fashioned ways. It is always so when we are discouraged—we cease from the work of the Lord and waste time in talk and nonsensical refinements! May the Lord take away discouragement from any of you who now suffer from it!

I suppose some of you do feel it, for at times it creeps over my heart and makes me go with heaviness to my work. I believe that God’s Truth will yet come to the front, but it has many adversaries today. All sorts of unbeliefs are being hatched out from under the wings of “modern thought.” The Gospel seems to be regarded as a nose of wax, to be altered and shaped by every man who wishes to show his superior skill. Nor is it in doctrine, alone, but also in practice, that the times are out of joint. Separateness from the world and holy living are to give place to gaiety and theater-going. To follow Christ fully has gone out of fashion with many of those from whom we once hoped better things. Yet are there some who waver not, some who are willing to be in the right with two or three. For my own part, even should I find none around me of the same mind, I shall not budge an inch from the old Truth of God, nor sweat a hair for fear of its overthrow. I shall abide confident that the eternal God, whose Truth we know and hold, will vindicate Himself before long and turn the wisdom of the world into babble and its boasting into confusion! Blessed is the man who shall be able to stand fast by his God in these evil days. Let us not in any way be discouraged. “Be strong; be strong; be strong,” sounds as a threefold voice from the Triune God! “Fear not” comes as a sweet cordial to the faint—therefore let no man’s heart fail him. Thus much about the discouragement.

II. Secondly, here is THE ENCOURAGEMENT IMPARTED which is the grand part of our text. “According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you: fear you not.” God remembers His Covenant and stands to His ancient promises! When the people came out of Egypt, the Lord was with them by His Spirit—therefore He spoke to them by Moses and through Moses He guided, judged and taught them. He was with them, also, by His Spirit, in inspiring Bezaleel and Aholiab as to the works of art which adorned the Tabernacle. God always finds workmen for His work and, by His Spirit, fits them for it.

The Spirit of God rested upon the elders who were ordained to relieve Moses of his great burden. The Lord was also with His people in the fiery cloudy pillar which was conspicuous in the midst of the camp. His Presence was their glory and their defense. This is a type of the Presence of the Spirit with the Church. At the present day, if we hold to the Truth of God; if we live in obedience to His holy commands; if we are spiritually minded; if we cry unto God in believing prayer; if we have faith in His Covenant and in His Son—the Holy Spirit abides among us. The Holy Spirit descended upon the Church at Pentecost and He has never gone back— there is no record of the Spirit’s return to Heaven! He will abide with the true Church forevermore. This is our hope for the present struggle. The Spirit of God remains with us.

To what end , my Brothers and Sisters, is this Spirit with us? Let us think of this, that we may be encouraged at this time. The Spirit of God remains among you to aid and assist the ministry which He has already given. Oh, that the prayers of God’s people would always go up for God’s ministers, that they may speak with a Divine power and influence which none shall be able to oppose! We look too much for clever men. We seek out fluent and flowery speakers. We sigh for men cultured and trained in all the knowledge of the heathen—but if we sought more for unction, for Divine authority and for that power which hedges about the man of God, how much wiser would we be!

Oh, that all of us who profess to preach the Gospel would learn to speak in entire dependence upon the direction of the Holy Spirit, not daring to utter our own words, but even trembling lest we should do so! We must commit ourselves to that secret influence without which nothing will be powerful upon the conscience or converting to the heart! Know you not the difference between the power that comes of human oratory and that which comes by the Divine energy which speaks so to the heart that men cannot resist it? We have too much forgotten this! It were better to speak six words in the power of the Holy Spirit than to preach 70 years of sermons without the Spirit! He who rested on those who have gone to their reward in Heaven can rest, this day, upon our ministers and bless our evangelists, if we will but seek it of Him! Let us cease to grieve the Spirit of God, and look to Him for help to the faithful ministers who are yet spared to us.

This same Spirit who, of old, gave to His Church eminent teachers can raise up other and more useful men. The other day, a Brother from Wales told me of the great men he remembered. He said that he had never heard such a one as Christmas Evans, who surpassed all men when he was in the pulpit. I asked him if he knew another Welsh minister who preached like Christmas Evans. “No,” he said, “we have no such man in Wales in our days.” So in England we have neither Wesley nor Whitefield, nor any of their order. Yet, as with God is the residue of the Spirit, He can fetch out from some chimney-corner another Christmas Evans, or find in our Sunday school another George Whitefield who shall declare the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven! Let us never fear for the future, or despair for the present, since the Spirit of God remains with us.

What if the growing error of the age should have silenced the last tongue that speaks out the old Gospel? Let not faith be weakened! I hear the tramp of legions of soldiers of the Cross. I hear the clarion voices of hosts of preachers. “The Lord gave the Word; great was the company of those that published it.” Have faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and received gifts for men. He then gave Apostles, teachers, preachers and evangelists—and He can do the same again. Let us fall back upon the eternal God and never be discouraged for an instant.

Nor is this all. The Holy Spirit being with us, He can move the whole Church to exercise its varied ministries. This is one of the things we need very much—that every member of the Church should recognize that he is ordained to service. Everyone in Christ, man or woman, has some testimony to bear, some warning to give, some deed to do in the name of the Holy Child Jesus—and if the Spirit of God is poured out upon our young men and our maidens, each one will be awakened to energetic service! Both small and great will be in earnest and the result upon the slumbering masses of our population will surprise us all. Sometimes we lament that the Churches are so dull. There is an old proverb which says of Soand-So, that he was, “as sound asleep as a church.” I suppose there is nothing that can sleep so soundly as a Church. But yet the Spirit of God still remains and, therefore, Churches go to be awakened. I mean that not only in part but as a whole, a Church may be quickened. The dullest professor, the most slovenly Believer, the most captious and useless member of a Church may yet be turned to good account. I see them like a stack of wood, piled up, dead and dry. Oh for the fire! We will have a blaze out of them yet!

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, brood over the dark, disordered Church as once You did over chaos, and order shall come out of confusion and the darkness shall fly before the light! Only let the Spirit be with us and we have all that is needed for victory. Give us His Presence and everything else will come in its due season for the profitable service of the entire Church.

If the Spirit is with us there will come multitudinous conversions. We cannot get at “the lapsed masses,” as they are called. We cannot stir the crass infidelity of the present age. No, we cannot, but He can. All things are possible with God. If you walk down to our bridges at a certain hour of the day, you will see barges and vessels lying in the mud—and all the king’s horses and all the king’s men cannot stir them! Wait until the tide comes in and they will walk the water like things of life! The living flood accomplishes, at once, what no mortals can do. And so today our Churches cannot stir. What shall we do? Oh, that the Holy Spirit would come with a flood tide of His benign influences, as He will if we will but believe in Him—as He must if we will but cry unto Him—as He shall if we will cease to grieve Him! Everything will be even as the saints desire when the Lord of saints is with us! The hope of the continuance and increase of the Church lies in the remaining of the Spirit with us. The hope of the salvation of London lies in the wonder-working Spirit. Let us bow our heads and worship the Omnipotent Spirit who deigns to work in us, by us and with us!

Then, Brethren, if this should happen—and I see not why it should not—then we may expect to see the Church put on her beautiful garments! Then shall she begin to clear herself of the errors which now defile her! Then shall she press to her bosom the Truths of God which she now begins to forget! Then will she go back to the pure fountain of Inspiration and drink from the Scriptures of Truth! And then, out of the midst of her, shall flow no turbid streams, but rivers of Living Water. If the Holy Spirit will work among us, we shall rejoice in the Lord and glory in the name of our God.

When once the Spirit of God puts forth His might, all things will be in accord with Him. Notice that in the rest of the chapter—which I shall now read, not as relating to that Temple at all, but to the Church of God— there is great comfort given to us. If the Holy Spirit is once given, then we may expect Providence to cooperate with the Church of God. Read verse 6—“Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake Heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. I will shake all nations.” Great commotions will cooperate with the Holy Spirit! We may expect that God will work for His people in an extraordinary fashion if they will but be faithful to Him. Empires will collapse and times will change for the Truth’s sake. Expect the unexpected! Reckon upon that which is unlikely if it is necessary for the growth of the Kingdom! Of old the earth helped the woman when the dragon opened his mouth to drown her with the floods that he cast forth— help shall come unexpected to us when affairs are at their worst.

Especially do I look for a shaking among the hosts of unbelief. How often did the Lord of old rout His enemies without His Israel drawing a sword! The watchword was, “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” The adversaries of old fell out among themselves—and they will do so again. When Cadmus slew the dragon with his javelin, he was told to sow its teeth in the earth. When he did so, according to the classic fable, he saw rising out of the ground nodding plumes, crested helmets and broad shoulders of armed men! Up from the earth there sprang a host of warriors—but Cadmus needed not to flee, for the moment they found their feet, these children of the dragon fell upon each other till scarcely one was left! Error, like Saturn, devours its own children! Those that fight against the Lord of Hosts are not agreed among themselves and they shall sheathe their swords in each other’s bosoms.

I saw in the night vision, the sea, the deep and broad sea of the Truth of God flashing with its silver waves. Lo, a black horse came out of the darkness and went down to the deep, threatening to drink it dry. I saw him stand there drinking and swelling as he drank. In his pride, he trusted that he could snuff up Jordan at a draught! I stood by and saw him drink and then plunge further into the sea, to drink still more. Again he plunged in with fury and soon he lost his footing and I saw him no more, for the deep had swallowed him that boasted that he would swallow it! Rest assured that every black horse of error that comes forth to swallow up the sea of Divine Truth shall be drowned in it! Therefore be of good courage! God, who makes the earth and the heavens to shake, shall cause each error to fall like an untimely fig!

And next, the Lord in this chapter promises His people that they shall have all the supplies they need for His work. They feared that they could not build His House because of their poverty. “But,” says the Lord of Hosts, “the silver and the gold are Mine.” When the Church of God believes in God and goes forward bravely, she need not trouble as to supplies. Her God will provide for her. He that gives the Holy Spirit will give gold and silver according as they are needed—therefore let us be of good courage! If God is with us, why need we fear? One of our English kings once threatened the great city of London that if its councilors talked so independently, he would—yes—he would, indeed, he would—take his court away from the city!

The Lord Mayor on that occasion replied that if his majesty would graciously leave the river Thames behind him, the citizens would try to get on without his court. If any say, “If you hold to these old-fashioned doctrines, you will lose the educated, the wealthy, the influential.” We answer—but if we do not lose the godly and the Presence of the Holy Spirit, we are not in the least alarmed. If the Holy Spirit remains with us, there is a river the streams of which make glad the city of God! Brothers and Sisters, my heart leaps within me as I cry, “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea.”

The best comfort of all remained—“The desire of all nations shall come.” This was in a measure fulfilled when Jesus came into that latter Temple and caused all holy hearts to sing for gladness, but it was not wholly fulfilled in that way, for if you notice, in the ninth verse it is written, “The Glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former; and in this place will I give peace,” which the Lord did not fully do to the second Temple since that was destroyed by the Romans. But there is another Advent, when, “the desire of all nations shall come” in power and Glory—and this is our highest hope! Though Truth may be driven back and error may prevail, Jesus comes and He is the great Lord and Patron of Truth—He shall judge the world in righteousness and the people in equity! Here’s our last resource—here are God’s reserves. He whom we serve lives and reigns forever and ever! And He says, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” “Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

III. I would have finished if it had not been that this text seemed, to me, to overflow so much that it might not only refresh God’s people, but give drink to thirsty sinners who are seeking the Lord. For a moment or two I give myself to ENCOURAGEMENT FURTHER APPLIED.

It is at the beginning of every gracious purpose that men have most fear, even as these people had who had newly begun to build. When first the Holy Spirit begins to strive with a man and to lead him to Jesus, he is apt to say—“I cannot; I dare not; it is impossible. How can I believe and live?” Now I want to speak to some of you, here, who are willing to find Christ. I want to encourage you by the Truth of God that the Spirit lives to help you. I would even like to speak to those who are not anxious to be saved. I remember that Dr. Payson, an exceedingly earnest and useful man of God, once did an amazing thing. He had been holding inquiry meetings with all sorts of people and great numbers had been saved. At last, one Sunday, he gave out that he would have a meeting on Monday night with those persons who did not desire to be saved—and, strange to say, some 20 persons came who did not wish to repent or believe.

He spoke to them and said, “I am sure that if a little film, thin as the web of the gossamer, were let down by God from Heaven to each one of you, you would not push it away from you. Although it were almost invisible, you would value even the slightest connection between you and Heaven. Now, your coming to meet me tonight is a little link with God. I want it to increase in strength till you are joined to the Lord forever.” He spoke to them most tenderly and God blessed those people who did not desire to be saved, so that before the meeting was over, they were of another mind! The film had become a thicker thread and it grew and grew until the Lord Christ held them by it forever. Dear Friends, the fact of your being in the Tabernacle, this morning, is like that filmy thread—do not push it away! Here is your comfort—the Holy Spirit still works with the preaching of the Word.

Do I hear you say, “I cannot feel my need of Christ as I need to feel it?” The Spirit remains among us. He can make you feel more deeply the guilt of sin and your need of pardon. “But I have heard so much about conviction and repentance and I do not seem to have either of them.” Yet the Spirit remains with us and that Spirit is able to work in you the deepest conviction and the truest repentance. “O Sir, I do not feel as if I could do anything.” But the Spirit remains with us and all things that are necessary for godliness, He can give. He can work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. “I want to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Who made you want to do that? Who but the Holy Spirit? Therefore He is still at work with you and though, as yet, you do not understand what believing is, or else I am persuaded you would believe at once, the Spirit of God can instruct you in it! You are blind, but He can give you sight—you are paralyzed, but He can give you strength—the Spirit of God remains!

“Oh, but that doctrine of regeneration staggers me—you know, we must be born again.” Yes, we are born again of the Spirit and the Spirit remains with us still. He is still mighty to work that wondrous change and to bring you out of the kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son. The Spirit remains with us, blessed be His name! “Ah, dear Sir,” says one, “I want to conquer sin!” Who made you desire to conquer sin? Who, but the Spirit that remains with us? He will give you the sword of the Spirit and teach you how to use it! And He will give you both the will and the power to use it successfully. Through the Spirit’s might, you can overcome every sin, even that which has dragged you down and disgraced you! The Spirit of God is still waiting to help you. When I think of the power of the Spirit of God, I look hopefully upon every sinner here this morning! I bless His name that He can work in you all that is pleasing in His sight. Some of you may be very careless, but He can make you thoughtful. Coming up to London to see the Exhibition, I hope you may, yourselves, become an exhibition of Divine Grace! You think not about these things, but He can make you feel, at this moment, a sweet softness stealing over you until you long to be alone and to get home to the old armchair and there seek the Lord. You can thus be led to salvation!

I thought, when I came in here, that I would have a picked congregation and so I have. You are one of them! Wherever you come from, I want you now to seek the Lord. He has brought you here and He means to bless you. Yield yourselves to Him while His sweet Spirit pleads with you! While the heavenly Wind softly blows upon you, open wide every window. You have not felt that you needed it, but that is the sure proof that you need it, for he that does not know his need of Christ is most in need! Open wide your heart that the Spirit may teach you your need. Above all, breathe the prayer that He would help you, this morning, to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, for, “there is life in a look at the Crucified One—there is life at this moment for you.”

“Oh,” you say, “if I were to begin I should not keep on.” No, if you began, perhaps you would not, but if He begins with you, He will keep on. The final perseverance of saints is the result of the final perseverance of the Holy Spirit—He perseveres to bless and we persevere in receiving the blessing! If He begins, you have begun with a Divine power that faints not and neither is weary. I wish it might so happen that on this fifth day of the ninth month, not the Prophet Haggai, but I, God’s servant, may have spoken to you such a word as you shall never forget! And may the Lord add to the word, by the witness of the Holy Spirit, “From this day will I bless you!” Go away with that promise resting upon you! I would like to shake the hand of every stranger here this morning, and say, “Brother, in the name of the Lord I wish you, from this day, a blessing.” Amen and amen!

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“THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS”  
NO. 3442

A SERMON  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 25, 1870.

**“And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of Hosts.” Haggai 2:7.**

THE second Temple was never intended to be as magnificent as the first. The first was to be the embodiment of the full glory of the dispensation of symbols and types—and was soon to pass away. This comparative feebleness had been proved by the idolatry and apostasy of the people, Israel. And when they returned to Jerusalem they were to have a structure that would be sufficient for the purposes of their worship, but they were not again to be indulged with the splendors of the former house which God had erected by the hand of Solomon. Had it been God’s Providence that a Temple equally magnificent as the first should be erected, it might have been very readily accomplished. Cyrus appears to have been obedient to the Divine Will and to have been a great friend of the Jews, but he expressly, by edict, diminished the length of the walls and gave express command that the walls should never be erected as high as before. We have also evidence that a like decree was made by Darius, an equally great friend of the Jews, who could, with the lifting of his finger, have outdone the glory of Solomon’s Temple! But in God’s Providence it was not arranged that it should be so and, though Herod, not a Jew, and only a Jew by religious pretense to suit his own particular purpose, lavished a good deal of treasure upon the second Temple for the pleasure of the nation he ruled, and to gain some favor from them, yet he rather profaned than adorned the Temple, since he did not follow the prescribed architecture by which it ought to have been built, and he had not the Divine Approval upon his labors. No Prophet ever commanded, and no Prophet ever sanctioned the labors of such a horrible wretch as that Herod! The reason seems to me to be this—in the second Temple, during the time it should stand, the dispensation of Christ was softly melted into the light of spiritual Truth. The outward worship was to cease there. It seems right that it should cease in a Temple that had not the external glory of the first. God intended there to light up the first beams of the spiritual splendor of the second Temple, namely, His true Temple, the Church, and he would put a sign of decay on the outward and visible in the Temple of the first. Yet He declares by His servant, Haggai, that the glory of the second Temple should be greater than the first. It certainly was not so as in respect of gold, or silver, or size, or excellence of architecture—and yet it truly was so, for the Glory of the Presence of Christ was greater than all the glory of the old Temple’s wealth! And the glory of having the Gospel preached in it, the glory of having the Gospel miracles worked in its porches by the Apostles and by the Master was far greater than any hecatombs of bullocks and he-goats—the glory of being, as it were, the cradle of the Christian Church—the nest out of which should fly the messengers of peace, who, like doves, should bear the olive branch throughout the world. I take it that the decadence of the old system of symbols was a most fitting preparation for the incoming of the system of Grace and Truth in the Person of Jesus Christ! And the second Temple has this glory which excels—that while the first was the glory of the moon in all its splendor, the second is the moon going down—the sun is rising beyond her, gilding the horizon with the first beams at the morning!

I intend to speak to you at this time about the true spiritual Temple, the true second Temple, the spiritual Temple, which, I think, is here spoken of—although the second Temple, literally, is also intended—the true spiritual Temple built up, according to the text, as the desire of all nations.

I find this passage a very difficult one in the original—it bears several meanings in itself. The first meaning that I give you, though it runs contrary to the great majority of Christian expositors, is the most accurate explanation of the original. We shall bring in the other explanations byand-by. Reading it thus, “I will shake all nations,” and the desire—the desirable persons, the best part, or as the Septuagint reads it, the elect of all nations—shall come. They shall come—the true Temple of God, and they shall be the living stones that shall compose it, or, as others read it, “The desirable things of all nations shall come,” which is, no doubt, the meaning, because the eighth verse gives the key—“The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of Hosts.” The desirable things of all nations are to be brought in as voluntary offerings to this true second Temple, this spiritual living Temple.

Let us begin, then, and take that sense, first. And in this case we are told, in the text concerning this second Temple, what these living stones are—

I. THE HISTORICAL DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME. The choice men, the pick, the best of all men shall come and constitute the true Temple of God. Not the kings and princes, not the great and noble after the flesh—these are but the choice of men after the manner of man’s choice—but not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen and called! But still, those whom God chooses must be the choice ones of mankind. They will not claim to be so by nature—on the contrary, they will repudiate any idea of any natural goodness in themselves. But God sees them as what they are to be, as what He intends them to be, as what He makes them to be and in this respect they are the desire, they are the choice of all nations! To God, His people are His royal treasure, His secret jewels, the treasury of kings—they are very precious in His sight. Their very death is precious. He keeps record of their bones and will raise their dust at the Last Day. If the nation did but know it, the saints in a nation are the aristocrats of that nation. Those who fear God are the very soul, marrow, and backbone of a nation. For their sakes God has preserved many a nation. For their sakes He gives unnumbered blessings. “You are the salt of the earth”—the earth were putrid without them. “You are the light of the world”—the world would be dark without them. They are the desire, I say, though often the world treats them with contempt and would cast them out. It has always been thus with the blind world—to treat its best friends worst—and its worst enemies often receive the most royal entertainment. Now what a joy it is to us to think that God has been pleased to make unto Himself a people according to His own sovereign will and good pleasure and that He has made these to be the desirable ones out of all nations—that with these choice and elect ones He will build up His Church!  
But the text not only tells us of the stones, but of the remarkable mode of architecture. “The desire of all nations shall come”—they shall be brought together. Human means shall be used to bring each one to its place, to excavate each one from its quarry. And while it is God who speaks, He speaks like God, for He uses “shalls” and “wills” most freely, and according to the Eternal Purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus, before the earth was, so shall the fulfillment be. We who preach the Gospel may preach with devout assurance of success. The desire of all nations shall come! Out of this congregation the truly desirable ones shall come to Christ. Out of the soil in which the sower sowed—the honest and good ground—is brought forth the harvest. Out of the nations, though they reject Christ and continue in their idolatry, yet there are some choice spirits who come—some whom the Lord looks upon with great delight—and these shall come. We do not labor in vain, neither do we spend our strength for nothing. We fall back upon the Doctrine of Divine working and Divine choice for consolation—certainly not for an excuse for indolence, but for consolation when we have done our best, that God is glorified in the end, “the desire of all nations shall come.”  
And if you will notice in the whole text, it appears that they do not come without much shaking. In one sense, no man comes to God with compulsion. And in another sense, no man comes without compulsion. You see two boxes opened. There are two ways of opening them. You see one box wrenched— evidently there has been used rough means. Who opened it? A thief. God never opens men’s hearts in that way! You see another box open—no sign of damage, no sign of any particular labor. Who opened it? The person who had the key—probably the owner. Hearts belong to God and He has the keys and opens them—sweetly opens them. And yet, though no force is used, that puts aside the positive, free agency of man which God interferes not with, yet there is a spiritual force which may well be described as a shaking. It is only when the tree of the nation has a thorough shaking, that at last the prime, ripe fruit will drop down into the great Master’s lap! He shakes by Providence, by the movement of the human conscience. He shakes by the impulses of His Holy Spirit. He shakes the spirit and as the result, the desirable persons out of all the nations are brought to Himself. Stones that He would have come at last out of the quarry—and He builds them up into a Temple.  
And now observe that these persons, according to another rendering of the text, when they come to build up the Church they always bring their desire with them—they bring with them the most desirable thing. The desirable things of all nations shall give the silver, and the gold, and so on. He that comes to Christ brings with him all he has—and he who has left his true substance behind him has not come to Christ. What, now, is the desire of all the nations when hearts are renewed? Well, silver and gold will always be desirable, and men who give their hearts to Christ will bring what they have of that to Christ. But the most desirable things of manhood are not metals—are they dirt, mere dross, hard materialisms? No, the desirable things of manhood are things of the soul, the heart, the spirit! And into the Temple, the great second Temple, there shall come, not merely masses of gold and silver that can adorn with outward splendor, but also love, and faith, and holy virtue—more priceless than gems, far richer in value than rarest mines! Oh, what a sight the Church of God is when holy angels look upon it! We hear of some of the first Spanish invaders going into the temple of Peru and seeing floors, roofs and walls made of slabs of gold—and standing astonished! But oh, in the Church there are slabs of faith on the floor of that great Temple, and walls of love of Christian self-sacrifice, and roofs of holy joy and Christian consolation! It is a Temple that makes spiritual eyes flash with gladness! What care they for the splendor of kings and princess. But they care much for the true, desirable things of nations—holy emotions, holy desires, ascriptions of gratitude and devout acts of service for the Lord God! Oh, how glorious is the second Temple, then, when the desirable men come to it and bring with them all the desirable things to make it glorious in the sight of God!  
And then this Temple, thus built and thus adorned, will continue. The text implies that, “I will shake all nations.” The Apostle says that this signifies the things that can be shaken—that the things that cannot be shaken will remain—and that the desire of all nations must be put down as a thing that cannot be shaken. The Church, then, shall never be shaken, and the precious things that the Church gives to her God shall not be shaken! Time will change many things. Great princes will be considered mere beggars, by-and-by, in the esteem of men who know how to judge by character. Great men will shrivel into very small things—when they come to be tried, even by posterity. And the Judgment Day—ah, how will that try the great ones of this earth! But the Christian Church— the very gates of Hell shall not prevail against her! Time shall not be able so much as to chip one of her polished stones. Her treasures of faith, and what not, the rich things that God has given her—these things shall never be stolen—they can never be shaken! And then the crown of all is, “I will fill this house with My glory, says the Lord.” This is the reason, the great charm of it all! God Himself dwells, as He dwells nowhere else, in His Glory. The Church, which we think two, and call militant and triumphant, is but one, after all, and God dwells in it! Oh, if we had but eyes to see it, the Glory of God on earth is not much less than the Glory of God in Heaven, for the glory of a king in peace is one thing, but the glory of a conqueror in war is another thing, though I know which I prefer. Yet if I transfer the figure, I have no preference between the Glory of the God of Peace in the midst of His obedient servants in His ivory palaces, and the Glory of the Lord of Hosts in the thick of this heavenly war, as He conflicts with human evil and brings forth glory to His saints out of all the mischief that Satan seeks to do to His Throne and to His scepter. God is known in the Jerusalem below, as well as in the Jerusalem above. “The Lord is in the midst of her.” Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. God is in the midst of her—she shall not be moved. And though the kings gather together for her destruction, yet His Presence is the river, the streams whereof make glad the City of God! Yes, glorious things may well be spoken of Zion when we have such stones as precious men, such gifts as precious graces, such abiding character as God gives, and such a Presence as the Presence of God Himself! But now, in the next place, if we take the other rendering of the text—  
II. THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL SECOND TEMPLE IS ACTUALLY THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.  
“I will shake all nations,” and He who is the desire of all nations shall come—a rendering which is not incorrect, and is established by a great mass of theologians, though, according to some of the ablest critics, a rendering scarcely to be sustained by the original. He who is the desire of all nations shall come, and that shall be the Glory of the second spiritual Temple! Jesus Christ, then, is the desire of all nations, if so we read the text, and this is doubtless true. All nations have a dark and dim desire for Him. I say a dark desire, for without that adjective I could scarcely speak the truth. Most interesting chapters have been written by students of the history of mankind upon the preparedness of men’s hearts for the coming of Christ at His Incarnation. It is very certain that almost all nations have a tradition of the Coming One. The Jews, of course, expected the Messiah. There were persons instructed according to the culture of various nations, which, though they do not expect the Messiah quite as clearly as the Jews, had almost as shrewd a guess as to what He might be and do as the mere ritualistic and Pharisaic Jews had. There was a notion all over the world at that time of Christ’s coming, that some great one was to descend from Heaven and to come into this world for this world’s good. He was in that respect darkly and dimly the desire of all nations. But in all nations there have been some persons more instructed to whom Christ has really been the object of desire with much more intelligence. Job was a Gentile and a fearer of God. We have no reason to believe that Job was a solitary specimen of enlightened persons— we have reason, rather, to hope that in all countries all over the

world God has had a chosen people who have known and feared Him, who have not had all the Light of God which has been given to us, but who better used what Light they had and were guided by His secret Spirit to much more of Light, perhaps, than we think it right, with our little knowledge, to credit them with! These, then, as representatives of all the nations, were desiring the coming of the Great Deliverer, the Incarnate God. And in this sense, representatively, the whole of the world was desiring Christ in that higher sense—and He was the desire of all nations. But, my Brothers and Sisters, does this mean, or does it not mean, that Christ is exactly what all the nations need? If they did but know, if they could but understand Him, He is just what they would desire and should desire! Were their reason taught rightly, and were their minds instructed by the Spirit to desire the best in all the world, Christ is just what they need! All the world desires a way to God. Hence men set up priests and anoint them with oil, and smear them with I know not what, only that they may be mediators between them and God! They must have something to come between their guilt and God’s glorious holiness. Oh, if they knew it, what they need is Christ! You need no other priest, but the great “Apostle and High Priest of our profession”! You need no mediator with God, but the one Mediator, the Man, Christ Jesus, who is also equal with God. Oh, world, why will you go about to seek this priest and that other deceiver, when He whom you need is appointed by the Most High? He whom Jacob saw in his dream as the Ladder which reached from earth to Heaven is the only means—the Son of Man and yet the Son of God! The world needs a peacemaker. Oh, how badly it needs it now! I seem, as I walk my garden, as I go to my pulpit, as I go to my bed, to hear the distant cries and moans of wounded and dying men. We are so familiarized each day with horrible details of slaughter, that if we give our minds to the thought, I am sure we must feel a nausea, a perpetual sickness creeping over us! The reek and steam of those murderous fields, the smell of the warm blood of men flowing out on the soil must come to us and vex our spirits. Earth needs a peacemaker and it is He, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, and the friend of Gentiles, the Prince of Peace, who will make war to cease unto the ends of the earth!  
Man needs a purifier. Very many nations feel, somehow or other, that political affairs do not go as one could wish. There are great excellences in personal government, but great disadvantages. There are great excellences in republican government, but remarkable difficulties, too. There are supreme excellences, as we think, in our own form of government, but a great many things to be amended, for all that. And this world is altogether out of joint—it is a crazy old concern, and does not seem as if it could be amended with all the tinkering of our reformers in the lapse of years. The fact is, it needs the Maker, who made it, to come in and make it right! It needs the Hercules that is to turn the stream right through the Augean stable. It needs the Christ of God to turn the stream of His atoning Sacrifice right through the whole earth, to sweep away the whole filth of ages! And it never will be done unless He does it. He is the One, the true Reformer, the true Rectifier of all wrong and, in this respect, the desire of all nations! Oh, if the world could gather up all her right desires. If she could condense in one cry all her wild wishes. If all true lovers of mankind could condense their theories and extract the true wine of wisdom from them, it would just come to this—we need an Incarnate God and we have got the Incarnate God! Oh, nations, but you know it not! You, in the dark, are groping after Him and know not that He is there!  
Brothers and Sisters, I may add Christ is certainly the desire of all nations in this respect, that we desire Him for all nations. Oh, that the world were encompassed in His Gospel! Would God the sacred fire would run along the ground, that the little handful of corn on the top of the mountains would soon make its fruit to shake like Lebanon. Oh, when will it come, when will it come that all the nations shall know Him? Let us pray for it! Let us labor for it!  
And one other meaning I may give to this—He is the desirable One of all nations, bringing back the former translation of this text. He is the choice One of all nations. He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. He, whom we love, is such an One that He can never be matched by another. His rival could not be found among the sons of men. There is none like He! There is none like He among the angels of light! There is none that can stand in comparison with Him. The Desire, the one that ought to be desired, the most desirable of all the nations is Jesus Christ, and it is the Glory of the Christian Church, which is the second Temple, that Christ is in her, her Head, her Lord! It is never her glory that she condescends to make an iniquitous union with the State. It is her Glory that Christ is her sole King. It is her Glory that He is her sole Prophet, He is her sole Priest and that He then gives to all His people to be kings and priests with Him, Himself the center and source of all their glory and their power!  
I cannot stay longer, though the theme tempts me, but must just give you the last word, which is this, the visible Glory of the true second Temple will be Christ’s Second Coming. He, Himself, is her Glory, whether at His First Coming, or at His Second Coming. The Church will be no more glorious at the Second Coming than now. “What?” you ask, “no more glorious?” No, but more apparently glorious. Christ is as glorious on the Cross as He is on the Throne—it is only the appearance that shall alter. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, but they evermore are brightness, itself, in the Person of Jesus Christ. Now, Brothers and Sisters, we are to expect, as long as this world lasts, that all things will shake that are to be moved. They will go on shaking. We call the world sometimes “terra firma”—it is not this world, surely, that deserves such a name as that—there is nothing stable beneath the stars! All things else will shake, and as the shaking goes on, Jesus Christ will, to those who know Him, become more and more their desire! I suppose if the world went on, in some things mending and improving, and were to go up to a point, we would not want Christ to come in a hurry, we would rather that things should be perpetuated—but the shaking will make Christ more and more the desire of the nations. “The whole creation groans,” is groaning up to now, but it will groan more and more “in pain together travailing”—the Apostle says—“even until now.” The travailing pains grow worse and worse, and worse, and it will be so with this world—it will travail till, at last, it must come to the consummation of her desire!  
The Church will say, “Come, Lord Jesus.” She will say it with gathering earnestness. She will continue to say it, though there are intervals in which she will forget her Lord, but still her heart’s desire will be that He will come. And at last He will surely come and bring to this world not only Himself, the desire of all nations, but all that can be desired, for those days of His, when He appears, shall be to His people as the days of Heaven upon earth, the days of their honor, the days of their rest—the day in which the kingdoms shall belong unto Christ! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is not for me to go into details on a subject which would require many sermons, and which could not be brought out in the few last words of a sermon. But here is the great hope of that splendid building, the Church, which is desired. Her glory essentially lies in the Incarnate God who has come into her midst. Her Glory manifestly will lie in the Second Coming of that Incarnate God, when He shall be revealed from Heaven to those that look and are waiting for the coming of the Son of God—looking for Him with gladsome expectation! And this is the joy of the Church. He has gone, but He has left word, “I will come again, and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, you may be also.” Remember the words that were spoken by the angels to the Church, “You men of Galilee, why stand you here, gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus who is gone up from you into Heaven shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go up into Heaven.” In propria persona—in very deed and truth, He shall come!—  
*“These eyes shall see Him in that day,  
The God that died for me!  
And all my rising bones shall say,  
Lord, who is like Thee?”*  
Then shall come the adoption, the raising of the body, the reception of a glory to that body reunited to the soul, such as we have not dreamed of, for eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them who love Him! Though He has revealed them unto us by His Holy Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God, yet have our ears heard but little thereof, and we have not received the full discovery of the things that shall be hereafter. The Lord bless you! May you all be parts of His Church, have a share in His Glory and a share in the manifestation of that Glory at the last.  
Dear Hearer, I would send you away with this one query in your ear— Is Christ your desire? Could you say, with David, “He is all my salvation and all my desire”? Could you gather up your feet in the bed, with dying Jacob, and say, “I have waited for Your will, O God”? By your desire shall you be known! The desire of the righteous shall be granted. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desire of your heart!  
But the desire of many is a groveling desire! It is a sinful desire! It is a disgraceful desire—a desire which, if it is attained, the attainment of it will afford very brief pleasure. Oh, Sinner, let your desires go after Christ! Remember if you would have Him, you have not to earn Him—not to fight for Him—not to win Him—He is to be had for the asking! “Lay hold,” says the Apostle, “on eternal life.” As if it were ours, if we did but grip it! God give us Grace to lay hold on eternal life, for Jesus from the Cross is saying, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth!” And from His Throne of Glory He is still saying, “Come unto Me,” exalted on high, “to give repentance and remission of sin,” and He will give them both to those who seek Him. Seek Him, then, this night! God grant it for His Son’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HAGGAI 1-2:1-9; HEBREWS 7:15-28.**

The subject is the building of the second Temple. The people had been busily employed in building their own houses—some of them had gone to great expense and much labor upon these houses, but they had not built the Temple of God. The Prophet Haggai was sent to incite them to holy labor.

Verses 1, 2. In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the Prophet unto Zerrubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of Hosts, saying, This people says, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’S house should be built. A bad excuse is thought to be better than none. These people would not object to the building of the Lord’s house, but they were willing to postpone so expensive a matter. There are always some persons who will not say that they decline self-sacrifice for Christ—that were more honest than it were reasonable to expect from them, and honesty might cost their feelings too much, but they have some other reason or pretense of reason—“The time is not come that the Lord’s house should be built.” Men are generally quick enough for anything that is for their own interest. “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” We must catch time by the forelock. Oh, if we had the same desire in the work and service of God—if we had the same desire—we should have the same promptitude to do our task. “The time is not come”—the time that the Lord’s house should be built.

3, 4. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the Prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your paneled houses, and this house to lie in waste? They had wainscoted their houses with cedar and odoriferous wood, decorated them with carvings, whereas the plainest edifices would have sufficed. God will allow them to build their own house for necessary dwelling, but next to that should certainty come His house, before they took to decorating their own. “Is it time for you to do this?” And, indeed, it may well be said to many a wealthy man, “It does not appear to you to be time to aid foreign missions, but it does seem to you to be time to put another thousand pounds in bonds. It does not seem time for you to help the Bible Society, but it seems to be time to make another investment, and purchase another estate that adjoins your own.” “Is it time for you, oh, you, to dwell in your paneled houses?”

5, 6. Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of Hosts, Consider your ways. You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourself, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages, earns wages to put it into a bag with holes. Those people did not prosper—they were very prudent after a worldly sort, but somehow they did not get on. No, it is not what we do so much as God’s prospering us that will make us really succeed! It is vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. God must give us prosperity and He often withholds this where He sees it is not right. A man will not trust a bad steward, and though God has trusted many and many a bad steward for wise reasons, yet among His own people He often gives chastisements and deprives them of worldly comfort when they use not what they have for His service. I think I have heard some people say that ministers never ought to talk about money in the pulpit. The Prophet Haggai did, however, and it is because ministers say so little about the consecration of their substance to God’s cause that this most important part of true piety is often treated with levity—and with some even by disgust! No, Brothers and Sisters, we must speak often. The great sin of the Christian Church is withholding from God. Now is it the same sin as in the days of Haggai! “Thus says the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways.” If you considered your ways, you would see that you have been losers by your attempts to gain. Consider your ways practically by changing them!

7, 8. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountains, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the LORD. That should be the great objective that we should aim at in all we do—that God may be glorified— that God may take pleasure in it! It does not matter who we please if God is not pleased, nor who gets honor from what we give, if God is not glorified thereby.

9. You looked for much, and, lo it came to little. It vanished—the breeze was so strong that the unconsecrated substance went away like chaff.  
9-11. I did blow upon it. Why? says the LORD of Hosts. Because of My house that is waste, and you run, every man, unto his own house. Therefore the Heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands. Men make an inventory—itemize so many cattle, itemize so much corn, itemize so much wine. God can itemize, too, and He can curse all our blessings, one by one! This catalog looks like it. If they have saved in all these, robbing God, God will take care that they shall get nothing by their doing!  
12. Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the Prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. There is good bottom in those men who are led to duty when they are reminded of neglect—and it is blessed work preaching where there is a conscience quick to accede to the admonition. I do not suppose it was so with all the people of Jerusalem, but it was with some of them, and those the leading men. Where high priests and men of authority lead the way, others, if not so prompt, are often guided by the principle of imitation—and they follow the leader.  
13. Then spoke Haggai, the LORD’S messenger, the LORD’S message unto the people, saying. I am with you, says the LORD. Here was the best cheer for them. They had engaged in God’s business and God would be with them!  
14, 15. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work on the house of the LORD of Hosts their God. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. Notice that date—the 24th day of the sixth month.

**HAGGAI 2:1-9.**  
Verse 1. In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the Prophet, saying— Not very long after.

2, 3. Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? It appears that the spirit of idleness had broken out again. As the walls began to rise, the older men wept at the recollection of what an inferior structure it would be, compared with the former building of Solomon, and the idlers, ready enough to use any excuse, are ready enough to cease work. Therefore God’s Prophet is at it again! If the fire begins to die out, the bellows must be used again! The zeal of the Christian is very much like the zeal of these men of Jerusalem—very apt to flag—and the zeal of God’s messenger must come to stir them up again.

5, 6. According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you: fear you not. For thus says the LORD of Hosts, Once more, (it is a little while)—Though as some read it, it is “but a little structure,” but our reading is, perhaps, better—it is a little while.

6-9. And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of Hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the LORD of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the LORD of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the LORD of Hosts. Clearly encouraging them to proceed with their work.

**HEBREWS 7:15-28.**  
15-18. And it is yet far more evident, if, in the likeness of Melchisedec, there arises another priest who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For He testifies, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. The old Levitical Law is disannulled—it became weak and unprofitable—and now a higher and better dispensation is ushered in with a greater and undying priesthood.

19. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw near unto God. That is all the Law did—it was a steppingstone towards something better. “By which we draw near unto God.” “The Lord has sworn and will not repent.”

20-24. And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, the Lord swore and will not repent, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec). By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better Testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this Man, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. I think they reckoned that there were 83 high priests in regular succession from Aaron to the death of Phineas, the last high priest at the siege of Jerusalem. One succeeded another, but this One goes on continually, He forever has an untransferable priesthood. That word, “untransferable,” is nearer to the meaning than this, “unchangeable.” If any of you have old Bibles with the margin, you will see, “has a priesthood which cannot be passed from one hand to another,” and the margin happens, in this case, to have the true rendering, “This Man has an untransferable priesthood.”

25. Therefore He is also able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them. We need just that High Priest who would live on forever throughout all the ages to sustain His people and do for them all they should need to have done for them, until time should be no more.

26-28. For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, who needs not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the people’s: but this He did once, when He offered up Himself. For the law makes men high priests which have weaknesses; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, makes the Son, who is consecrated forevermore. There is our joy!

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2495 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

DEFILED AND DEFILING  
NO. 2495

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 13, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1885.

**“Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touches any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It  
shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, says the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.” Haggai 2:13, 14.**

THE Prophet Haggai very wisely drew out from the priests a definite answer to certain questions which he put to them. Then, upon their authority, he could say to the people, “This is what your own priests say and this is what you, yourselves, believe.” This was taking them by a kind of sacred guile and it was a powerful means of forcing home the Truth of God to their heart and conscience.

According to the 12th verse, Haggai first put to the priests this question, “If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any food, will it become holy? And the priests answered, and said, No.” Here is a man who is holy—I mean, ceremonially holy—and he is carrying in the fold of his garments, part of a holy sacrifice. Now, if he touches anything, will he make it holy by that touch? The priests said, “No.” They could not say otherwise. So, if a man is, himself, holy, however holy he may be, can he make another man holy simply by touching him? If he speaks of good things, or does good actions, will it be certain that he will, thereby, affect others by his good words and good works? Oh, no! There does not seem to be that spreading power in holy things that there is in unholy things! At any rate, not in those that are merely ceremonially holy. Here, then, is a man who is, in a legal sense, clean before God and he is carrying a holy thing in the fold of his garment, but he does not, therefore, make that which he touches to be clean or holy.

Then the Spirit of God, having by the mouth of the Prophet put the Truth of God in that way, suggested to him to ask the priests another question. “Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touches any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.” There is such a terrible contagion about uncleanness that he who is affected by it spreads it wherever he goes. Whatever he puts his foot upon, or touches with his hand, becomes thereby defiled. We cannot communicate holiness, but we can communicate unholiness! It will cause us labor and agony and anguish of spirit to impart to another even one right idea—and when it is imparted, it is not fully fixed in the hearer’s heart till the Spirit of God comes and works a miracle of Grace! But it is easy enough to communicate evil. A lewd song may have but one hearer and yet never be forgotten! A wrong action may never be chronicled by the public press, yet some little eye that saw it shall have learned from the evil example something that shall never be unlearned! The horribly contagious and infectious power of sin, wherever it is displayed, is terrible.

But the thing to which I want especially to call your attention is this. See what a picture is before us. Here is an unclean man—he has touched a dead body and so become unclean—therefore whatever he touches also becomes unclean. There is a loaf of bread. He has cut a slice off it and all that loaf has become unclean! Here is a mess of stew on the table— he has taken a portion from it and so made it all unclean. There is a cup of wine. He has sipped it, or he may have only touched the cup that contains it—but the whole of the wine is unclean! Here is oil, which one would think would be medicinally useful without being at all harmful, but this unclean person has put his finger to it and it is unclean! Here is meat, or vegetable food of any kind—he has touched it, so it is all unclean. I should not like to be that man—to make unclean even a chair that I might touch! To pollute the very house in which I dwelt, to be unable to shake hands with a friend without making him defiled through contact with me because I was unclean! I say again that is a dreadful picture and you must bear with me when I tell you my fear that it is not only the portrait of the erring people in Haggai’s day, but also a life-like representation of some who are now present—and of multitudes who pass for very good people in these, our days! It can still be said with utmost truthfulness, “So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.”

I. So this is my subject. FIRST, THE TERRIBLE UNCLEANNESS. And here I will keep to my text.  
If you want to fully understand the text, or to have it put into New Testament language, you must look at Paul’s Epistle to his son, Titus, for there, in the 15th verse of the first Chapter, you get this same picture in other colors—“Unto the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.” They are themselves so impure that everything becomes impure to them. Every man whose heart is not renewed by Grace is in this sad and terrible condition!  
Here note, first, that common things are polluted by men of unclean nature. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, says, “I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.” Nothing that God has made and that sin has not marred, is common or unclean of itself, “for every creature of God is good.” From that day when Peter, at Joppa, saw the great sheet let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, creeping things and fowls of the air, he was taught a lesson that he needed to learn—“What God has cleansed, that call not you common.” In and of itself, there is nothing that God has made which ought to be described as common. To the pure heart, everything is pure—but unclean men may make unclean every common or everyday thing of life. They can not only make wine to be unclean, as, alas, is all but universally the case, but even bread, stew, oil, meat, or anything that is, in itself, harmless, can be rendered impure when it comes to be touched by impure men and used wrongfully!  
Perhaps someone asks, “How can that be?” Well, common things can be rendered unclean when you make gods of them. If the most important questions of your life are, “What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?”—if you seek, first of all, in this life merely these things—though they are not, in themselves, evil, they will become idols and so will be unclean, for every idol is a defiling thing to those who bow down before it. Anything which takes your attention away from your God is an idol—it is another god, a rival god—and so it is the most unclean thing possible! I mean just this, that, although your ordinary pursuits may be, in themselves, perfectly innocent and may be commendable if they are followed out to the Glory of God, yet if your first objective in life is yourself and what you can get out of the common things of this life, you defile them by putting them into the place which belongs alone to God!  
Next, common things may be defiled by an excess in the use of them. This may be done by gluttony. What a defilement it is of bread, the staff of life, and of those comforts which God gives to us for food, when a man makes his own belly into a god—whose temple is his kitchen! I know not that the worst of the heathen can possibly degrade themselves more than epicures and drunks do when they make those things which, in themselves, are not evil, to become their gods and indulge in them until, by their excess, they sink below the level of the beasts that perish! You can go to this excess with all kinds of things. The most common and most apparent case is that of the man who indulges in strong drink. But all other common things are capable of being polluted in the same way—and they are continually being so polluted.  
Others pollute common things by excess in the keeping of them. The miser’s gold is cankered by his avarice. He who must always be getting more land, even if he has to banish everybody from the range of his windows, defiles his possessions. He who in trade is exacting towards those who labor for him, demanding more and giving less than is their due, defiles his trade. He makes a dunghill of his shop and turns his traffic into treason against God! I need not go into particulars because the thing is apparent to all men, and you can see how a defiled man, coming into a business which, in itself, is perfectly right, nevertheless defiles it by excess in the keeping of the goods which God has entrusted to him as a steward to use for the good of others.  
I am sure that we can also defile the common mercies of this life by ingratitude in the enjoyment of them. Are there not many who eat and drink, yet never bless God for what they have? Or who abound in riches and yet out of all their wealth there never comes from their hearts any thanksgiving to God? They are, as good old Rowland Hill used to say, like the hogs under the oak which eat the acorns that fall on the ground, but never lift up their thoughts to the tree from which the acorns come. These ungrateful people are willing to receive all the good things which God may give them and they are greedy to get more—but the Lord never receives from them even the peppercorn rent of a word of thanksgiving! Their hearts are set upon the gifts of God and they care nothing for the gracious Giver. O Sirs, when you sit down without thanksgiving to your food and to your drink, your tables are defiled, your platters and your cups are defiled, and every mouthful that goes down your throats is defiled because you do not eat and drink to the glory of God!  
See, then, in how many ways common things may be polluted by men of unclean nature.  
But, even worse than that, holy things are polluted by men of unclean nature. It is a very sad thing to see how the most sacred things can be spoiled by the touch of unholy hands. You have all heard of Voltaire and you know something of the character of the man. I should think that nobody ever excelled Voltaire in a clever kind of blasphemy, yet I find him writing to a lady—a lady of whose character the less said, the better— “My friends say everywhere that I am not a Christian. I have just given them the lie direct by performing my Easter devotions (mes paques) publicly, thus proving to all my lively desire to terminate my long career in the religion in which I was born.” Only fancy a man like Voltaire, after blasphemously saying of Christ that he would “crush the wretch,” then going to eat “the sacrament,” as some call it! And I am afraid that every Easter there are many people of that sort, who have no respect for the Lord’s Day, but because their “priests” choose to call the day, “Good Friday,” they have great respect for that day, and they will come, then, to the Communion Table, though all the year long they have never had a thought concerning Him whose death they profess to celebrate! It is a terrible thing that the innermost mysteries of the Church of Christ are often polluted by a godless, thoughtless man who, nevertheless, for some hypocritical or formalistic reason, will come even to the Table of the Lord, not hesitating to break through that guard of fire—“he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”  
Brothers and Sisters, it is not merely the Lord’s Table that an unclean man defiles, but he pollutes the Gospel by using it as an excuse for sin! Listen to him. He says, “the preacher proclaimed the mercy of God, so I am going to live in sin.” Brute beast are you to talk like that! Another says, “the minister told us that salvation is all of Grace and that a great sinner glorifies God when he is converted, so why should I not be a great sinner?” O horrible wretch, you are accursed, indeed, when you can turn the very Grace of God into an excuse for your wantonness and sin?” Oh, but,” says a third, “you say that salvation is all of the Sovereignty of God, therefore I cannot do anything in the matter.” I know you, Sir, you are, in your own heart, so defiled that you use the blessed Gospel, itself, as the instrument of your rebellion against God! Such people are, alas, all too common—they touch with defiled hands the holiest thing and so pollute

it. But what happens if these defiled people pray? Oh, how many prayers

there are which only insult the Most High God! If you sit down, or stand up, or kneel and you are, “a miserable sinner,” when you neither believe that you are a sinner, nor suffer any misery because of your sin, what are you doing but provoking the Lord to anger by virtually lying in His Presence? Is not much so-called praying just of that sort? It is an awful thing to repeat a form of prayer when your heart does not mean it. What is it but a direct insult to the Lord? Yet how can men who are defiled pray such a prayer as God will accept? They must be first cleansed before their prayers can be accepted. There is nothing so holy, in earth or in Heaven, but a man of defiled heart and conscience will pollute it if he can but lay his hand upon it.

Further, even good works are polluted when they come from evil men. See what it says in the text—“So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands.” Here is a charitable man—he has been giving away a great deal of money, yet look how he has defiled his liberality! He sounded a trumpet before him. He was ostentatious, he desired to be thought very generous and thus, every penny that he has given to the poor has been defiled! “Take heed,” says our Lord, “that you do not give your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward from your Father which is in Heaven. Therefore when you give your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward.” There is no reward reserved for them at the resurrection of the just, for they have had their reward already!

Here is another man and though he is not renewed and regenerate, he is, in his own way, a very religious man. But why is he religious? Partly, out of fear! But still more, from custom! Possibly just to please his friends, or to stand well with his neighbors. Is not all that simply defiling religion?

I have also known some men appear very humble just to gain their own ends and when an unrenewed man puts on humility merely as a cloak—I was going to say that he is devilish, for the very humble man who aims at making some gain by it—the Uriah Heep of the novelist—is one of the most despicable of all people beneath the sky! When even that precious Grace of humility is touched by his hand, does he not defile it till it appears loathsome in the eyes of men?

I have seen that same man become sternly righteous in order to get revenge on his enemy. “I must do the right thing,” he says, and he speaks as if it was most painful to him to have to do it. But all the while there is somebody whom he hates and he is determined to crush him! He will have his pound of flesh, or the uttermost farthing of his debt, and he tries to excuse his malice by saying, “You know, we must, sometimes, make an example of wrong-doers.” Yes, other people have been very foolishly charitable and have passed by wrongs done to them—but he is going to be a defender of everything that is upright—yet he does it merely to gratify his desire for vengeance! Is he not defiling holy things and good works by touching them? Yet is not this often the case with bad men? They defile to the last degree even things that appear to be good!

And, dear Friends, the text adds that even sacrifices are polluted when offered by unclean men—“that which they offer there is unclean.” Their lamb, their bulls, their fine flour, their oil that they pour out at the foot of God’s altar—all becomes defiled! There is what professes to be a public thanksgiving to God, but it is turned into a show to the glory of men! Whenever the unregenerate world brings anything to God as a sacrifice, what a wretched mess it makes of it! It becomes only another occasion for sinning against the Most High. Supposing a heathen should come in, on Christmas night, when professedly Christian people are supposed to be celebrating the birth of Christ, but all their cups are full of wine and they can scarcely stand for staggering? What would he think the Christ must be whose birthday they are celebrating? An unrenewed man cannot touch anything without spoiling it! Wherever he goes, he is a spoiler. The sea has often been strewn with wrecks which have been occasioned by the stupidity of merchants—and the world is full of the tombs of men who have been hurried to their graves by other men. Truly did the poet

sing— *“Every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile.”*

It is a mercy that unrenewed men cannot enter Heaven! If they could, Heaven would not last as Heaven for even five minutes. There would be another Hell created if unrenewed men could walk among the palms and harps of the glorified. You may do what you like with a man, but as long as he is unclean, he communicates his defilement wherever he may lay his hand.

That is a picture of every man who has not been born again! It is not a pretty picture, is it? Did you come here expecting me to say pretty things to you? I have not learned the art of doing that, but in the name of God I assure you that this is true, and I pray His Spirit to convince every unregenerate person that it is true! In your present condition you cannot do any good works, you cannot serve God—what have you to do to declare His statutes? You cannot do anything but what will displease Him until you are born again. “Except a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God”—he cannot even see it! —And further, “Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” He will have to stand shivering outside its walls, but of that Kingdom he cannot be a subject until he has passed from death to life—and has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus, and so has been cleansed from his sinful defilement.

II. Thus I have kept to my text, but now I am going to run right away from it to speak upon THE ALL-SUFFICIENT REMEDY.  
Where can we find a better type and figure of that remedy than in the chapter which I read to you just now from the Book of Numbers? [Exposition at end of sermon—was always read before sermon—EOD.] In Numbers 19 we have

a type of the great remedy and a striking account of the uncleanness which it removed. I shall not attempt a full exposition of the rites used for purifying the unclean, but I would have you notice that, first of all, in order to the removal of uncleanness, there was a sacrifice. There was a red heifer, without spot, which had to be slain. There could be no sort of purification except through death, and there can be no cleansing of your defilement, my Brothers and Sisters, except through the Sacrifice of the Son of God. The red heifer and the lambs and the bulls under the Old Covenant died to teach people that the punishment of sin was the forfeiture of life—and these creatures died in the place of the offender that he might live. They were all types pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God who, in the fullness of time, came and took upon Himself His people’s sin and stood in His people’s place—that He might die—“the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.”

There is no hope of your ever being made clean except through the blood of Him whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin. Kick not at this doctrine, I pray you, for why should Jesus die at all if you could be saved without His death? And if there is not everything in that death that is necessary for your cleansing, what do you propose to add to it? It seems to me to be sheer blasphemy to think that anything you can feel, or do, or give, can be worthy to be added to the great Sacrifice of Christ! I wish you would say, “If this is the way of salvation, by a Sacrifice offered in my place to be accepted by me, I will gladly and joyfully accept it.” This is the great Truth of God—“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.” There is no other cleansing and there is no need of any other! Listen to this text and believe what it says—“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” Is not that enough for you?

Turning again to this Book of Numbers, you will notice that there was a burning, for this heifer, after being killed, was burned outside the camp. This burning signified that sin was very hateful to God, that He could not bear to have it where His people lived. Sin must be put outside the camp and then, as a dead thing, it must be burned with fire and the heifer which was supposed to bear that sin must suffer that doom. Jesus also, when He took our sin, suffered outside the gate. I want you, dear Friends, to feel that sin is a hateful thing—you can never be purged from it while you love it. Shut it out from your heart as much as possible! Shut it out from your thoughts! Since it put Christ outside the camp, you must put it outside the camp. There is no cleansing a man from sin while he lives in sin and there is no possibility of forgiveness while sin is indulged in and delighted in! You must stop it—it must be burned as offal, over the wall there among the filth and refuse of the city—and be put away altogether from you. In type of which you see your Lord thus slain upon the Cross, as if He, too, had been a felon, “made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.”

Looking again at the type, you will see that there was a water of separation. The ashes of this red heifer were to be put into running water— not stagnant, but lively, running water—and a mixture being made with it. It was to be sprinkled upon the people as a water of separation, or purification. And, dear Friends, you and I must have the Holy Spirit pouring in upon us the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ to make us clean. There is no purification for you, my Friend, except by the Holy Spirit. There must be the water as well as the blood—they must both come to purge the conscience from dead works that we may be clean, like the priests of old, and go into the Holy Place to present acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. You must have the blood to take away the guilt of sin and you must also have the water to wash you from the pollution of sin, that you may be sanctified and set apart to the living God!

You will notice, too, that there was an application of all this with hyssop. Hence David says, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.” Faith is, as it were, that little bunch of hyssop. Hyssop was a small plant, as I suppose, insignificant enough in itself and of no use except for use in sprinkling. It was dipped into the blood and then the guilty one was sprinkled—or into the water with the ashes—and with it the unclean one was sprinkled and made clean. You must have this faith if you would be saved! The blood of the Paschal Lamb would not have saved the Israelites in Egypt if it had not been smeared on the lintel and the two side posts. The scarlet line would not have saved Rahab if she had not fastened it in the window, to be the mark that her house, with its inhabitants, was to be spared. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” It is all you have to do—and this He enables you to do. Just simply believe that Christ is able to save you and repose yourself on that dear heart which was pierced for you!

Put yourself into those blessed hands that were fastened to the Cross and you are saved! The moment you believe in Jesus, your sins are gone—all of them, for there is no halving sin! There is a solidarity in sin— it is one great mass! So that the moment a sinner believes in Christ, all his sins—past, present and to come—are gone, and gone forever. “To come,” you say, “how can that be before they are committed?” Did not Christ die, not only before we committed any sin, but before we had any existence? And yet even then, in His death, He put away the sin of His people. If you believe, your transgression is forgiven—you are “accepted in the Beloved!” And, as surely as you live, you shall one day stand before yon burning Throne of God, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” and you shall have no fear—

*“Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who anything to my charge shall lay? While through Your blood absolved I am  
From sin’s tremendous curse and shame.”*

See, Beloved, how simple is this deliverance from impurity? If the impurity was terrible, yet the remedy is so perfect, so complete, so available, that my heart dances while I talk of it to you!

Finally, this remedy must be applied to our whole nature. Remember that 19th verse that we read—“And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening.” If you, dear Friend, would be clean in God’s sight, you must be washed from head to foot—not merely with the washing of water, but with the washing of the Holy Spirit. “What is holiness?” said a clergyman to a poor Irish boy. “Please, Your Reverence,” he said, “it is having a clean inside.” And so it is—and you have to be washed that way—washed inside, washed in your very nature! The fountain of your being has to be cleansed, the source of all the pollution is to be made white! And how can this be done by any man for himself? This great purification can only be worked by a wonderful work of Grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit! But then the Holy Spirit is pledged to do this to everyone who believes in Jesus. It is a part of the Covenant— “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”

“Oh!” says one, “that would be delightful, but I am afraid that I should fall away, after all.” That you shall not, for here is another Covenant promise—“I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” O glorious promise! That crowns it all! I want you, dear Friends, to have a faith that can believe God and say, “I have given myself over to Christ to save me to the end, and He will do it. And I commit to Him my soul, not for this next year, only, but for all years and all times. And I give myself up never to have any claim to myself, again—to be His forever and ever.” What does He say to that? He answers, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.” You see the double picture—Christ has His people in His hand, and then His Father comes and puts His hand over the top of Christ’s! And all who believe in Christ are in that double hand of the Son and of the Father—and who shall pluck them from there? We defy earth, Heaven and Hell to ever tear away any soul that is once in the grip of the Lord Jesus Christ! Who would not have such a glorious salvation as this?

O you defiled ones, come to Him who alone can cleanse you! And when He has once cleansed you, remember that you will have need to daily wash your feet and you shall find Him waiting to wash them! But you shall never need such a complete cleansing as He gave you at the first. There shall never be a repetition of that, for, “he that is bathed, needs not but to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.” May the Lord give you that cleansing if you have not had it and, if you have had it, rejoice in it with all your hearts! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**NUMBERS 19; PSALM 51.**

Numbers 19:1. And the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying.— This ordinance was not given to Moses on Mount Sinai, but in the wilderness of Paran, after the people had broken their Covenant with God and were condemned to die. You know that the 90th Psalm—that dolorous dirge which we read at funerals—called “a prayer of Moses the man of God.” Well might he write that Psalm, for he lived among a generation of people who were all doomed to die within a short time, and to die in the wilderness. This ordinance was especially appointed to meet the cases of those who were rendered unclean by the frequent deaths which occurred. There was to be a simple and easy way of purification for them—and the teaching of this chapter to us is that inasmuch as we dwell in a sinful world, there needs to be some simple and ready method of cleansing us, that we may be able to draw near to God.

2, 3. This is the ordinance of the Law which the LORD has commanded, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: and you shall give her to Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth outside the camp, and one shall slay her before his face. This was not a usual sacrifice, for the beasts offered were, as a rule, males—but this was to be a special sacrifice. It was not to be killed by the priest, as other sacrificial offerings were, but the Lord said, “One shall slay her before his face.”

4. And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. This makes it a sacrifice. Otherwise it scarcely deserves the name.

5, 6. And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: and the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. All was to be burned and then the ashes, the essence and product of it, were to be preserved to make the water of purification needed to remove those constant defilements which fell upon the people of the camp. So the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are the very essence of Him, are perpetually preserved for the removal of our daily pollution. There was also the essence of cedar wood, that is, the emblem of fragrant immortality, for cedar was an unrotting wood. “And hyssop and scarlet.” There must be the humble hyssop used, yet there must be some degree of royalty about the sacrifice, as the scarlet color implied— and all this is mixed with the blood and the flesh and the skin of the creature, to make the ashes of purification.

7. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the evening. What a strange sacrifice was this, for even when it was offered it seemed to make unclean all those who had anything to do with it!

8, 9. And he that burns her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the evening. And a man that is clean. Now we come to the merit of Christ, for who is clean except Christ?

9. Shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. This ceremony does not represent the putting away of sin—that is typified in the slaying of the victims—but it represents that daily cleansing which the children of God need, the perpetual efficacy of the merit of Christ, for this red heifer was probably killed only once in the wilderness. According to Jewish tradition there never have been more than six killed. I cannot tell whether that is true or not, but certainly the ashes of one single beast would last for a long time if they were only to be mixed with water and then the water to be sprinkled upon the unclean. So this ordinance is meant to represent the standing merit, the perpetual purifying of Believers by the Sacrifice of Christ enabling them to come to the worship of God, and to mingle with holy men, and even with holy angels, without defiling them! In the fullest sense, it may be said of our Lord’s atoning Sacrifice, “It is a purification for sin.”

10. And he that gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening: and it shall be to the children of Israel, and to the stranger that sojourns among them, for a statute forever. That was the remedy ordained by the Lord for purifying the defiled. Now notice what made this remedy so necessary.

11, 12. He that touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purifies not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. I wonder whether that is a revelation of our being justified through the resurrection of Christ, which took place on the third day after his death, and then our being brought into perfect rest, which represents the seventh day, through the wondrous purifying of our great Sacrifice, the Lamb of God?

13, 14. Whoever touches the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifies not himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. This is the Law, when a man dies in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. Think, dear Friends, what a solemn and yet what an irksome ordinance this must have been! Why, according to this regulation, Joseph could not have gone to see his father Jacob, and to be present at his death, without being defiled! You could not have watched over your consumptive child, or have nursed your dying mother without becoming defiled, if you had been subject to this Law of God! And everything that was in the tent, or in the house, became defiled, too.

15-16. And every open vessel, which has no covering bound upon it, is unclean. And whoever touches one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. This Law was, indeed, a yoke of bondage which our fathers were not able to bear! It was meant to teach us how easily we can be defiled. Anywhere they went, these people might touch a bone or touch a grave, and then they were defiled, and you and I, watch as carefully as we may, will find ourselves touching some of the dead works of sin and becoming defiled! It is a happy circumstance for us that there is the means of purification always at hand! We may always go to the precious blood of Jesus and may once again be washed clean—and be made fit to go up to the house of the Lord!

17-22. And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burned heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself and wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation has not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean. And it shall be a perpetual statute to them, that he that sprinkles the water of separation shall wash his clothes and he that touches the water of separation shall be unclean until evening. And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the soul that touches it shall be unclean until evening. This ordinance was partly sanitary. The Egyptians were accustomed to keep their dead in their houses, preserved as mummies. No Jew could do that, for he would be defiled. Other nations were accustomed to bury their dead, as we once did, within the city walls, or round their own places of worship, as if to bring death as near as they could to themselves. No Jew could do this, for he was defiled if he even passed over a grave! So they were driven to what God intended they should have—that is, extramural interments, and to keep the graveyard as far as they could away from the abodes of the living. The spiritual meaning of this regulation is that we must watch with great care against every occasion for sin and, inasmuch as there will be these occasions and we shall be defiled, we must constantly go to the Lord with a prayer like that of David in the 51st Psalm, which we will now read.

Psalm 51:1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. There may be some people who think themselves so holy that they cannot join in this Psalm. I can, for one, and I believe that there are many of you who can join with me. Just let us, for the time being, forget all others and let us come, each one for himself or herself, with David’s language on our lips or in our hearts so far as it applies to our individual case.

2-19. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight that You might be justified when You speak and be clear when You judge. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which you have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your Presence; and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your gracious Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted to You. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice; otherwise would I give it: You delight not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion: build the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings, then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar.

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PLEASE PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #3073 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THRICE HAPPY DAY!

(THE NEW YEAR, THE FIRST SABBATH AND THE TIME OF BLESSING)

NO. 3073

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 1, 1865.

**“From this day will I bless you.”  
Haggai 2:19.**

I THINK as soon as ever I read that promise, your heart would leap towards it and you would spontaneously say, “Lord, be this the day—the first day of the year, and that day the Lord’s Day—make this the day from which You will begin to bless me in a very special manner!” God’s blessing is the richest gift which His creatures can receive. To be deprived of it is their greatest calamity! What is Hell? It is the place where God’s blessing cannot come. What is Heaven? It is the place where God’s blessing is constantly enjoyed without admixture. My God, were there a choice between Your blessing and Heaven, I would sooner choose Your blessing and be out of Heaven, than be in Heaven, if such a thing were possible, unblessed of my God. The highest happiness of a creature is to be blessed by its Creator—and the very highest felicity of the child of God is to have his Father’s blessing on his head and in his heart!

In a certain sense, dear Friends, we cannot tell the time when God began to bless His people. If you go back to the day before all days, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days. If you get back to the time when there was no time, when only eternity existed, you find, in the council chambers of Divinity, that God was blessing His people. If I might suppose a day in eternity, I might say of it, “From this day will Jehovah bless His people.” When Jesus Christ appeared in human flesh, though you and I were not born, yet were we written in the Book in which all the members of Christ are written—and from that day when He bowed His head and said, “It is finished,” and yielded up the ghost, a channel was opened for those mighty streams of Divine Grace which sprang from the Divine Decree! And it might be peculiarly said that from that day God began to bless us. When you and I were born, from the first moment that our face received the air and our eyes were opened to the light, mercies were waiting for us. A tender mother received us on her bosom. A kind father provided for the needs of our weakness and infancy. I may say that from the cradle, the Lord has said, “From this day will I bless you.” But to some of us there has been a second birthday, a day in which we passed from death unto life, from darkness into light. Happy day! We can never forget it! Next is it in happiness to that day in which we shall see the face of Christ without a veil between! The happiest day of our existence was that when we saw Christ hanging on the tree to bear the punishment of our sins. Truly may I say, as I stand at the foot of the Cross and remember the day when Jesus first met with me there, that He then said to me, “From this day will I bless you.”

Passing, however, over all the times and seasons upon which we might well be tempted to linger, I shall use my text, first, for seeking souls. The time is come, even tonight, when God will bless them! Then I shall use it for individual Christians. May the same be their case! Then I shall apply it to this Church as a whole. May this Church realize the blessedness of the promise!

I. First, I shall use the text FOR SEEKING SOULS.  
I remember well when my heart was seeking after God with intense earnestness. My never-ceasing desire and my daily cry was, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” And I would ask the Lord, “How long shall I cry unto You and You will not hear me? How long shall I seek the face of Christ in vain?” This gives me sympathy with others in a like condition. You have been for a long time seeking rest and finding none. You are weary and heavy laden—and you are saying, tonight, “When will God bless me? When shall I be privileged to see my Father’s face in Christ Jesus and to know that my sins are forgiven?” My Beloved Brothers and Sisters, there is a period known to God when He will show His face to His people. That period, when it does arrive, will certainly bring you comfort. It is written concerning Christ, “He must needs go through Samaria” and there is a similar necessity that, to every chosen sinner, a day of Grace should come so that he may see Christ and be saved through Him! That fixed and delightful time shall yet arrive to you. I pray that it may arrive tonight!  
If you want to know when it is likely to arrive, let me give you some signs by which you may foresee it.  
You are likely to have the whisper of God’s love in your heart when you have given up all confidence in the flesh. It may be that you have some indistinct reliance, at the present moment, upon your own prayers. You are not so foolish as to trust in your Baptism, or your Confirmation, or your Church attendance, or Chapel attendance—but there lurks within you the traitorous thought that there is some efficacy, some usefulness in your Bible reading, in your tears and repentance—or something else that comes from you. Now, remember, you will never know the fullness of Christ until you know the emptiness of everything else but Christ! All that was ever woven by man God shall unravel. All the sticks and stones that human energy can build in the matter of eternal salvation must be plucked down by Jehovah’s hand, for it is Christ alone who must build that house! Unless He shall do so, they will labor in vain that build it. I say that this may be only an indistinct matter, but I pray you to cast out every particle of this old leaven—for Christ and your soul can never be agreed until you are willing to take Him to be your sole and only reliance. And if you have a shadow of a dependence anywhere else, Christ can never be a Savior to you. See to that matter.  
The time to bless you is probably come when there is a clean divorce between you and all your sins. That it is which keeps so many poor sinners in trouble, because though they have given up many sins, there is one favorite sin which they still hold. But, Sinner, you cannot love Christ and your sins too! I know you are quite content to give up all the outward sins of the flesh, but there may be some worldliness, some covetousness, some little sin which you are loath to part with. But you must slay every one of these, in the purpose of your heart, or you can never be reconciled to your Father and your God. One unrepented sin. One sin indulged in and delighted in will as effectually stop the gates of Heaven against your soul as if you were living in fornication, adultery, or murder! Your heart must hate all sin and your heart must love all holiness. When this comes to pass, from that day God will bless you.  
There are some who have never obtained peace through Christ because they have not sought it in earnest. “I have prayed,” you say, “in earnest. I have groaned, cried, and wrestled.” Yes, I know you have done so at times, but your earnestness has been of the spasmodic order. The gates of Heaven open to all who are really believing in Christ, but they must know how to knock and to knock again and again. When your soul has come to the point when you can say—  
*“I can no denial take,  
For I plead for Jesus’ sake”—*  
then you shall have no denial! O Soul, think of the Hell from which you would escape! Will not that quicken your slumbering spirit? Then think of the Heaven of which you would be a partaker! Will not this fire your sluggish soul? Come, I pray you, and meditate for a little while upon your state and condition, upon time, eternity, death, Heaven, Hell—and let your soul begin to bestir herself. If you are cold and love not prayer, God will not bless you. But when your soul comes to a devout enthusiasm— from that day will God bless you.  
I think you are quite sure to get a blessing when you are willing to have it in God’s way. Some of you do not intend to believe in Christ unless you feel very deep conviction. If God will condescend to alarm you with dreams, you will then go to Him. If you have made up your mind that you are to be saved in a certain stereotyped fashion and you will never believe in Jesus unless He shall be pleased to manifest Himself in that particular way—the day of your blessing will tarry a long time before it comes. But when your soul says, “If I can but look to Jesus, I will not ask for this experience nor for that. Only save me, Lord! Do but take me into the Ark and let me escape from the destruction that is coming upon all who are outside—and my soul will lay aside her whims, her wishes, her proud will—and bless Your name for what Your Grace has done.” When your heart lies before God as the wax under the seal, ready to take any impression that the Divine Hand chooses to put upon it, then will God say, “From this day will I bless you.”  
To sum up everything in one—if there is a sinner here who says in his soul, “Truly, I will take Christ tonight and rest upon Him. I see clearly that I have nowhere else to fly and I, therefore, fly to the cleft in the Rock of Ages and find a shelter there”—from this night God will bless you! If your faith is built on Christ, and Christ only, go your way—your sins, which are many, are forgiven you and you are an accepted soul! And neither death nor Hell shall ever divide you from your Father’s love. Rejoice with unspeakable joy, for a long train of mercies shall be yours, world without end! I think I have said enough on that point. Pray, you who understand the power of prayer, that God may bless these simple, feeble sentences to the comforting of some captives—and to the loosening of their bonds!  
II. And now I shall turn TO GOD’S PEOPLE and address a few words to them.  
Present in this assembly, tonight, are many saints who know their blessedness in Christ Jesus, but they are pining after a higher state of spiritual life. They need more communion with Christ, a greater conformity to His image, and so on. Dear Friends, you are wanting to know when you may expect this choice favor, when you may dare to walk in the light of your Father’s face. Let me answer you. When your spirit is entirely resigned to the Divine will, then, from that day, God will bless you! It is very hard to bring down Lord Will-be-Will to be a contented servant of the King of kings. It is an easy thing to stand up here and sing—  
*“If You should call me to resign  
What most I prize—it never was mine!  
I only yield to You what was Yours—  
‘Your will be done!’”*  
But it is not so easy to say that when you are looking into the face of a dead child, or have to follow to the grave some dearly-beloved wife or husband, or some brother or sister upon whom your soul was set! To stand to our surrenders, then, is hard work. We say, “Your will be done.” But when God’s will is being done, we do not always use Job’s language and say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!” When you see a Christian in the furnace, you cannot expect that he will get out by asking, “When will this flame abate?” But the fire will soon be over when a man, in such circumstances, can say, “The Lord’s will be done.” It is a sign that the metal has been properly fused and that the dross has gone when you can see the image of the Refiner in it—when the heart reflects the face of God and says, “Not as I will, but as You will.”  
Beloved, depend upon it, our miseries grow at the root of our selfishness! Where selfishness begins, sorrow begins. And where selfishness is dead, grief is dead. Have I made myself clear? If our souls had wholly given up everything to Jehovah’s will, we would never lose anything, for we would already have given it up! We would never murmur if we could say, as the old Puritan said, “I always have my own will because God has helped me to make His will my own will.” It proved the good state of the beggar’s heart when someone said to him, “I wish you a good day,” and he replied, “I thank you for your wish, but I always have good days. I do not know that one day is better than another when God is with me.” “Well,” said the one who was speaking to him, “surely there are some days that you like better than others.” “No,” he said, “there are not—all days please God—and what pleases God pleases me.” “If,” said one, to an aged Christian woman, “you had your choice whether you would live or die, what would you choose?” She replied, “I would not choose at all.” “But suppose you were forced to choose?” “I would then ask God to be good enough to choose for me.” Still, you see, she would avoid the choice and leave it to the Lord! When your heart becomes like that—then from that day will God bless you!  
As Christians, we may expect great blessing when it is no longer a matter of talk with us that we will give our all for the service of God, but when we really do so. Then, from that day, God will bless us. I need not say, probably, that there is no giving so acceptable to God as that which is most costly to us. The widow’s mite was precious not because it was a mite, but because it was all that she had. The old proverb says that “the liberal man gives until his hand sweats.” There are not many of that sort. True liberality begins when the hand begins to feel when some sacrifice is caused by what we have given to the Lord our God. Do I feel, tonight, that all I am and all I have belongs to my Master? Can I truly say that if a life of pain and poverty would glorify Him, I would desire to live in pain and poverty? And if my death would more honor Him, I would be willing to leave health and comfort at once and to bear the stroke of the sword of death? Do you feel that—  
*“There’s not a lamb among the flock  
I would disdain to feed.  
There’s not a foe before whose face  
I’d fear His cause to plead”?*  
Can you make again, tonight, that solemn declaration of allegiance to your God that you made when first you came to Christ—  
*“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done! I am my Lord’s, and He is mine—  
He drew me, and I followed on.  
Charmed to confess the voice Divine”?*  
If so, then from this day God will bless you.  
There are some particular days on which God is pleased to grant a new lease of blessing to His people. Sometimes it is when they have been especially engaged in prayer. I suppose you have all some landmark, if I may so call it, in your life, to which you can refer as being the starting point of your spiritual career, and also seasons of peculiar spiritual enjoyment. On such a day, for instance, one of you can say, “I had sweet communion with Christ. My soul was ravished with the glance of His eyes.” Well, dating back from that, you feel that there was a period of peculiar enjoyment. Now, I hope that, tonight, at the Communion Table, we shall be favored with such a season and equally so tomorrow in private prayer. A certain Highlander began to entertain doubts as to his salvation. He could not, however, rest in doubt, but went to the top of a high mountain and continued there all night wrestling in prayer. And he was so taken up in devotion that he remained there the whole of the next day! But, from that time forth, he was never vexed with doubts again! His mighty struggle with Satan upon the top of the mountain seemed to end forever the period of his doubts and fears—from that time a clear shining set in upon him until he was taken Home. It were well if we were to have some seasons set apart for seeking communion with Christ, for at such times He would bless us.  
I believe, too, that many Christians have dated new spiritual life from some particular act in their history. I do not like to tell my own secrets, but there has been such a day with me from which I have had to date a sort of new life. Our friends know little of it, perhaps, but I recollect one Sabbath evening when, for some weeks, the collections in support of the College had not amounted to more than £2 or £3, and there were some 20 or 30 young men to maintain—and all that I had, had been spent— there was no money that I knew of to pay for another week. That evening I learned to walk by faith in God in temporal things—a lesson that I had not so fully learned before. That very night I went out from here and said to one of my Brothers who is sitting behind me, “Now my bank is exhausted.” “No,” he said, “your Banker is the eternal God and He can never be exhausted.” “Well, at any rate,” I said, “I have nothing in hand.” “Still,” he said, “cannot you trust your God?” We opened a letter that was then lying on the table, totally unknown to him or to me, and found in it £200 sent by some donor whose name I never heard of and probably never shall hear of until the Day of Judgment! From that moment to this I have trusted God in that matter and, mark my words, though I have found funds to be lacking for this or that, there has never been any real need of money, for, whenever it is needed, God sends it! I have considered that from that very night, my heavenly Father took that work into His own hands and He said, “From this time will I bless you.”  
Some of you may have had a comfortable income and you got on very well, but it was all taken from you and you seemed to be cast adrift. But then, for the first time, you began to live by faith—and though, as men call it, it is only a hand-to-mouth way of living—yet you have had greater blessedness in it than you ever had before! And, though you may not be as rich as before, yet you have had such inward comfort and such peace of conscience, that you have felt that God from that day has blessed you. If there are any Christians here who are dallying midway between faith and sense, I advise you to snap the chain! Worldly people will say to you, “Let well enough alone,” and so on, but the best prudence in the world is to be a child—and the highest wisdom is that which the world thinks folly! “He who runs straightforward makes the best runner,” was the saying of a German when he was resting upon his God in one of his works of piety, and very true is it. Do not go roundabout, here and there, and ask, “Is this or that true?” but go straight to your God in the simple path of duty, in the holy way of faith. Take that course and “from this day,” says the Lord, “will I bless you.”  
III. And now, to close. I think there is a time when EVERY CHURCH may hear the voice of God saying, “From this day will I bless you.”  
I believe it will hear that voice as soon as ever it is bent upon getting a blessing. It is a difficult thing, however, to get a church into that state. I know some country churches where the minister’s efforts are almost certain to be fruitless, not so much because of the congregation as because of the church. My Brothers in the ministry sometimes say to me, “I tried to get a Prayer Meeting, but they would not come. I wanted to have some special meetings, but an old deacon said, ‘We never had such a thing and we ain’t going to have any now.’ I wanted to get them to do something by way of evangelizing the neighborhood, but they said they could not afford it—they had as much as they could do to keep up their own cause—and they would not do it.” Now, such churches never can expect a blessing. But I believe that in this church we have only one mind and that one mind is this—we mean to plead before God until He opens the windows of Heaven and pours us out a blessing! We feel, every one of us, upon this subject, that we will wrestle with the Covenant Angel until He gives us our heart’s desire! And we feel, too, that Christ will never be satisfied till many more jewels are put into His sparkling crown. Well, I believe that if this is true, from this very night God will bless us!  
God is sure to bless His people when everyone feels that he has something to do and means to do it. Do not say, “My brother ought to do such-and-such and my minister ought to do this and that.” Of course you can speak like that if you wish to do so, but that is not the way to get a blessing! The main business of each Christian should lie in his own personal responsibility. I have heard of a man who, as he went by the plate one collection Sunday, said, when he was asked what he gave, “What I give is nothing to anybody.” Somebody said he thought that was exactly what he did give! Now there are some people who, in what they do, come up to the same standard—they do no good to anybody. They live for themselves. And when they die, their existence will have been purely a selfish one. Such people bring a curse, rather than a blessing, to the Church. But if you feel, Brothers and Sisters, tonight, that each one of you has a niche to fill, and resolve that you will try to fill it. If you realize that there is something to be done and, in God’s name you mean, each of you, to do it, then, from this time God will bless you!  
And there is sure to be a blessing when there is a strong current of prayer. And there is that current in this church right now. There will be that current, I hope, tomorrow evening when we meet together especially for prayer. I hope that everyone may come up with a heart like a censor full of sweet incense smoking with holy prayer! Brothers and Sisters, we must pray more in private! Here, perhaps, we fail. We must be instant in season and out of season in prayer, if prayer can ever be out of season. And then, when we come together at our Prayer Meetings, there must be wrestling times—times in which the blessing must surely be won from God by holy wrestling. When love and concord reign. When each member assists each other member. When the whole united church seeks nothing but the Glory of God in the conversion of souls, then will the blessing come! I am not a Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet, but I do venture to foretell a great blessing upon this church in the year which has so happily commenced! We ended the last year by wrapping it up in a shroud of prayer—we will give this year the wings of praise, but we will still continue to pray for a visitation of the Spirit! And we shall surely have it—and the Lord’s name shall be glorified!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **HAGGAI 1; 2.**

Haggai 1:1, 2. In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the Prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of Hosts, saying, This people says, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’S house should be built. God keeps an almanac and the date on which He speaks is always important. There is a set time for each of His messages to come to men—and God would have them give heed to every message as soon as it is delivered to them. If they do not, He keeps count of the days of their delay and, therefore, He is particular in causing His servants to record the exact date when His message was delivered—“In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the Prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest.” Oh that God would make this very day notable in our history by speaking to the hearts of many here!

Notice, too, that God also takes care to direct His messages to those for whom they are intended. The word of the Lord came by Haggai the Prophet unto Zerubbabel and to Joshua. God knows to whom His message is especially addressed, today, and He will not let it miss its mark. Oh that someone here would cry unto Him, and say, “Lord, speak to me as You did to Zerubbabel! And not to me, only, but to such-andsuch another, as You did to Joshua.”

“Thus speaks the Lord of Hosts, saying, This people says.” So that the Lord notes what people say and, in due time, He reminds them of what they have said. Sometimes He makes men eat their own words but, if not, He at least recalls them to their remembrance—“This people says, The time is not come, the time that Jehovah’s house should be built.” Delay has always been one of the strongest of Satan’s temptations even with God’s own people. They far too often say, even concerning His work which they know ought to be done, “The time is not come.” How much more would be done for God if we would all do at once what ought to be done! We could then go on to something else and make our lives still more useful and fruitful. But we delay the carrying out of one good purpose so long that there remains no opportunity for another. If any of you Christian people are tempted to put off some service for God which lies upon your heart, I pray you to remember your Lord’s words and to imitate His prompt action, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work.”

3, 4. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the Prophet, saying, Is it time for you, yourselves, to dwell in your paneled houses, and this house lie waste? “There seems to be time enough for you to enjoy the luxuries of life, but not time for you to rebuild the Temple of the Lord— time enough for you to get rich, but not time for you to serve God—time enough for you to spend your labor upon anything for yourself, but not upon the house of your God!” What a rebuke was this to those who professed to be the Lord’s people!

5. Now therefore thus says the LORD of Hosts; consider your ways. “Just look back a little and see what has already been the consequences of looking to yourselves, and not to your God. Have you gained anything by so acting?

6. You have sown much, and bring in little. “You have sown much to yourselves, but little to God—what has your sowing brought in to you?”  
6. You eat, but you have not enough. “Those of you who do seem to prosper are not content with what you have. Peace of mind does not come with it. You are not happy.”  
6. You drink, but you are not filled with drink. “You are as thirsty as ever after all your drinking from the earthly cistern, yet you still crave for more of that drink which can never quench your soul’s thirst.”  
6. You clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes. How often does this happen! Yet what folly it is for a man to work hard and earn wages—and then put the money into a bag with holes and so lose it all!  
7-9. Thus says the LORD of Hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the LORD. You looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? says the LORD of Hosts. Because of My house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house. Again I beg you to note what a stern rebuke this was, yet how richly was it deserved! God had done great things for His people—He had brought them back from Babylon to Jerusalem! And their first concern should have been to rebuild the Temple which had been destroyed. But every man was more concerned for his own house than for the house of the Lord and, therefore, no good could come of whatever they did, or whatever they had. “I did blow upon it,” said the Lord. And when God blows upon whatever a man has, or upon whatever a man does, He soon blows it away, as the marginal reading says.  
10, 11. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands. We are dependent upon God for everything! And sometimes He makes use of the ordinary laws of Nature to be a chastisement to those who forget Him. If we will not be reminded of Him by His mercies, we shall be reminded by His judgments! And if, as stewards, we do not make a proper use of that which He entrusts to us, He can easily take it all away.  
12. Then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Josedech the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the word of Haggai the Prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. What a blessing it is when faithful testimony is thus received! Sometimes it happens that people get angry and hate the preacher who too plainly rebukes them for their sins. But when the Spirit of God works within them, they take heed to what is said and receive the preacher’s message as from God Himself.  
13. Then Haggai, the LORD’S messenger, spoke the LORD’S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, says the LORD. Haggai was the Lord’s messenger, so he did not utter his own words, but he “spoke the Lord’s message unto the people, saying, I am with you, says Jehovah.” He was with them, so they were with Him—and it is the same with us if we are true Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He says to us, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” And if we have the Presence of God, we have all that we need.  
14, 15. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Josedech the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of Hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. God takes note of the time when His people work for Him! He records, in His almanac, the day, the month, the year, for He loves to see His people actively engaged in His service.  
Haggai 2:1. In the eleventh month, in the twenty-first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the Prophet Haggai, saying. God’s people need to be spoken to very often. And every time God speaks to them, He takes account of it. Let us do the same. Let us not think it is such an unimportant matter for us to hear a Gospel sermon that we need not take note when we hear it. Oh, that the Word of the Lord were more precious to us in these days! Let us praise God for it and not reckon it to be so common a thing that we take no more notice of it than we do of eating our breakfast or sitting down to our supper.  
2, 3. Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? There could not have been many persons left who had seen Solomon’s Temple. If any such were still living at that time, they must have been extremely aged persons. Yet there were many there whose fathers had seen it and who had heard from their fathers, when they sat upon their knees as children, what a glorious place the House of God had been in Solomon’s day!  
4. Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the LORD, and work: for I am with you, says the LORD of Hosts. This is the second time that Haggai was sent with this message. It was so rich, so full, so Divinely encouraging that the Lord might well repeat it—“I am with you, says the Lord of Hosts.”  
5-7. According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remains among you: fear you not. For thus says the LORD of Hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with Glory, says the LORD of Hosts. So it happened, that to the second Temple, the Babe of Bethlehem was brought, that glorious “Desire of all nations” whom we worship! And thus it came to pass that the Glory of the second house was, after all, far greater than the Glory of the first!  
8. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of Hosts. The released captives had not much of it with which to build the second Temple, but God had all that was needed and He was willing to supply them with enough for all the needs of the great work which they had undertaken in His name.  
9. The Glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the LORD of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the LORD of Hosts. The Prince of Peace gave peace to many in that second Temple!  
10. In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the Prophet, saying. Here is another message from the Lord—and the date of its delivery is as carefully noted as the dates of those that had preceded it.  
11-14. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, Ask now the priests concerning the Law, saying, If one bears holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt touches bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touches any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before Me, says the LORD, and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean. [See Sermon #2495, Volume 42, DEFILED AND DEFILING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That which is ceremonially holy cannot communicate its holiness to that which is unclean. But that which is unclean in the eyes of the Law of God can communicate its uncleanness to anything that touches it. These people, being themselves defiled with sin, could not bring to God either acceptable service or acceptable offerings!  
15-17. And now, I pray you, consider from this day forward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the Temple of the LORD: since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the heap for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you turned not to Me, says the LORD. How often, in these two chapters, the word, “Consider,” occurs! And this subject of the Lord’s chastisement was well worthy of His people’s earnest and solemn consideration, yet they were not brought to repentance by all that they suffered!  
18, 19. Consider now from this day forward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD’s Temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? Yes, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not brought forth: from this day will I bless you. That was, indeed, a memorable day in their history! I trust that many of us can also remember such a notable day in our life when the Lord said to us, “From this day will I bless you.”  
20-23. And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them, and the horses and their riders shall come down, everyone by the sword of his brother. In that day, says the LORD of Hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the LORD, and I will make you as a signet: for I have chosen you, says the LORD of Hosts.

TWO VISIONS  
NO. 598

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1864, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I saw by night and behold a Man riding upon a red horse and He stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom and behind Him were there red horses, speckled and white. Then said I, O my Lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show you what these are, And the Man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the Angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth and behold, all the earth sits still and is at rest. Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry you, saying, Thus says the Lord of Hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sorely displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus says the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be built in it, says the Lord of Hosts and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts: My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad. And the Lord shall yet comfort Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Then lifted I up my eyes and saw and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these? And he  
answered me, These are the horns which  
have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.  
And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then  
said I, What come these to do? And He spoke, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are  
come to scatter them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn  
over the land of Judah to scatter it.”  
Zechariah 1:8-21.**

THIS is a somewhat dark and mysterious passage. And if we should ask many a reader, “Do you understand what you are reading?” he would be compelled to reply as did the Ethiopian eunuch, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” Although there are some portions of the Word of God which are hard to be understood—by far the greater portion of Scriptures which are at first perplexing—will open up if we will carefully peruse them and prayerfully ask the illumination of God’s Holy Spirit.

We should seek to know all of God’s Word which can be known. You will perceive that the Prophet Zechariah himself was not content with beholding the two visions described in this passage, but had to ask, in the ninth verse, “O my Lord, what are these?” And then, again, in the nineteenth verse, “What are these?” Nor did he cease his enquiries! In the twenty-first verse he says, “What come these to do?” If the seer of the vision asked for an interpretation, much more may you and I.

He was not idly curious, but reverently teachable—let us imitate his holy diligence in desiring to learn. Be it remembered that God’s Word is never out of date. It is not like an almanac which is useful this year, but which will be mere waste paper the next. It always stands good. And the promise of God, when once fulfilled, are still valid for another fulfillment. Unlike a check, which being once paid, ceases to be of any force, the promises of God have a perpetual value in them! And if we can lay hold upon them by faith, having once drawn upon the great bank of Divine Mercy, we may go again with the same word and get as much from the liberal hand of God as we did before.

Let us come, then, with reverent attention to this passage hoping that God will instruct us in its meaning and help us to grasp its promises and win a new fulfillment. The two visions before us describe the condition of Israel in Zechariah’s day. But being interpreted in their aspect towards us, they describe the Church of God as we find it just now in the world. You notice that the first vision opens with a view of the Church of God. It is described as a myrtle grove flourishing in a valley.

The Church of God is hidden, unobserved, secreted as in a valley. The careless gazer doesn’t see her. She courts no honor—she comes not with observation. The Church has endured neglect and shame from the time of the Cross until now—her day of glory is to come at the manifestation of the Lord from Heaven, but at present—

*“It is no surprising thing  
That we should be unknown.  
The Jewish world knew not their King,  
God’s everlasting Son.”*

When Christ came, despised and rejected of men, His Glory had not broken forth—He was like the sun in a mist. The Church is like her Head— she has a glory, but it is hidden from carnal eyes—persecutions, sins, infirmities and reproaches surround her. The time of her breaking forth in all her glory is not yet come.

She lies in the valley where none but a keen observer can discover her. You must see the towering mountains, but only a careful eye can discover this myrtle grove. Historians write the records of empires, but they take slight notice of the true Church of God. An historian who should pen the tale of English history might, now and then, come across the Church—but it would usually be the political establishment which arrogates that title and not the spiritual and separated host of the faithful in Christ Jesus— for they are not of the world, even as their Lord was not of the world.

“My kingdom is not of this world,” is still most solemnly true. Perhaps the position of these myrtles in the valley may indicate the gloom which at seasons falls upon the Church—when she is in spiritual darkness, when no present favor is shown her by her God in Providence—when her pastors weep that their flocks are scattered by persecution and her ministers lament that their testimony is neglected. They cry, “Who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” Then Zion is under a cloud—the myrtle grove is overshadowed and darkened.

But I think there is here the idea of tranquil security—the myrtle grove in the valley is still and calm, while the storm sweeps over the mountain summits. Tempests spend their force upon the craggy peaks of the Alps, but down there, where the stream flows which makes glad the city of God, the myrtles flourish by the still waters, all unshaken by the impetuous wind. How great is the inward tranquility of God’s Church! She may be hunted upon the mountains, but in peace her martyrs possess their souls. She may hide herself in the catacombs of Rome, but the memorials upon the old slabs assure us that in the catacombs men lived in hallowed peace, and died in joy!

God’s Church in the valley has a peace which the world gives not and which, therefore, it cannot take away. It is the peace of God which passes all understanding. It keeps the hearts and minds of God’s people. Is there not also in the metaphor a peaceful, perpetual growth? The myrtle sheds not her leaves, she is always green. And the Church, in her worst time, still has a blessed verdure of Grace about her! No, she has sometimes exhibited most verdure when her winter has been sharpest. God’s Church has prospered most when her adversities have been most severe.

The myrtle was the emblem of peace and a significant token of victory. Were not the brows of conquerors bound with myrtle and with laurel? Is not the Church of God, despite the neglect which she suffers from men and the occasional gloom which she endures through God’s Providence, still a victor? May not her saints, as they die, be laid in the grave with the myrtle wreath upon them? Is not every Christian more than a conqueror through Him that loved him? Living in peace, do not the saints fall asleep in triumph?

You can readily picture to yourselves that quiet, calm, yet somewhat somber grove of myrtles. And forget not that in the midst of these myrtles, the Glory of the myrtle grove stands—the Son of Man! Oh, it is ever the Church’s Glory that the Savior is present with her. “Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” Here is the Church’s strength! Here is her assurance of victory, the terror of her enemies, the confidence of her friends! If the Church is likened to golden candlesticks, John saw one like unto the Son of Man walking in the midst of them. And if she is a myrtle grove, then the Man upon the red horse is never absent from her, but stands in the midst!

He is the wall of fire round about the Church and the Glory in the midst of her evermore. For the comfort of God’s people, let us closely view this vision. You say, O son of man, feeble and full of unbelief, that God’s Church will become extinct, that Popery will devour her and infidelity will eat her as does a canker. You fear that the banner of the Truth of God

will be dashed to the ground and that the enemies of the Lord will win the victory. Cast away your fear! Your God appears unto you this day and in the visions of His servant Zechariah, He reassures you and speaks “good words and comfortable words unto you.”

I. Observe THE LORD JESUS ENGAGED AS THE GREAT DEFENDER OF HIS CHURCH. Behold a Man riding upon a red horse. This same Man is called an Angel of the Lord. Christ shows Himself among His people as a Man, since He is the Head of the new race of men. As Adam was the man, the representative man to the whole of fallen humanity, so Jesus stands forth the second Adam, the representative Man of twice-born and blood-bought humanity. Out of love to His people He became one flesh with them and is now most truly called, “The Man Christ Jesus.” He is not ashamed to call them Brethren.

Once professors forgot the Godhead of Jesus—we are more likely to overlook His true and real Manhood. Bone of our bone is He—flesh of our flesh. In no respects different from the rest of men, save only that no sin has ever tainted His Nature. He feels as we feel. He thinks as we think— He once suffered and died, even as other men. O Church of God, rejoice! The glorious Man who is “God over all,” is ever in your midst! He never forgets you! He never forsakes you! He abides with His people after a spiritual sort, forever! And never is this Covenant Head separated from His body the Church.

Inasmuch as He is also called an angel, this may suggest to us the doctrine that Christ is in a sense the Head of angels, as well as men. What if I were to surmise—and it were no new thought of mine, but one which many have indulged—what if I were to suggest, not as a matter of doctrine, but only as a subject for thought—that the same great work which redeemed us who were fallen creatures, may have established the elect angels, so that they can never fall? I know not how it is that the angels have become consolidated in perfection so that they cannot now sin, unless it is through the virtue of the Savior.

Could they have been so created? A moral agent must necessarily have the power to sin—if it had no power to sin, it would need no Law. But for God to create a creature beyond all Law, to say the least, would be unsafe—it were, in fact, to set up other gods—for a creature that knew no Law would be a rival to the Godhead! But so long as a creature is under Law, it may offend and so fall. How, then, came the angels in such a condition that they cannot sin? Is it not that they are now removed by a special act of Grace from under the Law and put into a condition of gracious permanence such as Law could never give them? And was this act of Grace the result of that great transaction upon Calvary?

Is this one part of the Apostle’s meaning when he says, “By Him all things consist”? Was there in the Atonement a virtue which has established the elect angels forever in perfect holiness so that they should never sin? Why is it that other creatures beside men join in the song? (Rev. 5:9, 10). “You are worthy to take the Book and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain and have redeemed US to God by Your blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Why did the cherubic emblems stand upon the Mercy Seat and why were they made part and parcel of it, if not to show that while man bends as a sinner before that Mercy Seat and receives pardon, angels stand as sinless beings, looking down upon that Mercy Seat which is the groundwork of their eternal safety? It seems to me to magnify the greatness of the Atonement that it affected Heaven as well as earth and that throughout all the principalities and powers there would be a reason why they should bow with holy gratitude before Jesus the Lord, seeing that He has redeemed them from future falling by His precious blood.

Whether this is so or not, certainly Jesus is the true Archangel—He is the Head of principalities and powers, as well as the Head of redeemed men. He is called “the Angel of the Covenant,” as God’s messenger sent forth to fulfill God’s will in Covenant purposes to His children. Oh, this is the joy of the Church, that Jesus the Man, Jesus the Angel, is ever in her midst! He is represented as riding upon a horse. This is to show His swiftness. He flies upon the wings of the wind to defend His people.

An ordinary commander cannot be in two places at once—and while the right wing has victory under his leadership, the left may be broken. But our Savior rides swiftly as the flashes of thought along the whole ranks, cheers them all on, and secures to every warrior the ultimate victory! Riding on the horse is a symbol of His zeal. He comes with all His power and might, flying with all speed so that none of His people should perish. He shows Himself strong on behalf of them that serve Him and is jealous for them with a fervent jealousy.

But why a red horse? Does this describe His Atonement? Does this picture His sufferings? Is it His own blood with which the horse is covered? Or is he bespattered with the blood of his foes slain in battle? “The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name.” He comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength because He has trod the winepress of wrath and trod His foes in His fury. Does this manifest the terror, the strength, the majesty of Him whose name is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah”?

The day is coming when He will ride on His white horse and go forth conquering and to conquer. But today it is the red horse—for His Church still suffers—still is she stained with the blood of persecution. John says that when he saw the Son of Man, “His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,” and so is it still with our Lord—His head is glorious in Heaven, but His feet, we that have fallen upon these evil days, glow still in the furnace! As far as earth is concerned, then, the fitting picture of Christ is the Man upon the red horse in the midst of the myrtle trees. Rejoice, O you people of God, that Jesus is in the midst of His saints with His sword girt upon His thigh!

II. I take you a step farther. For the comfort of God’s people we have not only Christ engaged, but we see THE WHOLE ANGELIC HOST READY TO DO US SERVICE. Observe that behind the Man on the red horse was a company of horses—of course these were not horses without riders, for they are represented as speaking. The Church of God has the angels of

Heaven to be her protectors. These angels are described as mounted, to represent their swiftness—“He makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.”

You perceive also the strength of the horse mingled with its swiftness— what God bids His messengers perform, they do. Who can stay their hand! He gives them a charge and girds them with His own power. Zeal quickens every step of these burning ones. Standing with wings outstretched, they wait upon the Divine will. And when the command is given, no eagle cleaves the air so swiftly as the holy ones. They appear to be of different sorts. There are those who are commissioned for vengeance—these ride upon the red horses of God’s tremendous wrath. Who knows how often and how terribly angels may have struck through the loins of kings! An angel slew Sennacherib’s host. Was it not an angel that struck Herod? Has not God still upon His red horses, angels that shall speedily make an end of the Church’s proudest persecutors?

Then there are those on the white horses that come to bless God’s saints. Was it not such a spirit that delivered Peter from prison and cheered the heart of Paul in the stormy night? Who knows how often they strengthen the faint and comfort the broken-hearted? They are ever ascending and descending upon that ladder which Jacob saw. Some come to curse the wicked, but as many come to bless the righteous. As for the speckled or bay horses—these are the mingled circumstances in which you see both the mercy and judgment of God—angels are not strangers to these, for God employs them upon many occasions.

What part do angels take in the protection of the Church? I suppose it would be very difficult to describe precisely how they act. But that they do work for us is most certainly a Scriptural doctrine. They are represented as guarding the Lord’s people. “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him.” Have we not some reason to believe that angels inject comforting thoughts into our minds? When Christ was in the garden, there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him. May it not be that those warm thoughts which come welling up in our minds, as we think, spontaneously, have been suggested by angels?

We are prone to ascribe our temptations to the devil—how is it we do not ascribe some of our excellent comforts to the work of angels? Are those bad spirits to have the monopoly of dealing with us? Are they to be the only spiritual agents? God forbid! Doubtless, as bad ones would cast us down from the pinnacle where we stand, so these good ones would bear us up! May there not be going on in the air strange battles between the demons and the spirits of light? Is the case mentioned in Jude the only one in which an angel has contended with the devil? Are there no combats such as that described by Daniel in his tenth chapter, where Gabriel and Michael seem to be both engaged against a prince of the power of the air?

May it not be that bright angelic squadrons are holding strange fights with hosts of demons while the Word is preached, contending for and against that glorious Truth which is the power of God unto salvation? We know not what spiritual agencies are continually at work. But that they are at work is clear enough in the Word of God. Spenser was no dreamer when he sang*—*

*“How oft do they their silver bowers leave To come to succor us that succor need!  
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave The flitting skies, like flying squadrons  
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!  
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward, And their bright squadrons round about us plant. And all for love and nothing for reward—  
O why should heavenly  
God to men have such regard?”*

Brethren, may not angels also operate upon the wicked? Is it not possible that the strong restraints which sometimes come upon ungodly men and the singular thoughts which make them, like Balaam, speak what they do not mean and say a good word where they would curse—is it not possible that these may be caused by the suggestions of angels? At any rate these bright spirits rejoice to minister to the heirs of salvation.

Courage! Courage! Warriors of the Cross! March on to victory, for I hear the wings of angels flying at your side! Strike, for angelic swords are drawn! Sound your clarions, for the trumpeters of God are near. Behold the mountain is full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Church of God—more are they that are for us than all they that are against us! We are come unto an innumerable company of angels, all of whom salute us as fellow soldiers in the host of God. Here let us pause and bless the Grace which makes ten thousand times ten thousand angels the allies of the warriors of the Cross.

III. As you read on, you will perceive another ground of comfort to those of you who are alarmed for the Church of God. WE HAVE THE WHOLE OF PROVIDENCE ENGAGED UPON OUR SIDE. Thus it is written, “These are they whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro through the earth.” They gave the result of their reconnoiter—they said, “We have walked to and fro through the earth and behold, all the earth sits still and is at rest.” According to the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel, the four living creatures, whom I take to represent angels, always co-worked with the wheels.

The mysterious agency of angels is at work together and in unison with the great work of Providence. Whatever may be occurring, great or small, is certainly happening for the good of God’s Church and for the propagation of God’s Truth. How singularly does God, in political events, prepare men’s minds for the particular phase which His Church assumes! There was perfect peace over the whole world at the time when Christ was put to death. The whole world was subject to one dominion, so that the Apostle Paul and his coadjutors could preach everywhere the unsearchable riches of Christ.  
I cannot go into the question this morning. But every Christian student of history knows that the circumstances of the outward world have ever been arranged by God so as to prepare the way for the advance of His great cause. How strangely Providence works to spread the Truth of God. They said of Martin Luther’s writings, that they were scattered by angels. No such distributors were employed. But still they were scattered so widely that it was a perfect mystery how it was done. There was scarcely a little peddler who went about with jewels who did not somewhere in his stock keep a copy of the Word of God or Luther’s Psalms.

It was said that in England, out of every three persons you met with in the road, though they might be but peasants breaking stones, there would be one of the three a Wickliffe—for Wickliffe’s translation of the New Testament spread marvelously—though it was continually hunted after and burnt when discovered. You will find, if I am not mistaken, that soon God will scatter broadcast over all lands those testimonies which are most clear and most full of Christ! He will do it in such a way that our societies will have to hold up their hands in amazement and say, “We cannot tell how this was done.”

God finds a market for his wares—he needs not to advertise them. God Himself, who revealed His Truth, will incline men’s minds to procure the Truth. Then how singularly does God work in Providence to prepare individuals for His Truth! How many a man has come into this Tabernacle with a heart as much prepared for the particular sermon to be delivered as it possibly could be so that he has said that the preacher must have been told what his feelings were for the Word had come so pointedly home! It was nothing but God in Providence plowing the field for the seed!

How often can we see God opening the doors of nations to missionaries! It was marvelous that China should become accessible after being shut up so many years. And whatever may be said concerning our treatment of the Japanese, (and we are not among those who would vindicate or defend any tyranny on the part of the strong), yet Japan must be opened and the Gospel of God must be preached there!

For every nation that shuts her gates against the Truth of God shall find God’s battering ram shake the nation to its foundations sooner than His Word shall be shut out. Courage, warriors of the Cross! Christ is with you as your Captain! Sound your trumpets and advance to battle! If Christ and His angels and the Providence of God all work with you, who can be against you?—

*“When He makes bare His arm,  
What shall His work withstand?  
When He His people’s cause defends,  
Who, who shall stay His hand?”*

IV. I come now to point out to you something equally interesting and even more comfortable in this vision. We have here AN INTERCEDING SAVIOR. The twelfth verse—“Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation these threescore and ten years?” That same Christ, who is on earth in spirit, on the red horse, is in Heaven in Person, pleading before the Throne of God.

Let me not talk coldly upon this, but carry up your hearts to Heaven. I think I see Him, the Angel of the Covenant—He pleads—He pleads for mercy. Mercy that sent Him to earth—mercy is His petition now. He pleads for present mercy. His cry is, “How long? Eighteen hundred years is it since My blood was offered and yet My kingdom has not come! Lo, nearly two thousand years have rolled away and yet Antichrist is not slain, but Satan’s seat is still upon the seven hills! How long? How long? How long?”

Observe the objects of His intercession. He pleads for Jerusalem and Judah. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me.” With what pleading power He points to His wounds and declares Himself to be no other than that mighty One who discharged the Father’s will and bore the whole of Divine wrath! And must He not prevail? Church of God, if you can be rejected, yet He cannot be! Shall the Darling of the Father receive no answer to His cry? Does He plead for us and shall we be afraid? No! In the name of Him who lives and loves and pleads before the Eternal Throne, let us set up our banner! For God has given the victory into our hands in answer to the pleadings of His Son.

V. Nor is this all—observe that WE HAVE IN THIS VISION A GRACIOUS God—for as soon as the plea was put up, the Lord answered the Angel that talked with Him, “with good words and comfortable words.” O Zion, there are good things in store for you! Church of God, your time of travail shall soon be over and your children shall be brought forth! Your captivity shall end and the day of manifestation shall appear. Bear patiently the rod for a season and under the darkness still trust in God, for He has not forgotten you. “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. Your walls are continually before Me.”

God loves the Church with a love too deep for human imagination to understand—He loves her with all His infinite heart. Therefore be of good courage, she cannot need anything, to whom God speaks “good words and comfortable words.” What these comfortable words are the Prophet goes on to tell us—“I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.” You perceive He loves her so much that He cannot bear she should go astray to others. And when she has done so, He cannot endure that she should suffer too much or too heavily. He will not have His enemies afflict her—He is displeased with them because they increase her affliction.

When God seems most to leave His Church, yet His heart is very warm towards her. It is remarkable that whenever God uses a rod to chasten His servants, He always breaks it—as if He loathed the rod which gave His children pain. As soon as ever God struck Israel, whether by Moabite, or Midianite, Babylonian, Persian, Assyrian, Greek, or Roman—in every case He broke the rod in pieces as soon as He had used it, for He is loath to vex His people. He feels the smart far more than His people. “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him,” and the rod cuts Him more than it cuts His Church.

Let us be of good courage! God has not forgotten us. You may belong to a part of the Church which is in great obscurity, but He has not forgotten it. You may think that the Lord has passed you by, but He has not— He that counts the stars and calls them all by name has no limit to His understanding and no measure to His knowledge! He binds up the broken in heart and heals their wounds. And He knows your case and state as much and as perfectly as if you were the only creature He had ever made, or the only saint He had ever loved!

VI. We must now consider the second vision of Zechariah, prophetic of SUITABLE INSTRUMENTALITY. It was dark and as the Prophet looked into the air with wonder, the Rider on the red horse melted away and the myrtle grove disappeared. The horses, too—whether bay, or red, or white—with their angelic riders, were gone. Instead of these, he saw in the sky four terrible horns. They were pushing this way and that way, dashing down the strongest and the mightiest.

And the Prophet naturally asked, “What are these?” The answer was, “These are the horns which have scattered Israel.” He saw before him a representation of those powers which had oppressed the Church of God. There were four of them, for the Church is attacked on all sides. Well might the Prophet have felt dismayed. But all of a sudden there appeared before him four carpenters. He asked, “What shall these do?” The original may as well be translated four blacksmiths. Perhaps the better way would be to make it four workmen. If they were carpenters, they were doubtless armed with their saws—or if blacksmiths they came with their heavy hammers. “What shall these do?”

Why, these are the men whom God has found to break those horns to pieces and scattered or frightened the powers which wield them. Brethren, God will always find men for His work. If He requires carpenters, He has only to call for them and there they are. If blacksmiths shall be better, “He creates the smith that blows the coals in the fire.” You look upon the scarcity of ministers—it is true there is a great lack of faithful servants of God. But remember, you have but to pray that He would thrust forth more laborers into His vineyard and the thing is done!

God always knows where to find men for His work. And He finds men at the right time. The Prophet did not see the carpenters first, when there was nothing to do, but first the horns and then the carpenters. Of late, there has been a great increase of infidelity—infidelity of the worst kind— that lying infidelity which swears that it believes the Articles of the Christian faith and wears a miter, or a priest’s frock, and believes nothing of the kind. Well, I suppose, any lie may find fitting refuge beneath the wings of the Anglican Establishment!

What solemn criminality must belong to those who utter falsehood in the name of the Holy Spirit, and, acting in the office of priests, justify the wicked for a reward! To say in God’s name what I know to be untrue is a crime which transcends in infamy all other crimes of mankind—I will not even exclude murder—if it is upon provocation. For to murder souls deliberately by teaching a lie is as great a crime as to slay a man in haste. Let me give an instance of how our State Church sins against morality and Scripture—it is taken from last week’s paper:

“One of the most shocking scenes that ever occurred in connection with the prize ring, took place in Sheffield yesterday (Sunday). A number of young men and youths, frequenters of some of the lowest brothels and beerhouses in the town, agreed to meet in the Old Park Wood and fight for a sum of money. One pair of boxers set to and fought for an hour. And then the arena was cleared for another couple, two young men named Dawes and Home. They fought for twenty minutes and Dawes received a heavy blow on the jugular. He was placed on his second’s knee. Time was called, amidst much shouting and yelling. He got up and advanced to meet his antagonist but had not gone a yard before he reeled, fell and died instantly.”

A few graphic lines from The Sheffield Daily Telegraph will describe the burial of this unhappy youth—“The remains of Dawes (who was killed in a prize fight on Sunday morning), were interred yesterday afternoon at the general cemetery. A heterogeneous multitude—old and young of both sexes from the squalling cherub in arms, to the decrepit hag—thronged the sacred edifice. Still more numerous, ill-mannered and ill-conditioned was the throng who clustered around the grave—pig-headed and bullnecked young fellows, mostly under twenty years of age who must have been the representatives of the ‘P.R.’ in Sheffield. The Service for the Dead was performed by the Rev. G. Sandford and at its conclusion the rabble departed.”

Did this clergyman give God hearty thanks that it had pleased Him to deliver this brother out of the miseries of this sinful world? Did he pray the Father to raise the bystanders from their death in sin unto the life of righteousness, that when they shall depart this life, they may rest in Him, “as our hope is this, our Brother, does”? I am called uncharitable for denouncing this infamy. I beg to offer apologies. I have said I cannot understand how Evangelical clergymen can bring their conscience to perform such enormities. I apologize—I apologize altogether. I will not say again, “I wonder how they can bring their consciences to it”—for when men act thus, I believe they have no consciences at all!

Thus far I apologize, but no further. Conscience must be seared utterly, if not extinct, when the man can stand there, dressed in the habit of a priest of God and say over a sinner who has died in the very act of sin, that he buries him in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life! Let these men find a trade where truthfulness is not essential to success. But for them to stand as teachers and claim to be successors of the Apostles is an evil which might stir the very stones of the street to cry out against them!

But for the putting down of these giant evils, God will find men at the right time and as this evil seems to have mounted to the very highest pitch, He will find somewhere a hand to scatter this horn. Observe, again, He finds enough men. He did not find three carpenters, but four. There were four horns and there must be four smiths and each smith must take his proper place. And then He finds the right men—not four gentlemen with pens to write—not four architects to draw plans, but four mechanics to do rough work! He who wants to open an oyster, must not use a razor—there needs less of daintiness and more of force. For some works Providence does not find gentlemen to cut off the horns, but carpenters.

The work needs a man who, when he has his work to do, puts his whole strength into it and beats away with his hammer, or cuts through the wood that lays before him with might and main. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the horns grow troublesome, the carpenters will be found. You need not fret concerning the weakness of the Church of God at any moment! There may be growing up in the chimney corner the man who will shake the nations! Chrysostoms may come forth from our Ragged Schools and Augustines from the thickest darkness of London’s poverty!

The Lord knows where to find His servants—they may be in the Universities of Cambridge or Oxford, or possibly in the peasant’s hut. He has but to hold up His finger and as Luther and Melancthon and Calvin and Zwingli and Bucer and Farrell and multitudes of the same kind were found—and as in modern times on the continent, Haldane was the means of calling forth Malan and Gaussen and Vinet and D’Aubigne and the whole company of the Monods and multitudes of faithful servants to bring back the Helvetian and Gallic Churches to their allegiance—so, let God but find one man at first to bear the brunt and they come! They come, an exceeding great army!

Be it ours to deliver the Word and leave the results with God. And His army, though it may now be hidden, shall stand forth ready for the battle. God has in ambush a multitude of mighty men and at His word they shall be ready for the battle—for the battle is the Lord’s—and He shall deliver the enemy into our hands. These two visions seem to me to be full of comfort to the true Church of God. Let us abide then, dear Friends, faithful to Christ, faithful to His Word and who knows what may come?

But if we are God’s enemies, let us fear and tremble, for the angels on the black horses shall be our destruction. And as God is strong to defend His people, so is He strong and swift to slay His enemies. Beware, you who forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you. Fly to Jesus, trust Him and live!

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THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE  
NO. 604

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 11, 1864, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I lifted up my eyes again and looked and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, Where are you going? And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is the length.**

**And there was the angel who talked with me,  
going out; and another angel was coming  
out to meet him, who said to him, “Run,  
speak to this young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem  
shall be inhabited as towns without walls because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. For I,’ says the Lord, ‘will be a wall of fire around her and I will be the glory in her midst.’”  
Zechariah 2:1-5.**

IT is evident that this vision and prophecy graciously reveal the future history of Jerusalem. You may spiritualize, if you will, and say that Jerusalem signifies the Church—but I pray you not forget the literal meaning of such words as these in the twelfth verse—“The Lord shall take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is spoken of and Jerusalem is meant. A man with a measuring line is about to measure the length and breadth of the city. He appears to be interrupted in his work by another angel who foretells that so greatly shall Jerusalem extend that she will be as a town without walls, for the number of men and livestock that shall be in it.

This prophecy has not as yet been fulfilled—it may have had some partial fulfillment in those times of peace before the coming of the Savior, but even then Jerusalem was surrounded by a triple wall. And though it is true that there was a large suburban population, yet the city was not then, “as towns without walls,” nor was the Glory of God in the midst of her in any eminent degree. I believe this passage refers to a happy and glorious future yet to come when the city of Jerusalem shall have no walls, except the protection of the Lord, but shall be extended far and wide.

The Jewish people and their royal city shall remain the center of the manifestations of Divine Glory, just as the city of London still remains the center of the metropolis. But the nations of the earth shall be joined unto the Lord so that while Jerusalem remains the city of the Great King, the faithful among the people of all nations shall be, as it were, a suburban population to the chosen city and the kingdom of Messiah shall extend far and wide. Jerusalem will be rebuilt in more than her former splendor. The Jews will be restored to their own land. And Messiah will reign as a prince of the house of David.

We cannot understand many portions of Scripture except upon this belief. If it is so, it appears according to this prophecy that God shall be the protection of this great city and the glory in the midst of her. All her sons

shall be gathered from their distant wandering places. And where they have associated themselves with Antichrist, they shall hear the voice which says, “Deliver yourself, O Zion, that dwell with the daughter of Babylon.” Christ Himself shall fulfill His promise, “Lo, I come.” The nations shall be judged. God shall shake His hands over all lands and give them as a spoil to His people. Zion shall sing and rejoice—her Lord and King shall dwell in the midst of her—many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah and He, from shore to shore, shall reign while all flesh is silent before Him because He is raised up out of His holy habitation.

I am not given to prophesying and I fear that the fixing of dates and periods has been exceedingly injurious to the whole system of pre-millennial teaching. But I think I clearly see in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ will come—so far I go and take my stand—that He will come personally to reign upon this earth. At His coming it appears clear to me that He will gather together the Jewish people. Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the new empire which shall then extend from pole to pole, from the river even to the ends of the earth. If this is a correct interpretation of prophecy, you may read the whole of this chapter through and understand it—you have the key to every sentence! Without such a belief I see not how to interpret the Prophet’s meaning.

Dear Friends, we may sometimes refresh our minds with a prospect of the kingdom which is soon to cover all lands and make the sun and moon ashamed by its superior glory! We are not to indulge in prophesies as some do, making them their spiritual food, their meat and drink. But still we may take them as choice morsels and special delicacies set upon the table. They are condiments which may often give a sweeter taste, or, if you will, a greater pungency and savor to other doctrines. Prophetic views light up the crown of Jesus with a superior splendor.

They make His Manhood appear illustrious as we see Him still in connection with the earth—to have a kingdom here as well as there—to sit upon a throne here as well as in yonder skies! To subdue His adversaries even upon this Aceldama, as in the realm of spirits! To make even this poor earth upon which the trail of the serpent is so manifest a place where the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. If our view of prophecy is the correct one, it seems to be in perfect harmony with all the doctrines of the Gospel.

God certainly did elect His people the Jews. He made a Covenant with His servant Abraham and although you will remind us that this was only a temporal covenant, I would remind you that it was the type of the spiritual one and it would be an unhappy reflection for us if the typical Covenant should prove to be only temporary as well as temporal! If that came to an end and if God cast away, in any sense, the people whom He did foreknow, it might foretell to us the ill foreboding that perhaps He might cast away His spiritual seed also—and that those who were chosen as the spiritual seed of Abraham might yet be cut off from the olive into which they had been grafted. If the natural branches are cast away forever, why not the grafted branches, too?

But here is our joy—the God who swore unto His servant Abraham that to him and to his seed would He give the land forever has not gone back from His word—they shall possess the land. Their feet shall joyously tread its fruitful acres yet again. They shall sit, every man, under his own vine and under his own fig tree and none shall make them afraid. And so the spiritual seed to whom the spiritual heritage is given as by a Covenant of Salt shall also possess their heritage forever and of their rightful portion no robber shall despoil them.

Now, I think it cannot be said that I have avoided the immediate meaning of the passage before us and that I have selected the vision as a text merely to accommodate it to my own purpose. You have now before you the intention and mind of the Spirit of God, so far as I am able to perceive it. And having spoken thus far upon it, I now feel at liberty to interpret the vision in what is commonly called a more spiritual sense, begging you, however, not to think that I make the spiritual sense override the sense I have already given, for the mind of the Spirit in the passage is ever to be respected far beyond any human accommodation.

And though the accommodation may seem to be less historical and more suitable for Sunday food to the people of God, yet remember God’s sense stands first and our sense is only to be regarded and respected as it stands in harmony with other portions of Holy Writ. My heart is so taken up with the present state of my Church and congregation that I feel moved to use my text in its application to us and I think it may well bear such an application. May God teach it and bless it to us!

First, dear Friends, I want you to lift up your eyes with Zechariah and see the man with the measuring line. Secondly open your ears with Zechariah and hear the voice of the prophesying angel. And then, thirdly, I want you to go your ways and publish abroad the commands of this angel.

I. First, then, LET US SEE THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE IN HIS HAND. All Zechariah’s visions are remarkably simple. They are not like Isaiah’s when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. Nor or they like Ezekiel’s when he beheld living creatures with four faces and wheels full of eyes. Zechariah had not imagination enough to be capable of beholding with due appreciation visions so complicated and mysterious. He was not the proper instrument of God for the Revelation of these more mysterious matters. But the Lord had a place for him and a vision for him, too.

How sweet to be a servant of God in any position! He sees simply a man, an ordinary architect, going forth with a measuring line to measure the city of Jerusalem—a very simple sight—and without any stretch of the imagination you can all picture the man with his line. If this man in the text is to be viewed as an angel, commissioned by God to take measurements of that city, he would be sure to do it accurately and his measurements would be instructive, could he reveal them to us. Since they are hidden from our eyes, let it be enough for us to perceive that the city has measurements—has a settled length and breadth—and that the measurements can be taken and that we have Divine authority for asserting that they have been taken.

This leads us to contemplate the doctrine of predestinating love, with its line of Divine Grace, and its plans of wisdom. God’s city of Jerusalem is not to be built haphazardly. The line marks out and measures how long the wall shall be and where the corner shall be placed. And how far the

other wall shall be carried and where it shall come to an end. The towers are counted, the bulwarks are considered. Every single item and particular of the sacred architecture of the Church of God is written down in the decree of the Most High. Every man has his plan and shall not the Most High God?

He is esteemed to be a simpleton who begins to erect a building with no sort of idea how it will look at the end! Who, but a fool waits till the top stone is brought out before he conceives in his mind any sort of idea of what the building will be like? You would never employ a person without foresight as an architect. And if a man were foolish enough to do this with his own building, all who heard of it would make it the theme of laughter.

It cannot be supposed, therefore, to be so with God! Your belief in His wisdom supposes that He has a plan, no, necessitates that there should be a design in the Divine mind! Moreover, you cannot separate the thought of Omniscience from God. If God is Omniscient, He knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place not merely the cornerstone which He has laid in fair colors—in the blood of His dear Son— but He beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature and polished by His Grace! He sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle.

He has in His mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space and how vast the edifice shall be and when the top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, “Grace! Grace unto it!” Deny the decree of election and what do you see? You see the work of Grace without God’s superintendence in it. What would creation be if God had not been absolutely present there? Can we conceive of a single creature formed without the creating purpose of God? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air which was left to chance for its creation? No! In every bone, joint and muscle, sinew, gland and blood vessel you mark the Presence of God working everything according to the design of infinite Wisdom.

Shall God be present in creation, ruling over all and not in Grace? Shall Grace be left in a state of chaos while creation is ordered by the Most High? Look at Providence! Who knows not that not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Every dark and bending line meets in the center of your love. It is our joy to believe that the measuring line is used in our trials and our troubles. If He ordained the number ten, who can make it eleven? If He filled the cup but half-full, even Satanic agency cannot fill it to the brim. God weighs the mountains of our griefs in scales and the hills of our tribulation in balances.

And shall there be a God in Providence and not in Grace? What? Shall He ride in the chariot of the clouds and put a bit into the mouth of the tempest and rein in the wild steeds of the storm and yet shall He leave the greater work of His Grace—His third dominion, the grandest and the best—to the will of man, to the fickle choice of the creature? Shall He make the glorious salvation of Jesus an unsettled thing to be kicked about as a football by the free agency of man? Shall Divinity stand as lacquer to the creature’s changeful choice? Never! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy! He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion!

And at the last it shall be seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy Jehovah did as He willed with His own. And in every separate instance of salvation and in every part and portion of the work of Grace the Lord reigned as King forever and did as He willed and glorified His own name. I see a man with a measuring line and I rejoice to see him and thank God that it is written, “The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His.” It is just possible that the man in the text was nothing but a man. At any rate, we may often see apparitions of men with measuring lines. And while I have an intense reverence to the angel with the measuring line, I must confess an entire dislike to the man with the measuring line.

How often, Brethren, have we seen men with the measuring line endeavoring to estimate the length and breadth of God’s true Church? Some of them take a very long line and they begin to calculate how many Protestants, Roman Catholics, and members of the Greek Church there may be throughout the world. Then they write down all these millions as being Christians! Now, we beg to differ from the estimate—how we wish we could agree with it!

Glad enough should we be to hope that these were all true members of the Church of God! But when we remember the errors with which one section of the Church is polluted almost beyond hope. When we remark the absence of all spirituality in others. When we see how the mass of nominal Christians are living without God and without Christ. When we reflect upon the many criminals, harlots and open sinners who would, according to this rule, be called Christians, we beg to remind the man with the measuring line, “They are not all Israel which are of Israel”! And although they may all lie upon the threshing floor, “What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord.” The field is the world, but among the wheat many tares are growing—multitudes are gathered here, not in the valley of decision, but in the plains of outward profession—and a separating day must come!

If we were to measure in this way, we should certainly be deluded—we should find Christians whom we could not trust! Christians who did not know their creed! Christians who did not rejoice in the name of Christ— Christians without faith, without hope and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel! Christians merely in name cannot be Christians, for, “Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Again, I very frequently see another man with a measuring line. He is of a very sad countenance and looks out upon the universe through blue spectacles. He will never fall into the error of the first man but delights in the opposite extreme. “Oh,” he says, as he wrings his hands in a kind of delicious misery, “the people of God are a handful, a remnant, a child might write them.” He likes right well that hymn*—*

*“Dear Shepherd, of Your chosen few,  
Your former mercies here renew.”*

He wishes his minister to preach from, “Fear not, little flock.” Or this one, “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leads unto life and few there are that find it.” Sometimes Despondency takes the shape of a man’s fearing that he himself shall not enter—now there is something humble about that and therefore it is bearable—but in frequent instances, Despondency is married to Pride and then it is not despondency about themselves, but about all the rest of the human family. They are doubtless the men and “wisdom will die with them.”

They hear of backsliders and they conclude that all professors will backslide. They have read a story of some famous minister who stained his character and they believe that all ministers are mere pretenders. They hear of Mr. Liberal, who was noted for his generosity and for his zeal in the cause of Christ and yet he turned out to be generous with other men’s money and to be thought little better than a thief. And Despondency shakes her head and says, “I told you so—all men are liars.” “Lord! Are there few who shall be saved?” is the constant question of Despondency.

And every day she lives, she keeps making the measuring line a little shorter till perhaps the day will come when Despondency shall prophesy the destruction of the Christian faith, the return of the Papacy and the outpouring of the vials and say, “The faithful fail from among men, Zion is under a cloud.” A day of clouds and of thick darkness, is the only description of the present age which this spirit allows to be correct. Perhaps Despondency herself may die in the dark, believing that she is not included in the line of the Covenant of Grace.

Well, now, I must confess I am thankful that God has not set our desponding brother to measure His Zion! I am grateful that He is pleased to keep that in His own hands, or it might be woe forever to many of the brightest of the Lord’s people. Certain men occasionally come across my path who carry a measuring line which was originally made either by one called Mr. False Experience or Mr. Proud Experience. These Brethren will not believe any to be Christians who have not experienced precisely the same emotions, doubts, fears, trembling, horrors, terrors, ecstasies, delights or raptures which they themselves have felt!

They get hold of every Christian professor and they do with him as Procrustes did with men in his day—they take him into their bedchamber and there is their bed of experience—the exact length that it should be. If the Brother to be judged is not long enough to reach from head to foot, then they have a rack ready for him and they will pull his limbs a little. Or, if he should happen to be rather longer than themselves, then their pride is more aggrieved, still, and it is likely enough that a sharp twoedged sword of censure will take off his head so as to accommodate him to the length of the couch.

Perhaps you know certain professors of this kind and if you live in their midst the only path of wisdom will be to hold your peace. They are supposed to have received information by special revelation from on high that their particular rut and that rut alone, leads to the land where sorrow is unknown. See them put on their spectacles and sit as a sort of jury to investigate a candidate for Church membership. This poor young man only professes to have been converted some three months. If they entertain his case at all it is with the decided determination ultimately to reject him. Thus they begin with him, “Have you ever experienced such-and-such law-work in your soul? Were you ever led to curse God and to feel the awful corruptions of your nature, tempting you to blaspheme the Holy Spirit?”

The poor young man can only say he knows himself to be a sinner lost by nature and saved by Grace through faith in Christ. They shake their heads and tell him it is a mere natural, notional faith. As he has not known the law-work which they have known, he is of no good whatever. They pretend to hope for him but they mean all the while that they do not believe in him an atom.

Another class of emotional religionists steer by another star. They question the enquirer from another catechism, “Have you been carried up to the third Heaven, like Paul? Can you say, ‘Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knows’ ”? Such Brethren sometimes will put such questions as this—“Do you feel any pleasure whatever when you are with your friends? Can you take a walk in the fields and find enjoyment in the singing of birds and in the foliage of the trees?” And if you answer, “Yes, thank God, I can,” ah, they are sickened at you! You are not spiritually-minded, if you can look at works of art and admire them. If you can view the works of God in creation and feel any pleasure they are astonished at you and think you carnal!

As for themselves, they have attained to such a superfine degree of spirituality that they have purified all the common sins out of themselves as well as the “sense.” Dr. Watts says*—*

*“May purge ourselves from sense and sin,*

*As Christ the Lord is pure.”*  
He meant by “sense” feeling, mere carnal feeling. But I am afraid that some have really purged themselves from sense in the ordinary acceptance of the term and might very well claim that their spirituality was not at all akin to worldly wisdom, for it is remarkably akin to absurdity and cant. Now, I thank God that the measuring line is not in the hands of the experimentalists and bless my Master that it is written, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” And, “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the Brethren.”

I have also seen the measuring line in the hands of others— Doctrinalists. Yes. And their line has five marks which were originally made by John Calvin. And if your opinions do not square exactly to the standard, you are cut off from all part and lot in the blessings of vital godliness. Zion is certainly built according to the arrangement of the five points and therefore if any Brother or Sister does not comprehend and receive them all, he is not a weak Believer, but according to the measuring line of our rigid friends, he is not a Believer at all!

You know, Brethren, that there is no soul living who holds more firmly to the Doctrines of Grace than I do and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer, I wish to be called nothing but a Christian. But if you ask me do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them and rejoice to avow it. But, my dear Friends, far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none within her walls but Calvinistic Christians—or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have

been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him, that while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan.

And if there were wanted two Apostles to be added to the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitfield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness and communion with God. He lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians and was one of whom the world was not worthy. I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these Truths of God, or, at least cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ into their hearts and are as dear to the heart of the God of Grace as the soundest Calvinist out of Heaven.

I thank God we do not believe in the measuring line of any form of bigotry. I remember meeting with one who knew, yes, he knew how many children of God there were in the parish where he lived—there were exactly five. I was curious to know their names, and much to my amusement he began by saying, “There is myself.” I stopped him at this point, with the query whether he was quite sure about the first one. Since then, his character has gone I know not where, but certainly he will get on better without it than with it! Yet he was the first on his own list and a few others of his own black sort made up the five.

There were in the other places of worship to which he did not go, men whose characters for integrity and uprightness, yes, and for spirituality and prayerfulness, would have been degraded by being put into comparison with him. And yet he, he was set as judge in Israel and was to know exactly how many people of God were in the village! Oh, I bless God that we have learned to have very little respect for the vision of the man with the measuring line! When we see an angel with it, if such is the intention of the vision, we are glad enough. “The Lord knows them that are His.” But when we see a man with it, we tell him that he must give us a warrant from God and show us how he is to know the elect by any other method than that laid down in Scripture—“By their fruits you shall know them”!

Notice that this vision soon departed. The Prophet does not seem to have dwelt long upon it. Almost as soon as it appeared it disappeared. Perhaps it is not a good thing for the people of God at any time to be much engaged in numbering the people. It is a question what was the particular sin of David in numbering the people. I will not enter into it just now, but I do fear that it is hard for us to number the people at any time without committing a sin—either the greatness of their number may lift us up and inflate us with pride or the littleness of their number may make us despond and doubt the strength of God.

The vision of the man with the measuring line is only to be looked upon for a moment and then it may depart. We therefore ask you to close your eyes to that and open your ears to the voice of that Covenant angel, who, interrupting the man, began to tell Zechariah good things concerning times to come.

II. From my text it appears, dear Friends, THAT WE ARE TO LOOK FOR A GREAT EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. I hope we are to look for it now. Jerusalem shall be inhabited “as towns without walls.” There are those in this place who remember when, if you crossed Blackfriars Bridge, you scarcely saw a house—as soon as you had crossed the bridge from London you were in the country at once. They still survive among us to see how this great city has not only swollen to this district, but has gone right on for miles and threatens to absorb mile after mile of the country.

Such an extension we are to expect in Christ’s Church. It began with twelve Apostles. It was soon swollen to some four hundred Brethren. It was increased by three thousand more at the day of Pentecost. There were added afterwards to the Church daily of such as should be saved. The Gospel was preached throughout all regions. The children of God were found in Athens and Corinth, in Derbe and Lystra—from all parts of the earth the elect were gathered in. The kingdom extended. The Gospel was preached in Spain as well as Italy. It passed on to Gaul, it came to Great Britain. In these after days it still continues to spread.

A new world has been discovered, the religion of Jesus has been carried there. The emigrants who are peopling great islands of the southern seas bear with them the religion of Jesus Christ. Everywhere the kingdom grows. There is, as it were, a little core and center of Believers from among the Jewish people—but all around these there spreads a vast multitude of whom I might almost say that no man can number them. In our portion of Christ’s Church it has been upon a small scale the same. Beginning with but a handful of men, God has been pleased to add hundred after hundred till He has extended our number to a great host.

But I do trust that what it is now is only the nucleus around which there is to be built a yet mightier Church. I would to God that now He might open the windows of Heaven and pour us out a blessing and so multiply us that the present thousands of this Church might be altogether lost in the numbers yet added. Truly, I would not ask it for this Church alone, but that other Churches all around may derive health from our prosperity—that God may raise up out of our loins Churches which shall be our sons and daughters—which shall again beget spiritual children, so that the kingdom of Christ may come and His name be exalted in the land! We are to look for an extension.

I want to encourage our elders and deacons and all our Brothers and Sisters to be looking for it. We have prayed for God’s blessing—if ever a people prayed, we have. There has been an earnestness, I am sure, about the most of the Brethren here which cannot be without its reward. We have pleaded the name of Jesus even unto tears and God does not answer prayer if He does not send us a blessing! We have used His Son’s name. We have pleaded His own promise. We have asked in faith, nothing doubting—and the blessing must come! Let us look for it and as sure as ever effect follows cause, so surely must we receive an extension of this Church!

It appears from the vision that the supply for all the number shall be as great as is required. “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and livestock in it.” The livestock are the provisions for the population. What is to be done with so large a Church? How are the converts to be seen after? How are the members to be fed with

spiritual food? “As your day, so shall your strength be.” Whatever provision the Church shall want, God will give it. Jehovah-Jireh is His name! This city of London has not overgrown its supplies—while we may be astonished at the population, we may be equally astonished at the provision.

It shall be so in the kingdom of Grace. God will raise up in the midst of any growing Church the proper men to look after the converts and see to their spiritual health. We have no need to be under any alarm in this respect—“All needful Grace will God bestow.” Other friends are afraid that if there is so large an extension of the Church there will be many added to it who are not Believers and that consequently the Church may be increased, but not really strengthened. That too, is supplied in the text. “I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire round her,” both to keep out her enemies and to protect her from the incoming of false friends.

It is the Church’s duty to see to it that she admits not unworthy persons knowingly, but her best guard is the Presence of God. It is written, “Of the rest no man dared join himself unto them.” You remember the death of Ananias and Sapphira? It came in opportunely, just at the time when the Church was rapidly increased. That solemn judgment set a wall of fire round about the Church so that ungodly persons dared not hypocritically come to be united with them. And so will God do to His Church now.

The traveler, when he wishes to keep out the wild beasts, makes a ring of fire and then the lion is shut out. And God makes a ring of fire round His Church and the enemy is kept at a distance. China is said to be protected by a wall of stone. Old England is shielded by her wooden walls. But the Church of God has a better wall, still, for she has the Divine wall of fire! Her enemies cannot break through this to destroy the meanest of her citizens and her false friends shall say to themselves, “Who among us can dwell with the eternal burnings?” And so they shall keep back from a Church which is visibly sheltered and protected by the Presence of the Most High.

Observe, dear Friends, while the Church is thus supplied and thus protected, she does not lack for glory. Her glory, however, does not lie in her numbers, nor in the provision made for them, but in the Presence of God. “I will be the glory in her midst.” Let us never cease to pray for this. Let the Church distinctly recognize that the Holy Spirit is in the midst of the Church now. When we sing—“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,” we mean rightly enough. But the words must not be understood to mean that the Spirit of God is not here—for He is in the midst of His Church always and He dwells among His people as the Shekinah in the temple! And your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit—God dwells in you!

Our prayer must be, “You that dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! Stir up Your strength and come and save us.” The glory of a Church does not lie in the architecture of the place where she meets, nor in the eloquence of her minister, nor in the greatness of her number, nor the abundance of her wealth, nor the profundity of her learning. It lies in her God. “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered.” O God, when You went forth before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness, the earth shook! The heavens also dropped at the Presence of God—even Sinai itself was moved at the Presence of God, the God of Israel. Here, then, lies the Church’s best hope! Let her make this the grand object of her prayer—that the Lord may be the glory in her midst!

To close up this point let us observe that doubtless at such seasons, Divine love shall be very sweetly enjoyed among all the members. For the eighth verse says—though I do not intend to push our investigations further than the text—“He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” We never know so much of our nearness and dearness to God as when we, in common with the rest of God’s people, are visited with the joy of His Presence. How differently things look in the sunshine from the way in which they appear without it! Ride along this land of ours when the rain is pouring down, or the mists have gathered and what a dull, dreary wilderness it seems.

And these London streets! What a settlement for convicts they appear in the midst of our thick fogs! But let the sun shine forth as it did this morning! Let the mists be scattered, and then even the leafless trees have a golden light upon them and all nature rejoices and the meanest and poorest landscape becomes, after its sort, sublime! So when our hearts are dull and heavy and the Church of God is in the same state, how poor everything appears! But when the Lord shines forth and the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in His wings, then the Doctrines of Grace, how precious! Then the ministry of the Gospel, how effectual! Then the means of Grace, how dear! The people of God, how estimable! The things of God, how delightful!

O that we may have this! We have a right to expect it! We do not deserve it, but God has promised it! Let us give Him no rest till we have it! Stop your measuring, O Despondency! Stop your measuring, O Bigotry! Stop your censures, you who cut off the people of God and hearken while the angel prophesies that the kingdom of Christ shall grow and increase, till, like a city without walls, Jerusalem shall have for her glory the Presence of the Lord—and for her boundary nothing but the will of the Most High!

III. I close with a few words on the third point and but a few. Where is this increase to come from, this great increase? It is to come from two sources indicated in the sixth and seventh verses. MULTITUDES ARE TO COME OUT OF THE WORLD. “Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the Lord, for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the Heaven, says the Lord.” God’s chosen people are scattered here and there. There are many of them in this assembly of whom we know nothing—but God knows them. The preaching of the Gospel is a message to you to come forth!

That message is this: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” It comes to every soul among you with this commanding, but most consoling word, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” My Hearers, you know what believing means. It is simply trusting upon what Christ has done for sinners. “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” If you now trust Him, your many sins shall be forgiven you! You are a child of God and an heir of Heaven if you but trust Him!

Like prodigals you may have spent all your substance—spiritual hunger may have seized upon you—you would gladly fill your belly with the vain pleasures of the world, but you cannot. The Holy Spirit whispers in

your heart, “Arise and go to your Father.” Obey that heavenly whisper and though you are as yet a great way off, yet your Father sees you! He runs to meet you as you are! He falls upon your neck and kisses you, just as you are, undeserving and sinful. He cries to His servants, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” Will you trust that Father’s love? Will you confide in it as it is set forth in the bleeding sacrifice of the Lord Jesus?

It is from you, O unconverted men and women, that we expect the greatest increase through the Spirit’s power. We are looking for it and praying for it. I hope that the people of God this morning will be looking after you and when this sermon is done I hope they will speak with you, or if they cannot do so, at least pray for you. “Up, up, come forth”—twice the shout is given—as if you were slumberers and needed to be awakened. “Up, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters.” Here there are two “ups,” as if you should be called with vehemence, with earnestness, with pleading—“Come forth!” The year is almost over—I pray God that a new year may not be begun by you in sin, but may God begin with you at the fall of the year and bring you now to know His power to save.

There is another class from which the Church is to get this increase, indicated in the next verse, “Deliver yourself O Zion, that dwell with the daughter of Babylon.” There is a large number of this second class in this congregation. There are a number of you who believe in Christ but you dwell with the daughter of Babylon. If a census were taken of Christians according to the Church roll—and I do not know that it could be taken better by mortal man—then you must be put down as being of the world. When the Lord’s Supper is spread and the Savior says, “Do this in remembrance of Me,” you go away, or stay in the galleries.

You practically say to the Lord Jesus, “Lord, I will not do this in remembrance of You. I feel myself justified in disobeying Your command. I believe I have a valid reason for not doing what Your loving lips request me to do.” I do not know if I put it in that shape that you will quite agree with your own assertion, because how can a man really have a justifiable reason for not doing what the Lord Jesus Christ expressly tells him to do? That word “separation” needs to ring in the ears of Christians, “Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord and touch not the unclean thing.”

Though this is to be done practically by your actions, yet first and foremost it should be done by a distinct avowal of your Lord Jesus Christ and that avowal should be by Baptism and union with the Church. May God bless these remarks both to saints and sinners, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE LORD’S CARE OF HIS PEOPLE  
NO. 452

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” Zechariah 2:8.**

GOD’S love to His ancient people is the theme of many a Psalm and deserves to be rehearsed in the ears of every generation. Abraham was by nature as a rough unhewn stone, but the Lord who chose him in the quarry, having hewn him from the rock, made him a polished pillar, a monument of Divine faithfulness. The Lord set His love upon him while he was a Syrian ready to perish. He brought him out of the land of his nativity and called him from his father’s house.

Having made a Covenant with the solitary man, He multiplied his seed until they became as plentiful as the stars of Heaven. The kindness which God showed towards Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He retained towards His chosen people, who sprang of their loins. Even when to all appearance He had deserted them, His face was towards them for good. If He sent a famine and broke the staff of life, He provided seven years of plenty in Egypt, that the storehouses of Pharaoh might be full for their sakes.

If the Egyptians heavily oppressed them, then all the powers of nature were put out of their accustomed pathway to emancipate them from the house of bondage. When He had brought them out into the howling wilderness, His path dropped fatness, the heavens rained forth bread, and the rocks flowed with rivers. He made men to eat angels’ food. He carried them as on eagles’ wings. He could truly say, “I shod you with badgers’ skin and I girded you about with fine linen.”

He made His Jeshurun to ride upon the high places of the earth and fed His Israel with royal dainties, “butter of kine and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs and rams of the breed of Bashan and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat.” Wherever they went, their foes fled before them— Amalek was put to confusion before the people of the Lord. Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan, felt the terror of their arm. Even the false prophet, as he looked from the mountain’s brow upon them, could only say, “Happy are you, O Israel: who is like unto you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help and who is the sword of your excellency? Your enemies shall be found liars unto you. And you shall tread upon their high places.”

In due time He brought this people into the best spot of land which the earth knew—a country which indolence and tyranny have rendered barren, but which anciently overflowed with superabundant fertility. He brought them to a land of hills and valleys, of springs and rivers—a land out of whose heart they might take iron and copper and treasures in abundance. He established them in a land which flowed with milk and honey, so fertile that even its spontaneous productions, as exampled in the grapes of Eshcol, rivaled the products of the choicest husbandry.

Having brought them into this goodly heritage, He drove out the former inhabitants that He might plant His people and make them dwell in safety alone. How gracious He was to them in the days of Joshua and in the years which followed! When He mapped out their lots according to their tribes, He rejoiced to dwell in the midst of them. He had His tabernacle in Shiloh and His dwelling place in Zion. He showed not Himself unto other people but only unto this nation upon which His heart was set. He chastened them but He raised up judges for their deliverance.

At last He gave them a king in His anger and took him away in His wrath. But He sent unto them David—a man after His own heart, before whom their enemies were rooted out and the nobles among their persecutors were made like Zebah and Zalmunna who fell by the hand of Gideon. Greatly He blessed the nation under David and his immediate successors! Everything in the neighboring countries was ordered only to bring peace and prosperity to the chosen land—Your land, O God, which You have overshadowed with Your wings.

Oftentimes they provoked Him but His anger waxed not hot against them. When He lifted up His rod, His strokes were few and He repented of the evil which He did unto them. At last, when they became incorrigible in their sins and made their brows like flint and their hearts like adamant, for a season He gave them up to captivity. They were taken to Assyria, they were carried away to the rivers of Babylon. The days of their banishment were many and they wept in the bitterness of their soul. Still, even in their captivity He loved them.

When they had forgotten Him, He had not forgotten them and in due time He brought them up again out of the house of their bondage, once more to set them in their land. It was about this time when He would give to His people a fresh deliverance, as memorable as the coming out of Egypt, that Zechariah testified, “he that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” As much as to say, “I smite you, but I hate the nation that oppresses you. I take the axe to cut down your stubborn pride but lo, I will break the axe to shivers. I send against you the executioners of My anger but I will surely punish them, also, for the evil which they have done. He that touches you—even though I am the great first cause of the terrible onslaught upon you—‘he that touches you, touches the apple of My eye,’ and I will be avenged on him in the day of My wrath.”

Thus introduced, the text seems to teach us three lessons, upon which we shall speak briefly and God grant it may be to your edification. It tells us, first of all, God’s esteem of His people. Secondly, danger much surrounds persecutors. And, thirdly, the safety of the Church of God. For it may be well to remind you that the Jewish nation was a type of the Church of Christ.

I. First, then, our text teaches us GOD’S ESTEEM OF HIS PEOPLE. He esteems them as much as men value their eyesight and is as careful to protect them from injury, as men are to protect the apple of their eye. The pupil of the eye is the most tender part of the most tender organ and very fitly sets forth the inexpressible tenderness of God’s love. As Calvin remarks, “There is nothing more delicate or more tender than the eye in the body of a man. For were one to bite my finger or prick my arm or my legs, or even severely to wound me, I should feel no such pain as by having the pupil of my eye injured.”

Behold, then, Beloved, a mystery of loving kindness and affection. The Lord sits upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants there are as grasshoppers, the nations are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance—how marvelous that He has thoughts of everlasting love towards such worthless things! As we said this morning, it is wonderful that God should even notice such insignificant creatures as men, that He, in His infiniteness should be able even to discover such delight in this drop of matter which we call the world.

But that wonder is totally eclipsed by another, namely, that God should love such utterly worthless, as well as insignificant creatures. Oh, Great One, when You did give Your heart, were there not some creatures worthy of it? No! There could be none, for even Gabriel himself was not fit to match the eternal God. The cherubim and seraphim, the presence angels that stand before God as His holy servitors forever, what were they? They were not pure in His sight and He charged His angels with folly. The noble created intelligences are so far inferior to our God, that only by wondrous condescension could He love them.

O God, how is it that You could have chosen the debased, depraved, rebellious, hard-hearted creature called man? Why did You look upon such an one and bring him into Your favor? What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him? This enquiry we cannot answer and therefore, no more curious to solve this mystery, we will weave it into our everlasting song, and we will sing of Your Sovereign Grace before Your throne forever. ‘Twas of Your Divine Grace, of Your own will and good pleasure, that You have lifted us up from the dunghill and made us to sit among princes.

It is not for us to know why the Lord has His people so highly in estimation, for we cannot search to the bottom of this Divine mystery. But, Brethren, God’s love, which at first came to [See No. 447 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit] us freely, has so ennobled us in Christ, that God’s present

esteem of us in Jesus is not without reason and justification. Love without cause has now imparted and imputed such loveliness to its objects, that in Christ they are fitting subjects for love’s embrace.

Know you not that the saints are the masterpieces of His workmanship? God has shown His wisdom in balancing the clouds and guiding the stars in their orbits. Infinite wisdom is discoverable in every flower and in every living thing. But the wisdom and the skill of God are far more clearly to be seen in the Believer than in any other work of the Divine hand. Man, born the first time, was fearfully and wonderfully made, but newly-created and regenerated, he is far more full of marvels than he was before.

Therefore, because of the Divine skill which has been shown in our recreation, well may we be the objects of Divine care. When Bernard Palissy had, after long struggles, invented that valuable ware which still remains unmatched, we can suppose that, if a person had entered his room and broken those invaluable dishes, which were worth their weight in gold, he would have said, “I had sooner that you had burnt my house, or that you had maimed my person, than break these things which have cost me so much thought, so many trials in the furnace and so much daily watching and nightly care.”

When the poor man had pulled up the very floor of his room, to heat the furnace for the last time, before he saw the precious stuff come from the crucible, his work must have been dear to him. And when we think that God, our God, has made His people the objects of His eternal thoughts, the trophies of His noble skill, vessels of honor fit even for the Master’s use, it is but little wonder that He should guard them with a jealous care, even as men do the apple of their eye.

Moreover, all the people of God are the object of the dearest purchase that was ever known, since they were redeemed not with corruptible things, as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Stand at the foot of Calvary and let the groans of Christ pierce your heart. Behold His head crowned with thorns. Look at His hands and His feet streaming like fountains of blood. Think for a moment of the awful anguish which His spirit suffered, of the unknown pangs He bore when He redeemed our souls unto God. And you will readily conclude that love so amazing, which could pay a price so stupendous, would not easily loose its hold of that which it has thus purchased unto itself.

We think little of ourselves, when we value ourselves at anything less than the price which Jesus paid. We dishonor the Lord which bought us, if we think ourselves only fit to live unto the flesh, and to this poor temporary world. When, indeed, we are fitted for a heavenly world and for most Divine purposes, seeing that Christ, the Son of the Highest, shed His very heart’s blood to redeem us from our sins. Well, I say, may He value highly, those whom He has so dearly bought!

Furthermore, let us remember that to God the Father, the saints are Christ’s most tender memorial, monuments of Christ’s passion and conflict, the engraved tablets of His death. What is there in Heaven which is the record of the Redeemer’s achievement? Yonder spirits before the Truth of God are the monuments of the battle and the victory. What is there to bear witness on earth to what the Lord has accomplished? We who have by faith believed, are now the living triumphs of His conquest. If you and I had erected a lasting and valuable memorial to some beloved child, we should think it a grievous insult and a serious injury if an adversary should wantonly and wickedly defile it.

And so the Lord looks upon His own people as standing mementoes and He counts it no small sin, no mean offense, for any of His adversaries, be they ever so great, to touch His anointed and do harm to His chosen. As obelisks, arches, columns and pillars are raised in commemoration of heroes and their glories, even so are the saints the sublime memorials of Jesus. Precious are they for this cause, to the heart of Him who delights in the honors of His only begotten Son. The hosts of Heaven shall jealously guard these living stones of memorial.

Yet more—remember that Christ’s people are God’s own children and you know how even we, although we are evil, could not stand still to see our children ill-treated. I have heard a man say sometimes, “You may strike me and I will not return the blow. You may even spit in my face and I will put up with the insult. But if you touch my children my blood is in my face, I cannot endure it.” Ask a woman what it is that brings her mettle up the most—is it not if she sees her little ones ill-treated, or hears a word of false accusation spoken concerning them?

The God of Heaven and earth will not have the princes of the blood royal ill-used. They who are descended from His loins and are thus the nobles and the peers of the court of Heaven, are not to be trod under the foot of man. God will avenge their quarrel at last. Surely as the world shall look on Christ, whom they have pierced, and mourn, so shall they look on the injured and persecuted Church and mourn because they despised the excellent of the earth and threw God’s jewels into the mire. They are His children, I say. And therefore He loves them.

Look around even to the brute creatures. When we would describe the creature most terrible, we speak of the bear robbed of her whelps. If you would describe the strong lion when he lashes his sides with fury, is it not when his cubs have been taken away? Then he rushes to the attack, fearless of the spear, and of the hunter, meditating terribly how he may destroy the murderer of the young lion. So shall it be with the Lord God Omnipotent. His fury shall be kindled against the enemy and He shall tear him in pieces if he touches any of the house of Judah, or of the seed of the Son of David. The King who is in the midst of them is mighty and He is strong who is their deliverer.

Yet, again, no doubt there is a special reason why God is thus jealous over His people, since he who touches them, does to a certain degree, touch the Person of Christ—the Father’s First-Born. Are they not members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones? The cry of Christ from Heaven, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” clearly shows that Christ looks upon the persecution of humble men and women as an insult to Himself. Should any wound your hand and then say, “I have not injured you.” You would reply, “But it is my hand and it is so much a part of myself that I cannot separate myself from the injury.”

So is it with Christ. The poorest, mean, most illiterate Christian, is in the close union with the glorious Head of the body and it will be at the foeman’s eternal hazard if he touch him, since he is part of Christ’s mystical body. If you hurt His people willfully, the Son of man will say, “Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, My Brethren, you have done it unto Me,” and the recompense shall follow.

Do you not know that the children of God have a relation towards God the Father, in respect of their being partakers of His character and dignity? The saints are God’s ambassadors. Among all nations an insult offered to an ambassador is an offense which cannot be readily wiped out. God’s ambassadors to the sons of men are His chosen people. They are Christ’s representatives on earth, so far as they live up to their profession. They who are the people of God are the Christs of this generation— anointed of the Lord and sent forth to tell of His love. Their life, if it is as it should be, is the picture of virtue and an example to mankind.

Now the world’s hatred to these men is but a part of their hatred to the Most High. They see His image in His servants and wantonly insult it, or contemptuously disregard it. When men oppose the people of God, it is because of their holiness. If it could be clearly proved that the world’s opposition to the Church was on account of the Church’s inconsistency, then it might be pardonable, or even virtuous. But we believe the real reason of the world’s enmity is the Church’s holiness. Were she not God-like and Divine, she would not be attacked. If she were not clear as the sun, fair as the moon, she would not be terrible as an army with banners, nor would the foe go forth in battle to meet her.

Well, then, because holiness is insulted in a persecuted saint, because righteousness is itself debased and defamed when the righteous man is slandered and dishonored—the battle is not ours but the Lord’s—and He will surely deliver His chosen. Because God espouses the quarrel of the virtuous, and takes up the gauntlet for the weak who desire to serve Him, therefore be careful, you sons of Ham, you children of the persecutor, be careful, for when He fits His arrows to the bow and draws His sword out of the scabbard, it shall go ill with you, for He remembers His people and He will avenge His own elect.

II. The second point is THE DANGER OF PERSECUTORS—“He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye.” If a man should seek to thrust his finger into our eye with the purpose of destroying our sight, I think we should not deliberate long as to the way in which to treat him. We should take good care that at all risks to our antagonist we defended a thing so precious.

Now, when any molest the people of God, they may be certain of this, that God will surely visit them. Therefore let persecutors take heed how they meddle with God’s eyes. According to the learned Blayney, our text may be read, “Whosoever touches you, touches the apple of his own eye.” In this sense we understand the passage as declaring that God shall cause the enemies of His Church to work their own ruin. They shall pull out their eyes by their own fingers.

The visitation of God will surely blast and wither those persecutors who go on in sin. At times it curses in the form of temporal death—more often, however, in the form of spiritual hardness of heart. I am not one of those who look upon everything that happens in this world as being a judgment from God. If a boat goes down to the bottom of the sea on a Sunday, I do not look upon that as judgment on those who are in it, any more than if it had gone to the bottom on a Monday. And though many good people get frightened when they hear one affirm this doctrine, yet I cannot help their fear, but like my Master, I must tell them that they who perish so are not sinners above all the sinners that are in Jerusalem.

I looked the other day at “Fox’s Book of Martyrs,” and I saw there an illustration of that deeply-rooted mistake of Christian people, concerning God’s always punishing men’s sins in this life. Fox draws a picture of a Popish priest who is insulting the faith, speaking lightly of the blood of Jesus and exalting the Virgin Mary and he drops down dead in the pulpit. Fox holds him up as a picture of a great sinner who dropped down dead for speaking lightly of Jesus, and the good man affirms the wicked priest’s death to be a judgment from Heaven.

Well, perhaps Fox is correct, but still I do not see the connection between his dropping down dead and the language he employed, for many a preacher who has been exalting Christ has fallen down dead in the pulpit. And happy was it for such a man that he was engaged in minding his charge at the time. The fact is, Providence smites good men and bad men, too. And when the storm rages, and the hurricane howls through the forest, not only are the brambles and briars shaken and uprooted, but goodly oaks crack and break, too. We are not to look for God’s judgments, except in special cases, in this life. His judgment is in the world to come.

Yet there have been some special cases. Look at Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the greatest persecutors that the Israel nation ever had—his death was so awful that I should disgust you if I described it. Remember, too, Herod the Great. “The disease of which Herod the Great died and the misery which he suffered under it, plainly showed that the hand of God was

then in a signal manner upon him. For not long after the murders at Bethlehem, his distemper,” as Josephus informs us, “daily increased in an unheard-of manner. He had a lingering and wasting fever and grievous ulcers in his entrails and heart, a violent colic and insatiable appetite.

“He had a venomous swelling in his feet, convulsions in his nerves, a perpetual asthma and offensive breath. He acquired rottenness in his joints and other members, accompanied with prodigious itching, crawling worms and intolerable smell—so that he was a perfect hospital of incurable distempers.” The Roman emperor, Julian, a determined enemy of Christianity, was mortally wounded in a war with the Persians. In this condition, we are told, he filled his hand with blood and casting it into the air, said, “O Galilean! You have conquered.”

History affords you many such cases. God has seemed to say to His Providence, as David said to Solomon concerning Joab, “Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.” I read the other day a list, I should think, of a hundred of the mighty persecutors—Roman and Grecian and so forth—all of whom came to a most shocking and untimely end. In the face of so many facts, one did feel it fair to draw the inference that, “Bloody and ungodly men shall not live out half their days.”

There is a story told of the days of the Cavaliers, when they used to hunt up the Puritans for meeting in the woods, in the fields, or on secluded banks, to worship God. One old man, who was parish constable, was asked to be an informer and hunt up a certain meeting in his parish in Northamptonshire but the old man said “No,” he’d have nothing to do with it—not that he liked those people, for he hated them. “But,” he said, “I should not advise any of you to meddle with any of these people. In the good old days, when Sir Harry was alive, he hunted them and took eight troopers with him to harass the Puritans all round this region.

“And,” he said, “the old man is dead, six of the soldiers are dead. Some of them were hanged and some of them broke their necks. And I myself fell off my horse and broke my collarbone in the act of persecuting them. For my part, I have had warnings enough, and I will never meddle with them again.” And I have no doubt that history could tell hundreds of tales of that kind, where God has seemed, at last, to leave off His general rule of long-suffering and of patience and to give to His foes a blow then and there, for their hectoring and intolerable hunting of His children and harassing them out of the land.

Far oftener, however, the penalty has come in spiritual things. He has left them to wax worse and worse, till they have become so hardened in sin that they “breathed out threats against the saints,” and licked up the blood of God’s children as dogs licked up the blood of Naboth. No sermon has had power to move them. No Truth of God could awaken Them. No warnings of Providence could alarm them. No wooing invitations could win their hearts. They have gone down, down, down a steep descent with their feet slipping in gore—in the red crimson mire, crimson with blood of saints—and in Hell they have lifted up their eyes in torment.

“I’d like,” said one old Romanist in the days of Luther, “I’d like to ride up to my horse’s bridle in the blood of Lutherans.” And he had his wish before long in another way, for in a dreadful bursting of blood-vessels in his own body, he laid weltering in his gore. Not up to his horse’s bridle but covered to his very soul with a suffocation of blood. God has done this, spiritually, to other men. They wanted to slay other men’s souls and the blood, as it were, of their own souls has drowned them. They would let off the light, and God has left them in darkness. They would throw away the salt and God has given them up to rot and to become putrid. They slew God’s ambassadors and God has proclaimed eternal war against them—a war which rages now and will rage in the world to come.

I do not know whether I happen to have any person here who might be called a persecutor. We do not have much persecution to suffer now-adays—at least, it does not come to much. I know that many servants lose their places, many wives are ill-treated by their husbands—now and then some poor husbands by their wives. And I know that children have been made wretched by their parents. Ah, but when you put these things side by side with Smithfield and the old Lollard’s Tower, they come to nothing.

Yet I know that there are many men who only want power and they would be as violent against God’s people as ever the tyrants were in the olden times. Very well, then, as you cannot do what you would do, since you do what you can, God shall visit that, also, upon your head and you shall find that the jest and the sneer and the jibe and the slander and the cruel mocking, shall by no means lack their reward.

But I will not dwell upon a point which we care so little to mention. Let us turn, rather, to the last point, upon which I speak with brevity.  
III. THE SAFETY OF THE CHURCH. “The Church is in danger! The Church is in danger!” Do you believe that, dear Friends? No, it depends upon whose Church it is. But if it is God’s Church, all the croakers in the world cannot alarm us, for we believe that God’s Church is safe enough, despite everything that may be said. “Oh but the Church is in danger from Romanism!” Nonsense! God can keep that in bounds. The dragon would have drowned the woman with the floods of his mouth centuries ago, if the Lord had not secured her from harm forever.  
The gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church, much less, then, shall the hates of Rome prevail. It is not the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ that is in danger. Perhaps the fat benefices may be. I will not say anything about that. I do not know of any particular promise upon which unscriptural officers and worldly dignitaries can rely, but the Church of God has special security guaranteed by Covenant, by promise and by oath. God is her pledged Preserver, for there is a promise—“I the Lord do keep her. I will water her every moment: lest any hurt her, I will keep her, night and day.”  
The Church is not in danger, and why? Well, first, the very frame of nature was made to protect her. We take up a chestnut or other seed and we find outside a prickly envelope—then there comes a hard shell, then inside a soft one, and then a film, and then another film and at last, somewhere in the center, you get the life-germ. And all the rest was made to exist for a time and to rot and to decay, in order to preserve the life-germ from hurt and to furnish food for it when it began to spring up.  
Now, I look upon this great vaulted roof of Heaven and the whole earth as being but the surrounding envelope in which God has wrapped up the living seed of His Church. You will have to break the whole constitution of earth before you will be able to surprise with destruction those whom God has surrounded by munitions of such stupendous strength. Speaking after a mystical sort, the mountains are round about Jerusalem. The solid rocks of the earth are like arms beneath her. The very stars are her watchers and the firmament and the Heaven of heavens are the gates that shut out her raging foes.  
When the Lord made the heavens and the earth, what was the drift of the whole thing? For what was the earth preparing in the old geological past? Preparing, you tell me, for man. But why, and why was man made? God made the whole race of man, but in respect of that chosen life within the race, those elect men and women who are as the substance which is in the oak when it loses its leaves, the holy seed which is the substance of the race and of all time.  
And when man came into the earth and did multiply and God divided the nations and scattered them to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west, He divided the whole, looking to His people. He saw at one glance how it would be best for this empire to stand, or that monarchy to fall—how it would be more advantageous for that dynasty to exist through a whole stream of kings, or for that monarch to be cut off in his prime, before his son should be born who should take the scepter from the dying hand.  
I say that the whole machinery of nature, the whole work of God which He has made, is intended to be the shell in which the Lord preserves His people, and there must come, indeed—“The wreck of matter and the crash of worlds,” and a total unloosing of the pillars of earth and Heaven, before you can perish, O you Children of God!  
But again, not only does nature, but Providence, too, works for the protection of God’s people. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Stupendous agencies are abroad. The wheels are so high that they are dreadful, but the wheels are full of eyes, and they only turn in such a way as shall preserve the Church of the living God. When we shall see the end from the beginning, we shall be amazed as to how it was that everything turned upon the axle of the Church—how the greatest wheel turned on its pole to bring out the elect, to fetch up out of their spiritual darkness the generation who were afterwards to be enlightened—how the biggest wave that followed the keel of the Church’s ship was ordained to wash it onward.  
And how the very wave which seemed to roll the other way, did but in some mystic manner still waft her onward to her desired haven. How storms and tempests, plagues and conflagrations, wars and bloodsheds, all co-worked to bring out the people of God, that the Lord’s name might be glorified in them. Like some huge steam vessel, Providence bears on the Church and you must reverse those wheels which lash the sea of events to foam, before you can detain the Church from her haven.  
Yet further, not to detain you longer, the Church is constantly preserved, we know, by the ministry of angels. Unseen by us, the angels of God keep watch and ward around us. They bear up the Church’s foot lest she dash it against a stone. They cover her head in the day of battle lest the fiery shafts should penetrate her helmet. By night and by day the watchers of God keep constant guard over the blood-royal of Heaven. Let us not be deceived in this matter, thinking that we have to deal here with a fancy or a myth.  
Angels have more to do with this world than we dream. They are more potent influences for the saints’ good than ever we have known, for they are the ten thousand chariots of God, the ten thousand times ten thousand saints of the Most High who stand in their battle array this day. If your eyes are opened, you will be able to say with the Prophet—“More are they that are with us than they that are with them.” Reckon the angels as your friends—put them not down as though they were weak and feeble— believe them to be strong and then you shall not doubt but that the Church shall be preserved as the apple of God’s eye.  
Then, last of all, God preserves His Church by the overruling of His Grace. By a sort of holy alchemy He fetches gold out of dross, medicine out of poison, success out of disaster. From seeming evil, He produces good, and better still, and better still, in infinite progression, so that the evil doings of the Church’s enemies turn out for her good in the end and their worst projects are in the wisdom of God but designs for her advancement. Let us rest in this, then, quite confident that by all means and by any means the Church shall always be safe. She rocks today—a big wave seems to strain her timbers—but He who built her is on board. The eternal hand grasps the helm and the Mighty One, with unruffled brow, looks at the storm and bids the ship cut through the foam.  
She has not turned as yet, though rocks and quicksand threatened to be in her path. Straight as a line, “as an arrow from a bow drawn by an archer strong,” she sped on her splendid flight, and on she shall go though a thousand hells boiled over to stay her Heaven-ordained mission. Yonder mighty billow, that seems ready to swallow her up and give her an eternal grave, shall break before her bow. And if she is for a moment buried in the spray, she shall either come up white from the washing, or she shall leap over it, ascending up to Heaven upon its crest.  
And if she goes down again, as though she would descend into the depths of the sea—the depths of defeat and dismay—it shall be but to bring up some sinner from the depth and save a soul that otherwise might have been lost. Oh, blessed be God, the Church is never insecure, no, nor yet one of her children—  
*“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,  
Nothing from His love can sever.  
I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power,  
What I’ve committed to His hand,  
Till the decisive hour.”*  
The apple of God’s eye shall not be touched. We shall never see a blinded deity, and until then we shall never hear that the people of God have perished and that the Church of Christ has been destroyed by her enemies. Courage, then, soldiers of Christ, courage! Turn not back through shame or fear. Another rush, another advance upon the foe, for you cannot be wounded, you are invulnerable. You cannot be defeated, you are invincible. God is in you and you must be almighty. He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye. Therefore dare, run risks, and venture for God, for you are always safe when you are venturing for Him.  
Our final question is, “Am I thus dear to God?” I would like you, now that I send you away, to ask yourselves that question. You, dear Friends up yonder, and you in this mighty tier, and you below, ask yourselves— “Am I thus dear to God?” Let each man and woman ask that question. How can I answer it? Is Christ dear to me? Then I am dear to God. Is Christ dear to me tonight? Do I rest on Him? If I do, I am saved. And if I do not, why should I not now? If I never have believed on Him, why should I not now?  
If I trust Him, He will save me. Lord, I trust You. Can you say that from your heart? Then the Spirit of God has helped you to say it and if tonight, poor Soul, whoever you may be, you will repose simply and wholly upon the merit of Jesus’ blood and the power of His intercession in Heaven, you are saved. Go your way, your sins are forgiven. You are accepted in the Beloved, if you have trusted Christ. God help you to rely on Jesus now, and to His name be praise forever and ever! Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #611 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ZECHARIAH’S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST  
NO. 611

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 22, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked from the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And to him He said, Behold, I have removed your iniquity from you and I will clothe you with rich robes. And I said, Let them put a clean turban upon his head. So they put a clean turban upon his head and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.” Zechariah 3:1-5.**

THE original intention of this vision was to foretell the revival of the Jewish state after its long depression through the Babylonian captivity. Joshua, the high priest, with his tattered garments, must be looked upon as the type of the Jewish people in their deep distress. He was ministering before the Lord in worn and filthy garments, to show at once the sin of Israel and the poverty into which they had fallen. They were so poor that the service of God could not be conducted in suitable apparel, but the high priest himself appeared before the altar in robes unfit for his sacred work.

The set time to favor Zion is according to the visions most near at hand. And Satan, the old adversary of the chosen race, bestirs himself to resist them and turn away the favor of God from them. But that same Angel of the Covenant who led the people through the wilderness and carried them all the days of old, stands before the Throne as their Advocate and at His request Jehovah rebukes Satan and begins to bless the people. Joshua, their representative, receives a change of clothes, in testimony that the people’s sin is forgiven and that God accepts their worship.

The vision then sweeps on to the day of the Lord Jesus and the heart of the Prophet Zechariah is cheered by a sight of the whole land restored to its former peace and happiness under the reign of the glorious One who is called, “My servant, THE BRANCH.” While we have been interpreting the other visions of Zechariah, we have tried to derive present comfort and profit from them. We will endeavor to do so on this occasion. We may very properly take Joshua as a type of all the people of God as they stand in their sense of sin and natural faultiness, subject to the accusations of Satan, but delivered by their ever gracious Lord.

And the change of clothing as setting forth the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of the Savior’s righteousness, which is the joy of all Believers. Let us take each particular separately and may God the Holy Spirit shed a sacred light upon the vision and may we see in it more than Zechariah himself discovered! May we see Jehovah Jesus in all the glory of His love, manifesting Himself to His chosen as He does not unto the world.

I. To begin, then, where the vision begins—with THE BELIEVER HIMSELF REPRESENTED BY JOSHUA. The Believer himself is described as a priest standing before the Angel of the Lord. Let us mark this. He is a priest. Who are the priests? Certain sons of Korah, who take too much upon them, say, “We are the priests, we are the legitimate descendants of the Apostles and a mysterious power distills from our priestly hands.” We reply to them, it is impossible that you should be descendants of the Apostles and yet claim to possess priestly power, for the Apostles never claimed any peculiar priesthood for themselves above other Believers.

They spoke of their Brethren, the Christians of their age, as being on a par with themselves in the matter of priesthood. “You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). If, then, these pretenders to priesthood are priests in any special sense, they certainly are not descendants of the Apostles—for the Apostles claimed no priority of priesthood beyond the rest of their brethren, but said of all the saints, “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood.”

The fact is they are neither one nor the other—they are not descendants of the Apostles, for they preach not the Apostles’ Gospel and know not their Spirit! Nor have they any priestly office, unless it is that the old Babylonian harlot accepts them as her foster children and gives them a name and a place among those who partake in her abominations. Who are the priests? Why, every humble man and woman that knows the power of Jesus Christ in his own soul to purge and cleanse him from dead works is appointed to serve as a priest unto God! I say every humble man and every humble woman, too, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female—we are all one in Him.

We offer prayers to God knowing that they ascend to Heaven like sweet odors before the Throne! We offer praise, believing that “whoever offers praise, glorifies God.” “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Jesus has made us priests and kings unto God and even here upon earth we exercise the priesthood of consecrated living and hallowed service and hope to exercise it till the Lord shall come. When I see, then, Joshua the high priest, I do but see a picture of each and every child of God who has been made near by the blood of Christ and has been taught to minister in holy things and enter into that which is within the veil.

But observe where this high priest is—he is said to be “standing before the Angel of the Lord,” that is, standing to minister. This should be the perpetual position of every true Believer. I have no business on the bed of sloth. I have no right to be wandering abroad after private business. I can claim no time which I may set apart to my own follies, or to my own aggrandizement. My true position as a Christian is to be always ministering to God—always standing before His altar.

Do I hear you ask how this can be—with your farms and with your merchandise? Know you not, Brethren, that whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, you may do it all to the glory of God? Understand you not that every place is now God’s temple and that everywhere is God’s altar and that you can as truly serve Him in your daily callings as in the assemblies of the place of worship? You know not the true position of a Christian if you fancy that you are only priests on the Lord’s Day and only to minister before God when you stand in the congregation of the faithful. You are appointed priests like your Lord—forever—and you are forever to be offering the sacrifice!

By day and by night should your hearts be going up to Him. You should fall asleep with your Master’s name upon your tongue and when you awake you should say with the Psalmist, “I am still with You.” Happy Joshua! Notwithstanding the filthiness of his garments, he is to be commended because he keeps in the position to which he is called and like the servant whose ear was bored, he does not leave his master’s house. Come, you that profess to be God’s people—if you have been negligent in the duties of your high calling, and if your hearts at this moment are going after vanity—pray God the Holy Spirit to put you into a proper state to perform the functions of your holy office! And now in the courts of the Lord’s House, stand like Joshua, with your hearts prepared by the Lord of Hosts to minister before the Lord.

Yet, notice where it is that Joshua stands to minister. It is before the Angel of Jehovah. You and I can never stand to minister before Moses, the mediator under the Law—much less before Jehovah Himself. For our God is a consuming fire. It is only through a Mediator that we poor, defiled ones can ever become priests unto God. Perhaps some of God’s people here may have forgotten this. You have been searching yourselves and trying your hearts as in the sight of God’s Law and you feel very deeply that you are far behind what the glory of the God in the Law would ask of you. Therefore you begin foolishly to mistrust your Father’s love and to think that your service before Him will not be heeded.

Beloved, it is ill serving God in the light of the Law—but oh, how blessed is it to stand and minister before Christ and in Christ! Then, if I can bring Him nothing but my tears He will put them in His bottle, for He once wept. If I can bring Him nothing but my groans and sighs He will accept these as an acceptable sacrifice, for He once was broken in heart and sighed heavily in spirit. Gracious God, I bless You that I have not to present my sacrifice directly to Yourself, else you would consume my sacrifice and me with the flames of Your wrath! But I present what I have before Your Messenger, the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus! And through Him my prayers find acceptance wrapped up in His prayers!

My praises become sweet as they are bound up with bundles of myrrh and aloes and cassia from Christ’s own garden. Then I myself, standing in Him, am accepted in the Beloved. And all my poor, defiled, polluted works, though in themselves only objects of Divine abhorrence, are so accepted and received, that God smells a sweet savor. He is content and I am blessed. See, then, the position of the Christian as a priest—he is to stand before the Angel of the Lord. Now read the next word in the light of your own experience—“Clothed,” it is said, “with filthy garments.” Did you ever feel this when you have come to serve God?

Perhaps it is at evening prayer—there has been something amiss in the family during the day and you know it—perhaps, as the head of the household you have to conduct prayer and you feel, “O God, I cannot pray, I cannot pray as I would! I am Your priest in this house, I know, but how can I minister before You, for I have filthy garments on?” Possibly your business kept you up very late last night. Things are not going on as well as you wish in matters of trade and you have come here distracted. And while sitting in the pew listening to God’s people as they praise the Lord, you have thought, “Ah, I have my filthy garments on. I cannot pray to Him. I cannot praise Him as I would.”

I know what it is to come and preach to you sometimes and to feel such an overwhelming sense of my own unworthiness, that, were it not, “Woe unto me if I do not preach the Gospel,” I would not come on this platform again, for it is hard to feel that your garments are defiled while endeavoring to be God’s mouth to men. Perhaps this afternoon, when you are going into your Sunday school class, you will feel much warmth of heart towards God. You will confess that you are not your own, but bought with a price. You will desire to live unto Him and honor Him.

But, oh, that dread impediment of conscious guilt—it will make you cry out—“How can I stand before Him who charged His angels with folly and declares that the heavens are not pure in His sight? How can I hope to have a blessing on anything that I do when I feel a heart of unbelief departing from the living God? How can I give a blessing to His saints when I want a blessing myself? How shall I break the bread of Christ with unholy fingers and pour out the wine into His cup with a sinful hand?”

But stop, Christian! Do not think of renouncing your priesthood! Do not let a sense of unfitness keep you from your service! Stand where you are—for remember, you are standing in the only place where pollution can be washed away—you are standing before the Angel of the Covenant! It is before Christ that sin is to be confessed. Confess it anywhere else, your sorrow is not repentance, but remorse.

“What is remorse?” says one. Remorse is repentance made out of sight of Jesus! True repentance is sorrow of sin in the Presence of Christ. Foul and filthy as you are, there is but one Voice which can speak you clean. Go not away from that Voice. There is but one Hand which can touch you and make you pure—stand where that Hand is close to you and still, filthy as your garments are, shun not the face of your best, your only Friend! And breathe out this prayer, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. Purge me, oh, purge me now, for Your love’s sake.”

II. Let us turn to another individual who figures in the group. We have, in the second place, AN ADVERSARY. Satan stood before the Angel to resist Joshua. Does not his opposition seem superfluous? Poor Joshua feels enough the filth upon his garments without needing to have the devil to withstand him. And I, poor I, do often feel so much my own sinfulness that it seems a work of supererogation on the devil’s part to lay accusations—conscience accuses enough without him!

But yet, so cruel is he that he avails himself of the times of the weakness of God’s people—then and there to resist them. Observe what he is called. He is called Satan, which signifies an adversary. He is an adversary and that by nature. His nature is now so vile that he cannot help being the adversary of everything that is good. From the day on which he was expelled from Heaven and dragged with him a third part of the stars of glory, he has been God’s bitterest foe. And as to man, from the hour in which it was said, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” he discovered in that humble creature, man, his great destroyer. And he has never ceased to nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman, foreknowing how terribly his head is to be bruised.

There is something, however, very comforting in the thought that he is an adversary—I would sooner have him for an adversary than for a friend! O my Soul, it were dread work with you if Satan were a friend of yours, for then with him you must forever dwell in darkness and in the deeps—shut out from the friendship of God! But to have Satan for an adversary is a comfortable omen, for it looks as if God were our Friend and so far let us be comforted in this matter. Yet, remember, Satan is an adversary not to be despised. Of keen intellect, ripened by years of experience, with a fullness of cunning and craft which made even the serpent, when possessed by him, more subtle than any other beast of the field, he is an antagonist worthy of angelic might.

Gabriel might lose in such a conflict if he did not stand clad in the golden armor of perfect innocence. We, so apt to sin, carrying about with us so much tinder, had need to fear the fiery sparks which he scatters. It is a dreadful thing to stand foot to foot with Apollyon. Read Bunyan’s description of Christian’s fight in the Valley of Humiliation and you have there a shadow of what the true conflict is. Better to endure all kinds of temporal pains and trials than to be beset by Satan. He who wins, gains nothing—and he who fails will find his weight full heavy when the dragon sets his foot upon his neck. You have a stern adversary here and one who will never cease to vex you till you shall be out of gunshot of him, in having crossed the river of death.

Now you will perceive, if you look at the passage, that this adversary selected a most fitting place in which to do Joshua damage. He came to accuse him before the Angel—before God’s own Son! Oh, if he could once make the Lord loose His hold of us, then we should soon be his prey! You perceive he does not attack Joshua first, but he comes before the Angel to prevent Joshua’s being accepted. If Satan can once persuade you or me to think we are not God’s children and not accepted, he knows that he has done us serious injury. In the arsenals of Hell there are great stores of “ifs”— “ifs” are Satan’s bombshells—“If you are the Son of God.”

If he can make you doubt, then he makes a breach in your wall. If you are strong enough to say, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him,” you will then come off more than conqueror! But the drift of Satan is to touch you just there, in that place where your strength lies. He is like Delilah—he feels that if he can cut off the locks of your faith, where your strength dwells—then he may put out your eyes and sell you to the Philistines forever. Take care, take care, when Satan comes to accuse you before the Angel and to make you doubt your interest in the Lord Jesus, that you at once leave the case in the Angel’s hands—for your Advocate can plead better against the accuser than you can!

And it is best for you to hold your peace and to let that great Advocate stand up and say, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” You will agree with me that the adversary not only selected a very fit place by coming at once to the Throne to lay the accusation, but a very fit opportunity. Joshua had his filthy garments on. Satan is a great coward—he will generally meddle with God’s people when they are down. I find that when I am in good physical health, I am not often tempted of Satan to despondency or doubt. But whenever I get depressed in spirit, or my liver is out of order, or my head aches—then comes the hissing serpent—“God has forsaken you! You are no child of God! You are unfaithful to your Master! You have no part in the blood of sprinkling,” and such-like things.

You old rascal! If you say as much as that to me in my days of health—when my blood is leaping in my veins—I shall be more than a match for you! But to meet me just then, when you understand that I am weak, yes, this is just like you, Satan. What a thorough devil our enemy is! I can call him by no worse name than his own! But if worse there were, richly would he deserve it. You must expect, Christian, when you have lost your sense of justification, when you are conscious of sin, when you feel unfit to minister before God—you must expect that just then he will come to accuse you.

If Joshua’s garment had been perfectly clean that morning when he went to minister as a priest, Satan would have let him alone. But see Joshua depressed in spirit and heavy in mind—weeping over his sins—then comes Satan and he says, “Now, I shall battle with him! God will hate Joshua, for He cannot bear filth. He will be sure to cast away the filthy priest. And Joshua is hating himself, too, and so I shall plunge him in despair and make an end of the man.” Surely, so it would have been if the Angel had not been there!

But the Angel of the Lord, by His Presence, is ever a wall of fire round about His people and a Glory in the midst! If the lion of Hell comes prowling forth to seize the very weakest lamb, the great Shepherd will deliver the lamb out of his teeth—nor shall the infernal lion rend the meanest of His sheep. Commentators have puzzled themselves to know what Satan would have to say against Joshua. As I read their conjectures I thought that it would never have puzzled me—for my question would be, in my own case—“Which one out of the fifty thousand things the devil would choose to bring?” Not what he could bring, but I ask which one out of fifty thousand things he would choose to bring?

Truly, dear Friend, if Satan wants to accuse us—any page of our history—any hour of any day will furnish him material for his charges! Yesterday you were impatient. The day before you were proud. Another day you were slothful, on another, angry. Oh what a den of unclean birds the human heart is! I would to God we could wring their necks, but they are too many for any power less than Divine to destroy them all! One chirps at one time and one at another and between them they maintain a dolorous discord! Talk of perfection in the flesh? The man who dreams of it is either a fool or a knave, one of the two!

He is either a fool and does not know his own heart, or else he is a knave before God and is dishonest and does not call that sin which is sin. Perfection in the flesh? Why, those Believers who live nearest to God and have the deepest experience of Divine things will tell you they have given up that dream long ago! They never expect to be perfect except in Christ Jesus and never to be complete in themselves but only to be complete in Him. If the old accuser wants reasons for accusation, he may, indeed, find as many as he wills and continue to accuse as long as ever he pleases—for we are altogether as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

I have heard of a certain Divine that he used always to carry about with him a little book. This little book had only three leaves in it and to tell the truth there was not a single word in the book. The first was a sheet of black paper, black as jet. The next was a sheet of red—scarlet. And the next was a sheet of white without spot. Day by day he used to take out this little book and at last he told some one the secret of what it meant. He said, “There is the black leaf—that is my sin and the wrath of God which my sin deserves. I look and look and think it is not black enough, though it is black as black can be. Then the next, that is the leaf of the atoning sacrifice, the precious blood—the red leaf—how I do delight to look at that and look and look again. Then there is the white leaf. That is my soul, as it is washed in Jesus’ blood, made white as snow through the righteousness of Jesus Christ and washing in the fountain which Christ has filled from His own veins.”

Ah, that first black leaf! That black leaf! Surely, if Satan looks over it, it will be no puzzle to him to find something against you! He may continue to plead against you till doomsday and always find ground in your shortcomings for accusing you before the Angel of God! And what was it that Satan was after, after all, with Joshua? Was it that he hated Joshua’s sins? Did he bring these before the Angel because he really was vexed that such a sinner as Joshua should defile the courts of God’s House? Ah, not a bit of it! It is an edifying spectacle, certainly, to see Satan pleading against sin! It is sometimes good to turn the tables on Satan, as Martin Luther does and tell him, “Supposing I am all you say I am, yet what are you, that you should bring accusations against me?

“I am no servant of yours, Satan. If my Master does not find fault with me, who am I that I should be afraid because you assail and accuse me? What are you, after all? You do but look round my castle wall and smile at every rift and so tell me where it needs mending! What are you but a fierce dog, keeping me awake by your howling? Better that I have you, than be without you, lest I fall into a deadly slumber and so sleep myself into carnal security and spiritual death. What are you after all, arch Fiend, but one who, like a terrible tempest, drives me nearer to my Savior and compels me to find a harbor in His bosom?”

Satan aims at our destruction—that is the point at which he drives. He does not care for our pleasure—it is our total and eternal ruin. Let us know this and never be beguiled by him. In whatever way he puts sin, let us understand it to be sin, still, and therefore keep out of his clutches. When at the council of Basle, a certain cardinal had spoken very fairly about Protestants, the Emperor Sigismund rose and said, “Yes, he talks very prettily, but remember, he is a Roman—he is a Roman still.” So when the adversary advances with his blandishments and temptations, remember he is a devil still, though dressed in his best robes! You can always detect him under any of his various disguises—for his desire is at all times and all seasons your total destruction!

We have now a very gloomy picture before us. We have the poor Believer in Christ willing to minister unto the Lord, but quite unable to do so because of his filthy garments. And we have, at the same time, a clamorous accuser who is crying out before the bar of justice, “Condemn him! Condemn him! Condemn him!” And well may that poor Believer tremble from head to foot as he recollects how true the charge is!

III. But stop! The picture changes now, for THE ANGEL SPEAKS! He has been silent till now, but now He comes into the foreground. “The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked from the fire?” Take note that this rebuke comes at the right season. When Satan accuses, Christ pleads. He does not wait till the case has gone against us and then expresses His regret, but He is always a very present help in time of trouble.

He knows the heart of Satan, being Omniscient God. And long before Satan can accuse He puts in the blessed plea on our behalf and delays the action till He gives an answer which silences forever every accusation. Do not think, Christian, that there will ever come a night so dark that there will be no light shining for you in it, or that Satan will be able to surprise the Savior and take you by storm! In the nick of time Christ will be sure to be your help. Observe that this rebuke also came from the very highest authority. He says, “Jehovah rebuke you, Satan.” Christ does not merely rebuke Satan Himself, but He prays the Lord to do it.

The eternal God, who is full of justice, says to the accuser, “I have justified, why do you accuse? I accepted My own dear Son in the place of the poor sinner with the filthy garments on—why do you accuse?” That is a joyous utterance of the Apostle, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies.” If God justifies, that very act is a rebuke to all the accusations of the false Fiend! Courage, Christian! The Voice which silenced your cruel foe is the Voice that rolls the stars along—against which nothing can stand.

You must not fail to observe, however, that this rebuke was founded upon electing love. You that deny the doctrine of election come here and read this verse—“Jehovah rebuke you, Satan! Even Jehovah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” If God has chosen His people, then it is of no use for Satan to attempt their overthrow. Christ does not here meet Satan with any, “ifs,” “ands,” ‘buts,” nor “perhapses.” He does not meet him with those truths which are merely matters of experience and about which there may be a question—He meets him with the high mysterious Truth of God which was settled before the world was—He throws, as it were, this chain into his teeth and bids him champ that till he breaks his teeth. “God has chosen Jerusalem!” Let that be rebuke enough.

I think your experience will bear out what I now say—that it is all very well to live on spoon victuals and on milk when you have no trials and troubles. But if it ever comes to a pinch between your soul and sin—if you are in the deep waters of conscious sinfulness and Satan is accusing you—nothing will do for your soul to meet the adversary with but the doctrines of Sovereign Grace. You may be an Arminian in the summer, but you must be a Calvinist in the roaring winds of winter. Arminianism is a very pretty sort of theology for a painted boat upon a glassy lake. But they that do business on deep waters, and weather storms and hurricanes must have a good substantial boat of everlasting immutable love! Otherwise, if the vessel is not staunchly and well built—its tacklings will become loose—and they cannot strengthen their mast and the vessel will drive upon the quicksands.

Beloved, in my spiritual building I want to get more and more onto the rock, immediately on the rock. I know I am told that the rock does not yield a harvest—that election is not a practical truth—but after all, if I want a house built, let me have it on the rock, for if it does not yield me any present practical results, yet I must have some comfort—I must have some place to dwell in the storm! I can go out to other fields to sow my corn and reap my harvest, but for my everlasting confidence I want a rock.

Rest assured that the doctrines commonly called Calvinistic are the only doctrines that can shut the mouths of devils and fill the mouths of saints in the day of famine and in the time of extremity. “The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” When I am bowed down under sin, next to my Bible I love such books as “Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty,” or “Dr. Crisp’s Sermons.” Albeit that they do not contain all the Truth of God, yet they teach very clearly that part of it which a troubled spirit needs. Does eternal love ordain sinners to eternal life irrespective of their works? Does the Lord absolutely, out of sovereign mercy, make men to be His children? Did God choose the chief of sinners and does He ever cast them away?

Does He say, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy”? Does He declare that He is absolutely justified in doing whatever He wills with His own? Does He, on such terms as that, choose me? Then blessed be His name—such an election as this just suits my case! And I find that believing the doctrine in that light I can say to all my doubts and fears, “Jehovah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” The rebuke is forcibly applicable to the case in hand. He says, “Is this not a log plucked from the fire.” Satan says, “The man’s garments are filthy!” “Well,” says Jesus, “how do you expect them to be otherwise? When you pull a log out of the fire, do you expect to find it milk-white or polished?”

No, it had begun to crack and burn and though you have plucked it out of the fire, it is, in itself, still black and charred. So it is with the child of God. What is he at his best? Till he is taken up to Heaven, he is nothing but a log plucked out of the fire. It is his daily moan that he is a sinner. But Christ accepts him as he is—and He shuts the devil’s mouth by telling him, “You say this man is black—of course he is—what did I think he was but that? He is a log plucked out of the fire!

“I plucked him out of it. He was burning when he was in it—he is black now he is out of it. He was what I knew he would be—he is not what I mean to make him—but he is what I knew he would be. I have chosen him as a log plucked out of the fire. What have you to say to that?” Observe that this plea did not require a single word to be added to it from Joshua. If you look, Joshua did not say a solitary word. This so silenced the devil that he was speechless. How often Satan has been nonplussed! He has made up a very pretty case against us—he has caught us in our worst moments and he has thought, “I will sift him like wheat in my sieve.”

His plans would have succeeded, but there was a “but” in his way— (an unfortunate “but” for him, but a blessed “but” for us)! “But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.” Satan is something like Haman. What an admirable plot Haman had laid for the destruction of Mordecai and the Jews! Yes, but there was one little thing which he had not reckoned on—the Jews had a friend at court who lay in the bosom of the king. And so Satan has often a scheme for the destruction of God’s people, but there is one thing which frustrates him, namely, that they have a dear Friend at Court who lies in the bosom of the Eternal King and who pleads for them! And while He is there poor Joshua shall never fail, for the great Joshua, even Jesus his near kinsman, says, “The Lord rebuke you Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a log plucked out of the fire?”

IV. We have not yet entered into the soul of our text, but here it is—A MATCHLESS DEED OF GRACE. Thus said the Angel, “take away the filthy garments from him.” Here is a picture of sin removed. Do you not think you see him? They have taken off his vestments, every single piece of the robe which was too defiled for him to wear has been taken away and there he stands! And as the Angel looks at him He sees the man’s nakedness, but He cannot see any defilement, for the filth is all gone!

So is every pardoned sinner! So am I this morning—so are you, dear Brothers and Sisters. God has commanded, “Take away his filthy garments from him,” and as easily as we take off filthy robes, so easily does God take away sin through the Atonement of Christ. There is more than that here. The Lord does not only take away the sin itself, but He takes away the consciousness of it. You feel as if you could not serve God because sin is heavy on you. Look to Jesus, the Covenant Angel. Hear Him say, “It is finished,” and if you can but lay hold on Him, in a moment you will lose all sense of sin!

You will know yourself to be a sinner, but at the same time you will feel that you are a blood-washed sinner—a sinner saved by Divine Grace! And your soul, with your Savior’s garments on—made holy as the Holy One—will venture close to the Throne and stand there unabashed. That is a delightful sentence where Paul speaks of “having our conscience purged from dead works.” Not merely having the dead works forgiven, but having the conscience purged of them so that you have no more conscience of sin. Sin is gone! You do not stand, now, in God’s sight as a sinner, but as one who is perfect in Christ Jesus! You have not a sin in God’s book against you—you are absolved. Christ has said it, “Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you.”

You have an admirable picture of this in Joshua’s losing his filthy garments. Nor was this all. The order was now given to clothe him—“I will clothe you with rich robes.” Christ has performed complete obedience to the Divine Law. He had no need to do this for Himself, but He did it for His people. What He did is ours. The perfect obedience of Christ is imputed to every Believer! We wrap ourselves about with the garments of Christ, just as Jacob put on the robes of his brother Esau. And our Father gives us the blessing, because He finds us in our brother’s clothes. Oh, this is gracious, because all the righteousness you and I could ever have if we had been perfect would only have been human—but this is Divine!

Christ is the Lord our Righteousness and we are sumptuously arrayed in His seamless robe. Here let me remark that this is matter of experience, too, for the Believer gets to feel that he can now minister before God without trembling, because he wears Christ’s garments. Oh, how delightful it is to preach dressed in the robes of Christ, or to pray when you feel you have Christ’s vestments on! Oh, how fair a thing it is to minister at God’s altar when you know that you are dressed in the white linen, the righteousness of Christ—so clean that even God’s all-seeing eyes cannot detect so much as a spot or blemish on it.

Pure, lovely, beautiful—without blemish from head to foot in the sight of God is every justified soul! Oh, Christian, never be satisfied unless you know this and live in the constant enjoyment of it. Notice one more thing and I will not keep you longer. The Prophet was so astonished to see the alteration which had taken place in Joshua dressed out in his new and sumptuous apparel that he broke in upon the vision, and spoke, himself! “And I said, Let them put a clean turban upon his head.” I do not know what business Zechariah had to speak, but truly, if I had seen the vision, I must have done the same.

Gazing through my tears, seeing the Lord’s people thus transformed from filthiness to cleanliness and from shame to beauty, I think I should have said, “Now, Lord, finish the work. Make that servant of Yours to serve You. As he is perfectly clothed, now, Lord, put on the miter and make him fit to do your work.” Some of God’s people appear to me to forget this. They get as far as imputed righteousness and believe themselves to be accepted in the Beloved. There they are, content to tarry. But, ah, my soul desires even to say, “Lord, put a fair miter on the head of every one of Your saved ones.”

Some of you, I trust, are saved, but then how little you do for Christ! My prayer shall be for you—“Lord, put the miter on their heads! Make them priests—they ought to be such. You have washed them, cleansed them and clothed them on purpose that they may be such—but they have laid aside their miter—Lord, put it on their heads.” I pray that you may have it on your head today! That you may in your family! In the Sunday school! Tomorrow in your business—in the street and in the shop! Go forth wearing the miter—ordained to be true priests unto God and exercising your functions! Do not lay aside your office! Some act with their miters as our kings and queens do with their crowns—they only put them on upon State occasions—they do not always wear them because they are too heavy.

Oh Christian, your State occasion should be always! You are always dear to Christ and always near the Father’s heart. Never take your miter off! Believers, put it on and go forth from this time forth praising and blessing the Covenant Angel who, in Jehovah’s name, has taken away your filthy garments and who still stands by! I like that closing sentence—“And the angel of the Lord stood by.” Oh, yes, we want Him always to stand by! When you have your new garments on, when you wear your miter, you still need His Presence. “Abide with us,” must be our daily prayer. We still need His strength, His comfort, His smile—the help of His arm, the light of His countenance—for if we have Him not, we shall soon slip from our steadfastness and have reason to stand again, like Joshua, with filthy garments on.

I have thus preached after a very feeble sort to God’s people. There is this voice to sinners. Your case is like that of Joshua at first—for you have filthy garments on. Do not try to wash them. Nothing is said here about washing the garments, not a word! Do not try to make those old rags any better—there is nothing said about stitching or mending. Just confess that they are too bad to be mended, too filthy to be washed, and turn your eyes to Christ, the wounded Sufferer, and ask Him this morning to speak the word—“Take away the filthy garments from him. Clothe him with a change of raiment.”

I tell you, Sinner, what He did for Joshua, He will do for you! Oh seek His face and live! God help you to seek it and to find it this very morning and He shall have the praise forever and ever. Amen.

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GOD’S FIREBRANDS  
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A SERMON  
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Zechariah 3:2.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 1 to 5 is Sermon #611, Volume 11— ZECHARIAH’S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST—  
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IT may be well to explain these words, for simple as they are, a few words of exposition may be useful to open up the metaphor and enforce the thrilling Truth of God that underlies it.

There is mention of a fire. A cry of “FIRE!”has something fearful in it. When a fire begins to get the upper hand with us, it is terrible in its destructiveness. The fire here meant is more awful than any flame that makes havoc of matter, and its devastations are ten thousand times more appalling! It is the fire of sin. It blazed in the heart of an angel and he became a devil. Its sparks fell into the bosom of mother Eve and into the heart father Adam—and Paradise was burned up and the world became a wilderness. Sin is a fire which destroys the comfort of mankind, here, and all the joy of mankind hereafter. It is a flame which yields no comfortable warmth. The sinner may dance in the light of it for a moment, but in sorrow will he have to lie down in it forever! Woe unto those who have to make their bed in this fire—to dwell with these consuming flames for a term that knows no ending!

There is, further, mention of a brand. Nothing can be more suitable to burn in the fire than a brand. It is not a branch just taken from the tree, fresh and full of sap—it is a brand—dry, sere timber, fit for the burning. It is not a mass of stone or iron, but a combustible brand. And what does this indicate but man’s natural heart which is so congenial to the fire of sin? Our heart is like the tinder—Satan has but to strike the spark and how readily does the spark find a nest within our bosom! As the firebrand fits the fire, so does the sinner fit in with sin. When sin and the sinner come in contact, it is, “Hail fellow, well met!” They are bosom companions. The sinner’s heart is the nest well prepared—and sins are the foul birds which come to nestle there! Not to go a step without a particular application, it will be well for us all to understand that we are, ourselves, like the brands—there is a fitness between us and sin. If we burn in the fire of sin, it is no wonder! With our fallen nature, it is no greater marvel that we should be incited by sin than that the firebrand should kindle in the flame!

Beyond the distinct allusion to a fire and a brand, we read of a brand in the fire. Nor is it merely a brand lying upon the heap, to be, by-and-by, put upon the flames—it is “a brand plucked out of the fire.” It has been in the fire! Does not this portray our condition—not only congenial for the fire of sin, but actually burning and blazing in it? We began very early. Disobedience to parents, angry tempers, petty lies, many sorts of childish obstinacies and wrongdoings—all these were like the first catching on fire of the brand. We have blazed away the reverse of merrily since then—some have become charred with sin till their very bodies contain the marks of that tremendous fire, while in every case the soul receives a charring and blackening from the flame. Not one of us has been able, even with godly training and Christian parentage, to escape from burning to some extent in this fire. Alas! Alas, for those who are even now in it!

There is a fair side to the picture—it is not altogether gloomy. While we have a fire, a brand and a brand in the fire, we also have, blessed be God, a brand plucked out of the fire. Sinners these, who though they have still within them the propensity to sin, are no longer in the fire of sin! They have been taken away from it. They sin through infirmity, but willful sin they do not commit. Their nature has been challenged. They have received the renewing Grace of God. The fire that once burned within them has been quenched. They recollect, to their grief and sorrow, the mischief that sin did to them, but it is not doing them the same mischief now. They are delivered from the body of sin and death!

Still, the force of the passage seems to lie in the words “ plucked out of.” You may sit down on the bench by the hearth in one of those good old country fireplaces where they still burn the logs and, perhaps, a brand drops out upon the hearth where it flames a little while and then goes out. This is not a picture that we can appropriate, for there never was an instance known of a man, by himself, dropping out of the fire of sin! Alas, we love it too well! “The burnt child dreads the fire,” says the proverb, but we are like the silly moth that flies at the candle and singes its wings, yet still uses those wings to mount up again into the flame! And if it falls— all full of pain and torment, with burnt legs and with almost all its wing gone—it struggles, it pants, it labors to get into the fire again! Such is man. He loves this fire which is his destruction! In youth, we put our finger into the flame. We feel that it is burnt, yet again we put our hand into it. Then, in later years, we persist deliberately till that sin has consumed us from head to foot! And we lie down in our grave with our bones filled with disease—foul fruit of the sins of our youth—our very corpses in their mortality bearing witness to the corruption of our morals!

Albeit the Christian is relieved of that peril, he does not escape by his own free will. He is plucked out of it. To be plucked out, there needs a hand quick to rescue. You know that pierced hand and how it burnt itself when it was thrust into the hot coals to pluck us out like brands from the burning! It was no use waiting till we dropped out, for we would never have done so—there was no hope of that. With all the appliances of Grace and of Judgment, the two together could not bring us out! But effectual vocation did it, when the Spirit of the living God took the firebrand in His hand and without asking it whether it would or not, by the sweet and irresistible compulsions of Divine Grace plucked the brand out of the fire! Every Believer in the Lord Jesus is a trophy of the strength as well as of the mercy of God. It took as much Omnipotence to snatch him from the fire as it needs to make a world—and every Believer may feel that he is a brand plucked from the fire.

This question, as it appears to me, will bear three renderings. First, it may be looked upon as an exclamation of wonder—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire!” Secondly, as an enquiry or hope—“Is not this a brand— particularly this one—“plucked out of the fire?”And, in the third place, it is certainly a defiance for us, assured of our safety, to throw into the face of Satan, the accuser—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”

I. THE TEXT BEARS THE SENSE OF WONDERMENT—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
It was said of Joshua, the High Priest. There was such astonishment at his preservation, that with hands uplifted, the question was asked, “Is not this man just like a firebrand snatched from among the glowing coals?” Nor is this marvel confined to Joshua. I believe this is a matter of wonder in the case of every saved sinner. Was there ever a man saved by Grace who was not a wonder? Is not every Christian conscious that there is some peculiarity about his own salvation which makes it marvelous? If you cannot all chime in with, “Yes,” I must at least lead the chorus in which an overwhelming multitude will join—confessing that it was so with myself! For a long while, I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be the odd person in the world. When the catalog was made out, it seemed to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out. If God had saved me and not the rest of the world, I would have wondered, indeed! But if He had saved all the world except me, that would have seemed to be according to the common course—and a right course, too. And now, being saved by Grace, I cannot help saying, “Yes, I am a brand plucked out of the fire!”And does not each Believer say the same? Why, look at the Believer! He is fallen, lost, and yet, though lost in his first parent, he is saved in Christ! The Believer’s own nature is depraved like that of other men and yet, contrary to nature, his is made a new creature! As though Niagara were suddenly made to leap upwards instead of falling downwards, our nature, so mighty for sin, has been suddenly turned into the opposite direction and we have been compelled to seek after Grace and holiness!  
Out of the state of our natural depravity we have been plucked so that every man who is delivered from its sway may well say, “Am not I a brand plucked out of the fire?” Each Christian, knowing his own heart and having a special acquaintance with his own peculiar besetting sin, feels as if the conquest of his own will by the Grace of God were a more illustrious trophy of that Grace than the conquest of a thousand others! I can well understand that none of us will yield the palm in Heaven to any other as to our indebtedness to the Mercy of God. You may sing, and sing loudly, each one of you, and each one say, “I owe more to God’s Grace than any other”—but there is not one of us who will concede the point! We shall each strike up our own peculiar note and louder yet, and louder yet, and louder until our notes of gratitude will rise to the seventh Heaven—“unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood: to whom be Glory and dominion forever and ever!” Each Christian, then, for some reason, will feel that he is peculiarly “a brand plucked out of the fire.” I envy not the feeling of any Believer who should dispute this. May you and I be more thoroughly baptized into the spirit of humility—that with deeper gratitude we may feel how peculiarly we are indebted to the Grace of God!  
Though this is the case universally, there are instances so uncommon that they excite surprise in the minds of all who hear of them. In the cases of extraordinary conversion, one of the first is the salvation of the extremely aged. Imagine a person, here, who has lived to be 70 or 80 years old and all this time his heart has never heard the sigh of repentance and never felt the joy of pardon! You have lived only to cumber the ground all these years and you are still an enemy to God! While on the borders of the grave you have no hope of Heaven. O Soul, your case is very sad! It were enough to make angels weep, if weep they could, to think that such an one as you, after so many years of long-suffering, should not be melted thereby! Now, suppose the Lord should appear to you tonight and say to you, “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you. I took you into the House of Prayer tonight on purpose that My Word might come with power to your soul, and I have this to say to you—“Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” What do you say, you hoary Jacob, but without Jacob’s faith, leaning upon your staff—would it not be a wonder if now you should begin to love the Lord and begin to believe in Jesus? Oh, may God give you Grace to do so! And then I am sure you will say to your kinsfolk and acquaintance, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
There have been instance of persons converted at the most advanced age. There was one who went, I believe, to hear Mr. Toplady preach the very day when he turned a hundred! He had been a constant neglecter of the House of God, but when he arrived at the age of a hundred, attracted by the fame of Mr. Toplady, who was an exceedingly popular, and he certainly was a highly evangelical preacher, and happened to be preaching in the town where the man lived, he said he would go on that day to hear him, that he might remember his birthday. He went—and that day God, in His Grace, met with him! I remember, too, the instance of a man who was converted by a sermon which he heard Mr. Flavel preach, and which was blessed to him 83 years after he had heard it, when he was at the age of ninety-eight. The Word came with power to his soul after all that interval of time! Just as he was on the borders of the tomb, he was made to enter into eternal life! If the God of Infinite Mercy gives such a blessing to aged ones here—then they will be brands plucked out of the fire!  
Remarkable, too—I might almost say exceptional—is the conversion of people who have been accustomed to hear the Gospel from their youth up, who, though not, perhaps, absolutely aged, have nevertheless been for years receiving Gospel privileges without any result. They have been lying at Bethesda’s pool with its many porches, for 40 or 50 years! Oh, there are some such here. You have not heard me all that time. Some other ministry has, in times past, fallen upon your ears and, perhaps, our own voice is now familiar to you through your having heard it these 10 or 12 years. You listened to it at first with attention. You were riveted for a little while. Then it grew to be an ordinary thing and though you still give the preacher a fair hearing, there is very little of that drinking in of the Word of God which there once seemed to be. Some of you, perhaps, will almost go to sleep here now. I sometimes wish that you were elsewhere— perhaps another voice would make your ears tingle—you know my voice full well. It is quite possible for a minister to preach too long to any one set of people—they can get so accustomed to the tones of his voice that they are never awakened. The “click, click” of the mill gets to be so to the miller that he goes to sleep. Over in Bankside, I am told, when a man is first put inside a boiler while the rivets are being fastened, he cannot stay long—the noise is so dreadful. But after a time, the boilermaker gets so used to the horrible din that he can almost go to sleep inside! Well, now, so it is, too, under any ministry when the people get Gospelhardened. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. The influences which tend to make some people better, make other people a great deal worse. Some of you have thus trifled with your own conscience! Should you be saved tonight, you would be brands plucked out of the fire, and may we not hope that you shall be? Will not some of us pray for it?  
Further still, and apparently the wonder increases, there have been cases of gross sinners in which this marvel has been still more exciting! It is a merciful thing that God forgives drunkenness. Some of those who have wallowed in it have been saved. We sometimes talk of a man being “as drunk as a beast,” but who ever heard of a beast being drunk? Why, it is more beastly than anything a beast ever does! I do not believe that the devil himself is ever guilty of anything like that. I never heard even him charged with being a drunk. It is a sin which has no sort of excuse— those who fall into it generally fall into other deadly vices. It is the devil’s backdoor to Hell and everything that is hellish, for he that once gives away his brains to drink is ready to be caught by Satan for anything! Oh, but while the drunk cannot have eternal life abiding in him while he is such, is it not a joy to think of the many drunks who have been washed and saved? This night, there are sitting here those who have done with their cups, who have left behind them their strong drink and who have renounced the haunts of their debauchery! They are washed and cleansed—and when they think of the contrast between where they used to be on Sunday night and where they are now, they give an echo to the question—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
Very frequently where this sin comes, blasphemy is added to it! And how many we have who, though now saved by Grace, were once fearful swearers and could dare the God who made them to destroy them! Or to inflict the most horrible judgments which it were a shame even to mention, upon them! But Almighty Grace takes the swearer and says to him, “You shall curse no longer, for I have blessed you; I do not intend that you should imprecate curses on yourself; you shall now begin to plead with Me for saving mercy!” Many, many, many such, whose tongues might well have rotted in their mouths through blasphemy, have been cleansed by Jesus’ blood! And the tongue can now sing, that once could curse, and the lips can now pray, that once could utter oaths! “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” Oh, you are here, Jack, are you? You can swear! Sometimes, when you are at sea, you roll out an oath or two. And when you are on shore, you know what you are—but may my Master meet you and may He once and for all transform you and put His Holy Spirit to dwell in you, instead of the seven devils that are now there! And then you will say, “Is not this a brand plucked out of

the fire?”  
Can we pass over the case of some who have given themselves up to sin, to work it with greediness? Alas, how men turn aside with scorn from the harlot in the street, and they think of her as though she must be consigned to the seventh Hell, albeit that they, themselves, perhaps, are viler still! But how shall we give a preference to one sinner rather than to another when it must take two to commit this iniquity? But, alas, we know that in London, our streets abound with those whose very names seem to make the cheek of modesty to mantle with a blush. Well, should there be such an one strayed in here—Sister—for you are a Sister, still— the Lord Jesus receives sinners, and though you have sinned very foully, “there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared.” And His voice still says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Whoever you may be that has fallen into these polluting sins which do such terrible mischief and which bring down God’s anger upon men—still the heart of God melts with pity to the chief of sinners and He cries, “How can I give you up?” and lets the lifted thunder drop! Oh, when such are saved—and there are scores, and scores, and scores, to our knowledge, now rejoicing in Christ who have found peace in this House, though once the chief of sinners—when such are saved, we say of each one of them, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
Or, what if you have even worn the felon’s dress? What if you have even plunged into such sin that the very thought of it makes your ears tingle? What if the darkness of the night could tell of such hideous crimes that the brightness of day seems all too good for such an offender as you have been? Still the rivers and floods of Divine Mercy can break forth and rise above the loftiest Alps and Andes of iniquity! The deluge of the Savior ’s pardoning Grace shall mount to 20 cubits upwards, until the tops of the mountains of sin are covered and you, the chief of sinners, shall have it said of you, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
We have gone a good length in the way of wonderment, yet one wonder, I think, is greater than all. I have almost ceased to wonder when the swearer is converted, or when the harlot is saved—not because it is not a mighty act of Grace, but because it is common enough to be often repeated! God’s mercy is extended very freely to such sinners as these, but there is a wonder which I do not often see. I do see it, though not often—I wish I could. It is when a self-righteous religious man gets saved.  
“What,” you say, “do you mean by that?” Why, I mean those good people who go to Church and Chapel regularly, have family prayers, say their own prayers and think themselves upright! They will not confess that they have sinned, except in the mere complimentary way in which they are accustomed to say that they are “miserable sinners,” though they do not look very miserable! Perhaps I address some such, now, who felt, while I was preaching to the sinner, as if their dainty holiness was quite shocked. They are double-distilled in their refinement. They are unutterably holy and free from hypocrisy—their heart all the while loathing the plan of salvation and rejecting the Grace of God—because they believe that they are as good as they need be! To talk to them of crying, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” is to insult them! Have they not been baptized? Have they not been confirmed? Have they not gone through all the means? All must be right with them—they are so good—who could think of finding fault with them?  
Now, if ever such people as these are saved from this terrible disease of self-righteousness, we would have to say, indeed, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” And nowadays it is getting so common that it ought to be a subject of prayer with God’s people that God would deliver this land from the spreading poison—the Romanism, alias Puseyism— which has covered it almost everywhere! If a man wants to make sure of everlasting wrath, let him fall into the deep ditch of Puseyism, for the abhorred of the Lord fall therein! You may get out the common sinner, but those who wrap themselves about with vestments and fine garments of ceremony—who shall reach these? The hocus-pocus of the priesthood, the gewgaws, the ceremonies, the mummery which they designate worship—these things form the refuge of lies behind which they hide themselves—and the true Gospel of the blessed God is scarcely heard! What with their chants and intoning, how can the still small voice of the Gospel be heard? Through the dim smoke of incense and the glare of gorgeous vestments, how shall Christ have a hearing? The Man of Nazareth, alone, is He who can save sinners! May He, in His mighty power to save, rend away these rags of Rome from before His Cross and let the naked beauty and simplicity of the Gospel shine out again! Once more may we have to say, in the words of Cowper—  
**“Legible only by the light they give,  
Stand the soul-quickening words—  
‘BELIEVE AND LIVE.’”**  
II. With more brevity than the preacher likes, though with perhaps as much amplitude as will be pleasant to yourselves, we shall now take the text BY WAY OF ENQUIRY OR HOPE. Our time has so far gone that I can only hint at what I meant to say.  
When a sinner’s eyes are suffused with tears and the sorrowful cry breaks forth, “Alas! Woe is me!” you may then say, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” for the tear of sorrow for sin is a blessed omen of Mercy’s dawning! May Mercy reach her noontide soon! And when, alone, the knee is bent and the whispered prayer goes up, “Jesus, Master, pity me! Save me, or I die,” the angels recognize the penitent’s prayer. They say, “Behold, he prays!” And then they feel that this is “a brand plucked out of the fire.” The tear of penitence and the prayer of the seeking soul are evidences of the working of Almighty Grace!  
And when the poor soul at last, driven by necessity, throws itself flat at the foot of the Cross and rests its hope wholly and alone on Jesus, then we my say of it, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
And when, in the midst of many a conflict and soul-struggle, the heart flings away its idols and resolves to love Christ, and vows in His strength to be devoted to His service, we may say again with pleasure, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
I would invite you to think over these signs of Grace and if you see them in yourselves, may you ask the question, and be able to answer it with joy, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”  
III. And lastly, WHAT A QUESTION OF DEFIANCE THIS IS!  
Do you not catch the idea of the text? There stood Joshua, the High Priest. There stood the angel of the Lord and there stood Satan. The adversary began to attack Joshua, but the angel of the Lord said to him, “‘The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you: Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?’ What have you to do with him? If God has plucked him out of the fire, you can never put him in again. Seeing God has plucked him out of the fire, go your way and mind your own business! You have nothing to do with this saved soul, this elect vessel, this one whom God has chosen, in whom the Spirit’s power has shown itself! He has plucked him out of the fire! Go your way, Satan, and leave this soul alone!”  
It is a defiance full of majesty and grandeur! It reflects a gorgeous luster on the past. “God saved that soul,” says the angel to Satan. “Why did He do it? Why, because He chose him, because He ordained him unto eternal life, because everlasting love had set itself upon him! What have you to do with him? If God has chosen him, do you think that you can undo the Divine decree? Can you reverse the counsels of the Most High, or dash in pieces the settled purposes of the Infinite mind? Go your way! God has snatched him from the fire, determined to save him. Go and think not to frustrate that Divine design!”  
Nor less did the angel seem to dart a look forward. If God had plucked him from the fire why did He do it? To let him go back again? Will God play fast and loose with men? Does He pluck brands out of the fire to thrust them into the flame again? Absurd! Preposterous! Why has He plucked this brand out of the fire? Why, to keep it from ever being burned! That brand, taken out of the fire, shall be exhibited in Heaven as a proof of what God’s Almighty Grace can do! And therefore the angel says to the devil, “Get out of here! What have you to do with this man? God means to save him, so can you destroy him? God has done that which is the earnest and pledge of his perfect eternal safety—do you think that you can thwart God’s resolution and intention?”  
Now, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, realize in yourselves this precious thought, each one of you. If the Lord has changed you. If, indeed, you are a brand plucked out of the fire, why should you fear the temptation which now assails you? Dread not all the temptations that may attack you! Weak as you are, the God who has done so much for you cannot leave you! He will not leave His purpose half accomplished! He will not be disappointed. He will to the end carry on His work till He brings you up to Heaven. Why, I think some of you who were very great offenders ought to often take comfort from your conversion—you can say, “What a change there is in me! How far beyond anything I could ever have worked in myself. It must have been God’s work—  
*‘And can He have taught me to trust in His name, And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame?’”*  
The whole end to which we drive is this—May God enable us all to see that our salvation is in Him! Jonah had to go into the whale’s belly to learn that grand axiom of theology—and the most of us had to be sorely beaten before we found out that “salvation is of the Lord.” If you know this, look to the Lord for it! Repose yourself on Him right now and you shall be His forever—you shall dwell on high, your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks—and your eyes shall see the King in His beauty—they shall behold the land that is very far off!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JOB 1.**

Verse 1. There was a man in the land of Uz. Job was a man, indeed—a true man—a man of the highest type, for he was a man of God.  
1. Whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright. Job was thoroughly true and sincere. And in this sense he “was perfect and upright.”  
1. And one that feared God, and eschewed evil. He had both sides of a godly character—a love of God and a hatred of sin.  
2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. Job was highly favored in having such a family of sons and daughters.

3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East. Job was not a poor man, yet he was a man of God—one of those “camels” that manage to go through “the eye of a needle.”

4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, each on his appointed day; and sent and called for their three sisters—Who were very modest and retiring, and would not have gone to the feast if they had not been sent for, but their brothers were kind and thoughtful, as all good brothers will be.

4, 5. To eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them. Job did not go to the feast. Perhaps he felt too old—his character was too staid for such a gathering. He had higher joys that were nearer his heart than any earthly feast could be.

5. And rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their heart. Thus did Job continually. He thought, “Perhaps, in their rejoicing, unholy thoughts may have intruded. They may have been unguarded and lax in their conduct. They may not have fallen into any gross sin, but in their feasting they may have sinned against God. Therefore I will offer sacrifices for them.” “Thus did Job continually.” Not only occasionally, but every day he sacrificed upon his altar unto God, and so sought to keep his household right before Jehovah.

6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. Into Heaven? Oh, no! The Presence of God is very widespread and there was no need to admit the evil spirit into Heaven in order that he might be present before God!

7. And the LORD said unto Satan, From where do you come? God is Satan’s Master, so He asks him where he has been. I wonder whether if the Lord were to put that question to everybody here, “From where do you come?” if each of us could give a satisfactory answer to it.

7. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. Uneasy, restless, ever active, like a roaring lion “seeking whom he may devour.” Ah, we little know how near Satan is to us now! And even in our hours of prayer, when we are nearest to God, he may come and assail us.

8. And the LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant  
Job—[See Sermon #623, Volume 116—SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] “He is an example to you.  
He may well chide you, he is so obedient, and you are so rebellious: ‘Have you considered My servant Job’—

8, 9. That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said—We may be certain that if there had been anything bad in Job, Satan would have found it out and brought it against him. However excellent a man is, though there are none like him on earth, you can find fault with him if you want to do so. Satan found fault with Job because he had prospered. And his friends afterwards found fault with him because he did not prosper! So you can make anything into a blot on the character of men if you have a mind to do so. “Satan answered the Lord, and said”—

9, 10. Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? The black dog of Hell had been prowling around to see where he could get in, so he knew that there was a hedge around Job and round his house and all that he had. Notice how the devil insinuates that Job feared God for what he could get out of Him. “His love is cupboard love,” says Satan, “he is well paid by Providence for his reverence to God.”

10. You have blessed the work of his hands—Even the devil dared not deny that Job was a working man, or say that he had come by his estate by oppression or plunder. No. He said to God, “You have blessed the work of his hands”—

10, 11. And his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face. Oh, what mischief Satan can imagine against the righteous! The mercy is that although he is mighty, he is not almighty—he is very malicious, but there is One who is far wiser and stronger than he is who can always circumvent and overpower him!

12-15 . And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the Presence of the LORD. And there was a day when Job’s sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away; yes, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you. Job had not wronged these Sabeans—they were plunderers on the lookout for spoil. And when Satan moved them, they came and stole the Patriarch’s oxen and asses—and slew his servants.

16. While he was yet speaking—As if to give Job no time to rally his faith and encourage his heart—  
16. There came, also, another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep, and the servants and consumed them; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you. This calamity must have distressed Job all the more because “the fire of God” had burnt up the sheep that he was accustomed to offer in sacrifice to Jehovah—and the blow had seemed to come directly from God, Himself—as if it was lightning that had destroyed both sheep and shepherds, too. Poor Job had not time to recover from that shock before the next blow fell upon him—

17. While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels and have carried them away, yes, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell you. He had not time to think before the heaviest stroke of all came—

18, 19. While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and, they are dead; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you. Satan had arranged to bring on the Patriarch’s troubles so quickly, one after another, as to utterly overwhelm the good man—at least, so the devil hoped it would prove—yet it did not.

20. Then Job arose—With all his burden on him, he arose—  
20. And tore his mantle, and shaved his head—He did not pull his hair out as a Pagan, or a maniac, or a person delirious through trouble might have done. But he deliberately “tore his mantle, and shaved his head”—  
20. And fell down upon the ground and worshipped—Grand old man! How bravely does he play the man here! He “fell down upon the ground and worshipped”—  
21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. That is, to the womb of Mother Earth.  
21. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the

name of the LORD. [See Sermons #2457, Volume 42—JOB’S RESIGNATION and #3025, Volume 53—FIFTEEN YEARS LATER—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I think these are the grandest words in the whole record of human speech! Considering the circumstances of the man at the time, that he should thus speak was, I think, a miracle of Grace!

22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #953 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

DONE IN A DAY, BUT WONDERED AT FOREVER  
NO. 953

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, says the Lord of hosts. They shall call  
every man his neighbor under the vine, and under the fig tree.” Zechariah 3:9, 10.**

WE cull the text from one of Zechariah’s most instructive visions. It is a stone from a diamond field. All the context is rich in precious things, but we cannot, though we would be very glad to do so, linger over them this morning. We must be satisfied with this one brilliant stone. Taking the text as it stands, and by itself, it is evidently descriptive of those long expected and happy days when God will once and for all forgive His Israel and restore His long-banished ones to their former place of favor and of joy. As a consequence thereof, He shall cause them to dwell in their own land under the happiest circumstances, surrounded by peace and enjoyment, praising and blessing the God of mercy.

But we may, from the dealings of God with one particular case, usually extract the rule of the Divine procedure—for the Lord is under no necessity to alter His modes of action, and is not subject to change. As He works in one case, so may we expect Him to do in another, if the circumstances taken in are all similar. I purpose this morning, to draw, therefore, from the text nothing about Israel after the flesh, but much concerning the spiritual Israel—believing souls who are the true seed of the father of the faithful.

Our object will be to glorify the fullness and richness of the Divine mercy which pardons the greatest sin and sheds abroad the most delightful peace. May the Holy Spirit now instruct both the preacher and the congregation. While all our eyes are gazing upon the promise of Grace, may it be fulfilled in our midst.

I. Our first remarks will gather around the question, WHAT IS TO BE REMOVED? What does the text speak of? The reply is, “the iniquity of that land.” The term “iniquity” or, in-equity, is a very comprehensive one— including everything that is not equitable, not right towards God, not just towards man. It comprehends the entire compass of sin, for a sin of commission is an in-equity of excess, and an omission is an in-equity of falling short. The text, therefore, in the term “iniquity” comprehends every violation of equity either by way of transgression or shortcoming.

It includes sins against the first and second table, sins of the body, the hand, the tongue. Sins which more immediately spring from and end in the soul, sins against God and man, sins of youth, and sins of old age. Widely extended as iniquity is, God declares that He will remove all of it from His people in one day. The great variety of the sin to be removed is

clear from the additional words, “that land.”  
The offenses of a whole nation make up a complete catalogue of crimes.  
When high and low, old and young, rich and poor, literate and illiterate  
are considered as one body, the mass of their united sin is diversified, indeed. In the throng I see a despiser of parents in one place, and a Sabbath-breaker in another. Search the land over and you will be sure to find  
liars, slanderers, drunkards, gluttons, swearers, thieves, harlots, murderers, and I know not what of wickedness besides.  
The one city of Jerusalem was so sinful that Ezekiel likened it to a boiling pot, and said of it, “Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is  
there. She has wearied herself with lies. In your filthiness is lewdness.” In  
a land so large as Israel, though comparatively small, there must have  
been criminals of all kinds—wretches defiled with sins of the blackest  
dye—a more than Newgate calendar of reprobates. And yet it is promised  
that all these varieties of sin shall be removed in one day! From sins of  
thought and heart right up to blood-red murder, and the most desperate  
adulteries—all are spoken of as to be removed.  
The iniquity of a land, however, is not only that of the generation then  
dwelling in it, but the accumulated sin of past generations, even as we  
read that, “the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full.” If anyone would  
speak correctly of the sins of Israel he would not mean the sins of the  
Israel of that particular hour, but the heaped-up sins of their fathers who  
had provoked God many long generations before. Now grasp the grand  
idea of mercy’s boundless plan—in one day—the promise declares that  
God shall not only remove all the sins of one man, but all the sins of many  
men! Yes, and all the sins that have accumulated and laid up a store of  
wrath against a whole nation!  
What mercy is this which blots out the long records of the past, sweeps  
out the rotting heaps of old transgression and cleanses the Augean stable  
of a guilty nation’s sin? “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”  
What a miracle of infinite mercy! The iniquity rises before us like a huge  
mountain whose peak defies the thunderbolts of God, but lo, eternal Mercy, like a sea, swallows up the mountain and it is gone, to be found no  
more. It is clear, then, from the text, that the Lord is able to forgive sins of  
every shade and form.  
What is your sin, my Hearer? Is it one peculiar to yourself? Yet can God  
forgive it. Are your sins of many sorts, so that you could not set them in  
order before your eyes because they are too varied and multitudinous? Yet  
can He remove them all in one day. No matter though one of your sins lie,  
as it were, in the far east, and another is found in the far west—He can  
cleanse the whole land of your nature. Though one of your sins is an attack upon the heights of Heaven, and another dives into the lowest blasphemies of Hell—He is both the God of the hills and of the valleys—and  
such enormities as yours He can remove.  
When a whole land is purged, sins similar to yours must have been in  
the number of those blotted out. Therefore there is hope for you, since  
what has been done can be done again. What are your sins? Are they as  
scarlet? “No,” says one, “they are of another hue.” Well, then, if they are crimson He will make one as wool and the other as snow. He will take away all iniquity. He will forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy. Whatever their tint and shade, and however double-dyed and ingrained our  
sins may be, the blood of Jesus can remove them all in one day. In addition, let every sinner here remember that the text indicates not  
only variety of sin, but vast quantities of sin—the sin of a land consisting  
of millions of people is no light thing to remove in one day, yet the promise  
guarantees it. Eternal love takes to itself the new sharp threshing instrument of the Atonement, and therewith beats the mountains of sin till they  
become as chaff and the wind does carry them away. Learn, then, that  
however many your sins may be—you might as well count the sands on  
the seashore as number your transgressions—they can all be removed  
from you as far as the east is from the west.  
As the tide covers all the sand, so can forgiveness cover all your sin. As  
night covers all things, so can love cast a mantle over all your wrong  
doings. As the sun exhales a myriad dewdrops, so can eternal love cause  
all your sins to pass away. In the case of Israel, the iniquity to be removed  
had been continuous and aggravated. The iniquity of the land of Israel  
was an iniquity which had continued from generation to generation. Their  
first fathers rebelled in the wilderness. They sinned afterwards under the  
judges. They revolted under the kings. More and more they went astray,  
and when sold into captivity they still transgressed.  
If cured of one sin they became more inveterate in another. Though idolatry had been driven out of the Jews before our Savior’s time, yet their  
heart was still apostate, for they crucified the Lord of Glory. So, my dear  
Hearer, if the continued sin of the Jews, which had for so long a period  
accumulated could be put away from the land in one day, so can yours. O  
you sinners of ripe years, O you transgressors of seventy or eighty years—  
there is hope for you!  
From the text I hear the silver trumpets ring, “I will remove the iniquity  
in one day”—the continuous iniquity—then why not your continued iniquity? Though you have added stone of sin to stone till the mound of your  
transgressions stands as a memorial to God against you, yet He can remove the heap, and that in one single day. Is not this good news to sinners? I am sure it is to me! I do devoutly bless and thank my heavenly Father that He has put such great promises in His Word, and spoken so  
largely of His mercy to the guilty—for mine is a case of which I am obliged  
to say as Baxter did, “O Lord of Mercy, give me great mercy or no mercy,  
for little mercy will not serve my turn. I must have great mercy or I perish.”  
See, then, in the text, the power of God to remove sin very remarkably  
set forth. The Prophet speaks of the sin of a whole land, of a most sinful  
land, a highly privileged land which had turned every privilege into provocation. Yet in one day the Lord would remove it all! The inference is clear,  
O penitent Sinner, that He can remove your sin, also. O you Hearer of the  
Gospel, convicted in your own conscience of having been a trifler with Divine things, despair not! Though you have gone as far as you can in sin,  
the Lord, through Jesus Christ, can put your sin away.  
I know how your mind is this morning. If you are aroused to see your state by nature, you are mourning that ever you had a being. O Man, it were, indeed, enough to make you mourn that you were born if there were not hope of a second birth, and hope in the infinite mercy of God for the removal of your hideous defilements! Take heart from the text, and approach your gracious King through Jesus the appointed Mediator—for if you believe, He will this day, even this day—take away all your transgressions, receive you graciously, and love you freely. The wayfaring man, though a fool, may in this text clearly see that our God is abundantly able  
to pardon, for He removes a nation’s accumulated iniquity in one day. II. Secondly, we shall consider WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH IT. “I  
will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” It shall be remitted and  
forgiven. In some parts of Scripture we read of sin being “wiped out,” and  
the expression is remarkably expressive. Sometimes the wiping out refers  
to the housewife’s meaning of the word—when the dish is wiped out and  
turned bottom upwards. So can God take our sinful souls and wipe them  
right out so that they shall be perfectly clean—and the pot which was filthy and had death in it shall be, “holiness unto the Lord.”  
At other times the wiping out refers to the erasure of notes made upon  
tablets. Some writings were cleared off with a sponge. At other times, if  
the tablet was of wax and the marks were made with an iron pen, or stylus, then the wax was softened and smoothed again—and all evidence of  
the record totally disappeared. Though our sins are written with an iron  
pen and engraved with the point of a diamond upon the very horns of our  
altars, yet will the Lord make the record to disappear when His mercy is  
revealed to our faith.  
He blots out the handwriting which was against us. He puts it out of  
the way, nailing it to the Cross. He makes our sins, like clouds, to pass  
away forever. God can, O Sinner, wipe out your transgressions so that  
they shall not exist! Through the precious blood of Jesus He can finish  
your transgressions, and make an end of all your sins.  
If we take the word “remove” as it stands in the text, then it is as  
though a great stone lay at the door of God’s mercy. “Sin lies at the door,”  
who shall roll away the stone for us? “I,” says God, “will remove the iniquity of this land in one day.” Or it is like a burden pressing on our shoulders. Speak of the load which Atlas carried, when he is fabled to have sustained the world. it was nothing compared with this more than Atlantean  
load which crushes us down, and will crush us to the lowest Hell. “I will  
remove it,” says the Savior, and He has kept His Word.  
He took the load upon His own shoulders and so removed it from us.  
And then He carried it right up to the Cross, and from the top of Calvary  
He hurled it into His sepulcher. And there He left it, a dead and buried  
thing. And if it is searched for, it shall not be found, “Yes, it shall not be,”  
says the Lord. He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and  
brought in everlasting righteousness for all His people.  
It is as though sin were looked upon as a substance, exceedingly heavy,  
but capable of removal. Not, however, capable of removal by any human  
hands, for it is as firmly settled in its place as the everlasting hills. But  
the Lord plucks it up by its roots, removes it, and casts it into the depths of the sea. Blessed be His name! He has so removed our sins, as Believers, that none can ever bring them back again to accuse or condemn us. He has fulfilled the promise, “I will remove the iniquity of that land.” And  
once removed by Sovereign Grace, it shall never be brought back again. “As far as the east is from the west”—measure that, you astronomers!  
“As far as the east is from the west”—O swift-winged angel, compute the  
space! “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our  
transgressions from us.” The Lord has done it. It is finished! Our iniquity  
is removed. The depths have covered our sins, they sank like lead in the  
mighty waters.  
Listen patiently to this word. The removal of our transgressions lies in  
four things. There is the removal of the punishment. The man whom God  
pardons cannot be punished for sin. It were a mock pardon that left a  
man in the executioner’s custody. The royal pardon bids every angel of  
justice hold off his hand. Your sins shall never rise against you, Sinner, if  
God forgives them. For you there is no Hell. For you no never-dying worm,  
no fire unquenchable. Forgiven! The sentence is stayed, no, revoked. The removal of transgression implies next, the taking away of the guilt  
of it as before the Lord. Sin has made God angry. It is a breach of His  
Law. It is a dishonor to His name. Yet God will forgive the believing sinner  
so that no anger shall linger in His bosom against him. He will cast his  
sins behind His back, put them out of His mind. Oh, miracle of miracles!  
Can God put anything behind His back when He sees all things? Can  
Omniscience find a corner where His eyes can never peer? Yes. He says, “I  
will cast your sins behind My back.” O God, Your Word in this case is  
marvelous and strange, but we perceive right well Your gracious meaning—the transgressions of Your people shall not be remembered against  
them any more forever—their guilt is utterly removed.  
The removal of sin implies, thirdly, the putting away of the defilement of  
sin. Sin makes us to be polluted creatures. We are like degraded priests  
no longer clad in fair white garments, but wearing sordid, and filthy robes.  
When the sin is put away, the defilement consequent upon it also is  
cleansed and we become pure before God—personally acceptable with  
God. What a mercy is this! It is no less a mercy to be cleansed from personal defilement than to be delivered from future punishment. Again, the removal of sin includes, in the fourth place, the total destruction of the dominion of sin over our nature. Not that in us sin has  
lost all its power—but that in the Believer it has lost its reigning power,  
and is dethroned. The position of sin in a natural man is that of a king on  
his throne. The position of sin in a Christian is that of a bandit hiding in  
secret places trying to get back its old usurped dominion, but failing in  
the attempt, for “sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not  
under the Law, but under Grace.”  
Thus the promise of the text is a very full one. The removal of sin includes the remission of the punishment, the putting away of the guilt, the  
cleansing of the defilement, the dethronement of the evil power. Ah, my  
dear Hearers, my heart leaps within me for joy to think that I am able to  
tell you that such a fourfold, four times precious blessing, is to be conferred by God upon poor sinful men.  
O Sinner, how I wish you would have it this day. I love the word “this day.” If in one day a land’s iniquity could be so completely removed, why not yours today? Why not on this Lord’s-day? How true a Sunday would it become to you? If you believe you have your sin removed, faith finds out the great Sin-Bearer and sees the transgression borne away by Him. O that pardoning Grace were given to everyone in this assembly, so that it could be safely said, “The Lord has removed the iniquity of the whole con  
gregation of the Tabernacle in one day.”  
Talk not of bell ringing—oh, what heart ringing, what heavenly songs,  
what soundings of the golden harps there would be if it might be so! O  
that the Almighty Spirit would apply the atoning blood, and remove the  
iniquity of all this multitude in one single day! Do it, Lord, and we will  
bless Your gracious name!  
III. But we must turn to the third point, which is this—HOW LONG IT  
TAKES TO REMOVE THE SIN. “I will remove the iniquity of the land in  
one day.” It took a great many days to pile up the sin, but one day sees it  
removed. The iniquity of the land began when the people entered it. They  
had not been long in Canaan before Achan took of the forbidden thing,  
and he was but a type of the rest.  
They were a stiff-necked and rebellious people whose very nature was  
averse to the service of the Lord their God. Throughout the hundreds of  
years of the judges, the kings, the captivities, and so on, they continued to  
revolt from the Divine authority. They heaped up transgression till it stood  
aloft in mountainous heights. And yet when the dreadful pile was completed, the Lord made it to disappear in one day. Yes, and our sins have  
taken a long time to heap up—they comprise the sins of our youth, the  
sins of our manhood, the transgressions of our riper years—and it may be  
we have added to these the sins of our old age.  
One may say, as he looks at his sin, “That is forty years’ work.” Another  
may mournfully confess, “That is seventy years’ accumulation.” If each sin  
deserves a tear, O to be a Naomi! For we have need that clouds and rains  
dwell in our eyes. Our souls have need of all the watery things that nature  
can produce. But we may dry our tears, for though many days were taken  
for the formation of the sin, the Lord says He will remove it all in one day.  
In one single day seventy years of sin are forever put away by our Lord Jesus—truly for this His name shall be called “WONDERFUL.” Think, dear Brethren, that this iniquity could not have been removed  
by all the repenting in the world. Though a man should repent of sin, if it  
were possible, not for one day, but for twenty thousand years, yet he  
could not remove his sin by repentance. Man tries to act as a bleacher to  
his sin—he dips the stained garment into the strong liquid which is to  
make it white, hoping that some spots will be removed.  
But when be takes it out again, if his eyes are clear, he says, “Alas, it  
seems as spotted as ever. I laid it to soak in that which I thought full  
surely would take out the stain, but so far as I can see, there is another  
stain added to the rest. I find myself worse instead of better. I must add a  
more pungent salt. I must use a stronger lye. I must make my tears more  
briny, I must fetch them up from the deep salt wells of my heart.” He lays his vesture again to soak, but each time, as he takes it out, his  
own eyes become more keen and he sees more foulness in the garment  
than he had observed before. Then he goes and takes unto himself niter  
and much soap. But when he has used it all, when he has gone to his  
Church, when he has gone to his Chapel, when he has repeated his prayers, attended to ceremonies, done, I know not what, to prove the genuineness of his repentance—ah, the iniquity is still there, and will be there,  
and must be—let him do what he may. Yet what your repenting cannot do  
in thousands of years God can do for you, Sinner—and that in one single  
day!  
The people of Israel had been chastised very severely. Many times they  
were carried away captive and pillaged and robbed. But as often as they  
were chastised

they so often returned to their sins, till the Lord said, “Why  
should you be smitten any more? You will revolt more and more.” Now,  
what many years of chastisement could not remove, God’s mercy removed  
in a single day. Oh, how some of you have been flogged and whipped! You  
have lost your property, perhaps. You have lost your health, it may be,  
through early sin. You have lost the dearest friends you ever had. You have been tried in body, tried in estate—but for all that you hug  
your sin, and the guilt of it still clings to you. Ah, but Jehovah Jesus can  
remove it in one day! What His Providence cannot do, his Grace can do. In  
one day Infinite Mercy can remove the sin. During all the years that Israel  
had sinned they had still offered sacrifices, but their sacrifices had never  
taken away sin. It is clear, since they had to offer the sacrifices every year,  
that their sins were not removed, for then no further sacrifice would have  
been needed.  
So, my dear Hearer, no sacrifice of yours or mine can ever take away  
sin. There are still men in what is called this “enlightened nineteenth century” who impertinently claim to be a special caste of priests, and will offer a sacrifice on our behalf before God. Well, let them go on with their  
worship if they will. Let the priests of Baal cry aloud and spare not even to  
the chapter’s dreadful end—but no sin is ever put away in this fashion. The one sacrifice of Christ upon Golgotha, the one sin-bearing of transgression upon Calvary has put away sin in one day, and put it away forever, so that no further sacrifice is wanted, no new blood, no new atonement—  
*“It is done, the great transaction’s done,”*  
Heaven is satisfied. Justice is content. Mercy has a free channel. God is  
glorified. In one day, without help, alone, solitary—God, in the Person of  
His Son—has put away the transgression of His elect, and put it away forever and ever.  
Thus I might continue to show you the marvelous act of God in putting  
away iniquity in one day, because the pains of Hell, even, could not have  
removed sin, not even throughout eternity. Banished from God’s Presence,  
the sinner at the end of ten thousand times ten thousand years would be  
as guilty as he was before—and as liable, still, to bear the wrath of God.  
For him there is no hope that suffering could ever make atonement. He  
must, forever and forever, as long as God’s Word is true, lie under the  
weight of sin.  
There ought to be, among Christians, no question about the doctrine of the eternity of punishment. There could be none if men were not wise above what is written, for if Heaven is eternal, Hell must be. “These shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.” The two things are put together in such a way that you must doubt the one if you doubt the other. No, you cannot rightly believe God concerning the  
one side without believing Him as to the other, also.  
But herein is the triumph of Christ. Dreadful as sin is, His Cross is  
more glorious! Awful as the transgression against God’s Law is, so awful  
that none can measure its tremendous deeps, yet more glorious still is  
that most effectual Atonement which Christ has worked out and brought  
in—by which in one single day He has removed forever all the sin of His  
people. Oh, but this is a grand text! Who shall speak of it as he should? I  
wish that you would feel it, my dear Friends, and that would be better  
than my speaking upon it.  
Let it be, then, literally stated, that in one single moment all the sin  
which lies upon a sinner can be swept away! The word “one day” is used  
to show that the act of God in forgiving sin is instantaneous. Christ in one  
day put away sin by His suffering and death. Faith brings Christ to us,  
and —  
*“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Salvation in full through Christ’s blood.”*  
The dying thief had not to wait a month to get pardon, or else he would  
have died unsaved. He did but say, “Lord, remember me,” and the answer  
came, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” You may have begun this  
morning the blackest sinner out of Hell—you may, before this service is  
closed, if God’s Grace meets with you—be pure through the precious  
blood. Who shall describe that wondrous change from darkness into marvelous light, from death into spiritual life? May the Eternal Spirit work  
such a change as that in you!  
Remember, this change is not only possible to ordinary sinners, to such  
as have been moral and have kept within the bounds of the laws that regulate mankind in reference to themselves—but it is true of the very worst  
of sinners, the most degraded, depraved, abandoned—those who have  
gone to the utmost extravagance of transgression. One single day, faith  
being exercised, will put your guilt all away! One single word from the  
great King, “Absolvo te,” “I absolve you,” and all sin is gone! She to whom Christ said, “Your sins which are many are forgiven you,”  
received the pardon then and there. May that same voice in the power of  
the Spirit speak to some hearts today! And may they go out of this place  
justified, saying, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is  
God that justifies—who is he that condemns?”  
IV. One would like to linger here, but I must not. For we must notice,  
in the fourth place, WHO IT IS THAT REMOVES INIQUITY IN ONE DAY.  
Here is the point of the text, “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one  
day.” “I,” “I,” “I.” That accounts for the wonder. What cannot God do? He  
can pluck the sun from his sphere, quench the lamps of night, shake the heavens, and dry up the sea—nothing is impossible to God, nor too hard  
for Him.  
“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” When Jehovah puts  
His hand to a work, then it is done. All without Him must fail. But when  
He does it, how readily is it accomplished! It is always, “I,” when you come  
to the pardon of sin. “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” How He “I’s” it there! “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions.” Jehovah alone can say unto the soul, “I am your salvation. Who  
can forgive sins but God only.” He forgives all your iniquities. He laid our  
sins on Jesus, and He, therefore, Himself takes them away from us. It is  
the Lord that pardons, the Lord that cleanses evermore. Hope then, O  
worn-out Transgressor, bowed down with sin—what could not be done by  
others—God can do!  
Tarry a moment over that word “I.” Let me take it and translate it. The  
“I” of Jehovah is not one, but three. To begin, then—“May the Grace of our  
Lord Jesus Christ be with you,” for it is He who says, “I will remove the iniquity of that land.” He was laid as the one foundation stone of our hope,  
upon which seven eyes are fixed. He who was engraved with the graver’s  
tool when He was fastened to the Cross, and His side was pierced—He it is  
that has removed the iniquity of His people in one day, by bearing it, by  
making a recompense to Almighty Justice for it all.  
See, then, the Crucified—He uplifts His pierced hands, He bares His  
open side, and He says—“Sinner, look to Me. I will remove your iniquity in  
one day.” But, “May the love of God be with you,” for it is the Father who  
says, “I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day.” The returning  
prodigal said, “Father, I have sinned,” and it was the father, the same offended father, who bid them take off his rags and kill for him the fatted  
calf. It was the father who rejoiced that his son that was lost was found,  
and that he who was dead was alive again. The Father, therefore, removes  
the sins of His children.  
And, “May the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you,” for it is the  
Holy Spirit, also, who says, “I will remove the iniquity of the land in one  
day.” He brings the blood that Jesus shed, the Jesus that the Father gave.  
He applies it to the conscience, sprinkles it upon the heart, and makes  
those to be actually and experimentally cleansed who in God’s sight were  
cleansed by the death of Christ. “I will remove it.” Oh, did you ever feel  
within your heart the power of the Holy Spirit removing your iniquity in  
one day?  
I shall never forget when my iniquity was removed. It was, indeed, in  
one single moment. Wretched I was, and more. My sins terrified, alarmed  
me—they haunted me day and night. They made me to sit on the doorstep  
of Hell. But how changed was the scene when I heard and understood  
that text, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.”  
Then I was enabled to look to Jesus, and one look removed mountains. As  
I looked, my iniquity was forgiven, my joy was overflowing. I had to restrain myself and to do violence to my feelings in order to keep my seat. If the Methodists cry out, “Hallelujah,” I could for once have cried out,  
“Hallelujah,” with the loudest of them! Oh, the bliss of pardon, when it  
comes by the Holy Spirit! You may hear about it, my Brethren—you may read about it—and both of these are well in their way. I hope you will continue both to hear and read, but these are not enough. It is essential that you receive the Word with living power within from God Himself,  
against whom you have offended.  
You can only find pardon and peace by looking to Jesus. The simple act  
of throwing yourself into His dear arms will bring it—nothing else will. It  
will come at once, come suddenly—and when it comes it will bring to you  
results of blessedness that shall know no end. “I,” says God, “I will do it.”  
“Give unto the Lord, then, you pardoned, give unto the Lord glory and  
strength! Give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name.” Take now your songs and go forth and sing, “O God, I will praise You,  
for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You  
comfort me.” If you choose your joy in that sweet verse of our poet you will  
do well—  
*“Jesus is become at length,  
My salvation and my strength!  
And His praises shall prolong,  
While I live, my pleasant song.  
Praise you, then, His glorious name,  
Publish His exalted fame,  
Still His worth your praise exceeds  
Excellent are all His deeds.”*  
Continue till you mount to Heaven to sing, “Unto Him that loved us and  
washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory forever and ever.”  
V. And now to conclude. The last point of the text is, WHAT STATE  
FOLLOWS PARDON. “They shall call every man his neighbor under the  
vine, and under the fig tree.” Yes, wherever pardon comes, peace follows.  
In times of war the fig trees are cut down, the vines are destroyed. And if  
not, the inhabitants are kept within doors and often are driven into the  
eaves of the earth for shelter.  
But the picture before us in the text represents the people as sitting at  
ease in their gardens and in their courtyards, where the luxuriant vines  
yield them shelter. The words admirably picture a scene of peace—each  
man under his vine and fig tree. I wonder why it is people cannot quote  
Scripture rightly in prayer, but there are very few who ever do. How often  
have I heard, “They shall sit every man under his vine and fig tree, none  
daring to make them afraid.” I would like to find that in the Bible! The text in Micah is, “And none shall make them afraid.” They dare do  
it, but they cannot do it. There is the point. They dare, but they cannot.  
The impudence of Satan is unlimited—he dares to do anything—but he  
cannot though he dares. Our text does not mention the fact, but it implies  
that no enemy can molest. A soul pardoned is a soul at peace. If God forgives me, nothing can distress me.  
“Strike,” said Luther, “strike, Lord, if You will, for now You have forgiven me I will bear Your strokes and sing.” Oh, yes! If sin is pardoned,  
nothing can harm us. For us the poison is gone, the sting is departed, the  
evil is annihilated. We have in the pardon of sin an antidote for all that  
might have distressed us. We must and shall have peace.  
But the text also implies neighborliness. They are not each one to sit  
under the vine, and under the fig tree, and say “Glory be to God I am a pardoned man, I am saved, I do not care about my neighbors one bit.” No—he that is a gracious soul invites his neighbor, (for so it might run), invites him to commune with him! Grace is the most neighborly thing in the world. Christ’s people are called sheep, sheep are gregarious—you do not meet sheep one by one—they go in flocks. They love company, good  
company.  
So you shall find the people of God. They are good company-keeping  
people. I do not mean that they have great entertainments, and care for  
idle chit-chat—but this is how they are described—“Then they that feared  
the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard.”  
Somebody said, “The good friends at the Tabernacle blocked up the steps  
a good deal after service by standing to talk with one another.” Well, if you  
talk about Christ, and things Divine, the more you talk the better—of holy  
conversation there need be no limit.  
If you talk against your neighbor, be home with you! If you talk gossip  
and scandal, you have no right to do it on the Tabernacle steps—no!  
Where have you a right to do it? No where! Gossiping slander is at all  
times vile, but if our conversation is of Jesus, then the more we speak together, and the more sociable we are, the more the House of God on earth  
becomes like Heaven above. God save us from a stiff gentility that knows  
nobody because it does not know itself. May we, on the other hand, rejoice  
in what God has done for us and all His people, and, therefore, make ourselves familiar with the consecrated brotherhood of saints.  
Do not only sit under the fig tree, but call each man your neighbor.  
Say, “Rejoice with me! Come and help my joy, I cannot rejoice alone. Come  
and hear, all you that fear God, I will tell you what God has done for my  
soul.” We will make even the heathen among whom we dwell to say, “The  
Lord has done great things for them.” And we will say, “Yes, the Lord has  
done great things for us whereof we are glad.” Christian sociability, Christian communion, Christian friendship, Christian communication the one  
with the other is a most desirable and fitting thing—and where sin is pardoned and peace is implanted it is quite sure to follow.  
But I must note again there is not only peace and neighborliness in the  
text, but there is comfort. They might sit, and they might sit together in  
misery—but in this case they sit in comfort under the vine, its broad  
leaves giving them shade. They sit under the fig tree, too, finding a cool retreat from the heat of the day. And oh, how Believers, when they meet together in communion, what comfort they have in the Holy Spirit! I could  
not help rejoicing today over a good Sister who has been away from here a  
long time.  
She had had a deal of trouble, and I praised God when she said, “Oh,  
but I should not have minded the trouble if I could have got to the Tabernacle on Sundays and weekdays, for there you could at least forget your  
troubles for an hour or two, and then go away strong to contend with  
them again.” Yes, and when sitting under the shadow of Christ, under the  
leaves of His Truth, under the droppings of His familiar love, Christian fellowship becomes very sweet. One almost feels, when Jesus draws near to  
our assemblies, that if Heaven is better than this, it must be very good, indeed. We get such earnest anticipation of the joy of the glorified saints  
that we are fairly overcome with excessive delight!  
But note, it was not only comfort they had, but substantial enjoyment  
and real supply of needs. They sat under the vine—then there was wine  
for them to drink. They sat under the fig tree—then there were figs for  
them to eat. So when God gives pardon and peace, He gives to our souls a  
satisfaction with good things. We find in Jesus Christ, if we sit under His  
shadow with delight, that His fruit is sweet unto our taste—  
*“All my capacious powers can wish  
In Christ do richly meet;  
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,  
Nor friendship half so sweet.”*  
Now, my Beloved Friends—you that are unsaved and remain so. I can  
understand that you seek company and that you will go and call every  
man his neighbor, “Come, let us make mirth, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, let us break the Sabbath, let us break God’s bands  
asunder, and cast His cords from us.” I can understand that, and I think  
you also can understand that the company you keep on earth will be the  
company you will have to keep forever. “Bind them in bundles to burn  
them,” will be the Lord’s command. Like with like. They that depart from  
Christ on earth will hear Him say, “Depart, you cursed, forever.” O that  
you might be led to seek God, and then to seek His people!  
But as for you that love God, I am sure if Grace is reigning in your  
hearts you will feel a yearning after holy company, and your company will  
be such as love what you love, such as hope to be with Jesus where you  
will be. “Oh, but God’s people have many faults!” My dear Friend, so have  
you, but despite all the faults of the Church—  
*“My soul shall pray for Zion still,  
While life or breath remains.  
There may best friends, my kindred dwell, There God my Savior reigns.”*  
There is no better company than the company that Christ keeps! There is  
no better house than the house that Christ inhabits. May we be willing to  
be doorkeepers in the House of God! May we, by God’s Grace, be glad to  
be the least in the Church, so long as we may be numbered among the  
chosen, redeemed by the blood of Jesus! May the Lord give us perfect pardon, perfect peace, for His name’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1569 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE GOLDEN LAMP AND ITS GOODLY LESSONS  
NO. 1569

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

***“And the angel that talked with me came again and awakened me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep and said unto me, What do you see? And I said, I have looked and  
behold a candlestick all of gold, with a  
bowl upon the top of it and it has  
seven lamps thereon and  
seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side.  
And I answered again and said unto  
him, What are these two olive branches which  
through the two golden pipes empty the golden  
oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Don’t you know what these are?  
And I said, No, my lord. Then he said, These are the***

***two anointed ones that  
stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”  
Zechariah 4:1-3; 12-14.***

THE Prophet, as he tells us in the introduction to His vision, had to be awakened by the angel as one is awakened out of his sleep. His mind was dull and heavy. Perhaps he was weary and worn out. Do you not often feel a similar lethargy from which you need to be awakened before your mind is equal to the study of those Truths which God is revealing to your soul? May it not, then, be well, at the commencement of our meditation, to pray the Lord to awaken us as a man is awakened out of his sleep? A divinely mysterious power can brood over us and quicken us out of lethargy. Have you ever felt it? “Or ever I was aware my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” I had been slow before, but when the Spirit came, then was fulfilled that ancient proverb, “Draw me and I will run after You.”

The touch of the Holy Spirit makes our faculties strong, our powers of thought are greatly enlarged and we get the key to mysteries which we never had been able to unlock before. Come, blessed Spirit, then, to each one of Your slumbering children at this good hour and awaken us, that we may see what You would set before us! Like young Samuel, whom You called in his sleep, we would, each one, heartily say, “ Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.”

Beloved Friends, we live in a world which is naturally shrouded in darkness. The “Prince of this world,” “the Prince of the power of the air” is a dark spirit loving ignorance and sin! This darkness hovers over all the world as it did over Egypt—a darkness that might be felt is upon the souls of men! We sometimes fear that this gloom will thicken into an awful midnight. When we mix up with men in the ordinary avocations of life and hear their profane language; when we see the angry passions, the earthly propensities and the worldly policies that prevail among people who are held in repute among their fellow creatures, if we are children of God we cannot fail to be distressed that the world should still be so benighted and so destitute of that knowledge which purifies the heart.

Nearly 1,900 years have passed since the blessed feet of our Divine Master touched this globe and yet it still smokes beneath the hoof of the Wicked One! The sun has risen on this Egypt and yet a miserable midnight covers the guilty people. We are apt, therefore, to become somewhat desponding, lest the Light of the knowledge of God should gradually wane—till at length it shall utterly die out. What, then, would become of the world? If the one golden candlestick were taken out of its place—if those who are the light of the world should all be removed and if the sure Word of Prophecy which is like unto a light that shines in a dark place, should become extinct—what, then, would be the horrible darkness?

Now, I think the vision of Zechariah may remove all fear on that score. Rest you well assured that the lighthouse which God has lighted to guide men across the boisterous sea and preserve them from the peril of eternal shipwreck shall have its lamps trimmed throughout all time! Until the “Sun of Righteousness” shall rise, that lantern shall never go out, for the Lord will take care that the Light of God shall still shine, notwithstanding all that the powers of darkness may do, or devise to extinguish it. This one thought I beseech you so to grasp that it may strengthen your faith and comfort your hearts—the light of God’s Grace has been kindled never to be quenched! To this end I invite your attention to the interesting parable contained in the marvelous vision which Zechariah the Prophet beheld and described.

I. First, turn aside and see this great sight! Look, I beseech you, at THE WONDERFUL LAMP WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED TO LIGHT THE SONS OF MEN. “He said unto me, What do you see? And I said, I have looked and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it and it has seven lamps thereon and seven pipes to its seven lamps, which are upon the top.” Here is a candlestick that must challenge the notice of all who gaze at it, for it is of costly material and curious form—the work of wisdom fitted for the Holy Place of the tabernacle of the Most High! It resembles the candlestick whose pattern Moses received from God and yet, in some respects, it differs, as we shall see.

The object is scarcely more remarkable than its position. Note that it stood in the open. Under the old Covenant the candlestick stood within curtains where only priestly eyes might see it—it was hidden from the mass of the people. We are very apt to think that because the Jewish ritual was full of symbols, the worship of the people must have been of so materialistic a character that there was little or nothing to raise the soul to spiritual adoration of the Invisible One. But it was not so—to the average Israelite there was little more of symbol than to us. Although it is true that within the Holy Place there were many symbols, yet there were very few of God’s people who ever saw one of them and most probably we, ourselves, know far more about the types than the Jews ever did.

The worship was not visible to the camp, for it was within an enclosed space and when the people were settled in Canaan the actual temple area could only hold a few of the vast multitudes who inhabited the land. Within the Holy Place, the holiest of all, the “Holy of Holies,” no man ever entered except the High Priest and he but once in the year so that they who worshipped God in the further parts of Palestine would, for the most part, not even see the Tabernacle or the Temple! And when they did go up to Jerusalem, they believed that the symbols were inside, behind the veil. Their worship had less of the visible about it than we are apt to imagine, for most of the material emblems were simply certified to them by testimony and not otherwise verified to their senses.

Then, as if to let us know that the Light of God did not yet fully shine among men and that the fullness of Grace and Truth had not yet been revealed, seeing Christ had not come, the seven-branched golden candlestick stood out of sight of the mass of the people, shut in within the curtains, enclosed within the Holy Place. But the lamp which Zechariah saw was in the open air! We are quite sure of this because he saw two olive trees growing, one on each side of it. It was, therefore, in an open space. Today, Beloved, “the veil of the temple is torn in two.” What was mystery before has become plain to us now. Now we see Jesus and, seeing Jesus, we behold a Light such as never greeted the eyes of Prophets and kings. Though they longed to behold it, they died without the sight.

Let us take care that we keep this lamp in the open—do not let us suffer anyone to shut it up. Let the Gospel be preached plainly to the masses of the people. Let the adorable name of Jesus Christ be proclaimed in your street corners. In every place where you can have access to the sons of men, let it be known that there is salvation in none other than by Him and all that believe in Him shall obtain the forgiveness of sins. Some would cover up the golden lamp with ceremonial observances and others would hide it away under philosophical quibbles and theological jargon! But be it yours to be a “city set on a hill that cannot be hid” and what is said to you in secret, speak in the light—what you learn in closets— publish aloud upon the housetops!

Lift up the beacon that it may flame afar all over the land and across the sea! Let the blaze of Gospel light flare out till dwellers in the utmost parts of the earth shall ask, “What is this light? From where does it come?” and you shall answer, “It is the candlestick of the Lord once hidden among the peculiar people, but now set out before the nations in Christ Jesus! It was once concealed under type and emblem, but now made manifest by Him who speaks no more by parable, but tells us plainly of the Father.”

Note, next, that it was a lamp of pure gold. This is a fact of much significance. We are emphatically told that it was a “candlestick all of gold.” The major vessels of the tabernacle were all of gold and this, I think, indicates that the lamp which God has kindled is of the most precious kind. The Church, which may be said to represent this candlestick, is as God has made it—of pure gold. Those who are united together in the fellowship of the Church of God on earth should be a holy people, precious in the sight of the Lord, as gold is precious among metals. There should be no mixture of dross and tin, no careless reception of carnal men and mere formalists—but those who are elect of God, precious in His sight and honorable.

God’s chosen should be choice men. The lamp which holds the golden light should itself be of gold! The Lord will not use an unholy church to be His light-bearer and where there is an apostasy as to doctrine, an absence of spiritual life, or a defection as to holiness of conduct, He will not use such a church, lest His holy name be polluted among men! His candlestick is all of pure gold! His people are a “peculiar people,” “sanctified unto Himself,” “zealous of good works.” If any who seem to be religious delight themselves in sin—if they fail in purity—they have no power to give light. And because of their depravity they are as spots in our solemn feasts and mists that dim the brightness of our shining.

Ungodly churches are not the candles of the Lord! If men find pleasure in unrighteousness, they exert an influence baneful as the shadow of death. How can the Light of God shine from them while they serve the Prince of Darkness? What a mercy it is that God has set up a Church in the world which shall bear testimony to His name and shall scatter the Light abroad, because His Grace makes and keeps it “holiness unto the Lord”! Let us love the Church of God! We must never think that any one congregation, or any thousand congregations, can comprise the whole of that Church! It is not for us to say, “The temple of the Lord are we.” God forbid!

He has a people scattered up and down throughout the whole earth— He has a remnant even among churches which err from the faith who have still kept their garments unspotted from the world, “And they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels.” Let us pray for the Church militant, the entire body of His elect, the redeemed of the Lord, the quickened of the Spirit, the called-out ones, the true ecclesiae, the assemblies of the Lord, for these are they that are His candlesticks, standing in the open as a “city set upon a hill that cannot be hid,” holding forth the Word of Life, that all who see the Church in its life and the Church in its testimony may behold the Light of God!

This wonderful candlestick, all of gold, you will observe, is lit with golden oil. Such is the expression used in our text. At the 12th verse, we read, “Which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves.” The quality of the oil is, doubtless, here commended, for I suppose it means the very best possible oil of a rich golden color and in value, in splendor, in purity and in clearness excellent beyond all praise. This represents that precious doctrine, that golden Truth of God, that fullness of Gospel Grace which keeps alive the Light of the Church of God. Or may it not remind us of the Divine Spirit, who, coming into His Church and imparting to her the golden oil of His Graces and gifts, enables her to maintain her brilliance of testimony and to scatter her Light among the sons of men.

The Holy Spirit is also the flame by which the oil is kindled and made to burn and give its light—and thus we have the Truth of God on a blaze with sacred fervor—sound doctrine united with intense zeal—and all because the Spirit of Truth is present and reveals Himself at the same time as the Spirit of Power! We will say of this golden oil that it is the Truth, the living and incorruptible Word of God. This is the oil which the Church must burn and with this she must trim her lamps. No strange doctrines, no vain traditions, no scientific conjectures, no poetical reveries, no thoughts of men, no excogitations of human brains, but the revealed Word of God, the Truth as Jesus Christ has given it to us! The Truth as the Holy Spirit has revealed it in the sacred Book! The Truth as He brings it home with Divine power to our understanding and conscience.

This it is that we must use and we must take care that if we have it, we empty it out of ourselves into the golden pipes that they may never be without sacred oil to keep the flame alive! Precious beyond all conception is the Truth of God! God will not be served with falsehood, but in Truth is His delight. Take care that you bring nothing here but the best of the best, nothing but the unadulterated olive oil of Revelation. What blunders and mistakes we make in the management of our own business! Should not this make us very careful in doing the work of the Lord that we do it not in a slovenly manner and so provoke Him to anger?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope we desire to be clean before God as to His Truth. I pray you not to trifle with it! Never tack with the wind of public opinion, but watch, if necessary, while the world lasts and wait for the fulfillment of God’s Word and be assured that it will surely come to pass. Though you may well be tolerant of error in others, since you are so liable to it yourselves, yet be jealous of your own hearts and keep out of them every false doctrine. “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” If there is any adulteration of the oil, the lamps will burn but dimly—perhaps they will go out. This golden lamp shone with a sevenfold brightness! There were seven lamps to this golden candlestick and there were seven pipes to the seven lamps—and, as some read it, there were seven pipes to each one of these lamps, so that it gave seven times the light that the old lamp of the Temple ever gave.

The suggestion has been hazarded that there were seven times seven pipes and the Hebrew might allow of such a translation. At any rate, there was seven times more light given by this mystic lamp seen by Zechariah than had ever been given by the candlestick of the old dispensation. God has given us Light enough to flood the world with, today, in the generous Gospel that is preached among all nations. The light of the Law all but blinded the dim eyes of the Jew, but oh, the Light of the Gospel! How it has sometimes overpowered all our senses! Saul of Tarsus tells us that about noon, suddenly there shone a great light round about him and he fell to the earth. So, too, many of us can testify that when the Glory of God in the salvation of a lost sinner first flashed upon our souls, we were so amazed that no strength remained in us!

“Dissolved by His goodness we fell to the ground and wept to the praise of the mercy we found.” Overpowering was the effect when the brilliance of Gospel Light beamed upon our weak eyes at first and even now, though the Lord has strengthened our spiritual sight so that we rejoice in the Light, it is still, at times, more than we can bear! What a glory it has! Vain men ask us to delight ourselves with the sparks they have kindled! Let it suffice that our Light renders all the flashes of natural joy, things too dim to notice! They tell us of something new they have thought up. To their apprehension, no doubt, it seems very wonderful. They may strike their matches and light their candles if they will—we are more than satisfied with the Eternal Sun!

You may bring your ancient lamps from Rome. You may fetch your tapers from Oxford and the Anglican imitators of Rome, but the lamp which the Holy Spirit has kindled by the Divine Word is better than all the glare of Antichrist! This despised Book has seven times more light than all the solons of antiquity or all the glare of modern times. There is none like it! Only have eyes to see it and you shall rejoice in this Light! It is the Light of God, Himself! Spread it, then, if you have it and let it shine in your families! Let it shine on the town or city where you dwell! Let it shine all over the earth, for there is no such light as the Light of the Eternal Gospel, “the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Oh that all saw it and loved it and lived in it!

II. Thus have I spoken about the wonderful lamp. Now, I ask those of you who love the study of God’s Word to follow me a little in considering the description that is given of THE COMPLETE MACHINERY, THE PERFECT APPARATUS PROVIDED FOR THIS LAMP. If you notice, it was a “Candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it and it has seven lamps thereon and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side.” We do not read anything about pipes and bowls in the old Temple lamp. I suppose that each one of its seven lights had to be fed distinctly and separately by the officiating priest with a separate portion of oil, but in this case there seems to have been a bowl at the top of the seven branches into which the golden oil first entered and from which it flowed out again and thus each of the branch lights was fed.

At any rate, you see that a complete apparatus was provided and is described. The details are given. The pipes, bowl and so on were all arranged with exquisite precision. Correspondingly, in the Church of God we ought to pay much attention to detail. I do not think we look to it half as much as we should. If the lamps are to be kept trimmed, you must attend to the pipes and you must see to the golden oil. We ought, each man, to think, “Now, I have something to do to keep this candlestick in proper order. I have something to do with keeping this lamp burning.” One man may be compared, as it were, to the bowl because he yields much of the light of intelligence and instruction, communicating knowledge and counsel to the Church of God.

Another is a pipe to the Sunday school and yet another golden pipe runs to the young men’s class. One is a pipe to the poor and ignorant in the streets, another to the sick, another is a golden pipe to those who are at home with their families. There is some point to which each one in Christ’s Church may help to conduct the golden oil to keep the blessed flame of the Truth of God always burning in this dark world. I want you, Brothers and Sisters, to look, one and all of you, after the details of Church work. Especially in a Church of such magnitude as this, with such a multiplicity of agencies, attention to detail is most requisite. What can one overseer do? What could 20 pastors do? It is impossible if you leave this work entirely to us that it will ever be properly discharged.

Oh no—let each member have its own office in the body, even as each pipe had its own oil to carry to the one light of the candlestick which it had to supply. Do not get out of your place, do not interfere with other people’s service—do your own work and see that it is well done and then look over all the Church and pray the Lord to supervise the whole, so that the golden bowl and the golden pipes may all be in full operation. Of this machinery which is thus mentioned in detail there seems to have been an abundance. If there were seven pipes to each one of the lights of the lamp, (and I think it was so), there could have been no lack of service. So, beloved Friends, we must mind that the Church in her machinery is ever kept abundantly supplied!

We ought not to be slack in our labors nor scanty in our equipments. The everlasting Gospel should be promulgated with great energy and varied service. Little oil will mean little light—little Grace will mean little work for God and little Glory to His blessed name. But let us endeavor to make every arrangement more effective. The light might not be extinguished even in one pipe—to the completeness of the Divine design every light must be in good order. Be it our aim to keep the seven pipes constantly flowing and feeding so as to convey a sevenfold measure of oil that the light may burn steadily on from hour to hour till the Lord comes! This apparatus still further suggests to us the idea of unity. As I have already said, there were seven distinct lights to the old lamp of the Jewish sanctuary and these could be individually filled—but here they are all one.

One bowl is filled with oil and from it the oil runs down the pipes to each of the lights. So is there unity in the Church. We all suffer if one suffers! We are all the better if one is in a prosperous condition. No man lives to himself and no man dies to himself. Though I speak of myself now as a fool, yet, it is true—if I decline in Grace I injure all of you, more or less, and you, also, in some measure, exert a like influence upon me, though not to the same extent, because you do not occupy the same public station. Every member of the Church who grows poor in Grace impoverishes all the rest in some degree. We act and react upon each other. I am sure the preacher can do injury to the hearer and the hearer can, in measure, injure the preacher. Let your Grace decline and your prayerfulness be restrained and the pastor must feel the loss and his ministry will bear melancholy evidence that the Spirit of God is not witnessing mightily among us.

So instead of one enriching the other we may, by sinful neglect, mutually endanger our prosperity—no, we may beggar each other and become partners in destitution and distress! May it never be so with us, but may we always prove ourselves to be a warm-hearted, loving, prayerful people who are so glowing ourselves that we warm up those that are cold and kindle fresh life in those that are expiring! Then if the whole congregation is consecrated to God and the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ gladdens them all and they are filled with the fruits of righteousness, the minister can never be dull and drowsy—his heart will be aglow with sacred fervor and his preaching will be resplendent with Divine Light and fire!

The pews will respond to the pulpit! Fire will kindle to a flame and the flame will kindle fresh fire! Vitality will promote revival—our tone will be spirited and inspiriting! A breath from the four winds will make a stir among the dry bones and an army shall presently arise. The force of sympathy shall be felt and oh, free commerce in all our holy gifts will flourish in our commonwealth! Oh may it be so! I know it is desirable and I feel that it will be attained. Nor is it merely for one Church we are thus anxious—all the Churches need the same consecration. If one Church is dull, it injures other Churches. All the Churches of Jesus Christ are really one and, as even my little finger cannot be ailing without my head suffering in consequence, so even the smallest Church in the most remote village cannot decline without the entire body of the faithful, whether it is known to themselves or not, being losers thereby.

Look well, then, to every portion of the apparatus of this golden lamp— examine its details—keep it well trimmed and abundantly supplied. Remember its unity, for with all its many pipes, it is but one candlestick.

III. But the most remarkable disclosure in this vision was THE MYSTERIOUS SUPPLY BY WHICH THESE LAMPS ARE KEPT BURNING. There were no priests to trim these lamps, nor is mention made of anyone being appointed to keep them in order! No golden snuffers nor golden snuff dishes were used. Nor was any oil brought by any living man to replenish them. That is remarkable! Moreover there is no mention of oil being given by the people. The lamp in the Temple was fed by the offerings of the people—they brought the best oil to keep the lamp perpetually burning before the altar. There is nothing of the kind here—that is not the way by which this oil gets to the lamp in the vision before us. Neither by priest nor people is it supplied.

But how, then? Why simply by a natural process without any machinery—for there are two olive branches—“Two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl and the other upon the left side. And these trees in this vision empty the golden oil out of themselves through the two golden pipes and so the marvelous lamp is kept supplied! It is a very amazing picture which is now before you, oil flowing directly from the living tree and at once creating light! Ordinarily, when the olive tree yields its berries, they must be taken to the mill and ground before oil can be produced. I have gone into the olive mill, myself, and seen the great stones crushing the berries and I have seen the other processes by which the olive oil is prepared for the lamp—but there is no mention, here, of any mill, or press, or strainer, or jar, or bottle of oil.

The food of this light does not come in that way at all, but the tree grows and, in a mysterious way imparts its fatness to the bowl from the pipe and in this way the flame is fed. Thus we are shown that the Light of God is not dependent upon human will or human skill! It is an apt illustration of the text we were reading just now which lights up the whole chapter. “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.” Not by your grinding out your oil by laboriously turning the mill of study, nor by your contributions of wealth, nor by your eloquence and logic, but by Divine agency shall living men be raised up and through these living men shall come the wondrous golden oil of Grace by which the lamp of testimony shall be kept bright and the darkness of the world shall be overcome!

At first sight the provision may appear to be inadequate to the purpose. For God to make two olive trees grow by the side of the candlestick seems, at first, to be a deficient arrangement because the trees stand out so separate from the lamp that we cannot perceive any connection between them. Had I beheld that vision as the Prophet saw it, I feel I should have been as perplexed as he was. I would have said, “What are these?” I could not have made it out. Two olive trees growing by the side of a candelabrum! What connection can there be between them and it? But that is the very pith of the vision! You are to be shown the unique manner in which the Lord keeps His Church burning and shining without mechanism. He simply raises up chosen men, perhaps only two, sometimes more, who live and grow and in their life and growth they bring forth, by God’s Grace, as from their very souls, the sacred Truth of God—the holy oil with which the lamp of God is kept burning!

I suppose that the two olive trees represent, in this case Joshua, the High Priest, of whom we read that his filthy garments were taken away and he was clothed with change of raiment. And Zerubbabel, of whom we read in this chapter that his hands had laid the foundation and his hands should finish the house. These were the two men whom God strengthened and enabled to set up a standard because of the Truth of God. The Lord qualified them to build the Temple that He might be glorified. Those two men, by Divine Grace, carried out the Lord’s design, moving the people to the sacred service. Joshua was made the ruler and teacher of the people and Zerubbabel was promised that his hands should lay the top stone, as his hands had laid the foundation of the Temple. And this, too, when Judah’s lamp burned dim and her light was well-near gone out!

These two, though they were nothing in themselves but godly men, who, like living trees, brought forth fruit unto God, should be the means, according to the appointment of God, of keeping up the sacred Testimony so long as they lived. Such means certainly appear insignificant in comparison with the magnificent result to be achieved. But that is God’s way of working—He generally works by ones or twos and when He uses two, He couples them well. In the missions of the Lord’s ordaining we observe Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Calvin and Luther, Whitefield and Wesley.

Foolish persons rail at a one-man ministry, but what can they say against a two-man ministry? To the end of time there will be two witnesses—representative men will rise in pairs and do the work of the Lord so as to awaken the whole Church. Little as the world may think of them at the time, men do arise whose influence wonderfully displays the power of God, for they are made to stand like olive trees and, by some mysterious means, it is through them that the lamp of God is kept burning continuously! Of these two men I want you to notice two things. You wonder how it is that God should speak of them as keeping the lamp burning. He does so speak of them, for He says, “These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

First, remember that they are able to do this because they stand before the Lord of the whole earth! Those whom God chooses to do His work stand as His servants in His sight—they could do nothing of themselves or by themselves, but their testimony comes from God and their unction is of the Holy One and they are clothed with Divine energy—otherwise they would be weak as the rest of their brothers. Then be sure of this that they have been anointed—they are said to be “anointed ones.” We have no power to pour forth oil till we have been, ourselves, anointed. It is not possible that we should feed the holy Light until God has worked in us the will of His own good Spirit. These men are said to have been filled with the Spirit of God according to the sixth verse—“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.”

There is Joshua! You can see him. He is clad in filthy garments! Is this the Lord’s High Priest? Is this he that is to instruct the people? Is he the man who wears garments that are old and soiled and foul? Yes, that is the man! “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts,” and My Spirit shall rest upon this poor Joshua, this brand plucked out of the burning and he shall teach My people! There is the other man over yonder—Zerubbabel. He is a poor, timid creature. It is the day of small things with him. He has but little confidence. God has to chide him and say, “Who has despised the day of small things?” But he is the man before whom the mountain shall become a plain! He is the man that shall build the Temple of the Lord because the Spirit of God shall be upon Him—“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.”

You will always find that when God chooses men to do His work, He makes it palpable to everybody that they are nothing but men. Sometimes they have imperfections over which we mourn very much and over which they mourn far more than we do! But these manifest tokens of their infirmity show more distinctly the infinite skill of Him who uses such poor instruments. The frailty of the earthen vessels is made evident so that the excellency of the power which is of God and not of them may be the more conspicuous! So it is with God’s work, for He will have it known that it is not by charm of eloquence, nor by force of reasoning, but by His Spirit that He operates with resistless power! He takes men, poor humble men that seem no more able to trim the golden lamp than two olive trees would be and He works by them to the praise of the Glory of His Grace!

Yet these men must be full of faith. “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” I doubt not that Zerubbabel grasped that promise, relied upon it and rejoiced in it and proved himself to be a man of faith. God will use us, whatever our faults are, if we have faith! I do not know what use He could make of any man who has no faith. Read the 11th chapter of Hebrews and notice on what strange men God set the seal of His approbation because they had faith. Samson may be quoted as an extreme case—speaking after the manner of men we might have thought that God would have set him aside, altogether, because there were such serious flaws in his character. Yet he was a great child-man who, with all his faults, believed in God and, perhaps, believed more in God than many who were far better than he in other respects.

With a thousand enemies before him, only think of that one man, daring, through His confidence in God, to fling himself upon them all—with no weapon except a poor ass’s jawbone! Look! He leaps upon the crowd! “Heaps upon heaps. With the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men.” He never counted the odds. He just went at it, believing that God would help him, however tremendous the struggle might be. So when they put him, blind as he was, into that huge temple of the Philistine gods where everything was so strong and massive that it could bear up all the Philistine lords up there in the gallery, he begins feeling for the pillars. This poor blind man, whose hair had been shorn and who had been made a prisoner by his bitter adversaries, feels for the huge columns, believing that God would enable him to snap them like reeds, or rock them to and fro as bulrushes!

Oh what a desperate and glorious tug was that! What a transcendent act of faith when he bowed himself with all his might and pulled the structure down upon the heads of his oppressors! A glorious faith animated him! He was a poor specimen of propriety in many respects—he was made of strange stuff—but there was grandeur in his faith and that saved him! O my dear Brother, if you can believe God, God can use you! But if you have no faith, or if you have but a weak, trembling faith, your unbelief will hinder the Lord and it will be said of you, “God could not do many mighty works by him, because of his unbelief.”

Oh, if we could believe more implicitly and venture to act more unreservedly on the certainty of the covenanted promises, what exploits we might achieve! The limit of our usefulness is narrowly set by our lack of confidence in God. If we had more faith, the harvests we reap which yield tenfold, might yield fifty-fold, or a hundred-fold! With more faith the weakest of us might be as David and David would be as the Angel of the Lord! God grant us His Grace that we may so believe and rely upon His sure Word that we may become men fit for His use and profitable for His service. One thing more is prominent and unmistakable about these men—these olive-tree men that fed the lamp and kept it burning—they ascribed all their success to Grace, for it is said that when the top stone of the Temple should be brought out there should be shouts of, “Grace, Grace, unto it.”

If souls are saved, it is always by a ministry of Grace! Whatever else is left out in a soul-saving testimony, there must be a clear ring as to Grace! Election by the Grace of the Father, regeneration by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, remission of sins by the Grace of God through the atoning blood of Jesus—Grace beginning, continuing and perfecting! I like the word, “Grace,” even when it is coupled with an adjective and spoken of as, “Sovereign Grace,” “Free Grace,” “Effectual Grace”—and all those whom God will bless must be men that love His Grace and feel His Grace and preach His Grace—for this is the very essence of the golden oil by which the lamp is trimmed. These men, or rather these trees, emptied out the golden oil, “out of themselves.”

They did not make the golden oil—it came into them by the miraculous power of God—the process was beyond Nature! Men cannot create Grace any more than trees could prepare oil themselves. Olive trees cannot distil oil without a press, nor can men be the means of Grace to others unless God shall cause them to be so and then they empty out themselves to a good and gracious purpose. Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you want to know how to be useful, one of the things that is absolutely necessary is that you empty yourselves out! Do you expect to give anything to another without losing it yourself? You will be mistaken! Take it as a general rule that nothing can come out of you that is not in you and as the next general rule it takes something out of you to give something to other people.

Paul said he did not merely wish to impart the Gospel to the people, but himself, also. Though he did not preach himself, yet he was willing to spend and be spent so long as he could bring souls to Christ. I believe the difference between the result of the labor of one man and another is often this—one gives more out from himself than another. I am acquainted with some very learned Brothers of mine who do not feed many people. They are huge barrels of learning, like the Heidelberg wine cask and they are full to the brim with the best wine in the world, but never much comes out! On the other hand, I have never, myself, been anything but a very small cask but I let everything run out that is put into me. If you have not 10 talents to boast of, turn the one talent you have over and over and over and over again and you will make far more of it than if you let many talents lie still and rust.

Take care that you are actively earnest in the cause of the Master and a blessing will surely come out of it. Oh how it shows the wisdom of God and the power of God when He makes simple means produce surprising results and, by feeble instruments, compasses His infinite forethoughts! God might have been glorified by doing the work Himself, as when of old He stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, speaking and it was done. But He is far more glorified by using poor, unworthy creatures for the accomplishment of His Divine purposes! When Quintin Matsys made the celebrated well-cover at Antwerp, it would have been highly creditable to him even if he had used the best of implements to make it with.

When we are told, however, that his fellow workmen robbed him of his tools and that he did it with one common hammer or some such instrument, our estimation of the artist’s skill is greatly enhanced. It is no wonder that the Spirit of God can, Himself, convert souls—the wonder is that He converts men by us! That we, who are so imperfect and so feeble, should become channels of blessing is a great marvel! Those two olive trees might, it was feared, grow in the way of the light, but God made them to be its maintainers! The branches of our infirmity might hide the light from the people’s eyes if Grace did not intervene and make every one of them yield its olives and pour out its measure of oil for the supply of the golden candelabrum!

Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, if you have the Light of God, shed it! If you have Grace, endeavor to impart it! The Lord has blessed you—ask Him to bless you more by His Holy Spirit. Let those olive trees, yielding abundance of oil, be your model that your lively vigor may prove of lasting value to the Church. So be the Lord with you from now on and forever. Amen and amen!

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INDEPENDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY  
NO. 149

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.” Zechariah 4:6.**

GOD’S first and greatest object is His own glory. There was a time, before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days. When God dwelt alone in the magnificence of His sublime solitude. Whether He should create, or not create was a question depending upon the answer to another question—would it be to His honor or not? He determined that He would glorify Himself by creating. But, in creating, beyond all doubt, His motive was His glory. And since that time, He has ever ruled the earth and even blessed it with the same object in His infinite mind—His own glory and honor.

Lesser motive for God to have were less than Divine. It is the highest position to which you or I could attain, to live for God. And the very highest virtue of God is for Him to magnify Himself in all His greatness as the Infinite and the Eternal. Whatever, then, God permits or does, He does with this one motive—His own glory. And even salvation, costly though it was and infinitely a benefaction to us, had for its first object and for its grand result the exaltation of the Being and of the attributes of the Supreme Ruler.

Now, as this is true in the general of the great acts of God, this is equally true in the minutiae of them. It is true that God has a Church, that that Church has been redeemed and will be preserved for His glory. And it is equally true that everything that is done to the Church, in the Church, or for the Church either with the permission or by the power of God, is for God’s glory, as well as for the Church’s welfare. You will notice, in reading Scripture, that whenever God has blessed the Church, He has secured Himself the glory of the blessing, though they have had the profit of it.

Sometimes He has been pleased to redeem His people by might but then He has so used the might and power that all the glory has come to Him and His head alone has worn the crown. Did He smite Egypt and lead forth His people with a strong hand and outstretched arm? The glory was not to the rod of Moses but to the Almighty power which made the rod so potent. Did He lead His people through the wilderness and defend them from their enemies? Still, did He, by teaching the people their dependence upon Him, preserve to Himself all the glory. Moses nor Aaron among the priests or Prophets could share the honor with Him.

And tell me, if you will, of slaughtered Anak and the destruction of the tribes of Canaan. Tell me of Israel’s possessing the promised land. Tell me of Philistines routed and laid heaps on heaps, of Midianites made to fall on each other. Tell me of kings and princes who fled apace and fell until the ground was white like the snow in Salmon. I will say of every one of these triumphs, “Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” And I will say at the end of every victory, “Crown Him, crown Him, for He has done it. And let His name be exalted and extolled, world without end.”

Sometimes, however, God chooses not to employ the agency of power. If He chooses to save, by might and by power, it is that glory may be unto Him. And when He says, “Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord,” it is still with the same object and the same desire, that we may be led—

*“To give to the King of kings renown,*

*The Lord of Lords with glory crown,”*  
God is jealous of His own honor. He will not suffer even His Church to be delivered in such a way as to honor men more than God. He will take to Himself the Throne without a rival. He will wear a crown that never head did wear and sway a scepter that never hand has grasped, for as truly as He is God, the earth shall know that He and He alone has done it and unto Him shall be the glory.

Now, my objects this morning will be to glorify God by showing to you, who love the Savior, that the preservation and the triumph of the Church are both of them to be accomplished, not by might, nor by power but by the Spirit of God, in order that all the honor might be to God and none of it to man. I shall divide my text very simply. It divides itself. First, not by might. Secondly, nor by power. Thirdly but by My Spirit.

You will ask me whether there is any distinction to be drawn between these two words, “NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER.” I answer, yes. The best Hebrew scholars tell us that the “might,” in the first place, may be translated, “army.” The Septuagint does so translate it. It signifies power collectively—the power of a number of men combined together. The second word, “power,” signifies the prowess of a single individual, so that I might paraphrase my text thus—“Not by the combined might of men laboring to assist each other, nor by the separate might of any single hero, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” And now you will see the distinction which is not without a difference.

To begin, then, the preservation and the triumph of the Church cannot be accomplished BY MIGHT—that is, not by might collectively.  
First, let us consider that collected might to represent human armies. The Church, we affirm, can neither be preserved nor can its interests be promoted by human armies. We have all thought otherwise in our time and have foolishly said when a fresh territory was annexed to our empire, “Ah! what a Providence that England has annexed India”—or taken to itself some other territory. “Now a door is opened for the Gospel. A Christian power will necessarily encourage Christianity and seeing that a Christian power is at the head of the Government, it will be likely that the natives will be induced to search into the authenticity of our Revelation and so great results will follow.  
“Who can tell but that at the point of the British bayonet, the Gospel will be carried and that by the edge of the true sword of valiant men, Christ’s Gospel will be proclaimed?” I have said so myself—and now I know I am a fool for my pains and that Christ’s Church has been also miserably fooled. For this I will assert and prove, too, that the progress of the arms of a Christian nation is not the progress of Christianity. And that the spread of our empire, so far from being advantageous to the Gospel, I will hold and this day proclaim, has been hostile to it.  
We will just confine our attention for a moment or two to India. I believe that British rule there has been useful in many ways. I shall not deny the civilizing influence of European society. Or that great things have been done for humanity. But I do assert and can prove it, that there would have been greater probability of the Gospel spreading in India if it had been let alone, than there has been ever since the domination of Great Britain. You thought that when Christians, as you called them, had the land, they would favor religion. Now I will state a fact which ought to go through the length and breadth of the land. It does not rest on hearsay, I was informed of it a little while ago by a clergyman, upon whose memory the fact is vividly impressed.  
A Sepoy in a certain regiment was converted to God by a missionary. He proposed to be baptized and become a Christian. Mark, not a Christian after our way and fashion, as a Baptist, or an Independent or a Methodist. But a Christian according to the fashion of the Episcopalian Church established in this realm. He was seen by the chaplain and was received as a Christian. What do you think became of that Sepoy? Let the East India Company blush forever. He was stripped of his regimentals, dismissed from service and sent home because he had become a Christian! Ah, we dreamed that if the Sepoy had the power they would help us! Alas, the policy of greed cannot easily be made to assist the Kingdom of Christ.  
But I have another string to my bow. I believe that the help of Government would have been far worse than its opposition. I do regret that the Company sometimes discourages missionary enterprise. But I believe that had they encouraged it, it would have been far worse still, for their encouragement would have been the greatest hindrance we could receive. If I had tomorrow to go to India to preach the Gospel, I should pray to God, if such a thing could be, that He would give me a black face and make me like a Hindu. For otherwise I should feel that when I preached I should be regarded as one of the lords—one of the oppressors.  
It may sometime be added—and I should not expect my congregation to listen to me as a man speaking to men, a Brother to Brother, a Christian full of love—but they would hear me and only object to me, because even my white face would give me some appearance of superiority. Why in England, our missionaries and our clergymen have assumed a kind of superiority and dignity over the people. They have called themselves clergy and the people laity. And the result has been that they have weakened their influence. I have thought it right to come among my fellow men and be a man among men, just one of themselves, their equal and their friend. And they have rallied around me and not refused to love me.  
And I should not expect to be successful in preaching the Gospel unless I might stand and feel that I am a Brother, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. If I cannot stand before them thus, I cannot get at their hearts. Send me, then, to India as one of the dominant ruling race and you give me a work I cannot accomplish when you tell me to evangelize its inhabitants. In that day when John Williams fell in Erromanga you wept, but it was a more hopeful day for Erromanga than the day when our missionaries in India first landed there. I had rather go to preach to the greatest savages that live, than I would go to preach in the place that is under British rule.  
Not for the fault of Britain but simply because I, as a Briton, would be looked upon as one of the superiors, one of the lords and that would take away much of my power to do good. Now, will you just cast your eye upon the world? Did you ever hear of a nation under British rule being converted to God? Mr. Moffat and our great friend Dr. Livingstone have been laboring in Africa with great success and many have been converted. Did you ever hear of Kaffir tribes protected by England ever being converted? It is only a people that have been left to themselves and preached to by men as men, that have been brought to God.  
For my part, I conceive that when an enterprise begins in martyrdom, it is none the less likely to succeed. But when conquerors begin to preach the Gospel to those they have conquered—it will not succeed, God will teach us that it is not by might. All swords that have ever flashed from scabbards have not aided Christ a single grain. Mohammedans’ religion might be sustained by scimitars but Christians’ religion must be sustained by love. The great crime of war can never promote the religion of peace. The battle and the garment rolled in blood are not a fitting prelude to “peace on earth, goodwill to men.” And I do firmly hold that the slaughter of men—bayonets and swords and guns have never yet been and never can be, promoters of the Gospel.  
The Gospel will proceed without them but never through them. “Not by might.” Now don’t be fooled again if you hear of the English conquering in China. Don’t go down on your knees and thank God for it and say it’s such a heavenly thing for the spread of the Gospel—it is not. Experience teaches you that and if you look upon the map you will find I have stated only the truth—that where our arms have been victorious, the Gospel has been hindered rather than not. So that where South Sea Islanders have bowed their knees and cast their idols to the bats, British Hindus have kept their idols. And where Bechuanas and Bushmen have turned unto the Lord, British Affairs have not been converted—not perhaps because they were British but because the very fact of the missionary being a Briton, put him above them and weakened their influence.  
Hush your trump, O War—put away your gaudy trappings and your bloodstained drapery if you think that the cannon with the Cross upon it is really sanctified. And if you imagine that your banner has become holy, you dream a lie. God does not want you to help His cause. “It is not by armies, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord.”  
Now, understanding this word “might,” in another sense, to signify great corporations, or, as we say, denominations of men. Nowadays, people get a strange notion in their head and they form what they call a denomination. It is all wrong. There never ought to have been any denominations at all, for according to Scripture, every Church is independent of every other. There ought to have been as many separate Churches as there were separate opinions. Denominations, which are the gathering up of those Churches, I take it, ought not to have existed at all. They may do some good but they do a world of mischief. Now, when first a denomination starts it is very much opposed. Take, for instance, Methodism.  
How earnest were its first preachers, how indefatigably did they toil and how incessantly were they persecuted. Yet what a harvest of souls God gave to them! What a great blessing was showered from the cloud that first started at Oxford, with those few young men preaching the everlasting Gospel! Methodism goes on till it grows to be a most respectable kind of society, its ramifications extend all over England and it has societies in every country—and now—God forbid I should say anything against Methodism—let those who like it believe it. I do not like it—but I do say now, when they have come to the greatest, is the time when they are doing the least.  
They will confess that the ancient power of Methodism has to a great degree failed. That power which once seemed to turn the world upside down and set the whole of the Churches on fire with a Divine light and life is to a great degree quenched. Wars and rumors of wars are in their camp, till, what with new connections and old connections, reformed and conferential and an infinite quantity of names, one does not know into how many fraternities they intend to divide themselves.  
The fact is that just when the corporation began to be the greatest, God said, “Now then. You have done your work, to a great degree. It shall not be by you any longer. Not by might, not by your allied forces. You have said your efforts will cover the earth with the Gospel.” “Now,” says God, “I will diminish you by thousands. I will take off your roll year by year as many as would make another denomination strong. And though you shall still exist, you shall have to weep and repent with bitterness because of your departed zeal.” It is just the same with every other denomination.  
When we Baptists were reckoned to be the poorest lot in the world and everybody sneered at us, we did far more good than we do now. There was far more pure doctrine and far better preaching than there is at the present time. But we began to be respectable—and just as we began to be respectable we began to lose our power. Every fresh Gothic Baptist Chapel was a diminution of simplicity. And every fresh place where the minister become intellectual, as it was called, was just a loss of evangelical might. Till now, as a denomination, we are just as low as any other—and we need some of our old leaders again—just to preach the Word with demonstration and with power and to overthrow all those grand conventionalisms which have tried to make the Baptist denomination respectable.  
I pray to God I may never be called to preach to a much applauded congregation. It would be a sad and evil day. To be despised, to be spit upon, to be caricatured and to be jeered is the highest honor that a Christian minister can have. And to be pampered, flattered and applauded by men is a poor, base thing, that is not worth having. If any come here and say, “They are not a respectable sort.” We reply, “we labor to preach to the poor.” But mark this, whenever a great denomination begins to get too great, God will cut away its horns and take away its glory till the world shall say, “It is not by might nor by power.”  
And now I shall give one more application of the word “might.” It is so with one particular Church just as I have been observing. I tremble for the Church of which I am the pastor. I never trembled for it when we were few. When we were earnest in prayer and devout in supplication. When it was a thing of contempt to go into “that miserable Baptist Chapel on Park Street.” When we were despised and maligned and slandered. I never trembled for us then—God was blessing the ministry—souls were saved and we walked together in the fear of the Lord and in love. But I tremble for it now—now that God has enlarged our borders and given us to count our members not by tens but by hundreds—now that we can say we are the largest Baptist Church in England.  
I tremble now because now is just the time when we shall begin to say, “We are a great people.” “We shall do very much.” “We are a great agency.” “The world will look upon us and we will do a great deal.” If we ever say that, God will say, “Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm,” and He will hide the light of His countenance from us, so that our mountain that stands firm shall begin to shake. O Churches!—All of you here that are representatives of Churches, carry the tidings. O Churches! Take heed lest you trust in yourselves. Take heed lest you say, “We are a respectable body.” “We are a mighty number.” “We are a potent people.”  
Take heed lest you begin to glory in your own strength. For when that is done, “Ichabod” shall be written on your walls and your glory shall depart from you. Remember that He who was with us when we were but few must be with us now we are many, or else we must fail. And He who strengthened us when we were but as “little in Israel,” must be with us— now that we are like “the thousands of Manasseh.” Or else it is all over with us and our day is past. “Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord.”  
II. NOR BY POWER, that is, individual strength. You know, Beloved, that after all, the greatest works that have been done have been done by the ones. The hundreds do not often do much, the companies never do— it is the units—just the single individuals that after all are the power and the might. Take any parish in England where there is a well-regulated society for doing good—it is some young woman or some young man who is the very life of it. Take any Church—there are multitudes in it but it is some two or three that do the work. Look on the Reformation. There might be many reformers but there was but one Luther. There might be many teachers but there was but one Calvin.  
Look upon the preachers of the last age—the mighty preachers who stirred up the Churches. There were many coworkers with them but after all it was not Whitfield’s friends, nor Wesley’s friends but the men themselves that did it. Individual effort is, after all, the grand thing. A man alone can do more than a man with fifty men at his heels to fetter him. Committees are very seldom of much use and bodies and societies sometimes are loss of strength instead of a gain. It is said that if Noah’s Ark had had to be built by a company, they would not have laid the keel yet. And it is perhaps true. There is scarcely anything done by a body—it almost always fails. Because what is many men’s business is just nobody’s business at all.  
Just the same with religion—the grand things must be done by the ones. The great works of God must be accomplished by single men. Look back through old history. Who delivered Israel from the Philistines? It was a solitary Samson. Who was it gathered the people together to rout the Midianites? It was one Gideon, who cried, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.” Who was he that smote the enemy? It was one Shamgar, with his ox goad, or it was an Elon, who with his dagger put an end to his country’s tyrant. Separate men—Davids with their slings and stones, have done more than armies could accomplish. “But,” says God, “it is not even by individual might the Gospel is to be spread.” Take individual might in different senses.  
Sometimes we may say, of this kind, it represents learning. We discover here and there certain great and mighty men in learning that can take an infidel, strap him on to the dissecting board and just anatomize him in a minute. They are great doctors of divinity, they have achieved the highest titles that can be given them at the universities. They have read the Scriptures thoroughly, they are mighty theologians, they could dispute with John Owen and could entirely take the wind out of the sails of Calvin. They know a great deal, a very great deal. They can write most

excellent reviews and are much gifted in philosophical disquisitions. But did you ever hear, in the course of all your life, of anyone of these being blessed by God to lead any great religious movement?  
Such a thing may have been but I have forgotten all about it. There may have been such an occurrence but I do not remember it. This I am sure of—the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had taken no degree, except it was a good degree of being excellent fishermen. This I am certain of—that all through the ages, God has not often used men of any very great intellectual compass—they have not seemed to be men of profound learning. They have generally been men of determined will and strong principle but not often of any very high intellectual attainments. Do I, therefore, rail at learning? O, no! God forbid! The more of that the better.  
Let men be as wise as they can be and as learned as they can be but still the fact remains and there is no one that can dispute it—that God has often taken the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, in order that men may see, “It is not by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” I have the pleasure and happiness of being acquainted with a large number of the most eminent ministers in England. I have walked and talked with them and spoken to them about the things of the kingdom. If they were present they would not think me severe in what I am about to say. Many of those at whose feet we have been prepared to sit as little children to hear their wisdom, confess as ministers that when they reviewed their life, they felt that it has been unprofitable.  
They are learned men but they would say with Owen, “I would give up all my talents to preach like Bunyan the tinker.” They have wished that they could be known for something else besides having attained profound learning and research. My Brethren, it is not their fault. They have labored well and earnestly. I find no fault whatever with them. It is God’s supremacy that stamps this upon them and makes them feel the force of it—it is their very intellectual prowess that makes them feel this way. They are incapable of being used by God, as a mass at least, though individuals may be, for any very great result in the Church because then it would seem to be by power.  
“No, no,” says one. “If a man is not learned that does not mean much, a man must be eloquent.” That is another mistake—it is not by power of eloquence that souls are saved. I believe every man that preaches the Gospel in his heart is eloquent. I have used a wrong word. I mean, however, that great oratorical powers are very seldom made use of by God for any very great result. Not even here is God pleased to let it be seen to be by power. You have heard of the preaching of Whitfield—did you ever read his sermons? If you did you will say they were rather contemptible productions. There is nothing in them that I should think could have approached to oratory. It was only the man’s earnestness that made him eloquent.  
Have you heard any preacher that has been blessed by God to move the multitude? He has been eloquent, for he has spoken earnestly but as to oratory there has been none of it. I, for my own part, must eschew every pretension thereunto. I am certain I never think, when I come into this pulpit, “How shall I talk to this people in a grand fashion?” I think when I come up here, “I have got something to say, I will tell it.” How I will tell them, it does not mean much to me. I shall find the words somehow or other I daresay, God helping me.  
But about any of the graces of eloquence or the words of oratory, I am utterly and quite in the dark, nor do I wish to imitate any who have been masters in that. I believe that the men whom we call eloquent, now that they are dead, were laughed at in their day as poor bungling speakers. Now they are buried they are canonized but in their lives they were abused.  
Now, my Brethren—God, I think, will generally cast a slur upon fine speaking and grand compositions and so on in order that He may show that it is not by individual power but by His Spirit. I could stand here and point my finger in a certain circle around this place and I could pause at such a Chapel and say, “There is a man preaching there whose compositions are worthy to be read by the most intellectual of persons but whose Chapel contains this morning, a hundred.” I will point you to another of whose preaching we can say that it was the most faultless oratory to which we ever listened but his congregation were nearly all of them asleep.  
We might point you to another, of whom we could say that there was the most chaste simplicity, the most extraordinary beauty in the compositions he delivered but there has not been a soul known to be saved in the Chapel for years. Now, why is that? I think it is because God says, it is not by power, it shall not be by individual power. And I will say this, that whenever God is pleased to raise up a man by individual power to move the world, or to work any reform, he invariably selects a man whose faults and whose errors are so glaring and apparent to everyone, that we are obliged to say, “I wonder that man should do it, surely it must be of God, it could not be of that man.”  
No, there are some men who are too great for God’s designs, their style is too excellent. If God blessed them the world would cry—especially the literary world—it is their talent that God blesses. But God, on the other hand, takes up some rough fellow, truly an earthen vessel, puts His treasure in him and just shakes the whole world. People cry, “We do not see how it is, it is not in the man, certainly.” The critic takes up his pen, dips it in gall, writes a most fearful character about the man. The man reads it and says, “It is true and I am glad of it for if it had not been true God would not have used me. I glory in my infirmities, because Christ’s own power rests on me. If I had not those infirmities so much could not have been done but the very infirmities have insured against men’s saying, ‘It was the man.’ ”  
I have often been delighted at some of my opponents. They have sneered at everything in me—from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot I have been all over bruises and putrefying sores. Every word has been vulgarity. Every action has been grotesque, the whole of it has been abominable and blasphemous. And I said, “Well that is delightful, now that is good.” And while some persons have said, “Now we must defend our minister,” I have thought, “You had better let it alone, it is much the best that it should be so. For suppose it is true—and it is, the most of it— there is all the more glory to God. For who can deny that the work is done?’ ”  
And He is a great workman that can use bad tools and yet produce a fine piece of workmanship. And if the conversion of hundreds of souls now present, if the sobriety of drunkards, if the chastity of harlots, if the salvation of men who have been swearers, blasphemers, thieves and vagabonds from their youth up is not a grand result, I do not know what is. And if I have been the unwieldy, uncouth, unworthy tool employed in doing it, I bless God, for then you cannot honor me but must give all the glory to Him and to Him all the glory belongs. He will have it proved that “It is not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord.”  
III. And now to conclude lest I weary you. While the progress and advance of the Church are neither to be accomplished by the collected might of armies, corporations, nor Churches. Nor by the separate exertions of individuals, by the might neither of learning nor of eloquence, yet both the objects are to be accomplished BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD.  
I was thinking, yesterday, my Friends, what a magnificent change would come over the face of Christendom if God were on a sudden to pour out His Spirit as He did on the day of Pentecost. I was then sitting down meditating upon this sermon and I thought, oh, if God should pour His Spirit upon me, should I not leap from this place where I am now sitting and on my knees begin to pray as I never did before? And should I not go next Sabbath-Day to a congregation who would feel a solemn awe about them? Every word I spoke would strike like arrows from the bow of God. And they themselves would feel that it was “none other than the house of God and the very gate of Heaven!”  
Thousands would cry out, “What must I do to be saved?” And they go away carrying the Divine fire till the whole of this city would be kindled. And then I had pictured to myself what would come over all the Churches if they were in the same condition and all the people received that same Spirit. I had seen the minister from Monday morning till Saturday night doing little or nothing—delivering his weekly lecture, attending one Prayer Meeting and thinking himself hard worked. I saw him, on a sudden, start from his couch and go round to all the sick of his Chapel and I marked how he delivered a short address of comfort to the sick with such holy gravity and such Divine simplicity, that they lifted their heads from their pillows and began to sing, even in the agonies of death.  
I thought I saw others of them girding up their loins and crying, “What am I doing?—men are perishing and I am preaching to them but three times a week and am called to the work of the ministry.” I thought I read of all those ministers going into the open air to preach next Monday night. I thought I saw the whole of them flying, like angels fly, to-and-fro this land. And then I thought I saw the deacons all full of the Spirit, too and found them with all their powers doing everything in the fear of God. I found those who had been lords and rulers no longer seeking to be like Diotrephes. I saw the heavenly influence spread over every mind.  
I saw the vestries too small for the Prayer Meetings and I saw the Chapels crowded and I heard the Brethren who year after year had prayed the same monotonous prayer, break forth in earnest burning words. I saw the whole assembly melted in tears when the pastor addressed them and urged them to prayer and I heard the Brethren one by one as they rose up speak like men who had been with Jesus and had learned how to pray. They prayed as if they had heard Christ pray in Gethsemane—that prayer which was such as never man prayed. And then I thought I saw all those members and those deacons and those pastors going out into the world. And, oh, I pictured what preaching there would be, what tract distributing, what alms giving, what holy living!  
And then I already thought I heard every house at vesper uttering its song and every cottage in the early morn sending up its prayer to Heaven. I thought I saw upon every plowshare “consecrated to God,” and every bell upon the horses, “holiness unto the Lord.” And then I thought I saw the different denominations rushing into each others arms. I saw the bishop doff his miter and clasp his dissenting Brother and call him Friend and bid him preach in his cathedral. And I thought I saw the stiff puritanical dissenter casting away his hatred of conformity and receiving the Church of England Brother to his heart. I thought I saw baptized and unbaptized sitting at one table.  
I saw Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Independent and Quaker agreeing in one thing—that Christ crucified was All—and clasping one another’s hands. Yes, and then I thought I saw the angels coming down from Heaven. And it was not long before I finished my daydream by hearing the shout— “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” It was a daydream but it will be true some day. By the Spirit of God all this will be accomplished. How and by what means I know not but I know the great agency must be the Holy Spirit.  
And now, dear Friends, let me counsel you. The grand thing the Church wants in this time is God’s Holy Spirit. You all set up plans and say, “Now, if the Church were altered a little bit, it would go on better.” You think if there were different ministers, or different Church order, or something different, then all would be well. No, dear Friends, it is not there where the mistake lies, it is that we don’t want more of the Spirit. It is as if you saw a locomotive engine upon a railway and it would not go and they put up a driver and they said, “Now, that driver will do.” They try another and another. One proposes that such-and-such a wheel should be altered but still it will not go.  
Someone then bursts in among those who are conversing and says, “No, Friends. But the reason why it will not move is because there is no steam. You have no fire, you have no water in the boiler—that’s why it will not go. There may be some faults about it. It may want a bit of paint here and there but it will go well enough with all those faults if you do but get the steam up.” But now people are saying, “this must be altered and that must be altered. But it would go no better unless God the Spirit should come to bless us. You may have the same ministers and they shall be a thousand times more useful for God, if God is pleased to bless them. You shall have the same deacons, they shall be a thousand times more influential than they are now, when the Spirit is poured down upon them from on high.  
That is the Church’s great want and until that want be supplied we may reform and reform and still be just the same. We want the Holy Spirit and then whatever faults there may be in our organization, they can never materially impede the progress of Christianity, when once the Spirit of the Lord God is in our midst. But I beseech you be earnest in praying for this. Do you know that there is no reason today why I should not have preached today so that every soul in the place was converted, if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to manifest Himself? There is not any solitary shadow of a reason why every soul that has been within the sound of my lips should not have been converted by something said today if God the Holy Spirit had been pleased to bless the word!  
Now I will repeat—there is not a humble Primitive Methodist, nor a poor insignificant preacher of any sort on earth, but who, if he preaches the Truth, God the Spirit may not make as useful in conversion as any of the great departed, who are now before God’s Throne. All we NEED is the Spirit of God. Dear Christian Friends, go home and pray for it. Give no rest until God reveals Himself. Do not tarry. Here you are—do not be content to go on in your everlasting jog—trot as you go. Do not be content with the mere round of formalities. Awake, O Zion! Awake, awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Jerusalem. Start from your slumbers, awake from your lethargy and cry unto God and say unto Him, “Awake, awake! Put on Your strength, O arm of the Lord, as in the ancient days.” Then when He shall do it, you will find that while it is not by might, nor by power, it is by God’s Spirit.  
And now I conclude with a brief address that shall not occupy but a moment. Sinner, unconverted Sinner, you have often tried to save yourself but you have often failed. You have, by your own power and might sought to curb your evil passions and licentious desires with you. I lament that all your efforts have been unsuccessful. And I warn you—it will always be unsuccessful—for you never can by your own might save yourself. With all the strength you have you never can regenerate your own soul. You can never cause yourself to be born again and though the new birth is absolutely necessary, it is absolutely impossible to you unless God the Spirit shall do it.  
I pray for you that God the Spirit may convict you of sin and if you are already convicted, I bid you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He has died for you, has washed away your sins. You are forgiven. Believe that. Be happy and go your way rejoicing. And God Almighty be with you until you die.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2601 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SMALL THINGS NOT TO BE DESPISED  
NO. 2601

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 18, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1883.

**“For who has despised the day of small things?” Zechariah 4:10.**

IT is a very great folly to despise “the day of small things,” for it is usually God’s way to begin His great works with small things. We see it every day, for the first dawn of light is but feeble and yet, by-and-by, it grows into the full noontide heat and glory. We know how the early spring comes with its buds of promise, but it takes some time before we get to the beauties of summer or the wealth of autumn. How tiny is the seed that is sown in the garden, yet out of it there comes the lovely flower! How small is the acorn, but how great is the oak that grows up from it! The stream commences with but a gentle rivulet, but it flows on till it becomes a brook, and then a river—perhaps a mighty Amazon— before its course is run!

God begins with men in “the day of small things”—He began so with us. How little and how feeble were we when first we came upon the scene of action! He that is now a giant was once so feeble that he could not move from place to place except as he was carried in his mother’s arms. Let us, then, not despise “the day of small things,” as we see that God begins with little things in Nature and among the sons and daughters of men. And I am sure that He does so in the great work of His Church. Long ago He began to build a spiritual temple for His own habitation, but, at first, the stones of the foundation were hidden from the great mass of mankind. How little was known in the world at large concerning Abraham and his seed! How very, very slowly did the walls of that great temple rise! Even in the time of Zechariah, it was still “the day of small things” with the people of the Lord.

Comparatively speaking, it is still so, for what is the Christian Church compared with the great mass of the heathen world and of those who reject the Savior? Our Lord’s method of spreading His Truth among men was to begin with a handful of disciples in an upper room at Jerusalem, to fill them with His Spirit and then to let them be scattered over the whole known world. This is usually God’s plan of working in His Church and also in individual Believers. Of course there are various degrees of ability and Grace even among the Lord’s own people. One of the old Puritans said that some men are born with beards and, certainly, there are some Believers who, almost as soon as they are converted, seem to take great strides and to make speedy advances so that they soon become very useful and are even able to teach things which others only learn after long years of experience. But, generally speaking, this is the order of the growth of Grace in the heart, “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”

First, the Truth of God is heard and felt, and the heart bleeds under conviction of guilt. By-and-by another Truth is discovered and the wounded heart is bound up by faith in Christ. This faith grows to full assurance—there is a gradual conformity to the image of Christ—and that image becomes more and more clear till the man reaches the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ Jesus. But first there is the beginning which is small and afterwards there is the latter end which shows a great increase. It is within our souls as it is in the world—the day begins with the dawn, but the shining light “shines more and more unto the perfect day.”

Woe unto that man who despises “the day of small things” in the Church of Christ, or who despises “the day of smart things” in any individual Believer, for it is God’s day—it is a day out of which great things will yet come and, therefore, he that despises it really despises his Maker’s work and despises the great and glorious things which are to come out of the small things which are at present apparent! I know some professing Christians who, I am afraid, despise “the day of small things” in little Churches. There is gathered a small community of godly people. Perhaps they are poor and many of them illiterate. And some of you rich folk who think yourselves wonderfully intelligent—though I am not always sure that you are—if you happen to settle down in that village, you say that you would like to attend the little Chapel or mission room, but the minister puts his h’s in the wrong place and his speech is ungrammatical and, of course, that is very painful to your refined taste! Then the people are very poor and you hardly think that the Church is advancing at all, so to help it, you leave it alone! “God forbid,” you say, “that we should despise the day of small things!” But you are very sorry that everything is on such a small scale! You say that you pity the poor people, but, instead of helping them, you lie quietly by, or you go off to a more fashionable place where you meet with some of your own class and feel more at home. There, the h’s are put in properly, though the Gospel is left out of the preaching! But the people who attend are such a “respectable” sort of folk that you feel it is quite the correct thing to worship with them. If any of you have any respect for yourselves while acting in such a way as that, I hope you will soon discover that there is really nothing “respectable” in that kind of respectability! I mean that there is nothing that should make a man respected when he gives up his convictions and leaves his own true Brothers and Sisters for the sake of getting into a better class of society and seeming to be of a superior order to the godly poor people to whom he might be of real service.

To me, it seems that it should be your glory to join the poorest and weakest churches of your denomination and wherever you go, to say, “This little cause is not as strong as I should like it to be, but, by the Grace of God, I will make it more influential. At any rate, I wil1 throw in my weight to strengthen the weak things of Zion and certainly I will not despise the day of small things” Where would have been our flourishing Churches of today if our forefathers had disdained to sustain them while they were yet in their infancy? I thank God for the men who did not mind going down into back yards and up into haylofts that they might worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. I always delight in those who were willing to stand on the village green with the people sitting down on felled trees or logs to listen to them—and who were not afraid of being called fanatics and of bearing all manner of reproach and scorn for Christ’s sake! But if you and I grow to be such great and grand people as some we have known, we must mind that the Lord does not take us down a notch or two, and that, perhaps, by a very painful process. He asks, as if in indignation, “Who has despised the day of small things?” and I believe that He is grieved with any of His servants when they fall into such a state of mind as that—and begin to despise His Church because she is despised by the world, and look down on His people as the high peaks of Bashan seemed to regard with contempt the lowly hill of Zion—and, therefore, the Psalmist said to them, “Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in; yes, the Lord will dwell in it forever.”

My special objective at this time is to reprove those who despise the earlier and weaker works of Grace in the soul. True, it is “the day of small things,” but it is a subject for rejoicing and is not to be despised. First, I shall speak to proud professors who despise “the day of small things” in young beginners. Then I shall have a little talk with young beginners who despise “the day of small things” in themselves. And thirdly, I shall speak of those who do not despise “the day of small things.” When this question is put to them, “Who has despised the day of small things?” they can answer, “Lord, you know that we have not done so; we have rejoiced in the small signs of Grace in young beginners and we hope to see great things grow out of them.”

I. First of all, THERE ARE SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS WHO DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS” IN OTHERS.  
I am sure I do not know exactly at what point the day of Grace begins in some people. There are some who, even before they fully receive the Gospel, have some good thing in them. “Oh, no,” you say, “that cannot be.” Well, just think a moment. Before the sower went forth to sow, there was a certain part of the farm which was described as “honest and good ground.” There was another part that was like the highway and another part covered with thorns or stones. But there was something which distinguished the “honest and good ground” from all the rest of the land. I do not say that it was, then, bringing forth any fruit to God’s Glory, but I do say that God. had, from a very early period—I do not know when— made that ground ready and fit to receive the Seed. So I can believe that before a man even hears the Gospel at all, there may be an antecedent work of what I may almost call secondary Grace—not saving Grace, but a making ready of the heart for the reception of the saving Grace of God.  
In my own experience, I never quite know where I am to put my finger upon the beginning of God’s work in my soul. I can tell the very day and hour when I was converted, but I had many stirrings of conscience before that. I know that I was very effectually convinced of sin, but when the gracious work began, I cannot say. One of the first things that I recollect is lying awake at night because I had done something wrong to my mother. I do not know whether that was not the Grace of God working in my heart even then—I think that it was. I am sure that it was, in some measure, the Lord graciously working within me and making me ready for the more manifest work of His Spirit.  
Now, dear Friends, do not despise those little things, those preparation works, but whenever you see them in children, or in adults, be thankful for them. Frequently, when I have been receiving members into the Church, I have asked of a good woman, “Is your husband a Christian?” and the answer has often been, “Well, Sir, he is a very good husband, but I am afraid that he is not a Christian.” Then I have enquired, “What does he do with himself on Sundays?” “Oh, Sir, he is always at the Tabernacle! He has been attending the services for years and he is very fond of you, Sir. He will run home and hurry over his tea so as to get to the Prayer Meeting on Monday, and on Thursday nights, he is never absent.” I have said, “My good woman, does your husband show such love to the Lord’s House and to the minister, and yet he is not converted?” “Yes,” she answers, “he is not converted, for sometimes he does what he knows is not right. Still, his attendance upon the means of Grace is a great check upon him. He is a dear good husband, much better than he used to be, but I am afraid he is not a Christian and that he does not truly pray for pardon.” “Ah,” I say, “let us have a little prayer together about him and let us firmly believe that we shall have him yet. If a man continues to come where we are constantly firing the Gospel gun, one of the stray shots will hit him yet! Be sure that you encourage him to keep on coming and mind that you are very kind to him and help him all you can in finding the Savior—and we will yet rejoice together over him.” When moths fly very near the candle, sooner or later they will singe their wings—there is a great Gospel candle burning here and I do not doubt that some of these human moths will dash into the flame, by-and-by! So I hope you will encourage them to come here, again and again, until they are blessedly caught so that they can never fly away. Such people as I have been describing have very curious whims and fancies—they will take offense at almost anything at all, so we must tread very softly and tenderly—and not grieve any with whom it is, in this sense, “the day of small things.”  
I have known some come to Christ at last and trust Him, but it was with such a very little faith that I hardly know whether, in their case, it was faith born or unbelief dying. You remember the poor man who said to Christ, “Lord, I believe,” and then he felt as if he had gone a little too far with his declaration, for he drew back and said, “Help You my unbelief.” And these poor halting souls are just in that state—I hope they do believe, but I am sure that they are very unbelieving. They begin to pray, but, oh, what strange prayer it is! Some of them repeat a form of prayer they learned a long while ago which is quite inapplicable to their present case, but still they do mean to pray somehow. They want to pray and though it can scarcely be called prayer, yet I expect that God accepts it as prayer and graciously answers it. They have begun to repent—they have not a very clear view of what sin is, but they know that it is something they would like to get rid of. They are like Paul when he was at Melita—I am not sure that he understood much about snakes and their bites—but when a viper fastened itself onto his hand, he shook it off into the fire. So, these people could not define sin, theologically, but they wish that they were clear of it, they long to be pardoned. It is “the day of small things” with them and it is not to be despised.  
Ah, dear Friends, when a man tries to get away alone, that he may read his Bible, do not despise him! When a tear falls during a sermon and he brushes it away and wants to make you believe that there was something the matter with his nose, do not despise him, even for that! I have seen that sort of thing happen many a time and I have been pleased to notice it. We ought to delight in anything and everything that looks in the right direction—and never think of despising it.  
Now I want to come to the most important point—Why ought we not to despise these small things—these feeble beginnings? Especially when there is a little Grace in any people, why must we not despise them?  
Well, first, because in the Church of Christ, there always were and there always will be babes as well as men. Do not despise the babes— where are the men to come from if there are no babes? If it happens in God’s family as it does in most families, you will soon find that it will not do to despise the babes. How very grieved all loving parents are when their infants are despised! You may ignore the big son if you like, but do not despise the babes. So, with regard to Christ’s family, be sure to honor the little ones—take care of them, never stand in their way. When they want to come to Christ, allow them to come. It does not say, “draw them,” for they are wanting to come, but get out of their way and do not hinder them from coming. And whenever you meet with one who has lately been born of God and who is tender of heart, do not despise him. As long as the family of Christ is to increase, there always must be babes, and babes must never be despised.  
Again, dear Friends, do not speak harshly to those who are newly born to God, for you were once a babe. Yes, yes, though you do not like to be reminded of it, you, great giant that you now are, were once an infant! And you with your deep experience and your profound knowledge, you who think you can set everybody else right, why, once you hardly knew that twice two made four! You had to begin at the very beginning just like others have had to do! So remember what you used to be, look back to the hole of the pit from where you were dug and do not begin to despise others who are in the same condition in which you once were!

Remember, again, that the greatest saints in this world, or who ever were in this world, were babes in Grace once. Whether it was Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, they all began with little Grace and weak spiritual life at the first. Yes, there is not a bright spirit before the Throne of God who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but once was only an infant in spiritual things! And if the greatest were once so little, that is a good reason why we should never despise “the day of small things.”

Besides, dear Friends, it should always check every tendency in this direction when we remember that God made and God loves the very least Believer. You know, a silver sixpence is as really silver as a half-crown. And the Queen’s image on the one is as genuine as on the other. They are current coin of the realm and I am sure you will not treat with scorn the little pieces of money. Then why should we despise the small coins in Christ’s treasury? When our dear young Brothers and Sisters are made of the same metal and stamped with the same image as we are, why should we despise them, though we happen to be, or think we are, of somewhat more weight and value in the Church of God than they are? Oh, do not despise the lowly violet that hides its head among the leaves! It is quite as much a flower of God’s making as the finest tulip that airs its beauty aloft, or the most brilliant standard rose that is before your eyes! God made the little things and God loves them and, as parents have a special love for their weak and little children, so has God a special favor towards the lambs of His flock, and He takes special care of the seedlings in His garden which have not yet come to the fullness of growth. Therefore, do not despise them.

If you do, there is one sentence I would utter that ought to rebuke you very effectually. Your Master would not despise them if He were here. Christ has a quick eye to see little Graces in His people and when He sees them, He delights in them. A diamond is a diamond if it is ever so small. And Christ’s people are Christ’s people let them have ever so little Grace. Oh, if the Lord Jesus Christ would have carried that lamb in His bosom, why do you refuse to carry it? Why do you neglect it? Why should there be so often heard stinging words and keen, cutting, sarcastic remarks about the feebleness of knowledge or the defects of practice, when, if there is but Grace in the heart, you and I ought to rejoice to see it? I have often quoted to you the words of Jerome when he said that he loved Christ in Augustine and he loved Augustine in Christ. So ought we to love the weakest Believers—to love Christ in them, and to love them in Christ. May the Holy Spirit teach us to be like our Master in this respect as well as in all others!

I have finished this word of gentle rebuke when I add that if you and I do despise “the day of small things,” the probability is that we shall have to smart for it. You remember that passage in Ezekiel where the Lord speaks of the fat cattle pushing the weak cattle with their horns and their shoulders? They were big bulls of Bashan and they were always goring one and pushing against another because they happened to be weak and sickly—and the Lord said that He would judge between cattle and cattle and those that had been so headstrong, so proud and so cruel would have to smart for it. The day shall come, my proud Brother, when you will be glad to sit at the feet of that young Christian you now despise! I have noticed that sort of thing many a time. It is a part of my pastoral observation that when persons who were genuine Christians have been proudly lifted up, they have been made to go down very low till they have envied those they once despised, and said, “If we felt as sure of salvation as that dear young man that we judged so harshly, we would willingly enough change places with him and take what we called his inexperience and his lack of knowledge, if we could be just as simple in our confidence in Christ as he is.” Therefore, Beloved, if you do not want to bring the rod upon your own back, despise not “the day of small things,” but be ready to cherish and comfort all in whom the work of Grace has apparently begun even to the lightest extent!

II. Now, secondly, THERE ARE SOME WHO DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS “ IN THEMSELVES. They think that it is very humble to do so. I am not sure that it is—I think it is very foolish to do so.

There are some who despise “the day of small things” in themselves in this way—they pass by the small things. Suppose that a young man is impressed, under a sermon, with a sense of sin. A wise thing for him to do is to get home as quickly as he can and cry, “Lord, I do not know whether this is true repentance, but, if it is not, make it so! Lord, I am half afraid that I am only a stony-ground hearer and that this good Seed will spring up for a little while and then will wither. Lord, break my stony heart and do it effectually.” Be very thankful, dear Friends, if you have the faintest spiritual impressions. I know some men who would almost give their eyes if they could but feel anything, but they say that they sit and hear, and the only result is what Cowper said—

*“If anything is felt, ‘tis only pain  
To find I cannot feel.”*

So, if you have any spiritual feeling at all, do not despise it, but go to God with it and pray that the work which seems to be begun in you may be carried on until it is complete—and that if it is not begun, it may begin at once. When you feel, sometimes, in the assemblies of God’s House, a softening influence stealing over your spirit, or when possibly, in the middle of your work—you do not know why—you suddenly feel very tender in heart—or, perhaps, walking down into the City early in the morning, before many people are astir, you feel a solemnity quite unusual to you—do not despise it! These little things may lead on to a blessed saving work—I pray the Lord that you may take care of these dewdrops of Grace. It there are but a few tiny drops and if they are but cared for and valued, the Lord will yet look still more graciously upon you and send you a copious shower of blessing. Do not despise anything that looks like Grace in your heart. God help you to take it as a gardener at this time of the year takes the little slips and cuttings and puts them in silver sand to make them grow, that he may have the flowering plants, by-and-by. Use your cuttings—the little things that seem as if they could not have any life in them. God would have you plant them in favorable circumstances, that they may grow to His praise and glory.

Some despise “the day of small things” in themselves because they do not think that any good can come of them. When I was preaching this  
morning, [Sermon #1739, Volume 29—“Bankrupt Debtors Discharged”—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org ] I thought that, per

haps, some poor soul would take comfort to himself, and I said to a Brother when I went outside, “I do like, sometimes, to have a subject which comes rolling up like a sea of Grace” because there are so many people who are like oysters in the riverbeds waiting for the tide to return. I did hope, this morning, that it was a flood tide, and that some of you would open your shells and that the blessed Word of God would come into your very souls! If you do that, it will come in. The oyster cannot make the sea roll up, but whenever he feels it rolling over him, he says, “Now is the time for me to open my shell,” and when you feel, “Now is the time for me to seek the Lord, now is the day of salvation, now is the high tide of Grace,” you shall have the blessing! It is all around you, or else you would not have opened your shell. It is the very flood tide of Grace that has made you feel what you feel. Therefore be glad and do not despise it. It may seem a little thing to feel tender and solemn, but it is not so—it is often the beginning of a blessed work of Grace—therefore value it highly.

I have known some to despise the blessing by resolutely resisting its entrance into their hearts. I can never forget some instances of this resistance that I have known. I was preaching once, in a certain city, and a gentleman who had been very kind to me was in the congregation, but I saw him get up in the middle of the sermon and go out of the building. The Brother who was with me slipped out after him and said to him, “My dear Sir, why did you come out?” He answered, “Mr. Spurgeon has got me in his hands. I am like an India rubber doll and he can twist me into any shape that he likes. I am afraid that if I had listened to him for another ten minutes, I would have been converted.” So off he went, deliberately stamping out, as far as he could, the spark of the Truth of God as it came toward him. He would not let the good Seed grow—he invited the birds of the air to come and steal it away. Do not forget that although the Lord graciously changes man’s will and He has absolute power over the human will and makes men willing in the day of His power, yet He never saves anybody against his will and, while the will stands out against God and is unrenewed and unchanged, the man is still unsaved. It seems to me a dreadful thing that people can come to the House of God without any desire to get a blessing and there cover themselves up in armor of mail to keep every arrow from getting anywhere near their hearts. That is one method of despising “the day of small things.”

I know some others who despise “the day of small things” because if they get a little good in their hearts, they do not try to get more. If we did not expect a little child to ever grow, we would really be despising it, putting it down as a dwarf or a monstrosity. So, if the Grace of God has come into your heart, you will do all in your power to make it to grow and increase and thus prove that you do not despise it. I think I have said enough to show that if any here have the slightest sign of the beginnings of Grace, any glimmerings of the Divine Light, any first outlines of the image of Christ upon their heart, they must not despise them, but they should pray God to bless them and bring them to maturity. If they do so, I will tell you what God will do—it is hinted at in the verse from which our text is taken—“For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.” They had begun to build, but it was such a poor paltry piece of work and the wall was still so low, that they despised it. But when they saw the prince standing there, with the plummet in his hand and saw stone after stone brought and laid in its place—and their great leader officiating as the chief architect, they said to one another— “Look, the prince is there with the plummet in his hand! He is a man who never undertakes a task unless he goes through with it, so, depend upon it, the work will be completed.”

In like manner I can see that, although it may be very little Grace that is in your heart, yet Christ has come with that Grace! Christ is building in your heart, Christ is laying the foundation stone, the Prince of the kings of the earth, Christ Jesus, is there with His plummet and He that has begun the good work in you will carry it on till it is perfected in Glory! Oh, what a blessing it is to look to Christ with the plummet in His hand and say, “Great Master-Builder, I will not despise these foundations because, as yet, they are scarcely seen above the soil, for I know that You, who have begun the good work, will carry it on and perfectly perform all that You have promised. The Temple will yet appear to Your praise where now there seems to be but a tiny heap of stones.”

That is the way to cure you of despising “the day of small things” in yourselves.  
III. Now, my last point is this. THERE ARE SOME WHO NEVER DESPISE “THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.” I have time for only a few words on this part of my subject, but I wish them to be very tender words.  
First, true pastors never despise “the day of small things.” Speaking for myself, I can say that I love to see in those of you who are unconverted any sign of serious thought, any intimation of a coming change, any token that you are turning unto the Lord. My heart is gladdened whenever I perceive it. Does anyone think that I despise it? Why, I pray to God continually to bring it to pass! Despise it? I look for it as the reward of my toil! If I did but know that I had awakened thought in any one of you, I would go home happy! If I did but hear that the Lord was bringing a score or two to Himself, I would gladly lie awake at night to bless His name for such a mercy as that! I do not care for the vastness of this congregation, but I do care for the individual souls in it and I rejoice most of all over those who are saved out of it. What good is it simply to bring you here and to have you sitting quietly while I talk to you? It is a waste of time and labor unless it brings you to Christ! But if I know that any of you are brought to penitence and faith, I am sure that I do not despise it, for I value such blessings above the choicest gold!

And let me also tell you that your dear parents, your Christian wife and your godly daughter who persuaded you to come to this service do not despise “the day of small things.” I have known some of our members do really extraordinary things in order to get people to come here in the hope that they might be converted. There was one who, after many attempts, at last induced a man to promise that he would come with him one day, so he went round to fetch him. “Oh, I cannot come!” said the man, “I am making a rabbit hutch.” “Well,” said the other, “I have one ready made that I will give you.” “But,” said the man, “I cannot come, I promised to go and see a man who has a pair of pigeons to sell.” My friend answered, “I have a pair of pigeons I will give to you if you will come with me.” It was all in vain. He might offer the man what he would, he could not get him. I hope that he has brought him by this time, but if not, I know that he will stick to him till he does see him here! And I know another thing, that he will bring the friend to his own seat and he will, if necessary, stand in the aisle and pray for him all through the service! Well, now, if he gets his friend to hear the Word and sees that he is impressed by it, you do not suppose that he will despise “the day of small things,” do you? On the contrary, he will be glad even for the slightest sign of the working of God’s Spirit in his friend’s heart!

Your godly mother, when she hears that you have been to the Tabernacle, will say, “Bless God for that!” If she finds that you have begun to pray, her heart will leap within her! A dear father, a minister of the Gospel, writes to me, and says, “My son had never decided for God till he went to hear you at Exeter Hall. During the evening sermon he bowed his head and gave himself up to the Lord. And now he is proposed as a member of my Church. God bless you, Sir!” It is always so with true Christians—they do not despise “the day of small things,” but they are glad when their children are brought to Christ! And it is just the same with all soul-winners and I hope that many here are of that class. If they can spy anything like the tiniest egg of Grace, they feel so glad! And they watch you and they say to one another, “Is that light that I can see there in the East?” And the other says, “I do not know. I am afraid it is not.” “Oh,” says the first friend, “but I think it is. Does it not look a little gray just over there?” “No,” replies the other, “I am afraid that it is not morning light yet.” That is how some of us talk about you—we are often talking and praying about you, dear Hearers, and we say to one another, “When will So-and-So come to the Savior?” There is a good man here whom I pray for nearly every day and I know that his wife does the same. He loves to come here, yet he is still an unsaved man. But, by the Grace of God, he cannot remain where he is if prayer can stir him! We will pray him out of it and bring him to the Savior—may the Lord grant that it may speedily be so!

There is one other Person who never despises “the day of small things,” and with Him I finish. And that is, our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is so eager to see of the travail of His soul that if He spies in you even a desire after Him, He is pleased with it. Believe me, if you have but a spark of desire after Christ, He has a whole furnace of desire after you! Oh, that you would have Him as your Savior! He is free to every soul of you who will have Him! Is it not put just so in His last invitation? “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Do not think that He excludes you—you may exclude yourself, but if there is in your heart any wish, any shadow of a wish, anything like a desire for Christ, you may come, and welcome! Mercy’s gate is wide open. Christ invites you to His house and to His heart. Oh, come to Him and come now! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” May His Divine Spirit lead you to believe on Him at this moment! To believe on Him is to trust Him. Throw yourself on Him, sink or swim. Take Christ to be yours! Have you done it? Then you are saved, for, “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” His believing is the evidence that he is already a saved man! So, go your ways and the Lord be with you, but I charge every one of you, meet me in Heaven! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ISAIAH 54:1-10.**

Verse 1. Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD. In this Western clime we do not know all the misery which was felt by Eastern women who were childless. They were looked down upon and despised. Yet here God bids them sing! And, dear Friends, if you and I feel as if our hearts have become barren so that we cannot think of God or raise our thoughts towards Him as we would desire. If we feel that we have become useless and for that reason our spirit is greatly depressed, let us give heed to this sweet, this charming exhortation of Jehovah— “Sing, O barren soul; break forth into singing, and cry aloud,” for God can turn our barrenness into fruitfulness and make us to rejoice exceedingly before Him. If we are now sighing and crying because we are not what we ought to be, or what we want to be, God can, in the richness of His Grace, make us all that we desire! Therefore let us begin to be joyful even before the miracle of mercy is worked! Let us have unbounded faith in God and expect Him to bless us even while we are in our lowest state.

2 **,**3*.*Enlarge the place of your tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. This was good news for the poor Gentiles who were so long spiritually barren, but whose seed was to spread all over the earth! This prophecy has been already fulfilled in a great measure and the very wording of it is a direction to us if we desire to see the Church of God increased. Make ready for God’s blessing, you who are pining and groaning for greater things than these—God is about to bless you! Enlarge your tents! Lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes! Prepare for the coming blessing, for you are to have better and brighter days than you have ever known! Therefore be no more sad, but look forward with joyful anticipation to the good things in store for you.

4 *.*Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. I am not going to interpret the passage in its strict connection, but to use it for our comfort and instruction. O you that are cast down, you poor trembling ones that would gladly be at one with God, but feel as if you cannot find Him, believe in the Lord your God and trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, for there are glad times coming for you! All your former days of sadness shall be forgotten and you shall have such joy and delight as you can hardly imagine at present.

5 *.*For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel the God of the whole earth shall He be called. Oh, what a blessing that is! This is a wide-spread mercy— “The God of the whole earth shall He be called.” My Soul, come and hide beneath the shadow of these earth-covering wings, for there is room for you beneath their welcome shelter and, once there, you shall not be banished from that sacred spot, for it is written, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Your Maker is your husband,” united to you in eternal wedlock! Therefore, be of good comfort.

6. For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God. Poor rejected one, has the world cast you off? Do its sinful pleasures pall upon you? Listen, “The Lord has called you.” You are divorced from the world that you may be forever united to Him!

7 **,**8*.*For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD your Redeemer. What words of comfort lie here to those of the Lord’s people who have fallen into spiritual darkness and come upon evil days! God still remembers you! His wrath is but for a moment and will swiftly pass away—but His age-enduring kindness which sweeps across the boundless eternity shall be with you forever!

9, 10. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that 1 would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you. Oh, for Grace, oh, for the help of the Holy Spirit to lay hold upon these precious promises, and to feed on them!

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ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE DEPRESSED  
NO. 3489

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1915.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 27TH, 1871.

**“For who has despised the day of small things?”  
Zechariah 4:10.**

ZECHARIAH was engaged in the building of the Temple. When its foundations were laid, it struck everybody as being a very small edifice compared with the former glorious structure of Solomon. The friends of the enterprise lamented that it should be so small—the foes of it rejoiced and uttered strong expressions of contempt! Both friends and foes doubted whether, even on that small scale, the structure would ever be completed. They might lay the foundations and they might raise the walls a little way, but they were too feeble a folk, possessed of too little riches and too little strength, to carry out the enterprise. It was the day of small things. Friends trembled. Foes jeered. But the Prophet rebuked them both—rebuked the unbelief of friends and the contempt of enemies, by this question—“Who has despised the day of small things?”—and by a subsequent prophecy which removed the fear.

Now we shall use this question at this time for the comfort of two sorts of people—first, for weak Believers and, secondly, for feeble workers. Our objective shall be the strengthening of the hands that hang down and the confirming of the feeble knees. We will begin, first of all, with—

I. WEAK BELIEVERS.  
Let us describe them. It is with them a day of small things. Probably you have only been lately brought into the family of God. A few months ago you were a stranger to the Divine Life and to the things of God. You have been born-again and you have the weakness of an infant. You are not as strong, yet, as you will be when you have grown in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is the early day with you and it is also the day of small things. Now your knowledge is small. My dear Brothers and Sisters, you have not been a Bible student long—thank God that you know yourself a sinner and Christ is your Savior! That is precious knowledge, but you feel now what you once would not have confessed—your own ignorance of the things of God! Especially do the deep things of God trouble you. There are some Doctrines that appear to be mysterious, that are very simple to other Believers, but are depressing to you. They are high—you cannot attain to them. They are to you what hard nuts would be to children whose teeth have not yet appeared. Well, be not at all alarmed about this! All in God’s family have once been children! There are some that seem to be born with knowledge—Christians that come to a height in Christ very rapidly. But these are only here and there. Israel did not produce a Samson every day. Most have to go through a long period of spiritual infancy and youth. And, alas, there are but few in the Church, even now, who might be called fathers! Do not marvel, therefore, if you are somewhat small in your knowledge.  
Your discernment, too, is small. It is possible that anybody with a fluent tongue could lead you into error. You have, however, discernment, if you are a child of God, sufficient to be kept from deadly errors, for though there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect, yet the elect cannot be deceived, for, the Life of God being in them, they discern between the precious and the vile—they choose not the things of the world—but they follow after the things of God! Your discernment, however, seeming so small, need not afflict you. It is by reason of use—when the senses are exercised—that we fully discern between all that is good and all that is evil. Thank God for a little discernment— though you see men as trees walking, and your eyes are only half opened—a little Light of God is better than none at all! Not long ago you were in total darkness. Now if there is a glimmer, be thankful, for remember where a glimmer can enter, the full noontide can come—yes, and shall come in due season! Therefore, despise not the time of small discernment.  
Of course, you, my dear Brother or Sister, have little experience. I trust you will not fake experience and try to talk as if you had the experience of the veteran saints when you are as yet only a raw recruit. You have not yet done business on the great waters. The more fierce temptations of Satan have not assailed you—the wind has been tempered as yet to the shorn lamb—God has not hung heavy weights on slender threads, but has put a small burden on a weak back. Be thankful that it is so! Thank Him for the experience that you have, and do not be desponding because you have not more. It will all come in due time. “Despises not the day of small things.” It is always unwise to get down a biography and say, “Oh, I cannot be right because I have not felt all this good man did.” If a child of ten years of age were to take down the diary of his grandfather and were to say, “Because I do not feel my grandfather’s weakness, do not require to use his spectacles, or lean upon his staff, therefore I am not one of the same family,” it would be very foolish reasoning! Your experience will ripen. As yet it is but natural that it should be green. Wait a while and bless God for what you have.  
Probably this, however, does not trouble you as much as one other thing, you have but little faith, and that faith being small, your feelings are very variable. I often hear this from young beginners in the Divine Life, “I was so happy a month ago, but I have lost that happiness.” Perhaps tomorrow, after they have been at the House of God, they will be as cheerful as possible, but the next day their joy may be gone! Beware, my dear Christian Friends, of living by feeling! John Bunyan puts down Mr. Live-by-Feeling as one of the worst enemies of the town of Mansoul. I think he said he was hanged. I am afraid he, somehow or other, escaped from the executioner, for I very commonly meet him—and there is no villain that hates the souls of men and causes more sorrow to the people of God than this Mr. Live-by-Feeling! He that lives by feelings will be happy, today, and unhappy tomorrow—and if our salvation depended upon our feelings, we would be lost one day and saved another, for they are as fickle as the weather and go up and down like a barometer! We live by faith, and if that faith is weak, bless God that weak faith is faith and that weak faith is true faith! If you believe in Christ Jesus, though your faith is as a grain of mustard seed, it will save you, and it will, by-and-by, grow into something stronger. A diamond is a diamond, and the smallest scrap of it is of the same nature as the Koh-I-Noor, and he that has but little faith has faith, for all that! It is not great faith that is essential to salvation, but faith that links the soul to Christ, and that soul is, therefore, saved! Instead of mourning so much that your faith is not strong, bless God that you have any faith at all, for if He sees that you despise the faith He has given you, it may be long before He gives you more! Prize that little, and when He sees that you are so glad and thankful for that little, then will He multiply it and increase it—and your faith shall mount even to the full assurance of faith!  
I think I hear you also add to all this the complaint that your other Graces seem to be small, too. “Oh,” you say, “my patience is so little. If I have a little pain, I begin to cry out. I was in hopes I should be able to bear it—bear it without murmuring. My courage is so little—the blush is on my cheek if anybody asks me about Christ—I think I could hardly confess Him before half a dozen, much less before the world. I am very weak, indeed.” Ah, I don’t wonder. I have known some who have been strong by reason of years and have still been lacking in that virtue. But where faith is weak, of course, the rest will be weak. A plant that has a weak root will naturally have a weak stem and then will have but weak fruit. Your weakness of faith sends a weakness through the whole. But for all this, though you are to seek for more faith, and consequently for more Grace—for stronger Graces, yet do not despise what Graces you have. Thank God for them! And pray that the few clusters that are now upon you may be multiplied a thousand-fold to the praise of the Glory of His Grace. Thus I have tried to describe those who are passing through the day of small things.  
But the text asks, “Who has despised the day of small things?” Well, some have, but there is a great comfort in this—God the Father has not! He has looked upon you—you with little Grace, and little love, and little faith—and He has not despised you! No, God is always near the feeble saint. If I saw a young man crossing a common alone, I would not be at all astonished, and I would not look round for his father. But I saw today, as I went home, a very tiny little tot right out on the Common—a pretty little girl, and I thought, “The father or mother are near somewhere.” And truly there was the father behind a tree whom I had not seen. I was as good as sure that the little thing was not there all alone! And when I see a little weak child of God, I feel sure that God the Father is near, watching with wakeful eyes and tending with gracious care the feebleness of His newborn child! He does not despise you if you are resting on His promise. The humble and contrite have a word all to themselves in Scripture, that these He will not despise!  
It is another sweet and consoling thought, that God the Son does not despise the day of small things. Jesus Christ does not, for you remember this word, “He shall carry the lambs in His bosom.” We put that which we most prize nearest our heart, and this is what Jesus does. Some of us, perhaps, have outgrown the state in which we were lambs, but to ride in that heavenly carriage of the Savior’s bosom—we might well be content to go back and be lambs again! He does not despise the day of small things.  
And it is equally consolatory to reflect that the Holy Spirit does not despise the day of small things, for He it is who, having planted in the heart the grain of mustard seed, watches over it till it becomes a tree! He it is who, having seen the new-born child of Grace, does nurse, feed and tend it until it comes to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The blessed Godhead despises not the weak Believer! O weak Believer, be consoled by this!  
Who is it, then, that may despise the day of small things? Perhaps Satan has told you and whispered in your ear that such little Grace as yours is not worth having, that such an insignificant plant as you are will surely be rooted up. Now let me tell you that Satan is a liar, for he, himself, does not despise the day of small things! I am sure of that because he always makes a dead set upon those who are just coming to Christ. As soon as ever he sees that the soul is a little wounded by conviction. As soon as ever he discovers that a heart begins to pray, he will assault it with fiercer temptations than ever! I have known him try to drive such a one to suicide, or to lead him into worse sin than he has ever committed before. He—  
*“Trembles when he sees  
The weakest saint upon his knees.”*  
He may tell you that the little Grace in us is of no account, but he knows right well that it is the handful of corn on the top of the mountain—the fruit of which shall shake like Lebanon! He knows it is the little Grace in the heart that overthrows his kingdom there.  
“Ah,” you say, “but I have been greatly troubled lately because I have many friends who despise me, because though I can hardly say I am a Believer, yet I have some desire towards God.” What sort of friends are these? Are they worldly friends? Oh, do not fret about what they say! It would never trouble me if I were an artist, if a blind man were to utter the sharpest criticism on my works. What does he know about it? And when an ungodly person begins to say about your piety that it is deficient and faulty, poor Soul, let him say what he will—it need not affect you! “Ah,” you say, “the persons that seem to despise me, and to put me out, and tell me that I am no child of God, are, I believe, Christians.” Well then, do two things—first, lay what they say to you, in a measure, to heart, because it may be if God’s children do not see in you the mark of a child, perhaps you are not a child! Let it lead you to examination. Oh, dear Friends, it is very easy to be self-deceived and God may employ, perhaps, one of His servants to enlighten you upon this—and deliver you from a strong delusion! But, on the other hand, if you really do trust in your Savior, if you have begun to pray, if you have some love to God— and any Christian treats you harshly as if he thought you a hypocrite, forgive him—bear it! He has made a mistake. He would not do so if he knew you better. Say within yourself, “After all, if my Brother does not know me, it is enough if my Father does. If my Father loves me, though my Brother gives me the cold shoulder, I will be sorry for it, but it shall not break my heart. I will cling the closer to my Lord because His servants seem shy of me.” Why, it is not much wonder, is it, that some Christians should be afraid of some of you converts, for think what you used to be a little while ago? Why, a mother hears her son say he is converted. A month or two ago she knew where he spent his evenings and what were his habits of sin, and though she hopes it is so, she is afraid lest she should lead him to presumption. And she rejoices with trembling and, perhaps, tells him more about her trembling than she does about her rejoicing!  
Why, the saints of old could not think Saul was converted at first! He was to be brought into the church meeting and received—I will suppose the case. I should not wonder before he came, when he saw the elders, one of them would say, “Well, the young man seems to know something of the Grace of God—there is certainly a change in him. But it is a remarkable thing that he should wish to join the very people he was persecuting—perhaps it is a mere impulse. It may be, after all, that he will go back to his old companions.” Do you wonder they should say so? I don’t! I am not at all surprised. I am sorry when there are unjust suspicions. I am sorry when a genuine child of God is questioned. But I would not have you lay it much to heart. As I have said before, if your Father knows you, you need not be so broken in heart because your Brother does not! Be glad that God does not despise the day of small things!  
And now let me say to you who are in this state of small things, that I earnestly trust that you will not, yourselves, despise the day of small things “How can we do that?” you ask. Why,

you can do it by desponding! I think there was a time when you would have been ready to leap for joy, if you had been told that God would have given you a little faith! And now you have got a little faith and, instead of rejoicing, you are sighing, and moaning, and mourning! Do not do so. Be thankful for moonlight, and you shall get sunlight! Be thankful for sunlight, and you shall get that Light of Heaven which is as the light of seven days! Do not despond lest you seem to despise the mercy which God has given you! A poor patient that has been very, very lame and weak, and could not rise from his bed, is at last able to walk with a stick. “Well,” he says to himself, “I wish I could walk, and run, and leap as other men.” Suppose he sits down and frets because he cannot? His physician might put his hand on his shoulder and say, “My good fellow, why, you ought to be thankful you can stand at all! A little while ago, you know, you could not stand upright. Be glad for what you have—don’t seem to despise what has been done for you.” I say to every Christian here, while you long after strength, don’t seem to despise the Grace that God has bestowed, but rejoice and bless His name!  
You can despise the day of small things, again, by not seeking after more. “That is strange,” you say. Well, a man who has got a little and does not want more—it looks as if he despises the little! He who has a little light and does not ask for more light, does not care for light at all. You that have a little faith and do not want more faith—do not value faith at all—you are despising it! On the one hand, do not despond because you have the day of small things, but in the next place, do not stand still and be satisfied with what you have! Prove your value of the little by earnestly seeking after more Divine Grace! Do not despise the Grace that God has given you, but bless God for it—and do this in the presence of His people. If you hold your tongue about your Grace and never let anyone know, surely it must be because you do not think it is worth saying anything about! Tell your brothers, tell your sisters, and they of the Lord’s household, that the Lord has done gracious things for you! And then it will be seen that you do not despise His Grace.  
And now let us run over a thought or two about these small things in weak Believers. Be it remembered that little faith is saving faith, and that the day of small things is a day of safe things. Be it remembered that it is natural that living things should begin small. The man is first a baby. The daylight is first of all twilight. It is by little and by little that we come unto the stature of men in Christ Jesus. The day of small things is not only natural, but promising. Small things are living things. Let them alone, and they grow. The day of small things has its beauty and its excellence. I have known some who in later years would have liked to have gone back to their first days. Oh, well do some of us remember when we would have gone over hedge and ditch to hear a sermon! We had not much knowledge, but oh, how we longed to know! We stood in the aisles, then, and we never got tired! Now we need soft seats and very comfortable places—and the atmosphere must neither be too hot nor too cold! We are now getting dainty, perhaps, but in those first young days of spiritual life, what appetites we had for Divine Truth, and what zeal, what sacred fire was in our heart! True, some of it was wild fire and, perhaps, the energy of the flesh mingled with the power of the Spirit, but, for all that, God remembers the love of our espousals and so do we remember, too! The mother loves her grown-up son, but sometimes she thinks she does not love him as she did when she could fondle him in her arms. Oh, the beauty of a little child! Oh, the beauty of a lamb in the faith! I dare say the farmer and the butcher like the sheep better than the lambs, but the lambs are best to look at, at any rate! And the rosebud—there is a charm about it that there is not in the full-blown rose. And so in the day of small things there is a special excellence that we ought not to despise. Besides, small as Grace may be in the heart, it is Divine—it is a spark from the ever-blazing sun! He is a partaker of the Divine Nature who has even a little living faith in Christ. And being Divine, it is immortal! Not all the devils in Hell could quench the feeblest spark of Grace that ever dropped into the heart of man! If God has given you faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will defy all earth and Hell, all time and eternity ever to destroy it! So there is much reason why we should not despise the day of small things.  
One word and I leave this point. You Christians, don’t despise anybody, but especially do not despise any in whom you see even a little love to Christ. But do more—look after them, look after the little ones! I think I have heard of a shepherd who had a remarkably fine flock of sheep— and he had a secret about them. He was often asked how it was that his flocks seemed so much to excel all others. At last he told the secret—“I give my principal attention to the lambs.” Now you elders of the church, and you, my matronly Sisters, you that know the Lord, and have known Him for years, look up the lambs! Search them out and take a special care of them! For if they are well nurtured in their early days, they will get a strength of spiritual constitution that will make them the joy of the Good Shepherd during the rest of their days! Now I leave that point. In the second place, I said that I would address a word or two to—  
II. FEEBLE WORKERS.  
Thank God there are many workers here tonight, and maybe they will put themselves down as feeble. May the words I utter be an encouragement to them, and to feeble workers collectively! When a Church begins, it is usually small and the day of small things is a time of considerable anxiety and fear. I may be addressing some who are members of a newlyorganized Church. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do not despise the day of small things! Rest assured that God does not save by numbers, and that results are not in the Spiritual Kingdom in proportion to numbers! I have been reading lately with considerable care, the life of John Wesley by two or three different authors in order to get, as well as I could, a fair idea of the good man. And one thing I have noticed—that the beginnings of the work which has become so wonderfully large were very small, indeed. Mr. Wesley and his first brethren were not rich people. Nearly all that joined him were poor. Here and there, there was a person of some standing, but the Methodists were the poor of the land. And his first preachers were not men of education. One or two were so, but the most were good outdoor preachers—head preachers, magnificent preachers as God made them by His Spirit—they were not men who had had the benefit of college training, or who were remarkable for ability. The Methodists had neither money nor eminent men, at first, and their numbers were very few. During the whole life of that good man, which was protracted for so many years, the denomination did not attain any very remarkable size. They were few, and apparently feeble, but Methodism was never so glorious as it was at first—and there were never as many conversions, I believe, as in those early days.  
Now I speak sorrowfully. It is a great denomination. It abounds in wealth—I am glad it does. It has mighty orators—I rejoice it has. But it has no increase, no conversions! This year and other years it remains stationary. I do not say this because that is an exceptional denomination, for almost all others have the same tale. Year by year as the statistics come in, it is just this. “No increase—hardly hold our ground.” I use that as an illustration here—this Church will get in precisely the same condition if we do not look out—just the same state! When we have not the means, we get the blessing—and when we seem to have the might and power—then the blessing does not come. Oh, may God send us poverty! May God send us lack of means and take away our power of speech if it must be, and help us only to stammer, if we may only thus get the blessing! Oh, I crave to be useful to souls, and all the rest may go where it will. And each Church must crave the same. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” Instead of despising the day of small things, we ought to be encouraged! It is by the small things that God seems to work, but the great things He does not often use. He won’t have Gideon’s great host—let them go to their homes—let the mass of them go! Bring them down to the water—pick out only the men that lap—and then there is a very few. You can count them almost on your fingers—just two or three hundred men. Then Gideon shall go forth against the Midianites! And as the cake of barley bread smote the tent, and it lay along, so the sound of the sword of the Lord and of Gideon at the dead of night shall make the host to tremble and the Lord God shall get to Himself the victory! Never mind your feebleness, Brothers and Sisters! Never mind your fewness, your poverty, your lack of ability! Throw your souls into God’s cause, pray mightily, lay hold on the gates of Heaven, stir Heaven and earth, rather than be defeated in winning souls—and you will see results that will astonish you! “Who has despised the day of small things?”  
Now take the case of each Christian individually. Every one of us ought to be at work for Christ, but the great mass of us cannot do great things. Don’t despise, then, the day of little things! You can only give a penny. Now then, He that sat over by the treasury did not despise the widow’s two mites that made a farthing. Your little thank-offering, if given from your heart, is as acceptable as if it had been a hundred times as much! Don’t, therefore, neglect to do the little. Don’t despise the day of small things. You can only give away a tract in the street. Don’t say, “I won’t do that.” Souls have been saved by the distribution of tracts and sermons! Scatter them, scatter them! They will be good seed. You know not where they may fall. You can only write a letter to a friend, sometimes, about Christ. Don’t neglect to do it! Write one tomorrow! Remember a playmate of yours—you may take liberties with him about his soul from your intimacy with him. Write to him about his state before God, and urge him to seek the Savior! Who knows?—a sermon may miss him, but a letter from the well-known school companion will reach his heart. Mother, it is only two or three little children at home that you have an influence over. Despise not the day of small things! Take them tomorrow— put your arms around their necks as they kneel by you—pray, “God bless my boys and girls, and save them”—tell them of Christ now. Oh, how well can mothers preach to children! I can never forget my mother’s teaching. On a Sunday night, when we were at home, she would have us round the table and explain the Scriptures as we read, and then pray— and one night she left an impression on my mind that never will be erased, when she said, “I have told you, my dear children, the way of salvation, and if you perish you will perish justly. I shall have to say, ‘Amen,’ to your condemnation if you are condemned.” And I could not bear that! Anybody else might say, “Amen,” but not my mother!  
Oh, you don’t know—you that have to deal with children—what you may do! Despise not these little opportunities. Put a word in edgeways for Christ—you that go about in trains, you that go into workshops and factories. If Christians were men who were all true to their colors, I think we should soon see a great change come over our great establishments. Speak up for Jesus! Be not ashamed of Him! And because you can say but little, don’t refuse, therefore, to say that, but rather say it over 20 times, and so make the little into much! Again, and again, and again, repeat the feeble stroke, and there shall come to be as much result from it as from one tremendous blow! God accepts your little works if they are done in faith in His dear Son. God will give success to your little works! God will educate you by your little works to do greater works—and your little works may call out others who shall do greater works by far than ever you shall be able to accomplish! Evangelists, go on preaching at the street corner! You that visit the low lodging houses, go on! Get into the room and talk of Jesus Christ there as you have done. You that go into the country towns on the Sabbath and speak on the village greens of Christ, go on with it! I am glad to see you, but I am glad to miss you when I know you are about the Master’s work! We don’t want to keep the salt in the box—let it be rubbed into the putrid mass to stop the putrification. We don’t want the seed forever in the corn bin—let it be scattered and it will give us more! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, wake up if any of you are asleep! Don’t let an ounce of strength in this Church be wasted—not a single grain of ability, either in the way of doing, or praying, or giving, or holy living! Spend and be spent, for who has despised the day of small things?  
The Lord encourage weak Believers, and the Lord accept the efforts of feeble workers, and send to both His richest benediction for Christ’s sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ZECHARIAH 7; 8:9-22.**

Verse 1. And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Darius, that the Word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu. God’s Prophets were not always in the spirit, and when the Word of God came to them, it was a notable day, and they marked it in their diary! I think that we, too, who are not Prophets can remember some special time when God’s Word was peculiarly precious to us. We can put down “the fourth day of the ninth month.”

2, 3. When they had sent unto the house of God, Sherezer and RegemMelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, and to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of Hosts, and to the Prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? On that day the Jews had kept a fast to commemorate the terrible calamity which happened to the Temple in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Now these people were living away in Babylon and it occurred to them that, as the Temple was now being built and Jerusalem was restored, it was a question whether they ought to keep that fast any longer since it was not kept by Divine command. It was a fast of their own inventing—and the question was whether they ought not to abandon it when things had so changed. So they sent messengers to the Temple to inquire of the priests and of the Prophets, and to pray to God, Himself. When we have a difficult question lying on the conscience, it is well to settle it, and not allow it to rest on the heart unsatisfied.

4, 5. Then came the Word of the LORD of Hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me? There is the point! You can fast to self. You can fast to your own pride. If we have no thought of honoring God in our fasting, there is nothing in it. The question is, “Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?”

6. And when you did eat, and when you did drink, did not you eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? If a holy feast is not kept with a view to God, it is not kept at all! It is a feast to yourselves. You have missed the mark altogether.

7. Should you not hear the words which the LORD has cried by the former Prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? Well, what was that word? Zechariah has it fresh from God, and he states it.

8-10. And the Word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of Hosts, saying. Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. This is what God said—most just, most fit for God to require of His people.

11, 12. But they refused to listen, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, so that they should not hear. Yes, they made their hearts as an adamant stone lest they should hear the Law, and the words which the LORD of Hosts has sent by His Spirit by the former Prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of Hosts. And well there might! When God requires what is so just and so commendable, and men will not yield and will not even hear about it, they deserve that God should grow wrathful with them.

13. Therefore it is come to pass, that as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear; says the LORD of Hosts. The punishment of sin seems to be according to the sin itself. If men will not hear God, neither will God hear them!

14. But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate. Now, in the next Chapter, the Prophet goes on to speak not so much of the people’s sin as of God’s resolve to have mercy upon them. He speaks with gentle warnings and with loving promises.

**Zechariah 8:9-22.**  
Verses 9, 10. Thus says the LORD of Hosts: Let your hands be strong, you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the Prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of Hosts was laid, that the Temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor. See into what a state sin brought Israel? There was no bread, no work, no wage, no peace. Every man was the enemy of his neighbor!

11. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of Hosts. He would change everything and give them happiness and prosperity.

12. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. God can turn our estate as easily as a man turns his hand.

*“The Lord can clear the darkest skies,*

*Can give us day for night.”*  
As the wheel revolves, so can the whole fortune of a man change speedily under the kind hand of God!

13. And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. The Jew had become the very model of a curse. “You are as cursed as a Jew,” said the enemies of Israel! But God would make them to be the very model of a blessing, so that men would say, “You are as blessed as they of Israel.”

14, 15. For thus says the LORD of Hosts, As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, says the LORD of Hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear you not. It is a very instructive and encouraging passage. When God threatened to punish His people, He did it. He did not play with words. He punished them and repented not. And so when God promises to bless His people, He will not run back from His Word, but He will carry out every jot and tittle of it in the blessing of His people!

16, 17. These are the things that you shall do: Speak you every man the truth to his neighbor: execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates. And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD. He will have His people true, even if they swear to their own hurt. They must not change. They are to speak the truth, though a thousand calamities should be let loose thereby! May God make us a truth-loving, truthspeaking, truth-doing people!

18. And the Word of the LORD of Hosts came unto me, saying— This is the point that I call your attention to. You had the question when I began to read—here is the answer.

19. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah, joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. Here is an answer to more than they asked for! The messengers only inquired about one fast—what they should do with it—namely, the fast of the fifth month. But they get instruction upon three other fasts. If you come to God’s Word upon any point, you will not only be resolved upon that point, but you will be guided in many other ways, for God’s Word is full of instruction—and they that are willing to be taught of it shall become wise in all ways. So now they are told that these fasts were to be turned into feasts.

20, 21. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts: I will go also. It is a fine thing when we invite other people and can always say, “I will go also.” There are many people who say, “Do as I do, not as I say!” But if our example keeps pace with our precept, there will be power in our precept. “Let us go,” they said—and he that said it added, “I will go also.”

22. Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. And it is so, even now. We have received our religion from a Jew. We believe in One who was of the seed of Abraham. We rejoice in Him as also the Son of God, and many nations come crowding about the Christ of God.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1495 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE KING-PRIEST  
NO. 1495

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1879, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“He shall sit and rule on His throne; and He shall be a priest on His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” Zechariah 6:13.**

LET us first look at the historical setting of this passage. It would seem that three Jews of the captivity had come from Babylon with a contribution towards the building of the temple at Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua. Their names are given in the 10th verse of the chapter before us. Now, the Jews at Jerusalem had become exceedingly exclusive and, in some measure, rightly so. They would not accept help for the building of the Temple from Samaritans because they were a mixed race. They had said to them, “You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God, but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel.”

Possibly they had begun to feel some coolness with reference to the captivity at Babylon inasmuch as if any did not come back to their own land, their descent must be proven before they would be acknowledged. If they would not quit the ease and comfort of the towns in which they were settled and come up to Jerusalem to work with their brethren, could they be sure that they were really Israelites? At any rate there would need to be some enquiry into the pedigree of anyone offering gifts to make sure they might not be receiving help from Samaritan pretenders.

There was, however, no difficulty about the acceptance of the offerings in this case, for the Prophet Zechariah was bid to hasten down that same day and meet the three worthy Jews from Babylon. He was to accept for the Lord the tribute which they had brought and make of it crowns of silver and gold. He was then to go with these Brothers and Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, their host, down to the Temple, call for the High Priest, Joshua, or Jesus, the son of Josedech, and place these coronets of silver and gold upon his head.

This was to be done, not as an honor to the individual, but as a prophetic token that there would, in due time, arise One who would be a Priest crowned with many crowns. This illustrious Person, who is called, “the Branch,” was to spring out of the decayed house of David, like a shoot from a tree which has been cut down even to the stump—according to the prophecy of Isaiah—“and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (11:1). He was to be both a Priest and a King even as David had prophesied in the 110th Psalm—“The Lord has sworn, and will not repent, You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Now Melchizedek combined the king and the priest in one person, as also does our Lord Jesus of whom Zechariah spoke. This royal Priest was to build the real Temple of God, which the Temple at Jerusalem could never be, for the Highest dwells not in temples made with hands. It was

also intimated by the Prophet that as at that particular time men had come from afar and had brought offerings to the Temple, so in the days of this great Priest-King many should come from the uttermost ends of the earth and should, themselves, be built into the Temple of the Lord God.

This is the historical setting of our text. Now we have to learn its spiritual lesson. May the Holy Spirit be our Instructor. Last Sabbath morning we spoke of the Foundation of the Temple of God. We saw how—

*“The Church’s one Foundation*

*Is Jesus Christ, our Lord.”*  
We may not forget that He who is the Foundation is also the Builder of the spiritual house—“He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory.” There is but One who is the true Architect and Master Builder of the Church of God, even Jesus Christ! His hands have laid the foundation of the house, His hands shall also finish it. So great is the fullness of our Lord Jesus that no figures can exhaust His Character—He is not only Foundation and Builder, but He is the “Headstone of the corner”—the Pinnacle as well as the Basement, the Omega as well as the Alpha, the Finisher as well as the Beginner.

He begins, He carries on and He completes the Divine structure of the Church and when all this is done, it is He that establishes the structure, provisions and furnishes it, keeps and preserves it and, best of all, it is He that is the Glory in the midst, dwelling in the Church, as a monarch in His own halls and making it to be a palace as well as a temple! It is the Lord Jesus who walks among the golden candlesticks of the Church, who loads her table with bread and wine and sends forth His rod of power from her midst. As a King as well as a Priest, He dwells in His palace-temple. As the Shekinah was the Glory of the Tabernacle of God among men in days of old, so is the Presence of Jesus the Glory of the Church at this hour. “Lo, I am always with you; even unto the end of the world” is our pillar of cloud and of fire, our glory and our defense.

Our text tells us that the promised Builder of the spiritual temple will inhabit and build it in His double Character as Priest and King. The Church is built up by none other than by this Melchisidec and it is built by Him in virtue of both His offices as King and Priest. As King He puts forth power and as Priest He displays holiness. As a King He builds up the walls and as a Priest He sanctifies them unto the Lord. At this moment it will be well for our faith to open her eyes and look up into Heaven, itself, and see our great exalted Priest-King sitting at the right hand of God and yet at the same time working, by His Spirit, among men for the perfecting of His Church below. Our Solomon is both reigning and building! Of His Throne we may well say, “there was not the same in any kingdom,” and of His Temple we may also add that it is “exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all countries.”

I shall try, this morning, to set our Lord Jesus before you, as far as I can, in that double Glory which is peculiar to Himself—in the majesty of His royalty and the holiness of His priesthood. Such lights meet not in any other star! To no one else belongs the royal priesthood, save only that He reflects His own brightness upon His brethren, whom He has made to be priests and kings! The subject will run thus—first let us consider the glorious combination of offices in the Person of Christ. Secondly, let us notice the happy result of it—“the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” And then, thirdly, let us suggest the action on our part which is harmonious thereto—make crowns and set them upon the head of Jesus.

I. First, then, I want you to consider at this time THE GLORIOUS COMBINATION which is found in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord. Note, first that He is King and of Him, as King, it is written, “He shall sit and rule upon His throne.” One has the idea of ease suggested by the expression. Few kings have been able to sit and rule. Most have been forced to rise and rush here and there to defend their sovereignty! No other seat in the world is so uneasy as a throne! We have seen monarchs elevated by their soldiers, or borne aloft by the fickle throng—bayonets or ballot boxes have been the frail supports of their thrones.

The last few centuries have been a sorry time for kings. As once men feared to be thought Prophets, so might men in revolutionary times have cried out, each one, “I am not a king nor the son of a king.” But our Lord Jesus sits upon a Throne which knows no trouble—once and for all He has bled and died and now He has gone into Glory never to be disturbed again. The Lord who has set Him on the Throne by an unalterable decree, has His enemies in derision and Jesus waits in perfect rest until His foes shall be made His footstool. Publicly recognized as King of kings by the Divine enthronement which His Father has given Him, He is not a King warring for a disputed crown, nor battling to drive invaders from His realm—He sits and rules upon His Throne!

Sitting is the posture of abiding as well as resting. Jesus reigns on and will reign on so long as the moon endures. “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” Even we, who are yet young, have seen dynasties come and go and we have seen the kingdoms of the earth moved and tossed to and fro as the waves of the sea. But the Throne of Jesus has not been shaken, for it is written, “The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever.” “The Lord is great in Zion, and He is high above all the people.” “The Lord shall reign forever and ever.” Hallelujah! As a King, He is described as sitting upon His own Throne. He has not usurped the throne of another, but His right to sovereignty is indisputable. He is well qualified to be King of men since He is their Redeemer.

His Father has given Him a crown as the reward of the travail of His soul, even as He promised, “Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death.” He sits upon a Throne which He has won by conquest, for He has vanquished the powers of darkness and led captivity captive. His right to His Throne can never be disputed, for it is accorded to Him by the enthusiastic approval of all His people. Do we not sing—

*“Bring forth the royal diadem,*

*And crown Him Lord of all”?*  
There is no monarch so secure as He! He is really and truly King by Divine right. He is King by descent, for He is Son and heir of the Highest. He is King by His own intrinsic excellence, for there is none to be compared to Him. And he is King by His own native might and majesty, for He Himself holds His Throne against all comers and shall hold it till all enemies shall be under His feet. Thus is He spoken of as King.

A hint or two is given as to His position as Priest, namely, that He is first, Priest, before He is King, for so was the type in the text. Joshua, the son of Josedech was already High Priest and then he was crowned with the gold and silver crowns. Now, the kingdom of which we speak today it not that of Christ’s essential royalty as by Divine Nature and, therefore, Lord of All, but that which His Father has given Him, because, “Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Why God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Jesus reigns because He died. For the suffering of death He is crowned with glory and honor. The saints in Heaven sing, “You are worthy to take the Book and to open the seals thereof, for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.” We note, too, with regard to our Lord’s Priesthood, that He is said to sit, for if He sits as King, it is implied that He sits as Priest. Indeed, it is expressly said, “He shall be a Priest upon His throne.” Now, of no other priest is it said that he sits, for the Apostle says, “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” There was no seat provided within the Holy Place for Aaron, or for any of the priests—they were servants of God and they stood, daily ministering.

“But this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God; from that time waiting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Jesus still sits forevermore in quiet expectancy, for all His work is done—there is no merit to be worked out to complete His righteousness, no sufferings to be endured to perfect His Atonement. “It is finished,” He said, as He gave up the ghost—and it is finished! And in token thereof, Jehovah says to Him, “Sit You at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” So far, then, we have a glimpse of the King sitting on His Throne and of the Priest, crowned and resting from His labors—we have seen each office.

Now we are to see the two combined in the Lord Jesus. And to make the combination clear we shall notice, first, that as a Priest, He is royal. And then, secondly, that as a King, He is priestly. Consider, now, that as a Priest, our Lord is royal. He was a Priest when He honored the Law by His death. He was a Priest when He took upon Himself our sins and bore them, offering His own soul as the Victim upon the Altar of His body. He was to the fullest, a Priest when He presented His one Sacrifice for sin. But never let it be forgotten that even then, in His Nature, He was a King! The sword of vengeance awoke against the Man who was Jehovah’s Fellow even when He bled. The Laws which He vindicated had been ordained by Himself and it adds a special Glory to His priestly work of Atonement that it was worked by the royal Lawgiver Himself.

The subjects broke the Laws, but it was the King who bore the penalty! He that is under law offends, but He that made the Law came under the Law that He might make amends to the injured honor of His own justice! This was a notable deed of love and of justice combined. Let us be even more amazed at the Sacrifice of our great High Priest, because of the dignity of His Nature and the supremacy of His rank, for He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant! Our Lord stooped to the lowest service for our sakes when He was acting a Priest among us in these lower realms.

He presented Himself as an Offering for sin and men scourged Him, spat upon Him and hung Him up like a felon—and in all this shame and suffering we look to Him as our Savior! Thus He made expiation for sin. But though we are to look to Him in that capacity for the pardon of sin, as men sought cleansing from a priest, we must never forget that now He expects homage from us and we must come to Him for government as men pay obedience to a king. Think of Him as the Crucified One as much as you will, for as such He is your atoning Sacrifice, but remember that this same Jesus which was crucified, God has proclaimed to be both Lord and King. Trust in the Man of the crown of thorns must foster and nourish reverence for the Lord who wears many crowns.

We must not only trust but worship. We must never separate from that shame and spitting the fact that the four living creatures and the elders prostrate themselves before the Lamb and sing unto His praise, “You are worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.”—

*“Salvation to God, who sits on the Throne, Let all cry aloud, and honor the Son!  
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim, Fall down on their faces and worship the Lamb.”*

O you that come to Him today laden with guilt and full of fears to wash yourselves in the fountain which He filled from His own veins, you must also come to obey Him and to walk in His statutes! You may not come to Him merely that you may get your sins forgiven—you must come to be cleansed from the power of evil—and to yield yourselves unto God. Jesus was given that He might be Leader and Commander to the people, as well as their Deliverer and Savior.

A true disciple looks to His Master for ruling as well as for teaching and he expects to render obedience as well as to receive instruction. There may be no separation between these two points—our Priest to save must always be regarded as our King to rule. He puts away sin, but He expects to reign over the forgiven spirit. He washes our feet, but He looks to see that we also practice His precepts and example of love, for He says—“You also ought to wash one another’s feet.” At this moment in Heaven, if your eyes of faith can see the Lord Jesus, you perceive that He is pleading for His people as a Priest. It is a priest’s duty to offer intercession for those over whom he is appointed—and this Jesus does continually.

Has He not said, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest”? He always lives to make intercession for them that come to God by Him. But do not forget that our Lord does not make intercession otherwise than royally. There is no prostration, now, amidst the olives of the gloomy garden; no bloody sweat; no strong crying and tears. He says not, “Not as I will, but as You will,” but He urges His case in another fashion. The interceding Priest has laid aside His bloodstained garments and put on His robes of holiness for Glory and for

beauty! He wears the jeweled breastplate; ephod of gold and blue and purple and scarlet; miter and fine linen and gold; and girdle of needlework the High Priest wore on favored days—all typical of the Glory of the Lord Jesus now that He has gone within the veil.

With authority He pleads with God from the Throne of His power. He asks and He has. He speaks and it is done, for the Intercessor of the saints before the Throne of God is now the King immortal, eternal, invisible—the only wise God, our Savior! Oh, what prevalence there is in His plea! And when we give Him our cause to plead, how confident we may feel that the blessing will come to us. As a Priest our Redeemer not only pleads with God, but He blesses the people. It was the work of the High Priest to pronounce the benediction over the house of Israel. Jesus does that, but He does it royally! I mean He does it with the power of a king as well as with the commission of a priest. He does not merely wish us good, but He works us good! There is Omnipotent Sovereignty at the back of the priestly benediction. He that speaks and declares His people to be justified, accepted, preserved and blessed is He who can make good His words.

The benediction of Jesus, the Priest, is the benediction of Jesus the King! Let us rejoice and be glad in this.  
And now, Beloved, it is as a Priest that Jesus sends out His Gospel to the ends of the earth. In that Gospel He invites men to come to Him that He may purge them from their uncleanness. Today He speaks by us, His ministers, and bids men come to the great Priest that He may heal them of their leprosy and deliver them from all manner of defilement. But, mark you, it is an invitation from a King as well as from a Priest—and he that rejects it shall be counted guilty of disloyalty and high treason! “He that believes not shall be damned.” It is not, O sons of men, that Jesus offers you salvation and leaves it up to you whether you will have it or not! If you reject it your rejection will be required at your hands! Beware, you despisers, and wonder and perish!  
The invitation to the wedding of the great King is made freely, of His voluntary bounty, but if any who are bid shall refuse to come, the King will be angry and send forth His armies against those who thus proclaim their enmity. Jesus is not only Priest, asking you to come to Him and receive of His forgiving love, but He is King as well—and He will break, with a rod of iron, all that dare to trample on His blood and slight His priestly Grace. Thus I have put forward the combination in one form and testified that Jesus, as a Priest, is right kingly in all that He does.  
Let us now turn the other side of the Truth towards the light and see that as a King He always retains His priestly Character and, in the deeds of His Sovereignty, He acts not otherwise than as the High Priest of His people. The Lord Jesus Christ is King over all at this very moment. He reigns over the whole world and, notwithstanding all this hurly-burly of affairs, this perpetual clamor of wars and rumors of wars, His kingdom rules over all! Our Lord is Master of the game and He shall surely win at the end. “The government shall be upon His shoulders.”  
But, blessed be His name, our Lord’s kingly majesty is ever softened and sweetened by His priestly tenderness, otherwise He would have crushed this world out of existence long ago! If Rule had been all and Mercy had not claimed her share, Justice would have swept away this rebellious race! If Jesus were not Priest as well as King, He would say to His angels, “Go and smite that nation which refuses My Gospel. Destroy Antichrist that lifts his triple crown against My Sovereignty. Go and scourge that favored nation which, having the Gospel of peace, yet chooses war and with high looks and lofty words provokes bloodshed.”  
He does not destroy because His office is to forgive and save! A priest must show longsuffering, gentleness and compassion, for, to that end, is he taken from among men and ordained for men in the things of God. Such is our Lord—“He is not slack concerning His promise, but He is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” This longsuffering of the King leads to repentance— its intent is man’s salvation. We, who are short of patience, cry eagerly to Him, “Come, O King. Come, O King!” But He answers, “I tarry yet a while in mercy that still more may be gathered to My name and may wash themselves in My atoning blood.” Think of this, my Brothers and Sisters! Do not lower Christ’s Sovereignty, but at the same time learn to see it shining with gentler beams through the medium of His priestly Character!  
And, now, today, among His servants, Jesus alone is King and as King He commands us. He lays certain laws upon His servants and He bids us teach all men to observe His statutes. But, oh, it is so sweet to think that our King in Zion is also a faithful and merciful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, ready to help us and prompt to forgive us. My Brothers and Sisters, though Jesus commands you, yet He pities your weakness and helps you to obey. He has given you a Law, but He knows your feebleness and so He gives you Grace to keep it! Yes, and when you do not keep it, He has pity upon the ignorant and upon them that are out of the way—and your sins of ignorance and of transgression He continues, still, to put away.  
When His servants were about Him here on earth, He not only gave His commands to them, but He prayed for them that they might be kept from disobeying in the hour of trial. And He restored them when they had fallen. He not only ruled His little band of followers, but He kept them in the name of the Lord. He was their King and their Priest, too. Read the commands of Jesus with becoming reverence, for He is your king! But let them not distress you, for He knows your weakness and will help you to do what, of yourself, you are incapable of doing! He is King, but the priestly garment is always over the kingly vesture—whatever the ornaments of His imperial splendor, He is still clothed with a garment down to the feet. The priesthood covers all and removes all cause of dread from every believing mind.  
The same is true of our great King when He goes out to war. He is the Lord mighty in battle—in righteousness He does judge and make war. The Psalmist cries, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under You.” But the wars of Christ are not like the wars of earthly monarchs. His sword is not in His hand, but it goes out of His mouth—and with this He smites and rules the nations! He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, but it is His own blood!  
Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but this is a warfare of another fashion, for He wrestles not with men, but with their sins! Not with princes and armies, but with falsehood and iniquity! His victories are not those of mighty men who return from the fray amidst the groans of widows and the cries of orphans, but His bloodless triumphs make glad the poor and the oppressed and only crush down principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places, bringing good to all who seek His face! He is a King, but always the patron and true Priest of men. Among ourselves at this day, Beloved, we who know Him delight to acknowledge Him as our King. O Lord Jesus, You greater Joseph, the Shepherd and Stone of Israel, all our sheaves pay obedience unto Your sheaf and all Your father’s children bow down before You!  
You more glorious Judah, You are He whom Your brothers shall praise! Unto You shall the gathering of the people be! The Chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely are You. Yes, Beloved, this glorious One is our Brother and delights to be regarded as a Priest taken from among men, being one of ourselves, able to sympathize with our infirmities! Our Lord is higher than the highest and yet He stoops as low as the lowest. He is kingly even to Deity and yet so truly a Priest that in all our afflictions He is afflicted! He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Ruler of our race, He is yet partaker of our flesh and blood and He is acquainted with all our sorrows. True King and yet true Priest.  
Thus I would have you blend the idea in both ways and see Jesus as a royal Priest and a priestly King—  
*“Jesus, the King of Glory, reigns  
On Sion’s heavenly hill.  
Looks like a lamb that has been slain,  
And wears His priesthood still.”*  
Such is your Lord. May your view of Him be clear; your faith in Him be firm; your love to Him be fervent; your joy in Him be overflowing and your obedience to Him be constant. Trust the Priest and serve the King! And always pay your vows unto Him who is “a Priest upon His throne.”  
II. Secondly and very briefly, we shall now meditate upon THE HAPPY RESULT of all this. The text says, “The counsel of peace shall be between them both.” I confess myself unable dogmatically to interpret this passage, for there are no less than three possible meanings. I must give them all and leave you to judge for yourselves. The most natural reading, to my mind, is that when we shall see, in the Person of Christ, the King and the Priest combined, the counsel of peace shall be between them both. These offices, the King and the Priest, being combined in one, shall make a deep and lasting peace for us—a peace arranged by the deep thought and counsel of God—and therefore full of wisdom, truth, and certainty. When we see the Lawgiver Himself making Atonement for our transgressions, we have peace, indeed! When Ruler and Savior meet in one Person, the rest is sure and profound.  
Beloved, if this is not the meaning of the passage, it is at least a precious Truth of God. If we need peace, we can only obtain it by knowing Christ as Priest and King. The counsel of peace must lie between these two. Oh, do you know Christ, my dear Hearers, as your Priest? Have you seen Him offering Sacrifice for your sin? Does He stand, instead of you, before God? Do you present your prayers and your praises to God through Him? Well, then, you have begun to know what peace is, for peace comes through the blood of Jesus the Priest—peace by His righteousness, peace by His Sacrifice.  
But if, knowing this, you are still in trouble of heart, remember that you need to know Him, also, as your King. When He subdues your iniquities; when the power of sin is taken away as well as the guilt of it, then you shall know the perfection of peace. “Take My yoke upon you,” He says, “and learn of Me, and you shall find rest unto your souls.” It is not in a mere belief in Christ as your Savior that you will ever get perfect peace—it is by yielding up yourself unto Him that He may rule and reign over you completely. This Man shall be the peace when He is Lord as well as Priest. As long as your will rebels against your Redeemer’s rule, you cannot have unbroken rest. It is idle for you to talk about trusting in the blood of Jesus unless you submit to His scepter!  
The Cross itself cannot save you if you divorce it from the crown. Your Savior must be a Priest upon His Throne to you. His blood must be on your conscience and His yoke must be upon your neck. There is no counsel of peace until it is between both these—the kingly Priest, the priestly King, alone, can make and maintain the peace of God within you. That is a great and deep Truth of God—may we learn it well. But it is thought by some wise men that the text means the counsel of peace shall be between Jehovah, the Father, and the Son. I am not sure that such a meaning would suggest itself to every reader and as the most obvious meaning is generally to be preferred, I will not

ontend for this second meaning.  
However, as an interpretation, it is certainly not too far-fetched and, even if it cannot be sustained, it is certainly a very great Truth of God. It is between God, the Eternal Father, and Jesus Christ, our Melchizedek, or King-Priest, that the counsel of peace has been established on our behalf. You never know God so as to have peace with Him till you know God in human flesh. Only the Incarnate God can end the trouble of your spirit. Yes, and it must be that Incarnate God bleeding, suffering, dying, making expiation for sin and then rising to the Throne and ruling over all that must be seen before you can perceive how the infinitely glorious Jehovah can be at peace with you. God in Covenant is God at peace with man.  
There was a counsel between the Trinity at the making of man, “Let Us make man” and so, also, there was a counsel between the Divine Persons at the redemption of man—the counsel of peace is between them both. It is a joy for us to know that between Jesus, our Priest-King, and the Everlasting God, peace has been established for us. Peace which never can be broken! Our first Covenant head, Adam, broke the treaty and left us at war with God. But the second Adam has fulfilled and established the Covenant of Grace and, believing in His name, we have peace with God! But there is a third meaning and although I am not sure of it as the sense here, it is assuredly a blessed Truth and appears to me to be congruous with the connection. Let me go back to the historical circumstances. Here were these three men that had come from Babylon. The Prophet is to take them to the house of a Jew in Jerusalem. There might be some little differences between these men and the Jerusalem Jews. These Babylonian Jews had not come up to dwell in Jerusalem, but Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, was a resident there and he might have demurred and have said, “We cannot take your present to the Temple because you do not bring yourselves and come to abide with your own people.”  
No, but they were to go up, together, bearing the gold and silver crowns and put them upon the head of the priest. They were to go up in unity and love—and they were to furnish in their own persons, types of other far-off ones who should come to the great crowned Priest whose coming the Prophet had foretold. Thus said the Prophet, “They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and you shall know that the Lord of Hosts has sent Me unto you.” Now, certainly, it is in Jesus Christ, the Priest and King, that the Jews who were near and the Gentiles who were afar off are brought together and made one!  
In Him the middle wall of partition is broken down and the counsel of peace is between us both. The day shall come when our glorious Lord shall be more clearly manifested than now, in the glory of His Second Advent and when the Jews shall behold Him as the priestly King and bow before Him. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles also be gathered in and the Lord Jesus Christ shall reign over the whole earth. May that day speedily dawn! We have reason to expect it, therefore, let us pray for it and strive for its coming. Jesus the Priest and King is the uniter of the divided nations! Jew and Gentile are, after all, of one blood and one God is the Father of all—why should they not become one? “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,” but one touch of Jesus Christ shall do it infinitely better—shall do it once and for all!  
III. I close with the third point, which is this—THE ACTION WHICH IS HARMONIOUS WITH THESE TRUTHS. The connection of our text suggests to us to do exactly what the prophet Zechariah advised the Babylonian Jews and Josiah to do. I will read you what he said—“Take silver and gold and make crowns and set them upon the head of Joshua” or Jesus. This is what is to be done. First, “take.” “Take silver and gold.” That is, bring the choicest things you have. If Jesus Christ is Priest, should you not bring your offerings to Him! If Jesus Christ is King, should you not bring tribute to your King!  
If you have gold and silver, bring them, for to Him shall be given of the gold of Ophir. If you have talent, which is much more valuable than gold and silver, bring ability, tact, genius—bring all the acquisitions of learning, all the acquirements of experience—and all your natural talents and consecrate them all to Him. Whether you have these or not, bring your heart, which is more precious, by far! It is the very essence of your being— make this a crown for Jesus. Come, bring your soul, your life, your all. Has He redeemed you? Then be His forever! Is He your King? Do not mock Him with a half-hearted service—be loyal to such a Sovereign and serve Him with spirit, soul and body. Take silver and gold and bring them to Him. Bring your whole being to Him.  
What next? “Take,” then, “make.” “Make crowns.” Come, my Brothers and Sisters, I invite you to this occupation! You say, “We are neither goldsmiths nor silversmiths.” Nevertheless, make crowns! Try your hands, this morning, and make crowns for Jesus with such material as you have. Fashion the crown of memory. Think of what He has done for you from the first day until now. Interweave and intertwist the recollections of the past—hammer out the gold of gratitude—set in it the gems of love and make a crown for His dear head. Make crowns by holy contemplation and thought! Think how great your Lord is and how great He deserves to be blessed, ever-blessed!  
Then make crowns of purposes of what you hope to be and do. Plot and plan within your spirit something you have not yet done, which you are able to do before you go home to Heaven. Look for some child you may teach; some sinner you may woo and win; some treasure you may spend for Jesus; some precious promise you may whisper in the ears of the distressed; some holy enterprise you may suggest to earnest youth. Make crowns! It seems to me so sweet that it should be said, “Set them upon the head of Jesus.” Brothers and Sisters, let us crown Him ourselves. We hope to do so in Heaven—let us do it here. Our love shall be the gold, our praise shall find the gems, our thanksgivings and our humble labors shall furnish the silver and then we will set the golden chaplets about His brow which once was torn with thorns for us! Crowns for Jesus! Crowns for Jesus! Crowns for our priestly King! Let us make and bring them.  
I return to that blessed precept, “Set them upon the head of Jesus.” Whenever we have made a crown, let us take care to put it on His head ourselves. Have you ever, when you have been doing something for Him, or giving something to His cause, wished that you could present it to Him personally? Well, you may do so in spirit and that is as much a matter of fact as if you did it bodily. With your shoes off your feet, let your spirit draw near to Jesus and, in thought, offer to Him the deed which you have worked. Speak to Him and tell Him that this is done only for Him. I do not know a greater pleasure upon earth than to think of something you can do for Jesus—and then to do it for Him and to tell Him so!  
“Jesus, I did it all for You. I thought not of my Brothers and Sisters’ praise, nor do I think of it now, but I did this deed for You alone. Here is the best crown I can make and by Your Grace I put it on Your head.” The love of Jesus will suggest and produce many a deed which otherwise had never been done. If you have a beautiful alabaster box, it is not pleasant to break it and if you have choice ointment, it is not according to nature to pour it out upon another. No, but when you are before His feet, the feet of Jesus, your Lord, then is it a delight to break the alabaster box and to pour out its fragrant contents for Him! The utmost waste is economy when it is done for Him! And to sacrifice strength, soul, health, life is to save it all when it is spent for Him!  
Where should it go? Where should my all go? For what should my bodily frame be consumed? For what should my soul be poured out but for His honor? Do you not feel it so? You will, if you distinctly recognize that He is King and Priest. You will bring crowns to put on His head if you know who and what He is. And what is said last? It is said that this should be a memorial to those three men and to the brother who had entertained them. I suppose these crowns of silver and gold were hung up in the Temple and, when anybody said, “What are those crowns, yonder?” it would be answered, “Those are crowns which were made, by order of the Prophet Zechariah, by Heldai and Tobijah and Jedaiah, who came from Babylon. And they are in memory of those men and of the hospitality of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, who entertained them at his house when they came. They are hung up in the Temple in honor of the coming priestly King and in memory of those four men who presented an offering to the Lord.”  
It seems very amazing that God should allow, in His house, memorials of His servants, but He does so. And our great priestly King allows memorials of His people in His Temple now. We shall never forget, shall we, while the world stands, the sacrifice of Paul and how he made crowns and set them on the head of Jesus? Never while the earth lasts shall we forget the sacrifice of John, Peter and James. No, the Church will not forget the sacrifices of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Wycliffe. And the holy lives and ardent ministries of Whitefield and Wesley shall not be forgotten in the Church because they made crowns and set them on the head of Jesus!  
“Oh,” you say, “but we must not remember men!” “No,” I say, “we may remember men and, women, too, for our Lord has set us the example. “Wherever this Gospel is preached there shall this which this woman has done be mentioned for a memorial of her.” My Master thinks much of His people and in the plenitude of His great goodness the little things which they do for Him are held in remembrance. Did he not say of Cornelius, “Your prayers and your alms have come up as a memorial of you”? This is sweet to think upon. While our King-Priest shall have the crowns and wear them, yet we, if we bring love tokens and honorable spoils to Him, shall be remembered, too, in that day when He shall award the praise to His people, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servants.”  
The Lord whom we serve will immortalize our service by uniting it with His service! We shall rest from our labors, but our works shall follow us. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance! They shall shine forth as the sun when their Lord’s Glory shall be revealed. Their Priest shall make them priests! Their King shall make them kings and they shall forever be filled with the vision of the Priest upon His Throne. So may it be with us! Amen.

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CHRIST GLORIFIED AS THE BUILDER OF HIS CHURCH  
NO. 191

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 2, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS

**“He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory.” Zechariah 6:13.  
“There’s music in all things, if men had ears;  
This world is but the echo of the spheres.”**

HEAVEN sings evermore. Before the Throne of God, angels and redeemed saints extol His name. And this world is singing, too. Sometimes with the loud noise of the rolling thunder, of the boiling sea of the dashing cataract and of the lowing cattle. And often with that still, solemn harmony which flows from the vast creation, when in its silence it praises God. Such is the song which gushes in silence from the mountain lifting its head to the sky, covering its face sometimes with the wings of mist and at other times unveiling its snow-white brow before its Maker and reflecting back His sunshine. It gratefully thanks Him for the light with which it has been made to glisten and for the gladness of which it is the solitary spectator, as in its grandeur it looks down upon the laughing valleys. The tune to which Heaven and earth are set is the same in Heaven. They sing, “The Lord be exalted. Let His name be magnified forever.”

And the earth sings the same—“Great are You in Your works, O Lord! And unto You be glory.” It would seem, therefore, a strange anomaly if the Church, the temple of the living God, should be void of song and we bless God that such an anomaly does not exist, for “day and night they praise God in His temple.” And while it is true the ceaseless circles of the starry heavens are praising Him without cessation, it is also true that the stars of earth, the Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, are each of them evermore singing their hymns of praise to Him.

Today, in this house, thousands of voices shout His name and when the sun of today shall set, it shall rise upon another land where Christian hearts awakened shall begin to praise as we have just concluded. And when tomorrow we shall enter upon the business of the week, we will praise Him when we rise, we will praise Him when we retire to rest and we will solace ourselves with the sweet thought that when the link of praise here is covered with darkness, another golden link is sparkling in the sunshine in the lands where the sun is rising when it sets upon us.

And mark how the music of the Church is set to the same tune as that of Heaven and earth—“Great God, You are to be magnified.” Is not this the unanimous song of all the redeemed below? When we sing, is not this the

sole burden of our hosannas and hallelujahs?—“Unto Him that lives and sits upon the Throne, unto Him be glory, world without end.” Now, my text is one note of the song. May God help me to understand and to make you to understand it also. “He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory.”

We all know that the Lord Jesus Christ is here alluded to, for the context runs—“Behold the Man, whose name is the Branch”—which title is ever applied to the Messiah, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. “He grew up out of His place and He shall build the temple of the Lord. Even He shall build the temple of the Lord and He shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule upon His throne. And He shall be a priest upon His throne—and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

Now we shall notice this morning, first of all, the temple, that is the Church of Christ. We shall notice next, its builder—“He,” that is Jesus, “shall build the temple.” Then we shall stop a moment and pause to admire His glory—“He shall bear the glory.” Then we shall attempt, under the good hand of the Holy Spirit, to make some practical applications of the subject.

I. The first point is THE TEMPLE. The temple is the Church of God. And here let me begin by just observing that when I use the term “Church of God,” I use it in a very different sense from that in which it is sometimes understood. It is usual with many Church of England people to use the term “Church” as specially applying to the bishops, archdeacons, rectors, curates and so forth—these are said to be the Church and the young man who becomes a pastor of any congregation is said to “enter the Church.” Now I believe that such a use of the term is not Scriptural. I would never for one moment grant to any man that the ministers of the Gospel constitute the Church. If you speak of the army, the whole of the soldiers constitute it. The officers may sometimes be spoken of first and foremost, but still the private soldier is as much a part of the army as the highest officer.

And it is so in the Church of God—all Christians constitute the Church. Any company of Christian men gathered together in holy bonds of communion for the purpose of receiving God’s ordinances and preaching what they regard to be God’s Truths, is a Church. And the whole of these Churches gathered into one, in fact all the true Believers in Christ scattered throughout the world, constitute the One true Universal Apostolic Church, built upon a Rock, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail. Do not imagine, therefore, when I speak at any time of the Church, that I mean the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London and some twenty other dignitaries and the whole host of ministers.

Nor when I speak of the Church do I mean the deacons, the elders and pastors of the Baptist denomination, or any other—I mean all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth—for these make up the one Universal Church which has communion in itself with itself, not always in the outward sign, but always in the inward grace. The Church which was elect of God before the foundation of the world, which was redeemed by Christ with His own precious blood, which has been called by His Spirit, which is preserved by His grace and which at last shall be gathered in to make the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven.

Well, now, this Church is called the temple of God and Christ is said to be its Builder. Why is the Church called the temple? I reply very briefly, because the temple was the place where God especially dwelt. It was true that He did not wholly dwell in the temple made with hands, of man’s building, which Solomon piled upon the mount of Zion. But it is true that in a special sense the Infinite Majesty there held its tabernacle and its dwelling place. Between the wings of the overshadowing cherubim there did shine the bright light of the Shekinah, the type, the manifestation and the proof of the special presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

It is true God is everywhere. In the highest heavens and in the deepest Hell God is to be found—but especially did He dwell in His temple—so that when His people prayed, they were bid to turn their eye towards the temple as Daniel did when he opened his window towards Jerusalem and offered his prayer. Now such is the Church. If you would find God, He dwells on every hilltop and in every valley. God is everywhere in creation. But if you want a special display of Him, if you would know what is the secret place of the tabernacle of the Host High, the inner chamber of Divinity—you must go where you find the Church of true Believers. For it is here He makes His continual residence known—in the hearts of the humble and contrite who tremble at His Word.

Again, the temple was the place of the clearest manifestation. He who would see God the best of all, must see Him in His temple. I repeat, He was to be discovered everywhere. If you stood on Carmel’s top and looked towards the great sea wherein are all the ships and the great leviathan He had made to play therein, there might God be discovered in His great strength. If you turned your eye on the same hill and looked toward the vale of Esdraelon there was God to be seen in every blade of grass, in every sheep feeding by the stream. God is everywhere to be discovered. But if you would see Him it is not on Bashan, it is not on Sermon, it is not on Tabor. It was on Mount Zion that the Lord God loved to make a special display of Himself.

It is so with the Church. God is to be seen in the midst of her, her Helper, her Strength, her Teacher, her Guide, her Deliverer, her Sanctifier in holy communion—in the breaking of bread and in the pouring out of wine, in holy baptism—in the immersion of Believers into the Lord Jesus Christ. He is seen in the preaching of the Word, in the constant declaration of the great salvation of Jesus, in the lifting up of the Cross, in the high exalting of Him that died upon it, in the preaching of the Covenant, in the declaration of the grace of God—here is He to be seen, here is His name written in brighter letters and in clearer lines than elsewhere the

wide world over.

Hence His Church is said to be His temple. Oh, Christian people, you know this, for God dwells in you and walks with you. You dwell in Him and He dwells in you—“the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His covenant.” It is your happy privilege to walk with God. He manifests Himself to you as He does not unto the world. He takes you into His inner chamber. He manifests His love. The Song of Solomon is sung in your courts and nowhere else. It is not the song of the world, it is the sonnet of the inner chamber, the song of the house of wine, the music of the banquet. You understand this, for you have been brought into near acquaintance with Christ. You have been made to lean your head upon His bosom, you have been taught to look into His heart and to see eternal thoughts of love there towards you. You know, better than we can tell you, what it is to be the temple of the living God.

And once more. We should fail to describe the reason why the word “temple” is used to picture the Church if we did not observe that the Church is like the temple—a place of worship. There was a Law passed by God that no offering should be presented to Him except upon the one altar in His temple at Jerusalem and that Law is extant to this day. No acceptable service can be offered to Christ except by His Church. Only those who believe in Christ can offer songs and prayers and praises that shall be received of God. Whatever ordinances you attend to, who are without Christ in your hearts, you do belie that ordinance and prostitute it—you do not honor God.

Two men go up to the temple to pray, the one a Believer the other an unbeliever. He that is an unbeliever may have the gifts of oratory, the mightiest fluency of speech. But his prayer is an abomination unto God— while the most feeble utterance of the true Believer is received with smiles by Him that sits upon the Throne. Two persons go to the Master’s table— the one loves the ordinance in its outward sign and reverences it with superstition, but he knows not Christ. The other believes in Jesus and knows how to eat His flesh and drink His blood as a worthy partaker in that Divine ordinance. God is honored in the one, the ordinance is dishonored in the other.

Two persons come to holy Baptism—the one loves the Master, believes in His name and trusts Him. He is baptized, he honors Christ. Another comes, perhaps an unconscious infant, one who is incapable of faith. Or has no faith. He dishonors God, he dishonors the ordinance in venturing to touch it, when he is not one of the Church and therefore has no right to offer sacrifice of prayer and praise unto the Lord our God. There is only one altar—that is Christ. And there is only one set of priests, namely, the Church of God, the men chosen out of the world to be clothed in white robes to minister at His altar. And whosoever pretends to worship God, worships Him not. His offering is like that of Cain. God has no respect to his sacrifice, for without faith it is impossible to please God. We care not who it is that does the act—unless he believes he cannot win pleasure from God—nor shall his sacrifice be accepted.

I have thus noted the reasons why the Church is said to be the temple. As there was only one temple, so there is only one Church. That one Church is His holy place, where God dwells, where God accepts worship, where songs of praise are daily uttered and the smoking incense of prayer continually comes up before His nostrils with acceptance.

II. W e have an interesting subject in the second part of our text. “He shall build the temple of the Lord.” CHRIST IS THE CHURCH’S ONLY BUILDER. Now, I shall want to make a parallel between Christ’s building the Church and Solomon, as the builder of the first temple. When Solomon built the temple, the first thing he did was to obtain instructions with regard to the model upon which he should build it. Solomon was exceedingly wise, but I do not think he was his own architect. The Lord, who had shown the pattern of the old tabernacle in the wilderness to Moses, doubtless showed the pattern of the temple to Solomon, so that the pillars and the roof and the floor thereof were all ordained of God and every one of them settled in Heaven.

Now, Christ Jesus in this is no Solomon—with this exception—that being God over all, blessed forever, He was His own architect. Christ has made the plan of His Church. You and I have made a great many plans for the building up of that Church. The Presbyterian makes his plans extremely precise. He will put an elder in every corner and the Presbytery is the great groundwork—the pillar and the ground of the truth and right is he in so doing to an extent.

The Episcopalian builds his temple, too. He will have a bishop at the doorpost and he will have a priest to shut the gate. He will have everything built according to the model that was seen by Cranmer in the mount, if he ever was there at all. And those of us who are of severer discipline and have a simpler style, must have Christ’s Church always built in the congregational order—every congregation distinct and separate and governed by its own bishop and deacons and elders.

But mark, Christ does not attend to our points of Church government, for there is one part of Christ’s Church that is Episcopalian and looks as if a bishop of the Church of England had ordered it. Another part is Presbyterian, another Baptist, another, Congregational. And yet all these styles of architecture somehow fused into one by the Great Architect make that goodly structure which is called “the temple of Christ, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.” Christ must be His own architect. He will bring out different points of truth in different ways.

Why, I believe that different denominations are sent on purpose to set out different truths. There are some of our Brethren a little too high—they bring out better than any other people, the grand old truths of sovereign grace. There are some, on the other hand, a little too low. They bring out with great clearness the great and truthful doctrines of man’s responsibility. So that two truths that might have been neglected, either the one or the other—if only one form of Christianity existed—are both brought out,

both made resplendent, by the different denominations of God’s people, who are alike chosen of God and precious to Him.

God forbid I should say anything that would bolster up any in their errors. Nevertheless God’s people, even in error, are a precious people. Even when they seem to be as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter, they are still comparable to fine gold. Rest assured that the Lord has deep designs to answer, even by the divisions of His Church. We must not interfere with Christ’s reasons, nor with His style of architecture. Every stone that is in the temple, Jesus Christ ordained should be put where it is. Even those stones that are most contemptible and unseen, were put in their places by Him. There is not one board of cedar, one piece of burnished pinnacle that was not foreseen and prearranged in that eternal Covenant of Grace which was the great plan that Christ, the Almighty Architect, drew for the building of the temple to His praise. Christ, then, is the only Architect and He shall bear the glory, for He designed the building.

Now, remember that when Solomon set to work to build his temple, he found a mountain ready for his purpose, mount Moriah. The top of it was not quite broad enough, he had therefore to enlarge it, so that there might be room for the beautiful temple, the joy of the whole earth. When Jesus Christ came to build His temple, he found no mountain on which to build it. He had no mountain in our nature, He had to find a mountain in His own and the mountain upon which He has built His Church is the mountain of His own unchangeable affection, His own strong love, His own omnipotent grace and infallible truthfulness. It is this that constitutes the mountain upon which the Church is built and on this the foundation has been dug and the great stones laid in the trenches with oaths and promises and blood to make them stand secure, even though earth should rock and all creation suffer decay.

Then after Solomon had his mountain ready and the foundation built, the next trouble was he had no trees near at hand—there were, however, fine trees growing in Lebanon, but his servants had not skill enough to cut them down. He had therefore, to send for Hiram, king of Tyre, with his servants, to cut down the trees upon Lebanon, which, after being shaped according to the model, were to be sent by rafts or floats to Joppa, the port nearest to Jerusalem and there brought a short distance over land for the building of the temple.

He had to do the same with the stones of the quarry. For the different stones that were needed for the building had to be hewn out of the quarry by Hiram’s servants, assisted by some of Solomon’s people, who had inferior skill and therefore were set about the more laborious and rougher parts of the work. The same fact you will notice, if you will read the history of the building of Solomon’s temple, occurred with regard to the making of the vessels of the house. It is said that Hiram did cast them and Solomon found the gold. And the molds were made in the great plain and Solomon did cast them there, with Hiram for his chief designer and director.

Ah, but herein Solomon fails to be a type of Christ. Christ builds the temple Himself. There stand the cedars of Lebanon that the Lord has planted but they are not ready for the building. They are not cut down, nor shaped nor made into those planks of cedar, whose odoriferous beauty shall make glad the courts of the Lord in Paradise. No. Jesus Christ must cut them down with the axe of conviction. He must cut them up with the great saw of His Law, He must plane and polish them with His holy Gospel. And when He has made them fit to be pillars in the house of the Lord, then they shall be carried across the sea to Heaven. Then shall they be placed in His temple forever. No Hiram is needed. The axe is in His hand, the plane is in His hand, too. He understands well that business. Was He not a carpenter on earth?

And spiritually, He shall be the same to His Church forever and ever. It is even the same with the stones of the temple. We are like rough stones in the quarry. Behold the hole of the pit from where we were dug and the rock from where we were hewn. But we were hewn out of that rock by no hand but Christ’s. He raised up seed unto Abraham out of the stones of the pit. It was His own hammer that broke the rock in pieces and His own arm of strength that wielded the hammer when He dashed us from the rock of our sin. Though we are each of us being polished so that we may be ready for the temple, yet there is nothing that polishes but Christ. Afflictions cannot sanctify us, except as they are used by Christ as His mallet and His chisel. Our joys and our efforts cannot make us ready for Heaven apart from the hand of Jesus who fashions our hearts aright and prepares us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Thus you notice that herein Jesus Christ excels Solomon for He provides all the materials. He hews them Himself. He roughcasts them first and then afterwards, during life, polishes them till He makes them ready to transport them to the hill of God, whereon His temple is to be built. I was thinking what a pretty figure was that floating of the trees of Lebanon after being hewn into planks and made ready to be fixed as pillars of the temple—what a fine emblem of death! Is it not just so with us? Here we grow and are at length cut down and made ready to become pillars of the temple. Across the stream of death we are ferried by a loving hand and brought to the port of Jerusalem where we are safely landed, to go no more out forever, but to abide as eternal pillars in the temple of our Lord. Now you know the men of Tyre floated these rafts. But no stranger, no foreigner shall float us across the stream of death.

It is remarkable that Jesus Christ always uses expressions with regard to His people which impute their death to Him alone. You will recollect the expression in the Revelation—“Thrust in Your sickle and reap—for the time is come for You to reap. For the harvest of the earth is ripe.” But when He begins to reap, He reaps not the vintage—which represents the wicked that were to be crushed—but the harvest which represents the godly. Then it is said, “He that sat upon the Throne thrust in the sickle.”

He did not leave it to His angels, He did it Himself. It is so with the bringing of those planks and the moving of those stones. I say no king of Tyre and Sidon shall do it. Jesus Christ, who is the death of death, and Hell’s destruction—He Himself shall pilot us across the stream and land us safe on Canaan’s side. “He shall build the temple of the Lord.”

Well, after these things were brought, Solomon had to employ many thousand workmen to put them in their proper places. You know that in Solomon’s temple there was no sound of hammer heard, for the stones were made ready in the quarries and brought all shaped and marked so that the masons might know the exact spot in which they were to be placed—so that no sound of iron was needed. All the planks and timbers were carried to their right places and all the catches with which they were to be linked together were prepared so that there might not even be the driving of a nail—everything was ready beforehand.

It is the same with us. When we get to Heaven, there will be no sanctifying us there, no squaring us with affliction, no hammering us with the rod, no making us. We must be made meet here. And blessed be His name, all that Christ will do beforehand. When we get there, we shall not need angels to put this member of the Church in one place and that member in another. Christ who brought the stones from the quarry and made them ready, shall Himself place the people in their inheritance in Paradise. For He has Himself said, “I go to prepare a place for you and if I go away, I will come again and I will receive you unto Myself.”

Christ shall be His own usher, He shall receive His people Himself. He shall stand at the gates of Heaven Himself to take His own people and to put them in their allotted heritage in the land of the blessed. I have no doubt you have read many times the story of Solomon’s temple and you have noticed that he overlaid all the temple with gold. He provided much of the substance, but his father David brought him a good store. Now Jesus will overlay all of us with gold when He builds us in Heaven. Do not imagine we shall be in Heaven what we are today. No, Beloved, if the cedar could see itself after it had been made into a pillar, it would not know itself. If you could see yourselves as you shall be made, you would say, “It does not yet appear how great we must be made.” Nor were these pillars of cedars to be left naked and unadorned—though they had been fair and lovely then—they were overlaid with sheets of gold. So shall we be. “It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body,” plated with pure gold—no longer what it was, but precious, lustrous, glorified.

And in the temple we understand there was a great brazen sea in which the priests did wash themselves and there were other brazen seas in which they washed the lambs and bullocks when they were offered. In Heaven there is a great laver in which all our souls have been washed, “for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Now Christ Himself prepares this sacred sea. He filled it with blood from His own veins. As for our prayers and praises, the great laver in which they are washed was also made and filled by Christ—so that they with us are clean and we offer acceptable sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I say again, before I leave this head, there is no part of the great temple of the Church which was not made by Christ. There is a great deal in the Church on earth that Christ had nothing to do with, but there is nothing in His true Church and nothing especially in His glorified Church, which was not put there by Him. Therefore, we may well come to the conclusion, on the last head, here, He shall bear all the glory, for He was the only Builder of it

III. Now, what a sweet thing it is to try and GLORIFY CHRIST. I am happy this morning to have a subject that will magnify my Master. But is it not a sad thing, that when we would magnify Christ most, our poor, failing lips refuse to speak? Oh, if you would know my Master’s glory, you must see it for yourselves, for like the Queen of Sheba, the half can never be told you, even by those who know Him most and love Him best. Half His glory never can be told. Pause awhile and let me endeavor to address to you a few loving words. Your Master, O you saints of the Lord, has prepared you and will build you into His temple. Speak and say, He shall have all the glory.

Let us note, first, that the glory which He shall have will be a weighty glory. Dr. Gill says, “the expression implies that the glory will be a weighty one, for it said, ‘He shall bear the glory.’ ” “They shall hang,” says another expression, “upon Him all the glory of His Father’s house.” And in another place, we are told, that there is “an exceeding weight of glory,” which is prepared for the righteous. How great then, the weight of glory which shall be given to Christ! Oh, think not that Christ is to be glorified in such humble measure as He is on earth! The songs of Heaven are nobler strains than ours. The hearts of the redeemed pay Him loftier homage than we can offer. Try not to judge of the magnificence of Christ by the pomp of kings, or by the reverence paid to mighty men on earth. His glory far surpasses all the glory of this time and space.

The honor which shall be bestowed upon Him is as the brightness of the sun. The honors of earth are but the twinkling of a fading star. Before Him, at this very day, principalities and powers do bow themselves. Ten thousand times ten thousand seraphim wait at His footstool. “The chariots of the Lord are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels,” and all these wait His beck and His command. And as for His redeemed, how do they magnify Him?—never staying, never changing, never wearying. They raise their shout higher and higher and higher and yet louder and louder still—the strain is lifted up and evermore it is the same. “To Him that lives and was dead and is alive forevermore, unto Him be glory, world without end.”

And note again, that this glory is undivided glory in the Church of

Christ in Heaven—no one is glorified but Christ. He who is honored on earth has someone to share the honor with him, some inferior helper who labored with him in the work. But Christ has none. He is glorified and it is all His own glory. Oh, when you get to Heaven, you children of God, will you praise any but your Master? Calvinists, today you love John Calvin—will you praise him there? Lutherans today you do love the memory of that stern Reformer—will you sing the song of Luther in Heaven? Followers of Wesley, you have a reverence for that evangelist—will you in Heaven have a note for John Wesley? None, none, none! Giving up all names and all honors of men, the strain shall rise in undivided unison— “unto HIM that loved us, that washed us from our sins in HIS blood, unto HIM be glory forever and ever.”

But again—He shall have all the glory. All that can be conceived, all that can be desired, all that can be imagined shall come to Him. Today you praise Him, but not as you can wish. In Heaven you shall praise Him to the summit of your desire. Today you see Him magnified, but you see not all things put under Him. In Heaven all things shall acknowledge His dominion. There every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue confess that He is Lord. He shall have all the glory.

But to conclude on this point, this glory is continual glory. It says He shall bear all the glory. When shall this dominion become depleted? When shall this promise be so fulfilled that it is put away as a worn out garment? Never—

*“While life and thought and being last,*

*Or immortality endures,”*  
we shall never leave off praising Christ. We think we can almost guess how we shall feel when we get to Heaven with regard to our Master. Methinks if I should ever be privileged to behold His blessed face with joy, I shall want nothing but to be allowed to approach His Throne and cast what little honor I may have before His feet and then be there and evermore adore the matchless splendor of His love, the marvels of His might.

Suppose someone entering were to say to the redeemed, “Suspend your songs for a moment! You have been praising Christ, lo, these six thousand years—many of you have without cessation praised Him now these many centuries! Stop your song a moment—pause and give your songs to someone else for an instant.” Oh, can you conceive the scorn with which the myriad eyes of the redeemed would smite the tempter?

“Stop from praising Him? No, never! Time may stop, for it shall be no more. The world may stop, for its revolutions must cease. The universe may stop its cycles and the moving of its world but for us to stop our songs—never, never!” And it shall be said, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” He shall have all the glory and He shall have it forever. His name shall endure forever. His name shall continue as long as the thousands of suns—men shall be blessed in Him and all generations shall call Him blessed. Therefore shall they praise Him forever and ever.

IV. Now, in conclusion, let us make A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF OUR TEXT. Brothers and Sisters, are we today built upon Christ? Can we say that we hope that we are a part of His temple—that His handiwork has been exhibited upon us and that we are built together with Christ? If so, listen to one word of exhortation. Let us evermore honor Him. Oh, methinks every beam of cedar and every slab of gold and every stone of the temple felt honored when it was raised up to be a part of the fabric for Jehovah’s praise. And if that cedar, that marble, could have been vocal in that day when the flame descended from Heaven—the token of Jehovah’s Presence—the store and the cedar and the gold and the silver and the brass—all would have burst out into song and would have said, “We praise You, O God, for You have made the gold more than gold and the cedar more than cedar, inasmuch as You have consecrated us to be the temple of Your indwelling.”

And now, will you not do the same? O my Brothers and Sisters! God has highly honored you to be stones in the temple of Christ. When you think of what you were and what you might have been—how you might have been stones in the black dungeons of vengeance forever—dark damp stones, where the mobs and the greed and the slimy thing forever might have lived—disgraced, abandoned, cast away in blackness of darkness forever. When you think of this and then remember that you are stones in Jehovah’s temple—living stones—oh, you must say that you will praise Him, for man is more than man, now that God dwells in him.

Daughters of Jerusalem, rejoice! You are more than women now. Sons of Israel, rejoice! For your manhood is exalted, He has made you temples of the Holy Spirit—God dwelling in you and you in Him. Go out from this place and sing His praise. Go forth to honor Him and while the dumb world wants you to be its mouth, go and speak for the mountain, for the hill, for the lake, for the river, for the oak and for the insect—speak for all things. For you are to be like the temple, the seat of the worship of all worlds. You are to be like the priests and offerer of the sacrifices of all creatures.

Let me address myself last of all to others of you. Alas, my Hearers, I have many here who have no portion in Israel, neither any lot in Jacob. How many of you there are who are not stones in the spiritual temple, never to be used in the building up of God’s Jerusalem. Let me ask you one thing. It may seem a slight thing today to be left out of the roll of Christ’s Church—will it seem a slight thing to be left out when Christ shall call for His people? When you are all assembled around His great white throne at last and the books shall be opened, oh, how dreadful the suspense, while name after name is read! How dreadful your suspense, when it comes to the last name and yours has been left out! That verse of our hymn has often impressed me very solemnly—

*“I love to meet among them now,  
Before Your gracious feet to bow,  
Though vilest of them all.  
But can I bear the piercing thought —*

***What if my name should be left out,  
When You for them shall call?”***

Sinner conceive it! The list is read and your name unmentioned. Laugh at religion now! Scoff at Christ now! Now that the angels are gathering for the judgment! Now that the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long— now that the heavens are red with fire, that the great furnace of Hell overleaps its boundary and is about to encircle you in its flame—now despise religion! Ah, no. I see you. Now your stiff knees are bending, now your bold forehead for the first time is covered with the hot sweat of trembling. Now your eyes that once were full of scorn are full of tears—you do look on Him whom you did despise and you are weeping for your sin.

O Sinner, it will be too late then. There is no cutting of the stone after it gets to Jerusalem. Where you fall there you lie. Where judgment ends, there eternity shall leave you. Time shall be no more when judgment comes—and when time is no more—change is impossible! In eternity there can be no change, no deliverance, no signing of acquittal. Once lost, lost forever. Once damned, damned to all eternity. Will you choose this and despise Christ? Or will you have Christ and have Heaven?

I charge you by Him that shall judge the quick and the dead, whose I am and whom I serve, who is the searcher of all hearts—choose this day whom you will serve. If sin is best serve sin and reap its wages. If you can make your bed in Hell, if you can endure eternal burnings, be honest with yourself and look at the wages while you do the work. But if you would have Heaven, if you would be among the many who shall be glorified with Christ, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe now, today! “If you will hear His voice harden not your hearts as in the provocation.” “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” Brothers and Sisters, Mothers and Fathers, believe and live! Cast yourself at Jesus’ feet, put your trust in Him—

*“Renounce your works and ways with grief,*

*And fly to this most sure relief,”*  
giving up all you are to come to Him, to be saved by Him now and saved eternally. O Lord, bless my weak but earnest appeal, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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GOD OR SELF—WHICH?  
NO. 438

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 9, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Speak unto all the people of the land and to the priests, saying, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years,  
did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?  
And when you did eat and when you  
did drink, did not you eat for  
yourselves and drink  
for yourselves.”  
Zechariah 7:5, 6.**

AFTER the Jewish people had been thoroughly cured of their idolatrous tendencies by their seventy years of captivity, they fell into another evil— they became superstitiously regardful of ceremonies but they lost the life and spirit of devotion and neglected the weightier matters of the Law.

Phariseeism, in the spirit of it, had commenced, in the time of Zechariah. Great attention was paid to the formalities and externals of worship, but the vitality of godliness was unknown. The mint, the anise, the cummin of religion—these were all strictly tithed. But truth, mercy, charity, justice, were trod under foot. They multiplied ceremonies to themselves, apart from God’s Word. They had fasts which Moses never commanded, and feasts of which the tabernacle in the wilderness knew nothing.

They had ordained for themselves a certain fast for the burning of the temple by the Chaldees, and a question which seemed to them very important had arisen, as to whether this fast should be observed now that the temple was rebuilt. The Jews in Persia sent an honorable deputation to Jerusalem upon this important matter. They received no direct answer, for it was nothing to the Lord their God whether they fasted or not, since He had not commanded it, and could not accept their will-worship at their hands.

Learn this, then, with regard to all religious ceremonies whatever. If they are not expressly commanded of God, it is a small matter how men keep them. In fact, it were vastly better if they left them alone. Some time ago in convocation, the very wonderful question was discussed as to whether a child’s father and mother might be its godfather and godmother. Is there not a prior question? Does the Lord ordain such offices in His Word? And again, has He anywhere commanded infants to be sprinkled?

What matters it how the deed is done if the Lord has not ordained it in Holy Scripture? To the Law and to the testimony. If you find it not there, though you keep every rubric of your Church, you have not done it unto God, for He has not required it at your hands. “In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” I would that all our Churches were willing to search for the foundation of all their ceremonies in Scripture. This is the way to promote true Christian unity. Not to hide our views but to speak plainly. Not to settle down upon our old rituals, but to examine them and see whether they are of God or not, for

let us be sure of this—if we do anything which is not according to God’s Word, in whatever spirit we may do it, or however well we may perform it—it is not a service that God can accept of us.

However, though these deputies obtained no answer upon that point, since it was not material whether they did fast or not, yet they had some information upon a much more vital matter. They were informed by the questions asked of them, that all religion must have God for its object, or else it was nothing before Him. The question was solemnly asked of them and upon its answer all depended—“When you fasted did you fast unto Me? Or when you feasted on your solemn feast days did you not eat to yourselves and drink to yourselves?”

I shall try, this morning, to work out this great Scriptural Truth, first showing that in our religious worship our doing it unto God is the main thing. Secondly, that in the world our service to God must be done for His own sake, or else it is nothing. And, thirdly, we shall use our text as a test of our condition before God, asking ourselves solemnly whether we have lived unto God, or whether we have been all this while living to ourselves, eating to ourselves, and drinking to ourselves.

I. First of all, then, WITH REGARD TO OUR RELIGIOUS WORSHIP. You know, Brethren, there are various modes in which the Christian Church attempts to worship God. And we are not about, this morning, to discuss the acceptableness of these different methods—whether it shall be by book or extemporary—whether it shall be with sound of music or with the joyous voices of men and women. Whether the ceremony shall be pompous or simple—whether it shall be under the consecrated dome, or in an ordinary chamber.

These are matters of secondary importance, for they concern only the carcass, while we have now to deal with the soul of worship. We are apt to fall into a mistake and value the services of Sunday for something which God does not regard. For instance, in the singing of God’s praises it is well to have melody that we may sing with our understanding as well as with our spirit. But after all, if any man shall be satisfied because his voice has been in tune and time, in singing the words of the Psalm, and if he shall think that therefore he has praised God, alas, how mistaken he is!

Or in the prayer. If we shall think that a certain fluency, an apparent reverence and propriety of expression are the only necessary things, and if we forget that we are worshipping God, alas, what is our prayer? We might as well have been dumb. And if in preaching our hearers shall regard merely the orthodoxy of the doctrine, or the eloquence, or the fitness of the style, alas, they have not worshipped God, because in all this they forget the question “Have you heard as unto God? Have you sung as unto God? Did you pray as unto God?”

For if not, though the sermon is orthodox and eloquent, though the singing is as the voice of many waters, though the prayer goes up to Heaven and seems to be unexceptionable in expression, yet the worship is only vain and worthless, lacking holiness unto the Lord, since it is not done as unto God and is not really an offering unto Him. Take that as the guide, this morning, and I think I may speak home to your consciences.

How many who frequent the House of Prayer, worship God carelessly? They sing, but with no more heart than if they were singing in their own houses some common ditty. The prayer is offered and often that is the dullest part of the service, and their eyes are gazing about here and there. Or if the eyes of the head are shut, the eyes of their hearts are open enough, looking not, however, to God, but to vanity. And when the sermon is delivered they care but little for its precious message, or if they lend some attention, yet what a weariness it is!

You see in some congregations nodding heads and eyes that are given to slumber. They think there is nothing particular in hearing the Gospel. They listen to the entreaty of God’s ambassador as to a thrice told tale but that is all. Were it an oration upon politics, they night be a great deal more enthusiastic than they are, and if it were anything which touched their personal estates, they would be forward to catch every word. But as it is only about their souls, only about eternity, only about God, it does not mean much!

Now, think—do you really think that your thus coming up to God’s House is acceptable in His sight? If you come thus, you have not come to Him. You have not come to worship Him. How can He take this at your hands? What would you think if a courtier, who should pretend to be doing honor to his monarch, should be nodding before the throne, sleeping in the audience chamber? What would you think if some person should have the audience of a king, and while the petition is yet in his hands, should be gazing about with a vacant stare, or turning his back upon the throne?

Surely this were insult, instead of homage, and well might the gates of the palace be barred forever against the wretch whose conduct should be thus infamous. Let us take care that we are not satisfied with merely sitting in our pews and maintaining an apparently decorous behavior in

God’s House, for— *“God abhors the sacrifice,  
Where not the heart is found.”*

A larger number of our attendants miss the mark in another way. They are not altogether careless, but still their worship is not done as unto God, for they are content with the service itself. Provided they have sung— have somewhat joined in the prayer—and to some degree enjoyed the service, they are content, although no dew from Heaven rests upon their hearts. They look merely to man and no further, and if the minister should be in a low frame of mind—and what mortal can help that at times?—these persons, never having learned to seek God in His sanctuary, say that it was no means of Divine Grace to their souls.

The pitcher was empty and as they had not learned to draw directly from the well, they went home thirsty. They looked to the man and never thought of his Master. It is no marvel that the opportunity has been a lost one to them. Blessed are they who come up to God’s House to use the means, but not to rest in them—but rather desiring to find the God of the means in the means! Oh, how glorious it is when the song carries me up to Heaven’s courts! How blessed when the prayer is offered, if my soul can breathe its desire into the ear of Christ and have fellowship with Him. Oh, it is blessed to be in God’s House when the Lord Himself is in our midst!

What if the preacher should miscarry?—if all the while I am lifting up my heart to God, desiring that His Truth should be blessed to me, I shall profit under him. He may be clownish, but he will not be so to me. His expressions may be out of order, but they will reach my heart. And even if

his heart should not be affected, yet mine will be if I am having dealings with God and not with man.

Oh, how many of you come here to hear the man, to gratify your curiosity, to regale your ears, to find matter for conversation—but not to behold the beauty of the Lord, nor to enquire in His Temple. Well, we are glad to see you anyhow, for we hope that being in the way, God will meet with you. But I would have you savingly converted, and then you will come here to hear God’s Word, to talk to God, to speak to God. Is it not true that some of you do not use the Day of Rest and the House of Prayer for their real purpose, which is that man may meet with God?

There was a man who professed great love to his friend and therefore he would spend a day in his company. He rapped at the door and the servant said the master was not at home. “It does not matter,” he said, “I will wait inside and take my ease. I shall do quite as well though the master is not at home if you will bring me abundance to eat and drink.” So he entered and took a chair and made himself very comfortable and feasted to his heart’s content. And he went home boasting that he had enjoyed the visit.

Then his companions asked him—“Was the master there?” “Oh no, he was not there.” “But I thought you went to see him?” He had pretended a great desire to have converse with his friend but evidently he was lying, for if he had gone to see the master and the master had not been at home, he would have said—“Well, I will call another day but I have missed my errand this time.”

So there are some who go up to the House of God. They think they go there to worship the Lord. They have no enjoyment of His Presence, they have no communion with His Son, they have no indwelling of His Spirit but they enjoy the day for all that, which shows they did not go to worship God at all. When we put the question to them—“Did you at all fast unto the Lord” their answer must be—“No, verily, we only sought self. We did not seek the Master’s Presence.”

But there are others and these are not a few, who think they worship God acceptably when they merely do so as a matter of custom. It is a lamentable fact that in many of the suburban parts of this great city, where new villas are rising up, thousands of the people never attend any place of worship—I will not say because, being in the country, they are withdrawn from the wholesome restraints of society, but because, at any rate they do not feel its constraints.

They can spend the morning in bed, or the afternoon in the garden, too glad that they are not under the sorrowful burden of going to a place of worship. But with some of you it is the reverse. You are in such a position that you would hardly be counted respectable if you did not frequent a Church or Chapel—and so you go. The Sunday morning very properly sees you arrayed in your best garments and you enter the House of God with the multitude. But if you go there only as a matter of custom, do not think that God accepts your worship, for you rather obey your neighbors than your God.

Have you ever heard of the traveler, who, when he was in Protestant England, was accounted a devout follower of the Reformers? Sometime, when his course of journey led him to Rome, and as often as there was the mass, he might be observed among the crowd, bowing as they bowed, a thorough Papist. Soon he made a journey to Mecca that he might see the world and there, among the Mohammedan, he was as reverent as any—quite willing to receive the dogma of the Prophet.

Some who heard of it said, “What is this? How can you act so?” And he said, “Oh, when I am in Rome, I do as Rome does. And when I am at London, I do as London does. And when I am at Mecca I do as Mecca may do. It is all the same to me,” and straightway all who knew him despised him. We have some such in England. They happen to live near Christian people and they do the same as they do. Oh, my dear Hearers, I fear many of you would have been idolaters if that had been the custom of the country, and if so, what is the value of your worship?

No doubt, also, there is a small sprinkling of people attending all places of worship who come as a matter of profit, which is detestable. We have heard of some country towns—I do not think it takes place much in London, for it does not pay—where people ask, “Which is the most respectable congregation in this town? We must take a seat there.” Now what are they doing when they pretend to be worshipping God? Why, Sirs, if that is the reason why they go to a certain place of worship, they are following their trade on the Lord’s day—and as far as the sin of it goes, they might as well have their shop open as shut—for they carry their shops on their backs to the place of worship.

We suspect that some come among us for this reason. Christ had such followers. There were loaves and fishes to be given away, and therefore they fell into raptures—“What a sweet Preacher! What a profitable ministry! We are so fed under Him.” And they flocked in multitudes to listen to Him that they might afterwards eat and be filled.

I remember one case of this kind that came under my own knowledge. Preaching about in the country, I had often noticed in a certain county, a man in a smock frock who was a regular follower. He seemed to be amazingly attentive to the service, and thinking that he looked an extremely poor man, I one day gave him five shillings. When I preached twenty miles off he was there again, and I gave him some more help fancying that he was a tried child of God. When I was preaching in another place in the same county, he was there again! The thought suddenly struck me whether that man did not find something more attractive in the palms of my hands than in the words of my lips, so I gave him no more.

The next time I saw him he put himself in my way but I avoided him. And then, at last being again in the same county, he came up and asked me to give him something. “No,” I said, “you will not have anything now. I see what you have come for. You have only come pretending to delight in the Word and to be so profited by it, whereas it is profit you get out of me, not profit from the Gospel.” These people—there are such in all congregations—ought, at least, to be well aware that their pretended worship of God is detestable in His sight.

If you have had meat in your hands and a dog has followed you, you might feel pleased that the dog had taken a great affection to your person. But as soon as the meat was gone, when he turned his tail, you discovered that it was an affection for the meat and not for you. Such are some who come to God’s House. They have an affection for what is given by the charity of the saints, but they have no love to the saints nor to the saints’ Master. The sooner such people mend their ways, the better. This cupboard love, this love of God for what they get out of Him, is despicable to honest men, and it must be an abomination in the sight of the Most High.

Once more only upon this point. Beyond a doubt, some public worship is offered by those who attend our sanctuaries, in the idea that they are getting merit by it. Well, Sir, and so you prayed because you thought to atone for sin by it? You sang to help yourself to Heaven? You heard a sermon to help yourself to be accepted before God? You have done it to yourself, and the Lord’s voice to you is—“Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me? Did you not eat unto yourselves and drink unto yourselves?”

All religious worship done with a view that we may thereby be meritoriously saved, is really only a service rendered unto our own interests and not unto God. How can we expect the Eternal One to accept as an offering to Himself, what is really an offering to our own selfishness? “But is not a man to do anything to save himself?” you ask. No, I answer—NO! NO! NO! He is to let Christ save him. By faith, he is to put himself in Christ’s hands, that Christ may save him. Then after that he may do as much as ever he can out of gratitude to his Savior.

Why, Sirs, when your servile works are done to gain a righteousness, do you think you win the approbation of Heaven? What? Build a palace for God out of the mud of your own selfishness? Think that God can be bribed to bless you by deeds which you have done with self as a motive? God hates that which a man does with the idea that he can win the Lord’s love. You must come to God as undeserving of anything at His hands. Take His love and His mercy freely, and then go and do good works, and pray, and sing, and preach if you can, but never with a view of getting good to yourselves—but only that you may glorify Him and at last may enter into His rest.

I say, and with this I leave the point, that that Worship, and that worship only, which is for God and not for self in any sense, God accepts. And whether it is with a view to temporal profit, or from mere custom, or with a view to merit, that we attend to spiritual ordinances, rites, ceremonies, or what not—we have done nothing that God can receive—and we might as well have left the whole undone.

II. But now I shall turn to a wider circle for a moment or two. BY THIS WE MAY TEST ALL THE OTHER RELIGIOUS ACTS OF MEN.  
Many a brave deed has been done with the sound of which the world has rung for years which nevertheless has never been received by the Most High. Some have served God out of ostentation, that they might show what great things they could do. Remember Jehu when he said, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord God of Hosts.” Jehu has many imitators.  
“Lend me your pen, Sir.” “Yes.” “I hereby write my name for five thousand pounds at the head of the list. Is not that an acceptable offering to God? There are very few in England that will give as much as I have— report it in all the newspapers. Shouldn’t the world know that there still exists one liberal man?” Is not that splendid gift accepted? No, Brethren, certainly not, because it was given for his own praise and for his own glory and not for the glory of God.  
If it is our earnestness in preaching the Gospel, if we are only earnest in order that people may think us earnest—if we are only zealous that men may say of us, “That man does more than the rest. What a zealous, earnest man he is”—we have offered nothing to God. We have been sacrificing on our own shrines and offering incense before our own image.  
A certain king had a minstrel and he bade him play before him. It was a day of high feasting. The cups were flowing and many great guests were assembled. The minstrel laid his fingers among the strings of his harp and woke them all to the sweetest melody, but the hymn was to the glory of himself. It was a celebration of the exploits of song which the bard had himself performed. He had excelled high Howell’s harp and emulated great Llewellyn’s lay. In high-sounding strains he sang of himself and all his glories.  
When the feast was over the harpist said to the monarch, “Oh King, give me my guerdon. Let the minstrel be paid.” And the king said, “You have sung unto yourself—pay yourself—your own praises were your theme. Be yourself the paymaster.” He cried, “Did I not sing sweetly? O, king, give me the gold!” But the king replied, “So much the worse for your pride that you should lavish such sweetness upon yourself.”  
Brethren, even if a man should grow gray-headed in the performance of good works, yet when at the last, if it is known that he has done it all to himself, his Lord will say, “You have done well enough in the eyes of man but so much the worse, because you did it only to yourself, that your own praises might be sung, and that your own name might be extolled.” That is a singular text in Hosea—“Israel is an empty vine. He brings forth fruit unto himself.” There was fruit, only it was brought forth to himself, which before God is emptiness.  
Take care of ostentation. Be ready to serve God when none can see you. Prefer not to let your right hand know what your left hand does. Shun the very thought of getting a market for your own honor. Go behind the wall and serve your Master, sooner than sound the trumpet before you in the streets. When Mr. Morrison, the Missionary to China, needed an assistant, Mr. Milne, afterwards the celebrated Dr. Milne, offered himself. As soon as the examiners had talked with him, they saw that his heart was right enough but he had a clownish look and a dullness of expression.  
When the youth was gone out of the room, one of the examiners said, “He is scarcely a proper person to send, we need a man of greater intellect.” At last they agreed that they had better send him as a servant, the servant of the mission, to do the work of the household—clean Dr. Morrison’s boots and such like things, I suppose. So Dr. Phillip was requested to communicate this to him and he told him that the committee did not feel he was qualified to go as a Missionary, would he mind going as a servant? The youth’s eye sparkled and he said, “It is too much honor for me even if I am but a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the Lord my God.”  
And thus he went forth and afterwards, as you know, became one of the most useful of missionaries. How many a man would have said, “Gentlemen, I did not come for that. This is treating me with a want of respect. Surely you do not know who I am, or else you would not suppose for a moment that I would be willing to be a mere drudge, and menial servant!” They know not the Lord who only desire His service for the honor which it brings—but they have their hearts right before Him who want no honor for themselves but only desire that His name may be extolled above the hills—that He may be made famous in the earth.  
What would you say of a workman whom you should employ to build a house for you and who, when the house was done, should prepare a piece of stone with his own name upon it to be put right in the front so that everybody might say that he had built it? Why, you would say, “No, Sir, it is mine to choose the inscription. It is my house, not yours.” Did you ever hear of a pen that after a book had been written, required its own name placed at the bottom? It was enough for the real author to be known. What mattered it whether it was a gold pen, or a steel pen, or a quill pen that wrote it?  
So you and I are only God’s pens. He uses us and why ought we to care to be known? No, let the real Author be known, for “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” There was the difference between John Wesley and George Whitfield. Mr. George Whitfield had all the popularity of Mr. Wesley and all the opportunity that John had to make a denomination but he said, “No. I do not condemn my Brother, John, but I could not do what he does. Let my name perish. Let only Christ’s name last forever.”  
The day will come when the man who was willing that his name should perish rather than it should supplant the brighter name of Christ, will shine all the brighter for this self-denial. Let us mind that we have no sinister ends, no selfish objects in view. But let it be God alone, Christ alone, and His glory alone, or else we may ask ourselves the question afresh— “Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me? And when you did eat and when you did drink, did not you eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?”  
Again upon this point. How many of our religious actions, our attempts to propagate the Gospel of Christ have been very greatly promoted by strife and rivalry? Sometimes the strife has occurred in a single congregation, and a new Chapel has been built because some few disrespectful words were spoken and a slight disagreement ripened and rotted into a quarrel. The general public has thought, “Well, the persons who contributed to that new place must certainly have done some service to God.” But it may be that it was really service to the devil, for they only built it that they might gratify their own resentments and say to those whom they left, “See how well we can do without you.”  
How often have different Christians strived to increase their congregations or their denominations out of a spirit of jealous rivalry? The Wesleyans were awake, therefore the Baptists must be. Or the Church of England had a school and therefore the Dissenters must. How many have run in the race that they might keep up with, or exceed their rivals? Now concerning religious rivalry and religious strife, whatever others may have said of it, we only say, “These things are not of God.” The Lord may say of all that we have ever done out of mere denominational pride, out of jealousy and to make our own names great in the earth—“Did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me? When you did eat and when you did drink, did you not do it unto yourselves?”  
I would to God we were all contending earnestly for the faith and provoking one another to love and to good works! But to do good for the mere sake of doing more than some person whom I look upon as my rival is not serving God. It is indulging my weaker passions under the pretense of honoring the Lord. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I have had to ask myself this question scores of times, “Have I done it unto God?” I have gone groaning from this platform because I could not preach as I wished, but this has been my comfort, “Well, I did desire to glorify Christ. I did desire to free my conscience of the blood of men. I did want to tell men the whole Truth of God whether they liked it or not.”  
But sometimes when I have got on better and the words have flowed fluently and the sentences have had a little polish about them (they have not much at any time) I have thought, “Well, I went on pretty well this morning.” Just then my conscience has smote me—“You made the people pleased but did you glorify your Master? Did you lay the axe at the foot of the tree? Did you come down on their consciences? Did you strive to drive the nail right into their hearts? You might have done better with rougher words than with those garnished utterances.”  
I have no uneasiness about rough sentences, but I have, when I have not been earnest in my Master’s cause. Oh, I think it must be so with you, sometimes. You Sunday school teachers, are you sure that you teach for Jesus Christ? May it not be possible that you teach for custom, or that you do it because you like the association of your fellow teachers? You tract distributors, are you sure that when you distribute the tracts it is with an idea of winning souls to Christ? Is it not because your conscience tells you you ought to be doing something?  
And you who go out preaching, are you sure that you preach only for Christ’s glory? Does it not sometimes happen that you are tempted to glorify yourselves, and try to be fine and great when you ought to be simple and plain and earnest with the souls of men? Oh, when I think of some who spend all the week writing out their sermons and touching up every line and every sentence, I fear there must be something of self there! And when I hear some preachers with such splendid diction, with words so nicely picked, I cannot help thinking that there must be a sacrificing to the genius of oratory or to the beauty of eloquence, rather than to the Master’s cause. I say of everything that is done for self—down with it! Down with it! Let Dagon fall! Break these images, every one of them— smite them like the proud Philistine or the boastful Babylonian king. What have we to do with idolatrous self-worship? O Lord, deliver us from

it! I shall not detain you longer upon this point when I have said another

word. Though this is a Protestant land it is beyond all question that there are some Popish enough to perform great religious acts by way of merit. What a goodly row of almshouses was erected by that miserly old grinder of the poor as an atonement for his hoarding propensities! What a splendid donation to that hospital! A very proper thing, indeed, but the person who left it never gave a farthing to a beggar in his life! And he would not have given it now, only he could not take it with him and so he has left it as an atonement for sin.

Sometimes persons think that the doing of some outrageous religious act will take them to Heaven—frequenting Church prayer twice a day, fasting in Lent, decorating the altar with needlework, putting stained glass in the window, giving a new organ or such like. At the suggestion of their priest they do many such things, and thus they go on working like blind asses at a mill, from morning to night and make as much real progress. Do I address any such persons here? I do not find fault with you for what you do, but I do find fault with you for why you are doing it. If you dream that you are saving yourselves, remember that your acts are selfish acts

and that there is nothing good in them.  
They may be good things in themselves, but as they are done not unto  
God, but evidently with a view to your own welfare, they are done to yourselves and He will not, therefore, accept them. Let there be never such  
splendid deeds of alms-giving, never such marvelous mortifications of the  
flesh, never such devout attendance at daily prayer—they avail nothing  
before God—when they proceed from a self-righteous heart. Away with  
them! Away with them all! They are dross and dung before the Most High,  
if you bring them to Him with a view of purchasing salvation. No, you  
must have done with these, and trust in Jesus only. When a man can say,  
“I am saved. Christ is mine”—then he can serve God acceptably and his  
deeds shall be received through Christ Jesus.  
III. Now for our last point. It seems to me that our text may be a TEST  
OF OUR SPIRITUAL STATE.  
Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, may I solemnly ask you now to  
put your souls into the scales for a few minutes by way of selfexamination. What can you and I say with regard to our lives since we  
have known the Lord? Have we lived unto Christ? Dare we take the Apostle Paul’s motto—“For me to live is Christ, to die is gain”? Oh, Beloved, it  
is not what we have done, so much as with what object we have done it.  
For every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the  
heart. Have we in our hearts longed to serve Him?  
“Oh,” I hear one say, “it was little I could do, Sir. I was poor. I could not  
give Him gold. I was uneducated, I could not give Him words.” Ah, my  
Brethren, it is possible that what you have been able to do may be more  
acceptable than what some others have done, if you can say, “I did not  
desire my own honor. I was content to be humble, to be obscure, to be  
unknown and to be forgotten, if I might but lift Him up and praise Him in  
my little sphere and make Him glorious among men.”  
I fear, Beloved Brethren, that some of us do but little for Christ, even  
outwardly, and I blush to confess that in that little which we do there is so  
much that is spoiled by our looking after self. Have we not sometimes  
prayed at the Prayer Meeting with the view of being thought gifted men!  
Have we not joined a Church that we might be a little better thought of?  
May we not have labored more abundantly that there might be the whisper about—“So-and-So is a flourishing Christian, a useful man”? Do we not compliment ourselves thus—“Well, people think very highly  
of me. They say such-and-such, and it must be all right”? Are we not  
smuggling over the frontier some of the merchandise of pride? It has been  
lately remarked, and not before it was necessary, that this is an age in  
which the word pride means what it never meant before. You hear gentlemen on the platform say, “I am proud.” You hear the minister, himself,  
when speaking of something that has been done for him, “I am proud.”  
The words, “I am proud,” do not mean any hurt now, because we have  
forgotten that pride in any shape and in every shape is detestable in the  
eyes of God.  
We even talk of a decent pride. I saw a good young woman the other  
day—I dare say she is here this morning—and she told me she could not  
come now on a Sunday because her clothes were getting so bad. And she  
said, “I thought it was decent pride to stop coming.” And I said, “No, my Sister, no pride is decent.” I saw her last Sunday standing down there and I have no doubt she enjoyed what was said as well in her cotton dress as she would have done if she could have worn her silk one. All pride is  
indecent.  
A few Sundays ago, when we had the mourning for Prince Albert, some  
people could not go to Church because the dressmakers had been so busy  
that they could not get their black things ready and it was called decent  
pride which kept them at home. But I say again—it was indecent pride—  
indecent pride such as the Lord God of Hosts abhors. We must have done  
with these prides, but yet I do fear that pride has so mixed with all we  
have done and so stained our best acts, that we have reason to cry out  
this morning, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Lord have mercy  
upon us, for Jesus’ sake.”  
There is another arrow in my quiver and it must be shot. Alas, alas! I  
address some this morning who never did anything for God in their lives.  
To whom it would make no difference if there were no God at all, except  
that they would be rather glad than otherwise. A man—a man, mark  
that—made in the image of his maker and yet he has never said a good  
word for his Creator! The breath in his nostrils this morning is the gift of  
God. The comforts of his home are gifts from the liberality of the God that  
has made him, and yet he has never done anything for that God in his life! Touch him upon the point of what he has done for man and he may  
have done much—let men applaud him. If a great general has won battles  
for men, let men honor him. If a philanthropist has done much for men—  
let men be grateful. If you have spent your time for your families, let your  
families thank you. But there are some here who have done nothing for  
God. “Hear, O Heavens and give ear O Earth. I have nourished and  
brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his  
owner and the ass his master’s crib but they know not, neither do they  
consider.”  
A man would not keep even a dog which never looked to him with  
thankfulness, never frisked about his feet with joy at his liberality. And  
yet here are men more brutish than their own dogs—fed by God and never  
thankful to Him—they have never done anything for Him in all their lives!  
I know there are many here who, if their consciences sleep not, must  
stand convicted. Again I repeat it, we will not touch you upon the point of  
what you have done for man—but let me remind you that man did not  
make you—that it is not your deeds for others that can save you, it is not  
your nation that can save your soul.  
It is God! It is God and yet you have forgotten Him and He is not in all  
your thoughts. You can go to bed without a prayer to Him. You can rise in  
the morning without a hymn of thankfulness! A God forgotten in His own  
world, a God unknown by His own creatures, a God—and such a God! So  
good, so gracious, so tender, so loving—a God who has given His own Son  
to die, and yet by His own creature so lightly deemed, that he gives Him  
not a word or thought.  
Well, Soul, well, Sinner, what a mercy it is that God has not forgotten  
you. If He had forgotten to give you your bread, where had you been? If He  
had forgotten to let the sun shine on you—if He had forgotten to let the  
fields yield their harvests—if He had forgotten to keep back the fever—if  
He had forgotten you when you were lying last year upon a sick bed—or when you were out in that storm at sea and the wind had rent away the mast—or when your gun exploded in your hand—you had been howling in Hell now! But He has not forgotten you and you are yet alive. Oh, may His long-suffering lead you to repentance for having lived as if there were no  
God to love and yourself the only thing worth caring for!  
But, Soul, let me remind you that long-suffering does not last forever.  
The Roman judges were attended by lictors, as you know. These lictors  
carried on their shoulders a bundle of rods, and in the center an axe.  
Now, when the judge condemned any man to be beaten by the rods, the  
following scene always took place. The rods were tied about with leather  
thongs, which were knotted a great many times. When the judge condemned the man to be beaten, his back was stripped, the lictor then untied one knot, and then another and another, which took some little time  
and during all this time the judge was looking in the face of the person to  
be scourged, watching him to see if he saw hardness of heart and rebellion there.  
If he did, then the blows came heavy, and perhaps the axe followed.  
But if he looked in the criminal’s face and saw repentance expressed  
there, it often happened that before the last knot was untied, the judge  
would say, “the punishment is remitted, tie up the rods again.” Now, you that have forgotten God, remember His rods, too, are bound  
up with many knots. Many of those knots have been untied for some of  
you. Six years ago you laid ill with the cholera. There was a knot untied  
then. Before that you had had many warnings that were like loosening of  
the knots. And now, this morning, the fingers of Eternal Justice are loosening another of the knots.  
Sinner, it may be it is the last, and God is looking in your face. And  
what does He see there? Does He see a brow of brass? Is your heart saying, “I have loved pleasure and after it I will go”? Then it is possible that  
Justice will untie the last knot and then comes the axe. Take heed, Sinner, when once God’s axe is taken, you can not escape it. He shall dash  
you in pieces and there is none to deliver.  
O God of mercy, touch the sinner’s heart and make him repent. Compel  
him to feel his need of Christ. Lord, lead him to Jesus and then, by Your  
Grace, the rods shall never be untied and he shall never be smitten!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1747 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

MARVELOUS! MARVELOUS!  
NO. 1747

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 28, 1883, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Thus says the LORD of Hosts: If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes? says the LORD of Hosts.”  
Zechariah 8:6.**

GOD sent His servant Zechariah with a promise that Jerusalem should be rebuilt and that it should enjoy a time of great peace and prosperity. Instead of men being slain in battle in the prime of their days, old men and old women were to dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, “every man with his staff in his hand for very age.” And whereas war had often cut off the women and the children, the promise further added, “the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.” Everything was to be prosperous in the land around, so as to bring plenty into the city—“For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.”

It was a sweet assurance and it ought to have made them very happy, but it did not. When this gracious promise came, it startled the people, for it seemed past belief! The unbelievers did not say, point blank, “This promise is not true,” but deep in their brains they thought as much. It is not the general habit of unbelief among God’s people to give a flat contradiction to His promises—we are hardly honest enough to our own thoughts to express them with deliberate plainness of speech—even unbelief loves to wear some cobweb covering or other so that its naked deformity may not appear. Our reverence for the Lord will not permit us to distinctly call Him a liar, but it comes to much the same thing, for in our heart of hearts we deny the truthfulness of His Word.

The remnant of Israel said, “How can this thing be? In these days, in these troublous days, in these threatening days, how can Jerusalem be made to prosper? Former hopes have been disappointed. We see no better signs of the times and no doubt, if our hopes are now raised, they will again be disappointed. How can the city rise from its ashes? We can hardly think it possible! At any rate, it will be marvelous, extremely difficult, exceedingly unlikely, indeed, impossible!” They did not say dogmatically, “It will not be,” but they said, “It will be a marvelous thing”—by which they meant that it was not in the least likely. You who carry Bibles with you which have the marginal readings, will notice that in the margin there is the word, “difficult,” and the text may be read thus, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts: If it is difficult in your eyes, will it also be difficult in My eyes?”

This is the only instance in which the word, “difficult,” occurs in our version of the Bible, and in this case it is only to be found in the margin. There is too much of God in the Bible for difficulties to live in it! I would be very glad if I could always put the word, “difficult,” into the margin of my life and never let it stand in the substance of it. I wish my faith would banish it. Difficulty does crop up, now and then, through unbelief, but where God manifests Himself, difficulty vanishes! Leave it in the margin, Brothers and Sisters! Leave it in the margin! Let it not be read in the annals of your actual life. A brave self-reliance blots the word, “difficult,” out of its dictionary and a full God-reliance may much more safely do so. If God is for us, all things can be accomplished. Things impossible with men are possible with God!

The remnant of Israel said, “It will be difficult,” but then they softened the words a little, and said, “It will be marvelous in our eyes.” Still, it came to this—they did not believe the Word of the Lord. They could not conceive how the promise could be fulfilled and, therefore, because it surpassed their conception, they supposed that the Lord was equally nonpleased and perplexed. Because the restored prosperity of Jerusalem would be a great wonder, they doubted if it could ever be accomplished! Yet, blessed be the name of the Lord, it was accomplished, for, “though we believe not, He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” It certainly was a marvelous thing that Jerusalem, after having been so dreadfully destroyed, should again lift up its head and enjoy a little period of sunlight— but we are called upon to believe in even greater wonders—wonders of a spiritual kind which are more difficult to believe than material miracles!

I am going to talk about what to every intelligent and awakened mind will be the greatest wonder of all, namely, the possibility of our salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Satan will assail you who are saved and you who are seeking to be saved. And he will aim a blow at your faith. If he does not dare to tell you in his own native tongue of point-blank lying, that the promise which the Gospel makes to the Believer is false, yet he will lead you to think it highly improbable—too good to be true, too wonderful ever to happen—in a word, he will make it appear marvelous in your eyes and he will hint that it is incredible. So this morning I am going, first, to speak upon carnal reasoning, how it runs. Secondly, to offer a correction to that reasoning by pointing out an untruth which lies at the bottom of it. And, thirdly, I will try, in conclusion, to dwell upon the truth of the matter and see if we cannot enjoy some right reasoning.

O blessed Spirit of Grace, teach our reason right reason at this hour and make us to perceive all things in the light of the Truth of God!  
I. Here we have before us a specimen of CARNAL REASONING. The Jews of those days said, “It is difficult; it will never be performed. It is marvelous in our eyes; it will never happen.” This kind of speech comes from men as soon as they begin to think about their souls and to desire the salvation of the Lord. We inform them, in God’s name, that whoever repents of sin and confesses it, and believes in Jesus Christ, shall receive immediate pardon. This good news surprises them, as well it may. Straightway the old serpent begins to hiss out a doubt and they ask, “How can it be? Can a man receive, in one moment, forgiveness for 50 years of sin? How can his conscience be cleared by the simple act of believing in Christ? How can the record of a life of evil be blotted out at once?”  
Assuredly, it does not seem possible to a troubled mind! Reason decides that it must be very difficult. Common sense assents that it is a marvelous affair altogether—and the poor awakened hearts conclude that the promise of full, free forgiveness cannot be true. Thus they push the promise of God concerning pardon to one side as a good thing which is quite past belief. Then comes the blessing of renewal of heart, such as God speaks of in the Covenant promise, “A new heart, also, will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them.” Our hearer understands that upon his believing in Jesus he is born again and becomes a new creature with new likes and new hates—an entirely altered being! But understanding the promise is one thing and believing it is another!  
A new heart the awakened one desires, but he considers it too great a marvel. He asks, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Can I, who have been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well? It will be marvelous, indeed, if such a sinner as I should be turned into a saint—if such a rebel as I should become a loyal subject of King Jesus! Such a conversion will be most extraordinary. I do not think it can be carried out.” He knows that he cannot subdue his own stubborn will, nor conquer his own unruly passions and, therefore, he concludes that the thing is impossible and not to be looked for. Thus another choice Covenant promise is thrown to one side by unbelief and the man sits down in self-created despair, under the persuasion that a new birth for him would be too marvelous a thing to expect!  
Even if the awakened soul proceeds as far as believing in the first two blessings, unbelief comes to him in another way, for this thief is sure to meet the traveler to Zion again and again! The Lord has promised that the righteous shall hold onto His way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger. And Christ has declared that the living water which He gives shall be no transient gift, but shall be in a man a well of water springing up into everlasting life. “Oh, but,” says the tempted one, “how can I hope to persevere to the end? I shall be, one of these days, tempted so strongly that I shall be carried off my feet! What with indwelling sin and a cunning tempter and a world full of evil, I cannot hope to endure to the end! I shall, one day, fall by the hand of the enemy. Do you assure me that the righteous shall hold onto their way? Then it will be marvelous—it must be so difficult that I fear it is improbable, if not impossible.” Thus unbelief pushes to one side another Covenant blessing.  
Further on there comes to the man who has been helped to persevere for a while, the promise that he shall ultimately be presented faultless before the Presence of God with exceeding joy—this promise is assailed in the same manner. The serpent of unbelief leaves its slimy trail upon everything! We are told that a day shall come when the Believer shall be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, made meet to dwell with the angels in light, yes, and to dwell with God Himself forever! And straightway the soul is tempted to think this wonderful effect of Grace to be impossible! When we remember how often we have been worsted by the enemy, how frail, how fallible we are—and how fierce and subtle is our adversary—we dare not hope that we shall see him utterly defeated and his power broken to pieces. We dwell upon the fact that it will be very marvelous—indeed, the more we think of it, the more marvelous it becomes in our eyes!  
And, alas, unbelief leaps upon the back of our wonder and we judge that the blessing can never be ours. Thus another promised blessing is thrown under the table. In fact, each mercy of God’s Covenant is looked at, wondered at and then renounced—not because it is undesirable—but because it is so good, so rich, so full! O wretched unbelief which makes the excellence of the favor into a reason for refusing it! Help us, O Holy Spirit, to believe our Lord and to reason no more in this evil fashion! I have known children of God, in the time of their great trial when they have been surrounded with afflictions, oppressed with poverty and depressed in spirit, to become quite incredulous as to the possibility of deliverance. They ask, “How can God cause our bread to be given us and our water to be sure, now? Can He bring us out of such sore trouble as this? We know that He has been gracious to His people in other instances, but our case is one of peculiar difficulty! Surely our Lord has forsaken us— our God will be gracious no more.”  
This comes of reasoning, falsely called. When we see no passage through our straits, we are sadly apt to conclude that God sees none! He has promised that with every trial He will make us a way of escape, but we doubt His Word. Like the unbelieving lord in the Book of Kings, we say, “If God would make windows in Heaven, might such a thing be?” Have you ever said that, my Brother, in your spirit? Dear Sister, has not the Evil One whispered such a word in your ears in dark times? Have you not fancied that you have passed beyond the reach of Divine help and will surely perish? In this way carnal reason is sure to argue and rob God of His Glory and our souls of consolation! It has been so from the beginning, that while doubting God we cover our unbelief with an evil sophistry—and this sophistry does not avail to remove the mischievous tendencies of our mistrust.  
Unbelievers, by this wicked reasoning, are left in their spiritual death, while Believers are hampered and sorely wounded. O accursed Unbelief, this is your false argument, “It is marvelous and, therefore, it cannot be true!” We answer you that because it is marvelous it is all the more likely to be true!  
II. Secondly, we will now aim our arrows at the dark spot in this carnal argument which makes it all to be false, or, in other words, we will CORRECT THIS REASONING. First, let us note that when because the blessing promised is marvelous we, therefore, doubt the promise of God concerning it, we must have forgotten God. “If it is marvelous in your eyes, says the Lord of Hosts, is it therefore marvelous in My eyes?” God Himself puts it so and there is but one answer to the question. My text is a very singular one, for it is hedged in with the name of the Lord and with a double, “thus says the Lord of Hosts.”  
It begins with, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts,” and it finishes up with, “says the Lord of Hosts,” as if twice to bring to our memory that God is and that God has made a promise—and that this Promiser is Jehovah the great and powerful, the Lord of all who has countless armies at His beck and call! This unbelief forgets and, hence, her error. To come to our one subject, that of your own salvation, you hear the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus and your mind replies, “It is marvelous, it is difficult.” Do you not see that you are looking at it as if you had made the promise? From that standpoint it would be, indeed, difficult, even impossible! But whose promise is it? It is not yours but God’s! If you were to promise to give yourself eternal life, to keep yourself to the end and sanctify yourself perfectly, what a foolish person you would be to undertake what you could not possibly perform! But it is not your promise—it is God’s promise. Is anything too hard for the Lord?  
Look at it in that light. It is a marvelous promise for you to receive, but the God who spoke it knew what He was saying and He knew that He had power to perform it! It is the promise of God, “who alone does great wonders.” Remember that! And remember, next, that God does not look to you to fulfill His promises. Do not fall into such a foolish thought! If you make a promise, it is your own business to carry it out, is it not? And if God makes a promise that He will save a sinner—whose work is it to save that sinner? Why, it is the work of the God who made the promise! It is written, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” “Marvelous,” you say, but who said it? Why, God! Then it is God’s department to make it true. If you would but remember this—that the pardon of sin is God’s business, that the renewing of the heart is God’s business, that the keeping of the saint to the end is God’s business, that the sanctifying and perfecting of all Believers is God’s business—then you would find it more easy to believe.  
Can anything surpass the power of God? Did you ever hear of the Lord being baffled in His designs? Can it be possible that He has promised what He is not able to perform? The false reasoning which cries, “It is marvelous and, therefore, impossible,” ignores altogether the fact that God is a marvelous Being and that if His promise is marvelous, it is like Himself! He is a great God and His power and wisdom are infinite—can anything surpass His ability? Would you have the infinite God confine His promises and gifts to common-place matters? Would it be seemly that the Lord, who is infinite in resources, should do nothing but what you can understand? O Sirs, you forget the Eternal and, therefore, doubt the promise—do so no more!  
And, further, the error which vitiates the argument of carnal reason takes another shape. There is here, as far as the Lord is thought of at all, an underestimate of God. The Lord puts this very plainly in our text—“If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in My eyes?” You are judging God as if He were like yourself! You have been calculating Divine possibilities by the scale of your own capacity! You have lowered God to the limit of your understanding! You have narrowed Him to your notion of what He can do and thus you degrade His greatness to your littleness—His wisdom to your folly, His power to your weakness! The deed of salvation is marvelous with you, but it is not strange with God, to whom it has been the great thought of eternity, towards which He causes all things to move.  
Everything in wonder depends upon the person affected by it—a trader goes to Africa. He takes with him a looking-glass and you see the chiefs gather around. And with wonder they gaze upon their own pleasing countenances in the mirror. It is marvelous to them! It becomes the talk of the tribe! But that mirror is not marvelous to the trader who brought it there. A musical box is set playing and a whole village of Negroes gather about it, unanimously believing that it must be at least a spirit, if not a god. To them it is a great marvel and they expect the white man to marvel, too, for they measure his capacity by their own. Yet their wonderful thing is, to an Englishman, a mere simplicity. Shall we set it down for certain that what is a wonder to us is a wonder to God? This would be absurd! The Lord can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think—there is no bounding His power, no searching of His understanding.  
“But my sin,” you say, “who is to subdue it?” Not you, certainly! But the Lord of Hosts is able to overcome the power of sin! Do not measure God by yourself. “But my trouble, who can bring me through it?” Nobody can except the everlasting God who faints not, neither is He weary. The end of the creature is the starting place of the Creator! The limit of our power is soon reached, but the wings of the morning could not bear us beyond the Divine power. Whatever the Lord wills, is accomplished—you can be sure of that! When we begin to doubt whether God will love us to the end, is it not measuring God’s patience by our impatience? Is there not a calculating of God’s Immutability by our mutability? Because we change and grow weary, shall we fancy that the Lord also changes? Is there variableness and turning with the great Father of Lights? Has not the Lord declared, “I am God; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”?  
When we doubt God’s wisdom by questioning whether He can find a way of keeping His Word and helping us, is it not because our little knowledge is exhausted and our plans broken down and, therefore, we conclude that God’s plans will break down, too, and His invention will fail to contrive our deliverance? Beloved, it is not so! The Lord’s way is in the whirlwind and the clouds are the dust of His feet! His footsteps are not seen, but He walks on the sea! He rides on the wings of the wind! He has sway everywhere and all things answer to His purpose and accomplish His designs! Leave off doubting and believe that the Lord’s thoughts are as high above your thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! It is at bottom our pride which makes us judge the Lord to be like ourselves. If you degrade God to be like to man, it is because you idolize man and make him to be God!  
Who are you, you creature of an hour? Who are you, you creeping insect upon the bay leaf of existence? Who are you, poor mortal, that today is and tomorrow is shoveled back into mother earth, that you should begin to measure God? Go, measure Heaven with your span, weigh the Alps in scales and the Andes in balances! Go and hold the Atlantic in the hollow of your hand and when you have done these things know that you are not at the beginning of the measurement of the wisdom, the power, the truth and the goodness of the Lord! This, however, is the fault of carnal reasoning, that it judges the Lord of Hosts by the miserable standard of human weakness. Do you not see, dear Friends, that if we begin to say that God’s promise is so marvelous that it cannot be performed, we do the infinite God high dishonor? You dishonor His power by imagining that a difficulty has arisen which He cannot meet. You suppose a power greater than God, since it baffles and defeats Him. What is this but to set up another god? It is a fault charged upon Israel of old as a very provoking crime, that they limited the Holy One of Israel. Oh that we may never be guilty of this offense!  
But you do worse than that, for I can suppose God to bear the dishonor of His power being limited, but it is far worse, practically, to insinuate that He boasts beyond His capabilities! I tremble as I say that unbelief accuses the Lord of vain boasting! When a man promises you what he knows he cannot perform, what opinion do you form of him? You say at once, “Why, the man is a boaster! He is big at talking, but small at performing.” Will you insinuate that of the Lord God? Has it come to this, that you dare criticize your Maker? Do you dare insinuate that the Infinite Jehovah has promised to a sinner what He is incapable of giving him? God says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”—and dare you say, “No, I could not be saved.” Does God, then, speak beyond His ability? Does He promise what He is not able to perform?  
This is a form of blasphemy from which, I pray, we may be cleansed through the blood of our Lord Jesus! Or is it that you dream that God does not know His own strength? What? Is the Almighty ignorant? Is the only wise God unaware of His own power? Does He not know what He can do? I will not say that a man brags when he promises what he cannot perform, provided that he is unaware of his inability, for in such a case he blunders through ignorance or conceit. Do you dare charge either of

hese upon God? Far from me to have such an evil thought! I feel, this morning, that if all your sins were mine, yet since the Lord has promised pardon to him that believes, I could and would believe over the head of all that mass of sin! Yes, if all the iniquities of all the men that ever lived were laid upon my soul, yet upon that assurance, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” I would even venture my soul’s hope of salvation and be sure of success!  
If the Lord has given a promise to His people that He will keep them to the end and that they shall not perish, then He will keep them to the end without fail. Why, Brothers and Sisters, if our road to Heaven were thick with devils, so that they stood like blades of wheat in a corn field, yet we should be able to force a lane right through the serried host, the Lord Jehovah being our Helper! If all the powers that are, or were, or can be, were to raise themselves up against the promise of God, in the name of God would we defy and defeat them! The Word of the Lord makes us more than conquerors. David said of old, “They compassed me about like bees; yes, they compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” What can stand against the feeblest man that lives if he has God’s promise to back him? The Lord can do just what He wills, whoever may oppose!  
Therefore let us fling away this folly of ours in supposing that because a work of Grace is marvelous or difficult in our eyes, it is, therefore, marvelous or difficult in the eyes of the Lord! That which is difficult with us is easy with Him! There is a radical mistake at the bottom of all this wicked, unbelieving reasoning—it leaves out the Lord altogether, or degrades Him below the Glory of His Godhead.  
III. We have reached the third division of our discourse and here let us practice a little RIGHT REASONING. I invite any here who are troubled with doubts about the promise of God to follow me in a few simple considerations. First, it is quite clear that for our salvation, marvels must be worked. It will be a wonder in all of us for any one of us to attain Heaven—it will need the Omnipotence of God to renew, preserve and perfect us. It is a rule with regard to miracles that God is very economical with them. In the Romish Church you have miracles in abundance, such as they are, but they are, for the most part, needless parades of power.  
When St. Denis, after his head was cut off, picked it up in his hands and walked a thousand miles with it, the dear man might as well have saved himself and his head the unsightly pilgrimage! When the blood of St. Januarius liquefies, or a Madonna winks, it may be interesting, but one does not see the necessity for either performance! The God of the Scriptures has no hand in such miracles—they are not of the same order as those which are worked by His right hand. Our Lord never uses a miracle where the same thing could be done by the ordinary processes of Nature. But whenever a miracle is requisite, a miracle is forthcoming— there is no stint of power though there is no wasteful display of it, either.  
I argue, then, that if it is necessary for you to be saved in order that God’s promise may be kept, you shall be saved! And if, in order to this, marvels are needed, marvels will happen. The Lord reserves no strength when it is necessary to expend it for the fulfillment of His promises. If Omnipotence must make bare His arm, it shall be bared. The Lord led His people Israel to the Red Sea—perhaps if the Egyptians had not come up, it might have been possible to make rafts to ferry them across the water and we are sure it would have been done if it had been the best way of achieving the Lord’s design. But when the Egyptians were so close behind that you could hear the neighing of their horses and almost feel the hot breath of their vengeful masters, then there remained no ordinary way for the people of God to escape, and lo, the mighty depths yawned before the tribes and a road was opened through the heart of the sea that the people of God might pass through!  
So it shall be with you. If to forgive your sin needs a miracle of Grace, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and the miracle of Grace is done! If to change your nature needs the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit—if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit waits to work that great change. No, He has worked the change, and your faith is the evidence of it! If it shall need all the power of God to keep one of His children to the end, all that power shall be, for though God works not miracles till they are needed, He is not slow to do so when the case demands them. He will shake Heaven and earth to complete the salvation of His chosen! Therefore, if a deed of Grace is marvelous in your eyes, say to yourself, “Marvelous as it is, nothing short of it will do and, therefore, it shall be done.”  
It was marvelous that God should become Man, but as there was no salvation for His apart from Immanuel, “God With Us,” Jesus was born of a woman! It is marvelous that the Son of God should die, but as there was no salvation apart from His death, He died upon the Cross. If the Lord has given a promise, it must be carried out, cost what it may, for His name is, “God That Cannot Lie.” If there is no way of bringing a saint to God except by the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in him, which is a great wonder, then the Holy Spirit shall dwell in him, for the many sons must be brought unto Glory, and if marvels as many as the hairs on their heads are needed, so many marvels there shall be!  
A second little bit of reasoning may tend to comfort some of you, namely, that, after all, marvelous things are the rule with God. I say not miracles, although it is difficult to draw the line between the ordinary processes of God’s working and the extraordinary ones, for the ordinary are extraordinary and His extraordinary deeds can hardly be more marvelous than His daily operations! All the works of God in creation are marvels. Take the telescope and search out the stars. Assuredly an “undevout astronomer is mad.” When we perceive somewhat of the multitudes of worlds that God has made—their vast distances, the proportions of their bulk, the regularity of their orbits and the rapidity of their motions—we discover that the great machinery of Nature is ordered by infinite skill! “It is the Lord’s doing” and it is marvelous in our eyes!  
Surely that God who flings the stars about with both His hands can give us our daily bread! if He makes worlds to fly off like sparks from the anvil of His Omnipotence, He can make new creatures in Christ Jesus! If He keeps all those heavenly lamps shining so brightly for centuries, He can sustain Grace in the hearts of His people without difficulty! But now if you have done with the telescope, please put it away and let me lend you a microscope. Look at a butterfly from your garden. No, you need not trouble to examine the whole creature, a portion of a broken wing will suffice for your astonishment. Here is a spider’s eye! Are you not surprised? This is the petal of a flower—what amazing beauty! Take but a single portion of a minute blood vessel and study it awhile. I hear you say, “I never could have believed it! This glass reveals to me such wonders that I am utterly astounded!”  
God is as great in the little as in the great—He is God everywhere! If a man carefully fashions a needle it appears to be exquisitely smooth and polished. Ah, it is only bright because your eyes are weak. Put it under the microscope. It is transformed into a rough bar of iron! No works of man will bear to be examined with a microscope—but you may search the Lord’s work with the utmost care—the most common, plain, simple—the most ordinary creation of God is perfect! Since, then, all Nature teems with marvels, why put aside a promise of God because it involves a marvel? Is such conduct reasonable? However, if you have read through all the pages of Nature, which I am sure you have not, I would invite you to peruse the Book of Providence and see what marvels are there! I will give you no illustrations, because your own life will probably furnish you with many.  
If not, look at the history of any country—see how wondrously God has worked out His everlasting purposes of justice or of mercy in each land. The story of Providence contains a world of wonders! Why, then, should you doubt the promise of God because it involves a marvel? You should, rather, believe it for that very reason! I think there is good reasoning in all this. Follow me yet a little further, when I say that you must be prepared to abandon altogether the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ if you make it a rule to disbelieve the marvelous. The greatest marvel that I ever heard of is this—“Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the finite.” How the Infinite could become one with the finite, so that the Baby at Bethlehem should be the Mighty God, I cannot explain and I think you cannot, either. Are you prepared to forego the Incarnation of Christ? For if you are not, you must not refuse to believe in any act of God because it is marvelous—for it cannot be more marvelous than God in human flesh!  
Think again—it is a cardinal doctrine of Christianity that the dead will rise again—that at the sounding of the trumpet of God they that are in their graves will rise to be judged in their bodies. Is not this a marvel? Stand in a cemetery and ask the question, “Can these dry bones live?” Do you believe in the Resurrection? Then you must never set aside any promise of God because it involves a marvel. You also believe, according to the Word of the Lord, that this world will one day be the home of God’s Glory, for there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which dwells righteousness and the travail of the groaning creation shall come to an end— and this world shall be made anew a temple for the Lord. What an extraordinary thing this will be! Yet you believe it. Do not, therefore, ever doubt a single promise that God makes either to saint or sinner because it contains a marvel.  
Yet, again, I want you to follow me in another thought, namely, that greater marvels have been already worked than any which your salvation and mine will involve! Brothers and Sisters, if it had been whispered to any of us that God would take upon Himself human form and dwell among men, we should have looked much astonished! But if the Prophet had added, “In that form He will be despised and spit upon, and hung up to die a felon’s death because He will bear the sin of man which will be laid upon His perfect Person, so that He will be made a curse for us,” we should have said, “No, that cannot be!” Beloved, it has been! Atonement has been accomplished! Christ has borne the load of His people’s sins up to the Cross and He has hurled that weight from His shoulders into His own sepulcher and left them there, buried forever!  
No wonder like this remains to be done—the greatest deed is finished! The renewal of our nature and the forgiveness of our sin are but little things compared with what Christ has already done! That He should now save His people seems, to me, not at all extraordinary—it would be more extraordinary that He should die and not save those for whom He died! Having paid the ransom price for His heritage, it is but a natural consequence that it should be set free. The greater wonder has already amazed angels, principalities and powers! Oh, think not, though I, for lack of time, have passed lightly over this miracle of miracles—the death of our blessed Lord—that there is not much more to be said of this great wonder! Why, in dying, our Lord destroyed death, and cried, “Where is your sting?”  
In rising again, He burst the bands of the sepulcher and opened a way to life to all Believers! In ascending the starry road, He led captivity captive and took possession of Heaven in the name of all His redeemed! And now, this day, He that was despised and rejected has all power given to Him in Heaven and in earth on our behalf! These great wonders have been finished and registered in Heaven! It only remains for us simply to receive the result of them by believing in Christ Jesus our Lord! To deliver us from the wrath to come is but now a comparatively small marvel. Compared with the griefs and death of the Son of God, nothing great remains! Think of that and let your faith be encouraged.  
I will not detain you except to remind you of the sweet thought that the more marvels there may be in our salvation the more glorifying it will be to God. Think of that. The more difficult it will be to save you, the more glory to God when He has achieved it. Your sin washed away will only demonstrate the power of the precious blood of Jesus! Your hard, stubborn will subdued will only prove the might of the love of Christ upon your soul! Your trials, temptations, weaknesses and infirmities will only glorify that almighty strength which is working in you to produce your ultimate perfection! Believe the promise all the more because it is so wonderful and, therefore, so honoring to the Lord. Do not let the marvel stagger you—let it encourage you! Say, “If this involved nothing wonderful, I could not think it came from God, but inasmuch as it is great and high, it is all the more worthy of God.” Make the difficulties of the Bible a help to your faith and let the greatness of Grace render you the more hopeful of receiving it.  
Lastly, let me say, whenever you have any doubts and fears, turn your mind away from the thing that is promised to the faithful Promiser. We need altogether larger ideas of God! If we had them, we would find it easy to believe His Word. I remember when I was a boy, being taken to see the residence of one of our nobility, and the good friend who took me noticed my astonishment at the largeness of the house. I was amazed at it, having never seen anything like it, and so I said, “What a house for a man to live in!” “Bless you, boy,” he said, “this is only the kitchen!” I was only looking at the servants’ apartments and was astonished at the grandeur! The mansion itself was a far nobler affair! Oftentimes when you see what the Lord has done, you are ready to cry out, “How can all this be? His goodness, His mercy, is it as great as this?” Rest assured that you have only seen a little of His goodness, as if it were the kitchen of His great house— you have not seen the palace of the Most High where He reveals His full power and splendor!  
You know the story of the general, who, having led his men into a difficult position, went round at night to their tents. He said to himself, “If they are all in good heart we shall fight well tomorrow, for certainly this battle needs all our valor. I need to know the spirit of my men.” Going round the camp, secretly, he heard in a tent some half-dozen soldiers conversing, and one of them above the rest was saying, “I think our general has made a great mistake this time. Look at the enemy—they have so many cavalry, so many infantry and guns,” and so forth. He added up all the force of the enemy and another soldier chimed in, “What do you suppose our strength to be?” So the other calculated—so many footmen, so many horsemen, so many artillerymen, and so on. He was just going to total it up and make a very small concern of the whole, when the general drew aside the canvas of the tent and said, “And pray, my man, how many do you count me for?” Did all the general’s skill, valor and renown count for nothing? He who had won so many fights—could he not win again?  
Just so, the Lord Jesus Christ, whenever we begin summing up our strength, or rather, our weakness, seems to appear and ask, “How many do you count Me for?” O Sirs! You have not counted the Lord Jesus at the millionth part of what He is! No, the firmest Believer here has not yet reached the trailing skirts of the garments of Divine Omnipotence! Let us enlarge our minds! Come, Blessed Spirit, reveal Christ in us and let us know more of God and trust Him better! And let nothing be unbelievingly marvelous in our eyes, since nothing can be too hard for the Lord! God bless all of you. Amen.

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BELIEVERS A BLESSING  
NO. 3045

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 20, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“You shall be a blessing,”  
Zechariah 8:13.**

SO terribly had God punished idolatrous Israel and Judah that their names were a byword and a proverb among all the surrounding nations. If any man wished to pronounce upon his fellow man the most dreadful curse that he could utter, he would say, “May you become like a Jew— may a blight fall upon your whole life as awful as that which has fallen upon Israel!” Even the heathen used the Jewish nation as a model of their cursing and blasphemed the name of Jehovah who had poured out the vials of His wrath upon them. But God declared that He would return to His ancient people in love and mercy—and replenish them in the multitude of His loving kindnesses to them so that, from that time, instead of being the pattern of cursing, they should be used as the model of a blessing—that when men wished good things for one another, they would say, “May you be as blessed as the children of Israel, whom the Lord of Hosts has favored above all the rest of mankind!” You remember that old Jacob, when he blessed the sons of Joseph, uttered a sort of formula for future use by others, “He blessed them that day, saying, In you shall Israel bless, saying, God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.” And I believe that to this day, in Jewish marriages, the blessing is given to the newly-married couple, “As Isaac and Rebekah may they be!” In like manner would God make His people to become the model of benediction as before they had been the pattern of a curse.

Leaving that primary meaning of the passage, I am going to apply the promise of the text to the spiritual Israel. In His inscrutable wisdom, God allowed His ancient people, the nation of Israel, to become a curse among the other nations of the earth. Their idolatry was not only high treason against God, but it also gave the very heathen reason to blaspheme His holy name. The Lord said, by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah, “Has a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be astonished, O you heavens at this and be horribly afraid, be you very desolate, says the Lord. For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Israel turned aside from Jehovah to worship Baal, Ashtaroth and other false gods without number—and so, by evil example, Israel led other people into idolatry, dishonored the name of the Most High and became a curse among the nations. Yet Israel was the guardian of the Oracles of God and the time will yet come when God shall again visit His ancient people—and the branches that have been broken off, because of unbelief, shall be grafted again into their own olive tree—and their “fullness” shall be “the riches of the Gentiles,” as olive tree—and their “fullness” shall be “the riches of the Gentiles,” as 36. Indeed, at this very hour a Jew is the riches of Jews and Gentiles alike, for our Lord sprang out of Judah and, therefore, do we “take hold of the skirt of Him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with You.” And He is to us, “more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” The Son of Mary, who is also the Son of God, is our blessed Lord and Savior, and in Him is that ancient promise fulfilled which was made to Jacob at Bethel, “In you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” We cannot sing too often that grand Coronation Anthem of the Christian Church—

**“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!  
Let angels prostrate fall.  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all!  
Crown Him, you martyrs of our God,  
Who from His altar call.**  
Extol the stem of Jesse’s rod,  
**And crown Him Lord of all!**  
You chosen seed of Israel’s race,  
**A remnant weak and small,  
Hail Him who saves you by His Grace,  
And crown Him Lord of all!”**

Yet let us not omit to sing also —  
*“The hymn shall yet in Zion swell  
That sounds Messiah’s praise,  
And Your loved name, Immanuel!  
As once in ancient days.  
For Israel yet shall own her King,  
For her salvation waits,  
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing  
With praise in all her gates.”*

Whereas through sin, then, Israel had been a curse to the other nations of the earth, she shall, through the mercy of God, be a blessing when she repents of her sin and accepts the Messiah whom she has so long rejected. But we need not confine to the literal Israel and Judah the promise of our text, for it belongs to all the people of God, and so to you, Beloved, who are, by faith, the true seed of believing Abraham! This promise is applicable to you—“You shall be a blessing.”

I. And first, I want to remind you that THIS PROMISE QUICKENS REGRET WITHIN OUR SPIRITS—“You shall be a blessing.”  
Then the first emotion in our heart is that of penitential sorrow. If God says that He will make us a blessing, surely it is implied that once we were not so. Let us look back to the days of our unregeneracy. It may be that some of us were great curses to our families and to the neighborhood in which we dwelt. If so, we must look back with deep sorrow upon the past, for, albeit that God has blotted out the guilt of our iniquity, yet the consequences of the sin still continue. We cannot undo the evil that we have done to others. If we first tempted them and they fell into sin, we may be forgiven the temptation, but we cannot recall it, nor can we put them back into the place from which they have fallen. A child once learned an evil word from you—oh, how gladly would you unsay that word if you could! But it entered that child’s memory and it will abide there, perhaps forever! If you led others into places of frivolous amusement, or into haunts of vice, you may abhor those places, now, and God may have forgiven you the sin of your youth—but what about those whom you led there—what will become of them? You can pray for them and I know that you will do so. You will plead with them if you know where they are and you will be quickened in your service for the Savior by your remembrance of the earnestness with which you served Satan in those evil days of the past—but Beloved, there must still remain the bitter fruit of perpetual regret that you cannot destroy the results of that early sowing of bad seed! The handfuls of cockle and darnel that you scattered broadcast in the furrows—you cannot call them back again! The firebrands you have thrown, the hot coals that you have cast about and which caused such a terrible conflagration—you cannot undo the mischief and ruin that they worked! The results of good or evil deeds will abide forever and ever, so let us beware what we do since it can never be undone. So, first, when God makes us a blessing, it reminds us that we were once a curse.  
It also brings to us—at least it does to me—a painful remembrance of the time wasted—time spent unprofitably before our conversion when, if we were not actually doing damage to the souls of others, yet we allowed opportunities for doing them good to glide by unused. Oh, these blessed hours, these precious hours, these more than golden hours in which Christians may win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ! Angels never had them and the spirits of just men made perfect have them no more. Though they can render other and perhaps yet higher service to their Lord, this special service of soul-winning is reserved for us who are still living on this earth. We have, at the longest, only a few days, or weeks, or months, or years allotted to us in which we may glorify God by being a blessing to our fellow creatures after we have found the Lord for ourselves! Yet some of us allowed many years to pass away before we even gave earnest heed to these things for ourselves. Those of us who were brought to know the Lord in our early youth, bless Him for that, yet we regret that we were not saved in our childhood. We wish we had given to God the very first rays of the morning of our life as well as the bright beams of the fuller day, so that we might have been made a blessing to the Church and the world as soon as we had intellect and understanding—and were capable of influencing the minds and hearts of others.  
There is another reflection which is also a sorrowful one and causes us deep regret—namely that since the ever-blessed hour when the Holy Spirit taught us to trust in Jesus and gave us new life in Him, we have not been such a blessing to our fellow creatures as we ought to have been. Not altogether in vain have we lived—we have not sown to the flesh, but to the Spirit—yet how scanty has been our sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom! And, in consequence, how small has been the harvest that we have reaped! Oh, that we had availed ourselves of all the golden opportunities we have had of serving the Lord Jesus Christ! How much more good we might have done had we been earnest at all times, fervent at all seasons, had we thrown spirit, soul and body entirely into this holy service—and lived and breathed alone for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If we had reached the ideal Christian life so that we did eat, drink and sleep eternal life, having Christ living in us and we living in Him, how much more we might have achieved than any of us have yet done! The capacity to “be a blessing” to others was given to all of us who have believed in Jesus at our conversion—but we have left that precious talent unused to a very large extent. To some Christians, and to some now present, this message must go home and this question must be asked and answered—what have we done for Him who died to save us? Alas, how little—at the most, how little—but by the most idle, alas, alas, how little! God help you to turn your regret to practical account while the glad sound of the text rings in your ears like the music of a silver bell, “You shall be a blessing.” Let your tears fall plenteously as you recall the sad fact that before you knew the Lord, you were a curse to others—and not a blessing—and that even since you have known Him, you have not grasped the truth of the text and realized the fullness of its blessed meaning as you should have done, for such tears of regret will be likely to lead you to change your course of action for the future!  
II. Let us now notice, in the second place, that OUR TEXT IS CALCULATED TO EXCITE INQUIRY as well as to quicken regret. Inquiries will come something in this style from young Believers, “Will you kindly tell us what we can do by which we shall be a blessing? We hear the promise of the text, but how can we get it fulfilled in our own experience? In what way can we be made a blessing to others?” Beloved Friends, there are many ways in which God can make you the channels of blessing to your fellow creatures if you are, yourselves, regenerated by the Holy Spirit.  
First, it will probably be by your consistent conduct that you will be made a blessing to others more than in any other way. An unholy professor is a downright curse both to the church and to the world and, as for a church of inconsistent members, Satan himself could not devise an instrument more fitted to carry out his diabolical purposes! A community of ungodly men that is known by everybody to be a synagogue of Satan is robbed of much of its power to do mischief—but if it is misnamed a Church of Christ, it is potent for all manner of evil! An unholy professor outside the Church of God may batter against the walls with small effect but inside, he would be like the concealed soldiers in the wooden horse who opened the gates of Troy to the besiegers. It was only an Apostle who could be such a “son of perdition” as Judas was, so beware, you who profess to be followers of Christ! You have great capacities for usefulness, but your position gives you immense capacities for doing damage to the cause of Christ. Only holy Christians are useful Christians—and the preaching of Christ’s Truth must be backed up by the consistent living of Christ’s followers if it is to have its due effect upon the hearts and lives of the ungodly. No doubt many a shaft has missed the mark because it has not been shot from the bow of a consistent preacher, or because it has been turned aside by inconsistency in the church of which he is the pastor. Oh, for holy living! The honest tradesman who has just weights and measures. The diligent domestic servant who sweeps under the mats and in the dark corners. The laborious workman who may be trusted when his master is absent. The man who would not tell a lie even though he could win a fortune or a throne by doing so. The man who in all things acts justly towards men and walks humbly before his God—these are the people who “shall be a blessing” to all around them! If a man had no tongue and so never spoke a word. If it were not in his power to bestow as much as a farthing upon the poor. If he could not visit the sick or the prisoners, yet his very presence upon the earth would be in itself a blessing—a silent reproof, but none the less eloquent to ungodly men—and a powerful example to such as wish to walk in the way of righteousness. “Be you holy,” for so shall you serve God and serve the Church of Christ and, in the highest sense, serve your generation and serve the world! I love to sing, with John Newton—  
*“Let worldly minds the world pursue,  
It has no charms for me!  
Once I admired its trifles too,  
But Grace has set me free!  
Now, Lord, I would be Yours alone,  
And wholly live to Thee!”*  
But, in addition to that, all Christians may be made a blessing to others by instructing them in the Truths of the Gospel. The world is still very dark, spiritually, though many people foolishly speak of “this enlightened century.” It has “light” of a certain sort—or rather, of a very uncertain sort—within it. But the light that is in it is almost entirely darkness! It is still true of the bulk of mankind, as it was in Isaiah’s day—they “put darkness for light, and light for darkness…bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!” Today the scarcest thing in the whole world is true spiritual light and, where it is revealed, men hate it and try to banish it from their sight! Philosophy is exalted above Revelation. Science, falsely so-called, is set up in the place of Christ who is the Wisdom of God, though true science is never in conflict with the true Gospel. And anything that pretends to be light is preferred by many to Him who is “the true Light.” Spiritual Light is mainly conveyed to the dark souls of men through the proclamation of the Gospel—the good news concerning Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners. So, proclaim that—  
*“Old, old story  
Of Jesus and His love”—*  
to as many as you can! Tell it to thousands, to hundreds, to scores—tell it to one if you cannot tell it to more. Tell to all, as far as you can, these precious things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—His Incarnation, His holy life, His wondrous Words, His perfect example and His substitutionary death! Tell these things to your children and charge them to tell them to their children—and to charge their children to tell them to the generation following. Tell that great central Truth of the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ to the man who sits beside you in the tram or train, or who calls at your house on business! Seize every opportunity you can get of letting men know, by the Inspired Word of God, or by the written or spoken message, all that you can about “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,” “and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.” And not only justified, but also glorified! Every true testimony to Christ brings glory to God and blessing to men. A preacher may halt and limp, his elocution may be faulty, his theology may be open to criticism—but if it is “the Gospel of Christ” that he proclaims, it will be precious Truth to the saints who hear him—and sinners will be saved by it!  
Not only by instructing men will you be a blessing to them, but also by reproof. This is a far more difficult matter and probably nine out of ten of us had better keep to the easier task of giving instruction. Yet now and then there will come occasions when you must not see sin in your Brother or Sister without rebuking it. If I hear blasphemy and am able to condemn it, yet do not, my silence makes me a sharer in the sin. I am always afraid lest when I hear God’s name blasphemed, my guilty silence should make me an accomplice of the blasphemer. A rebuke need not be and should not be discourteous or disrespectful. And it should not be unduly severe, but I am afraid that nowadays we are not so likely to err by our harshness, as by failing to be faithful to our conscience and our God. We must boldly stand up, at all costs, for God, for truth, for purity. Shut your ear to the lascivious song—do not allow it to be sung in your house—and let not scandal be spoken at your table! Set your face like a flint against sin of every kind and, God speeding your testimony, you “shall be a blessing.”  
More frequently, however, and much more pleasingly to yourself, you can be a blessing by giving words of comfort. And often something more substantial than words to the poor and afflicted ones with whom you may come into contact. If you know someone who is fighting with a fierce temptation, go and help to succor him. If you know another who is struggling with a troublesome doubt, try to assist him to drive it away. Your experience may be just what he needs to know, so tell him. Be not backward or bashful in speaking of what the Lord has done for you. I am always grieved when I hear of any persons coming to this Tabernacle for a long time and nobody speaking to them—let it not be so. Do endeavor, Brothers and Sisters—you who know Christ by experience—to tell others of the sweetness that you have found in Him and of the faithfulness of God to His promises—and of the power of prayer and the reality of faith. You will thus bring many a poor soul out of bondage who, but for you, might have lingered long in Doubting Castle in the dungeons of Giant Despair. God grant you the Grace “to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” A word on wheels, as Solomon calls, “a word fitly spoken,” is like apples of gold on plates of silver.  
Besides that you can be a blessing by your actions, as well as by your words. Some of you have the means with which you can assist your poorer neighbors. Of all people who ought to be kind and neighborly. Of all who should be sympathetic and generous, the Christian should be the first! The tendency nowadays is to get everything under a cast-iron code of law and I should not wonder if a law is passed, some day, making it penal to give sixpence to a poor person who is starving. Somebody said to me today when I was telling him how I had been deceived by a vagabond whom I had relieved, “It is such as you who make the vagabonds.” If so, I shall go on making vagabonds sooner than let the stream of charity in my soul be frozen into ice! It is better to be taken in a few times than to let the heart become hardened like steel against the real poverty that there is in London and many other places besides—the gaunt, grim poverty that may soon be seen if we will but take a little trouble to search for it. Be charitable, notwithstanding all the mischief that unworthy applicants may make of your charity, remembering the command of our Savior to His disciples, “Give to him that asks you.”  
You can also “be a blessing” in many other ways which I need not mention now. In such a vast city as this metropolis, there is work for all to do. A Christian living in a remote hamlet might, perhaps, say to his minister, “Sir, can you find me an opportunity of serving the Lord?” But no person who lives in London ought to ask another person, “What can I do for Christ?” If he is willing to do anything for the Master, the work lies at his door! Floods of sin are surging all around you—and sinners are sinking in them! Stretch out your hands to help them—  
*“Rescue the perishing, care for the dying— Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.”*In such a city as this, with hundreds of thousands—I might truthfully say, millions—needing the Bread of Life and the Water of Life—and with many of them literally needing bread and water—all of you can do something to relieve them! And I beseech you, if you love your Lord and Master, do the first thing that comes to hand and “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” Well did Dr. Horatius Bonar write—

*“‘Tis not for man to trifle! Life is brief,  
And sin is here.*

*Our age is but the falling of a leaf,  
A dropping tear.  
We have no time to sport away the hours, All must be earnest in a world like ours.  
Not many lives but only one have we,  
One, only one—  
How sacred should that one life always be, That narrow span!  
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,  
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil.”*

III. Now we must pass on to the third point which is that OUR TEXT IS ALSO CALCULATED TO SUGGEST ENDEAVOR. It has quickened regret and excited inquiry—now it suggests endeavor. But what endeavor?

Well, first I think it stirs us up to look for a blessing upon what we have already tried to do for Christ and His Church. You, my Brother, have been teaching a Sunday school class for two years—is it not time that you saw some blessing? Go and look for it! Perhaps in looking for it, you will be the means, under God, of bringing it to your scholars. I think that an earnest, godly teacher, believing that God had blessed his message, would be well repaid if he asked the boys or girls in his class, “Has God blessed your souls through my teaching?” If he asked that question with tears, it might be more effective than all his ordinary teaching. And you, my dear Brother, have you been preaching in some little mission-room in London or in the country and have you seen no “fruit” from your sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom? Have you asked, “Who has believed our report?” If so, I ask you—“Have you believed the promise of my text, ‘You shall be a blessing’?” If not, do so at once and go and inquire if there has not been a blessing—and never rest satisfied until you have it!

Next, the text bids us look for a blessing wherever we may be and whatever we may do. What have you been doing just lately? You have moved to a more suitable neighborhood? Then let one of your first questions there be, “How can I be a blessing here?” You have been recently married. I congratulate you and suggest that you should ask, “How can I, in my new relationship, be made a blessing?” You, my Friend over yonder, have gone down in the world lately—well then, ask yourself, “For what purpose am I put in this lower position? Is it not that I may be a blessing to some whom I could not have reached under happier circumstances?” Are you a commercial traveler? Are you not sent from town to town to be a blessing to those you meet? Are you a tradesman? Are you not put behind the counter to be a blessing there?

So I might go on addressing the members of various trades or professions, but I want to remind you that there are some persons who ought, above all others, to aim at being a blessing to their fellow creatures. And I put, first of all, ministers of the Gospel. O my Brothers in the ministry, if we are not a blessing, we are a double curse! Every so-called “place of worship” in which the true Gospel is not preached is a curse, for it is like a sepulcher full of rottenness doing nothing but harm! Worldlings more often judge Christianity by fruitless trees than by fruitbearing trees. O preacher, be a blessing, or never enter the pulpit again!

This rule should also apply to parents. What a blessing Christian parents often are to their children! I can conceive of nothing more natural and, at the same time, nothing more blessed than a father and mother who, by precept and example, have trained up their children in God’s fear and whose loving instruction and earnest prayers have been blessed by the Holy Spirit to their children’s salvation! What greater joy can we have than to see our children walking in the Truth of God? God grant that you, fathers and mothers, may all diligently seek to be a blessing to your offspring!

There may be some domestic servants here. If so, let me remind you that you have great opportunities for being made a blessing. Good servants can contribute much to the well-being of the family. By the faithful discharge of their duties, they may be the means of preventing others from committing sin. Whereas on the other hand, untidy and idle servants create so much discord in the household that they are the fomenters of sin! I do not know of any person who can have so much influence for good as a godly maid who has the care of little children— one who, instead of scaring them with wicked threats or silly tales, talks to them discreetly concerning Him who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me.” I have known domestic servants who were earnest Christians, who have gone to live where there was no religion whatever, no family prayer and no Sabbath observance—and without ever intruding beyond their proper place, they have worked a blessed revolution in the house—and their masters and mistresses and fellow servants have been brought to Christ by their godly example! Let all Christian servants here endeavor to get the fulfillment of the promise of our text, “You shall be a blessing.”

I might speak thus to you who have the duty and privilege of instructing the children in our schools, to you masters of large factories, to you who, as workingmen, meet with great numbers of your fellow men—all of you ought to aim at realizing this promise, “You shall be a blessing.” Dearly beloved in Christ, let me say to all of you—Do, by God’s Grace, maintain a holiness of walk with God and then seek to be a blessing to others. Look at the six words before our text—“So will I save you, and you shall be a blessing.” It is only as you yourselves are, in the fullest sense, saved—saved from falling into sin, saved from inward corruption, saved from error—it is only as you are conformed to the image of Christ that you can expect to be a blessing to others. Do, I pray you, as members of this Christian Church, always feel that you are to take your full share in being made a blessing to others! There are some who hold that blessing comes to men only through priests—that is what I hold! I believe that no blessing comes to men except through priests! First, through the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then through all who believe in Him, who are, as Peter says, “a holy priesthood” and “a royal priesthood,” and whose song in Heaven shall be, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

The priesthood of the Christian Church is common to all the saints! There is no other true priesthood but that of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot discharge any of your religious duties or relieve you of any of your responsibilities. My own are quite heavy enough for me to bear—I will seek, as God gives me Grace, to discharge them—but I cannot discharge the responsibilities of any other person in the world! You, having been personally redeemed by Christ, personally washed in His blood, personally saved by His Grace, are to render personal service to Him. All proxy-religion must be abhorrent to Christ, “who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” He did not seek to find someone else to save you, for He knew that no one else could do it! He tread the winepress alone and of the people there was none with Him. So, to your personal Redeemer render your personal service. Give liberally of your substance to help others to do their part of the work, but give yourself— spirit, soul and body—for these are claimed by Christ as “your reasonable service.”

IV. Now I must conclude by trying to show you that our TEXT FURNISHES US WITH MANY CONSOLATIONS. “You shall be a blessing.”  
Some of you have to live in places where you are not comfortable. Perhaps you are not in a neighborhood that you like. Possibly in the very house where you live there may be others whose thoughts and feelings are very different from yours and, sometimes, you are grieved and perhaps perplexed because you have to live there. But if God put you there, “you shall be a blessing.” My dear Friend, Mr. Orsman of the Golden Lane Mission, has often told me that the results of his work will never be visible in Golden Lane because as soon as a man is converted, he begins to save, he becomes industrious, wears a better coat, seeks a better house, for he cannot live in that dirty room in which he once lived and he cannot bear the foul language of the court or alley—so, very properly and very naturally—he moves away! Unhappily there are always others coming in to keep the place as bad as ever. Now, when a Christian man is compelled to live in such a place as that, let him conclude that he has been put there that he may be a blessing. If that is your trying lot, my Brother, fight the devil where you are placed, on his own ground! It is not fair that you should have the pick of the spot where the great duel is to be fought. Fight the devil where he has a firm foothold and beat him by God’s Grace! I think if I were a gas lamp and had the choice of the place where I should be hung—and it was proposed to me that I should hang up somewhere in the West End where there is already abundance of light streaming from the fine shops—I don’t know that I would particularly care to be put there. But if there was a dark corner where thieves were in the habit of meeting and where much mischief might be done if it were not for the light of a lamp—I fancy I should ask to be hung up there where I should be of the most use! At any rate, if you are placed, in the Providence of God, in a dark neighborhood, let this be your prayer, “O Lord, make me a blessing here!”  
Perhaps, however, you are a member of an ungodly family. Now, you had no hand in that matter. You were not responsible for your birth and you cannot get out of that family into which you were born. Now, instead of saying, “I wish I had a Christian mother and that our house were ordered in God’s fear,” say, “God has called me, by His Grace. At present I am the only one saved, but He must mean me to be a blessing to my brothers, sisters and parents and, therefore, I am thankful that He has put me where I am needed. I will try to do everything that shall be kind to them—I will win their love if I can and I will also try to win them for Christ.” I am really thankful when some of you come to join the Church and tell me that there is no other in the house who cares for the things of God—for I look upon your conversion as getting in the thin end of the wedge! If we get one who fears God inside the house, I hope we shall get more, for, blessed be God, good example is contagious as well as bad! God grant that since it is your unhappiness to have ungodly relatives, it may be your happiness to “be a blessing” to them!  
It may be that you are persecuted, that you live in places where you are sneered at, where the Doctrines that are dearer than life to you, are regarded with contempt and Scriptural ordinances, in which you delight, are held up to constant ridicule. Do not altogether regret this, but say to yourself, “Perhaps I am put here in order that I may be a blessing to my persecutors.” Do not imagine that the unlikeliest man to get a blessing out of you is the one who laughs most at you. I sometimes think that the infidels who shout most loudly have more faith than others and that because they are afraid they shall hear conscience speak, they make a great clamor to try to drown its voice! When a man bullies you, there is a great deal better opportunity for you to get at him than when he says, as so many do, “Oh, yes, Sir, it is all true”—and there the matter ends as far as they are concerned. But there is something in a man who will stand up to oppose you and you may yet be able to say a word for Christ that will be blessed to him. Why should we want to run away because men mock us? If they say, “Come and fight,” let us go and fight—only with other weapons than theirs—with the weapons of holy gentleness giving a good reason for the hope that is within us with meekness and fear, for that is always the more powerful way of speaking! Do not, therefore, fear persecution, but rather thank God for it, and say, “I have to endure this that I may be a blessing to those who revile and abuse me.”  
Brothers and Sisters, I think our text furnishes sweet consolation to any who have been engaged in very arduous service. Have you a great deal to do for Christ—a great deal too much to do, it often seems to you? Are you incessantly occupied about the Lord’s business? Then thank God for it, for He has said, “You shall be a blessing”—and the more you have to do for Him, the more blessing you are likely to be the means of conveying to others!

Or on the other hand, are you passing through a very trying experience? If so, you are being qualified for greater usefulness. Your dark experience will only teach you more that you will be able to teach to others concerning God and His dealings with His own. Believe that you will become a blessing to others by means of your trials and cheerfully bow your heads to overwhelming floods of sorrow in the confident assurance that you will thus be made a blessing to others—and so bring glory to God!

Yes, Beloved, and we may even be content to die if our last testimony shall be more useful than any that we have borne before! If God will enable us to glorify Him by being a blessing to others, we will be content. I hope we can say that we desire nothing on earth compared with this— to be blessed of God and to be made a blessing by God. We covet not earthly wealth or position, but we do covet the honor of being a blessing! Have an insatiable thirst for this honor, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ—to be a blessing to tens, to hundreds, to thousands, to the millions of this great city! Incessantly strive, by your private prayer, by your generous alms, by your kindly deeds, by your public testimony, to be a blessing and may God bless you more and more—you and your children—for His dear name’s sake!

But, alas, there are many who cannot be a blessing to others, for they are not themselves saved. They are getting gray, but they are not saved! Death will soon call for them. Hell opens wide for them and they are not saved! May the Lord have mercy upon all of you who are not saved and may He, by His Grace, constrain you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and then to make the Scriptural profession of your faith, for HE said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” May God grant that you may all “be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation,” for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

[PUBLISHERS’ NOTE—Mr. Spurgeon’s Exposition of Zechariah 8 was an unusually long one, so it must appear with the next short Sermon that is published.] [It is in Sermon #3047, Volume 53, IF SO—WHAT THEN?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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ONCE A CURSE BUT NOW A BLESSING  
NO. 543

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you and  
you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.” Zechariah 8:13.**

AS these words came from the lips of Zechariah, doubtless they referred to the seed of Abraham, including the two tribes of Judah and the ten tribes of Israel. They have already received a minor fulfillment. But their most glorious accomplishment is yet to come. The Jews have for many a generation been cursed by all people. For ages no one had a good word or a kind look for the Jew. In every nation they have been persecuted and hunted like beasts of prey. The followers of the fierce Mohammed have not been their only enemies, for the children of the Babylonian harlot have equally thirsted for their blood in our own country.

In the dark ages, it was accounted God’s service to afflict the Israelites, and the day upon which the Church celebrated our Savior’s passion was chosen for the public stoning of His own Brothers and Sisters if they ventured into the streets. To be a Jew was, in the estimation of that era, to be deserving of all scorn and cruelty, and of no pity or consideration. To what exactions, to what fines, to what imprisonments and tortures have not the sons of Jacob been subjected by the professed followers of the Messiah? It is perhaps the greatest of all modern miracles that there should be one Jew upon earth who is a Christian—for the treatment they have received from pretended Christians has been enough to make them hate the name of Jesus.

It has been not simply villainous, but diabolical. Devils in Hell could not be more cruel to their victims than professed Christians have been to the sons of Abraham. They have been a curse, indeed. The whole vocabulary of abuse from “dog,” down to “devil,” has been exhausted upon them. Among all nations they have been a hissing and a byword. But the day is coming, yes, it dawns already, when the whole world shall discern the true dignity of the chosen seed. And they shall seek their company because the Lord has blessed them. In that day when Israel shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and shall mourn for their sins, the Jew shall take his true rank among the nations as an elder brother and a prince.

The covenant made with Abraham, to bless all nations by his seed, is not revoked. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the chosen nation shall not be blotted out from the book of remembrance. The Lord has not cast away His people. He has never given their mother a bill of divorce. He has never put them away. In a little wrath He has hidden His face from them, but with great mercies will He gather them. The natural branches shall again be engrafted into the olive together with the wild olive grafts from among the Gentiles. In the Jew, first and chiefly, shall Divine Grace

triumph through the King of the Jews. O Time, fly with rapid wing and bring the auspicious day!

Another meaning has been given to the passage by some very eminent expositors, namely, that the Jews have been for ages the model of a curse to all people. As old Master Trapp says, they bear upon their backs the wheels of God’s rod, or, as he puts it yet more strongly, like Cain, they carry upon their foreheads the mark of God’s wrath. They have been a people scattered and peeled, not numbered among the nations, men of weary foot and haggard countenances. Their nation has been the football of Providence, and the butt of misfortune. They have been shipwrecked upon every sea, overturned by every storm—the victims of every calamity and the objects of every misery.

Everywhere have they been men evidently accursed of God and given up to His wrath. When men wanted a name to curse by, they said, “Let me be as accursed as the Jew.” But the day is to come when they are to be quite as manifestly the blessed ones of God. Their conversion shall show how God favors them. Their gathering to their own land, the splendor of the reign of Messiah in their midst. All those latter-day glories which are dimly shadowed in the Book of the Revelation, and in the Book of the Vision of Daniel the Prophet—when all these shall come to pass—then the sons of men shall speak of the Jewish people as a royal priesthood and a peculiar people.

The seed of Abraham, God’s Friend, are very dear to Him—the darlings of His bosom, the flock of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Oh, that the dark night would soon be over! Long has the Christian Church slept in forgetfulness of the Jew. Even faithful men have scarcely given a thought to Israel, and have left the Jew to perish as though his heart were too hard to be melted by Divine love. I trust that mistake has been discovered and that there are many now anxiously praying for the restoration of the glory unto Israel.

But too many are still indifferent where earnestness is needed. May the Lord in His infinite mercy first put it into His people’s hearts to pray for Israel, and then to work in love and labor in faith. May He hasten in His own time the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And then shall the whole earth be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

We may work and we may toil, but till Israel is gathered, God’s Glory cannot be universal, nor even widely spread. Until the Jew acknowledges Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, the fullness of the times of restitution shall not have arrived. Make no tarrying, O our Lord! Come quickly and send as the herald of Your coming—Your own Brothers and Sisters who once despised You when You came to Your own and Your own received You not.

You can clearly understand the text now in its literal signification without another word of exposition—“As you have been a curse among all nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you and you shall be a blessing.”

We feel ourselves perfectly justified in using the text in a broader sense. Our text teaches us that the unconverted are a curse. Secondly, that when converted they become a blessing. Thirdly, the text tells the means by which the transformation is worked—“I will save you.” And it closes with a word of encouragement to those who desire salvation—“Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”

I. UNCONVERTED MEN ARE A CURSE. This they are positively forever. Unconverted man, no matter what may be his moral character, adds in his degree to the amount of evil in the world—he adds another handful of leaven to leaven the whole lump, another breath of death-bearing wind to scatter the plague of sin among the sons of men. Every unrenewed heart casts another stone upon the heap of iniquity and assists the rising Babel of rebellion to lift its head more proudly. As I see the ungodly advancing one by one, I hear the Prince of Darkness cry, “Here comes another soldier to swell the ranks of evil, another lance for Satan and another sword for the powers of evil.”

To the black banner, every man that is unconverted is a recruit. Let him do as he may and think as he will, he that is not with Christ is against Him. He that is not for the right is on the side of the wrong. How is the body corporate of humanity poisoned more and more as each man adds his grain of evil! How is the torrent swollen with another and another stream! A deluge of iniquity is but a collection of all the contributions from every fountain of the great deep. Every graceless spirit binds another millstone about the neck of the human race to sink it to the lowest Hell.

Every sinner is a positive mischief-maker in the world. He is a deadly upas tree—every feat distilling poison. It is impossible that it should be otherwise, for as a black and filthy fountain must send forth unclean streams, so by a law of nature, as long as man is himself evil, he must do evil. One sinner destroys much good, and whatever sort of sinner he may be, whether his sin is written on his forehead, or only carried concealed in his right hand, he infects the world with evil. The sinner is a curse, then, because he adds to the positive evil in the world.

He is yet more—he is a curse because he helps to bring down the wrath of Heaven upon the world. Another destroying angel to cry, “O Lord, how long before You smite iniquity and bathe Your sword in the blood of rebels?” Another voice to cry, “Awake! Awake! O sword of Justice! Smite the sinner and let him perish from the face of the earth.” Doubtless every sin is a God-provoking thing. It stirs Him to jealousy. As the blood of Abel cried, “Vengeance,” so does sin. It is a thorn in the side of justice, a stab at the heart of truth. God’s great patience is expended at a tremendous rate by the sins of men. You unconverted Men! You make every day a draught upon the exchequer of long-suffering, and the day shall come when the golden sun shall all be expended and then woe unto the world, for then shall the last plagues be let loose and the last vials shall be poured out.

Even when the ungodly man dies he has not finished his evil work. His life may be over, but the moral death caused by his life still continues. As the tree that has borne evil fruit sends to the winds its seeds and these are buried in their appointed places. Where young saplings spring up to become a forest of evil, so is it with the ungodly man—his words and his

example, like seeds in the ground, germinate and bring forth the like in other men. Like produces like. His children in nature and spirit arise after him, and these prolong the echo of the dreadful curse which his life has pronounced upon the race.

He cannot stay that curse even if he would—it is given to the course of time as a feather to the wind and on it must go forever. Those saplings which sprang from him as from the parent tree will all grow into deathyielding trees, and these will scatter their seeds and so on, and on and on, as long as the human race lasts. No, even in eternity the victims of his sin lie in torment and blaspheme God world without end, so that his curse is an everlasting curse, and the evil which he does lives on when he himself sleeps with the clods of the valley. The ungodly man is everlastingly a positive curse.

But he is also a curse negatively. It is deplorable to think how much of good a man who knows not God keeps from this world. He cumbers the ground in which he grows. He extracts nourishment from the ground and covers it so that it cannot yield nourishment to any other plant, and yet he, himself, brings forth no fruit. Is this your position, my Hearer, this morning? Are you a do-nothing? If you are, remember that the spot which you occupy might have been occupied by a man who would have glorified God and done much for the spread of true religion. You have much time upon your hands, but you kill it. If another had it, it would be occupied with visitation of the sick, teaching the ignorant, comforting the weary and other acts which would glorify the name of Jesus.

You have the time and it is ill-spent. You have money. You spend perhaps upon a feast for your own pleasure as much as might have sent a herald of the Cross to a foreign land. Many a man, if he had your means, would put clothes upon the backs of the naked and bread into the mouths of the hungry. In one respect money answers all things, but you make it answer to nothing except your own gratification. Ah, how much mischief you do in this way! You have influence. It may be you are a master with many servants, or placed in such a position that many wait upon you and your example is followed and your words are weighty. If another had your place, how would he lead a whole troop to Heaven! With what earnestness would he seek to bless those who dwell under his shadow.

But you, what do you do? You cumber the ground. These many years there has not been found upon you one single ripe fruit such as may be acceptable to the Lord of the Vineyard. Beware, beware lest He cut you down! Don’t you see what evil you are doing to others? The minister is preaching to you this morning, and he has to do it often. If it were not for stray sheep such as you are, he would have more time to see after the lambs of the flock. If he had not to cry out after you and against your sins, he might be led into the deep things of God, to the comfort and edification of the Lord’s chosen people.

While you are in this House you are spoiling the song—you are marring the prayer by the wandering and wantonness of your thoughts. If you should come into the midst of a company of God’s people who were talking of Divine things, you would be like an iceberg chilling the atmosphere about you. How many young Christians you have hindered in their zeal by your indifference? If you did nothing else but damage the good, stop up the stream of love, and quench the light of the Truth of God, you would have done enough to make them a curse among men and to provoke God to smite you with the curse that withers body and soul forever and ever.

This is true of every unconverted man. Many of you moral men, whose lives are admirable, have not your hearts right with God. What is the lesson that men learn from your conversation? Why, when the infidel wants to prove that there may be goodness apart from religion, he quotes you as an argument against the Word of God and against the necessity of a new heart and a right spirit. Have not many in your own position been hardened in their halt between two opinions by your example? Young people say, “There is Mrs. So-and-So and Mr. This-and-That, what good people they are and yet they have never given their hearts to God. “Surely,” say they, “such people must know, and if there were anything in religion, they would certainly have followed in the right road and have put their trust in Christ.”

The better you are, the more do I deplore that you should be upon the wrong side. If my country were at war, it would be very little comfort to me to know that my enemies were good soldiers. No, I had rather that they were bad ones. For there were then the more hope of overcoming them. The weight of your character makes it the more sad that it should be thrown into the scale of self-righteousness. I say the very excellence of your morals renders it a more serious crime that you should not take your stand with Christ, the lover of holiness. You do mischief, I am sure.

Possibly there is a measure of moral good effected by your example, but there is a more abundant spiritual evil, because many stop where you stop. Being affected by your example, they halt at your halting place, and as you will perish except you are born again, so will they. And the blood of their souls will lie at your door because your example was a curse to them.

If this is true of the moral unconverted man, how much more certainly is it of the open follower of vice. Shall I continue? No. I will scarcely so much as use my pencil to portray the mischief which the votary of vice brings upon others. How does the drunkard drown multitudes in his cups? How does the man of lust destroy and damn both the body and the soul of his victims? How does the man who leads a licentious life spread poison by his very eyes—like the basilisk, doing mischief by his glance? “His feet,” we may truly say, “are swift to shed blood.” His hands are full of drawn swords and flaming firebrands to destroy souls.

The profane swearer—what a pest he is! Young ears are bombarded with sin by him, and young hearts learn the crimes of old rebels. Ah, you are a curse, indeed! Better for someone to walk the streets with a deadly plague about him and to spread it in every house, than to have such as you are living in society, for you have the death plague and the damnation plague upon you! You are a walking malaria, a breather of pestilence—a myrmidon of Hell—a jackal to the infernal lion, the lackey and the slave of the Destroyer.

Perhaps there are a few such here. Therefore let us be brief upon that point. It is the same with the sinner who makes ungodly men his associates—he is a curse. You do not drink as they do, you say, nor go to their excess of riot, nor curse with their curses. But yet you herd with them. You make them your associates, and, if you want a little pleasure, you seek their acquaintance. Sir, you are a curse. You are a curse to these men. I will not say you make them sinful, but I must say you add to their comfort in their sin. They see such as you are with them and as association always hardens the sinner, they grow more confirmed in evil. Many a drinking club would break up if it were not for the two or three sensible men in it, and yet what is the effect of their morality?

Not so much to check the others as to keep the whole together and put a respectable face upon mischief. You who lie in the same bed with the wicked must take care when God smites the house that you do not perish in its overthrow. You that eat at their feasts, and drink of their cups, and laugh at their jokes, and revel in their vices, and take pleasure in their wantonness, mind when the Lord spreads His net to take these foul birds. He will take you in the same net and award you a portion with those that were His enemies.

Nor can we spare here the men of thoroughly bad principles. The men who pretend to doubt the existence of a God, who question the Inspiration of the Scripture, deny the Deity of Christ, or impugn the veracity of Gospel promises—all such men are great destroyers of good. They will always be on the face of the earth and we must never expect to see them rooted up until the Lord’s coming. It is wonderful that in England they should be so miserably small a party. If again infidelity should be as prevalent as Christianity, I should not much marvel, for it so suits the natural heart of man. The wonder is that there is not more of it abroad.

But one infidel—O what a curse he is! In a workshop that one man of sharp shrewd sense will very soon make disciples! Like the Pharisees of old they compass sea and land to make one proselyte. Too often the Believer does not give that attention to the reading of Scripture, and to the finding up of arguments for his faith which the ungodly man will give in order to find arguments to shake the faith of others. I would that our members were more industrious, both in searching the Scriptures and in studying the evidences of their Inspiration and authenticity, that they might have their weapons ready to meet the attacks of infidels.

For these infidels—men of much thinking and shrewdness and sagacity and wit—placed in the midst of poor uneducated Christians are terrible as wolves in the midst of a flock of sheep, and much havoc may they do. Though they cannot turn one truly blood-bought child of God out of the flock, nor yet make one that is born again apostatize from the Truth of God, yet they bring much misery into the heart. And doubtless many who are undecided are led by them into decisions for Satan and go straight away from all hopefulness of being converted to God. Now of such an one we may say he is a curse, indeed.

But now I hear another say, “Well now, I do not come under the description of immoral, nor yet of those who spread infidel principles and practices.” Ah, but still you may be a curse, if you have an evil spirit towards religion. There are some who say but little, but who hate the very name of Christ. Even if they hold their tongues, that shrug of the shoulder, that look, that cold, heartless reception which they give to the Truth of God must infallibly be observed by others. Children and those round about them cannot help detecting what they are, and who they are, and they will thus become very successful servants of the Prince of Darkness. O dear Friends, I fear that some of you know in your own conscience without any words of mine, that up to now your lives have been no blessing to your fellows, but rather, wherever you have gone, you have been a curse.

I shall conclude this point by noticing that the unconverted man is a curse everywhere. In the family, what a curse he is! His wife, perhaps, is a Christian—what a life he leads her! Does he strike her? Perhaps not. But his words wound her even more than blows would have done. What about the children? Why, they will go as the father goes—his crooked words they learn to speak, and his crooked actions they will learn to do. It is not likely, though by Divine Grace it is possible, that they should be better than he. If we were to put a black cross upon every house where there is a husband who is a curse to the household, how many streets in London might have the black cross half the way down? Are you an ungodly man— and does your life teem with iniquity? Then think that the black cross is there as you go home and say, “Yes. I am a curse to this house. I lead them away from God.”

He is a curse in the workshop. As soon as he goes to it, those who would be decent are led to the public house by him and to places where sin is accustomed to be allowed. Let him become what is more respectable, as we say, in life. But he is a curse even there. Make him a master and give him many servants—then how haughty and how domineering he will be if he meets a servant who is a professor of religion! His misspending of his Sundays will be known to all his working men and they are always willing enough to follow the example of their employers in doing evil.

Make him wealthy, he can indulge himself in all sorts of pleasures and his gold is spent in the service of Satan. Give him abilities—talents of thought and speech—he becomes a sort of sergeant-major in the ranks of Satan, a commander of others. Satan employs him as a decoy to bring others into the net. Now he goes abroad and is the call-bird of others, so that others, hearing his sweet notes, are lured into the fowler’s snare and are taken and destroyed. Put him on a throne and he curses an empire. Give him but a small village, over which he shall be the squire, and he is a curse to all the parish.

Let him become a professor and oh, this is the place where he can do the most of mischief. Clothe him with the garments of a Christian while his heart is rotten—and now, while pretending to be a disciple of Jesus— he will become more than ever a successful servant of Satan. Make him a minister and you have given him the worst possible position. In fact, the better the man’s place, the more evil can he do. Oh, to be a minister—to be thought to be sent of God to the people and then to be delivering falsehood! To be either by one’s life or one’s teaching contradicting the oracles of God! Of such a man we may well say his damnation is sure. But this is not the worst of it, for, before he goes down to the pit himself, he drags as

with a hundred ropes, multitudes of others down the dreadful steep. II. But secondly, here is a gracious promise made that THEY SHALL BE  
A BLESSING. Dear Friends, the true Christian is a blessing temporally in  
the world. If there were no life to come, yet is a converted man a blessing—since he arrests the judgments of God. Sodom shall stand if there are  
ten righteous found in it. The world shall last as long as there is salt  
enough in it to keep it from putrefaction. The world shall not be given up  
to blackness forever, so long as there are a few lights still shining in it. As  
the conducting rod prevents the dwellings of men from being destroyed by  
lightning, so Believers in a State, or in a town, are its preservation from  
the avenging judgments of God.  
Who will deny, again, that the Christian, the true Christian promotes  
morality—that his godly life settles the foundation of order? Where are the  
most revolutions? Where is the least of religion? Where has the guillotine  
fallen with its fatal drop? Where have heads rolled by hundreds in a basket? Where have streams of blood crimsoned the street? Where is there an  
empire, never safe except as the throne is supported by bayonets? Look  
across the Channel and you will see that the absence of religion is the absence of order in the State. It is England’s Bible which is the keystone of  
England’s institutions.  
The flag of old England is nailed to the mast, not so much by her soldiers and sailors, as by the men who love her God and bring down the  
blessing upon her continually by prayer. Do you think that we should  
have had a famine in the north and a stoppage of the mills without riot if  
it had not been for the wide spread of religion among the working men?  
The blessed restraints of holiness and goodness have produced order and  
patience. Dear Friends, the Christian man is the true patriot. He is a  
blessing to his country, be he where he may.  
Does not the Christian aid in every good work? He is no Christian if he  
does not. If there is an hospital, does he not delight as much to contribute  
towards the relief of sickness of the body as for the removal of disease of  
the soul? If education is needed by the lower classes, who shall be found  
to teach in the Sunday school and who will support institutions on the  
weekday more readily than Christian men? Anything which is pure and  
lovely and of good repute in this world, owes, if not its origin, yet its main  
support to the godliness of Believers. No one shall be able to estimate how  
much the presence of a good man in the State is a preventative as well as  
a cure. It prevents the breaking out or the more frightful forms of vice, or  
else drives it into seclusion and makes it hide its head for very shame. The  
Christian, I believe, is to a nation one of the greatest temporal blessings  
which God can send to it.  
And as for eternity, truly a Christian is a blessing there. If his example  
shall lead men to seek after God—if his words shall teach the sinner his  
need of a Savior—shall point him to the Cross—shall show him the  
wounds—oh, if his prayers shall be heard and the Spirit of God shall descend and his family shall be converted and his kinsfolk shall be reclaimed, then eternity shall know the music of the blessing which he scattered among the sons of men! You cannot bless men forever, in any other way than by yourself being a true follower of Jesus, and then seeking to  
bring them to a knowledge of the Truth of God.  
Now, as I said of the ungodly, that every ungodly man is a curse, so will  
I venture to say that every Christian man is a blessing in the degree in  
which he is true to his Christianity. If he has been moral before, now that  
he becomes a Christian, how that tells upon men like he! How those who  
would have been undecided are moved to go forth! The force of his former  
character and the excellence and amiability of his deportment operate  
upon those who knew him. If he has been a drunkard and a swearer before, this will not hinder him from being a blessing now. His old companions hear of the great change. They enquire how it was worked. They go  
with him to the House of God and they, too, are brought to Christ. Some of those who have brought more saints to God than others were  
once themselves the greatest of sinners. Let no one suppose that because  
his character has been up to now very vile, therefore, if converted, he  
would be of no use—sometimes he will even be of the more use. What  
would all your old mates say, when they saw you were a Christian? “There  
must be something in it,” say they, “if drunken William is saved.” What if  
the swearer should wash his mouth and should preach God’s Word! What  
if yonder voice should be heard at the Prayer Meeting, although once so  
loud in a brothel! Oh, would not men wonder, and would not there be  
many who would suddenly feel attracted to the Cross, as you have been,  
and say, “We will go with you, for we perceive that God has blessed you”? Such a man, even if he has been an infidel, becomes a blessing now—  
sometimes most a blessing to those to whom he was most a curse. Now he  
refutes himself. Now his own example becomes the best answer to his  
former false teaching. Now his love to Jesus is observed and noticed—all  
those whom he taught to hate the Lord will help to adore His sacred Person. And if the man has been through and through of a bad spirit, though  
he has not openly spoken against the things of God, yet when converted,  
how serviceable he becomes! For even if he is almost silent and can say  
but little, yet, as the bad spirit oozed through him, so now the Spirit of  
God will shine through him!  
There shall be a difference about his very face! And the manner of his  
walk and conversation shall be such that it will betray him. Out of the  
midst of him shall flow rivers of living water, whereof multitudes shall  
drink. No matter, O Christians, how poor you may be, or how ignorant  
you are, or how little influence you may have—you are and shall be a  
blessing, if God gives you a new heart and a right spirit.  
The converted man is a blessing everywhere. He is a blessing to his family. Daily prayer, Bible reading, teaching of the children—all these make  
his house a little Paradise. When he goes to the workshop, if any learn  
vice, it is not from him. If there are any who despise Christ, it is not from  
his example. He has a good word for Jesus. Now he begins to lament and  
pray over the sins of his fellow men. He speaks of the Cross of Christ and  
perhaps he brings some of them to repentance and to a saving faith. You  
may put him anywhere with safety. Make a king of him—he rules his dominions in the fear of God. Give him a large estate and you will find his  
substance expended as it should be. Now the hungry shall have their portion and the needy their share. The Church at home and missions  
abroad shall all be prospered by him.  
Let him make a profession—he does not dishonor it. He puts golden  
chains about the neck of piety by the excellence of his deportment. You  
may put him into the pulpit with safety. With a new heart he can be  
trusted, even at the altars of God. His soul, having been renewed, there  
will be nothing in his example, or word, of which a Christian could complain. Now you may take him to Heaven itself, for even there he shall be a  
blessing and help to swell the song of, “Hallelujah unto Him that washed  
our robes and made them white in His blood.” I would to God we had a  
holy ambition to be more a blessing than we have been, for remember—if  
you have been converted and are not living consistently with your religion—then your life is not much of a blessing.  
Oh, it is so sad, so sad, to my own soul when I see those who might be  
a blessing, by some weakness or folly throw away their golden opportunities. There are some of you—I cannot tell what good you might do in the  
world, but either through natural infirmity or sin, you are of little service.  
Do not, I pray you, destroy your own power to bless your fellow men! Do  
not so act in the family and in business and in the Church as to make  
yourself a little blessing, when you might have been a great one! Ask the  
Lord to fill you so full with His Grace that you may be like a great cloud of  
mercy, resting continually over the sons of men and pouring forth its gracious shower day by day.  
III. The third point is HOW IS ALL THIS TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT?  
How is the man who was a curse to be made a blessing? Can he do it  
himself? Rests there a power in human will that by the magic of its might,  
men who were once a curse may be made a blessing? Ah no! This abides  
not in the creature, but with the Creator. So runs the text—“I will save  
you.” You that have been a curse, “I will save you.” Swearer, drunkard,  
whoremonger, whoever you may be, “I will save you, to show what Sovereign Grace can do.” “I will save you and make you a blessing.” But you say, “How, then, may I be saved?” Salvation from sin is one,  
but yet it is a salvation from sin in two senses—from the guilt of it and  
from the power of it. Sinner, cursed of God and cursing others—all the sin  
that you have done can be blotted out. No matter though it is red like  
scarlet, it may be as wool. And though it is as crimson, God can make it  
whiter than snow. In a moment all your sins can pass away so that if they  
were sought for, they could not be found. Yes, though an inquisition were  
made to search them out, yet could they not be discovered. And this can  
be done by the blood, the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus the Substitute,  
the Son of God and yet the Son of Man, took the sins of all Believers upon  
Himself and suffered the punishment of all their sins—  
*“He for the sins of all the elect  
Has a complete atonement made.  
And justice never can expect  
That the same debt should twice be paid.”*If you believe, that is, if you trust in Christ, all the sins you have ever  
done were laid upon Christ. Your believing is the sign and mark of this.  
And from now on you have no sin, your sin is gone. You are an accepted  
and pardoned man. No, more—you are justified. The righteousness of Christ is yours. In the sight of God you stand accepted in the Beloved. And all this is to be had by the simple act of trusting. Whosoever you may be, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” But then you say, “But how can I be delivered from the power of sin? If all my past sins were forgiven, yet I might go back and do as before and so remain as vile as  
ever.”  
Yes, there is power in the Holy Spirit to make a new man of you. He can  
put into your heart the holy influences of Divine Grace so that though you  
naturally go towards evil, you shall, by supernatural influence, go towards  
the right. He shall give you that fiery motion, which, as the flame always  
ascends towards Heaven, shall make your heart ascend towards holiness.  
He shall subdue in you the powers of evil which now reign, shall keep  
your sins under your feet, and eventually cast them out forever and make  
you perfect before the Lord.  
Remember, this is to be done for you, not by you. You cannot make  
yourself a new man. It is impossible for you to work regeneration. One  
look at Jesus will take away past sins and will kill the power of sin for the  
future. Sprinkle His blood upon the old serpent and it dies. Put the water  
which flowed with the blood from Christ and the foulness of nature only  
remains to be subdued and eventually to be cast out when the Believer  
shall be taken up in perfection to dwell before the Father’s Throne. God  
can save you, whoever you may be, and whatever your past life may have  
been. No doings of your own, no prayers, no penances, no almsgivings,  
are required. Simply trust Jesus who died for you and you are saved,  
saved on the spot—saved forever.  
IV. And then comes the last point. The text GIVES A WORD OR TWO  
OF ENCOURAGEMENT from this—“Let your hands be strong: fear not.”  
Though you have been a curse until now, if you sincerely desire to be  
made a blessing, and if the Holy Spirit has made you willing to accept the  
perfect righteousness of Christ and to be washed in His most precious  
blood, then “fear not.” Let not conscience make you fear. God will answer  
to your conscience. The blood of Christ shall purge it from dead works. Let  
not a sense of Divine Justice make you fear, Christ has satisfied Divine  
Justice and Justice is your friend. Let not the remembrance of past sins  
make you fear. They shall be cast into the depths of the sea—not one of  
them shall rise to accuse you.  
Let not the thoughts of judgment make you fear. You shall have an Advocate at the Last Great Day to plead your cause. Fear not, but com, and  
welcome! Christ invites you by His wounds. The Father bids you come and  
trust His Only-Begotten Son. He earnestly entreats you to come unto Him  
and live. “Fear not,” says He. And if doubts and fears stand at the door to  
keep you from coming, yet rush forward through them all, saying—“God  
has bid me fear not and, therefore, will I not fear, but boldly venture upon  
the finished work of Christ. And if I perish, I perish.”  
“Let your hands be strong,” especially the hand with which you grasp  
the Savior. Lay hold upon Him, Sinner. O may the Spirit of God help you  
to lay hold upon Him now! “Let your hands be strong.” Grasp Him. Lay  
hold on eternal life. As a sinking man lays hold upon the rope that is cast  
to him, so lay hold on Christ. It is now or never with you. If Christ saves you not, you are damned forever. Grasp Him, then! He passes by. He may never pass this way again. This morning He comes in mercy to you to  
turn you, you Cursed One, into a blessing!  
Grasp Him. Even as Jacob laid hold upon the angel, lay hold on Christ!  
And if He struggles with you and seems as though He would not bless  
you, say unto Him—  
*“No, I must maintain my hold,  
It is Your goodness makes me bold.  
I can no denial take,  
Pity me for Your love’s sake.”*  
O for strong hands to grasp the Savior! Let your hands be strong to lay  
hold on His promises. They are such as these—“Though your sins are as  
scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson,  
they shall be as wool.” “Whosoever comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”  
“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He is able also  
to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Lay hold on these. Take them before God and say to Him, “Can You lie?  
Can You be untrue? If You are true, keep this promise for me. Have You  
not said, ‘As you have been a curse, so I will make you a blessing’? I have  
been a curse—I admit it. I lament it. Make me a blessing, Lord. By the  
sufferings of Jesus—by the agony and bloody sweat—by His Cross and  
passion—by His precious death and burial—make me a blessing, Lord!  
You have but to speak the word and I, even I, shall repent. You have but  
to will it, and I shall behold Your face in Christ and believe in Him. Your  
Spirit is not to be resisted—send Him forth to raise my dead soul from the  
grave. Come and work in me! Turn the lion to a lamb, the raven to a  
dove.”  
Sinner, if you can believe that God will do it, He will do it. For anything  
you will believe of Him, however high and great, He can do and will do, for  
He will never let your faith be in excess of His power—His unbounded  
power! Trust in Him! Rest upon Him! God help you to do it and may these  
poor stammering words of mine, by their very weakness, be fitted for your  
conversion, because my Master’s Glory shall shine the better through my  
weakness! And His power to save shall be the more resplendent because  
of my feeble words! If it is so, I would sooner be dumb than speak with the  
tongues of men and angels, if He were not to be honored.  
Father, glorify Jesus! Glorify Him now in bringing some who have been  
a curse, to the making of them a blessing, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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SAD FASTS CHANGED TO GLAD FEASTS  
NO. 2248

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 20, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1890.

**“Thus says the Lord of Hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.”  
Zechariah 8:19.**

MY time for discourse upon this subject will be limited, as we shall gather around the Communion Table immediately afterwards. So in the former part of my sermon I shall give you an outline of what might be said upon the text if we had time to examine it fully. It will be just a crayon sketch without much light and shade. You will be able to think over the subject at your leisure and fill up the picture for yourselves!

We have, in the chapters we have read, a blessed message of peace to God’s people in the day of their trouble. In the land of their captivity the Jews were in great perplexity. Their sad lament is on record—“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.” But their trouble led many of them to seek the Lord and He was found of them. Welcome is such misery which leads to such mercy! In the seventh chapter we are told that when they sent unto the house of God, to pray before the Lord and to say, “Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? Then came the Word of the Lord.” Jehovah has put their tears into His bottle and, in answer to their sighing, sent them a message of hope! That message has in it much that is very practical. It is a letter full of mercy, but it is directed to certain characters. God does not send indiscriminate mercy. If men go on in their sin, He sends them words of judgement. But when they turn from their wickedness and are renewed, by His Grace, in the spirit of their minds, then it is that words of comfort are spoken to them.

Reviewing the whole message which Zechariah was commissioned to deliver and which is summed up in our text, there are three things which stand out in clear prominence. The first is that God calls for transformation of character in the people He is going to bless. The second is that He promises translation of condition to those whose characters are thus changed and beautiful. And, lastly, He ordains transfiguration of ordinances as the result of the new character and condition. The whole subject is exceedingly suggestive and well worthy of careful study when you reach your homes.

We must not lose sight of the fact that, primarily, this message is for Israel according to the flesh and contains a prophesy of their latter-day glory. God has not cast off His people whom He did foreknow and there are majestic words here which still await their fulfillment when the set time shall have come. The Lord “will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem” and make the place of His feet glorious in that day. But as “no prophesy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,” so the message to the Jews also bears a message for us! Let us seek to learn its lesson well.

I. My text reminds me—and the chapter before us emphasizes the fact—that when God means to bless His people, HE CALLS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER. The promise of the abiding Presence of the Lord God Almighty is always proceeded by the call to separation and holiness. “The words which the Lord had cried by the former Prophets” made it very clear that only with the righteous nation would God dwell—and Zechariah delivers a similar message.

Very remarkable will be the transformation of character which God shall work. According to the text, love of the Truth of God is to be one of the main effects of the change. These people certainly did not set much value on the truth before—they were in love with every lie, with every false God and with every false prophet. But God would have them taste of His Covenant blessings and be set free from every false way. It is the only truth that can set men free, yet many there are, even today, who delight to be in bondage to error! How is it with you? Do you love the Truth of God, or can you put up with that which is not true, if it is only pleasant? Say, dear Heart, are you anxious after Truth—Truth in your head, Truth in your heart, Truth on your tongue, Truth in your life? If you are false and love falsehood, you are taken with a sore disease—and unless you are healed of the plague, you can never enter Heaven! You must be transformed and made true—and only the Spirit of Truth can effect the mighty change.

Another sign must follow— love of peace. The text also says, “Therefore love peace.” In some men it is a plain proof of conversion when they desire peace. Some are naturally very hot-tempered and soon boil over. These are the men of great force of character, or else of great shallowness—it is the small pot which is soon hot. Some are malicious. They can take enmity quietly and keep it in the refrigerator of their cold hearts for years! Such love is not peace—they are at war with all who have, in any degree, disappointed or displeased them. When the Grace of God takes away an angry, passionate, malicious disposition, it achieves a great wonder. But then Grace, itself, is a great wonder—and unless this change is worked in you who need it, you shall not see God, for you cannot enter Heaven to go into a passion there. Depend upon it, unless you lose your bad temper, you will never be among the ranks of the glorified! It must be conquered and removed if you are to join the happy hosts on high. “They are without fault before the Throne of God”—and so must you be if you are to be numbered among that company.

Moreover, those whom God blesses have undergone a transformation as to their conduct with each other. Righteous dealing is another effect of the change. Notice the ninth verse of the seventh chapter—“Thus speaks the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment.” This is, at all times, a necessary admonition, but never more necessary than now, when so many never dream of justice and goodness—in business and in private life many seem to have no care for righteousness. If the thing will pay, they will rob right and left—they will only be honest because there is an old saw that says, “Honesty is the best policy.” But he that is honest out of policy is the most dishonest man in the world! May God grant us Grace to do what is right at all costs! Christians, when the Grace of God reigns in their souls, would rather be the poorest of the poor than get rich by a single act contrary to uprightness. O beloved members of this Church, be upright in all your transactions, clear and straight in your dealings—for how shall you call yourselves the children of the righteous God if you make gain by unholy transactions?

Another point of transformation lies in the exercise of compassion. This comes out in that same ninth verse of the seventh chapter—“Show mercy and compassions, every man, to his brother.” A great mark of a changed heart is when we become tender, full of pity and kind. Some men have very little of the milk of human kindness about them. You may lay a case before them and they will wonder why you should come to them. And when you see how little they do, you wonder why you ever came to them! Many there are whose hearts are locked up in an iron safe and we cannot find the key! They have hidden the key—there is no getting at their hearts. One such said to a minister who preached a sermon, after which there was to be a collection, “You should preach to our hearts and then you would get some money.” The minister replied, “Yes, I think that is very likely, for that is where you keep your money.” The answer was a very good one. That is just where a great many persons carry their treasure— but when the Grace of God comes and renews the miser’s heart—he begins to be generous! He has pity on the poor and compassion for the fallen—he loves to bless those who are round about Him, and make them happy. It is a mark of wonderful transformation in the character of some men, when their heart begins to go a little outside their own ribs and they can feel for the sorrow of other men!

Notice, next, in the 10th verse of that same seventh chapter, that another mark of God’s people is consideration for others—“Oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor.” How can he be a child of the all-bountiful Father who would make men work for wages that scarcely keep body and soul together? How can he be a son of the God of Love who will defraud the poor woman whose fingers must go stitch, stitch, stitch, half through the night, before she can even get enough to give her relief from her hunger? God’s children will have nothing to do with this kind of thing! Those who take delight in oppressing the poor and who make their gain thereby, will be, themselves, pinched in eternal poverty—they are little likely to enter the golden gates of Paradise! There is many a child of God who has lived here in the depths of poverty—and when he gets to Heaven, away from all the struggle and bitterness, is he to see the man who was his oppressor here below, coming into Glory to sit side by side with him? I think not!

Once more, where there is a work of Grace, it leads men to brotherliness of character. “And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart,” says the Lord in the 10th verse of this seventh chapter. And the same thing is repeated in the 17th verse of the eighth chapter. I would be sure that some women were converted if they left off imagining evil against others in their hearts. For there are some women—and there are some men, too, I am sorry to say—who cannot think of anybody without thinking evil of them. There are such dreadful persons about and, sometimes, we come across them to our dismay. They paint the very saints of God black and there is no getting away from their slander—no, let a man live the life of Enoch, yet would some of these people report evil against him! Slander is no sign of a saint—it is the brand of one who is under the dominion of the devil! “For all these are things that I hate, says the Lord.” God save us from them all!

Thus I have given you a brief outline of the transformation of Grace. They are great changes because God works them. When men come to Him and yield themselves up to His Divine Power, He takes away the heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh. He turns their nature to the very reverse of what it was before—then they follow after the Truth of God and peace—then they love righteousness and learn kindness through His good Spirit.

II. The second point to which I would draw your attention, with reference to the methods of God with His people, is that HE PROMISES TRANSMUTATIONS OF CONDITION to those men in whom are found the transformation of character. I have already read the eighth chapter to you—let us go through it, again, and pick out just a note or two of the joy and gladness which are here written in full score.

First, jealousy is turned into communing love. God represents Himself, in the second verse, as being very jealous about His people because He loved them so much. He was jealous for them with great fury. The people set up false gods in His own city, even in His own Temple, and God was angry with them and would not dwell with them. But when they repented and He had cleansed them by His mercy, He says, “I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.” What a change! God waits not until, by long obedience, His people win Him back. He does not say that He will return when they merit His Presence. No, the word comes to us full of surprise and power, “I am returned.” Instantly, on the repentance, God comes back! A jealous God fights against me. I fly to Christ. He is content. He comes and dwells with me, no longer full of fury, but full of tenderness and love! If any of you have had God fighting against you, in holy jealousy chasing out your sin, happy will you be if you yield yourselves to Christ at once! If you do, God will come quickly and make your hearts to be His abode. May many get that transformation at this good hour!

Next, desolation is turned into population. On account of sin, Jerusalem became desolate. “I scattered them with a whirlwind,” says the Lord, “among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.” Zion sat like a widow. Nobody came up to her solemn feasts. But God returned to her and He says, in the fourth verse, “There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.” So that when God comes to bless His people, where there was nobody, there seems to be everybody! When Churches and congregations sin, God often admonishes them and brings them low. But when they return to their God, the old saints are seen there, again, and there are new-born Believers in plenty. God can soon change the estate of His people. It is the same with individual souls who have gone away from God, but afterwards repent and return to Him. Then the desolation of heart is forgotten in the joy of the multitude of sweet and holy thoughts and interests that crowd the heart and life! Old experiences revive and new life and joy are born where God comes near to us in Grace and power! What a wonderful change this is! May we all taste its bliss!

Another change of condition follows— scattering is turned into gathering. God goes on to say that as He scattered His people, so He will bring them together again from the east and from the west. This, as I have already said, has a first reference to the scattered Israel, but how true it also is of us! When the Lord leaves us, we are scattered like sheep without a shepherd in a cloudy and dark day. But when we turn to Him, His Word is sure. “I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.” May we know, in our new experience, the truth of that promise, “For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you,” and may it be to us according to His Word!

The next change is, that poverty is turned into plenty. Whereas they become poor and were half-starved with famine, God tells them that the city shall be prosperous—“The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew.” God often changes men’s circumstances when He changes their hearts. When He has been beating and bruising, if men will but yield to Him, He turns to them in love and plenty. May the Lord do this with any of us who have grieved Him and brought His rod upon us! There is no truer Word in the Book of God than this, “Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” With the Covenant blessings of Grace, God often bestows the common blessings of this life, even as it is written in the chapter before us, “I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.”

Farther on in the chapter, we are told of another change— ill-will is turned into good-will. Before the Lord graciously visited them, no man loved his neighbor. So we read in the 10th verse. But when God’s Grace came and changed their character, then one city went to another and said, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also,” and they went up to the House of the Lord, together. Oh, where the Grace of God comes, it makes men friends! Enemies they may have been before, but then they go and seek one another out and they say, “Come, old Friend, let us end all this. Give me your hand and let bygones be bygones.” There is nothing like love and unity among the people until the Grace of God comes and conquers the natural ill-will which otherwise would have had dominion! May such a transmutation take place between any here who may be at variance—and may all bitterness and hatred, if such things exist—be put away!

Did you not notice, also, in the reading of this chapter, how these people had been a curse and how, by the Presence of God, the curse is turned into a blessing? “And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.” When a Believer dishonors God, one of the worst results of it is that he becomes a snare to the people round about him. The very heathen look upon him as a curse. Inconsistent professors are the greatest stumbling blocks to the spread of the cause of Christ! But when their character is changed by the abounding Grace of God, they become like overflowing springs, sending streams of blessing far and wide!

Moreover, in the day of blessing, their reproach is turned into honor. The nation had been despised. Nobody would honor a Jew, but when they honored God, then God would honor them and 10 men would take hold of the garments of a man that was a Jew, saying, “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.” A man of God would, then, become more precious than the gold of Ophir! Well, my Friends, when we return to God, God very soon has ways of making us honorable, so that we are of value among men! He makes use of us and men begin to perceive that we are not to be despised if God is with us and His blessing rests upon us. Thus have I hurried over these two points because I want to dwell a little longer on the text, itself. It was necessary, however, to introduce it in this way.

III. Now we come to this fact which always accompanies God’s Presence. HE ORDAINS TRANSFIGURATIONS OF ORDINANCES. Four fasts, which had been kept by the Jews, were to be turned into feasts when the character of the men who observed them had changed and God had dealt graciously with them. Before this, their feasts had been farces—occasions of self-glorification and all manner of pride. Now, these days were to be festivals of gladness and times of drawing near to God, rejoicing in His good gift. In like manner, when a man becomes a Believer in Christ and is renewed, this principle operates—many a fast is turned into a feast—and many a sorrow and sadness into joy and gladness!

When the Communion Table shall be uncovered, you will see before you, in the emblems of the death of our Lord, what might have been the memory of a fast. The Lord of Life and Glory was nailed to the accursed tree. He died by the act of guilty men. We, by our sins, crucified the Son of God! We might have expected that, in remembrance of His death, we should have been called to a long, sad, rigorous fast. Do not many men think so even today? See how they observe Good Friday, a sad, sad day to many—yet our Lord has never enjoined our keeping such a day, or bid us to look back upon His death under such a melancholy aspect! Instead of that, having passed out from under the Old Covenant into the New, and resting in our risen Lord, who once was slain, we commemorate His death by a most joyous festival!

It came after the Passover, which was a feast of the Jews. But unlike that feast, which was kept by unleavened bread, this feast is brimful of joy and gladness! It is composed of bread and of wine, without a trace of bitter herbs, or anything that suggests sorrow and grief. The bread and the cup most fitly set forth the death of our Lord and Savior—and the mode of that death—even by the shedding of His blood. But as they stand before us, now, they evoke no tears! They suggest no sighs! The memorial of Christ’s death is a festival, not a funeral! And we are to come to the table with gladsome hearts, yes, and go away from it with praises, for, “after supper they sang a hymn.” At both ends it was Psalm singing. The great Hallel of the Jews commenced it and another Psalm, full of joy and gladness, out of the hallelujahs of the Palms, finished it. Oh, what has God worked! We crucified the Christ of God, but in that Crucifixion we have found our Ransom! With wicked hands He was slain by us, but His blessed Sacrifice has put all our sin away forever! Our hymn rightly asks—

*“‘It is finished.’ Shall we raise Songs of sorrow, or of praise? Mourn to see the Savior die, Or proclaim His victory?”*

But it justly answers—

*“Lamb of God! Your death has given  
Pardon, peace and hope of Heaven—  
‘It is finished!’ Let us raise  
Songs of thankfulness and praise!”*

As the Lord’s Supper leads the way in that direction, I may say that every other fast of the Christian has been transfigured in the same manner. The Sabbath is, to many people, a very dreary day, but, to many of us, it is a fast which has been turned into a feast! I am often amused when I read the accounts that are given by some people of an English Sabbath. In all soberness it is set forth what we Puritans do on this first day of the week. We wake up in the morning and say to ourselves, “Another dreadfully miserable day has come around,” and then we go off to our places of worship where we sit with frightfully long faces and listen to terribly dismal sermons! We do not sing, or even smile! We howl out some ugly Psalm and make ourselves as unhappy as ever we can be! When we come home, we draw down the blinds to keep the sun out. We never go into the garden to admire the flowers!

Well, you know the rest of the story. I think we are descendants of the people who killed the cat on Monday because it caught mice on Sunday— at least, so I have heard! But if I had not read all this, I would not have known it! Often, when I see in the paper some description of myself, I say, “Well, people somehow seem to know me better than I know myself—I never thought anything of the kind—it has never entered my head. Yet here is it in black and white!” O beloved Friends! Our idea of the Lord’sDay is altogether different from this hideous caricature of it! If I had to describe our Sabbaths, I would say that they are full of brightness, joy and delight! I Would tell of our singing with full hearts, of the happy prospect before us in that land—

*“Where congregations never break up,  
And Sabbaths have no end.”*

I am sure we would not be likely to go to that heavenly country if our Sabbaths here were as dreary as some say they are! Why, here in this house, we have had our merriest times! Of old, when the prodigal came back, “they began to be merry,” and I have never heard that they have stopped! At any rate, I do not think that we have! We have rejoiced with the joy of harvest as we have heard of sinners saved and have known that we are saved, ourselves. I grant you that, before we knew the Lord, it did, sometimes, seem to our young minds rather a dull thing to read the Bible, hear sermons and to keep the Sabbaths. But now that we have come to Christ and He has saved us—now that we are His—the first day of the week, which was a fast, has become a feast, and we look with eager delight for the Sundays to come round, one after another! In fact, these Lord’s-Days are the beds of flowers in our gardens. The week-days are only the gravel paths that yield us little but weariness as we walk along them. Happy Sabbath! We hail your coming with delight, and sing—

*“Welcome sweet day of rest,  
That saw the Lord arise!  
Welcome to this reviving breast  
And these rejoicing eyes!  
The King Himself comes near  
And feasts His saints today!  
Here we may sit and see Him here,  
And love, and praise, and pray!”*

So, you see, this is a second instance in which what might have been a fast is turned into a feast!

There is another thing that is, to some of us, a great feast, though formerly it was as full of weariness as a fast. It is the hearing of the Doctrines of Grace. I know some Brothers and Sisters who always sit very uneasily when I begin to preach the Doctrines of Grace. I am sorry that it is so and I hope that they will grow wiser. Still, all of us did not always like to hear about God’s electing love and absolute Sovereignty—about the special redemption of Christ for His people—and about the union to Christ being an everlasting union, never to be broken. There was a time when we did not join very heartily in the lines—

*“Once in Christ, in Christ forever,*

*Nothing from His love can sever.”*  
But, oh, when your heart gets into full fellowship with God, if it is with you as it is with me, you will be glad to get on that string! Is there anything that gives us greater joy than to know our calling and election—and to make it sure—to know that the Father loved us as He loved Christ from before the foundation of the world and that He loves us with such a love that it can never end and can never change, but will continue when the sun burns black as a coal? It was because they heard these grand Doctrines that such crowds used to gather in the desert in France to hear the old Calvinistic preachers!

It was the hold these Truths of Grace had upon the minds and hearts of men that explains how it was that, under the Gospel oaks in England, vast numbers used to come hear plain and often illiterate men, preach the Gospel! They preached a Gospel that had something in it—and the people soon discover the real article when it is set before them. There is much that goes for Gospel, now, and if you could have a mile of it, you would not get an inch of consolation out of it, for there is nothing in it! But when your soul is heavy and when your heart is sad, there is nothing like the old faith to put cheer and life into you. How often have I read Elisha Coles on Divine Sovereignty through and through when I have been ill! When the heart begins to sink, if one gets a grip of the Sovereignty of God and the way of His Grace whereby He saves the unworthy and gets unto Himself glory by His faithfulness to His promises—what had been a fast becomes, to the child of God, a feast of fat things and royal cheer of a godly sort!

You will all agree with me in the next point. Sometimes the day of affliction becomes as a fast which has been turned into a feast. It is a trying thing to lose one’s health and to be near to death or to lose one’s wealth and wonder how the children will be fed. Or to have heavy tidings of disaster come to you, day after day, in doleful succession. But if you can grasp the promise and know that, “All things work together for good to them that love God”—if you can see a Covenant God in all, then the fast turns into a feast—and you can say, “God is going to favor me again. He is only pruning the vine to make it bring forth better grapes. He is going to deal with me again after His own wise, loving and fatherly way of discipline.” You then hear the Lord saying to you—

*“Then trust Me and fear not: your life is secure. My wisdom is perfect, supreme is My power. In love I correct you, your soul to refine,  
To make you, at length, in My likeness to shine.”*

I have met with some saints who have been happier in their sickness and in their poverty than ever they were in health and in wealth! I remember how one, who had been long afflicted and had got well, but had lost some of the brightness of the Lord’s Presence which he had enjoyed during his sickness, said, “Take me back to my bed! Let me be ill, again, for I was well when I was sick! I am afraid that I am getting sick, now that I am well.” It is often worth while being afflicted in order to experience the great loving kindness of God which He bestows so abundantly on us in the hour of trouble and perplexity. Yes, God turns our fasts into feasts, and we are glad in the midst of our sorrow! We can praise and bless His name for all that He does.

Once more—the solemn Truth of God of the coming of the Lord is a feast to us, though at first it was a fast. With very great delight we believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will shortly come. He is even now in the act of coming. The passage that we read, “Surely, I come quickly,” would be better translated, “Surely, I am coming quickly.” He is on the road and will certainly appear, to the joy of His people and for the emancipation of the world! There are certain writers who say they know when He is coming— do not be plagued with them—they know no more about it than you do! “Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father, only,” said the Lord Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may come sooner than any of us expect—before this “diet of worship” shall break up He may be here! On the other hand, He may not come for a thousand years, or 20,000 years!

The times and the seasons are with Him and it is not for us to pry behind the curtain. Those of our number who are unsaved may well dread His coming, for He will come to destroy them that obey not the Gospel. “Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord comes, for it is near at hand; a day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” That day will be terror, not light, to you. When He comes, He shall judge the earth in righteousness—and woe unto His adversaries, for, “He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken into shivers.” You have grave need to keep the fast of the Second Advent, for to you it is dies irae, day of wrath and day of vengeance, day of dread and day of woe!  
But if you become a Believer and, by Grace, are transformed as I described in the earlier part of this discourse, then it shall be a feast to you! Then you will look for His appearing as the day of your hope and will gladly say, “Yes, let Him come! Come Lord, nor let Your chariots wait! Come, Lord! Your Church entreats You to tarry no longer! Come, You absent love, You dear unknown, You fairest of ten thousand! Come to Your Church and make her glad!” To us the thought of the glorious Advent of Christ is no fast—it is a blessed feast! Our songs never rise higher than when we get on this strain. With what fervor we lift up our voices and sing—

*“Brothers, this Lord Jesus  
Shall return again,  
With His Father’s glory,  
With His angel train!  
For all wreaths of empire  
Meet upon His brow,  
And our hearts confess Him  
King of glory now”!*

Last of all, to come still more closely home, the approach of death is, to most men, a dreadful fast. Not the Mohammadan Ramadan can be more full of piteous grief than some men when they are obliged to think of death. If some of you were put into a room, tomorrow, and were compelled to stay there all day and think of your death, it would certainly be a very gloomy time to you. You will die, however—perhaps suddenly, perhaps by slow degrees. There will come a time when people will walk very gently round your bed—when they will wipe the death sweat from your brow— when they will lean over you to see whether you still breathe, or whether you have gone. Out of the 6,000 persons here, tonight, there are some, certainly, who will never see New Year’s Day. Usually there is someone who does not even see another Lord’s-Day! Almost every week we get an intimation that a hearer of the previous week has died before the next Sabbath.

Who among us will first be gone? Dare you think of it? O Beloved, when once you have peace with God and you know that you are going to behold His face, whom, though you have not seen, yet you love, then you can think of death without trembling! I think that there is nothing more delightful to the man who has full assurance of faith, than to be familiar with the grave, the resurrection morning, the white robe, the harp of gold, the palm and the endless song. The thought of death is more a feast to us than a fast, for, as Watts sings—

*“Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are,  
While on His breast I lean my head,  
And breathe my life out sweetly there.”*

“Well, I shall soon be Home,” says one old saint. And she spoke of it as she used to speak, when a girl, of the holidays and of her going away from school! “I shall soon behold the King in His beauty,” says another. He speaks of it as he might have spoken, when a young man, of his wedding day! Children of God cannot only read Young’s Night Thoughts without feeling any chill of solemnities written there, but they can write in their diaries notes of expectation at the thought of being with Christ—and almost notes of regret that they have not passed away to Glory, but are lingering here in the land of shadows. “What?” said one, who had been long lying senseless, when he came back, again, to consciousness, “And am I still here? I had half hoped to have been in my heavenly Father’s home and palace above long before this and I am still here.” Truly, Beloved, the fast is turned into a feast when we reach this experience! We will not hesitate to say, “Come, Lord, take us to Yourself.” Oh for a sight of the King in His beauty!—

*“Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of Your abode!  
I’d leave Your earthly courts and flee  
Up to Your seat, my God.”*

I knew right well a beloved Brother in Christ with whom I was very familiar, who stood up, one Sabbath morning, and announced just that verse. I thought of him when I repeated it and I wondered whether it was quite as true to me as it was to him. He gave it out, and said—

*“Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of Your abode!  
I’d leave Your earthly courts and flee  
Up to Your seat, my God!”*

Then he stopped, there was a silence and, at last, one of the congregation ventured upstairs into the pulpit and found that the preacher was dead. His prayer was heard! He was gone to the place of God’s abode. Oh, happy they who die thus! The Lord grant that we may never pray against a sudden death! We may almost pray for it when once our soul is right with God. I can join John Newton and, instead of dreading the change, say—

*“Rather, my spirit would rejoice,  
And long, and wish, to hear Your voice!  
Glad when it bids me earth resign,  
Secure of Heaven, if You are mine.”*

But is Christ yours? Has the fast been changed into a feast for you by faith in the crucified Savior? God help you to answer that question with a glad, hearty, “Yes!” Then may He make all your life “joy and gladness,” changing your fearful fasts into “cheerful feasts,” until, at last, all of us who believe in Christ and who love His appearing, shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb! Amen.

**Portions of Scripture Read before Sermon—Zechariah 7 and 8.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—181, 30. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1107 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A CALL TO WORSHIP  
NO. 1107

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1873, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before  
the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also.” Zechariah 8:21.**

THIS prophecy may relate to the Jews, literally, and it is referred to by their learned doctors as to the days of the Messiah. We believe, also, that it refers to the days of the Messiah and we look for times when again the Holy Land shall be fully inhabited and the people shall rejoice to meet together to worship the Lord their God. We do not see, however, that this prophecy has yet been accomplished, and we look for it to be fulfilled in the latter days. Spiritually it teaches just this, that when God returns to bless His Church there are certain signs and marks of His return. Just as the coming back of the sun when he advances north of the Equator and again cheers us with his warmth, is marked by the springing up of flowers and the singing of birds, so the return of God’s Holy Spirit to bless His Church is marked by certain signs and tokens.

The text tells us what those signs and tokens are, but before I mention them, let me suggest that every Believer should pray that these cheering indications may be manifest in our midst—that in these, our days, the Lord may return unto His Jerusalem and be jealous for her with a great jealousy—that we may see glad seasons such as our fathers have told us of, which happened in their days and in the olden times before them. As far as shall lie in the ability of any one of us, may we help towards such revivals by our prayers, by our efforts and by our consistent obedience to the Gospel. And may the Lord visit us according to the desire of our hearts.

I. One of the first signs of God’s Presence among a people is that THEY TAKE GREAT INTEREST IN DIVINE WORSHIP. “The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts.” It is clear from this that they no longer despise assemblies for worship and no longer count Divine service to be a weariness. On the contrary, they begin to value the means of Grace and desire to make good use of them. The first solemn assembly mentioned here is the Prayer Meeting and certainly one of the surest tokens of a visitation of God’s Spirit to a community is their delighting to meet for prayer.

The first cry of the people mentioned in our text was, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.” It is no statement of mine, suggested by unreasonable zeal, but it is the result of long-continued observation when I

assert that the condition of a Church may be very accurately gauged by its Prayer Meetings. If the spirit of prayer is not with the people, the minister may preach like an angel, but he cannot expect success. If there is not the spirit of prayer in a Church there may be wealth, there may be talent, there may be a measure of effort, there may be an extensive machinery, but the Lord is not there. It is a sure evidence of the Presence of God that men pray as the rising of the thermometer is an evidence of the increase of the temperature.

As the Nilometer measures the rising of the water in the Nile, and so foretells the amount of harvest in Egypt, so is the Prayer Meeting a “Graceometer,” and from it we may judge of the amount of Divine working among a people. If God is near a Church it must pray. And if He is not there, one of the first tokens of His absence will be slothfulness in prayer. God’s people, by their saying one to another, “Let us go speedily to pray,” manifest that they have a sense of their needs—they feel that they need much, much that Nature cannot yield them—they feel their need of Divine Grace, their need of quickening, their need of God’s help if sinners are to be converted. They feel their need of His help if even those who are saved are to be steadfast—their need of the Holy Spirit that they may grow in Grace and glorify God. He who never prays surely does not know his own needs and how can he be taught of the Lord at all? God’s people are a people sensible of their needs and therefore the absence of a sense of poverty is a sad token.

Moreover, the love which God’s people have for prayer shows their desire after heavenly things. Those who frequently meet together for importunate, wrestling prayer, practically show that they desire to see the Lord’s Kingdom come. They are not so taken up with their own business that they cannot afford time to think of God’s business. They are not so occupied with the world’s pleasures that they take no pleasure in the things of God. Believers in a right state of heart value the prosperity of the Church and, seeing that it can only be promoted by God’s own hand, they cry mightily unto the Lord of Hosts to stretch out His hand of mercy and to be favorable to His Church and cause.

Church members who never pray for the good of the Church have no love for it. If they do not plead for sinners they have no love for the Savior and how can they be truly converted persons? Such as habitually forsake the assembling of themselves together for prayer may well suspect the genuine character of their piety. I am not, of course, alluding to those who are debarred by circumstances, but I allude to those who, from frivolous excuses, absent themselves from the praying assemblies. How dwells the love of God in them? Are they not dead branches of the vine? May they not expect to be taken away before long? Earnest meetings for prayer, indeed, not only prove our sense of need and our desire for spiritual blessings, but they manifest most our faith in the living God, and our belief that He hears prayer, for men will not continue in supplication if they do not believe that God hears them. Sensible men would soon cease their prayers if they were not convinced that there is an ear which hears their petitions. Who would persevere in a vain exercise?

Our united prayers prove that we know that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. We know that the Lord is able to work according to our desires and that He is willing to be entreated of us. I have never known a thirsty man by a well who would not use the bucket which was there ready to hand unless, indeed, he was of the opinion that the well was dry. I have never known a man who wanted wealth and had a good trade, who would not exercise his trade. And so I have never known a man who believed prayer to be really effectual and felt his great needs who did not engage in prayer.

It is an ill token to any community of Christians when prayer is at a low ebb, for it is clear evidence that they do not know their own needs, they are not anxious about spiritual things and neither do they believe that God will enrich them in answer to their petitions. Beloved, may we never, as a Church, deserve censure for neglecting prayer! Our meetings for prayer have excited general astonishment by their number, but they are not all they might be. I shall put it to the conscience of each one to say whether you are as prayerful as you should be. Did you ever hear of a Church member who had not attended a Prayer Meeting for a month? Do you know of Church members who never assemble with the Brethren so much as once in a quarter of a year? Do you know of any who have not been to a Prayer Meeting in this place for the last six months? Do you know such?

I will not say I know any such. I will do no more than hint that such people may exist. But if you know them will you give them my Christian love and say that nothing depresses the pastor’s spirit like the absence of Church members from the public assemblies of prayer, and that if anything could make him strong in the Lord, and give him courage to go forward in the Lord’s work, it would be if all of you were to make the prayer meeting your special delight? I shall be satisfied when I see our prayer meetings as crowded as the services for preaching. And it strikes me if ever we are fully baptized into God’s Spirit, we shall arrive at that point. A vastly larger amount of prayer ought to be among us than at present and if the Lord visits us graciously He will set us praying without ceasing.

But next, these people also took an interest in meetings for instruction. I find that the Chaldee translates the second sentence, “Let us seek the doctrine of Jehovah of Hosts.” The Lord’s coming near to any people will be sure to excite in them a longing to hear the Word. God sends impulses of enquiry over men’s minds and suddenly places of worship become crowded which were half empty before. Preachers, also, who were cold and dead become quickened and speak with earnestness and life. No doubt waves of religious movement pass over nations and peoples—and when

God comes to a people the crest of that wave will be seen in this form— that the kingdom of Heaven becomes an object of interest and men press unto it!

During the revival under John the Baptist, the people went in crowds into the wilderness to hear the strange preacher who bade them repent. The revival under the Apostles was marked by their everywhere preaching the Word and the people listening. This was the great token of the Reformation—meetings were held under Gospel Oaks, out upon the commons and away in lone houses—and in glens and woods men thronged to listen to the Word of God! The professionals of popery were forsaken for the simple preaching of the Truth of God! This also marked the last grand revival of religion in our own country under Whitfield and Wesley. The Word of the Lord was precious in those days. And whether the Gospel was preached among the colliers of Kingswood or the rabble of Kennington Common, tens of thousands were awakened and rejoiced in the joyful notes of Free Grace.

Men loved to hear the Word—they said to one another, “Let us seek the Lord.” It is said that Moorfields would be full of light on a dark winter’s morning at five o’clock when Mr. Whitfield was to preach because so many people would be finding their way to the rendezvous, each one carrying a lantern. And so also over there in Zoar Street, in Southwark, when Mr. John Bunyan was out of prison and was going to preach, a couple of thousand would be assembled at five o’clock in the morning to enjoy his honest testimony.

It is a token for good when people press to hear the Word. I think we have in a measure the first token—a love for prayer, but we need far more of it. As for the second token, namely, an earnest love for listening to the Word of God, we have that in abundance. See you not how the crowds rush in like a mighty torrent as soon as the doors are open? Putting the two together, it seems that both these forms of meeting were loved by the people because they sought salvation therein, or as the margin has it, they, “entreated the face of the Lord.” They came to pray with a view to be saved! They came to hear preaching with a view to Divine favor! They wanted reconciliation with God—they had wandered from Him, but now they sought Him! They wanted fellowship with God!

They had said to God, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” But now they said, “Reveal Yourself unto us, O God, as You do not unto the world.” They longed to promote God’s Glory, even as before they dishonored Him. Yes, when Prayer Meetings and Preaching Meetings shall be attended with this end and object—that we may get near to God and that we may glorify God—there shall be happy days, indeed, for us! Master Fox in his, “Acts and Monuments,” speaking of the time when the Reformation was breaking out, uses language something to this effect—“It was lovely to see their travels, earnest seeking, burning zeal, Bible reading, watching, sweet assemblies, resort of one neighbor to another for conference and mutual confirmation.” And, he adds, “All which may make us now to blush for shame in these, our days, of free profession.”

We may take the good man’s hint and feel shame for neglected opportunities, cold devotions and disregard of the Word of God. Our fathers loved to meet for prayer and to hear the preaching of the Truth of God. And when they came together it was with an intensely earnest desire to obtain the Divine blessing. To get this they risked life and liberty, meeting, even, when fine and imprisonment, or perhaps the gallows might be their reward. O to see the like earnestness among ourselves as to the means of Grace! May the Lord Jesus send it to us by the working of His Holy Spirit.

II. Another sign of God’s visiting a people in mercy is that THEY STIR EACH OTHER UP TO ATTEND UPON THE MEANS OF GRACE, for “the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.” That is to say, they did not merely ask one another to go if they casually met. They did not bring in the subject accidentally if they could do so readily in common conversation—but the inhabitants of one city went to another on purpose to exhort them! They made a journey about it. As men go to market, from town to town, so did these people try to open a market for Christ—and not only one messenger, but many of the inhabitants of one city went on purpose all the way to another city, with set design, to induce them to join in worship, saying, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.”

They put themselves out of the way to do it. They had such a desire that great numbers might come together to worship the Most High that they took much trouble to invite their neighbors. God will be with us, indeed, if each one of us shall be anxious to bring others to Jesus, and to that end shall try to bring them to hearken to the Word of God. Why were these men so earnest? The reply will be, they persuaded others to come to the meetings for worship out of love to God’s House, to God’s cause, and to God Himself. God’s House is honored and beautified when great numbers come together. The ways of Zion do mourn and languish when but few assemble for prayer. Christ has promised to be where two or three are met together in His name. Still, it is not helpful to comfortable fellowship for a mere handful to meet in a large house. We feel like sparrows alone on the housetop when such is the case.

A great space and only a sprinkling of people to occupy it is like a big barn with only one bundle of straw in it—the winds howl in and out of it very miserably. I am sure if any of you attend a place of worship where there are very few beside yourselves, you must feel unhappy. And if you do not, why surely your hearts cannot be in the right place. Warm hearts are not easily kept alive among empty pews. A coal must be very lively to burn alone, but many glowing coals laid together help to keep each other alight.

No one can doubt, moreover, that full houses give opportunity to the preacher to glorify God. It is hopeful work to throw the net where there are great shoals of fish. Where men are hearing, we may hope that God will be blessing and therefore earnest Christians love to see the aisles and seats crowded. Besides, God is glorified when great numbers come together with earnest minds to celebrate His worship. In early days, in the Jewish Church, the men of Israel did not come by twos and threes and meet together in scant numbers, but from all parts of Judea’s land—north, south, east, and west—they came together in companies, singing through the glades of the forest, singing through the dells, and singing over the hills! And when they reached the city of Jerusalem in their hundreds of thousands, their praise was a great shout, like the voice of thunder and the smoke of their sacrifices rose up in clouds to Heaven.

Those were grand days! Does not David seem to relish the service of the Lord his God all the more because of the multitude that kept holy day? Therefore the saints love to see many come to pray and to listen to the Word of God because the multitude honors the house and God thus honors God Himself. O Brothers and Sisters, we think the cause is sadly declining when hearers are like the gleanings of the vintage, when service time comes and sees vacant seats by the score because professors shrink at the weather, or hunt up an excuse for staying at home, being too idle, too indifferent to cross the threshold of their houses unless some eloquent preacher or fresh comer shall attract them. But we reckon that God’s cause prospers when the people come joyfully in their bands to listen to the Truth of God and God’s Spirit applies it to their hearts with power, leading them to prayer and praise.

Moreover, Believers love to bring others to the House of God because they wish to do good to them. Did you ever notice how the little birds, when they find a heap of corn, begin to chatter and twitter as if they would call all the other birds to come and feast, also? Grace is generous and is never akin to churlish Nabal. Misers would rather keep all their wealth to themselves, but a man who is rich in faith feels his happiness increased when others have faith, too! As soon as we drink of the Water of Life, a sacred instinct within us bids us cry, “Come.” “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters.” He knows not the Grace of God who has no desire that others should know it, also. You will assuredly long for the souls of others if God has saved your soul. Natural humanity, let alone our alliance to the Divine Nature, leads us to bid others come to Christ.

Besides, the love of company in the Christian makes him invite his neighbors to Gospel worship. Believers are like sheep in this among other things, namely, that they are gregarious. A man who loves to keep his religion to himself must surely be a stranger to the religion of Christ! Communion is one of the sweetest joys of the spirit. Fellowship with saints above will be one jewel of our everlasting crown and fellowship with saints below is one of the sweetest cordials of our mortal cares. “I went to the House of God in company,” says David, as if it made the house so much the sweeter to go in company with others who went there. “I had gone with the multitude. I went with them to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.” For the sake of communion we long to see many going upon the heavenly pilgrimage.

Observe in our text there does not appear to have been any minister or missionary employed to go from one city to another, and to say, “Let us go and pray,” but the inhabitants, themselves, undertook the duty of invitation and persuasion, and said, “Let us go and pray unto the Lord.” The people, themselves, attended to mutual provocation to love and to good works! How I wish they did so now! They did not wait for the exhortations of one specially set apart to be a prompter and an organizer. But their own hearts were so warm that they did it spontaneously among themselves! My Brothers and Sisters, may you thus be pastors to one another! There are far too many of you for me to look after personally, therefore I pray you stir one another up to every good word and work.

I believe that when a man stirs others up it is good for himself, for a man cannot, in common decency, be very cold, himself, who bids others be warm. He cannot, surely, unless he is an arrant hypocrite, be negligent of those duties which he bids others attend to! Beloved, I commit this charge to you, and then I have done with this point. This morning I ask you to visit one another and to say, “Come, let us not as a Church lose the Presence of God after nearly 20 years’ enjoyment of it. Let not our minister’s hands grow weak by our neglect of prayer. Let not the work of the Church flag through our indifference, but let us make a brotherly covenant that we will go speedily to pray before the Lord and seek the Lord of Hosts, that we may retain His Presence and have yet more of it, to the praise of the glory of His Grace.”

III. I must pass on to notice that it appears from our text that it is a sure mark of God’s visiting a people, when THEY ARE URGENT TO ATTEND UPON THESE HOLY EXERCISES AT ONCE. The text says, “Let us go speedily to pray,” by which is meant, I suppose, that when the time came to pray, they were punctual, they were not laggards. They did not come into the assembly late. They did not drop in, one by one, long after the service had begun—but they said, “Let us go speedily.” They looked up to their clocks and said, “How long will it take us to walk so as to be there at the commencement? Let us start five minutes before that time lest we should not be able to keep up the pace and should, by any means, reach the door after the first prayer.”

I wish late comers would remember David’s choice. You remember what part he wished to take in the House of God? He was willing to be a doorkeeper and that not because the doorkeeper has the most comfortable berth, for that is the hardest post a man can choose. But he knew that doorkeepers are the first in and the last out and so David wished to be first at the service and the last at the going away! How few would be of

David’s mind! It has been said that Dissenters in years gone by placed the clock outside the Meeting House so that they might never enter late. But the modern Dissenters place the clock inside, that their preachers may not keep them too long! There is some truth in the remark, but it is not to our honor.

This was, however, a fault with our forefathers, for quaint old Herbert said—“O be drest, stay not for th’ other pin: why you have lost a joy for it worth worlds.” Let us mend our ways and say, one to another, in the language of the text, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord.” Let us go with quick feet. If we go slowly to market, let us go quickly to Prayer Meeting. If we are slow on week days, let us go quickly on Sunday. Let us never keep Jesus Christ waiting and we shall do so if we are not on time, for He is sure to be punctual, even if only two or three are met together in His name. The expression, however, means more than this. “Let us go speedily” means, let us go heartily—do not let us crawl to prayer, but let us go to it as men who have something before them which attracts them.

When the angels serve God they never do it as though they were half asleep. They are all alive and burning like flames of fire. They have six wings and, I guarantee you, they use them all! When the Lord says, “Gabriel, go upon My bidding,” he outstrips the lightning! O, to exhibit some such ardor and zest in the service of God! If we pray, let us pray as if we mean it! If we worship, let us worship with our hearts. “Let us go speedily,” and may the Lord make our hearts to be like the chariots of Amminadib for swiftness and rapidity—glowing wheels and burning axles may God give to our spirits—that we may never let the world think we are indifferent to the love of Jesus. “Let us go speedily.”

The words, “Let us go speedily,” mean—let us go at once, or instantly. If any good thing has been neglected and we resolve to attend to it better, let us do it at once. Revivals of religion—when is the best time for them? Directly! When is the best time to repent of sin? Today! When is the best time for a cold heart to grow warm? Today! When is the season for a sluggish Christian to be industrious? Today! When is the period for a backslider to return? Today! When is the time for one who has crawled along the road to Heaven to mend his pace? Today! Is it not always today?

And, indeed, when should it be? “Tomorrow,” you say. Ah, but you may never have it! And, when it comes, it will still be today. Tomorrow is only in the fool’s almanac—it exists nowhere else. Today! Today, let us go speedily! I beseech the Church of God here to be yet more alive and at once to wake up. Time is flying—we cannot afford to lose it. The devil is wide awake, why should we be asleep? Error is stalking through the land, evil influences are abroad everywhere! Men are dying, Hell is filling, the grave is gorged and yet is insatiable—and the man of destruction is not yet satisfied. Shall we lie down in wicked satisfaction, yielding to base laziness? Awake, arise, you Christians! Now, even now, lest it be said of you, “Curse you Meroz, says the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

I know we are all apt to think that we live in the most important era of history and I admit that under certain aspects every day is a crisis, but I claim liberty to say that there never was a period in the world’s history when Christian activity, and prayerfulness, and genuine revival were more needed than just now. Where is our nation? Is it not on the very verge of becoming, once again, a province of the Pope’s dominion? Are not the modern Pharisees compassing sea and land to make proselytes? Does it not seem as if the people were gone mad upon their idols and were altogether fascinated by the charms of the Whore of Babylon, and drunken with her cup? Do you not see everywhere the old orthodox faith forsaken, and men occupying Christian pulpits who do not believe, but even denounce the doctrines which they have sworn to defend?

Might I not say of Christendom in England, that “her whole head is sick and her whole heart faint”? The daughter of Zion staggers in the street for weakness—there is none to help her among all her sons—all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper. Her Nazarites were purer than snow and their separation from the world was known of all men—but now they are defiled with worldliness until they are blacker than a coal! From the daughter of Zion her beauty is departed. O you that love her, let your hearts sound as a harp for her! O you that love her, weep day and night for her hypocrisy, for unless the Lord returns unto her the time of her sore distress draws near. Thus says the Lord, “Arise, cry out in the night season, pour out your hearts like water before the Lord, and then the Lord will return and be gracious to His inheritance.”

IV. For a moment I shall call your attention to another point. When God visits a people they will not only attend to prayer and preaching, and stir each other up to do so at once, but THEY WILL HAVE A SPECIAL EYE TO GOD IN THESE DUTIES. Observe, they shall say, “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts.” Alas, many go to religious meetings to be seen of men! I am afraid there is a great deal too much exhibition of dress in some quarters, and there certainly cannot be a greater abomination than to make the House of God a show room for our finery. Jesus might say, “Take these things away. It is written My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it an exhibition wherein to display yourselves.”

Some go to worship because it is the custom and it would not be respectable to stay away. “We must have a pew in Church, you know, or we should be remarked upon in society.” I am glad that people attend Divine worship for any reason, but mere custom is a poor motive and is no sign of Divine Grace. The people in the text did not say, “We will go that we may see our neighbors, and that our neighbors may see us.” No, they went to “pray before the Lord.” They did not assemble to seek a man. They did not go to hear Mr. So-and-So preach. Of course they would sooner

hear one who preached all the Gospel and preached it plainly, than another who preached half the Gospel and fired over their heads. But, still, they looked through the man to the man’s Master and they did not think that the Master was tied up to any one man.

May we cultivate in our midst the desire to worship for God’s sake, not for the preacher’s sake, whoever he may be. I believe it is not wrong for a Christian man to feel that he is better fed by one minister than by another and therefore to be most glad when God’s servant is in the pulpit. But if that feeling grows so that if he cannot hear his favorite preacher he will stay at home, it is most mischievous. I thank God that my Master has other preachers besides Paul. There is Apollos, there is Cephas, and beyond these I see a great company of them that publish the Good News. I will hear what God will speak through them. I would have you note, Beloved, how different is my text from that formal worship into which it is so easy to fall. “I have been to the Prayer Meeting. I have done my duty and I can go home satisfied. I have taken a seat at the Tabernacle and listened to two sermons on Sunday—I feel I have done my duty.”

Oh, dear Hearer! That is a poor way of living! I need a great deal more than all that or I shall be wretched. At the Prayer Meeting I must see God, I must pour out my soul before Him! I must feel that the spirit of prayer has been there and that I have participated in it, otherwise what was the good of my being there? I must, when in the assembly on Sunday, find some blessing to my own soul! I must get another glimpse of the Savior! I must come to be somewhat more like Him! I must feel my sin rebuked, or my flagging Graces revived! I must feel that God has been blessing poor sinners and bringing them to Christ! I must feel, indeed, that I have come into contact with God, or else what is my Sunday worth, and what is my having been in the assembly worth? If God shall bless you, indeed, you will worship spiritually and you will count nothing to be true worship which is not of the spirit and of the heart and soul. May God quicken us all up to that point, and He shall have the praise.

V. The last thing is this—it is a blessed sign of God’s visiting a people when EACH ONE OF THEM IS RESOLVED, PERSONALLY, THAT HE WILL, IN A SPIRITUAL MANNER, WAIT UPON GOD. Notice the last four words. “I will go also.” “Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also.” That is the point—“I will go also.” The Christian man should neither be content, when he goes to worship, to leave others behind, nor should he be content to drive others before him and stop behind himself. It is said of Julius Caesar that he owed his victories to the fact that he never said to his soldiers, “Go,” but always said, “Let us go.” That is the way to win. Example is mightier than precept!

We read of the Pharisees of old that they laid burdens on other men’s shoulders, but they themselves did not touch them with one of their fingers—true Christians are not so. They say, “I will go also.” Was not that bravely spoken of poor old Latimer, when he was to be burnt with Ridley. Ridley was a younger and stronger man, and as he walked to the stake, old Latimer, with his quaintness about him to the last, cried to his Brother, Ridley, “Have after, as fast as my poor old legs can carry me.” The dear old saint was marching to his burning as fast as he could—not at all loath to lay his aged body upon the altar for his Lord! That is the kind of man who makes others into men—the man who habitually says, “I will go also; even if I am called to be burned for Christ. Whatever is to be done or suffered, I will go also.”

I would be ashamed to stand here and say to you, “Brothers and Sisters, pray. Brothers, preach. Brethren, labor,” and then be an idler myself. And you, also, would be ashamed to say to others, “Let us pray. Let us be earnest,” while you are not praying and not earnest yourselves. Example is the backbone of instruction! Be, yourself, what you would have others be and do, yourself, what you would have others do. “I will go also,” because I need to pray as much as anybody else. I will go to hear the Word, for I need to hear it as well as others. I will go and wait upon God, for I need to see His face. I will cry to Him for a blessing, for I need a blessing. I will confess my sin before Him, for I am full of sin. I will ask mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, for I must have it or perish.

“I will go also.” If nobody else will go, I will go. And if all the rest go I will go also. I do not want to pledge any of you this morning. I shall not, therefore, ask you to hold up your hands, but I should like to put it very personally to all the members of this Church. We have enjoyed the Presence and blessing of God for many years in a very remarkable manner and it is not taken from us. But I am jealous, I believe it is a godly jealousy and not unbelief—lest there should be among us a slackness in prayer and a lack of zeal for the Glory of God. I am fearful of a neglecting of the souls of our neighbors, and a ceasing to believe to the full in our mission and in the call of God to be, each one of us, in this world as Christ was, saviors of others.

My Brothers and Sisters, knit together as we are in Church fellowship and bound by common cords to one blessed Master, let each one say within himself, “I will go also.” The Church shall be the subject of my prayer. The minister shall share in my petitions. The Sunday school shall not be forgotten. The College shall be remembered in supplication. The Orphanage shall have my heart’s petitions. I will plead with God for the Evangelists. I will consider the congregation at the Tabernacle and pray that it may gently melt into the Church. I will pray for the strangers who fill the aisles and crowd the pews that God will bless them. Yes, I will say unto God this day, “My God, You have saved me, given me a part and lot among Your people and put me in Your garden where Your people grow and flourish. I will not be a barren tree, but abound in fruit, especially in prayer. If I cannot do anything else I can pray. If this is my one mite, I will put that into the treasury. I will put You in remembrance and plead with

You, and give You no rest until You establish Your cause and make it praise in the earth.”

I am not asking more of you than Jesus would ask, nor do I exact anything at your hands—you will cheerfully render that which is a tribute due to the infinite love of your Lord. Now, do not say, dear Brother, “I hope the Church will wake up.” Leave it alone and mind that you wake up yourself. Do not say, “I hope they will be stirred up this morning.” Never mind others! Stir up yourself. Begin to enquire, “Which Prayer Meeting shall I go to, for I mean to join the people of God and let them hear my voice, or at least have my presence. And if I cannot go to the Tabernacle I will drop in near my own house. And if there is no meeting there I will open my own house—the largest room of any cottage shall be used for a Prayer Meeting—or my parlor if I have one. I will have a share in the glorious work of attracting a blessing from the skies. I will send up my electric rod of prayer into the clouds of blessing to bring down the Divine force.”

Do it! Do it! Let each one say, “I will go also.” May God bless this Word to His people, and I am sure it will result in benediction to sinners. For, remember, you ungodly ones, that all this noise is about you. What we need the blessing of God for is that you may be saved! We cannot bear that you should remain as you are, unconverted! And I am asking God’s people to pray specially with an eye to your salvation. Shall we think about your souls and will you not think about them yourselves? Are we inclined to move Heaven and earth that you might be saved and will you sit still and perish? May the Lord awaken you to say, “If others are going to pray unto the Lord and seek His face, I will go also,” and the Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Zechariah 8.  
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THE LOWLY KING

NO. 1861

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 25, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you. He is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9:9.**

I DO not intend to expound the whole text at any length, but simply to dwell upon the lowliness of Jesus. Yet this much I may say—whenever God would have His people especially glad, it is always in Himself. If it is written, “Rejoice greatly,” then the reason is, “Behold, your King comes unto you!” Our chief source of rejoicing is the Presence of King Jesus in the midst of us! Whether it is His first or His Second Advent, His very shadow is delight. His footstep is music to our ears.

That delight springs much from the fact that He is ours. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. . .Behold, your King is coming to you.” Whatever He may be to others, He is your King, and to whomever He may or may not come, He comes to you. He comes for your deliverance, your honor, your consummated bliss. He keeps your company—He makes your house His palace, your love His solace, your nature His home. He who is your King by hereditary right, by His choice of you, by His redemption of you and by your willing choice of Him, is coming to you—therefore shout for joy!

The verse goes on to show why the Lord, our King, is such a source of gladness—“He is just and having salvation.” He blends righteousness and mercy—justice to the ungodly and favor to His saints. He has worked out the stern problem—how can God be just and yet save the sinful? He is just in His own personal Character, just as having borne the penalty of sin and just as cleared from the sin which He voluntarily took upon Himself. Having endured the terrible ordeal, He is saved and His people are saved in Him. He is to be saluted with hosannas, which signify, “Save, Lord,” for where He comes He brings victory and consequent salvation with Him! He routs the enemies of His people, breaks for them the serpent’s head and leads their captivity captive. We admire the justice which marks His reign and the salvation which attends His sway—and in both respects we cry—“Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!”

Moreover, it is written of Him that He is lowly, which cannot be said of many kings and princes of the earth. Nor would they care to have it said of them! Your King, O daughter of Jerusalem, loves to have His lowliness published by you with exceeding joy. His outward state betokens the humility and gentleness of His Character. He appears to be what He really is—He conceals nothing from His chosen. In the height of His grandeur, He is not like the proud monarchs of earth. The patient donkey He prefers to the noble charger and He is more at home with the common people than with the great. In His grandest pageant, in His capital city, He was still consistent with His meek and lowly Character, for He came, “riding upon a donkey.” He rode through Jerusalem in state, but what lowliness marked the spectacle! It was an extemporized procession which owed nothing to Garter-king-at-arms, but everything to the spontaneous love of friends.

A donkey was brought, and its foal, and His disciples sat Him on it. Instead of courtiers in their robes, He was surrounded by common peasants and fishermen and children of the streets of Jerusalem—the humblest of men and the youngest of the race shouted His praises! Boughs of trees and garments of friends strewed the road instead of choice flowers and costly tapestries—it was the pomp of spontaneous love, not the stereotyped pageantry which power exacts of fear. With half an eye, everyone can see that this King is of another sort from common princes and His dignity of another kind from that which tramples on the poor.

According to the narrative, as well as the prophecy, there would seem to have been two beasts in the procession. I conceive that our Lord rode on the foal, for it was essential that He should mount a beast which had never been used before. God is not a sharer with men—that which is consecrated to His peculiar service must not have been, before, devoted to lower uses. Jesus rides a colt where no man ever sat. But why was the mother there? Did not Jesus say of both donkey and foal, “Loose them, and bring them unto Me”? This appears to me to be a token of His tenderness—He would not needlessly sever the mother from her foal. I like to see a farmer’s kindness when he allows the foal to follow when the mare is plowing or laboring—and I admire the same thoughtfulness in our Lord. He cares for cattle, yes, even for a donkey and her foal. He would not even cause a poor beast a needless pang by taking away its young! And so, in that procession, the beast of the field took its part joyfully, in token of a better age in which all creatures shall be delivered from bondage and shall share the blessings of His unsuffering reign.

Our Lord herein taught His disciples to cultivate delicacy, not only towards each other, but towards the whole creation. I like to see in Christian people a reverence towards life, a tenderness towards all God’s creatures. There is much of deep truth in those lines of, “The Ancient Mariner”—

*“He prays best who loves best*

*All things both great and small.”*  
Under the old Law, this tenderness was inculcated by those precepts which forbade the taking of the mother bird with her young and the boiling of a kid in its mother’s milk. Why were these things forbidden? There would seem to be no harm in either of these practices, but God would have His people tender-hearted, sensitive and delicate in their handling of all things. A Christian should have nothing of the savage about him, but everything that is considerate and kind. Our Lord rode through the streets of Jerusalem with a donkey and the foal of the donkey—for He is lowly in heart and gentle to all. His is no mission of crushing power and selfish aggrandizement—He comes to bless all things that are and to make the world, once more, a Paradise where none shall be oppressed. Blessed Savior, when we think of the sufferings of Your creatures, both men and beasts, we pray You to hasten Your Second Advent and begin your gentle reign!

Now, this riding of Christ upon a donkey is remarkable if you remember that no pretender to be a Prophet, or a Divine Messenger has imitated it. Ask the Jew whether he expects the Messiah to ride thus through the streets of Jerusalem! He will probably answer, “No.” If he does not, you may ask him the further question, whether there has appeared in his nation anyone who, professing to be the Messiah, has, at any time, come to the daughter of Jerusalem “riding upon a colt, the foal of a donkey.” It is rather singular that no false Messiah has copied this lowly style of the Son of David! When Sapor, the great Persian, jested with a Jew about his Messiah riding upon a donkey, he said to him, “I will send Him one of my horses,” to which the Rabbi replied, “You cannot send Him a horse that will be good enough, for that donkey is to be of a hundred colors.” By that idle tradition, the Rabbi showed that he had not caught the idea of the Prophet at all, since he could not believe in Messiah’s lowliness displayed by His riding upon a common donkey.

The rabbinical mind must necessarily make simplicity mysterious and turn lowliness into another form of pomp. The very pith of the matter is that our Lord gave Himself no grand airs, but was natural, unaffected and free from all vain-glory. His greatest pomp went no further than riding through Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of a donkey. The Muslim turns round with a sneer and says to the Christian, “Your Master was the rider on a donkey—our Mohammed was the rider on a camel and the camel is, by far, the superior beast.” Just so, and that is where the Muslim fails to grasp the prophetic thought—he looks for strength and honor—but Jesus triumphs by weakness and lowliness! How little real glory is to be found in the grandeur and display which princes of this world affect! There is far more true glory in condescension than in display.

Our Lord’s riding on the foal of a donkey was meant to show us how lowly our Savior is and what tenderness there is in that lowliness. When He is proclaimed King in His great Father’s capital and rides in triumph through the streets, He sits upon no prancing charger, such as warriors choose for their triumphs—no, He sits upon a borrowed donkey, whose mother walks by its side! His poverty was seen, for of all the cattle on a thousand hills, He owned not one and yet we see His more than royal wealth, for He did but say, “The Lord has need of them,” and straightway their owner yielded them up. No forced contributions supply the revenue of this Prince—His people are willing in the day of His power. He is your King, O Zion! Shout to think that you have such a Lord! Where the scepter is love and the crown is lowliness, the homage should be peculiarly bright with rejoicing. None shall groan beneath such a sway, but the people shall willingly offer themselves. They shall find their liberty in His service, their rest in obedience to Him, their honor in His Glory!

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, you may forget the hosannas of that Day of Palms, for I beg you to confine your thoughts to the consideration of the lowliness of our Divine Lord and Master. “Behold, your King comes unto you. . . lowly, and riding on a donkey.” Let us think for a few minutes upon the displays of the lowliness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then upon the causes of that lowliness and, thirdly, upon certain lessons to be learned from that lowliness.

I. First, then, let us think of THE DISPLAYS OF LOWLINESS MADE BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. You do not need me to remind you how devoutly we worship Him as God over all, blessed forever. Yet while on earth He veiled His Godhead and laid bare His lowliness! His sojourn here below was full of the truest greatness, but it was a grandeur, not of loftiness, but of lowliness; not of glory, but of humiliation! Our Lord was never more glorious in the deepest sense than in His humiliation. Because of it, “He shall be exalted, and extolled, and shall be very high.”

First, think of the lowliness of Christ in even undertaking the salvation of guilty men. Man without sin, as God first made him, is certainly a noble creature. It is written, “You have made him a little lower than the angels.” But, as a sinner, man is a base and dishonorable being only worthy to be destroyed! In that character, he has no claims to be regarded by God at all. If it had pleased the Divine Supremacy to blot this rebel race from existence, God might readily have repaired the loss by the creation of superior beings! And it was lowliness of the most tender kind which led our Lord, who took not up angels when they fell, to take up the seed of Abraham.

If it were possible for some tall archangel to espouse the cause of ants upon their hill in yonder forest, it would be a wondrous stoop. Yet it would be nothing compared with the condescension of the eternal God in bowing from His lofty Throne to redeem and sanctify the sons of men! We are frail creatures at the best—born yesterday, we die today. We are as green leaves in the forest for a while and then our autumn comes and we fade and the wind carries us away. For such short-lived things the Lord of Glory came to this sin-shadowed globe! Were He not of a lowly mind, He had never found His delights with the sons of men, nor would He have thought upon the woes of poor and needy ones.

Herein, in the next place, He showed His lowliness—that He actually assumed our nature. I cannot tell that story, it is too wonderful! A free Spirit voluntarily encases itself in human clay! A pure Spirit willingly becomes a partaker of flesh and blood! This is marvelous lowliness! The Strong is compassed with infirmity; the Happy assumes capacity for suffering; the infinitely Holy becomes one of a race notorious for its iniquity! This is a triumph of lowliness! The great God, the Infinite of Ages, unites Himself with a human body! He is born into our infancy; He grows up into our youth; He toils through our manhood; He accomplishes a life like our own! This is a miracle of lowliness! I think the angels still gaze into these things and wonder at the Word made flesh!

It is particularly said of our Incarnate Lord that He was “seen of angels” and that leads us to believe that angels watched Him with intense curiosity and ever-growing interest—wondering what it could possibly mean that He, who made and ruled the heavens, should be born of a woman and made under the Law! They wondered that He should eat and drink, and sleep and sigh and suffer like the creatures of His hands—and should, indeed, be such as they were! Surely they talk of it now with hushed voices and astonished hearts—and will so talk of it throughout the ages. Made lower than His angels are, His angels must feel a solemn awe at such a Divine descent of love! This lowliness was such as only God could display—let us worship, in the Person of our Lord, a condescending Love as unique as the Person who exhibited it.

Furthermore, when our Lord found Himself below, in the fashion of man, He manifested His true lowliness by carrying out to fulfill the part of a servant. He had taken upon Himself the form of a servant by becoming Man, but it was no matter of form with Him. He became actually obedient! Having put on the livery of service, He executed the lowest office. Never servant in a king’s kitchen did menial work so thoroughly as He. In His great house there are vessels to honor and to dishonor and He selected to be used for the lowest offices—He made Himself of no reputation; He became a servant of servants—all they that saw Him laughed Him to scorn! “He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.” If anybody was needed to talk with a fallen woman, He was soon seen sitting on the well. If anyone was needed to win a publican, He was speedily at the house of Zaccheus. If any man must be slandered as having a devil and being mad, He is ready to bear the worst reproach! He could truthfully say, “You call Me, Master, and Lord: and you say well; for so I am,” yet He, their Master and Lord, had washed their feet and proved that He was meek and lowly of heart!

Brothers and Sisters, it is a wonderful thing that the Lord of All should have become the Servant of all—it is so wonderful that many have lost their way in thinking of it. They have been unable to grasp the idea of Godhead combined with servitude, Majesty united with obedience. Indeed, it is only by faith that we can realize that He that built all things yet became so poor a thing as Mary’s Son, so sad a Being as the Man of Sorrows, so lowly a Person as the “despised and rejected of men.” Yet so it was and herein He showed the truth of His own statement, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” He wore the yoke, Himself and, therefore, can experimentally say, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me. . .and you shall find rest unto your souls.” This is He who breaks not the bruised reed and quenches not the smoking flax! This is He who “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” His life was one long proof of meekness and lowliness—and in nothing did He fail! He exhorts us to conquer by the same persevering methods, for He has proved that gentleness and meekness will prevail.

Still, let me keep you thinking upon the lowliness of your Lord when I bid you remember His life-long poverty. He does not advise His disciples voluntarily to espouse poverty unless it is for His sake and then they do well. Times have been and may be again, when Believers must forsake all things for His cause. But in His day, some of His disciples ministered Him of their substance and, therefore, had substance. He did not command these to renounce that substance and become poor, though I doubt not that, when persecution came, many of them gladly did so for His sake. Not to all did He put the test, “Sell all that you have,” but it was necessary to His own personal work that He should become poor, that His people might be made rich. And this He cheerfully endured. He was laid in a borrowed cradle in the stable where He was born. He dwelt in His life-work in borrowed houses and lived upon the charity of His followers. And when He rested, it was in a borrowed bed, for though the foxes had holes, He had nowhere to lay His head.

He preached from a borrowed boat and when He fell asleep and died, He was buried in a borrowed tomb, for He had no foot of land for a possession. He endured poverty as if He were born to the manner, for He was quite at home among the poor and lowly, receiving sinners and eating with them. Truly, a dignity surrounded Him far more real than that which has been conceived to hedge a king and yet, in His poverty He never seemed uneasy and the society of the poor and unlearned never grieved Him. He was with the poorest as one of them and they knew it and, therefore, they loved to gather about Him. He was so sweetly and tenderly their associate that the common people heard Him gladly.

Remember that He might have left that poverty at any moment. He that could turn water into wine might have quaffed full many a delicious draught had He so willed. He that could multiply bread and fish needed never to have hungered. A word from Him might have created palaces more wonderful than the dreams of Aladdin and wealth greater than the abundance of Solomon, for nothing was impossible for Him! If He had willed to make Himself the object of His own life, He could have surrounded Himself with every luxury but, instead thereof, “though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich.” In this He magnified His lowliness.

But I think I see more of His lowliness at times in His associates than in anything else because men may be very poor and yet they may be very proud. I think I have seen it sadly so. I have known men without a penny with which to bless themselves, as full of caste feeling as the wealthiest peer! They are working men, it may be, but they think themselves superior persons of remarkable gifts and eminent respectability. We are a little overdone with superior persons just now. I come across them almost everywhere in this department and in that and, of course, I look up to them with such respect as I can. But sometimes a little more reverence is asked of us than we can conveniently bestow. In this age we have to be careful not to trench upon the dignity of certain persons and yet He who was, in all respects, superior to us all, never played the superior person once in all His life! He sat on a well and talked to a woman—and His disciples, we read, marveled that He spoke to a woman.

It is not to “ the women,” as we get it in our Authorized Version, but the Revised Version puts it more correctly, “they marveled that He was speaking with a woman.” They thought that such a One as He should not speak to any woman, for they were tinctured with the exclusiveness of the period. I do not suppose that it occurred to our Lord that He was doing anything remarkable in speaking to a woman, for He was born of woman and He never disowned the tender ties which come of such a birth. To some men it would be a great come-down to speak familiarly to anyone if he did not keep a carriage. Even in our churches the silly caste feeling will intrude and Brothers and Sisters in Christ hardly think a poor saint to be their equal! Our Lord had no pride of manner about Him, for His lowliness was in His heart. We read that the publicans and sinners gathered round Him—even women of ill-fame listened with tearful eyes to His teaching!

Oh, no, we never mention them, of course! We call them, “outcasts,” and treat them as off casts—yet Jesus had a kind word for them. What a congregation He often had, of those whom the Pharisees abhorred! Yet He never said to one of them, “Be gone!” His rule was to welcome all, saying, “Him that comes to Me, will I in no wise cast out.” Those publicans were certainly very mean characters—they collected a hateful tax for the foreigner and squeezed out an extra portion for themselves, but the Savior never said to a single publican, “Be gone!” Quite the contrary, He gave the publican an honorable place in His parable—He made one of them an Apostle—and He went to abide in the house of another who received Him joyfully! He did not merely speak a good word to these degraded persons, but He actually sat at table with them as a Friend. “Horrible, was it not?” So the Pharisees thought. “Glorious,” say we, as we reverence that Divine Humility which scorned nothing that lived and especially nothing in the form of man or woman! “This Man receives sinners,” was said in disdain! Let it be thundered out in a hymn as glorious as the song of the seraphim who continually cry, “Holy, holy, holy!” Never was purity more pure than when its incarnation bowed to become “a Friend of publicans and sinners.”

He did what was still more amazing—He received little children. Now, I can see some reason for talking with grown-up men and women, even if they are debased and depraved, but as for those boys and girls, what can be done with them? When they heard the children crying, “Hosanna” in the Temple, the Pharisees demanded of Him, “Do You hear what these say?” As much as to say, “These boys and girls—are these Your admirers? Do You find Your followers among children?” He had a lowly answer for them, but it was one which silenced them. These hosannas came of our blessed Lord having said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.” He accepted children as the pattern of the kind of people who enter His Kingdom—He Himself was called God’s Holy Child Jesus and He was at home with children because of His perfect guilelessness and gentleness. Proud men seldom care for children, nor children for them—but our Lord, in His true lowliness of heart, loved children and they loved Him.

I wish we had a longer time in which to set out all the lovely lowliness of our adorable Christ, but I must only gather a few ears where I would have preferred to have reaped sheaves. Our Lord’s patient bearing under accusations that were so foul and false, was another proof of His lowliness. “I hear,” says a man, “that a calumny has been whispered against me, and I will drag it to light. I will have it out, let it cost what it may. Who dares breathe upon my character? He shall feel the law and know that he cannot defame me with impunity.” Some professing Christians appear to lose their balance when misrepresented—the lamb roars like a lion and the ox eats flesh like the leopard! Churches have been torn and families ruined to avenge a hasty word! Is not that spirit the opposite of the mind of our blessed Master? They said He was a drunk and a wine-bibber—the charge must have grieved Him, but He did not become angry and threaten His accusers. It was most important that His Character should be cleared. He smiled to Himself as He thought, “I will not contradict the accusation, for everybody knows that it is not true.” They said that He had a devil and He did condescend to answer that and confounded all His accusers by making them see the absurdity of the charge, for if the devil was in Jesus fighting against the devil, then the devil must have become divided against himself and his kingdom would soon come to an end!

Towards the end of our Lord’s life, His enemies gathered up their charges and flung them in set form before Pilate’s judgement seat, but He answered them never a word—“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before her shearer, so opened He not His mouth.” In silence He maintained His lowliness! Oh, if He, who could speak as never man spoke, had spoken—if He had defended Himself with His own irresistible oratory—with such a subject as Himself to speak upon, He might have made them all go out of the judgment hall, as once He had scattered them when His client was a woman taken in adultery! He might have turned the crowd against their rulers, had He chosen, or divided their counsels by setting Pharisees against Sadducees! But He sought not Himself. He was content to ask, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” “For which of those works do you stone Me?” And when He came to His end, He had no harsher word for them than, “Father, forgive them!”

To crown all, you know how our Well-Beloved died. He laid down His life for us—dearest pledge of lowliness! The decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem was no famous death in battle amid the roar of cannon and the blast of trumpet, shaking Heaven and earth with tidings of victory! His was no death amid the tears of a nation who prepare for their beloved Prince a more than royal mourning. No, He dies with malefactors! He dies at the common gallows! He dies amid a crowd of scoffers where felons cast contempt upon Him as He hangs between them! Hear how the ribald throng challenge His Divine Sonship and says, “If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross!” The bearing of such disgrace and the endurance of such scorn was the utmost proof of a lowliness of spirit which we humbly admire and feebly imitate—but which we can never equal.

II. I shall but occupy you one or two minutes while I try to explain THE CAUSE OF THIS LOWLINESS.  
His supreme lowliness of Character grew out of the actual lowliness of His heart. He never aimed at humility, nor labored after it—it was natural to Him. Of all sickening things, the pride that mimics humility is the most loathsome! Not a particle of that nauseous vice was found in our Lord. He never puts on an air, nor strikes an attitude, nor plays the humble part. But He is meek and lowly and all can see it. He is never other than He seems to be and He always is and seems to be the meekest of mankind. His inmost heart was seen and seen to be all lowliness.  
Why was He so? I conceive that He was so lowly because He was so great. A little man feels the necessity of magnifying himself and, therefore, becomes proud. Pride is essentially meanness. It is the little man that cannot afford to be little. Some of us are too low to be lowly, too mean to be meek. True greatness is always unconscious and never seeks to make a display. It magnifies a man when he can sink himself for the good of others. No one knew how to descend so gracefully as our Lord, for His great mind knew well the ways of self-denial. A man who is greatly rich is not ashamed to be seen in well-worn clothes in those same places where the pretentious bankrupt would not venture except in his newest attire. He who has a small estate puts a diamond ring upon his finger and holds it so that it sparkles in the light—to let all people see that he is a man worth something! But your eminent men of wealth scorn such display. Truly great men are humble. I have often heard it said of men of large substance, “He is singularly unassuming! You would never dream that he is a man of property.” So, too, of men of genius have we heard it said, “He gave himself no airs; he was as modest and friendly as the least of us.” Just so, and that very much accounts for his high standing. He that is somebody to others is nobody to himself. He who was more than all, even our Lord Jesus Christ, was, therefore, for that very reason, lowly of heart.  
He was lowly, next, because He was so loving. Mothers are frequently proud of their children, but, I think, they are seldom, if ever, proud to their children. No, if they love them, they do not think that it is any condescension to kiss them, or wash them, or carry them in their bosom. I never heard of a father who thought that he was very humble-minded because he allowed his boy to climb upon his knees and hold on with his arms about his neck. Those whom we love, we elevate to an equality with ourselves or, rather, we go down to them. Love is a charming leveler! Jesus had so much love that He could not be anything but lowly towards His little ones. You never yet heard even a blasphemer impute pride to God! Though our blood has chilled when we have heard the High and Mighty One arraigned for this and that by arrogant tongues, yet we have not known profanity to run in that line. It would be too absurd to impute pride either to God, or to His Ever-Blessed Son, Jesus Christ. The reason for this evident freedom from pride is the fact that “God is Love.” The fullness of Divine Love blinds the eyes which look in distrust upon it. God is patient, for He is loving—Christ is lowly of heart because His heart is made of love.  
Moreover, once more, our blessed Master was so absorbed in His great objective that He was necessarily lowly. The man who is driving at a great objective has no time for the affectations of self-adulation. He has no time in which to think of how he appears to others. He does not stand at the glass to arrange his beauties—the idea would be too absurd! He cannot be too particular about how he puts that poetic word, or how he mouths that polished sentence—his only desire is to deliver his message and to impress men with the matter in hand. Earnestness carries the speaker beyond the orator’s rules of self-display. His rhetoric is melted down by his enthusiasm. A great orator can readily be made to appear ridiculous by the comic critic who coolly looks down from the gallery upon him—but what does he care? His theme so absorbs him that he has forgotten all elegance of attitude and gesture—and only cares to make his point.  
He would make himself a fool 10,000 times deep if he could but win his case and bless his country thereby. He cares for nothing but his subject and his aim. So is it pre-eminently with our Lord—He pursues His course careless of man’s esteem. He burns His way, His zeal eats Him up! He is straitened till His work is accomplished and, therefore, He has no thought about the maintaining of His dignity. His greatness and His intense devotion forbid anything approximating to pride and, by force of nature, He is meek and lowly in heart. Because He has a great objective to achieve and that objective has absorbed His whole Self—He must walk in all lowliness of mind. Blessed Master, teach us this way of lowliness! Fire us with an ambition for Your Glory which shall shut out every thought of pride!  
III. What are the LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS LOWLINESS of our Lord?  
The lessons are, first, Brothers and Sisters, let us be lowly. Did I hear one say, “Well, I will try to be lowly”? You cannot do it in that way. We must not try to act the lowly part—we must be lowly—and then we shall naturally act in a humble manner. It is astonishing how much of pride there is in the most modest. Of course I do not mean in those who say that they are perfect. No, I leave them to their own vainglory. But in us poor, imperfect creatures, what a deal of pride there is! How we condemn pride! We feel that it would be well if all were as humble as we are! We boast that we detest boasting! We flatter ourselves that we hate flattery! When we are told that we are amazingly free from pride, we feel as proud as Lucifer, himself, at the consciousness that the compliment is right well deserved! We are so experienced, so solid, so discerning, so free from selfconfidence that we are the first to be caught in the net of self-satisfaction! Brethren, we must pray God to make us humble! If we become lowliest of the lowly, it will not be much of a condescension on our part—we shall only come down to the point which we ought never to have left. Down in the dust is the fit place for such poor mortals as we are! What right have we to be anything else but meek and lowly?  
Alas, we can be very proud in many ways! Let me give you a case or two in point. Yonder is one that is called to suffer and he rebels against it. Listen to his complaint—“Why should I be called to endure such great trials? What have I done that I am thus tried?” Do you not, at once, detect the great, “I”? Very different is this from the lowly prayer, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”  
“But, then, persons have spoken evil of me! I do not deserve to be treated thus.” Clearly it is especially wrong for any one to speak amiss of such an excellent being as you are! There lies the grievance. Because you are so good, it is horrible wickedness to malign you. You reply, “But, really, it was so malicious and the charge was so absurd and unreasonable.” Just so. People ought to be peculiarly careful not to hurt your feelings, for you are so deserving and praiseworthy. Is not self-esteem the spring of half our sorrow? We are so wonderfully good in our own judgement that we claim the box seat of the coach—and the chief seat in the synagogue. If we were really lowly of heart, we would say, “I have been treated very badly, but when I think of how my Lord was treated, I cannot dream of complaining. This severe critic cannot see my excellences but I do not wonder, for I cannot see them, myself. He has been finding fault with me and his charges were not true but, if he had known me better, he might have found more fault with me and have been nearer the truth. If I do not deserve censure in this way, I do in another and so I will cheerfully bear what is measured out to me. Yes, if it is in no sense my due, I will give my back to the smiters, as my Master did.” Oh, that the Lord would make us meek and lowly in heart—and we would submit to wrong rather than resist evil!  
“But surely,” cries one, “you do not want me to associate with sinners?” No, dear Friend, I do not want such a good person as you are to go near them at all! I could not so degrade your honorable self. Moreover, if you did go near them, you would aggravate them by your self-opinionated goodness. If your perfections are not quite so full-blown as usual, I would, however, suggest that you might do sinners good by kindly speaking to them—and that to gather up your skirts in fear and trembling lest you should be defiled by their presence is not the most excellent way. When you are afraid lest the wind should blow from a sinful person towards your nobility, you act the fool, if not the hypocrite—perhaps both! Why, you would have been in Hell, yourself, if it had not been for Sovereign Grace! You, fine ladies and prime gentlemen, you would have been as surely cast away as the vilest of mankind if it had not been for Infinite Compassion! It ill becomes us to boast, since we have enough sins of our own to plunge us in despair were it not for the love of the lowly Savior who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. O Lord, stamp out our pride and make us lowly in heart!  
Lastly, let us learn to say to the despondent and timorous, words of cheer. Since the Lord Jesus Christ is so meek and lowly—poor, trembling, guilty one, you may come to Him! You may come to Him now! I was sitting, the other night, among some excellent friends, who, I suppose, were none of them rich and some of them poor. I am sure it never entered into my head to think how much money they owned, for I felt myself very much at home with them until one of them remarked, “You do not mind mixing with us poor folk?” Then I felt quite ashamed for myself that they should think it necessary to make such a remark. I was so much one with them that I felt honored by having fellowship with them in the things of God—and it troubled me that they should think I was doing anything remarkable in conversing with them.  
Dear Friends, do not think harshly of any of us who are ministers of Christ! But you will think harshly of us if you conceive that we think it a coming down to associate with any of you! We are in heart and soul your Brothers—bone of your bone—your truest friends whether you are rich or poor. We desire your good, for we are your servants for Christ’s sake! Above all, do not think harshly of our Lord and Master by supposing that it will be a strange thing for Him to come to your house, or to your heart! It is His habit to forgive the guilty and renew the sinful. Come to Him at once and He will accept you now! Jesus is exceedingly approachable. He is not hedged about with guards to keep off the poor or the sinful. Your room may be very humble—what does He care about that? He will come and hear your prayer. Many a time Jesus has had no room to pray in,

but— *“Cold mountains, and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”*

Do you complain that you cannot arrange your words correctly? What is that to Him? He looks more at the sincerity of your heart than at the grammar of your language! Let your heart talk to Him without words and He will understand you. Do you complain with shamed face that you are such a sinner? You are not the first sinner that Jesus has met with, nor will you be the last. You are heavy-laden with sin—but He knows more about the weight of sin than you do. That terrible load of guilt worries you—but it pressed Him down even more terribly when it brought Him into the dust of death. It makes you weep to think of sin—but it caused Him to sweat great drops of blood. You feel that you cannot live under so crushing a burden! He did not live under it, but gave up the ghost in agony! Do not crucify your Lord afresh by suspecting that He is proud and will, therefore, pass you by. Do not insult Him by dreaming that He will reject you for your insignificance or unworthiness!

Come, and welcome, to Him who will delight to bless you! Come to Him at once, without further question or hesitation! Come just as you are! Fall at His pierced feet and trust the merit of His blood—and the good Lord will accept you on the spot, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” God bless you by leading you all to love this lowly and loving Lord! Even at this present moment I pray that you may take that step which will secure our meeting in Heaven to adore eternally our King, so meek and lowly, who will then dwell in the midst of us and lead us to living fountains of water!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 11.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—878, 765, 384.  
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THE BLOOD OF CHRIST’S COVENANT

NO. 3240

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 12, 1863.

**“As for you, also, by the blood of your Covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” Zechariah 9:11.**

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this same subject are #277, Volume 5—THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT and #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT— Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon Verses 11 and 12 are #2839, Volume49—“PRISONERS OF HOPE” and #2883, Volume 50—PRISONERS DELIVERED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE LORD is here speaking to His ancient people, Israel. That nation had always been preserved, although other nations had been destroyed— and the reason was that God had entered into a Covenant with Abraham on their behalf. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the Covenant, so that God could truly speak of “the blood of your Covenant.” The Jews have never ceased to be a nation, though they have been scattered, peeled and delivered over into the hand of their adversaries because of their sins. They may enjoy various rights and privileges in the different countries where they sojourn for a while, but they cannot be absorbed into the nationalities by which they are surrounded. They must always be a separate and distinct people—but the day shall yet come when the branches of the olive tree, which have been so long cut off, shall be grafted in again. Then shall they, as a nation, again behold the Messiah, the true and only King of the Jews—and their fullness shall be the fullness of the Gentiles, also!

All Believers have some share in that Covenant made with Abraham, for he is the father of the faithful. We who believe in Jesus are of the seed of Abraham, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise, and we are pressed by a Covenant which like that made with Abraham, is signed and sealed with blood even “the blood of the Everlasting Covenant.” We, too, are saved and kept as a separate and distinct people, not because of any natural goodness in us, or because of our superiority over others, but solely and entirely because the Lord has made an Eternal Covenant concerning us, which is “ordered in all things and sure,” because Jesus Christ is, Himself, the Surety on our behalf that its guarantees and pledges shall all be carried into effect.

I. So, applying our text to the Covenant people of God in all ages, we have first to consider THEIR NATURAL AND YET PRIVILEGED CONDITION. By nature they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, but by Grace they are in Covenant relationship to God!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when we were in our natural state, we were like prisoners. A prisoner is one who has lost his liberty—and that was our condition before Jesus met with us and set us free. We were “carnal, sold under sin,” in bondage to our own lusts and held captive by the devil at his will. No doubt we boasted of our free will, but our will, itself, was enslaved with all the rest of our powers. There is no greater mockery than to call a sinner a free man. Show me a convict toiling in the chain gang and call him a free man if you will! Point out to me the galley slave chained to the oar and smarting under the taskmaster’s lash whenever he pauses to draw a breath—and call him a free man if you will—but never call a sinner a free man, even in his will, as long as he is the slave of his own corruptions! In our natural state we wore chains, not upon our limbs, but upon our hearts—fetters that bound us and kept us from God, from rest, from peace, from holiness—from anything like freedom of heart and conscience and will! The iron entered into our soul and there is no other slavery as terrible as that. As there is no freedom like the freedom of the spirit, so is there no slavery that is at all comparable to the bondage of the heart!

A prisoner is also one who feels that he cannot escape from his prison—and that is how we felt. We began to have longings after better things. A heavenly Visitor came to us and dropped a new and strange thought into our minds—and we began to pant after something higher and nobler than this poor world could give us—but we could not reach it, for we were prisoners. We could not escape from the cruel grip of our captor and it became quite clear to us that we could never be delivered from the house of bondage by any power of our own. Do you not remember, my Brothers and Sisters, when you used to sorrowfully say—

*“I would but cannot pray*

*I would but can’t repent”—*  
and when you could use Paul’s words as your own and sadly cry, “To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not?” You were still a prisoner, yet you were beginning to be one of the “prisoners of hope.”

That is a strange kind of prison that is mentioned in the text—“the pit wherein is no water.” In the East, pits were frequently used as prisons. When a tyrant king wished to keep anyone in safe custody and also in ignominy and shame, and sorrow, he would have him cast into one of these waterless pits where the poor prisoner would be beyond human sight or hearing—and with no possible hope of deliverance from his doleful dungeon. Such was our sad state by nature, and well do we remember our first efforts to obtain release! We were in dense darkness and we felt all round the walls of our prison to try to find a door, or window, or ladder by which we might escape, but all in vain. We tried to look up, but we seemed to have been thrust, like Paul and Silas, into some inner prison where no ray of light could penetrate. The fact that there was “no water” in our prison-pit made our agonies all the more terrible! Those of you who have passed through that state of deep conviction of sin know that in such circumstances there is no comfort for the present and no hope for the future—as to the past, there is nothing to look back upon but sin—and as to the future, there is nothing “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” To a sinner in that condition, there seems nothing within but a heart as hard as stone, nothing beneath but a gapping Hell and nothing around but thick darkness. How dreary and dreadful is the state of man by nature—and how painfully conscious he is of his true condition when the Holy Spirit reveals it to him! Then is he, indeed, like a prisoner in a “pit wherein is no water.”

This is the actual state, by nature, of all the elect—they are prisoners, just as other men are—and they are in as dark and dismal a pit and they have as little comfort in it as the very worst of mankind have. Yet, by Divine Grace, they are in an altogether different condition from that of others, for they are in Covenant with God though they are not yet aware of that blessed and comforting Truth! God’s election of His people took place long before their creation. Those whom He has chosen unto eternal life were given to Christ in the Covenant of Grace, in that eternity of which we can form so slight a conception. And when they were born into this world, though they were born in sin and grew up to be the children of disobedience—enemies to God by wicked works—yet the Covenant made with Christ on their behalf remained unbroken all the while!

“Well,” says someone, “that is strange.” Yes, it is strange, but it is true. We must never forget that we were under a Covenant of Works long before we were born. Adam stood as our federal head and representative in that Covenant. You, my Sister, never put out your hand to pluck the forbidden fruit—and you and I, my Brother, never partook of it, yet we all have to share the consequences of Adam’s transgression because he was our Covenant head. Do you object to that and say that it was unjust to visit upon us the sin of another? If you do, then you must equally object to the Gospel plan of salvation by the righteousness and death of Another, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the one great federal Head and Representative of all who believe in Him! He took the place of the countless myriads of His elect who had been given to Him by His Father, and died on Calvary’s Cross in their place, although great numbers of them had not then been born and, consequently, could not have any virtue or merit of their own! Through His substitutionary Sacrifice, they were even then “accepted in the Beloved” and, in the fullness of time, they become Believers in Him and so enter consciously into the enjoyment of the Covenant privileges which had been conferred upon them from eternity! The Covenant is not made with them when they believe in Jesus—it was made on their behalf by the Father and the Son in the eternal council chamber long before the daystar knew its place or planets ran their round!

See, then, the twofold condition of the chosen—they are like prisoners in a pit wherein is no water, yet is there an eternal Covenant concerning them which guarantees that they shall be brought out of the bondage of their sins and shall be set at liberty forever! Does someone here say, “I trust that such a blessed Covenant as that has been made on my behalf”? Dear Brother or Sister, if you have a sincere longing to be a sharer in the blessings of the Covenant of Grace, methinks that is a proof that you have an interest in it already! And if you will, at this moment, put your soul’s trust in that precious blood that is their sign and seal of the Covenant, then you may rest assured that Grace has inscribed your name from all eternity in God’s eternal book!

II. Now let us turn to the second part of our subject which is THE MEANS OF THE DELIVERANCE OF THESE COVENANTED ONES—AND THE EVIDENCES OF THEIR DELIVERANCE.

The text says, “ By the blood of your Covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” I think this means, first, that the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the essential matter of the Covenant. In order to make the conditions of the Eternal Covenant effective for His people, it was necessary that Christ should be obedient unto death and that His blood should be shed for many for the remission of their sins. When, by faith, I look upon the blood of Jesus—whether I see it streaming down in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane or flowing in the crimson rivulets at Gabbatha or in the sacred streams of Golgotha, I see in that precious blood of Christ the essential matter of the Covenant, and I sing, with sadness on His account, but with rejoicing on my own—

*“Oh, how sweet to view the flowing  
Of His sin-atoning blood!  
By Divine assurance knowing  
He has made my peace with God!”*

Yes, O blessed Jesus, You have fulfilled on our behalf Your part of the Eternal Covenant! You have met all the demands of Infinite Justice even to the uttermost farthing! Your Father justly requires perfect obedience to His holy Law and You have rendered it in Your pure and spotless life. The offended Majesty of that Law demands adequate punishment for man’s multiplied violations of its just requirements—and Your one Infinite Sacrifice has fully paid the penalty, so that Divine Justice is completely satisfied and the dishonored Law is magnified and glorified. Thus it is that God can “be just and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus,” for in the Person, life and death of Christ, their Covenant Head and Representative, all claims upon Believers have been discharged forever!

Further, the blood of Jesus is also the Seal of the Covenant. Speaking after the manner of men, until the blood of Jesus had been shed, the Covenant was not signed, sealed and ratified. It was like a will that could only become valid by the death of the testator. It is true that there was such perfect unity of heart between the Father and the Son, and such mutual foreknowledge that the Covenant would be ratified in due time— that multitudes of the chosen ones were welcomed to Heaven in anticipation of the redemption which would actually be accomplished by Christ upon the Cross. But when Jesus took upon Himself the likeness of men and in our human nature suffered and died upon the accursed tree, He did, as it were, write His name in crimson characters upon the Eternal Covenant and thus sealed it with His blood. It is because the blood of Jesus is the Seal of this Covenant that it has such power to bless us and is the means of lifting us up out of the prison-pit wherein is no water. Let me put it thus to some of you who have long been under conviction of sin. You have been trying in your poor way to keep the Law of God, but you have utterly failed to do so. You know that there are many precious promises in God’s Word, but you get no comfort from them. Why is that? You feel that you are like a prisoner in a pit—and that you are shut away from the Presence of the thrice-holy God—and that His awful attribute of Justice bars your way like the flaming sword at the gate of Paradise, so that you cannot come near to Him. Then you listen to the Gospel, of which the sum and substance is this—that Jesus Christ has fully atoned for the sins of all His people, that He has suffered everything that they deserved to suffer and that God has accepted His substitutionary Sacrifice as a sufficient Atonement for all who believe in Him. As soon as you trust Him, you are lifted up out of the prison-pit, your feet are set upon a rock and a mug of grateful praise is put into your mouth! You are not afraid of the sword of Divine Justice now—no, you go and stand beneath the flashing blade and trust to it to defend you against all your adversaries! You rightly say, “As Jesus suffered in my place, Justice demands that I should go free! He has discharged all my liabilities. The Law has no longer any terror to me.” So you see, Beloved, how the blood of Christ’s Covenant brings the poor, trembling, despairing soul up out of that dread prison “wherein is no water.”

Now I want, dear Friends, to ask you all to answer honestly one or two questions that I am about to put to you. The first is—Do you know what it means to be delivered from that pit by the blood of Christ’s Covenant ? Perhaps I ought first of all to ask—Do you know what it means to be a prisoner in that pit wherein is no water? Have you ever moaned and groaned under the weight of your sin? Have you ever smarted under the lash of that ten-thonged whip of the Law? Has your conscience, itself, been sufficiently awakened as to condemn you? Have you ever been brought to such a state of self-despair that you could see nothing but death and damnation written upon everything that pertains to you? Was your comeliness withered, your strength dried up and your pride humbled so that you had to sit in sackcloth and ashes and cry, “Unclean! Unclean!” as the leper of old had to warn others to keep away from him? If not, I fear that you have never proved the power of the blood of the Covenant, for he who has never been humbled has never been exalted!

I feel sure that some of us here can answer, “Oh, yes! We remember well when we were humbled so that we felt ourselves to be less than nothing and vanity—and we realized that, by nature, we were totally ruined and undone—and blessed be God, we also recollect the time when a Power infinitely above our own, drew us up out of the pit in which we were imprisoned.” But, my dear Hearers, have you also been conscious of the working of this Almighty Power? Have you felt a mysterious influence, which you could not comprehend, drawing you out of your natural state and giving you new thoughts, new desires, new hopes, new joy and also new pains? Certainly you have never been delivered from this waterless prison by any power less than the Divine, so if God’s hand has not yet been stretched out on your behalf, you are still in the pit! Or, as Peter said to Simon the sorcerer, you are still “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

Is there anyone here who is in that pit, yet who earnestly longs to escape from it? Is your soul yearning to be delivered, not only from the consequences of sin, but from the sin, itself? Are you panting after reconciliation with God and acceptance in the Beloved? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Then you are already among those whom the Savior calls blessed and to whom He has given that gracious promise, “they shall be filled.” Such longings as these grow not in Nature’s soul— they are the product of Divine Grace. Therefore, be very thankful for them, for they are at least hopeful indications of the Holy Spirit’s working within you! And you may rest assured that where He has begun a good work, He will continue it until He brings it to perfection. He will never lift you part of the way out of the pit and then let you fall back again into the prison—He will bring you right out, even as the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt with a high hand and a stretched-out arm!

If you have been delivered, I feel sure that you will prize your deliverance. I would give little for what you call your grace if you would not willingly part with all else that you have rather that part with that! A slave who has been set free will value his liberty beyond all price. The man who can talk lightly of being free, never knew what bondage meant. I fear that none of us think highly enough of what the Lord has done for us. We get to worrying ourselves because He has not done more for us, because we are not yet perfect—how much better it would be if we would praise and bless Him for all that He has done for us! Remember that you are a free man even though some links of your chain are still clinging to you. Thank God that the chain is broken and that the last links shall soon be snapped—and you shall be perfectly delivered from the badge of bondage! Therefore be of good courage, prize your deliverance and praise Him who has done such great things for you!

Surely, too, if you have been drawn out of this pit wherein is no water, you will love your Deliverer and you will desire above everything else to live to Him and to labor for Him all your life!

I hope you can truthfully say to your Lord—

*“Have You a lamb in all Your flock  
I would disdain to feed?  
Have You a foe, before whose face  
I fear Your cause to plead?  
You know I love You, dearest Lord,  
But oh, I love to soar  
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,  
And learn to love You more.”*

I trust that you have dedicated yourself wholly to your Lord—perhaps not in writing, yet just as truly as if you had set your signature to such a covenant as some have felt moved to leave upon record. If you have resolved thus in your heart, you can say with me at the moment, “Lord Jesus, I am Yours—body, soul and spirit—wholly Yours, only Yours, always Yours. You have bought me for Yourself, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with Your own most precious blood and, therefore, You shall have me with all my powers, all my possessions, all my possibilities in life and in death, in time and in eternity! I give all up to You absolutely without reserve, that You may do with me whatever You please and whatever will bring most Glory to Your holy name. I fear there is much dross still remaining in me—in all the gold You have given me in Your wondrous Grace. If it seems good in Your sight, put me into the hottest furnace, but O Lord, do take away all the dross and then fashion me into a vessel meet for Your own use!” The man who can truthfully talk thus to the Lord Jesus is in the Covenant! And by the blood of the Covenant he has been brought forth out of the prison wherein is no water!

Perhaps you are afraid to say as much as this, lest it should seem to be presumption on your part. Well then, possibly you can say, “I dare not talk as some do about their attainments in spiritual things, but I do trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. My sole reliance is upon His perfect righteousness and His one great Sacrifice for all.” Then, my Brother or my Sister, you are among those who have built upon the Rock and you shall be preserved in the greatest storm that can ever beat upon you! You are no longer a prisoner in the pit wherein is no water! Faith in Jesus is not the heritage of the slaves of sin and Satan—it is the portion of those who are free men and free women in Christ Jesus—and if He has made you free, you are free, indeed, and you can never be enslaved again! You are at liberty to walk wherever you will on all the holy land which is the purchase possession of the children of the King! Every promise that He has given to His chosen people is a promise to you, so take full advantage of all your privileges as a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! You are now His and you shall be His when this world is on fire and when all things that are of time and sense shall perish in the last great conflagration! You shall be His amid the pomp and terrors of that tremendous day and you shall be His amidst the splendor and Glory of eternity!

If any here are still prisoners in the pit wherein is no water, may the Lord even now bring them forth by the blood of His Covenant, that they may share with all the chosen ones, all the blessings of that Covenant now and to all eternity! And too Him shall be the praise and the Glory forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ZECHARIAH 9; 10.**

As we read these ancient prophecies, we will not only notice how exactly they have been fulfilled, but we will also try to learn the lesson that they are intended to teach us.

Zechariah 9:1-4. The burden of the Word of the LORD against the land of Hadrach and Damascus, its resting place (for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel, are on the LORD). Also against Hamath which borders on it. And also Tyrus and Sidon, though they are very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will destroy her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. Alexander the Great besieged Tyre and utterly overthrew it. The citizens thought that their “strong hold” was impregnable, but they had at last to surrender to the mighty monarch whose attacks they had so long resisted. All the mercenaries whom they could procure with their heaped-up silver and gold could not avert the doom which the Lord had foretold and which, through the instrumentality of Alexander, He accomplished—“The Lord will cast her out, and He will destroy her power in the sea.”

5-8. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear, Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passes by and because of him that returns: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with My eyes. When Phoenicia had fallen into the hands of the conqueror, there was no power able to avert the overthrow of Philistia. And Jerusalem would also have come beneath his sway had not the Lord miraculously interposed for its preservation. Alexander was restrained by a power which perhaps he did not understand, but which he could not resist, so he passed by the holy city of which the Temple of the Lord was the glory in the midst. They who are Divinely protected are in absolute safety even in the most perilous times. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it and is safe.”

9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass. You know how exactly this prophecy was fulfilled in our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem—when the multitudes welcomed Him with hosannas—probably the same crowds that soon hoarsely shouted, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

10. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea, even to sea, and from the River even to the ends of the earth. He shall yet be acclaimed as the universal Monarch, “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” for, “of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.”

11, 12. As for you, also, by the blood of your Covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you. This “stronghold” is very different from that of Tyre, which failed her in her hour of need. It is, indeed, that of which the Prophet Nahum wrote—“The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows them that trust in Him.”

13. For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man. Note well that it is the Lord who is doing all these notable deeds—bending Judah like a bow, fitting Ephraim to the bow as the archer presses his arrow to the string, and raising up the despised sons of Zion so that they may be able to overcome the proud sons of Greece! “The sword of a mighty man” owes its strength to the hand that wields it, and the sons of Zion are only mighty when the Lord holds them in His almighty hands and uses them as seems good in His sight.

14. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the South. Then how safe must the Lord’s people be! And what terror must spread among their enemies!

15. The LORD of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour and subdue with slingstones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. There seems to be a hint here of the strange scene that was witnessed in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when the unbelieving mockers said of the Spirit-filled disciples, “There men are full of new wine,” but Peter repudiated the slander and declared that the wonder which the people could not comprehend was really the fulfillment of the ancient Prophecy, “It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh.”

16. And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. See how many metaphors the Prophet was Inspired to use in a single verse in describing the Lord’s chosen ones—“as the flock of His people; as the stones of a crown...as an ensign upon His land.” No human language can fully set forth all that their Lord thinks of them—and all that they are in His esteem!

17. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.  
Zechariah 10:1. Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, grass in the fields for everyone. The atheistic philosopher of the present day laughs at such a verse as this and sneeringly asks, “What possible connection can there be between men and women praying to God and the showers of rain which fall upon the earth? Why,” he says “according to the laws of Nature, showers fall at such-and-such seasons and if the atmosphere should not happen to be in such-and-such a state, all the praying in the world cannot produce a single drop of rain!” But faith can clearly see where reason is blind—and the prayer of faith moves the arm of God and the arm of God controls what the philosopher calls the “laws of Nature,” and so the rain descends. Let us learn from this precept and promise, the power of believing prayer! Prayer has the key of Nature as well as the key of Heaven hanging at her belt! Observe also, that when we have received one mercy from the Lord, we are to go on to pray for another. These people must have had “the former rain,” yet they were to ask for “the latter rain,” also! And if you, dear Friends, have had “the former rain” of conversion, go on to ask the Lord for “the latter rain” of sanctification. If, in our Church fellowship, we have had “the former rain” of gracious additions to our numbers, we must ask for “the latter rain” by praying that God would continue thus to bless us. When we cease to pray for blessings, God has already ceased to bless us—but when our souls pour out floods of prayer, God is certain to pour out floods of mercy.  
2. For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain. Observe the readiness of man to forsake the great fountain of Living Waters and to make unto himself broken cisterns which can hold no water! Notice, too, that some sort of comfort may, for a time, be derived from a false trust, but it is “comfort in vain.” As a dream yields no comfort when a man wakes up and finds himself to not be rich—as he had vainly dreamed that he was— but miserably poor, so all confidence in the flesh, all reliance upon anything except the almighty arm of God, even if it should yield us temporary hope and consolation, will only make our grief the greater when its utter failure is discovered!  
2. Therefore the people wend their way as a flock, they were troubled because there was no shepherd. The sheep that belong to Christ’s flock will never find any true shepherd except He who is “the Good Shepherd.” If, for a time, they should so lose their spiritual wits as to follow strangers—which, indeed, is not a natural thing for them to do, for “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers”—they will meet with a thousand troubles because they have no shepherd.  
3. My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds. Whenever people are afflicted with unfaithful ministers, when God comes to visit these people, He will not only punish the ministers, but the religious leaders, the false professors in those churches, the hegoats who led the flock astray! Oh, what a plague and a curse will an unfaithful minister be found to have been at the Last Day! A well which only yields bitter water like that of Marah, merely mocks a temporary thirst. But a minister who does not preach the Gospel and who does not live the Gospel, mocks the soul’s eternal thirst! Whatever I may be, God grant that I may never be an unfaithful preacher of His Word! Surely, if there is an innermost Hell, a place where the soul’s feet shall be made more fast in the stocks of the Pit than anywhere else, it shall be reserved for the man who, professing to be an instructor of the ignorant and a leader of the flock, taught them lies and led them out of the Way! May the Lord save us from shepherds against whom His anger must be kindled!  
3. For the LORD of Hosts has visited His flock the house of Judah, and has made them as His royal horse in the battle. As an expert horseman skillfully controls his steed and turns it according to his pleasure in the day of battle, and makes it obey himself, alone, so does the Lord rein in and direct His Church, so that she becomes like a “royal horse in the battle.”  
4. Out of Him came forth the corner, out of Him the nail, out of Him the battle bow, out of Him every oppressor together. Let us learn from this verse that everything comes from the Lord of Hosts, the God of Providence, as well as of Divine Grace. Those statesmen who are the cornerstones of the great building of State, must come from Him. Those Christian men and women of experience who seem to be as the cornerstones of our spiritual building must come from Him. Those who are as nails, upon whom weaker Christians seem to hang, come from Him. And whoever is, in the day of battle, like God’s bow, must also come from Him, for apart from the Lord there is no strength, nor power, nor wit nor wisdom among all His people. We must learn, then, to lift up our eyes unto God and look to Him for all that we need whether it is political, social, or religious needs that are to be supplied—all must come from Him.  
5. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. The Jewish infantry often turned to flight the Syrian cavalry, and I may fitly compare the Apostles of old to humble fighters upon foot, while heathen and other philosophers were like mighty men on horseback! Yet they were turned back by the apparently weaker warriors of the Cross—and it is still so. We can well afford to give our adversaries every advantage that they can ask—let them have State patronage, let them have worldly dignity, let them have learning, let them have wealth—yet, in the name of God will we vanquish them, for the Truth of God is mightier than all the wisdom of man and the weakness of God is stronger than the greatest strength of man!  
6. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back, for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off, for I am the LORD their God,

and will hear them. [See Sermon #2588, Volume 44—PERFECT RESTORATION— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See, Be

loved, how the Everlasting Covenant is the great foundation of everything for the saints. “I am Jehovah their God,” says He. The Lord has taken His people to be His own forever and, therefore, though He may seem temporarily to reject them, yet permanently and everlastingly He will hold them fast and acknowledge them as His people.

7. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yes, their children shall see it and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD. Get a firm hold of this promise, Believers, and plead it! Are you dull and heavy, desponding and sad? Then plead this promise, “Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord.”

8. I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased. The word, “hiss,” is supposed by some to be an allusion to the Eastern custom of men who managed bees making a sound like hissing in order to gather them into the hive. Others, however, translate the word, “piping,” as the shepherd pipes to his flock and they gather round him. In the words, “I will gather them, for I have redeemed them,” we see that particular redemption is the groundwork of effectual calling those whom Jesus Christ has bought with His precious blood, the Holy Spirit will call by power out from the rest of mankind.

9-11. And I will sow them among the people and they shall remember Me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria, and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction. In the restoration of Israel, there is to be an even greater triumph than that which was achieved at the Red Sea.

11. And shall smite the wave in the sea, and all the deeps of the River shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away. For the Glory of God in the deliverance of His people is sure to be attended by another form of Glory in the destruction of His enemies! Christ is a sweet Savior unto God both in them that are saved and in them that perish.

12. And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the LORD.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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“PRISONERS OF HOPE”  
NO. 2839

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 12, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1877.

**“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoner out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.”  
Zechariah 9:11, 12**

THIS passage unquestionably has to do with our Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. We are not at all in doubt about this matter, for the connection is exceedingly clear. If you begin to read at the 9th verse, you will see that we have, from that place on to our text, much prophetic information concerning our Lord and His Kingdom. We read, first, something about His own manner of triumph and His way of conducting Himself in His Kingdom—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” We know that the Prophet speaks not thus of any man save of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the King who put aside the pomp and pageantry in which Eastern monarchs delighted and, instead of riding upon a horse, He mounts a lowly ass. If He must ride in procession through the streets of Jerusalem, it shall be in that meek and humble guise. The King of the Kingdom of Grace is not high and lofty, haughty or proud, but condescends to men of low estate.

The Pharisees and scribes murmured, “This Man receives sinners, and eats with them,” and it was quite true. He is a King, and of a right royal nature, but His Kingdom is not that of pomp and show, of force and oppression. He is just and righteous, but He is also lowly, gentle and kind. The little children flocked around Him while He was here below and, now, the meek and lowly ones of mankind delight to serve Him. How glad I am that I can say to any of you who have not yet yielded yourselves up to Him that you need not fear to become the subjects of Jesus, the Son of God, for He is so gentle a King that it shall always be for your profit and pleasure, and never to your real loss or sorrow, to bow down before His gracious scepter! We have not to set before you a Pharaoh or a Nebuchadnezzar. Jesus of Nazareth is a King of quite another kind. Therefore, “kiss the Son, lest He be angry.” Bow before Him and let Him be your only Lord and King. You see, then, that this 9th verse refers to our Lord Jesus and tells us something concerning His personal and official Character.

The next verse goes on to describe the weapons by which He wins His victories. Or, rather, it tells us what they are not. Not by carnal weapons will Christ ever force His way among the sons of men, for He says, “I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off.” Mohammed may conquer by the sword, but Christ conquers by the sword which comes out of His mouth, that is, the Word of the Lord! His empire is one of love, not of force and oppression. He subdues men, but He does it by His own gentleness and kindness, never by breaking them in pieces and destroying them upon a gory battlefield. Let others cement an empire with blood if they will, but Jesus does not do so. “He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth. He breaks the bow, and cuts the spear in sunder. He burns the chariot in the fire.”

The same verse reveals to us more concerning the nature of Christ’s Kingdom—“He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” There have been universal monarchies in the past, but there shall never be another till Christ shall come again. Four times has God foiled those who have attempted to assume the sovereignty of the world, but, in due time, there shall come One who shall reign over all mankind. He is not of earthly mold, though He is, indeed, the Son of Man. He is descended from no line of modern princes and bears no imperial name among the sons of men, yet He is the Prince of the house of David and His name is the Son of God. He shall break all other kingdoms and empires in pieces, snapping the swords of the mightiest warriors, gathering scepters beneath His arm in sheaves, and casting all earthly crowns beneath His feet, for He alone is King of kings and Lord of lords!—

*“Kings shall fall down before Him  
And gold and incense bring.  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all people sing—  
For He shall have dominion  
Over river, sea, and shore,  
Far as the eagle’s pinion  
Or dove’s light wing can soar.”*

Thus I have shown you that this passage, in its proper connection, relates to the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation, so now we will consider its special teaching.

In our text, we have three things. The first is, a Divine deliverance. “As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” Secondly, we have a Divine invitation. “Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” And, thirdly, a Divine promise. “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.”

I. So, first, we are to think of A DIVINE DELIVERANCE.

This must be a matter of personal experience and, therefore, I should like that everyone whom I am now addressing would say to himself or herself, “Do I know anything about this Divine Deliverance in my own heart and life? If I do not, I have grave cause to fear as to my condition in the sight of God. But if I do, let me be full of praise to God for this great mercy—that I have a share in this Divine Deliverance—‘As for these also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.’”

Do all of you, dear Friends, know anything about the pit wherein is no water? Were you ever conscious of being in it? Regarding it as a state of spiritual distress, do you understand what it means to be in such a comfortless condition? It was a common custom, in the past, to put prisoners into deep pits which had been dug in the earth. The sides were usually steep and perpendicular—and the prisoner who was dropped down into such a pit must remain there without any hope of escape. According to our text, there was no water there and, apparently, no food of any kind. The objective of the captors was to leave the prisoner there to be forgotten as a dead man out of mind. Have you ever, in your experience, realized anything like that?

There was a time, with some of us, when we suddenly woke up to find that all our fancied goodness had vanished, that all our hopes had perished and that we, ourselves, were in the comfortless condition of men in a pit without even a single drop of water to mitigate our burning thirst! Well do I remember that period in my own history, when I looked upon my past life which I had thought was proper enough, and saw it to be all stained and spoiled by sin! I could get no comfort from the recollection of my past attention to religious exercises. I had been very diligent, indeed, in attending the means of Grace and also in private devotion, but these cups of water had all became empty. I could not find one single drop in them that could cheer me, for I discovered that as my heart was not right with God, all my prayers had been quite unavailing! And that when I had gone up to the House of God, since my heart was not in the services, God had not accepted me, but had said to me, “Who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts?” I tried what good resolutions would do, but I gained no comfort from them, for I failed to keep them! I tried what attempts at improving myself in various ways would lead to, but, alas, the more I strived to make myself better, the more I discovered some fresh evil within my heart which I had not previously seen, so that I could say

with the poet— *“The more I strived against its power,  
I sinned and stumbled but the more.”*

If I sought after water in my comfortless condition, I only found myself to be more intensely eaten up with thirst! Do you know what all this means? You need to know it, for this is the condition into which God usually brings His children before He reveals Himself to them!

The condition of being shut up in a pit wherein is no water is not only comfortless, but it is also hopeless. How can such a prisoner escape? He looks up out of the pit and sees, far above him, a little circle of light, but he knows that it is impossible for him to climb up there. Perhaps he attempts it, but, if so, he falls back and injures himself—and there must he lie, out of sight and out of hearing, at the bottom of that deep pit—with none to help him and quite unable to help himself. Such is the condition into which an awakened conscience brings a man. He sees himself to be lost through his sin and he discovers that the Law of God is so intensely severe—though not unduly so—and the Justice of God is so stern, though not too stern—that he cannot possibly hope for any help from them in his efforts to escape out of the pit in which he lies fallen as a helpless, hopeless prisoner!

Nor is that all. A man in such a pit as that is not only comfortless and hopeless, but he is also in a fatal condition. Without water, at the bottom of a deep pit, he must die. Sooner or later—and he almost wishes it might be sooner—he must expire. Life itself becomes a burden to him! I have known a soul—I say not that it is so with all to the same degree— but I have known a soul feel within itself as if the pangs of Hell had already begun! It feels itself so utterly condemned, even by its own judgment, and so certain to be condemned by the righteous judgment of God, that it writes itself down as already among the condemned and gives itself up as completely lost! Many of God’s children have known this experience to the fullest possible extent—and all of them have been, in some measure, brought into the pit wherein is no water!

But concerning those who have believed in Jesus, our text is true, and God can say, “I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”

Are you out of the pit, my Brother or Sister? Then it is certain that you came out of it, not by your own energy and strength, but because the Lord delivered you! Divine Power and nothing but Divine Power can deliver a poor law-condemned conscience from the bondage under which it groans! Let a man once know his real state by nature, as he is in the sight of God—let him see how the curse of death is written upon all his efforts and hopes, and then let him come out into light and liberty, and he will say, “The Lord has done it all! The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad!”

There is this further comfort that if He has set us free, we are free indeed. It is only God who can deliver a conscience in bondage—and when it is delivered by Him, it need not be afraid of being dragged back to prison anymore. If a criminal breaks out of his cell and is found at any time by the officers of the law, he may be arrested and taken back to prison. But if the sovereign of the realm has set him free, he is not afraid of all the policemen in the world! He walks about the streets as a man who has a right to his liberty because of the authority which has granted it to him. Now, Believer, God has brought you up out of all your trouble because of your sin. He has delivered you from all sense of guilt concerning it and as He has done it, you are not afraid that it has been done unjustly and you are, therefore, not afraid that you will be re-committed to prison and be once more held “in durance vile.” The Lord has delivered you, so you are delivered forever! Who can curse those whom God has blessed? Who can condemn those whom God has justified? Who can again enchain the soul that God, Himself, has set free?

But how has He done this great work? This is one of the principal clauses of our text—“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” The people of God are set free from their bondage by the blood of the Covenant! The blood of Jesus Christ has sealed, ratified and fulfilled the Covenant of Grace to all who believe in Him. It was on this wise—we had sinned and we were, therefore, put into the pit of condemnation. In order to our release, Jesus came forward and put Himself into our place—became our Substitute and promised that He would pay blood for blood for all that was due from us to God. Glory be to His holy name, He paid it all! In the bloody sweat of Gethsemane—in His bleeding hands and feet and side— in the agony of His soul even unto death—He paid all that was due on account of His people’s sins and now, the debt being discharged, the prisoners are set free! “By the blood of your covenant,” said God, who has a right to say it, “I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”

Beloved Friends, I trust that you will never be weary of listening to the Doctrine of Substitution! If you ever are, it will be all the more necessary that you keep on hearing it until you cease to be weary of it. That Doctrine is the very core and essence of the Gospel. To attempt to cloud it, or to keep it in the background is, I am persuaded, the reason why so many ministries are not blessed to the conversion of souls and give no comfort to those who are in distress of heart on account of sin. Let this stand, once and for all, as our declaration of what the Gospel teaches, that God “has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” “With His stripes we are healed.” They laid upon His back many cruel stripes which we deserved to receive and into His heart they thrust the sword which otherwise must have been thrust into our heart. If any man is freed from a guilty conscience and from the dread of Hell by any means apart from the blood of Jesus Christ, I pity him from my very soul. He had better go back to his prison, again, and never come out of it until this key is used to unlock the door—the substitutionary Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ! In the last dread hour of death, when conscience looks at sin as it really is and no longer is blinded, nothing can bring it peace but the blood of the Lamb! Nothing can give the soul repose, when it is about to meet its God, except the knowledge that Christ was made a curse for us that we might be blessed in Him.

No prisoners are set free except by the blood of Jesus and, Beloved, as the blood of the Covenant is Godward—the means of our coming out of the pit wherein is no water—so it is the knowledge of Christ as suffering in our place that sets the captive free. Are any of you in great heaviness because of your sin? Are you obliged to confess that your lives have been such that you could always weep over them? Is your sleep often disturbed at night by reason of the conviction that your years have been spent in vanity and transgression? Are you asking for mercy? Are you seeking rest? My dear Friend, there is no Doctrine that will ever give you true rest except the Doctrine of the Cross of Jesus Christ! Listen to it whenever you can. Seek out those preachers who preach most about the precious blood of Jesus. Read most those books which tell of Jesus as the great Atonement for human guilt. Study diligently the writings of the four Evangelists and, especially, those parts of the narrative which describe the death and Resurrection of our dear Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Sit down at the foot of the Cross in contemplation and never move away from it till from the Cross the Light of God comes streaming into your darkened spirit, so that you will be able to say, “I see it now! The Son of God suffered that I might not suffer! He was made the Victim that I might go free! Justice was magnified in Him that mercy might be magnified in me!” You will never be delivered in any other way.

I hope I am not addressing any who will remain for a long time in the pit wherein is no water. I did so myself, but I blame myself, now, for having done so. I must also somewhat blame the preachers whom I heard because they did not make plainer to me the Truth of God that all that was needed was already done and that I had only to accept it as having been done for me. Liberty was provided for me—I had but to trust in Jesus and I would at once be free. Dear Heart, if you are lying in Giant Despair’s castle, if you have been beaten with his crab tree club till every bone in your body is sore and your heart is ready to break, this is the key which will open every lock in Doubting Castle if you can but use it—“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”—even we guilty sinners who have so much sin to be cleansed from! Believing in this Truth, trusting in Jesus, we are “accepted in the Beloved.” How gloriously God has brought some of us forth! We are not now in the pit wherein is no water. We are forever set at liberty and our heart leaps at the very sound of Jesus’ name! Now is our peace like a river and our soul is exceedingly glad because of the loving kindness of the Lord.

II. I shall not be able to dwell long upon the second head of my discourse, which is A DIVINE INVITATION GIVEN.  
Those who were prisoners in the pit wherein is no water were prisoners without hope, yet God has set them free. But sometimes they get into prison, again—they ought not to do so, but they do. Even after Giant Despair is slain, the pilgrims’ troubles are not all over and, sometimes, saved men and women get into a despondent state. Then comes this gracious invitation, “Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” Do you catch the thought that is intended to be conveyed by these words? You have been taken out of the pit and there, close beside you, is the Castle of Refuge. So, the moment you are drawn up out of the pit, run to the castle for shelter. The parallel to this experience is to be found in the 40th Psalm where David says that the Lord had brought him up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set his feet upon a rock and established his goings. And now that you are delivered from your prison pit, you are to go and dwell in the fortress, the high tower which the Lord has so graciously prepared for you!  
The promises of God in Christ Jesus are the stronghold to which all believing men ought to turn in every time of trouble! And Jesus Christ, Himself, is still more their Stronghold in every hour of need. Sheltered in

Him, you are, indeed, surrounded with protecting walls and bulwarks, for who is he that can successfully assail the man who is shielded and guarded by the great atoning Sacrifice of Christ? Yet you will often feel as if you were still in danger. When you feel so, turn directly to the Stronghold. Do you doubt whether you are saved? Then run to Christ at once and so destroy the doubt! Do you mourn your slackness in prayer and does the devil tell you that you cannot be a Christian, or you would not feel as you do? Then run to Christ! Has there been, during this day, some slip in language, or has there even been some sin in overt act? Then run to Christ—turn to the Stronghold! Does darkness veil your Lord’s face from you? Do you see no bright promise gleaming out of the gloom? Does God, Himself, seem as if He had ceased to be gracious unto you and to have shut up the heart of His compassion towards you? Then run to Jesus—turn you to the Stronghold! Never try to fight your own battle with Satan, but run to Christ at once! Be willing to be called a coward rather than attempt to stand in your own strength! Let this be the proof of your bravery, that you flee to Christ, your Stronghold. “The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.” You do not call the conies cowardly because they run among the rocks to find shelter. They know where their stronghold lies and they resort to it in all times of danger.

So, again I say to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, never try to combat sin and Satan by yourselves, but always flee away to Christ! Inside that Stronghold, the most powerful guns of the enemy will not be able to injure you. But if you leave the shelter of your Master’s protecting Atonement and come out into the plain to contend against your adversary in your own strength, you will be in imminent peril of being destroyed! Therefore, in the words of my text, I say to you, “Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.”

I must not enlarge upon this point, but I do want all my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and especially all who are coming to the Communion Table, to go afresh to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. You were delivered from the pit years ago. You know that you were, though, perhaps, you have a little question about it at times. But at the present moment you are very dull and heavy—possibly the weather has helped to make you feel like that. It is very unsafe to judge our state by our feelings— they are poor, uncertain tests at the best—and they may greatly mislead us if we trust to them. Let us, rather, go all together to the Cross whereon our Lord did hang and let us still go on with Him as we began at the first. Let each one of us cry unto Him, with Dr. Watts—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Your kind arms I fall!  
Be You my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my All.”*  
Come along, my Brother, you have been a child of God for 50 years, but still keep on coming to Jesus, even as Peter writes, “To whom coming”—perpetually coming—“as unto a living stone, disallowed, indeed, of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” You know how Dr. Guthrie, when he was dying, wanted those around him to sing to him “one of the babies’ hymns,” for he wanted to have the babies’ faith, that is, a childlike faith, implicitly trusting in Him. They who have gone the furthest in the Divine Life yet do well to walk in Christ just as they received Him at the first. This is my own desire—I, nothing—Christ everything! I, guilty, Christ my righteousness in whom my sin is all blotted out! I in myself condemned, but in Christ absolved and accepted! Come along, all of you who have met with little but failure! You who are at your best and you who are at your worst—you who are rejoicing and you who are sorrowing—you who are strong, and you who are weak! All together, let us come to the fountain filled with blood and let us again prove that it still cleanses us from all sin!  
III. Our last words are to be concerning THE DIVINE PROMISE with which our text ends—“Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” I want you to plead this promise in prayer. If you do so and God fulfils it in your experience, you will then understand it better than you could with any explanation of mine.  
First, if you who have been delivered from the pit wherein is no water, continually turn to Christ, you shall have twice as much joy as ever you had sorrow. The grief that we had before we found Christ was a very mountain of sorrow, but how has it been with you since you came to Jesus? Speak for yourselves, Brothers and Sisters! Let your own hearts say how it has been with you. Have you not, after all, had twice as much joy as you have had sorrow? I know that it has been so with me—my heart was full, almost to bursting, when it was full of sorrow—but when I found Christ, it seemed to be not only full of joy, but to be plunged into an ocean of bliss! Oh, the unspeakable delight of the soul that has found peace in Jesus after having been long in bondage to sin and Satan! I think I have told you before that I heard Dr. Alexander Fletcher once say when he was preaching that, on one occasion, passing down the Old Bailey, he saw two boys, or young men, jumping, and leaping, and standing on their heads and going through all sort of antics on the pavement. He said to them, “Whatever are you doing?” But they only clapped their hands and danced more joyously than before. So he said, “Boys, what has happened to you that you are so happy?” Then one of them replied, “If you had been locked up for three months inside that prison, you would jump for joy when you came out.” “A very natural expression,” said the good old man, and bade them jump away as long as they liked! Yes, and when a soul has once been delivered from the pit wherein is no water, it has a foretaste of the joy of Heaven! The possession of Christ is, indeed, not only double bliss, for all its sin, but much more than double! I have known saved souls, when newly converted, act so that their neighbors have thought that they were out of their minds and have said, “What ails them?” Their mouths have been filled with laughter and their tongue with singing, and they have said, “The Lord has done great things for us, for which we are glad.” And, poor sin-sick Heart, if you can believe in Jesus, He will give you double joy for all the sorrow that you have been feeling for these last weeks, or months, or even years! “Ah,” you say, “if He would do that, it would be, indeed, joyous for me.” And joyous it shall be!  
More than that, God gives His servants the double of all that they expect. When we come to our Lord, it is as it was when the queen of Sheba came to Solomon. She said that the half had not been told her and if you raise your expectations to the highest point that you can reach, you who come to Christ will find them far exceeded in the blessed realization! He is, indeed, a precious Christ to all who believe in Him—but He is a hundred times more precious than you can ever imagine! You think that it must be a delightful thing to be saved and so it is, but it is ten thousand times more delightful than you suppose! You have read the Scriptures and have prized the blessings of Grace of which you have read there—but you have not prized them at anything like their proper value! There shall be double rendered unto you who are the people of God who have known the most of Divine Love and have for years sat at your Master’s feet. As yet you know not the half of what He will reveal to you in His own time and way! Only have patience and keep your souls upon Him while pressing forward in the heavenly race. The land has been full of silver mercy, but it shall yet be full of golden mercy! You have gone through green pastures and by still waters, but there are fatter pastures and deeper streams on ahead! The fullness of joy is not yet revealed to you—press on and you shall discover it and delight in it!  
Oh, what double joy shall come to us when we reach the land Beulah and when we come to the brink of the river that has no bridge across it, where the angels are hovering and waiting to welcome the spirits of the redeemed! When you dip your feet in Jordan’s chilly flood, you shall begin to hear the sonnets of the immortals! Your spirit shall be already, while yet it lingers there, partaking in the bliss that is yet to be revealed and then, when you have crossed that narrow stream, and the last sigh is over, how great will be the double that God shall render unto you! I cannot tell you much about it, but in that land you shall need no candle, neither light of the sun—the Lamb shall be the light, for the Lord God shall give you light and you shall reign with Him forever and ever! What a contrast between where we began and where we are to leave off—the pit without water and the bliss without alloy! What is the bridge that spans the great gulf between them and carries us over into the Glory Lands? It is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ! It the blood of the Everlasting Covenant! So believe in it, trust your souls NOW on Jesus and then rest assured that we will meet on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the hereafter where the Lord shall manifest Himself unto us and fill us with ineffable delight forever and ever! God grant it, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 103.**

Verses 1, 2. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Three times the Psalmist says, “Bless, bless, bless.” Come, my Heart, wake up, awake every faculty, but especially my memory—“Forget not all His benefits.” Here is a list of some of them—as we read each one, let our hearts say, “Bless the Lord for that.”

3. Who forgives all your iniquities. Hallelujah, bless the Lord for that! He who has felt the weight of his sin will leap for joy at the thought of the forgiveness of all his iniquities.

3. Who heals all your diseases. He has restored some of us from the bed of sickness and extreme pain and He is even now healing our spiritual diseases. Sometimes it may be that He gives the bitter medicine, but it is thus that “He heals all your diseases.” The process of sanctification is a healing process to the soul, so bless the Lord for it.

4. Who redeems your life from destruction. Can you ever praise God enough for your redemption from a doom so great as to be the destruction of every hope and of everything worth having? “Who redeems your life from destruction.”

4. Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. There is about your head, even now, a halo of love, invisible to all but the eyes of Grace and gratitude—a bright, shining crown of loving kindness and tender mercies. Have I not often told you that kindness is the gold of the crown, but that loving kindness is the velvet to line the crown to make it sit softly on the brow? Mercies—these are the jewels, but the tenderness of the mercies is the ermine that makes the crown such that it cannot truly be said, “Uneasy lies the head that wears this crown.” No, but happy, happy, happy are all they who are thus crowned! Bless the Lord if you are among them.

5. Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. There is an inward satisfaction that God gives to His people. They are not satisfied with themselves, but they are satisfied from themselves, from that “well of water” which springs up within them “unto life eternal.” What a mercy it is to be so satisfied as to get young again, to feel your spiritual youth coming back to you—to be young in heart even if you are old in body. “Your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Let me again pause here and say, “Let us bless the Lord for this.” Do not let one of these mercies be passed over as if they made up a dry and uninteresting list like the lots in an auctioneer’s catalog, but let us bedew every one of these lines with a tear of heartfelt thankfulness!

6. The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. Bless His name for this. In every age He has broken the oppressor’s rod. For a while, His people may be made to smart, but, by-and-by, He hears their cries and He avenges their wrongs.

7. He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel. Bless Him for this. He does not hide Himself from His people, so that they do not know “His ways” and “His acts.” Revelation is a constant source of thanksgiving to those who understand it through the teaching of the Spirit who inspired it. God might never have spoken to us, or we might not have lived in a world wherein God had deigned to reveal His will. But that is not the case—“He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.”

8. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Surely, dear Friends, we can all bless God for this Truth, for, if He had been quick to be angry, where would we have been? If His mercy has been scanty, we should long ago have been destroyed, but He is “slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.”

9. He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever. Are you, just now, hearing the stern voice of His chiding? Does His anger, like a black cloud, seem to rest upon you and hide His reconciled face from you? Then, bless the Lord that “He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever” against His own chosen ones!

10. He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Bless the Lord for that. Sweep your hand over the harp strings so as to fetch the sweetest music from them. How true it is of me and of you, “He has not dealt with us after our sins!”

11. For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. Immeasurable mercy, illimitable Grace, blessed be His holy name!

12. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Here again I cannot tell how much we ought to bless Him. It is not merely pardon of a temporary character that is given to us, but our sin is carried right away into a land of forgetfulness, so that it will never come back again to us. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies.”

13. Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear Him. Let us praise Him for His tender pity over our weakness, His forbearance with our infirmity and waywardness.

14. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. Some people do not remember that—they try to work us as if we were made of iron. But the Lord is full of pity. He knows that we are nothing but a mass of animated dust which the wind can soon carry away.

15, 16. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. In a very little time, unless Christ should first come in His Glory, this is what will happen to all of us. A breath of fever-bearing wind, or some other disease borne on the wings of the wind will sweep over us and the strongest of us will wither in an hour.

17. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him. Oh, bless Him for that! He does not die! He does not change! He does not fail any who trust Him!

17, 18. And His righteousness unto children’s children: to such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them. Let us bless God for His love to our sons and our daughters. Some of us have great joy in our children. I pray that all of you may have the same joy—that you may see that the Lord, who is your God, is also the God of your descendants, as the God of Abraham was the God of Isaac, and of Jacob, and of Joseph, and of Ephraim and Manasseh, from generation to generation. Grace does not run in the blood, but it often runs side by side with it. It is often the way with God, when He has blessed the father, to bless the son for the father’s sake. So you who are yourselves Believers may pray with great confidence for your sons and daughters. Bless the Lord for this!

19. The LORD has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom rules over all. For this, also, we bless Him. If there was any part of the world that He did not rule over. If there were any circumstances which He could not control. If there were any events which happened without His permission. If He were not King everywhere, this would be an intolerable world to live in! But now we bless Him because “His Kingdom rules over all.”

20. Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. David calls in the angels to help him to praise the Lord—he wants to do it well, but feels that he is weak and feeble, so he calls in the best of help. We also sing—

*“Angels, assist our mighty joys,  
Strike all your harps of gold!  
But when you raise your highest notes,  
His love can ne’er be told.”*

21. Bless you the LORD, all you His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure. All who wait upon Him, whether angels or men, or the lower creatures, are called upon to glorify His great name—and they do!

22. Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul. Do you notice that there is not a single petition in the whole of this Psalm? It is all praise! And herein it is like Heaven, where they cease to pray, but where they praise God without ceasing! We cannot rise to that height here, but let us both praise and pray when we can.

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PRISONERS DELIVERED  
NO. 2883

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON, LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 2, 1876.

**“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” Zechariah 9:11, 12.**

THIS text primarily relates to Israel—to the Jews—and there can be no doubt whatever that there are great blessings in store for God’s ancient people. Although blindness in part has happened unto Israel, yet, in due time, we know from the Word of God that the seed of Abraham will recognize our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah. When that happy day comes, the Lord will give to the whole world times of amazing blessing. The fullness of the Gentiles also will then be experienced. Then, too, shall come the latter-day glory of Jerusalem and all nations shall rejoice with her.

You notice that the text begins with the words, “As for you also,” which might be translated so as to run parallel with that pathetic exclamation of our Savior when He wept over Jerusalem and said, “If you had known, even you, at least in this, your day, the things which belong unto your peace: but now they are hid from your eyes.” The Hebrew of our text might be rendered, “As for you, even you,” and the meaning of the expression is, “There is some very special blessing for you, O Jerusalem! It is not for the heathen, but, as for you, O Zion—you seed of Abraham according to the flesh—there is something special in store for you.” I think we ought to pray for the Jews more often than we do, and to look more hopefully upon the Jews than we usually do—and not to speak of them as an unbelieving race. The fact is, they have been, in some respects, too believing, for they have blindly clung to the old faith of their fathers instead of going on to know the Lord Jesus Christ. When they do accept Him, that firm adherence which they have shown to the traditions of their sires will make them grandly strong in faith in the only true Messiah. I suppose, however, that we have no Jews with us here, so it is no use, just now, for me to address them. But I may use the text as a message to ourselves. While I do so, may the Holy Spirit bless it to us all! When we read in the Scriptures concerning Israel, we may fairly translate it to mean, spiritually, the Church of God, for, as all who believe are the children of believing Abraham, so all who have been born-again, by the power of the Holy Spirit, belong to the chosen Seed and may be rightly called, “Israel.” In this spiritual sense, how sweetly has our text been fulfilled in the experience of many of us who are the true Israel of God, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Sarah acknowledge us not!

What a wonderful history “the Church of the living God” has had! She has been, so Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” I have sometimes seen, in Scotland, what they call vitrified forts which have, evidently, passed through the fire to such an extent that the whole of the wall has become vitrified into one firmly united mass—and the Church of God seems to me to have been like those vitrified forts, for the fire has been concentrated upon her seven times hotter than anywhere else. Yet to this day the Church of Christ still firmly stands! The Truth of God is still to the front and the name of Jesus is still—

*“High over all,  
In Hell, or earth, or sky  
Angels and men before it fall—  
And devils fear and fly.”*

So shall it be even to the end!

The 48th Psalm reminds us of the glory of the ancient “city of the great King,” and of the terror that fell upon her adversaries—“For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled and hastened away. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.” So shall it be with the present race of skeptics and rejecters of Christ! Hundreds of generations of skeptics have come and gone like the sere leaves of autumn. They were fresh and green for a little while and then they professed to be a shade to the Church with their philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world—but not after Christ. And before long they withered, fell and rotted into the soil from which they sprang. Yet still the Truth of God abides and “the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,” still stands fast, awaiting the grand consummation when the topstone shall be placed upon the glorious temple amid shouts of “Grace, Grace unto it.”

Looking into this passage, we notice, first, that there are some prisoners mentioned and they are said to be in a terrible plight. Then, in the second place, there is an emancipation spoken of and the cause of that emancipation is mentioned.

I. First, THERE ARE SOME PRISONERS MENTIONED AND THEY ARE SAID TO BE IN A TERRIBLE PLIGHT. We need not look long to find those prisoners, for some of them are here in our midst—and there are others here who were once imprisoned thus—but they have been set free.

These prisoners are said to be in a pit. It was a common custom and still is, in the East, not to go to the expense of building prisons, but to make use of dry wells—and the authorities were not always very particular in seeing that they were dry. They just let the prisoner down by a rope, which they pulled up, leaving him in what was, usually, a very secure prison, indeed. No trouble was taken to fit up a proper cell. No money was expended upon ventilation, or anything of the kind. The pit was usually deep and dark—and a great stone was rolled over the mouth of it—and there the prisoner was left, in solitary confinement, often to die of hunger and thirst. If anyone thought or cared to bring him bread and water, it was well for him, but, in many cases, the prisoners were forgotten and nobody ever heard of them anymore. In fact, they were buried alive—and that was, spiritually, our condition when we were in the pit where there is no water.

I look back, 20 years or so, ago, and see myself, as I then was, in that horrible pit—consciously in that pit. We were all there by nature, but we did not know it. But, at the time I am recalling, I did know it. The Lord had opened my eyes and led me to see that I was in a deep, waterless pit by reason of the original sin in the fall of Adam. I saw that I was cast down into a deep pit from which I could not get out by my own exertions—with a nature averse to everything that was good—with a will that was strong for evil, but impotent for good—with a judgment that was out of gear—a taste that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—a heart that had turned aside unto idols—with everything about me as wrong as wrong could be! I distinctly remember that I did not trouble so much about the original sin through the Fall as I did about my own actual sins and transgressions. Oh, those dreadful walls of guilt that rose up all around me! Dense was the darkness in which I was enveloped and the few gleams of light that ever pierced that darkness only made me see more clearly the huge black walls of my old sins—my youthful sins, not forgotten to this day, but remembered with deep regret—sins of thought, sins of imagination, sins of word, such sins as I was capable of committing at that period of my life. Well do I remember that pit of actual sin. Perhaps some of you are in it at this moment. It is a horrible pit for anyone to be in and it is peculiarly so to some men. If a man has lived for many years in sin, but only in his later life—perhaps when verging on old age—has begun to get enough of the Light of God to show him what he really is in God’s sight, it is an awful thing for him to wake up and find himself in the pit of condemnation as the result of both original and actual sin!

There was a man, once, who lay asleep and, as he slept, he dreamt that he was in a gorgeous palace with marble halls and gold and gems in the utmost profusion. But, as a matter of fact, he was all the while asleep in a loathsome hole where everything was polluted and foul. When he awoke, the gilded walls had all gone and the marble halls had all vanished—and, realizing where he was, the fleeting pleasure of his dream was changed to the abiding misery of the actual facts of his sorrowful experience! Possibly I am addressing some who have just awakened out of their life’s dream and have discovered where they are—where they are by nature and where they are by practice, too—down, down, down in a deep pit where there is no water! For, be it known to you that whenever a man finds himself lost by nature, and by practice, too, he very soon finds that he is also lost by the just condemnation of God—for the thrice-holy Jehovah cannot look upon a polluted heart without abhorrence! It is not possible for Him to see sin without being angry. Some people, in these degenerate days, have invented for themselves a god who equally loves all men whatever their characters may be—who looks upon loathsome imaginations and filthy thoughts with an altogether indifferent eye—and still goes on to bless, let men do what they may. But such a god as that is not the God revealed to us in this old-fashioned Book! Nor is he my father’s God, nor mine, nor yours! Indeed, he is like the idols that are no gods at all! No, where there is sin, justice demands that there should be condemnation—and it also requires that there should be punishment as well. So this is the dreadful thing about our condition by nature—that when we were held in the bonds of sin, we were also condemned and lay in the condemned cell, only awaiting the hour of execution. That was our condition, spiritually—like prisoners in a pit.

We are also told, in our text, there was no water. Now, generally, in a pit, you do find some water—it drops from the clouds, if it comes from nowhere else. When Jeremiah was let down, with cords, into the dungeon of Malchiah, we read that, “in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sank in the mire.” It is only natural that in deep holes sunk in the earth, the water should stand in a pool at the bottom. But this pit, of which our text speaks, has all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of an ordinary pit. It is called, as though with an emphasis, “the pit where there is no water”—and there are some ungodly men who are in just such a pit as that. There are others who are up to their armpits in water—very muddy stuff it is—I should not like to drink it, yet they seem able to quench their thirst with it. They are the men who take pleasure in sin and enjoy iniquity!

But Brothers and Sisters, when God means to save a man, He makes him realize that he is in a pit in which there is no water. When a man has reached that point, all “the pleasures of sin” have vanished. He finds that he cannot any longer be pleased with that which once used to afford him great delight. Some of you know what this strange experience means—that the very things you used to crave have become most loathsome to you. Your soul lusted after them and you said, in your youth, “If I could only have these things, I would be the happiest mortal on the earth.” Well, you have had your fill of them and you do not want any more! You are sick of them, as one may eat honey till he loathes the very sight of it. I have heard of a poor flower girl in the streets of London who used to sell violets all day long, taking home at night those she had left. Having them always about her, she said that she hated the smell of violets—and God can make men hate the smell of their sweetest sins and flee from them with disgust! He can turn their sweet wine into the most sour vinegar so that they will be as glad to get away from it as they once were fond of running to it!

When a soul is in this condition, in the pit where there is no water, it often happens that even the lawful comforts of earth lose their usual comforting force. Well do I recollect the time when I was in this waterless pit. It mattered very little to me what I ate or drank. It made but a slight difference to me whether it was day or night, for, by day I dreaded the wrath of God. And if I fell asleep at night, I dreamt of it and wondered, when I awoke, that I was not already in Hell. Even those youthful games and those lawful amusements into which, as a lad, I entered, lost all charm for me. If you have read John Bunyan’s “Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,” you know that at the time when he was under conviction of sin, nothing comforted him at all. There seemed to him to be no brightness in the sky, no flowers on the earth, and no melody in the sweetest songs of the birds. Well, if it is so with any of you, dear Friends—if you are in a pit where there is no water—none whatever—I hope my text applies to you and that you belong to the special class of prisoners to whom the Lord thus speaks—“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit.”

The Lord is speaking of those who secretly belong to the Covenant race of Israel, His own chosen and redeemed ones. Though you know it not as yet, your name is recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Though His love has not, as yet, been fully made known to you, He has ordained you unto everlasting life and, therefore, though you are at present in the pit, you cannot die there and you cannot always lie there. Though you are at present without water, you shall never perish of thirst. You may be brought to dire distress, but you shall then prove that man’s extremity is God’s opportunity. As the Lord lives, who chose you by His Grace long before He made the heavens and the earth, He will bring you, as His prisoners, out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, set your feet upon a rock and establish your goings!

That is the first thing mentioned in the text—prisoners in a very terrible plight.  
II. Secondly, THE TEXT SPEAKS ABOUT EMANCIPATION. AND THE CAUSE OF THAT EMANCIPATION IS MENTIONED—“By the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit.”  
Delivered from that horrible pit! How did they get out? The text tells us that God sent them out of it. Oh, that awful pit of natural depravity—that dreadful pit of actual sin—that fearful pit of just damnation! Nobody ever yet came out of that pit except by Divine Power—nor need anybody ever wish to escape by his own power, for if he did so escape, he might be dragged back again into the dungeon. If a prisoner is released by the king himself, who will dare to re-arrest him? If the Lord, Himself, delivers us, where is the power that can put us back into the pit? It is Jehovah who says, “I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit where there is no water.” Some of us recollect the time when the Lord did thus send us forth. None but He could have done it, but He did it—and did it thoroughly! He snapped every fetter that was upon us, lifted us right up out of the abyss and fully and forever emancipated us—all glory to His everblessed name!  
Then our text tells us how God did it—“By the blood of your covenant.” Oh, what a grand way of deliverance this is! Do you know what this expression, “by the blood of your covenant,” means? There was a Covenant between God and His chosen people, made of old, before the day star had first cast his bright beams into the darkness. To make that Covenant sure, God’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son had agreed with His Father that He would ratify it with His own blood. And, in due time, He came to this earth and fulfilled that Covenant by offering up Himself as the God-appointed Victim in the place of guilty men. Now, Brothers and Sisters, it is by that blood of the Everlasting Covenant, offered in our place, that we were set free from the bondage of sin! I heard, the other day, that some wise man had said that if a preacher wanted to be popular—by which I suppose he meant to draw many to hear the Gospel—He must preach blood, and fire, and smoke! I do not know what the smoke has to do with it but I do know that there is nothing that has such power as the precious blood of Christ which cleanses from all sin, and that, next to the blood of Jesus, there is nothing that has such power as the blessed fire which comes down from Heaven, touches the preacher’s lips and makes him speak with fervor and enthusiasm of that precious blood!  
There is no man, either living or dead, who was ever sent forth out of the pit of soul-despair except by the blood of the covenant. I can assure you of one thing—the man who can do without the atoning Sacrifice of Christ has never known what true conviction of sin is. Men and women who received their “religion” by natural descent, or who jumped into it in the excitement of a revival meeting, may, perhaps, be content to do without the blood, but, if the Lord has put you into the pit where there is no water and brought you up out of it, you know that there was no deliverance for you until God, in human flesh, made Atonement for your sin by His blood. And, to this hour, if ever you are disturbed and doubtful concerning your true position in God’s sight, you always come back to the blood of the Everlasting Covenant offered upon Calvary’s Cross! And you sing—  
*“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood  
Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Is saved to sin no more.”*  
If, Sirs, you take away the atoning Sacrifice, you make that blessed Book to be a mere husk from which the kernel has been withdrawn. If you take away expiation by the precious blood of Jesus, you tear away the sinner’s only ground of hope! Indeed, his only hope—and you leave us, of all men, most miserable. I know that when I understood that Jesus Christ bore, in my place, all that I deserved to bear of the wrath of God— and that His death had made the Law of God honorable, so that the Lord Jehovah could pardon me without doing an injustice to the rest of mankind and without suffering the honor and glory of His righteous rule to be tarnished—I grasped it at once. It seemed to me to be far better than the balm of Gilead to my wounds when the great Physician laid His pierced hand upon me and the blood of His Covenant cleansed me from all guilt. And I pray that many others here may have the same experience. Of one thing I am sure—if you really grasp this Truth of God, you will never let it go—you never can let it go! This precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, will be to you, your hope, your rest, your joy, the seal of your Covenant with God and the cause of your walking at liberty forever, for if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed!  
I should like to have said more upon this blessed theme, but time fails me, so I must only say, in passing—“Let every Christian remember that if once he knows the power of the blood of Jesus, there is a Covenant existing between him and his God, and he can say with David, “He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” Believer, between your soul and the Maker of Heaven and earth there is a compact which can never be broken! Though earth’s huge pillars bow and break, this Covenant stands forever sure. You being in Christ and Christ being in you, you shall be saved, world without end, for God has declared it and His truth stands fast forever!  
III. Thirdly, our text contains A RECOMMENDATION TO THOSE WHO ONCE WERE PRISONERS—“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” I thought, dear Friends, that you were pulled up out of the pit— have you been made prisoners again? If it is so, it is very sad, but you can never be imprisoned as you were before. Perhaps you have not been living as carefully as you ought. Or, for some other reason your faith has become weak and so you have fallen into the pit again. But you are not now in prison as you were before, for now you believe you will get out again. No, better than that, you are sure that you will. Albeit that sometimes Giant Despair tells you that you will die in the dungeons of Doubting Castle, you know that you have a key called, “Promise,” in your bosom—and though you have not used it as you should have done, you have the firm conviction that it will open any lock that old tyrant has made—and you hope, some day, to employ it to such good purpose that you will again be free! But, Sirs, you had no business to get into that pit again. When the Lord once set you free, you should have taken good care not to go back again into bondage.  
It is a great mercy that you can never go back to such bondage as you once experienced. You are prisoners, it is true, but you are “prisoners of hope.” Therefore, take the good advice of the text—“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” That same Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His precious blood, once set you free, is still a refuge from every storm and every enemy. And if you are wise, you will cry to Him to deliver you this very hour! I address myself to every Brother and every Sister in Christ who has, in any sense, and to any degree, become a prisoner again. My dear Friend, the Lord delivered you, years ago, did He not? Do you not recollect, with intense gratitude, what He did for you then? Well, He can deliver you again at this very moment! You remember how joyfully you sang—  
Well, He can do the same thing, again, and do it now. Go to Him at once! You do not need a better Deliverer than the Lord who is “mighty to save,” do you? And as He was able to deliver you when you were so far gone as you used to be, He can surely deliver you now. You say that you are so foolish and so insensible that you cannot make yourself enjoy the means of Grace as you once did. It seems to you that as you get older you get more insensible. Well, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are not spiritually dead, are you? And yet, when you were really dead in trespasses and sins, Christ quickened you! Then, surely He can bring you out of this state of torpor and restore you from this strange swoon into which your soul has fallen. Return to Jesus now, just as you came to Him at the first! If you cannot come to Him as a saint, come as a sinner!  
Oh, the many hundreds of times that I have done that! And I expect to do it many more times before I get to Heaven. “What?” someone asks, “do you have to do that Mr. Spurgeon?” Oh, yes, that I do! The devil says to me, sometimes, “you are no child of God.” It is no use to begin arguing with him about that matter! The best way to answer him is to say, “Well, Satan, if I am not a child of God, I soon will be, for I will receive Christ as my Savior and that will make me God’s child.” “Then,” says the devil, “you talk about your faith, but you have no faith to talk about.” “Very well,” I reply, “if I have not any, I soon will have some, for I will begin to believe in Jesus now.” Then he says, “Your Christian experience, as you call it, is all a delusion.” Well, I never argue with him about that, but I say, “Suppose it is a delusion, it is still true that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ and He has promised to save all who trust in Him. So, here and now, I do trust Him and I am saved.” Satan is a very old lawyer. He has been in the profession for many centuries and he knows how to raise all manner of quibbles and difficulties—and he can argue and reason in a very crafty fashion. So your best plan is not to answer him at all, except to say, “I have put my case into the hands of my great Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have anything to say, you must say it to Him.”  
That is my earnest advice and it is the advice of the text, too, to all Christians who have, in any sense, come into bondage again—“Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.” If you do that, you shall soon come once more into light and liberty and joy and peace!  
IV. The last thing in our text is A DOUBLE BLESSING PROMISED— “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” If you turn to Christ, you shall get a double blessing! What does this part of the text mean?  
Well, it means that God has such abundant Grace to give that He will not only give you what you really need, but He will give you twice as much as that! All the flowers in God’s spiritual garden bloom double. There never was any mercy of His which had not many other mercies wrapped up in it. Every one of them contains far more blessing than we thought it did. Now, dear Brother, dear Sister—can you open your mouth wide and ask from God some great thing? If you do so, you shall receive from God twice as much as you asked for! Do you feel a great need within your soul—a need that is truly dreadful? It craves so much that it seems to be like the two daughters of the horseleech, crying, “Give, give!” Well, God will give you so much that you shall have enough to satisfy that craving twice over! Have you had some very great trouble? Then believe in the Lord and you shall have double as much joy! Have you had deep depression of spirit? You shall have double as much of holy exultation and delight! Has the Lord laid His rod very heavily upon you and made you sorely smart? Then He will give you two kisses to every blow! Has He made you drink out of the bitter cup? Then He will bring you a double draught of the spiced wine of the juice of His pomegranate, two cups of that heavenly nectar for every cup of quassia that you have had! He will make you consolations to abound and super-abound far above all your tribulations!  
“Well,” you say, “I am expecting something very great from the Lord.” I am glad of it, but you will receive twice as much! The Queen of Sheba expected a great deal when she went to see Solomon, yet she had to say, “The half was not told me.” So shall you find it with God. I read in the Scriptures that God is Love, but His love to me has been a thousand times better than I ever expected it would be! I thought that when I came to trust under the shadow of His wings, that I should have mercy and Grace and peace—but I never dreamt how much mercy, Grace and peace I would have! And, Brothers and Sisters, I believe it is better than before and that there is something brighter and sweeter than anything I have ever known yet to come! And it shall be the same with you. The Lord will go on to double your blessings and give you yet more and more, according to that blessed text, “Of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace”—Grace upon Grace.  
I especially beg you to notice that this is a present promise—“Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” Then why should you not get some of this double joy this very moment? I know that you said, as you were coming to this service, “I do not think I ought to stay for the Communion—I do not feel fit to go to the Table of the Lord. I seem to be as lifeless as a log. If I go and sit there, it will merely be to eat the bread and to drink the wine, but not to enjoy real fellowship with the Lord.” Ah, my Brother, my Sister, if that is true concerning you, it is to you that the text says, “Return to the stronghold.” Turn to Christ as you did at the first and then it may be that your fellowship with Him will be sweeter than even that which you enjoyed when first you came to His Table! It is the Lord who says, “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” Plead the promise in silent prayer right now—if you do so in faith, I shall be surprised if you do not get a double blessing from the Lord very speedily.  
Finally, note how true the promise is. When God says, “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you,” who among us dares to doubt His declaration? I have sometimes heard people say, when they have needed to be believed, “I declare to you that it is so.” And you know that the law of the land now allows those of us who object to the taking of an oath, to make an affirmation and to say, “I do solemnly declare that such-and-such is the fact.” And, in that fashion, God says, “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” Well, then, take Him at His word and “turn you to the stronghold.” While you are sitting here, trust the Lord to give you the double blessing that He has promised! If you do that, you may, each one, say, as you go home, “‘Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.’ I had no idea, when I went into the House of Prayer, that I could be so changed. I was singing, no, I mean, howling or growling—as I went up the steps— *“‘Dear Lord, and shall I always lie  
At this poor dying rate?  
My love so faint, so cold to You  
And Yours to me so great?’*  
yet, when I came out, I was able to sing, and almost to shout— *“‘If ever I loved You, my Jesus, it is now.’”*  
God grant that this may be the happy experience of many of you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**“He took my feet from the miry clay, And set me upon the King’s Highway”?**  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ZECHARIAH 9.**

Verse 1. The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach. Or Syria.  
1, 2. And Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD. And Hamath also shall border thereby. Tyrus. That is, Tyre.  
2-4. And Zidon, though it is very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver and the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out and He will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Tyre was attacked by Alexander the Great and after withstanding a long siege, was destroyed by him. The strength of the city lay in the fact that it was built right out into the sea and that it was protected by a vast, massive hole. Also, as a great trading center, it possessed enormous wealth and so was able to hire mercenary soldiers. But all its power and its wealth could not preserve it from destruction! And although we read of Tyre in the New Testament, it is now only a place for the drying of the nets of a few poor fishermen, even as Ezekiel foretold that it would be (26:14). When God foretells destruction, it always comes. But, blessed be His holy name, when He promises blessing, that comes just as surely!  
5. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. When Alexander invaded the country, the Philistines expected that he would be hindered by the Tyrians, but, when Tyre fell, the Philistines were easily conquered. That shows you the meaning of the prophecy and how literally it was fulfilled.

6. And a bastard. Or, stranger.  
6, 7. Shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth. That is, the prey that he had caught—“I will snatch it out of his mouth.”  
7. And his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. There is no doubt that after the days of Alexander, many Philistines became proselytes to the faith of the Jews and were absorbed into the Jewish nation, so that an Ekronite became like an Israelite—and this is a symbol of what God is doing all over the world! He takes men who are strangers and foreigners to the citizenship of Zion and puts them among His people, and treats the Ekronite as a Jerusalemite. Blessed be His name for this great act of Sovereign Grace.  
8. And I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passes by, and because of him that returns: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with My eyes. And so it was. Alexander went to Jerusalem, after destroying Tyre, but he did not attack the city. There was a strange restraint resting upon him which prevented him from touching the house of the living God. I need not repeat the well-known story of how he was met by the high priest whom he recognized as the man whom he had seen in a dream, and so, though he smote Tyre and Philistia, he allowed the people of God to go free. But, after that time, something better happened. That great event is marked off by a new paragraph in our Bible—and well it may be.  
9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you. Not Alexander the Great, but, “your King.” “Your King comes unto you.”  
9. He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. What a beautiful and faithful description of our Lord Jesus Christ! We wonder that Israel cannot see the Messiah here. Had this verse been written after the coming of Christ, it could not more accurately have described the blessed Person and Character of our Lord Jesus. His very riding into Jerusalem upon an ass, with her colt trotting by her side, is most plainly foretold here.  
10. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. This is our glorious King—the King whose conquests are not achieved by horses, chariots and battle-bows, but by the more powerful panoply of the Truth of God and love! Blessed are all who dwell beneath the rule of such a King as He is!  
11, 12. As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you. Christ has come to set the prisoners free and to be the stronghold of His people. Therefore turn to Him and all manner of precious blessings shall be yours.

13. For I have bent Judah for Me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man. This is a truly wonderful passage, setting forth how God is going to use His people as the weapons by which He will conquer the world. He will bend Judah and make her into a bow, and take Ephraim, and make her into an arrow—and then he will shoot His strangely-fashioned shaft against His adversaries and ours! What does this mean but that He is going to use those of us who are His own saved ones, that He may conquer the world by us? And what a blessed battle this is! “Your sons O Zion against your sons, O Greece”—the simple Believer against the cultured man of reason without faith—the humble truster in the Lord Jesus Christ against the man who proudly boasts of his own learning and eloquence! How will this battle end? We know which side will win, for “the Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

14. And the Lord shall be seen over them. As He has in the midst of His people of old.  
14. And His arrows shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. Here you have a foresight of Pentecost and the grand era which succeeded the outpouring of the Spirit. Oh, that we might once again prove what God’s Almighty Spirit can do!  
15. The LORD of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. You remember that the mockers said, on the day of Pentecost, “These men are full of new wine.” They were not, as Peter plainly declared, “these are not drunken, as you suppose.” Neither does this prophesy mean that they would be so, but that the Spirit of God should fall so copiously upon them as to fill them, like bowls brimming over with precious liquid, or like the corners of the altar drenched for Elijah’s sacrifice. It is a grand thing when Believers in Christ are thus filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God and Divine energy—they are the men who will win the battle for the cause of God and His Truth.  
16, 17. And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

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FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST’S BLOOD  
NO. 3106

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have set forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” Zechariah 9:11, 12.**

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text, is #2839 , Volume 49— “PRISONERS OF HOPE”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS morning, [See Sermon #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.], I tried to

show that in consequence of the blood of the Covenant having been shed and the Covenant having so been fulfilled, Jesus Christ was brought back out of the prison of the grave, set at liberty and exalted to indescribable Glory in the highest Heaven. I then showed that Jesus Christ is the Representative of all His people—that when He was set free, they were virtually set free, and that when He returned into Glory, He went there as their Representative, taking possession of the heavenly places in their name, so that, in due time, where He is, there they may also be. I had not time, this morning, to make a fitting application of our subject. But happily for us, here stands another text, an older one, and yet most suitable to come after the other, so I will use it now.

Jesus Christ has been delivered from the bondage of the grave and I have to remind you, first, that there are other prisoners who have been set free through the blood of the Covenant. Secondly, that there are other persons yet to be set free through the blood of the Covenant. And then I shall close with a few words in honor of the secret reason of their liberation—the blood of the Covenant.

I. First, then, dear Friends, we have to notice that THERE ARE SOME PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN ALREADY SET FREE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.

This leads us to consider where they were prisoners and to what they were prisoners. We are told, in the text, that they were in “the pit.” That is where all God’s people were once. You know that, in the East, they did not always take the trouble to build prisons—an empty well, or a place where they had been accustomed to hide their corn, or an underground, unused reservoir would serve for a prison. The poor prisoner was let down by ropes and the mouth of the pit or well was covered with a big stone—and there he was left to die. Generally the place was noisome and foul, a living grave rather than anything else. The position of a poor captive, sitting down on a stone at the bottom of a deep, dirty pit, is a very apt picture of the state of man by nature. When he is really awakened to a sense of his true position, he finds that this is the very image of where he is. He is put in that prison by the Law of God. He feels that he has broken the Law and that the Law must punish him. Conscience builds huge walls harder than granite around him—and when he tries to find a way of escape, there is none that he can discover. He realizes that the Judge of all the earth must abhor iniquity and must punish sin. In addition to that, sin has put him in that prison, for, though he has mourned over his sin since he was even partly awakened, yet he cannot cease from sin any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots! Like the big stone over the mouth of the well, his tendency to sin and his corruptions shut him in. He cannot lift that stone—he is a prisoner to his own evil desires and depraved heart and, at the same time, a prisoner lawfully detained, under a warrant from the High Court of Heaven by the officers of Divine Justice.

Many of you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, can recollect the time when you were in that pit. I remember being in it for years and, oh, what a happy day it was for me when I was lifted right up out of it! It is a horrible place, that pit of conviction of sin. Nothing can be more horrible, out of Hell, than to have an awakened conscience, but not to have a reconciled God—to see sin, yet not to see the Savior—to behold the deadly disease in all its loathsomeness, but not to trust the Good Physician and so to have no hope of ever being healed of our malady! Of all the miseries that can be endured in this life, this is one of the greatest.

This poor prisoner, shut up in a pit out of which he could not escape, could find no comfort. The text says it was a pit in which there was no water. I saw the Mamertine Dungeon, which might very well be likened to a pit—the entrance to the first vault is through a narrow hole, then another narrow hole from the bottom of that vault into the second one. But in the floor of the lower dungeon, in which Paul is said to have been confined, there is a spring which continually bubbles up—and I drank of the water—as cold and fresh and clear as any I ever drank. There was at least one source of comfort there, for, in the stifling heat of that horrible dungeon, there was some water. But when we were shut up in the pit by our own sin and by Divine Justice, there was no water there. Do you remember when you tried to drink at the cistern of human ceremonies and found that it was filled with brine which increased your thirst instead of slaking it? You sought next to drink of what you thought was the water of your self-righteousness—but you were like a pilgrim on the desert sands who sees the deceptive mirage—limpid streams and crystal fountains before his eyes, but when he presses forward to drink of them, he finds nothing there but the burning sand! Some of us were duped and deluded, for a while, with the vain hope of accomplishing our own salvation, but it all turned to nothing and we were still in the pit wherein was no water. Oh, what numerous devil’s agents there are about trying to cheat poor souls who are in this pit with the notion that they can supply them with water in the pit and that they can remain there—that they can continue unforgiven and unrenewed—and still enjoy true comfort! But that is an idle tale! No, more—it is a fatal delusion! There might as well be found water in Hell as true comfort for a soul that realizes its guilt and fears the thunders of the wrath of God, yet is not reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Apart from that Living Water which Jesus came to bring, such a soul is truly in “the pit wherein is no water.”

And, dear Friends, there was a still worse point about our bondage. It was a thoroughly hopeless one, for we were not merely shut up in that pit for a short time, but we were shut up there to die! When a man is cast into a deep pit and the mouth of it is covered over with a stone—and his captors give him neither food nor water—he knows at once what that harsh treatment means. If they meant him to live, they would at least put him down with a crust of bread and a pitcher of water. But we were in a pit wherein was no water and we felt that there was nothing before us but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” I have known what it is to wake in the morning and wonder that I was not in Hell, and to go to my bed at night afraid to fall asleep lest I should sleep myself into eternity! When a man is in such a state as that, he feels that life is hardly worth living, and he could almost say with Job, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life.”

This is the position into which many who are the true children of God are brought—they are not all tried alike, for all are not made equally sensitive of sin and to some, faith comes much sooner than to others. But there are many persons who were thus shut up, but concerning whom the text now says, “By the blood of your covenant, I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” Notice that expression, “I have sent forth your prisoners.” That is the blessing—we who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are in prison no longer. We are trusting in the blood of the Covenant and, therefore, there are no fetters upon us now, no stone walls, or prison bars, or terrors of conscience, or convictions of sin to frighten us now, for the Lord has said, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” There are thousands in this Tabernacle who were once in this prison, but they are out of it, now, and they can say, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We are out of this pit by right. We did not break out of prison contrary to the Law of God—we have the right to be out because the debts for which we were imprisoned, are all paid—a full Atonement has been offered for the sins for which we were put in prison! There has been a complete expiation made, wide as the sin of all the Lord’s people, and as vast as the demands of infinite and inflexible Justice. Every child of God is justly as well as graciously saved! It would be an eternal injustice if any soul for whom the Savior stood as a Substitute could die by the sword of Divine Justice. But that can never be—

*“Payment God cannot twice demand,  
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,*

*And then again at mine.”*  
No, my blessed Savior—  
*“Complete Atonement You have made,  
And to the utmost farthing paid,  
Whatever Your people owed—  
Nor can His wrath on me take place,  
If sheltered in Your righteousness,  
And sprinkled with Your blood.”*  
But, dear Friends, we are free by might, as well as by right, for that same Jesus who bought our liberty for us, has secured it to us. Those grim prison walls He has thrown down by His own pierced hands. Those black shades of darkness that surrounded us, He has chased away by His own glorious manifestation as our Sun of Righteousness! It is the Lord, the Liberator, who has set His people free! Therefore, if you are among them, rend the heavens with your joyful shouts, you liberated ones! By the blood of the Covenant you are set free by the almighty “Breaker” who has come to break down your prison walls and to make you “free indeed.”  
And, Beloved, we are now free forever, for the Lord says—“I have sent forth your prisoners.” And when God sends us forth out of prison, who can send us back? When He says, “Let there be light,” who can create darkness? When He says to me, “Be free,” who can chain me up again? Let all the hosts of Hell surround me—as the Philistines surrounded poor blind Samson—my soul shall say with David, “They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” When Christ makes a man free, it is not with a temporary liberty, to last for a month, or a year—but Christ’s emancipated slaves can never be enslaved again! Redeemed by His precious blood, the Redemption is not temporary, but eternal!  
And, blessed be God, that freedom is freedom indeed! If you know what it is to be a Christian to the fullest, believing the true Gospel, not clouding its beauty, not putting upon yourself the old yoke of bondage, not mixing Judaism with Christianity, not bringing in human ordinances to make you the cramped and fettered slave of man—if you are the Lord’s free men, then you are “free indeed!” “O Lord,” said David, “truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.” He who loves holiness and walks in the fear of the Lord all the daylong is the only true free man! He is the free man whom God’s Grace makes free—all others are slaves! No earthly power can bring real freedom to the soul—it is Grace and Grace, alone, that brings it by the blood of the Covenant! And where that freedom comes, no form of bondage can make a man a slave. He may be owned by some cruel master and whipped to his work, but his soul is free! He may be shut up in a damp, dark dungeon, but he can sing there, as others have done before him—  
*“Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage.”*  
I cannot further enlarge upon this tempting theme, but I want every true child of God, everyone who has been set free by the great Liberator, to act and live like Christ’s free man—not to go about fawning and crouching like a slave who dreads his master’s lash, but to walk uprightly, in both senses of that word, as a free man should, in the Presence of the Lord who has bought His servant’s freedom at the incalculable cost of His own most precious blood. May the Lord graciously grant to you “access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God!”  
II. Secondly, and briefly, THERE ARE OTHER PERSONS WHO SHALL YET BE SET FREE THOUGH THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT. Some of them are, I fully believe, going to be set free tonight! This is the favored hour in which the Lord is going to save them and set them free forever! They did not know this when they came in here, but the Lord had designs of love towards them in moving them, by His Spirit, to enter this House of Prayer an hour or so ago.  
To those who are going to be set free I have to say this. By nature, you are in the state that I have been describing, though perhaps you are hardly aware of it. You are prisoners in the pit without water. If unrenewed in heart, you are in a state of alienation from God and of spiritual danger, destitution and misery! But, dear Souls, though this is the case with all of you who have not been born-again, there is this cheering Truth of God—though you are prisoners, you are “prisoners of hope.” Wherever the Gospel is preached, there is hope for sinners and whoever hears it may take heart of hope. I am not now speaking merely about outwardly moral people, but I am speaking of any who have strayed in here and who have sinned grossly—drunkards, swearers, harlots—the very worst and lowest of persons. You are prisoners to your sins, but you are prisoners of hope, for you are within reach of One who sets free from sin! The Lord Jesus Christ, whom we preach to you, saves His people from their sins! And I pray that He may come to you, in all the plenitude of His liberating power and set you free from your sins this very hour!  
Though you are in this prison, there is a Divine command given to you—“Turn you to the stronghold.” If you would obtain liberty from your sin, both in its guilt and in its power, you must look to Jesus, who is the Stronghold to which captive sinners are to turn! “Oh,” you say, “this pit is truly horrible.” I know it is, but the Lord Jesus Christ has come to roll away the stone from the mouth of it and, looking down to you, He says, “Turn you to Me, your only Stronghold. There is hope for you, you prisoners of hope, if you will but turn unto Me.” “But,” you say, “we have looked all around, but we have found no consolation. No man cares for our souls.” There is One in Heaven who cares for your souls and who, because He does, has come to tell you that there is hope for the worst, the most hardened, the most despairing of you all! He bids you escape for your life and look not behind you, nor tarry in all the plain, but press on till you reach the Stronghold where you will be safe even when the wrath of God pursues you! “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Whoever turns to Him shall live, whoever he or she may be! “But I am so feeble,” says someone. Then turn away from your feebleness to His strength. “But I am so sinful,” says another. Then turn away from your sinfulness to His blood—the blood of the Covenant which washes black sinners whiter than driven snow! You are not to turn to yourself, nor to a human priest, nor to your own works, nor even to your prayers or your tears—all these are full of sin and worthless to give you acceptance in God’s sight. But the Lord Jesus Christ is Divine—so look to Him and to what He has done—and especially to His great atoning Sacrifice upon the Cross, for if you trust to that by a sincere and humble faith, you will certainly be saved!  
This declaration of hope in the Gospel is for the present moment. What says the Lord concerning it? “Even today do I declare that I will render double unto you.” You are getting very old, but “even today” mercy is declared to you! You have been, perhaps, wasting the former part of this Sabbath, but “even today” is mercy declared to you. It is seldom that you go to a place of worship, but you are here tonight—and “even today” is mercy proclaimed to you! You had so provoked God that you thought He had cast you away. Well, you have probably gone to the full length of your tether, but “even today” does God proclaim that there is still hope for you—that hope which He has laid up in Jesus on whom He has laid all necessary help for you!  
And what is it that He tells you today? Why, that He will render double to you! Do notice that. He will render double to you. You have committed great sin, but He will give you double mercy to wash out that double sin. But your heart is doubly hard—then He will give you a double portion of His Holy Spirit to soften it! But you feel a double tendency to sin—then He will doubly write His Law on the new heart that He will give you! But you are so desponding. Then He will give you double comfort. But you say that you feel so weak in prayer. Then He will give you double strength. But your faith is so feeble. Then He will give you double Grace to increase it. O Soul, if God says that He will give you all that you need, that ought to satisfy you! But when He says that He will give you double—double for all your sins—what wondrous Grace is that! If you put down a sin, God puts down two mercies. Put down another sin and He puts down two more mercies. “Ah,” you say, “but I can keep on putting down sins forever, they are so many!” And my Lord can put down mercies forever and ever for, however many your sins may be, they can be counted—but His mercies are innumerable! I know that your sins can be counted, for they are all written in a book, but God’s mercies cannot be written in a book—they are altogether countless. His mercy is immeasurably greater than your sin. David laid hold of that great Truth of God when he prayed, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” I tell you, Sinners, if you are lost, it will not be for lack of mercy! If your sins destroy you, it will not be because the blood of the Covenant has not power to wash away your sins. If you perish, it will not be because Jesus Christ is not able to save you. Why will it be, then? It will be because you have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, for “he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” I do pray the Lord that you may have reason enough and Grace enough given you to know that your eternal interests depend upon your believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. You have not to go and spin a righteousness which you are so fond of doing, but to come and take the spotless robe that Christ has woven. You have not to bring the money for your own ransom, though you would like to do that, but you are to take the liberty which has been bought by Christ’s precious blood and which is freely presented to every believing sinner, “for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” We who have escaped from the noisome pit, would, if we could, tempt you to also escape—we long that you may share the blessed liberty that we enjoy! Dear children, will you not follow your father and mother into Gospel liberty? Dear husbands, do you not desire to experience the holy joy that throbs in your wives’ bosom? Good wives, do you not wish to have your husbands’ Christ to be your own Christ? Brothers, would you like your sisters to be without you in Heaven? Will you not share with them in the blessings of eternal life? Oh, that we might all together come to Christ right now! For after all, whatever God has done for us, saints are still sinners, so we will come down to your level and each one, taking the hand of some poor fellow sinner who has never come to Christ, we will try to come together, now, and look up to Him. There is the Cross of Calvary and there is the Savior who hung there. O You blessed Jesus, we have no hope but in You! And these poor souls whom we have brought along with us, Lord, help them to look to You just now, even as we ourselves looked to You long ago! Clear their eyes even more than ours are cleared and may they, as they look unto You, find that—  
*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One”—*life for them, life for them just now, life from the death of sin, life from condemnation, life to be had at once, by a glance at Your wounds and by simple faith in You! You wear the thorn-crown and it seems to us as if all Your thoughts were hedged about with thorns that they might be fixed on sinners. And Your hands are fastened wide open, as if You would never close them again, but hold them always open to welcome poor sinners! And Your feet are fastened as if You would always graciously receive all who come to bow before You. Yes, and Your dear heart was opened by the soldier’s spear as if to make a way for guilty souls into Your inmost affection. Jesus, by Your Grace we come to You! Spirit of the living God, draw this whole houseful of sinners and saints and enable each one of us to say—  
**“There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains!  
I do believe, I will believe,  
That Jesus died for me,  
That on the Cross He shed His blood  
From sin to set me free.”**  
III. My last words—and they shall be very few—are to be IN HONOR OF THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.  
To you who have believed in Jesus and who are now coming to His table, let me say—As we come to the Communion, let us think of the blood of the Covenant. If we are free men and women in Christ Jesus, it is because the blood of Jesus ratified the Covenant of our liberty. It is because God saw the blood and delivered us. Let me remind you of that beautiful verse in the Book of Exodus, from which I have preached more

than once. [See Sermon #228, Volume 5—THE BLOOD and #1251, Volume 21—THE SACRED LOVE-TOKEN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

The blood of the paschal lamb, as you know, was to be sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of the houses of all the children of Israel. And what did God say about it? Did He say, “When you stand outside your house and look up at the blood I will save you”? No, He did not say that, but, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” It is God’s sight of the blood of Christ which, at bottom, is the reason for the salvation of the redeemed! How I rejoice to think that although my faith-sight of the blood gives me peace, still, if that eye of mine ever gets dim, it does not imperil my salvation, for God’s eye is not dim and it is always fixed on the blood of His Son! In sacred contemplation the Father surveys the Sacrifice of His Son with supreme satisfaction—and as He sees the blood, He spares us for His Son’s sake!

But, then, dear Friends, the blood of the Covenant is also to be extolled because it is our sight of it that brings us peace. When we realize that Jesus died for us, there is peace in our soul. I do not know whether you are like me in this respect, but there are times when I, as it were, take the fact of my eternal safety for granted. But there comes a severe sickness, or deep depression of spirit. There comes a time when death has to be looked in the face and the sense of past sin rises vividly before me—and then it is a blessed thing to stand once more at the foot of the Cross and to look up to Jesus hanging there, and to say—

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

And as I meditate upon that theme, despondency goes, pain is forgotten and I say, “Yes, yes, yes! I am safe! I am saved by the precious blood of Jesus! I do love Him and I would fall down at His dear feet and weep with mingled repentance and gratitude—repentance because I have sinned—gratitude because I have such a gracious Savior to put my sin away.” Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us praise the blood because God sees it—and praise the blood because we also see it by faith!

Praise the blood, too, because when we really trust in it, it gives us liberty. If you get away from the blood of the Covenant, you get into slavery. But keep close to that and you are at liberty. In prayer, mind that you plead the blood, for that is the way to get the “double” spoken of in the text. The double blessing comes by the blood of the Covenant. If you need more Grace, plead the blood for it. There is one talisman that will open every vault in the treasury of God—the blood of the Covenant! You cannot be denied if you plead the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Knock at Heaven’s gate with the crimson token in your hand and as surely as God loves Jesus Christ—and He loves Him more than all of us put together love Him—He will honor His Son’s great Sacrifice and He will say to you, “According to your desire and your faith, so be it unto you.” There are some preachers who cannot or do not preach about the blood of Jesus Christ—I have one thing to say to you concerning those— Never go to hear them! Never listen to them! A ministry that has not the blood in it, is lifeless, “for the blood is the life thereof”—and a dead ministry is no good to anybody! Leave out the atoning Sacrifice and it would be better for the people that the places in which a Christless, bloodless Gospel is preached, should be all burnt to the ground, for the atoning Sacrifice is the soul and life and marrow of Christianity! Rest in that and you are saved! But get away from that and you have wandered where peace and life and safety can never come! God Almighty bless you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ACTS 2:14-43.**

Verse 14. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and listen to my words. A great crowd had gathered in the street and the Apostles, under Divine Inspiration, addressed them in different tongues. Peter, as the leader, coming prominently to the front—“Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice.” They were 12 witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, for they had seen Him after He had risen and had eaten with Him. They constituted a jury of 12 honest and true men. And Peter, as their foreman, “standing up with the eleven,” gave their verdict!

15. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. At nine o’clock in the morning, it was not to be supposed that they had become drunk.

16-18. But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days My Spirit; and they shall prophesy. Every member of the Christian community would be anointed by the Holy Spirit. The blessing would not simply be given to one here and another there, but there would be a wonderful outpouring that should fall upon the whole multitude of Believers.

19-21. And I will show wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before that great and notable day of the coming of the Lord: and it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is a wonderful connection in which to find such a promise as this—a darkened sun, a blood-red moon—yet “whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” When the worst comes to the worst, prayer will still be heard and faith will lead to salvation! O matchless Grace of God! Is there not someone here who will call upon God’s name, now, before that evil day comes in all its fullness? “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Oh, that everyone of you would lay hold of that promise! It is said that drowning men will catch at a straw. This is no straw, but a gloriously strong life buoy! Only get into it and it will float you to Glory!

22. You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know. Note that Peter does not begin with the Deity of Christ. He will get to that soon. But, like a wise speaker, he commences with points upon which they were all agreed, or which they could not deny. He therefore calls Christ “a Man approved of God,” and he reminds them of the “miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him” in their midst. They knew that God had thus attested His mission, so he appealed to them for confirmation. “As you yourselves also know.”

23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. There is a wonderful blending in this verse of the predestination of God and yet the responsibility of man. I suppose our finite faculties cannot yet discern where these two things meet, but faith, in the absence of every other power, believes them both! The predestination of God does not alter the moral quality of the acts of wicked men. Man acts freely, as freely as if there were no Divine predestination—yet the free agency of man does not affect the foreknowledge and predestination of God.

24. Whom God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held of it. It was possible for Him to die, but it was not possible for Him to be held in the bonds of death!

25. For David—Speaking of Christ in the Psalm which, at first sight, might seem to refer to David, himself, but which was even by the Rabbis believed to also refer to the Messiah, and which we know did, indeed, refer to the Messiah!

26-27. Speaks concerning Him, I foresaw the lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because You will not leave my soul in Hell—Hades, the world of separate spirits.

27. Neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. David was speaking of Someone who, though He should die, would never in His body feel the natural effect of death, namely decay.

28, 29. You have made known to me the ways of life; You shall make me full of joy with Your Countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Peter craves liberty to speak with freedom and then he very shrewdly gives to David the high title of Patriarch, which is not generally given to him, so as to win their attention and approval—“Let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day.” And therefore he did not speak about himself in the words Peter was quoting!

30-32. Therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in Hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Peter points to the eleven around him. There they stood, steadfast in the midst of the surging crowd, assenting to the bold declaration of their leader.

33-35. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this which you now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he says himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit You at My right hand until I make Your foes Your footstool. See how he builds up his argument with clear and cogent reasoning?

*36.*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. How those men must have started when he came to that which was the finale of his address, the point at which he had aimed all along!

37. Now when they heard this, they were picked in their heart. The pointed Truth of God had gone home to their heart and they were wounded by it.

37. And said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? These may have been the same people who mockingly said, “These men are full of new wine.” They began badly, but they ended well. I hope none of you have come here to mock. But if you have done so, and then go out pricked in your heart by the Truth of God you have heard, it would be better than coming in an attentive frame of mind and then going out unimpressed as so many do. God prevent it!

38. Then Peter said unto them, Repent. “Change your mind entirely. Be sorry for what you have done. Repudiate what you have done by a holy repentance of it. ‘Repent’—

38. And be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Peter urged them to repent and bade them confess their faith by being baptized in God’s appointed way.

38. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. “You shall be sharers in this wonderful manifestation which has so astounded you.”  
39. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. What promise did Peter mean? Why that promise in the 21st verse, “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” That promise is also given to you, my Hearers, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even in the most distant heathen land, for the “whoever ” in the promise applies to everyone who “shall call on the name of the Lord.” Do not, therefore, shut yourselves out, or try to shut others out, but believe the promise—call upon God and you shall be saved!  
40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Peter first bore witness to the Truth of God and then pleaded with his hearers to receive his testimony. All true ministers will both “testify and exhort.” Some are always exhorting—they cry, “Believe, believe”—but they do not tell their hearers what is to be believed. Others are always testifying. They preach good doctrine, but they do not like to exhort sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. Each of these is a one-legged ministry! We must have two legs to our ministry and, like Peter, “testify and exhort saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” “Come out from those who crucified Christ! Quit the generation that is guilty of the blood of the Son of God! Put your repentance between you and them! Put your public Baptism between you and them—avow that you belong not to them, but to Him whom they crucified, and whom God has exalted!”  
41. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. They not only believed what he said, but they were glad to believe it, acknowledging that they had greatly sinned. And they rejoiced that there was a promise which covered even their sin—“Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Then, having repented and believed, they were baptized upon profession of their faith, according to the true Scriptural order.  
42. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. They believed the doctrine that was taught by the Apostles and they had fellowship with them and with all other Christians with whom they were associated. They did not try to go to Heaven by some underground railway without confessing Christ, but having confessed their faith in Christ, they further manifested their devotion to Him “in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” I do not know how many Prayer Meetings they had—they must have kept on praying, praising and preaching pretty well all day long.  
43. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles.

THE BURDEN OF THE WORD OF THE LORD

NO. 2114

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “The burden of the Word of the Lord.”  
Malachi 1:1.

THE Prophets of old were no triflers. They did not run about as idle tellers of tales, but they carried a burden. Those  
who at this time speak in the name of the Lord, if they are, indeed, sent of God, dare not sport with their ministry or play  
with their message. They have a burden to bear—“The burden of the Word of the Lord.” And this burden puts it out of their power to indulge in levity of life. I am often astounded at the way in which some who profess to be the servants of God make light of their work—they jest about their sermons as if they were so many comedies or farces.

I read of one who said, “I got on very well for a year or two in my pulpit, for my great-uncle had left me a large store  
of manuscripts, which I read to my congregation.” The Lord have mercy on his guilty soul! Did the Lord send him a sacred call to bring to light his uncle’s moldy manuscripts? Something less than a Divine call might have achieved that purpose.

Another is able to get on well with his preaching because he pays so much a quarter to a bookseller and is regularly supplied with manuscript sermons. They cost more or less according to the space within which they will not be sold to another clerical cripple. I have seen the things and have felt sick at the sorry spectacle. What must God think of such Prophets as these? In the old times, those whom God sent did not borrow their messages. They had their message directly from God Himself, and that message was weighty—so weighty that they called it, “the burden of the Lord.”

He that does not find his ministry a burden now will find it a burden hereafter, which will sink him lower than the lowest Hell. A ministry that never burdens the heart and the conscience in this life will be like a millstone about a man’s neck in the world to come.

The servants of God mean business. They do not play at preaching but they plead with men. They do not talk for talk’s sake. But they persuade for Jesus’ sake. They are not sent into the world to tickle men’s ears, nor to make a display of elocution, nor to quote poetry—theirs is an errand of life or death to immortal souls. They have something to say which so presses upon them that they must say it. “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!” They burn with an inward fire and the flame must have vent. The Word of the Lord is as fire in their bones, consuming them. The Truth of God presses them into its service and they cannot escape from it. If, indeed, they are the servants of God, they must speak the things which they have seen and heard. The servants of God have no feathers in their caps— they have burdens on their hearts.  
Furthermore, the true servants of God have something to carry, something worth carrying. There is solid Truth, precious Truth in their message. It is not froth and foam, phrases and verbiage, stories and pretty things, poetry and oratory, and all that. But there is weight in it of matters which concern Heaven and Hell, time and eternity. If ever there were men in this world who ought to speak in earnest, they are the men. Those who speak for God must not speak lightly. If there is nothing in what a man has to say, then God never commissioned him, for God is no trifler.

If there is no importance in their message—yes, if their message is not of the first and last importance—why do they profess to speak in the name of God? It is constructive blasphemy to father God with our nonsense. The true servant of God has no light weight to bear. He has eternal realities heaped upon him. He does not run merrily as one that has a featherweight to carry—he treads firmly and often, slowly—as he moves beneath “the burden of the Word of the Lord.”

Yet, do not let me be misunderstood at the beginning. God’s true servants, who are burdened with His Word, right willingly and cheerfully carry that burden. We would not be without it for all the world. Sometimes, do you know, we get tempted, when things do not go right, to run away from it—but we view it as a temptation not to be tolerated for an hour. When some of you do not behave yourselves and matters in our Church get a little out of order, I say to myself, “I wish I could give this up and turn to an employment less responsible and less wearing to the heart.”

But then I think of Jonah and what happened to him when he ran away to Tarshish—and I remember that whales are scarcer now than they were then—and I do not feel inclined to run that risk. I stick to my business and keep to the message of my God. For one might not be brought to land quite so safely as the runaway Prophet was. Indeed, I could not cease to preach the glad tidings unless I ceased to breathe. God’s servants would do nothing else but bear this burden, even if they were allowed to make a change. I had sooner be a preacher of the Gospel than a possessor of the Indies. Remember how William Carey, speaking of one of his sons, says, “Poor Felix is shriveled from a missionary to an ambassador.” He was a missionary once, and he was employed by the government as an ambassador. His father thought it no promotion and said, “Felix has shriveled into an ambassador.” It would be a descent, indeed, from bearing the burden of the Lord, if one were to be transformed into a member of Parliament, or a prime minister, or a king. We bear a burden but we should be sorry, indeed, not to bear it.

The burden which the true preacher of God bears is for God, and on Christ’s behalf, and for the good of men. He has  
a natural instinct which makes him care for the souls of others and his anxiety is that none should perish but that all should find salvation through Jesus Christ. Like the Christ who longed to save, so does the true Malachi, or messenger of God, go forth with this as his happy, joyful, cheerfully-borne burden—that men may turn unto God and live. Yet, it is a burden, for all that. And of that I am going to speak to you. Much practical Truth of God will come before us while we speak of “the burden of the Word of the Lord.” Pray that the Holy Spirit may bless the meditation to our hearts.

I. And why is the Word of the Lord a burden to him that speaks it? Well, first, it is a burden BECAUSE IT IS THE WORD OF THE LORD. If what we preach is only of man, we may preach as we like and there is no burden about it. But if this Book is inspired—if Jehovah is the only God, if Jesus Christ is God incarnate, if there is no salvation except through His precious blood—then there is a great solemnity about that which a minister of Christ is called upon to preach. It therefore becomes a weighty matter with him. Modern thought is a trifle light, as air, but ancient Truths of God are more weighty than gold.

And, first, the Word of the Lord becomes a burden in the reception of it. I do not think that any man can ever preach  
the Gospel aright until he has had it borne into his own soul with overwhelming energy. You cannot preach conviction of sin unless you have suffered it. You cannot preach repentance unless you have practiced it. You cannot preach faith unless you have exercised it. You may talk about these things—but there will be no power in the talk unless what is said has been experimentally proven in your own soul.

It is easy to tell when a man speaks what he has made his own, or when he deals in secondhand experience. “Son of man, eat this roll”—you must eat it before you can hand it out to others. True preaching is artesian—it wells up from the great depths of the soul. If Christ has not made a well within us, there will be no outflow from us. We are not proper agents for conveying the Truth of God to others, if Divine Grace has not conveyed it to us. When we get God’s Word in our studies, we feel it to be a load which bows us to the ground. We are, at times, obliged to get up and walk to and fro beneath the terror of the threats of God’s Word. And often are we forced to bow our knee before the glory of some wonderful word of the Lord which beams with excessive Divine Grace.

We say to ourselves, “These are wonderful Truths—how they press upon our hearts!” They create great storms within us. They seem to tear us to pieces. The strong wind of the mighty Spirit blows through the messenger of God and he, himself, is swayed to and fro in it as the trees of the forest in the tempest. Therefore, even in the reception of the message of God, it is a burden.

The Word of God is a burden in the delivery of it. Do you think it an easy thing to stand before the people and deliver a message which you believe you have received from God? If you so imagine, I wish you would try it. He that finds it  
easy work to preach will find it hard work to give an account of his preaching at the Last Great Day. One has carefully to  
look around and think while he is preaching, “I must mind that I do not put this Truth of God in such a way as to exaggerate it into a falsehood. I must not so encourage the weak that I dwarf the strong. Nor so commend the strong as to grieve the weak. I must not so preach the Grace of God as to give latitude to sin—I must not so denounce sin as to drive men to despair.”

Our path is often narrow as a razor’s edge, and we keep on crying in our spirit, while we are speaking, “Lord, direct me! Lord, help me to deal wisely for You with all these souls!” The anxieties which we feel in connection with our pulpit work are enough to make us old before our time. I have heard of one who thought he would give up his ministry because he had so small a Chapel into which he could not get more than two hundred people. But a good old man said to him, “You will find it quite hard enough to give a good account of two hundred at the Last Great Day.”

It is an idle ambition to desire a large congregation, unless that desire is altogether for God’s glory. For we only increase our responsibilities when we increase the area of our influence. Still, some are responsible for not having a large congregation. If their dullness keeps people from hearing, they do not, thereby, escape from responsibility. To speak aright God’s Word beneath the Divine influence is, in the speaking, as well as in the getting of the message, the burden of the Lord.

When we have preached, the Gospel becomes a burden. “Well, now, it is all done,” says one. Is it? Is it all done? You, dear Teacher, when you have taught your class today, have you done with your children? You have thought of them upon the Sabbath—will there be no care for them all the week? If your soul is towards your children, or your congregation, as it ought to be, you will bear them always on your heart. They will never be far away from you. The mother is gone from home. She is out today, seeing her sister—surely she is not caring about her babe, is she? Is SHE NOT? Why, wherever she is, the tender mother, if she does not bear her child outside her bosom, bears it inside her heart. Her babe is always on her mind.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child?” Can a soul-winner forget his charge? If God sends any of us to do good to our fellow men and to speak in His name, the souls of men will be a perpetual burden to us and we shall constantly cry for their salvation and perpetually, with entreaties and tears, go to God for them and ask Him to bless the message we have delivered.

Oh, that we may have, in all pulpits, ministers who bear the burden of the Lord in the study, in the pulpit, and when the discourse is finished! Once truly a minister, you are always a minister. Your burden clings to you. May you, my Brothers and Sisters, partakers in the holy service of our Lord Jesus Christ, each of you, in your measure, bear the burden of the Word of the Lord, and that continually.

II. I pass to a second point. It is not only a burden because it is so solemnly the Word of the Lord, and therefore weighty and overwhelming, but next, BECAUSE OF WHAT IT IS. What is it that the true servant of God has to bear and to preach?

Well, first, it is the rebuke of sin. I have heard of hirelings who preach, but never think of rebuking sin. It is with them like as in the story of the old Negro preacher, a very popular preacher, indeed, among his black Brothers. His master said, “I am afraid some of your people steal chickens, for I am always losing mine. I wish you would, next Sunday, give them a word about it.” “Master,” said the preacher, “it would throw such a damp over the congregation if I were to say anything about stealing chickens.” So the black preacher avoided that subject.

It seems to me that stealing chickens was the very thing that he ought to have preached about, if that was the sin his Brethren were guilty of. If a man bears the burden of the Word of the Lord, he speaks most to his people upon the evil of which they are most guilty. Somebody once said to me, “Sir, you were very personal.” I answered, “Sir, I try to be. Do not think that I am going to apologize for it. If I knew anything that would come home to your heart and conscience concerning sin, I would be sure to say that—just that very thing.” “And what if I should be offended?” “Well, I should be very sorry that you refused reproof and should feel all the more sure that it was my duty to be very faithful with you. If after much love and prayer you refused the word, I could do no more. But I certainly should not speak with bated breath to please you. And you would despise me if I did.”

I remember one in Oliver Cromwell’s day who complained to a preacher. He said, “The squire of the parish is very much offended by some remarks you made last Sabbath day about profane swearing.” “Well,” said the Puritan preacher, “is the squire in the habit of swearing?” It was admitted that he was and that he therefore thought himself pointed out by the minister. The Puritan replied to the complaining tenant, “If your lord offends my Lord, I shall not fail to rebuke him for it. And if he is offended, let him be offended.” So must every true preacher be not concerned of man’s esteem—and speak faithfully—and this is a burden to one of a tender spirit.

If there is any topic upon which we must of necessity dwell, it must be upon that sin which is most grieving to the Lord. For we must by no means leave an erring Brother unwarned. This is not a work to be coveted. It is neither pleasant to the hearer, nor pleasant to the speaker. And yet to rebuke sin and to rebuke it sharply, is part of the work of him whom God sends. And this makes the Word of the Lord his burden.

And, next, the Word of the Lord gives a rebuff to human pride. The doctrines of the Gospel seem shaped on purpose, among other objects, to bring into contempt all human glory. Here is a man who is morally of a fine and noble nature, but we tell him that he is born in sin and shaped in iniquity—this is a stern duty. Here is a man of a grand righteous character in his own opinion and we tell him that his righteousness is filthy rags—he will not smile on us for this. Here is a man that can go to Heaven by his own efforts, so he thinks, and we tell him that he can do nothing of the sort—that he is dead in trespasses and sins—this will bring us no honor from him.

He hopes that by strong resolves he may change his own nature and make himself all that God would have him. But we tell him that his resolutions are so much empty wind and will end in nothing—this is likely to earn us his hate. Be- hold, the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Every man, woman, and child stands a convicted criminal, and if saved must owe his salvation entirely to the gratuitous mercy of God. Condemned and ruined, if he ever escapes from his ruin it must be through the work of

the Spirit of God in him and not by his own works. Thus, you see, human nature does not like our message. How it writhes in wrath, how it grinds its teeth against the doctrine which humbles man, crucifies his pride and nails his glory to the gallows! Therefore, such preaching becomes the burden of the Lord.

And then the true preacher has to come into contact with the vanity of human intellect. We ask of man, “Can you, by searching, find God?” You say, “I know.” What do you know, poor blind Worm? You say, “I am a judge and I can discern.”

What can you discern, you that are in the dark and alienated from God by your wicked works? The things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent but revealed unto babes. And the wise and prudent are indignant at this act revealed of Divine Sovereignty. “Well,” says one, “I quarrel with the Bible.” Do you? The only real argument against the Bible is an unholy life. When a man argues against the Word of God, follow him home and see if you cannot discover the reason of his enmity to the Word of the Lord. It lies in some form of sin.

He whom God sends, cares nothing at all about human wisdom, so as to dote upon it and flatter it. For he knows that, “the world by wisdom knew not God.” And that human wisdom is only another name for human folly. All the savants and the philosophers are simply those who make themselves to be wise but are not so. To face false science with “the foolishness of preaching,” and to set up the Cross in the teeth of learned self-sufficiency is a burden from the Lord.

The most heavy burden of the Word of the Lord, however, is that which concerns the future. If you are sent of God and if you preach what God has revealed in His Word, then you say, “He that believes not shall be damned,” and you do not hesitate to say that the wrath of God abides on the rejecters of the Savior. You do not hesitate to say—

*“There is a dreadful Hell  
And everlasting pains,  
Where sinners must with devils dwell  
In darkness, fire and chains.”*

All the romance of the age runs against this. Everybody says, “Be quiet about the wrath to come, or you will have everybody down upon you.” Be down upon me, then! I will not soften God’s Word to please anybody. And the Word of the Lord is very clear on this matter. If you receive not the Lord Jesus Christ, you will die in your sins. If you believe not in Him, you must perish from His Presence. There is a day coming when you will die— after this comes another day when you must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and all your actions shall be published and you shall be judged for the things done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil.

And then you shall receive the sentence of, “Come, you blessed,” or, “Depart, you cursed.” Do you think we like to preach this? Do you think that it is any pleasure to the servant of God to deliver these heavy tidings? Oh, no—very often we speak in the bitterness of our spirit. But we speak because we dare not refrain. It is infinitely better that men should be told the truth than that they should be flattered by a lie into eternal ruin. He ought to have the commendation of all men, not who makes things pleasant, but who speaks things truly. Somebody is preaching of how to get people out of Hell. I preach about how to keep them away from Hell. Don’t go there. Keep clear of the fire which never can be quenched. Escape for your lives—look not behind you! Stay not in the plain but hasten to Christ, the Mountain of Salvation, and put your trust in Him. This is it which is the burden of the Word of the Lord. We have grief of heart because of the dreadful future which men prepare for themselves, namely, “everlasting punishment.” We are heavy at heart for the many who will not turn to God but persist in destroying their own souls forever. Oh, why will they die? The prospect of their future is a present misery to us.

III. Now, dear Friends, I have, in the third place, to say that it is a burden not only because it is the Word of the Lord and because of what it is, but BECAUSE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR BRINGING IT TO YOU.

Suppose that we do not preach the Gospel and warn the wicked man, so that he turns not from his iniquity, what then? Hear this voice—“He shall perish but his blood will I require at your hand.” What will my Lord say to me if I am unfaithful to you? “Where is the blood of those people who gathered at Newington? Where is the blood of that crowd which came together to hear you speak and you did not preach the Gospel to them?” Oh, it were better for me that I had never been born than that I should not preach the Gospel! “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel” of Christ, for men perish where there is not the Word of God!

I remember Mr. Knill’s portrait which was once in The Evangelical Magazine, that it had written at the bottom of it, “Brethren, the heathen are perishing—will you let them perish?” So is it with men that hear not the glad tidings. They die in sin. Worse still, men are perishing in this country—in the blaze of the Light they sit in darkness. Oh, that we might go and find them and tell them of the Gospel! For, if we carry it not to them, “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they are sent?” What makes it more of a burden to me, is that men may die even if they do hear the word of salvation—men may go from these pews quickly into perdition. Those eyes that look on me tonight, oh, how intently and earnestly!

O Sirs, if you do not look to Christ, you will be lost, however well you may have attended to me. Now, you listen to each word I utter. But I pray you listen to the Word of God, the heavenly Father, who bids you repent and believe in His dear Son. For “except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” So said the Savior. And this, I say, makes the burden of the message, lest some of you should not receive it.

I cannot bear that one of you should die unforgiven. I look along these pews and I remember some of you a good many years ago. You were then in a hopeful state but you still have not received Christ. Most faithful hearers you have been, but you have not been doers of the word. Do not think that I charge you too severely. Have you repented and believed?

If not, woe is me that I should bear to you a message which will be a savor of death unto death unto you because you refuse it! For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? When it has been freely proclaimed to us year after year, what will become of us if we reject it? Do not still refuse to come to Jesus! Do not make me a messenger of death to you. I implore you, receive the message of mercy and be saved.

And, then, it becomes a great burden to me to preach the Gospel when I think of what those lose who will not have it. That Heaven above—what tongue can describe it? What painter can ever picture it—the Heaven above—where all is love and joy and peace and everlasting blessedness? What if you should be shut out? What if against YOU, the door should be closed! There is no opening that door again, remember. Even though you stand and cry, “Lord, Lord!” yet will He not open it to you. May no one of us miss eternal felicity! May no one among us fall into eternal misery! But here lies the burden of the Lord—in the consequences of our ministry.

I remember walking out to preach near unto forty years ago, just when I began my witnessing for the Lord Jesus. As I trudged along with a somewhat older Brother, who was going to preach at another village station, our talk was about our work and he said to me, “Does it not strike you as a very solemn thing that we two local preachers are going to do the Lord’s work and much may depend even upon the very hymns we give out and the way in which we read them?” I thought of that and I prayed—and often do pray—that I may have the right hymn and the right chapter, as well as the right sermon.

Well do I remember a great sinner coming into Exeter Hall and I read the hymn beginning, “Jesus lover of my soul,” and that first line pierced him in the heart. He said to himself, “Does Jesus love my soul?” He wept because he had not loved the Savior in return. And he was brought to the Savior’s feet just by that one line of a hymn. It does make it the burden of the Lord when you see life, death and Hell and worlds to come, hanging, as it were, upon the breath of a mortal man, by whom God speaks to the souls of his fellows. This is serious burden-bearing. At least, I find it more and more so the longer I am engaged in it.

IV. But I pass on to notice one thing more now. It is often the burden of the Lord, because of THE WAY IN WHICH MEN TREAT THE WORD OF GOD.

Upon this I will be very brief. Some trifle with it. I was reading last night an account of how people are said to behave who go to Church. It was written by a canon. I dare say he knows. Certainly, some people who go to Nonconformist places are as bad. A servant was asked by her mistress about the sermon. She said it was a very good sermon. “Where was the text, Martha?” “Somewhere in the Bible, ma’am.” “What was it about?”

She did not remember a word of it. One question after another is put to her. She tells her mistress that it was a very nice sermon but she really does not know what it was all about. And the writer goes on to say that a large proportion of our people go off at a tangent while we are talking and their minds are thinking about something else. I hope that it is not quite true of you tonight. A man once went to hear Mr. Whitefield. He was a shipbuilder and he said, “Oh, that man! I never heard such a preacher as that before. When I have been to other places, I have built a ship from stem to stern—laid the keel and put the mast in and finished it all up, while the parson has been preaching. But this time I was not able to lay a timber. He took me right away.”

This preoccupation of human minds makes it such a burden when we are in earnest to reach the heart and win the soul. Our people are sitting here in body but they are far away in spirit. Yonder sits a good woman who is meditating as to how she shall leave her home, tomorrow, long enough to get to the shop to buy those clothes for the children. A gentleman here tonight wonders where he has left that diamond ring which he took off when he washed his hands. Do not let that bother you any more. Sell the stone and give the money away—then it will never trouble you again.

All sorts of cares come buzzing around your brains, when I am wanting them to be quite clear to consider holy subjects. Little pettifogging cares intrude and the preacher may speak his very soul out but it all goes for nothing. This makes our work the burden of the Lord.

Then there is another. It is the number of those who do hear, with considerable attention, but they forget all that they hear. The sermon is all done with when they have done hearing it. The last drop of dew is dried up when they get home. Nothing remains of that which cost the preacher so much thought and prayer. And is it not a hard thing to go on “pegging away and pegging away,” and have done nothing? The preoccupied mind is a slate and we write on it. And then a sponge goes over it all and we have to write each word all over again.

Few would choose to roll the stone of Sisyphus, which always fell backward as fast as he laboriously heaved it up the hillside. We are willing to do even this for our Lord. But we are compelled to admit that it is burdensome toil. Poor, poor work with some of you. Ah, it is the burden of the Lord to deal with your souls!

Alas, there are some others that hear to ridicule. They pick out some mannerism, or mistake, or something odd about the speaker’s language, and they carry this home and report it as raw material for fun. The preacher is in anguish to save a soul, and they are thinking about how he pronounces a word. Here is a man endeavoring to pluck sinners from the eternal burnings, and these very sinners are all the while thinking about how he moves his legs, or how he lifts his hand, or how he pronounces a certain syllable. Oh, it is sickening work—soul-sickening work! It is the “burden of the Word of the Lord,” when our life or death message is received in that way.

But when it is received rightly, then are we in the seventh Heaven! Oh, well do I remember one night preaching three sermons, one after the other. And I think that I could have preached thirty, if time had held out. It was in a Welsh village, where I had gone into the Chapel and simply meant to expound the Scripture, while another Brother preached. He preached in Welsh and when it was done, the question was put whether Mr. Spurgeon would not preach. I had not come prepared but I did preach and there was a melting time. And then we sang a hymn. I think we sang

one verse seven or eight times over—the people were all on fire. The sound seemed to make the shingles dance on the top of the  
Chapel. When I had done, we asked those who were impressed to stop.  
They all stopped and so I had to preach again. And a second time they all  
stopped and I had to preach again. It got on to past eleven o’clock before  
they went away. Eighty-one came forward and joined the Churches afterwards.  
It was but a few months before the terrible accident at Risca, [see Sermon #349, Volume 7] and many of those converted that night perished in  
the pit. God had sent His Spirit on that glorious night to save them, that  
they might be ready when He should call them Home.  
It was grand work to preach, for they sucked in the word as babes take  
in milk. They took it into their hearts—it saved their souls. Would we had  
many such opportunities! And then the Word of the Lord would be no  
burden—but like  
the wings of a bird, would make us mount on high and joy would fill every  
heart!  
V. And now I must not detain you. But I want to say, in the fifth place,  
the Word of the Lord is the greatest burden to the true teacher’s heart,  
because he remembers that HE WILL HAVE TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT. They are all down, those fifty-two Sabbaths. And those weeknight opportunities—they are all down in the heavenly record and the writing will  
be forthcoming when required. There will come a time when it will be said,  
“Preacher, give an account of your stewardship.” And at the same time a  
voice will be heard, “Hearers, give an account of your stewardship, too.”  
What a mercy it will be, if you and I together shall give our accounts with  
joy and not with grief! A mournful account will be unprofitable for you.  
What sort of sermons shall I wish I had preached when I come to die?  
What sort of sermons will you wish that you had heard when you lie on  
your last beds?  
You will not wish that you had heard mere flimsy talk and clever  
speeches. Oh, no! You will say, as a dying man, “I bless God for weighty  
words, earnestly spoken, that were a blessing to my soul.” I will say no  
more upon that, although it is the pressing point of the whole matter.  
Brethren, pray for the preacher. Brethren, pray for yourselves. I have only these two or three practical words to say. We have to bear  
the burden of the Lord. But there was one, the Head of our confraternity,  
the great Lord of All true Gospel preachers, who bore a far heavier burden.  
“He His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Preacher,  
Teacher, do you ever get weary? Look to Him as He bows beneath His  
Cross! Take up your burden cheerfully and follow after Jesus. If this work is a burden, we also rejoice in One who can help us. There  
is One who can make the burden light, or strengthen the shoulder to bear  
the heavy yoke. Dear People, pray for us that this great Helper may enable  
us to bear the burden of His Word to your souls. Do not pray that it may  
not be a burden. Pray that it may be a burden that crushes your pastor to the very dust. God forbid that he should ever preach without its being a load to him! But pray that he may  
then be sustained under it. And for every true preacher of the Gospel pray the same prayer. If the Lord is with us we shall  
not faint but go from strength to strength.  
Since it is a burden in itself, I ask you not to make it any heavier. Do  
not make it intolerable. Some add to it greatly and wantonly. Who are  
these? Well, I will tell you. Inconsistent professors. When people point to  
such-and-such a member of the Church and say, “That is your Christian!”—this makes our burden doubly oppressive. What a spoil it is to our  
testimony for Christ when outsiders can point to one and another and  
say, “That is how those Christians act!”  
Do not plunge us in this sorrow. I do not know why I should be blamed  
for all the offenses of everybody that comes to hear me. Can I keep you all  
right? Are you like chessmen, that I can move at pleasure to any square  
on the board? I cannot be responsible for any one person—how can I be  
the guardian of all? Yet the preacher of God’s Truth is held responsible by  
many for matters over which he has no power. And this injustice makes  
his burden heavy.  
And, next, do not make our burden heavier by your silence. There was  
a man of God who had been a very distinguished preacher, and when he  
lay dying he was much troubled in his mind. He had been greatly admired  
and much followed.  
He was a fine preacher of the classical sort and one said to him, “Well,  
my dear Sir, you must look back upon your ministry with great comfort.”  
“Oh, dear!” said he, “I cannot. I cannot. If I knew that even one soul had  
been led to Christ and eternal life by my preaching I should feel far happier. But I have never heard of one.”  
What a sad, sad thing for a dying preacher! He died and was buried  
and there was a goodly company of people at the grave, for he was highly  
respected and deservedly so. One who heard him make that statement  
was standing at the grave and he noticed a gentleman in mourning, looking into the tomb and sobbing with deep emotion. He said to him, “Did  
you know this gentleman who has been buried?” He replied, “I never  
spoke to him in my life.” “Then what is it that so affects you?” He said,  
“Sir, I owe my eternal salvation to him.”  
He had never told the minister this cheering news and the good man’s  
deathbed was rendered dark by the silence of a soul that he had blessed.  
This was not right. A great many more may have found the Lord by his  
means but he did not know of them and was therefore in sore trouble. Do  
tell us when God blesses our word to you. Give all the glory to God, but  
give us the comfort of it. The Holy Spirit does the work, but if we are the  
means in his hands, do let us know it, and we will promise not to be  
proud. It is due to every preacher of Christ that if he has been blessed to  
the conversion of a soul  
he should be allowed to see the fruit of his labors. And when he does not  
see it, it adds very sadly to “the burden of the Word of the Lord.” Do you not think that you add to my burden, too, if you do not aid me in the Lord’s work? What a lot of idle Christians we have—Christian people who might sing, like mendicants in the street—  
*“And got no work to do,  
And got no work to do!”*  
What a shameful chorus, when the world is dying for lack of true workers! There is a Sunday school—do you know it? “Oh, yes, we know there is one of those excellent institutions” connected with our place of worship. Did you ever visit it? Have you ever helped in it? There is an Evangelists’ Society and young men go out to preach. “Oh, dear!” you say, “I never thought of that.” Why do you not go out to preach yourself? Some of you could, if  
you would.  
What are you doing? There are districts where there are tracts to be  
distributed. Do you know anything about house-to-house visitation? I  
speak to some who do nothing whatever, unless it is a little grumbling. I  
wonder whether we  
shall ever have a day such as the bees celebrate in its due season. You  
may, perhaps, have seen them dismissing the unproductive bees. It is a  
remarkable sight. They say to themselves, “Here are a lot of drones, eating  
our honey but never making any. Let us turn them out.” There is a dreadful buzz, is there not? But out they go.  
I do not propose either to turn you out, or to make a buzz. But if ever  
those who do work for Christ should burn with a holy indignation against  
do-nothings, some of you will find the place too hot for you! I am sorrowfully afraid that it will thin my congregation and lessen the number of  
Church members. I have but little to complain of among my people. But still, as there is a lazy corner in every village, there is the same in  
this community. You increase the burden of those who do work, if you are  
not working with them.  
But the greatest increase of the burden comes from those who do not  
receive the Gospel at all. May there not be one such here tonight, but may  
everyone now look to Jesus and live! I shall close by asking you to sing the  
Gospel. Oh, that you may have it in your hearts! The final closing word is  
this—“There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for you. Then look, Sinner—look unto Him and be saved—look unto  
Him who was nailed to the tree.” Amen.

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GOD’S LOVE SHAMEFULLY QUESTIONED

NO. 2532

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 29, 1897. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 13, 1884.

**“I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?” Malachi 1:2.**

Man, by nature, is a lump of ingratitude. He is often ungrateful even to his earthly friends and he is invariably ungrateful to his Best Friend, above, until the Grace of God has changed his heart. Leave him alone and though he may be loaded with mercy, yet he will never bless the hand that gives him the favor. Should he even be allowed to survive so long as a hundred years, unless the Holy Spirit shall deal with him, he will not once remember his God in grateful thankfulness, but he will go on, from the beginning to the end of the century, always receiving, but never rendering back to the Lord anything like gratitude. We often say that ingratitude is one of the worst of sins—and we feel it so when it concerns ourselves. But we quite forget that it must be worse toward God than it is toward us, for, after all, whatever we may do for others, we are only like stepfathers to the blessings we bestow, for every good gift comes directly from the great Father of Lights, even from God, Himself! We may be the channels conveying comfort to others, but the blessing, itself, comes from Him. Shameful, then, is it that all good should come from God and yet that man should be ungrateful to Him who is the great Source of it all. The charge of ingratitude can be made against us all as we are by nature—it is not merely of some base, mean, groveling spirits that we are now speaking—but of mankind as a whole, looking at it on a broad scale.

Observe, next, from our text, that the Lord does not like that we should forget His love. He says here, by His servant Malachi, “I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?” And in the prophecy of Isaiah He says, “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.” Our ingratitude evidently grieves God’s heart—speaking after the manner of men. He cannot bear that we should forget His love—He presses it upon us as a great fact that He has loved us—and He seems astonished that we should, in our ingratitude, ask the shameful question, “In what way have You loved us?”

I am going to show you, dear Friends, that my text has a double bearing and, first, we will view this Truth of God as it relates to the bulk of men. There are some to whom God has been exceedingly kind, who are not yet converted. They do not even profess to be His people, yet He has dealt with them in such a way that He might truly say to them, “I have loved you,” in the sense in which we read that great Gospel text, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” When I have dealt with that point, as God shall help me, we will then view this Truth as it relates to the Lord’s people and notice that innermost kind of love of which they have tasted. Yet, though God has loved them emphatically, with a very peculiar kind of love, some of them may be in an ill-humor and may be saying, “In what way have You loved us?” An earnest word with them may not be out of place and may do them good.

I. First, then, take the broadest meaning of the text and view THIS TRUTH OF GOD AS IT RELATES TO THE BULK OF MEN.  
God had a love to the nation of Israel, yet many in that nation loved Him not, but turned from Him with ingratitude. Even then He still had a benevolent affection towards that nation, so that He favored them above all other people, and gave them the means of Grace—and sent to them the Light of God while the rest of the world remained in darkness. Still, I am not going to speak, just now, particularly concerning Israel, but to show the bearing of my text upon many who are living today, whether Jews or Gentiles.  
Let us begin by considering the announcement of the text. “I have loved you, says the Lord.” There are many who have very specially participated in God’s favor in the form of sparing love. They are yet alive—it is a wonder that they are, for they have passed through a great many accidents. Others have been killed by very small things, but, dear Friends, very great things have not killed you. You have been very sick. Disease has laid you low. Several times you have been on the very borders of the grave—the mold seemed to slip away from beneath your feet and you were almost entombed! The doctor thought that there was little hope of your recovery and others thought so, too. Yet here you are, still in the land of the living! You have had perils in rivers, perils on the deep, perhaps perils in battle. You have passed through all manner of perils, yet you have been kept alive with death so near! God has very graciously and mercifully preserved you. He has not allowed you to die in your sins. You are getting rather old, too. I perceive that your hair is pretty thickly sown with gray and from others it has almost gone. I see a bald head here and there, or else the snows of many winters lie white above your brow. Getting on to 70 and yet you have not yielded yourself to Christ—is it so with any whom I am now addressing?  
Seventy years of sparing mercy! Truly, God has favored you exceedingly. I do not suppose you are so long-suffering as that with any of your fellow creatures! There are some with whom God has had great patience who have not much patience of their own. If anybody offends them, it is a word and a blow and, sometimes, it is a blow first! But here is the Lord provoked to jealousy every day for 50, 60, 70 years—and all that while He has held back His hand from smiting. All these 70 years that tree has stood in the orchard and it has borne no fruit as yet to repay the Owner’s labor and care—yet has put back the axe again and again, and said, “Let it alone, let it alone, let it alone this year also.” It cannot be always so, you know. And, still, in your case, my unconverted Friend, up to the present there has been much sparing love on the Lord’s part in permitting you to cumber the ground so long.  
That is not all, for there are also many in whom God has exhibited a great amount of restraining love. Read the life of John Newton—in his early days he went on board ship, dealt in slaves, traded on the African coast and, at length, became enslaved himself! He went to great lengths in sin, yet he said that there was always something which seemed to check him and hold him back—and no doubt he would have perished in his sin if it had not been that God had put that check upon him. There are some who would have drunk themselves to death long ago, but they could not get the drink, for they were too poor to purchase it. What a blessing that was for them! And there is many a man who would have gone to great excess of riot, but he has had a broken leg, or he has had some infirmity so that he could not do as others did. And if he is not now among the blackest of the black, it is because he could not be. How grateful men ought to be when God thus restrains them from sin! Though not yet saved, it is a great thing to have been kept back from atrocious crimes and open sins.  
In a field, one day, I saw a horse that had a clog on its foot—a thing I do not admire at all. So I asked the owner why the horse was so fettered. “Well,” he said, “that horse has the bad habit of leaping over the hedges. And if he were free, we could never keep him anywhere. So I would a great deal sooner clog him than lose him.” Some of you have, perhaps, had a clog on your lives and you are likely to still have it because the Lord does not mean to lose you! He will not let you get away from Him. I have seen hogs in the country with great collars round their necks, so that they should not be able to break through the hedge—when they wanted to ramble out of the field, they could not. So, sometimes, a man will, by his very poverty and infirmity, be prevented from going into sin which otherwise he would have committed and which would have been to his eternal ruin—and it is a clear proof of the love of God that He has thus restrained him!  
I have known others who have been kept back by the check which their early training has had upon them. There are some who cannot sin as others do, for a mother’s tears are still remembered by them, and a father’s holy example tethers them to something like morality. It is true that they go as far as they can, but there is a something which will not let them find that pleasure in sin which others do. They drink of the cup of devils, but it does not taste to them as it tastes to their companions— the dregs of it are bitter and they often feel that it will not do for them though it does for others. Surely, the Lord is thus saying to them, “I have loved you in thus restraining you and holding you back from sin.”  
But what a great proof of Divine affection it is when inviting love is added to sparing love and restraining love! Many of you have been placed where you have heard the Gospel faithfully preached. It is one thing to go to a place of worship, but I am sorry to say that it is quite another thing to hear the Gospel—for there are places of worship where the newest and strangest thing to the congregation would be a real Gospel discourse! But many of you, dear Friends, have heard the Gospel from your childhood. You know about the Fall and about the only way of recovery from it. You have heard of the atoning blood and of the way of salvation by simple faith in Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is to even hear the Word! There are millions of the human race who have never heard the Good News— and millions, I fear, will yet die without having even heard the name of Jesus! Even in our own country and under the semblance of religious teaching, what masses of people we have who never hear the Gospel— they hear about forms and ceremonies, and they are deceived by the falsehoods of priest-craft, but the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, is an untold tale to them. So, if you have heard the Gospel, and heard it often, there has been, in that privilege, a wonderful manifestation of the love of God to you! Yet, more than that, you have had full, free, earnest, honest, loving entreaties to come to Christ that you may find life in Him. And you have been assured, time out of mind, that, “whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” and that, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” I cannot boast of anything I have done for some of my hearers, but this I can say—if I could know how to preach the Gospel more plainly than I have done, I would be willing to go to school to learn the art of it. I have preached as best I could and, oftentimes, when I might have uttered a fine sentence, or used a pretty expression, I have flung it to the winds that I might say something short and sharp that would cut deep into the conscience and the heart! I care not what men think of me—I want them to think well of my Master and ill of themselves! I want them to escape from sin and fly to Calvary’s Cross and find eternal salvation there. And it is no small privilege and favor from God for them to be honestly dealt with by the Lord’s servant and to be earnestly entreated to fly to Christ for mercy. “I have loved you, says the Lord.” If you want more proofs than these that I have mentioned, they could be given, but there is not time for more just now, as we must pass on to our next point.  
After the announcement in the text, “I have loved you, says the Lord,” there is a sentence of complaint—“Yet you say, wherein have You loved us?” “How has God ever loved me?” one asks—“I have not a coat on my back.” But how did you come to be without a coat? You drank yourself into this state, did you not? And you think it would be a token of love from God if He were to let you continue to lead a drunken dissolute life and yet have all you want? Why, would not this great sinful London become a thousand times worse than it is if drunkenness did not bring a man to poverty and rags? Would it be any evidence of God’s love to men if He allowed them to live in debauchery and drunkenness, and yet still have all the comforts of this life and not to come to need? I tell you, among all men, I pity most the young lord who has so much gold and silver that he may squander as he pleases and indulge himself in every vice—and then begin again in his evil course! What can that man do but go to the devil unless God’s Grace shall stop him?  
I talked, some time ago, to a young man who bears a very honored name. His father was one of the best Christian men I have known, yet the son seemed to take a pride in telling me of all his ways of sin. His father’s name was not as sacred to him as it was to me, but a thing to be spat upon! Although he could not truthfully find a fault in his father, yet to him, he was “a fool.” As for the young man, when he went on to tell me his story, everything grieved me till he said that he was greatly serving his country by improving the breed of horses and that he had taken to racing. “Oh,” I said, “I feel rather glad to hear that, for now you will soon get cleaned out. Your money will speedily be gone and that, I trust, will be the way home for you.” I asked him whether he knew why Satan did not drive express trains to Hell and when he said that he did not know, I told him that it was because he had found that racehorses carried men and women there faster than anything else that he could invent! And I added that I hoped that, one of these days, he might get a heavy fall and so find himself in the hands of that Great Surgeon who would give him a new heart and a right spirit. We would not encourage any man in any sin whatever, but, sometimes it does happen that the climax of sin becomes the turning-point of the sinner!  
It is a great mercy for many of you working men that if you go even a little distance in certain sins, you get pulled up. Instead of its being an evidence of harshness on God’s part, it is often a token of special favor. I know that I have often had an opportunity of speaking to men very plainly about their sinful state when they have fallen into trouble—and I have seen a little tenderness in them, then—and there has been an opportunity of bringing before them the claims of Christ. Suppose, now, the father in the parable, when his son was feeding the swine in the far country, had said, “There is my dear boy in great poverty. He is very hungry. I will send him a basket of provisions. He has begun to be in need, so I will make him a present of clothes and money just as if he were at home”? What would have been the effect of such treatment? Why, the prodigal would have stayed in the far country and would have died there, away from his father! His hungry belly was the best blessing that he could have had, with the

exception of his father’s love! “When he came to himself,” through his hunger and need, then he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” And the miseries of men, though brought on by their own sin, are often God’s voice saying to them, “‘The way of transgressors is hard. ‘Turn you, turn you: why will you die?’ Leave that evil road.” You who are living in sin have only to look at your afflictions to see, at once, evidences that God has loved you!  
I am also addressing a great many others who ought to see God’s love to them in their mercies. You have a wife and children about you. You have a good business by which you are able to earn your bread even in these days of keen competition. You have good health and a thousand earthly comforts. O my dear Friend, when there is so much poverty and starvation in this great city, should you not be grateful to God? You may well say—  
*“Not more than others I deserve,  
Yet God has given me more.”*  
The very least you can do, surely, is to serve Him and obey His gracious message. If looked at aright, our mercies and our miseries are equally proofs of love. And there are some to whom God has given very choice tokens of love. You, dear Friend, had a holy father—that was no small blessing. You had a godly mother—that was another great mercy. You have a praying wife—I do not know a more priceless gift than that! There are some whom I know who cannot get down to Hell, though they seem to try to do so, for, whichever way they move, there is somebody or other praying for them! And they are conscious that, at this very moment, they are the subject of some loved one’s prayer. Surely, God has an eye of love upon those whom He has encompassed with His own dear servants who, day and night, are praying for them!  
There are others, to whom God has given a very special favor, namely, a tender conscience. When I was a child, if I had done anything wrong, I did not need anybody to tell me of it. I told myself of it and I have cried myself to sleep many a time with the consciousness that I had done wrong! And when I came to know the Lord, I felt very grateful to Him because He had given me a tender conscience. Never tamper with conscience, dear Friends, or seek to make it less sensitive. It will soon get two or three skins over it and become as hard and callous as a farm laborer’s hands. It is a great mercy to have the conscience so tender that it bleeds at the slightest touch of sin—and I know some of you who have not yet given your hearts to Christ, who, nevertheless, have a very tender conscience. It is a great help to any man who has it—and you have no need to say, “In what way have You loved me?” You have proof enough of the Lord’s favor in the fact of His giving you such sensitiveness to sin! Take care that you do not lose it by the abuse of the privilege.  
I have thus put before you God’s announcement, and God’s complaint.  
I close this part of my discourse by reminding you of the suggestion in the text. Does it not suggest to you, my dear Hearer, that you should thank God for all His favors towards you if you have been thus loved? Do not be like the hog that eats the acorns under the oak, but never lifts up its head to bless the tree that gives it its food. It is better, as John Bunyan tells us, to imitate the little chicken that never sips a drop of water without lifting its head as if to thank God for every drop it drinks. God give to every one of you a thankful heart! Should it not also be natural to you to try to please Him? But “without faith it is impossible to please Him.” If there were anything you could do for God, would you not do it? “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” Do you not think that after all His goodness to you, you should trust Him? Do trust Him—He will never deceive you. Lean upon Him—He will not fail you. And then love Him. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so!  
II. Now, in the second place, we are to VIEW THIS TRUTH AS IT RELATES TO THE LORD’S PEOPLE, those to whom God can say, emphatically, in the highest, deepest, fullest sense, “I have loved you.”  
And, first, we will notice the statement on God’s part. “I have loved you, says the Lord.” Now that I am addressing those who are in Christ, what a fullness there is in my subject! God loved you, my Brothers and Sisters, long before the world was made! The verse from which our text is taken goes on to speak of Jacob and Esau, and of God’s choice of Jacob. So, dear Friends, there was an electing love in your case as well as in Jacob’s—  
*“What was there in you that could merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight?”*  
Yet He did take delight in you even from eternity! Perhaps you are the only converted one in your family—to you has been fulfilled that ancient promise, “I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.” I looked with something of wonder upon a Sister who came, this week, to join the Church. She could not remember anyone in her family, as far back as she could go, or any relative of any sort, who ever made any profession of religion, or went to any place of worship. She herself was an amazing instance of how the Grace of God gets at some people! There she was, all by herself, like a brand plucked out of the fire. Some of us have had the same experience, while others of us have the still greater joy of belonging to a family where all or nearly all love the Lord—yet it is equally wonderful to us that God has loved us and our families—and set us apart for Himself.  
If you begin your meditation there, at the wellhead of discriminating Grace and electing love, before all worlds, you can go right on and find some Covenant mercy always at your feet, for the Lord who loved His people gave His Son to die for them! Oh, what love was this! “Herein is love.” Giving His Son to die for them, He gave His Spirit to live in them. Here is wondrous love, again—that the Spirit should come and call us, quicken us, renew us, sanctify us and dwell in us and keep us to this day! If we would speak of the love of God toward His people, where shall we begin and where shall we leave off? Everything that God does to His people is all love—sometimes the love is a little disguised, but the love is always there! If He caresses, it is love. If He chastens, it is love. If He smiles, it is love. If He frowns, it is love, for God is Love and to His people nothing else but Love—infinite, boundless, eternal, immeasurable, inexhaustible, unchangeable, perpetual Love! Oh, the Lord has indeed loved His people, and He does love them, and He will love them, and must love them forever and forever! Let their hearts be glad in this fact.  
Now we must turn to quite another phase of our subject, that is, evil questioning on our part. “Yet you say, wherein have You loved us?” God’s people sometimes get into a very ugly temper—some who are in the Lord’s family are very strange individuals. I would not speak evil of dignitaries—and every child of God is a priest and a king and, therefore, I must mind what I say. But, really, some of them are strange people, at least at times. An old woman told John Newton she was sure that God chose her before she was born, for He never would have chosen her afterwards. And I think there is some truth in that remark as regards others of the chosen family, for they do seem, sometimes, to get into such an odd condition that one does not know what to make of them. I think, no, I am sure I have heard them say to the Lord, by their actions if not in words, “In what way have You loved us?”  
This has happened when they have been in very special trial. One of them said, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.” As much as to say that God whipped him every morning as soon as he was up and kept on whipping him all day long! And he also said, “I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, for there are no bands in their death: and their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Verily,” he added, “I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence.” “Oh!” says somebody, “that was Judas Iscariot who talked like that.” No, it was not! It was Asaph, one of the sweet singers of Israel! But he was getting a long way from the right state of mind when he wrote such words as those. And only the Grace of God brought him back—and he had to say, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.” That was a wonderful confession for a man of God to have to make. “Oh!” says one, “then he is very much to be condemned.” So he is, but mind that you do not have to be condemned for the same sort of thing, for when a man who once was well-to-do comes to be very poor—when he is also racked with disease so that all his nerves are affected and his spirits sink, he may do what others before him have done!  
He is not to be justified, even then, in speaking or thinking harshly of God! It is a great sin and a great wrong under any circumstances, yet it is done, and it is a grievous thing that it should be done. And I pray any child of God who is now doing it to leave off before he is made to smart for it under the Lord’s rod. He will not endure such treatment from you. He tells you that He loves you and He wants you to believe it and to know that all your trials and troubles are sent in love and that, in the end, you shall see that all these things have worked together for your good, seeing that you love God and are the called according to His purpose. I do not know to whom this message especially belongs, but I am certain that there is somebody here who ought to take this Truth of God home to his heart and cease from being envious of the wicked and fretting against the ungodly.  
Sometimes this evil questioning happens when a true child of God gets sad and depressed. A man may be very brave and full of joy—and the hand of God may be suddenly laid upon him and his spirits may sink almost down to despair. At such times, though it ought not to be the case, yet it often happens that the Christian begins to say, “How can God have loved me? I am so low, so sad, so depressed—it cannot be that He loves me.” Do not talk like that, dear Friend! Grieve not the Holy Spirit by saying anything of the kind! But turn to your God and say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” He has made your Heaven secure! He has given you Christ! He has given you a new heart and a right spirit! And He says that you shall shortly be with Him enthroned above the skies! Therefore do not begin to ask, “In what way have You loved me?”  
And, lastly, I have known this question come from professors when they have begun to backslide. When they have grown cold in heart and indifferent in spirit, then they have said, “The Lord does not love us; we have no evidences and tokens that He does.” Do you remember what the prodigal’s elder brother said to his father? “Lo, these many years have I served you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” He said, in effect, that he never had any joy! He was just a servant in the house and nothing more. But if he had had no joy, whose fault was it? What did his father say to him? “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.” If he had liked, he might not only have taken a kid, but a dozen kids and all the goats and sheep his father had, for they were all his own! If a Christian is not happy, let him blame himself, not his Lord!—

*“How vast the treasure we possess!  
How rich Your bounty, King of Grace!  
This world is ours, and worlds to come—  
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home. All things are ours—the gift of God,  
The purchase of a Savior’s blood!  
While the good Spirit shows us how  
To use and to improve them too.”*

So we ought to be glad and to rejoice! And if we do not, it is because we have grown cold and have wandered away from our Lord. If any of you are saying, “In what way have You loved us?” drop that question at once and come home to your Father, and let your Father’s heart be a fountain of delight to you—for He loves you and always will!

I should like to stop just now if you will all think over this one thought. It will not trouble you. It is the sweetest thought and yet it is the simplest that ever can be. Let everyone who believes in Christ try to get the marrow out of this truth. “The Lord loves me.” Not merely that the Lord pities me—thinks of me—cares for me—all that is true. But the Lord loves me, the Lord loves me, the Lord loves me! Oh, the sweet savor of that word, “love”—to be loved of the great heart which sustains the universe! O child of God, you are as much loved of God as if He had not another child to love! You have all His love, as much as if there were none but you for Him to love! Will you not be glad and rejoice in Him? Cease your murmuring and lift up your soul in song—and bless and praise His holy name from this time forth, and even for evermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**ROMANS 9.**

Paul begins by expressing his great sorrow because the Jews had rejected Christ.  
Verses 1-3. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I, myself, were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. They hated Paul intensely—nothing could surpass the malice of the Jews against the man whom they reckoned to be an apostate from the true faith because he had become a follower of Christ, the Nazarene. Yet note what is Paul’s feeling towards his cruel countrymen! He is willing, as it were, to put his own salvation in pawn if by doing so the Jews might but be saved! You must not measure these words by any hard grammatical rule, you must understand them as spoken out of the depths of great loving heart. And when such a heart as Paul had, begins to talk, it speaks not according to the laws of logic, but according to its own immeasurable feelings. There were times when he almost thought that he would, himself, consent to be accursed, “anathema,” cast away, separated from Christ—if thereby he could save the house of Israel, so great was his love towards them! Of course, this could not be, and no one understood better than Paul did that there is only one Substitute and one Sacrifice for sinners. He only mentioned this wish to show how dearly he loved the Jews, so that on their account he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.  
Do you, dear Friends, feel that same concern about your brethren, your kinsmen according to the flesh? If they are not saved, do you greatly wonder that they are not if you have no such concern about them? But when once your heart is brought to this pitch of agony about their souls, if it is our Lord’s will, you will soon see them saved!  
4, 5. Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. This was what troubled the Apostle so much concerning the Jews—that they should have such extraordinary privileges and yet should be cast away, but most of all that Jesus Christ, the Savior of men, should be of their race, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh—and yet they would not receive Him, or be saved by Him! Oh, the terrible hardness of the human heart! And what poor things the richest privileges are unless the Grace of God goes with them to give us the inner secret of true faith in Christ!  
6. Not as though the Word of God has taken no effect. Paul is always jealous lest anyone should suppose that the Word of God has failed, or that the purpose of God has come to nothing.  
6, 7. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children. Now he goes on to show that the blessings of God’s Grace do not go according to carnal descent. It is true that God promised to bless the seed of Abraham, yet He meant that word, “seed,” in a very special sense.  
7. But, In Isaac shall your seed be called. By passing over Ishmael, God showed that there was nothing of saving efficacy in blood or birth. Ishmael was the first-born son of Abraham, but he was passed by, for the promise was, “In Isaac shall your seed be called.”  
8-10. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the Word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac. When there were twins to be born of her.  
11-13. (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls), it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Here were two children born at the same time, yet Esau was not of the true “seed.” It matters not how closely you may be connected with the people of God—unless you have a new heart and a right spirit, yourself, you still do not belong to the Covenant seed, for it is not of the flesh that this privilege comes, but God has chosen a spiritual seed according to His own good pleasure.

14. What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! Paul knew very well that there would always be some who would cry out against this doctrine, that men would say that God was partial and unjust. If he had not foreseen that the declaration of this doctrine would provoke such remarks, he would not have put it so—“What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!”

15, 16. For He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. You know that the modern way of meeting objections to Scripture is to give up everything to the infidel and then say that you have won him—but the true Christian way is to give up nothing at all—and if the Truth of God is objectionable, to make it, if possible, still more objectionable, to turn the very hardest side it has, right in front of the face of man, and to say, “This is God’s Truth—refuse it at your peril.” I believe that half the attempts to win over unbelievers by toning down the Truths of God have simply been to the dishonoring of the Truths of God and the destruction of the doubter—and that it would always be better to do as the Apostle does here —not to disavow the Truth of God, but to proclaim it as fully, faithfully and plainly as possible. Let us again read what he says here—“Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy.”

17. For the Scripture says unto Pharaoh. Paul is now going to show the other side of the same Truth of God—“The Scripture says unto Pharaoh.”  
17-19. Even for this same purpose have I raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore has He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardens. You will say, then, unto me, Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will? Paul knew that the doctrine would be objected to on this ground. Evidently he intended to assert something which was open to this objection, which would naturally suggest itself to men—“Why does He yet find fault? For who has resisted His will?”  
20-25. No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea, I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. See the grand style in which God talks to men? He speaks after a royal fashion—“I will.” He asks no man’s permission for what He will do—“I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”

26. And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people. Though He, Himself, had said it,  
26. There shall they be called the children of the living God. See the splendor of this Divine Sovereignty which shows itself in wondrous, unexpected acts of Grace, selecting and taking to itself those who seem to be self-condemned, and even condemned by Himself, of whom He had said, “You are not My people”?  
27-31. Isaiah also cries concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel are as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah. What shall we say, then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith? But Israel, which followed after the Law of righteousness, has not attained to the Law of righteousness? Does it not seem strange that men who were outwardly sinful, who were utterly ignorant of any way of righteousness and even indifferent to it, have been, by the Grace of God, led to seek righteousness in the right way, namely, by faith in Christ, and they have found it, and God’s electing love is seen in them? While others, who seem very sincere and devout as to outward ritual, by following it and it, alone, have missed their way and never found the true righteousness? The Sovereignty of God appears in the choosing of those who follow the way of faith and the casting away of those who follow the way of mere outward righteousness. But why did Israel miss the way?  
32, 33. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the Law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense. I say again that there have been great attempts made with logical dynamite to blow up this great rock of offense and to clear away every difficulty from the path of the man who wants to be saved by his own method, and to make everything pleasant all around for him. But against this course of action we bear our continual protest, for it is not according to the mind of God, or the teaching of His Word— “As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense.”  
33. And whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. But if they believe not on Him, they shall, one day, be ashamed and, meanwhile, the eternal purpose of God shall still stand! He shall still be glorious whatever men shall do, or shall not do!

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LOVE’S LAMENTATION

NO. 2782

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 8, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1878.

**“I have loved you, says the LORD. Yet you say,  
In what way have You loved us?”  
Malachi 1:2.**

THE children of Israel had passed through great trouble, but all of it was brought upon them by their own sin. Yet, in their time of trouble, God had remembered them in the greatness of His Grace and mercy. They had been carried into captivity in Babylon and there they had wept when they remembered Zion. They had been scattered over the face of the earth, but God had heard their groans and had restored them to their own land and given them a period of peace and prosperity. But now that they were cured of idolatry, they fell into self-righteousness, indifference and worldly mindedness. The ordinances of God’s house were neglected, or, if they were attended too outwardly, it was in such a careless, heartless manner that God was insulted by their worship rather than adored thereby. For these reasons, new sorrows were caused to fall upon them, for, under the old dispensation, it was God’s rule that His obedient people were a prosperous people—but whenever they wandered in heart away from Him, then they began to suffer. His message to them, by Moses, was, “If you will walk contrary unto Me, I will walk contrary unto you, also, in fury and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins”— and so they found it. They were, therefore, now in a very sad condition, but they had no consciousness of the real cause of it. They were fretting and fuming against God instead of striking out boldly at their sins— complaining of the severity of the Divine chastisement rather than confessing the iniquity by which they had brought the rod upon themselves!

So God sent His servant Malachi, the last of a long train of Prophets, to seek to bring them to repentance—to try to touch their hearts and consciences by reminding them of His manifold favor and of their base ingratitude towards Him who had treated them so graciously and with such undeserved mercy. This is to be the subject of my discourse. I want, if I can, to get at men’s hearts. I shall not have much to say by way of instruction—I want, rather, to speak so as to impress and awaken my hearers, seeking to set your consciences at work so that all of us—for I hope there will be something to touch us all—may be compelled to bow before God in true repentance and with genuine confession of sin.

The text seems to me to contain two things and to suggest a third. First, here is the lamentation of love—“I have loved you, says the Lord.” Secondly, here is the insensibility of ingratitude—“Yet you say, In what way have You loved us?” They would not see any signs and tokens of God’s love, for they did not believe in it. And the third thing on which I am going to speak is the discoveries of Grace, for, though it is not in the text, the text leads us to think of it and the 5th verse tells us of it—“Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel.”

I. Our first theme, then, is to be THE LAMENTATION OF LOVE—“I have loved you, says the Lord.”  
The lamentation is abrupt and appears to end without completing its own sense. It is the exclamation of unrequited affection—“I have loved you, says the Lord.” It is a sorrowful lament—as the eyes of God rest on His rebellious people, He seems to say to them, “You are acting thus wickedly against Me, yet I have loved you. You offer polluted bread upon My altar. You bring the blind, the lame and the sick as sacrifices unto Me and thus you treat Me with derision, yet I have never treated you so, for I have loved you, says the Lord,” as if He were about to say a great deal more, but suddenly stopped. His grief would not let Him say more, so the sentence stands in its rugged majesty of pathos, “I have loved you, says the Lord.”  
Taking this expression, first, in its lowest sense, namely, the love of benevolence, it applies to all mankind. The Lord can still say to those who forget Him and care nothing for Him, “I have loved you.” Great masses of mankind live as if there were no God. If God were really dead it would, apparently, not make the slightest difference in their thoughts and feelings. They are, practically, dead to Him and they act as if He were dead to them. The Lord seems to me to be speaking to some of you who never appear to have any thought about Him—and He says to you, “I have treated you lovingly. I have permitted you to live and kept you in being. You are not suffering pain—the blood leaps in your veins, you are in robust and vigorous health, yet, alas—you are spending that strength in sin! Your children have been spared to you. Your house is replete with comfort and you have no little satisfaction in the things of this life. I gave you all these things—your corn, your wine and your oil—and I have clothed you and kept you alive. Shall I still keep on loving you in this fashion, loading you with benefits, causing you to prosper, giving you all that heart can wish—and will you, in return, continue to be hard, cold and indifferent to Me? Must I still be your Benefactor and you remain an ingrate? Must I, from morning to night, and from night to morning, visit you with kindness, and shall I never have anything from you but sullen silence and heartless indifference?”  
There are some of you who have been so prospered in the things of this world and who have been made so happy in your homes, that you ought to love the Lord who has done such great things for you! And He seems to say to you, through my lips, “I have loved you. Will you never remember Me, never thank Me, never give yourself up to Me, never accept Me as your Father and your Friend?” It is a natural and just lament of love that it should have done all this and yet should be reciprocated by forgetfulness.  
Certain men, however, go further than simply forgetting God, for they actively oppose Him. They can never seem to find language foul enough to apply to the religion of Jesus Christ. Those who are zealous on behalf of religion are described by them as cants, hypocrites and I know not what besides. And anything like conscientiousness is ridiculed by them as Phariseeism. They know better, but that is the way in which they oppose God. Yet, as He looks upon them in pity, He can say to them, “I have loved you. You oppose Me, but why do you act so?” When our Lord Jesus was upon the earth and the Jews took up stones again and again to stone Him, He said to them, “Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do you stone Me?” He had healed their sick, satisfied their hunger and bestowed upon them countless gifts—yet, again and again, they took up stones to stone Him, so He said to them, “Why do you act thus towards Me?” And God might speak to many of you in similar style and say, “I have dealt with you in love and you have scoffed at Me and opposed Me and I have only met your opposition with a still greater display of love! With a strange perseverance of unappreciated and unrequited love, I have still pursued you—then why do you rebel against Me as you do?”  
I might speak to some of you in another strain. O Sir, your mother died rejoicing in hope! Then why do you hate that Christ who was her joy and delight? Has the Lord Jesus Christ ever made your children become unkind to you? Has He ever been the means of any wrong being done to you? You know that it has not been so, but that all His influence among the sons of men has been for the good of the whole commonwealth and for the establishment of peace and righteousness the world over! Why, then, do men oppose Him so fiercely? Some of them seem almost to foam at the mouth whenever they mention His sacred name. Well may He, then, as He looks upon the atheist and the Socinian, say to them, as He says to so many more, “I have treated you with love, yet this is the only return I receive from you. Shall it always be so?”  
The same expression may be used concerning the many who have long heard the Gospel and who yet remain unsaved. Now I can speak personally to a great many of you who are here. God has indeed shown His love to you in permitting you to meet with us in this House of Prayer. You might have been born in some far-off country where you would have been taught the abominations of Paganism, or Romanism, or Mohammedanism. The name of Jesus might never have been sounded in your ears— yet it has been and, with many of you, from your very childhood! I will not speak in praise of my own ministry, but I will say this—I have always preached the Gospel to the best of my ability. All that I have known of the Word of God, I have spoken and I have tried to use the best words that I could get together in proclaiming the Gospel message. And seeing that so many hundreds and even thousands have found the Lord Jesus Christ here, I am right in saying that you have been in a highly privileged place. You have had opportunities given to you which are denied to a great many people—and God has proved that He has loved you in giving you such privileges. If you still remain hearers only, and not doers of the Word, I can fancy my Lord and Master weeping over you as He wept over Jerusalem, when He said, “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!”  
The words of our text will also be applicable to many when they come to die. When God comes to look back upon the whole of a man’s life and to recall the way in which He has treated that man from the first day of his history to the last, He will be able to say to many a man who will die unregenerate, “Yet, I loved you. I put you into the arms of a woman who taught you to fear My name. I placed you in circumstances that ought to have led you to thought, to prayer, to repentance and to faith. I have preserved your life and cared for you until now that you lie there dying, and you will be lost because of despised mercy and unrequited love! I called, but you refused! I stretched out My hands, but you regarded not—and now you are lost and must be driven away from My Presence forever—not because I treated you roughly, or denied to you the message of salvation, or shut you out of Heaven, but because you yourselves spurned My love and set at nothing all My entreaties.”  
I think I once told you the story of a godly woman who was wonderfully kind to her very unkind and wicked husband. She was so obedient, gentle, affectionate and patient that he even boasted about what a good wife he had. And in company, one night, long past the hour of midnight, he said that if he took his drunken companions home with him, late as it was, she would receive them like a lady and prepare a supper for them— and never show by word or sign that it was hard upon her, or that they were not welcome. And it came true! When he took them home, she got together such things as she had and made a decent feast for them. And one of them addressed her, afterwards, and said that they had come there as the result of a wager—and they could not understand how she could have patience with such a man as her husband was, for they themselves felt ashamed of the way he had acted towards her. When they pressed her for her answer, she said, with tears “I am afraid that my husband’s only happiness will be in this life. I have prayed for him and sought in vain to bring him to a better mind, but my fear is that when this life is over, there will be no more happiness for him, so I mean to make him as happy as he can be in his present condition.”  
It seems to me that God sometimes acts upon that plan, for He gives to some men more than heart can wish—their eyes stand out with fatness and He multiplies to them all earthly blessings because He is a God who would make men as happy as they can be. So He will let them have happiness here, for, in the eternity to come, it will not be possible for His Justice to deal out anything to them but those sorrows which are the inevitable consequence of perseverance in sin!  
Even in this first part of my theme there seems to me to be much that ought to touch many hearts. But when I come to the higher sense of the term, “love,” and speak of God’s own chosen people to whom He can, with emphasis, say, “I have loved you,” oh, how sad it is that the Lord has to often say this to them while they are in their unregenerate state! He has chosen them unto eternal life. He has written their names in the Lamb’s Book of Life. His well-beloved Son has already bought them with His precious blood, yet look at them—slaves to lust, rioting in sin, or merely hearers of the Word, but not doers of it, still rejecting the Savior and continually going from bad to worse. Oh, could someone only echo in their ears this little message of God, “I have loved you,” could they—would they—remain as they are, without the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, or any desire to be drawn towards Him? God knows all about His eternal love towards them and the choice that He has made of them. And often must He say, as He beholds their heart of stone, brow of brass and neck of steel, “Yes, I have loved you, O you poor foolish creatures. And you shall yet be Mine and shall sing among the angels, though now you are rioting in sin and reveling in iniquity!” I think I hear the Lord thus graciously expressing the inmost feelings of His heart and the very repetition of the message ought to touch all our hearts.  
But, further, think how the Lord must express Himself, in a similar style, concerning wandering backsliders. There are some whom we have every reason to regard as His people. In times past they have given abundant evidence that they were His, but they have grown spiritually cold, as if a death-chill had struck them in their heart. They have, apparently, gone back to the world and they are now far off from the place where they used to be. But the Lord looks upon them in their wretchedness and sin and He says to them, “I have loved you. You may be trying to live without prayer, but I have loved you. You may have ceased to frequent the House of God, but I have loved you. I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord, for I am married to you.” “The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away.” He has not sued for a divorce from His unfaithful spouse, as He might well have done. “Only acknowledge your iniquity,” He says, “confess that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and you shall be fully and freely forgiven, for I have loved you.”  
I pray that my blessed Master may Himself speak to any poor backslider who is here, for, surely, His gentle, gracious accents ought to melt even a heart of stone! If you were ever really His, however far you may have wandered from Him, do not hesitate to come back to Him, for He still says to you, “I have loved you.” Yes, dear Friends, whenever any of the Lord’s people get into a sad, lean, low condition—when they begin to grow cold and to doubt whether they can be the children of God at all—it is well for them to hear the great Father say to them, again and again, “I have loved you. I have loved you. I have loved you. I, who made the heavens and the earth, have loved you. I have loved you from before the foundation of the world. I have not merely pitied you as a man might pity a starving dog, but I have loved you with all My heart. I have loved many others beside you, but, still, I have as much love for you as if there were nobody else for Me to love in all the world.” Surely God will cause this simple but most comforting Truth to come home to the hearts of His people and then they will cry, “We will arise and go to our Father, and confess our wanderings and our sins, that we may once more be at peace with Him.”  
Are you, dear Friend, very sorrowful just now? Have you lost the Light of God’s Countenance? Are you sighing and crying for the peace you once enjoyed? Well, then, just do what I have been bidding the sinner do! Come to Christ all over again and, at the same time, make diligent enquiry to find out whether there is any wrong thing in your character that is bringing you into this state of misery. How long is it since you have thoroughly swept out the secret chambers of your heart? If you leave a room unswept for a little while, you know how the cobwebs and the dust gather and settle all over it. Look even at the snow after it has been lying for a day or two in such a foggy, smoky, grimy city as this—it is positively black! Well, if the snow gets black in this smoke, do you not think that your soul will also get foul and dirty? This world is a bad place to live in. To maintain a high condition of purity, you will need a deal of Divine Grace, or you certainly will not do it. Ah, me, how little there is around us that can help us toward God—and how much there is to draw us away from Him! Now, because of all this impurity by which you are surrounded, your soul needs to be constantly swept out. You had need cry to the Holy Spirit to light the candle and frequently sweep out the room, for unless there is a constant cleansing, there will be continual filth and the heart will never be fit for Christ to come into it and to abide in it. So much, then, concerning the lamentation of love.  
II. Now, in the second place, I have to speak upon THE INSENSIBILITY OF INGRATITUDE.  
That is a very cruel answer in our text—can you detect the heartless ingratitude in it? I am afraid I do not know how to pronounce the words aright so as to bring out all the evil that is in them. First, you hear God saying, in very plaintive tones, “I have loved you.” And then, instead of that declaration touching the hearts of those who had wandered from Him, and causing them to ask for mercy at His hands, you get this wicked question, “In what way have You loved us?” That is all the reply they give! It is short and sharp, full of unbelief, pride, and rebellion—“In what way have You loved us?” Does anybody really ask that question of God nowadays? Oh, yes! I have heard it many times.  
That question is sometimes asked by men who are loaded with temporal mercies. There is nothing that God has denied to them. When they were younger, if anybody had told them that they would be worth as much as they now actually possess, they would have said that it was beyond their utmost expectations. Yet now that they have all that their heart can desire and their eyes stand out with fatness, they put to God this shameful question, “In what way have You loved us?” They say that

they cannot see any sign of the goodness of God in their prosperity—they trace all their riches and their increase to their own wit, wisdom, industry and perseverance—they leave God out of the matter altogether! And so, although His mercies stare them in the face and they wear the tokens of those mercies on their backs, and carry them within their physical frame, yet they continue to say to Him, “In what way have You loved us?”  
I have known others who have practically said the same thing by the way in which they have slighted Gospel privileges—a man of this stamp, who has been a Hearer of the Gospel for, perhaps, 20 or 30 years, yet says—“I do not see any proofs of any particular favor that God has shown to me.” O Sir, if you had been cast into Hell, you would have learned to prize the privilege of listening to the Gospel when you had lost it forever! If you had been, for even a little while, in a lunatic asylum, you might, when you come out, begin rightly to value the blessing of restored reason with which you are able to understand at least something of that Gospel which you have so long neglected and despised! It is strange that there should be people living on praying ground and on pleading terms with God, with Heaven to be had for the asking, who yet say to the Lord, “In what way have You loved us?” Ah, Sirs, some of you see what kings and Prophets desired to see, but died without the sight, yet you say to God, “In what way have You loved us?” How happy ought to be your ears that hear the Gospel’s joyful sound, yet, as you hear it not in your hearts, you cry to the Lord, “In what way have You loved us?”  
Yes, and I have heard this question put very bitterly by some who have murmured at their temporal trials. “How has God been gracious to us?” they ask. “Look at me,” says one, “I am very poor. I work as hard as any slave, yet I get but little return for all my toil, and my lot is a truly pitiable one. In what respects has God loved me?” “Look,” says another, “at this broken leg.” Or perhaps the lament is, “I was born deformed.” Or, “I lost an eye early in life! Don’t talk to me about God loving me.” Yet there are many, now in Heaven, who might never have gone there if it had not been for their poverty, their infirmity and their pain. Often, when God is hedging up a man’s way with thorns to stop him from going to destruction, he thinks that the Lord is unkind to him, whereas the thorns in the way are the surest tokens of Divine Love to him! Yes, Sir, you were once able to drink greedily from the muddy stream of worldly pleasure and you kept at it as long as you could. I do not know where you might have been by this time had not God struck you down, taken away your power of enjoyment and deprived you of the means by which you indulged yourself in sin! What better service could He have rendered to you? The silly, self-willed child will not thank his father for the rod, but when he becomes a man, if that rod has been really useful to him, he will respect and love the wise and kind father who did not spare him for all his crying! And you, dear Friend, who are in trouble and sorrow, say that God is dealing harshly with you—yet those trials are all sent in love. That sharp affliction of yours is the surgeon’s knife that is cutting away the proud flesh and deadly cancers which, otherwise, would destroy you! God is working for your good in all that He is doing—it is His love that is doing it all.  
I am sorry to say that I have known some who appeared to be the Lord’s people, who have said to Him, “In what way have You loved us?” because they have become very doubting. They have not looked at eternal things—they have kept looking at their outward inconveniences and sorrows. The poor man has said, “With this leaky roof to my cottage, can God really love me?” And the poor woman has said, “With this rheumatism in my aching bones and my poor little children half clad and ill fed, can God really love me?” And even the heirs of Heaven have sometimes asked of God, “In what way have You loved us?” But when they have come back to their right mind and have rightly understood the ways of the Lord, they have blessed Him for their troubles as much as for their joys—and they have seen how all things work together for good to them that love God!  
It shows how wrong is the state of our heart if we can live in the midst of God’s continued mercies and yet cannot realize that He loves us. If any of you cannot see any tokens of the benevolence and goodness of God to you, surely you must be blind! And if, dear child of God, you fail to perceive what the Lord has done for you, anoint your eyes with eye-salve that you may see, for He has done everything for you! He has given you this world and worlds to come. Yes, and He has given Himself to you, to be your Father. He has given you His Son, to be your Savior. He has given you His Spirit, to be your constant Comforter. What more can He do for you than He has done, you who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you in the Gospel? Therefore, never let this thought flit across your soul and never let this question pass the door of your lips, “In what way have You loved us?”  
Thus have I spoken upon the insensibility of ingratitude as well as the lamentation of love.  
III. Now, lastly, I have to speak, for just a few minutes, upon THE DISCOVERIES OF GRACE. I am hoping and praying that these last words which I am about to utter, may come true in the experience of a great many in this place, as well as of others who will read the discourse when it is printed.  
Suppose you should be converted—become a child of God, and be saved—the first thing you will discover will be that God has loved you. What a change that will make in all your feelings towards Him! You will never again say to the Lord, “In what way have You loved me?” But, if you feel as I did when I first found out the love of God to me, you will begin tracing your whole history, from your cradle up to the moment of your conversion—and you will say, “I can see the Lord’s loving hand there, and there, and there, and there, and there.” You will look upon your trials, your losses, your crosses, your removals from one village or town to another and you will say, “Ah, it was love that watched over me all the while! It was love that was arranging all that happened for my good.” And you will be amazed at the difference that feeling will make in your life! Before you knew the Lord, you could not realize His love, but, as soon as ever you really know Him, you will say, “All His dealings with me have been proofs of His love.” You will put up your hands in wonder and say, “How could I have been such a mad fool as to go on sinning against God in spite of such wondrous love? It really seems to me as if the more I sinned, the more He loved me—and the worse I was to Him, the better He was to me. Over against my black sins He set the whiteness and brightness of His Grace and He seemed as if He conquered me, not by the sheer force of His might, but by the superior power of His boundless love.”  
Further, if you shall be converted, it will not be long before you will find out that in addition to God being loving and kind to you in His Providence, He so loved you that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for you. The general Truth of God that Christ died for sinners is unspeakably precious—but the sweetest Truth in all the world is for any of us to be able to say, “He died for me.” O my dear Hearer, if you were ever to find out that Christ thought of you in His last moments upon the Cross—that He distinctly and personally poured out His life for you and that your name—I mean your very own name—is engraved upon the palms of His hands and that you, in your own person, are continually before Him, surely that would be a heart-breaker for you! All the Law and the terrors in the world might only harden you in your rebellion, but one glance of the dear languid eyes of Him who hung upon the Cross—one gracious look of His—will make your spirit flow like the streams of water that ran out of the Rock in the wilderness! May the Lord, in His mercy, enable each one of you to say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me,” for then you will soon be at His feet as weeping, yet rejoicing penitents!  
Again, if you are really converted, so that you come to know the love of God, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, another thing which you will soon find out will be God’s election of you from eternity. How well I recollect when first that ray of light struck into my soul, as I seemed to hear Him say to me personally, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” That great Truth was revealed to me in this way. I said to myself, “Here am I converted, pardoned, saved. There are my school-fellows, the boys and young men with whom I used to be associated—they are not saved. Who has made the difference between us?” I dared not say that I had, and so put the crown of salvation on my own head. I saw, in a single moment, that God must have made the distinction if I was, in any degree whatever, different from my fellow creatures. Then I said to myself, “If God has made this difference in me and done more for me than He has done for others, there must always have been in His heart thoughts of love towards my soul, since He never changes. What He does today is the result of the purpose which was in His heart from before the foundation of the world.” So there rolled into my heart, like a stream of honey, the assurance that He had loved me, with complacency, long before the earth was formed, or the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round! Then I said to myself, “O you fool of fools, that you should ever have treated your God as you have done! Are you, indeed, one of His elect and chosen people and yet have you lived all these years without hardly a thought of Him who has loved you from eternity?” I blamed myself, as I still do, that I was so slow to recognize His eternal choice of me. And if the Lord shall be pleased to say to you, in the words of my text, “I have loved you”—when you once really know His love to you, His redemption of you and His election of you, personally, you will no more say, “In what way have You loved me?” But you will bow, in speechless but grateful reverence, at His dear feet, worshipping and adoring the greatness of His Infinite Love!  
I do not know how you feel, Brothers and Sisters, who know the Lord, but I feel that if I could live a thousand lives, I would like to live them all for Christ—and I would even then feel that they were all too little a return for His great love to me. And if any of us could have Grace and strength enough given to us to die a thousand deaths for Christ, He well deserves them for having loved us as He has done.  
There are just two things that I want to say to you, and with them I will finish my discourse.  
First, some of you are still living in sin. Perhaps you hardly know why you came to the Tabernacle tonight. Possibly it was only out of curiosity. I am no thought-reader or mind-reader, but I can imagine that some of you have been in the habit of pooh-poohing all religion—ridiculing it— and you have done so for a long while. Now, suppose that one of these days you should preach the very faith which now you despise, just as the Apostle Paul did? Do not utter more words than you can help in reply to this suggestion of mine, for you will have to eat them, however many there are of them! Do not go any further in the wrong road than you can help, because you will have to come all that way back. I dare to tell you, in my Master’s name, that some of you who hate Him, will love Him before long—though now you oppose Him all you can, by-and-by you will be among the first to vindicate His cause! My Lord knows all about you and as He has bought you with His precious blood, do you think He will not claim you as His own? He has written your name in His Book of Life, so the devil, himself, and all his legions cannot take from you the everlasting life to which His predestinating Grace has ordained you! You shall yet bow down before Him. The day draws near when you who now talk in a hectoring fashion, will be found lying at His feet as suppliants! Then, when He has drawn you to Himself, and has favored you with much of His love—when one of these Sabbath nights you shall be found sitting at His Table and the spikenard shall give forth a sweet smell, and your very soul shall seem to be carried away to Heaven because of the Presence of your Beloved, I wonder what you will think of yourself then?  
Suppose He were then to whisper in your ear—I know He will not do so—but suppose He were to remind you of all your ill behavior towards Him—He will not do so, because He gives liberally and upbraids not—but suppose your own memory should be your accuser and should say to you, “Remember that you were a bond slave in the land of Egypt. Recollect those black sins that came out of your heart, those foul words that issued from your lips”—do you not think that as you look up into the face of Jesus, your Lord and Master, you will say, “Ah, my gracious Savior, I have thought of a fresh reason for loving You. I knew it before, but it has come home to me more vividly now, than ever—should not they love most who have had most forgiven? That is my case, my Lord. Therefore, bind me to Yourself and let me never again wander away from You, but let me love You even to the end.”  
And lastly, dear Friends, I wonder what we shall think of ourselves when we get away from communion with the saints on earth and sit up yonder with our Savior in Heaven? There is one who was once a drunk— what a strange thing it will be for him to find himself in Heaven! Here he was stuttering and stammering and could not speak plainly because of his drunkenness, but he has been washed and cleansed in the blood of Jesus—and there he is, singing more sweetly, even, than the angels! Would you believe it? That very man up there—that bright spirit robed in white, who sings the loudest of them all, used to curse and swear and illtreat his wife because she went to the House of God—yet there he is, purified and glorified! See what Sovereign Grace can do? But what must he think of himself when he gets up there? I was trying to imagine what must be the emotion of such a man as Paul, who had been a persecutor and injurious, when he looks into the face of his dear Lord and Master, and casts his crown before Him, and yet all the while thinks, “But I persecuted Him!”  
I wonder whether that man is there who pierced His side and those soldiers who nailed Him to the tree? Certainly, he is there who railed at Him on the Cross and then repented and was forgiven! And he is there who said, “I know not the Man.” When they are singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing,” I think that, sometimes, Peter pauses a while—and those around wonder why Peter has left off singing, but he cannot help it. Emotions of unutterable gratitude are coming over him as he remembers that he has been forgiven through the wondrous Grace of Christ who loved him even when He was being denied by him with oaths and curses!  
I wish that I could communicate to you the emotions of my own spirit as I think of the greatness of man’s sin and set it side by side with the greatness of God’s Grace—as I think of unspeakable love and of unutterably vile sin which that love puts away. Come, dear Friends, and let us all join together to bless and magnify the wondrous love which God has revealed to us in His Word—and may we all meet in Heaven, to the praise of the glory of His Grace, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

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THE MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT

NO. 470

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in.” Malachi 3:1.**

The Lord’s people delight in the Everlasting Covenant itself. It is an unfailing source of consolation to them so often as the Holy Spirit leads them to its green pastures and makes them to lie down beside its still waters. They can sweetly sing of it from youth even to hoar hairs, from childhood even to the tomb, for this theme is inexhaustible—

*“Your Covenant the last accent claims  
Of this poor faltering tongue;  
And that shall the first notes employ  
Of my celestial song.”*

They delight to contemplate the antiquity of that Covenant, remembering that before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round, the interests of the saints were made secure in Christ Jesus. It is peculiarly pleasing to them to remember the sureness of the Covenant. They love to meditate upon “the sure mercies of David.” They delight to celebrate the Covenant in their songs of praise, as “signed and sealed and ratified, in all things ordered well.”

It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its immutability, as a Covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, things present, nor things to come, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall ever be able to violate—a Covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the Rock of Ages. They rejoice also to feast upon the fullness of this Covenant, for they see in it all things provided for them. God is their portion, Christ their companion, the Spirit their comforter, earth their lodge and Heaven their home.

They see in it not only some things but all things. Not only a help to obtain some desirable possessions but an inheritance reserved and entailed to every soul that has an interest in this ancient and eternal deed of gift. Their eyes sparkled when they saw it as a treasure-trove in the Bible. But O how their souls were gladdened when they saw in the last will and testament of their Divine kinsman that it was bequeathed to them! More especially it is the pleasure of God’s people to contemplate the graciousness of this Covenant.  
They see that the Law was made void because it was a Covenant of

Works and depended upon merit, but this they perceive to be enduring because Divine Grace is the basis, Divine Grace the condition, Divine Grace the strain, Divine Grace the bulwark, Divine Grace the foundation, Divine Grace the top stone.

From the beginning even to the end, it is all of Grace. They see that the Covenant runs on this wise, not, “I will if you will,” but,” I will and you shall.” Not, “I will reward if you deserve,” but, “I will forgive even if you sin.” Not, “I will cleanse if you are clean,” but, “I will cleanse if you are filthy,” not, “I will keep if you assist,” but, “I will bring you back even if you are lost, I will surely save you and preserve you even to the end.”

I know some Christians—bleary-eyed, like Leah—who cannot see afar off, and hence the councils of eternity they cannot behold. I know some Believers of weak knees and feeble joints who are afraid of that strong word, “Covenant.” But they that are men in Christ Jesus, who by reason of years have had their senses exercised, know that the Covenant is a treasury of wealth, a granary of food, a fountain of life, a storehouse of salvation, a charter of peace and a haven of joy. The Everlasting Covenant! Let my soul but anchor here, then howl, winds and roar, hurricanes! I will not fear.

The Everlasting Covenant! Let my soul but cast its anchor here and come life with all its tribulations, and death with all its pains and terrors, my soul laughs them all to scorn—

*“The Gospel bears my spirit up;  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation for my hope,  
In oaths and promises and blood.”*

We advance a step further towards our text and remark that the “Messenger of the Covenant” is a welcome ambassador to those who are interested in those exceedingly great and precious promises which pertain to life and godliness. But, waiving further preface, let us notice, first, that we delight in the office of Christ as the Messenger of the Covenant. Next, that we delight in the way in which He fulfils that office. And then, we shall conclude by noticing some ways in which we show our delight.

I. First, then, WE DELIGHT IN CHRIST IN HIS OFFICE OF MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.  
What is that office? I shall need two or three words to explain it. When we read of Christ as Messenger of the Covenant, I think we may understand Him to be a Covenanted Messenger. Now, God has sent many messengers, whose words, when they have been spoken in His name, He has not suffered to fall to the ground. So far they were covenanted messengers. But these persons sometimes spoke of themselves, and then God had not bound Himself by promise to keep their words. Sometimes, even like the Apostle Paul, they would have to pause and say, “I think I have the Spirit of God,” but they might not be certain.  
But Christ is a Covenanted Messenger. God has sworn to Him to do for us whatever He may promise to us, so that if we believe in God we may believe also in Him, since He speaks for God, and His every word is settled in Heaven —  
*“Arrayed in mortal flesh  
He like an angel stands,  
And holds the promises  
And pardons in His hands—  
Commissioned from His Father’s Throne  
To make His Grace to mortals known.”*  
Again, He is the Covenanted Messenger—on our behalf Christ swore to God to carry out that part of the Covenant which was left for man, and so He stood as a Covenanted Messenger between God and man. The word “plenipotentiary” just hits my thought. You know sometimes kings send out ambassadors to try and negotiate peace but they have limited powers. On other occasions ambassadors are sent with unlimited, unrestricted power, to make peace or not, and to make it just as they will.  
Now Christ comes as the Covenanted Ambassador of God, as the Plenipotentiary of Heaven. Let Him do what He will, God is with Him. Let Him promise what He may, God ratifies it. Let Him speak what He will to our souls, His word shall certainly be fulfilled. Now do you not rejoice in Christ in this office? He has said to us, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” “Rest,” says the eternal Father, as He confirms Jesus’ word. “Go in peace, your sins which are many are forgiven you.” “They are forgiven you,” says the court of Heaven, “go in peace.” “He that believes on Me is not condemned,” says Christ. And the Father says Himself, “He is not condemned.”  
There is not a word of the Gospel which the Father has left unsanctioned. You need not, therefore, when you venture upon Christ’s word and Christ’s merit, think you are resting on something which God will not accept. He is God’s Covenanted Messenger. He is sworn to accept whom Christ accepts and since Christ saves all that trust in Him, the Father accepts them likewise. He will certainly save all whom Christ has declared shall be saved.  
This, however, does not exhaust the meaning. Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant, in the next place, as the messenger of the Father to us. Moses was messenger of the Covenant of Works and his face shone, for the ministration of death was glorious. But Christ is the messenger of the Covenant of Grace. O let His face shine in your esteem, you saints of the Lord, for the ministration of life must be more glorious, far! Christ comes to us to tell us all that God will tell. The revelation of God is Christ. If you would know God, he that has seen Christ has seen the Father. God’s Word is Jesus, He speaks fully by Him.  
Would you know the Father’s decree? “I will declare the decree,” says Christ. Would you know His Character? See every attribute of God in the Man, Christ. Would you know His designs? See the designs of God effected in the works of Jesus. Would you know in fact all that is knowable of God? Understand that you can see it, not in nature, nor in Providence but in Jesus—  
*“God in the Person of His Son,  
Has all His mightiest works outdone.”*  
And will you not delight in Him as such—as God’s Messenger to you? If the very ministers of Christ are delightful to you, if their feet are beautiful upon the tops of the mountains when they bring glad tidings, how much more beautiful is He who comes from God to man, with messages of peace, declaring to us that God is reconciled to us and accepts us in the Beloved? Sing His praises, O you that have heard His voice. Glory in His holy name, O you that have received His report, unto whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed, for as God’s Messenger to you, you should delight in Him.  
But then, He is, as the Messenger of the Covenant, our Messenger and Mediator with the Father. You want to tell your Father something—Jesus stands to carry the message for you. George Herbert, in one of his poems, pictures Christ as using the hole in his side as a bag to carry our letters to Glory—  
*“If you have anything to send or write,  
(I have no bag but here is room)  
Unto My father’s hands and sight  
(Believe Me) it shall safely come.  
That I shall mind, what you impart;  
Look, you may put it very near My heart.”*  
In the wounds of Christ we put our messages to God and they go up to Heaven with something more added to them. The blots and blurs of our petition Christ wipes out, and then He savors our prayers and incenses them by putting with them the costly mixture of His own precious righteousness.  
Look! In His golden censer yonder smokes the incense of your prayers, accepted for the sake of the incense and for the sake of Him who swings it to and fro as it smokes before the Most High. “The Messenger of the Covenant.” This name is peculiar to our Lord. Let not any man arrogate this office to himself, for it is Christ’s, alone. God never did hear a message from man that He accepted, except through this Messenger. I cannot get to God directly, I must have a Mediator. Well said Luther, “I will have nothing to do with an absolute God. For our God is a consuming fire.”  
No sigh ever reached the Most High, except through Christ—I mean so as to move His heart to pour out His Grace. Prayers, groans, tears—all these are like arrows without a bow—till Christ comes and fits them to the string and shoots them home for you and me. All our prayers are like a victim, with the wood and altar—Christ must bring the fire and then the sacrifice smokes to Heaven. He is the Messenger. Oh Christian, do you not rejoice in Him, then as the Messenger of the Covenant? He is doing your errands before the Throne tonight, pleading for me, pleading for you. “I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”  
You came to this house tonight, you offered prayer, Christ is offering it now, as an offering most Divinely sweet. As you are sitting here, you are breathing a vow, or a desire to Heaven. Christ presents it, for He stands at the golden altar, having a censer full of the prayer and vows of saints. Give Him an errand now. Try Him at this moment, entreat Him to plead on your behalf. Thus view Him. Thus exercise your faith upon Him as the Plenipotentiary from God to man, as the Revealer of God to man and as Spokesman from man to God—  
**“Look up, my Soul, with cheerful eye,  
See where the great Redeemer stands—  
The glorious Advocate on high,  
With precious incense in His hands!  
He sweetens every humble groan,  
He recommends each broken prayer;  
Recline your hope on Him alone,  
Whose power and love forbid despair.”**  
II. But briefly on the second point. WE DELIGHT IN THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST HAS CARRIED OUT THIS OFFICE AS MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT.  
And here let us dwell on that part of the office which relates to the revelation of God to man. Oh, what a full Messenger has He been! He has not dropped half the message. He has not told us a part of God but all that His heavenly Father bade Him declare, He has revealed unto us as we could bear it. And He has given us this day the Holy Spirit who leads us into all the Truths of God, who shall take of the things of Christ which the Father gave Him and reveal them unto us. What a full Messenger and how faithful! Surely the Master could say, “I have kept back nothing that is profitable for you.”  
With greater emphasis than ever Paul could say it, He might have declared, “I am clear from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” We poor messengers mar the Master’s message in the telling of it but, “Never man spoke like this Man.” So full and faithful is He who speaks with Jehovah’s bidding to His chosen people, that He can say, “All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.”  
Then, how willingly He does it! “I delight to do Your will, O God.” How sweet it seemed to Him to show God to us! Even His tears, though bitterly they flowed, were cheerfully bestowed. And His very death, though it was an awful Baptism, yet was one for which He longed. How was He straitened until it was accomplished! I hate a man to be a messenger who goes unwillingly and who mumbles out the message as if he had no interest in it. But oh, our sweet Lord Jesus tells God’s message to us as though He were more interested in it than we were. He tells it so lovingly, so affectionately, so tenderly, with all His heart, turning His soul out that we may see it, writing His very nature out in streams of blood, that we might see in crimson lines what otherwise we might not have been able to perceive.  
Oh, how much better than ministers, better than Prophets, better than Apostles, better than angels, Christ has performed the office of Messenger from God. Solomon’s Proverb is all outdone in our Redeemer’s case. “As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refreshes the soul of his masters.”  
Beloved, let us delight equally as much in the way in which He has performed our message from ourselves to God. Ah, I have been to my Advocate a thousand times but I never found Him a weary Messenger. You have a servant and you give him many things to do. But towards nightfall it may be that you give him one thing too many and the poor man’s weary feet and languid looks chide you when you give him the errand. But I have been to my Master and so have you, in the dead of night and I never found Him asleep. I have been to Him in the heat of summer but I never found Him point to His bloody sweat and say He could not go.  
I have been to Him a thousand times and yet I have never, never heard Him say, “I have served you enough, I will not be your Messenger again.” But cheerfully, willingly, has He taken our request to God, again and again and again and presented it there. And how full of sweet powers of memory and generous recollections He has been! We have often failed to tell Him the message aright, and sometimes there was a part of it that we could not tell him—groaning that could not be uttered—but He read the message and then told it perfectly out in the other place, within the veil, never forgetting one desire nor one faint wish. Sometimes erasing one that was evil and putting in another that was right—but He has never forgotten us.  
The blessed Master has a thousand souls to plead for—no, what if I say millions! But never has He forgotten one. The meanest lamb in His flock He has tended. The poorest subject in His dominions has been the object of His advocacy. And then, Brethren, with what passionate love has He pleaded for us in Heaven! Oh, you cannot conceive Him, for He is high above us. But if we could see Him tonight, standing before the Throne, we would say, “I never thought I had such an Advocate as this!” Not with sighs and tears, for they are over now, but with authority He pleads, points to His wounded hands and to His side and urges the case of His people as though it were His own case and so indeed, it is, for He may well say*—  
“I feel at My heart all your sighs and your groans, For you are most near Me—My flesh and My bones.”*  
Never such an Advocate as this! Fathers might plead for sons and a wife might throw herself on the ground to plead with a judge for her husband, but never such a Pleader as this! You Messenger of the Covenant, none can plead as You do!  
And then, dear Friends, I think we ought to delight in Him, when we think how unflaggingly He perseveres in His intercession, though we are continually forgetful and ungrateful for His kindness. I am sure if we had a friend’s cause to plead and he were as unworthy and forgetful as we are, we should tell him to suit himself and find some other advocate. But He, for Zion’s sake, does not hold His peace. For Jerusalem’s sake He does not rest. Going to and fro from Heaven to earth, from earth to Heaven, He speaks messages of love from God to our souls, bearing messages of pleading and of intercession from our souls to God. Take, Beloved, a sweet delight in Jesus, for He does His errand well. He is a choice Messenger, one among a thousand, yes, the chief among ten thousand.  
III. But time files, and therefore we hasten onward to carry out our third proposal. HOW ARE WE TO SHOW THAT WE DO REALLY DELIGHT IN CHRIST? Well, there is one way of doing it, and that is by again employing Him tonight. You have been upon my errands so many times, my sweet Lord, that You shall even go again. I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, to let me speak to you a moment. I know you have some very heavy matters on your mind tonight, some very heavy trial awaits you tomorrow and you have been troubled about it all the week.  
Do you delight in the Messenger of the Covenant? Ah, then send your Jesus with it as a message to the Throne tonight. Say to Jesus, “I pray You tell the Father that one of His adopted who can say, ‘Abba,’ is in deep and sore trouble. Send You from Heaven and deliver me and pluck me out of the deep waters.” You will show your

delight in Him by trusting Him in your great matters. Oh, but you mean to do it yourself? You have all your wits about you and mean to get through it yourself, do you? You shall flounder in the mire. But give the matter up to Him and let Him take it to your God, and see whether prayer does not more often prevail in trial than all the energies and wits of man.  
And Sister over yonder, you have a secret, one you would not tell to me, no, nor to your dearest friend, but it rankles and it makes your heart bleed in secret till sometimes you are weary of your life. Do you love the Messenger of the Covenant? Whisper into His ear what you can tell to none beside and ask Him to speak for you to the King, to the Captain of the Host. Say unto Him, “Jesus, lover of my soul, I’ll trust You with this most secret grief. That which no creature can meddle with, You shall know. Behold I bare the wound before Your tender eyes. Go, tell the Father that a child of His is weeping in secret, walking in darkness and seeing no light.”  
You will show your delight in Him by trusting Him now. Minister, send a messenger by Him tonight for your flock! Sunday school teacher, give Him a missive from your heart for your class! Mother, the Messenger waits for you, ask Him to plead for your sons and daughters! Father, the Messenger is ready to bear your wish to Heaven! Tell Him you would have no greater joy than this, to see your children walk in the Truth of God!  
Jesus, say to Your Father that my prayer tonight is that I would have this congregation saved. Oh speak, my Master! Bear the ponderous message! Ask that not one within these walls may perish. Lift up Your hands and plead for every man, woman, and child beneath this tabernacle’s dome tonight, and ask that everyone may be a partaker of the Divine Grace that saves. I know that You will prevail if You will ask, for if You should ask anything of Your Father, He will do it for You. You have but to will it and it is done. Behold, by faith I would lay hold upon the skirt of Your garment, You great High Priest, the sweetly sounding bells of Your ephod I hear tonight. Upon Your glittering breast-plate the eyes of my faith are fixed. Take that request and plead it solemnly before the awful Throne of Heaven, and let the answer come to all this multitude—an answer of Grace and peace! Thus, my Beloved, we must show our delight in Him—by bidding Him plead for us.  
Leaving for a moment the thought of messenger, I want to add some other things, not quite, perhaps, in keeping with our text but quite in harmony with our delight in Jesus. You are coming round the Table, Brothers and Sisters, and you delight in Christ. Shall I tell you how it is that we show that we delight in Him?  
One way is by waiting for Him. There is the wife at evening. It is past the proper hour for her husband to return. She goes to the window and looks out into the cold dark night, and then she goes back to the chair and to the little one and takes her needle and whiles away the time. But soon she is up again looking out of the window once more and listening to every foot-step in the street, or looking out from the open door. Why is not her spouse at home? How is it that he is away?  
She sits down again, she tries to ease her mind with household business but every ticking of the clock and every striking of the hour suggests to her, “Why is he so long in coming?” Look, she is again drawing back the curtains and looking out into the black night for the hundredth time, longing for her husband, and why? Because she takes delight in him and wants to see his face. So when Christians look out into the dark world and say, “When will He come?” And when they go to their labor and say, “Why are His chariot wheels so long in coming?” And when they can cry with John, “Come quickly, even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus,” and are waiting for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of Man, then they prove that they have intense delight in Him.  
Do you show this, Christian? Are you waiting for Him? Are you getting ready for the time when the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God?— *“Come, my Beloved, haste away,  
Cut short the hours of Your delay—  
Fly like a youthful hart or roe,  
Over the hills where spices grow.”*  
We prove our delight in Him in another way, by working for Him. There is a woman there. She is working hard at her embroidery needle. She is making a little coat. It is a linen ephod. I wonder why that woman smiles so, while she works with her needle? There, she must put it away, for there is other work to do. I wonder why the next day she goes to the drawer, so pleased to get that work out and continue it?  
I will tell you her name. Her name is Hannah, the wife of Elkanah and she is making a little coat for her son Samuel, whom she has left with Eli at the Tabernacle. Now you perceive why she is so pleased in making this ephod? Because she delights in Samuel. So I see the Sunday school teacher pleased to meet his children. I see the minister go to the pulpit with beaming eyes and I see the missionary leaving house and home, kindred and cherished associations, joyfully giving up everything for Christ and I ask, why? Because he delights in Christ and therefore he can work for Him. Is it so with you, Friends, are you working for Christ? Yes, methinks you are, or else I fear you are not delighting in Him.  
And then another thing. I have seen the boy at school—I knew such a boy myself—and one day that child was at play, and merry was he at his games, but some lad ran across the ground and said, “Your father’s come to see you,” and he laid aside his playthings and his games and ran at once into his father’s arms because he delighted in his parent. And I have seen the Christian when he is delighting in his God, when lecture, or Prayer Meeting night came, say, “Well, I will gladly lose a little of my business, that I may run into my Father’s arms in the hour of worship.”  
There has been a saint to be visited, or a sinner to be warned, and I have seen the lovers of Jesus leave their nets that they may follow Christ and forsake the world, that they might serve Him. Beloved, if He were to come tonight and bid us choose whether we would be in Heaven or here, I think we would not long delay, but say to Him, “You leave me no choice. To be with You is so much better than anything beside, that I embrace You now. Oh take me up to You!”  
Further, we may show our delight in Christ by searching after Him when we lose His Presence. There is the spouse in the Canticles. She is going about in the city in the dark night—“Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?” The watchmen meet her and pluck away her veil rudely and they smite her. Why is not that delicate woman at home at rest? See, she wanders on, cold and weary, with tears rolling down her cheeks and hanging like pearls from her eyes. Why is this woman weeping and searching like that? The answer is—“Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where do You feed?”  
She has such a delight in Him, that she will search a thousand nights. Yes, a believing soul would search Hell through to find Christ, if He were to be found nowhere else. And I know what Rutherford said was no great exaggeration, when he said, “If there were fifty Hells between my soul and Christ, and He bade me wade through them and He would come and meet me, I would gladly dash through them all to reach His fond embrace.” Jesus, our thirst for You is insatiable. We must have You and thus we prove our delight in You.  
Lastly, we may prove our delight in Christ by being very happy, ourselves, and trying to make others partakers of our joy. Do not go to the Lord’s Table tonight, if you can help it, burdened with your groans and moans. If you cannot come without bringing them, then come, come anyhow. But I would have you tonight, if you could, delight yourselves in the Lord. You are very poor. Ah, but you are very rich in Him. You are sick, you say. Yes, but remember what He suffered for you. Oh, but you are a sinner. Yes, but remember His precious blood! Fix your eyes on Him tonight and on nothing else, and oh, be glad!  
Come to His Table with delight. I often say I know the people that come here—our regular people that come here—because they have a way of walking and a look on the Sunday that is different from most people that go to other places of worship. Other folks are so solemn, as if they were going to an execution. They look so grave, as if it were an awful work to serve God, as bad as going to prison, to attend a service, and as disagreeable as the pillory to stand up and praise the Lord.  
But I notice that you come here with joy, looking upon the Sunday as a joyous day, not a time to pull the blinds down and shut out the light, but a day to feast yourselves in God. Now I think ordinance days are especially times of rejoicing. You and I have been all the week up to our elbows in work. By-and-by we shall have to go back to that dingy workroom among those persecuting worldlings. Never mind—Lord make this as a sanctuary to us tonight. Shut us in and shut the world out and let us rejoice ourselves in our God—  
*“As myrrh new bleeding from the tree,  
Such is dying a Christ to me.  
And while He makes my soul His guest,  
Your bosom, Lord, shall be my rest.  
No beams of cedar, or of fir,  
Can with Your courts on earth compare.  
And here we wait, until Your love  
Raise us to nobler seats above.”*  
Beloved Brothers and Sisters, if you have this delight tell it to others. Do not be tongue-tied, and dumb, any of you. Speak out what God has done for you. Tell! Tell!—  
*“Tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior you have found.”*  
If you should have any enjoyment tonight, let others partake of the honey which you have discovered. God help you thus to live to His praise.  
I am about to retire a few moments, while our friends get to their seats for the communion. Before I retire, I have a message to tell from the Messenger of the Covenant. He is willing to take a message from any poor, troubled, sin-burdened, conscience-stricken sinner in this Tabernacle. Has any one of you a message for Him? The Lord Jesus Christ is willing to receive and stamp with His own blood-marked hand any earnest, heartwritten message you are willing to send to God tonight.  
Is there anyone who has this to send—“God be merciful to me a sinner”? What? Not one of you? Is there not a heart here that would say, “Lord save or I perish”? Surely there are some! Breathe your desire out now silently. Jesus hears it—trust Him to carry it to God. Believe that His blood can cleanse you. Trust Him, trust His merits to clothe you. Trust especially His intercession to prevail for you as the Messenger of the Covenant. Do it, Soul.  
“Oh but,” you say, “my hands are black with sin.” Never mind, He will touch them and make them clean. “Oh but I cannot pray.” He can pray for you. “Oh but I cannot plead.” He can plead in your place. Tell Him your wants. As Rowland Hill once did, so would I do with you. It is said that Rowland once had to put up in a village where there was no other house to put up at but a tavern. And having a pair of horses to feed and going into the best room of the inn, he was considered to be a valuable guest for the night. So the host came in, and he said, “Glad to see you Mr. Hill.”  
“I am going,” was the reply, “to stay with you tonight. Will you let me have family prayer tonight in this house?” “I never had such a thing as family prayer here,” said the landlord, “and I don’t want to have it now.” “Very well, then, just fetch my horses out. I can’t stop in a house where they won’t pray to God. Take the horses out.” Now being too good a guest to lose, the man thinks better of it and promises to have family prayer. “Ah but,” said Hill, “I’m not in the habit of conducting prayer in other people’s houses. You must conduct it yourself.” The man said he could not pray. “But you must,” said Rowland Hill. “Oh but I never did pray,” the man said.  
“Then, my dear man, you will begin tonight,” was the answer. The time came and the family were on their knees, “Now,” said Rowland Hill, “every man prays in his own house. You must offer prayer tonight.” “I can’t pray, I can’t,” said the landlord. “What? Man, you have had all these mercies today and are you so ungrateful that you cannot thank God for them? Besides, what a wicked sinner you have been. Can’t you tell God what a sinner you’ve been and ask for pardon?” The man began to cry, “I can’t pray, Mr. Hill, I can’t, indeed I can’t.”  
“Then tell the Lord, Man, you can tell Him you can’t pray,” said Mr. Hill, “and ask Him to help you.” Down went the poor landlord on his knees. “O Lord I can’t pray. I wish I could.” “Ah, you have begun to pray,” said Rowland Hill, “you have begun to pray and you will never leave off. As soon as God has once set you to pray, faint though it be, you will never leave off. Now I’ll pray for you.”  
And so he did and it was not long before the Lord was pleased, through that strange instrumentality, to break the landlord’s hard heart and to bring him to Christ. Now I say, if any of you can’t pray, tell the Lord you can’t. Ask Him to help you to pray. Ask Him to show you your need to be saved. And if you can’t pray, ask Him to give you everything that you need. Christ will make as well as take the message. He will put His own blood upon your prayer. And the Father will send down the Holy Spirit to you to give you more faith and more trust in Christ. May the Lord send you away with His blessing tonight. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1575 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE SITTING OF THE REFINER

NO. 1575

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

**“And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an  
offering in righteousness.”  
Malachi 3:3.**

THIS is spoken of as one of the results of the coming of the Lord—He would test and try all things, destroy the false and the evil and make those pure whom He permitted to remain. Behold, the Promised One has come! He whom Israel sought suddenly appeared in His Temple as the Messenger of the Covenant. Glad were the eyes of Simeon, Anna and all those who waited for Him—and glad, this day, are our voices as we proclaim that the Messiah has appeared! The glorious Son of God, the Anointed of the Most High has been among men and faithful witnesses have testified concerning Him, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.”

That coming, heralded by songs of angels and prophetic of countless blessings, should have been a day of unmingled light to men, but because of hypocrisy, pride and self, it was not so. On the contrary, it was to many a day of darkness and not of light. We have abundant historical evidence that our Lord’s first Advent was a day of great trial to the Jewish people and when we remember the siege of Jerusalem and kindred events, we do not marvel that the Prophet asked, “But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap.”

His ministry tried the religion, the orthodoxy and the saintship of the period—and because it revealed the hollowness of the whole of the profession of the day—it awakened all the enmity of the religious classes. Those who were the leaders of the so-called religious thought of the age were awakened to hate the Lord Jesus and to take a delight in nailing Him to the Cross, for His teaching was so true and good that their word-chopping and ceremony-making could not endure it! Our Lord, when He came, sat as a refiner and assayed the age then present—and ever since then His Gospel in the world, His Spirit, His teaching, yes, the very fact of His life— these all together have been a test, a trial, a sort of standard of weights and measures among men.

All things are on trial. You are constantly hearing of this time and that time as being “crises” and the saying is true. There is always a crisis of something or other during these days of the Lord’s sitting as a refiner. All things are being thrust into the furnace and the fire is kept burning at a white heat—and nothing evil can abide the flame. Everything that is good shall be conserved, purified, made brilliant—but all that is evil, be it what it may, the whole world over—since Christ has come, shall be tried and dissolved as by fire. When our Lord comes the second time, the trial will be still more intense. “Who shall abide the day of His coming” when He shall still further be revealed and when His purpose shall be that of judgment rather than of mercy?

It is well for us to know that whenever Jesus Christ draws near to a soul He comes in utmost mercy to make it clean. Because He is, in Himself, the Incarnation of ineffable Love, His coming always means that He is about to purify the soul, for the highest mercy is to rid us of sin. The grandest thing that God, Himself, can do in the purpose of His love is to purify us into His own glorious holiness! Christ loved His Church and this is how He showed it—“He gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

The Well-Beloved seeks to purify His chosen by the washing of water through the Word of God. It is the way His love takes, for true love does always choose the way of holiness. That love which would lead its beloved into sin is lust—it deserves not the name of love! But true love will always seek the highest health and wholeness (which is holiness) of its object. Pure affection will grieve to see a fault, mourn over a folly and seek to remove a blot.

Perfect love seeks the perfection of the thing it loves. Such is the perfect love of Christ—whenever He comes to a soul in love He comes as a refiner. He comes with this objective—to take away the dross from the silver and to make the fine gold still purer. In His sharpest dispensations He means no ill to us, but the most good, seeking not to grieve, but to lead us to the eternal blessedness of which the root and flower are both found in absolute perfection. If any of you, my Hearers, are seeking the Lord at this time, I want you to understand what it means—you are seeking a fire which will test you and consume much which has been dear to you.

We are not to expect Christ to come and save us in our sins! He will come and save us from our sins and, therefore, if you are enabled by faith to take Christ as a Savior, remember that you take Him as the Purger and the Purifier, for it is from sin that He saves us. “They shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” This is the particular salvation which He aims at. Though He does deliver men from Hell, it is by delivering them from the sin which is the fuel of Tophet’s flame. Though He does give us Heaven, yet His way of bringing us to Heaven is by giving us a heavenly mind—a heart obedient to the holy and loving Father.

The refinement of our nature and character is the way in which His infinite love most wisely displays itself. We are going to talk of this purifying process. “He shall sit as a refiner.” How is the refining carried on? It is carried on in part by the Word of God. “Is not My Word like a fire?” Wherever the Gospel is preached thoroughly, out and out, it is a wonderful consumer of dross! I have known certain congregations that have been dead in worldliness—the haunts of wealthy professors whose love to Christ was a mere pretense. Close to them I have seen another Church which has been lively in spirit and full of zeal for the Lord. What was the difference? The reason has usually been this—that in the one case there was man’s ministry and in the other there was the Word of the Lord!

Ministries of the Spirit worldly people cannot bear. They are displeased with a plain testimony. It rasps their conscience. There is no need to turn them out of the Church—they drop away of themselves. It is not the place for them; it is too hot for them, I mean too holy, too spiritual, too devout. By-and-by they are offended and murmuring, they prepare to emigrate. There are so many things that they do not approve of—they see so much that is dreadfully orthodox, narrow-minded and bigoted—that they trot off among their own cattle. Yes, and so they should. That is God’s way of keeping His flock to itself. Those that are rooted up by the Word of God are best rooted up. We may always be practicing this kind of separating the tares from the wheat, for it leaves the testing with God and a man’s own conscience and, therefore, no injustice will be done.

It would be ill by excommunications to seek to root up the tares from among the wheat, lest we root up the wheat with them, but by the Word of God, if it is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, the process will be always going on. God’s furnace stands in Zion. If any of you are ever displeased by the Word, I pray you are displeased—we shall certainly never alter the Word for you! If the Truth of God comes too closely home to your consciences and angers you, be angry, not only with him that speaks it, but with Him from whom it comes—and then you will see the folly of such anger and humble yourselves before God, accept His Truth—which will live and your sin shall die. God grant it may be so!

Another purging operation is by causing His chosen to have more fellowship with His own blessed and glorious Self. Of all the means of purging the heart, none surpasses this, for when the Lord, in great mercy, draws His child near to Him and makes Him feel His love and know it beyond a doubt, then the favored heart longs to be holy in all things. When the Lord fills His servant full of His love and makes him to be overjoyed with the sweet consciousness that he is the Beloved’s and that the Beloved is his, then a holy jealousy burns within the soul and the heart cries, “Is there anything that can grieve the Beloved? Let it be slain! Is there anything that I think, or wish, or say, or do, that might break the sacred spell of communion and cause Him to be gone? Let it be driven out at once!”

The heart institutes a diligent search that, if possible, it may put away the accursed thing so that Christ may not be grieved. Of all fires that ever burned, this is one of the fiercest. Jealousy is cruel as the grave and a holy jealousy does stern work in our hearts with sin! It hangs up the darling sin before the face of the sun and calls upon the fowls of Heaven to come and feast upon the slain! Oh, that we knew Christ better and lived more in the Light of His Countenance, for then we would be purged as with the spirit of burning! After all, the Holy Spirit is the great fire that burns in Zion to purge Believers from the love of sin. It is He that makes use of the Word, makes use of fellowship and makes use of everything else to sever sin from the saint and take away the dross from the silver. He is the immediate Agent of our sanctification—all else we must regard as only the means in His skillful hands. To Him be our love and our praise evermore!

As a subsidiary means the Lord uses Providence. I have no doubt that He very frequently uses gracious Providences, as we call them—that is, Providences which please us by gratifying our natural wishes. Some people have been sanctified by prosperity, but I do not think very many have. Few good medicines are pleasant to the palate. If we were as we ought to be, every joy that comes to us would tend to make us grateful and so it would make us love God—and what is that but to be more like God and more holy? But, alas, in that we are weak through the flesh, the gentler modes of Love more often fail than her rougher processes. It remains then, that if we cannot be preserved in honey, we must be salted with fire lest corruption should take hold upon us.

Such is the stubbornness of our flesh, that the Lord uses for fuel in His furnace sharp and heavy trials of different kinds. Adversity assumes many forms and in each and all of its shapes the Lord knows how to use it for His people’s benefit. Christ sits as a Refiner when He takes away prosperity and brings the wealthy down to poverty. He often refines men by the losses which they sustain of beloved friends. Bereavement burns like a furnace blast and, oh, how much of carnal love has been consumed by it! We have known persons greatly purified by the Holy Spirit by passing through depression of spirit, inward grief and soul sorrow. Spiritual pain has been blessed to some and physical pain to more.

In itself, pain will sanctify no man—it may even tend to wrap him up within himself and make him morose, peevish, selfish. But when God blesses it, then it will have a most salutary effect—a softening influence. Sorrow is made to act as a kind of flux upon the hard metal to make the dross separate from the precious ore. Yes, affliction is what most Believers think of when they read such a passage as this, but I warn them not to think too much of it, for that is not the Refiner’s only fire, nor is it even His best fire. Affliction is but one part of the machinery of the Royal Refinery—one of the fluxes by which the great Lord separates the precious from the vile.

I desire to call your attention to the text by leading you to mark three things. First, I want you to watch the attitude of the Refiner. “And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” Secondly, the object of His refining—“He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver.” And, thirdly, the result of the refinement, “That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

I. Notice carefully THE ATTITUDE OF THE REFINER—“He shall sit.” The posture would not have been mentioned had it not been instructive. Sitting looks like the attitude of indifference. There is the metal vexed with a white heat—here is the Refiner sitting down! There is the child of God upon the bed of pain and he cries, “My Lord, come and help me!” And there the Refiner sits—He looks on, but does not stir a hand. The child of God is sinking in trouble. He fears, like Peter, that the next step may drown him and there is his Lord, calm and unmoved! When the Apostolic ship was out at sea and tossed in the tempest, Christ was asleep in the back part of the vessel! Unbelief dares challenge His love because of this apparent apathy—how can He sit still and see us suffer?

She mutters—“He is indifferent! He does not care.” “Don’t You care that we perish?” is the cry of Unbelief and before the heart actually utters it, it begins to think, “Where is the tenderness of Christ? Where is the gentleness of God? Am I thus to be tortured? Am I thus to be tried? Am I thus to be tossed from billow to billow without a Helper?” Yet after all our crying and tears the Refiner still sits! Yes, He, to all appearances, disregards our prayers and entreaties and fulfils the description of the text—“He sits.” It is amazing how often God seems utterly indifferent to His people and how Christ, filled with compassion because He has been tried in all points like as we are, yet seems to look down upon our sorrows with undisturbed serenity.

I once heard a Welshman preach in his own native tongue. It was a sermon in which he got into the spirit of his subject and spoke as one Inspired. He used a very simple illustration when he said, “The mother has her dear babe upon her knee. It is time for washing. She washes its face. The little one cries. It loves not the soap; it loves not the water and therefore it cries. Here is a great sorrow! Listen to its lamentations! It is ready to break its heart! What does the mother do? Is she sorrowful? Does she weep? No! She is singing all the while because she understands how good it is that the child should suffer a little temporary inconvenience in order that its face, all smeared and foul, should become bright and beautiful again! Thus does the great Father rest in His love and rejoice over us with singing while we are sighing and crying.”

Ours is but a child’s sorrow, sharp and shallow, of which the greatest source is our own ignorance of the great designs of the Perfecter of men! The Lord pities our childish sorrow, but He does not regard it so as to stop His hands from His cleansing work. “Let not your soul spare for his crying,” said Solomon—and our wise Father, when He is chastening us, does not spare us for our crying. What if the metal that is put into the furnace should be sensitive when the crucible is hot and should cry out, “Oh, take me out! The fire is too hot! I cannot bear it. I am dissolving! I am melting! Take me out”? Would the assayer regard the entreaties of the metal? Ah, no! And so, when we are in the furnace, the Refiner sits still. Why should He be flurried? He knows what He is doing and He knows that His Divine methods are wise and Infallible.

He is not hurting the silver, but doing it lasting service. He is not even putting it through a needless process. He is taking the shortest way of working when He seems to be longest in His assays. There is a haste that is not good speed and God uses not such haste as that—He moves at the pace of perfection and that may seem slow to us. He shall sit as a Refiner till you shall ask, “Does He care at all for me?” Carnal reason may judge as it pleases as to the indifference of Him who seems to sit at ease while His people are melted in the flames, but faith is full-well assured that in the attitude of the Divine Refiner there is real attention. Why does the Refiner sit, but because He is resolved to steadily watch the crucible? He will not go away and leave it, even for a moment, lest the heat should grow too great or a certain point should be passed over when His Presence would be essential to the success of the process.

I have often heard that a refiner sits and looks at the silver till he can see his own reflection in it. Though I have heard that venerable story many times and can see the evident moral of it, I have my suspicions as to its being a matter of fact. I certainly should not like to be the refiner who had such a task to do, for when a crucible is in the white heat of the furnace, it is almost enough too burn out your eyes to look at it even for an instant! I do not believe that any human being could watch a mass of molten silver glowing in the furnace till he saw his own image there. Christ’s eyes can bear the blaze and He can watch us in the fires, but I do not use the illustration because I have my doubts about the truth of it.

Our Lord sits as the Refiner at the furnace mouth because He is all attention. He has, as it were, given up all other cares just to sit there and watch His treasure. He is determined that His servants shall be purified— that the sons of Levi shall be purged—and so there He is, everything else laid aside, giving His whole heart and soul to those whom He is refining. “Oh” you say “but you exaggerate if you talk about the Lord’s giving all His heart and soul to one of His people.” No, I do not. The Lord Jesus watches each one of His people as intensely as if He had no other. Finite minds must have a center, somewhere, and as that center changes, so our circumference of thought and action shifts. But God’s center is everywhere and His circumference is nowhere!

Each one of us may be in the center of the Divine mind and yet none of the redeemed may be any the less near because of it. Jesus watches each one—you, me, 50,000 others—all of them His chosen ones that are undergoing the purifying process. He watches each one as if there were never another for His blessed eyes to rest upon. He is all attention, watching not as children gaze on soldiers in the fire, but as practical refiners watch their precious metal! Poor, bowed Heart, Jesus is all attention! His sitting down is not because He forgets, but because He remembers!—

*“God’s furnace does in Zion stand,  
But Zion’s God sits by,  
As the refiner views His gold,  
With an observant eye.”*

Always observing, always watching. Jesus shall sit—“He shall sit as a refiner.”

But we may notice more than this. I think I see in the sitting down of the Refiner a settled patience, as if He seemed to say, “This is stern work and I will sit down to it, for it will need care, time and constant watchfulness. This metal may need to be purified in a furnace of earth seven times, but I am set upon the perfecting of the work and, therefore, here I place Myself. I shall bear with this man till I have delivered him from his faults. I shall bear with this woman till I have made something of her—till I have taken away that which weakens and injures her character. I mean to bear with this poor, petulant, unbelieving, complaining, selfish, groaning mortal—My Spirit has given him some love for Me and some life in Me—and, therefore, I will bear with him till his life and love shall have conquered all earthly grossness and he shall be a lump of pure metal fit for My Father’s treasury.”

The Lord has had boundless patience with some of us already, for we required a world of purifying and we have been very slow to receive it. How many sermons have we heard and yet how little have we been purified by the Word of God? How often has the Spirit striven with us and yet every thought is not yet brought into captivity? How often have we had near and true fellowship with Christ and yet have again forsaken Him? How frequently have we had to endure the furnace of affliction and yet our dross and tin are not removed? The Refiner still perseveres with settled resolve of ceaseless love. He will not give up His gracious task. He did not come hastily to the furnace door and shut us in and then leave us while He minded other matters. He has been sitting near His work ever since He began it—even as the refiner sits close to his work—and He means to stay as long as the work remains unfinished. He will not be gone till all is over. Here, then, Faith sees Divine attention and settled patience where Unbelief dared to suspect unfeeling indifference!

I find, in looking at the original, that the word for, “sit,” is one which is used many times in Scripture for the posture of a king upon a throne—it is a sort of regal sitting down. So that we have here the posture of power. “He shall sit as a refiner,” signifies, then, I take it, that He who seems indifferent, but who is constantly observant and patient, is seated on His Throne possessing infinite power over all things so that the process which He is watching can be checked or quickened according to His own will and wish. He reigns as a Refiner. He has power over every coal, over every single jet of gassy flame! He has power over every breath of air that fans the fire and over the furnace to its inmost center and its utmost vehemence. He has power over the metal, itself, and its dross and all that is excellent about it as well as all that is vile.

Oh, this is a grand consolation! He that has undertaken to purify us can do it, for He sits on the Throne of boundless might! Nothing short of an Omnipotent Savior could have saved me! It were ill news for me if men could show that Christ were not Divine, for short of a Divine Redeemer I know I shall never be perfected! No strength but that which made me can make me new! Only He that says, “I kill and I make alive,” can ever kill my sin and make me alive unto God. Oh, Christian, this ought to be a delight to you, that He who sits as a refiner sits on the Throne while He is refining you and exercises Sovereign Grace and infinite power while dealing with your soul! Jesus reigns in the work of sanctification, having all things at His disposal, and He can and will perform that which He has begun—

*“Grace will complete what Grace begins,*

***To save from sorrows or from sins.  
The work that wisdom undertakes  
Eternal mercy ne’er forsakes.”***

Eternal power performs what everlasting love designs.  
So I conceive that the text may also teach us the perfect perseverance  
of Christ in the work of the purifying of His people. “He shall sit as a refiner.” Might not your backsliding, after you had once reached a great  
height of sanctity, have disappointed Christ and made Him leave you?  
Yes, if it were not true of Him, “I am God: I change not,” He would have  
left you to be consumed! But you are not consumed because, from His  
blessed purpose He will not swerve. Oh, how many times you and I have  
seemed to make advances towards purity but have gone back, again, to  
folly, thus manifesting the abundance of our alloy! It did seem as if, at  
last, the blessed flame of Grace had begun to make us bright and yet we  
have dulled again back to the old state.  
And where is the Refiner? Has He gone? By no means. There He is! He  
has been sitting as a refiner and He is still sitting! That is a blessed text—  
“He shall not fail nor be discouraged.” There is much to discourage Him,  
but He is not discouraged! There is much to make Him relinquish the  
work, but He determines not to fail in it. His mind is made up and well it  
may be, for He has paid in bloody sweat and in His heart’s blood, the ransom price to purchase us and He will never leave half-effected what He  
has spent His life to achieve! What He has redeemed, He will refine! Gethsemane and Calvary have bound the Refiner to His task.  
He undertook a stupendous labor and He went through with it till He  
shouted from the Cross, “It is finished!” And, therefore, we may rest assured that He will go on with the further portions of His great enterprise  
till, from His Throne above He will say, “It is finished,” as He surveys every  
one of us, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”—pure lumps of  
gold and silver brought Home by Himself without a speck of dross about  
us. Oh, blessed hope! Where should we dare to indulge it but in the Presence of an almighty Savior whose Immutable oath has bound Him to carry  
out the work of our perfection?  
II. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, suffer a few words upon THE  
GREAT OBJECTIVE OF OUR LORD’S REFINING WORK. This point has  
come up all along. May the Spirit of God instruct us concerning it. The  
great objective of His refining is that He may deliver us from all evil and  
make us perfect. Remember, the subjects of purifying are His own chosen  
ones—“He shall purify the sons of Levi.” Levi was the tribe taken out of  
the rest for God’s service. The Lord has a people whom He has set apart  
unto Himself and these He will purify! Do others think that He does them  
an injustice by this act of choice?  
Would they like to be purified? Then, depend upon it, He will not refuse  
them! No, the quarrel lies in words and has no truth in it. Men pretend to  
be angry with electing love, though they have no desire for it, themselves!  
God’s election is an election to holiness and this is a thing which men, in  
their heart of hearts, do not desire. Sirs, if you do not wish for purification and holiness, why should you quarrel with God because He doesn’t give it to you? Yet unholy men rave at election to holiness and call it partiality and I know not what, besides! You dogs in the manger, will you always howl at God because He gives to His own sheep that which you will not care to have? If you wish for it, you may have it! Free is the Gospel to  
every soul under Heaven that desires it!  
The Lord proclaims, “Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of  
Life freely,” but if men turn their backs on Heaven’s ever-flowing Fountain, shall they, afterwards, quarrel with the election of God because He  
causes some to come whom He makes willing in the day of His power?  
They may quarrel if they will, but high overhead rolls the dread thunder of  
that awful Word of God, “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy,  
and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” God is  
Sovereign in His gifts of Grace and does after His own mind. He refuses  
Grace to none, but yet He will have a people of His own on whom His  
sanctifying work shall be wrought. “He shall purify the sons of Levi.” The Refiner begins His work by convicting His people of their need of  
purity. “What? Purify the sons of Levi? Do they need it? Surely, Reuben,  
Manasseh, Gad—these might need purifying—but Levi opens and shuts  
the door of the House of God! It is a Levite that sacrifices, that enters  
within the veil. Does he require purifying?” Yes, that he does. “He shall  
purify the sons of Levi”—the best, the very best, the holiest—those that  
come near to God—the true silver and the real gold! He shall purify these!  
Brother, Sister, have you a notion that you do not need purifying? Discard  
it, for if we walk in the light as God is in the light and have close fellowship with God, yet we still need the cleansing blood. “The blood of Jesus  
Christ, His Son,” still cleans us from all sin.” Still we need the purging  
Spirit or else there remains enough of evil about the man that is nearest  
Heaven’s gates to make a Judas Iscariot of him if Grace does not prevent.  
“He shall purify the sons of Levi”—the pure shall be purified and the clean  
shall be yet further cleansed.  
Did you ever notice that the branch which feels most of the knife and  
gets most of the pruning is not the dead branch? Not that withered,  
crooked branch does the gardener wound with the knife! No, the best  
branch that bears most fruit is most worthy of the gardener’s visits and  
shall be most favored with them. That ore which has the most gold in it,  
in proportion to the quartz, is the likeliest to get into the fire. He that has  
most of refinement is he on whom Christ will carry out his refining work.  
“He shall purify the sons of Levi.”  
Further, observe that He not only convinces them of their need of this  
purity, but He remedies their impurity. He shall actually purify them as  
gold and silver! The point is the thoroughness of it. This piece of wood  
which makes my pulpit, if it is defiled, it is dusted and it is at once sufficiently cleansed. Your platters are washed—that is all. Your furniture may  
need beating, dusting and many processes, but there is nothing thorough  
in them compared with the metaphor of the text—“He shall purify them as  
gold and silver.” They must go into the fire. The purging that God gives His people is not the washing of the outside of the cup and platter! It is the cleansing of the soul, the heart—the purging of the man—a fiery purging! Fire does not merely go about—it penetrates and passes right into it.  
The metal is hot! It is melted! It flows—the fire has dissolved the mass. We say in the hymn, “Refining fire, go through my heart,” and that is  
the nearest approximation of language. But fire does something more than  
go through the metal. It seems to get into the very essence and nature and  
character of the metal and fuses it all, making it all feel its supreme force.  
The Lord’s purification of His people, in order to make them fit to be with  
Him in Heaven, is a fire process—it is mysterious, inward, penetrating,  
consuming, transforming. His Spirit burns like fire! His Word, like fire,  
goes through and through the soul! His holy fellowship causes us to say,  
“My heart melted while my Beloved spoke.” And His fiery trials, too, when  
blest by the Spirit, seem to melt the very being of the man.  
This process is intended to be thorough, that it may be abiding. If you  
get a piece of gold or silver, though it has been through the fire, it may  
grow dull but it cannot, again, become impure and alloyed. Silver will  
soon oxidize upon the surface, but for all that, the bulk of the silver vessel  
is not injured at all—it remains pure silver after it has been through the  
fire. The work is done and done thoroughly. The purifications of God will  
last throughout eternity. Have you ever reflected upon the fact that when  
Christ’s refining work is done upon us there will never be any need for it  
again? Blessed be God, there is no purgatorial fire! We need not dread  
that we have yet to pass through purging flames in another world, for Jesus has well-refined the sons of Levi and they are clean every whit! Believers are taken up to Heaven at once—as soon as they quit this  
world. If we were not thoroughly purified before we entered there, we  
should be under a strong temptation to pride. Only think of yourself with  
a palm branch, my Brothers and Sisters! You fought very badly, too. You  
with a harp in your hand! Is there not a temptation to strike just one gentle string in praise of what you did or suffered? Say not that you could not  
be thus tempted—why, an angel fell from Heaven! The Son of the Morning—a greater being than you—could not stand amidst the glories of  
Paradise! Pride dragged Lucifer from Heaven and hurled him down to the  
darkest deeps!  
Oh, joy, joy, joy! The same shall never happen to you! You will never be  
proud in Paradise—you will never be discontented in Heaven. Do you say,  
“I should think not”? I do not know. If you could go to Heaven as you are,  
you would be. You would be sorry to think that there is no temple there  
and no more sea. And a great many things might make you dissatisfied,  
but you will not be discontented, for you will be purified! You will not  
speak sharply to your neighbor in Heaven! You will not think he sings too  
loudly or is too demonstrative in his worship! You will not quarrel with  
anybody in Heaven, for you will have nothing in you which can lead to sin! See how splendidly the Refiner will do His work, then, so that throughout eternity, when this poor world shall all dissolve in smoke and the sun  
shall have burnt out like an expiring coal—when the moon shall be black as a sackcloth of hair and all earth-born things shall have grown hoary and given way to corruption’s finger—you shall still be young and fresh and pure and perfect as the God that loved you and that made you so! Oh, well may we be content to let the fire burn and let the coals glow as much as they will since it can be only for a very little while and then come the ages, the eternities, the God, the Christ, the Heaven which He has pre  
pared for us when we are prepared for them!  
This, then, is the objective of His refining.  
III. Thirdly, and to conclude, WHAT WILL BE THE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF THIS REFINING AS CHRIST CARRIES IT ON? It will be this—  
“That they may offer to the Lord an offering of righteousness.” First, these  
Levites shall attend to their business. They ought to have been working at  
the Temple, but they had forgotten their high calling. The sons of Levi had  
taken up their portion in the world, though their God had never given  
them any, for He gave no portion to Levi when the land was divided among  
the tribes. “The Lord’s portion is His people” and the Lord is the portion of  
their inheritance. The Levites had gotten away from their spiritual calling  
and had given themselves up to mind this and that—but it is pleasant to  
observe that when God purifies them, they begin to do their own business—“That they may offer to the Lord.”  
Oh, Beloved, if you have been refined by the Word of God; if you have  
been refined by the Spirit; if you have been refined by heavenly joys; if you  
have been refined by sanctified sorrows, you wish to serve God much  
more than ever you did before. You now pray that if you have lived to self  
in any degree, you may be forgiven, for you wish to live to Christ and to  
Him alone! Now, as a Levite, you say, “What can I do for God? There is  
nothing here worth living for, but to love and serve Him. Here, Lord, tell  
me what You would have me to do. I desire to do it at once.” Brothers and  
Sisters thank God for every trial you have suffered if it leads you to offer  
your sacrifice! I will bless God for all I have endured, myself, if I am enabled to fulfill my priesthood, for are we not a nation of priests, a peculiar  
people, set apart to offer sacrifice to God? And this is to be the result of  
refinement—that we do good work and service unto God.  
Some of you need a little pushing on in this direction, for I know a great  
many Christians who live as if the main point in religion was to enjoy  
yourself. “I enjoyed that sermon. I enjoyed that Prayer Meeting.” Yes, that  
is quite right. But have you done anything? Have you served the Master?  
Have you offered anything to Jesus? Have you brought forth fruit to His  
Glory? Oh, it is a good thing to be watered! It is a blessed thing to stand in  
the warm sunlight and grow! But after the watering and the sunshine  
must come the fruit-bearing or we shall be barren fig trees, after all! And  
so it is in the text, you see—“That they may offer unto the Lord an offering.”  
And then, next, they are not only to do their work, but they are to do it  
well. “They must offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness,” for, oh,  
we may do much for God that looks very pretty, but when we get into trial  
and look back upon our service by the furnace light we do not think much of it! Have you ever taken a little time to look back upon your service to God and have you not wondered at yourself that you have done it so badly? Have you not said, “Please, God, may I address that class again? By Your Grace I will be more passionately in earnest.” Have you not said, “Please, God, may I get out to that village to preach again? This time, by Your Grace, I will speak with all my soul and nothing else but Christ shall  
be my theme.”  
Have we not often wished we could do our lifework over again that we  
might do it better? I do not think that there is any use in that wish. Let us  
improve what is to be done in the future rather than wish to undo the  
past! Let us buckle on our harness and ask God to give us more spiritual  
intensity that what is done may be a sacrifice offered in righteousness  
unto the Lord. And then another result of this purification is that they  
were accepted, for the next verse says, “Then shall the offering of Judah  
and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old.” When  
God accepts our persons, He accepts our offerings—but if we are not ourselves accepted—then that which we do is rejected. When the Lord Jesus  
Christ enables us to live by faith in Him and to see that we are “accepted  
in the Beloved,” and when that faith helps us to work in a right spirit and  
serve God from a pure motive, then we, ourselves, and our work are  
pleasant unto God as in former days.  
God grant that the blessed processes of His Providence and of His  
Grace which are being carried on in His people may be carried on in you  
and me that we may serve God with perfect hearts all our days! I think I  
heard somebody say, “I do not want putting through that process. I do not  
wish for such purifying.” Have you seen the great masses of slag that they  
throw out from the furnace? They lie in great heaps at the pit’s mouth.  
Will these be a picture of you and your eternal condition? Reprobate silver  
shall men call them because God has rejected them! Will you be the slag  
cast away? The dross left forever? Oh, Eternity! Eternity! What must it be  
to be shipwrecked on your shoreless sea and drifted forever as a waif and  
stray from God and hope! Eternity! Eternity! What must it be to be rejected and cast away from the Presence of God and from the Glory of His  
power—thrown out upon the waste heap of the universe, forever given up! God save any man from that! Oh, it were worth wading through a thousand Hells to obtain that which makes existence worth having—namely,  
rightness with God! But, oh, if there were nothing else to lose but God’s  
love; nothing else to earn by neglect of Divine things but to be rejected of  
God, I would plead with you with my whole soul that you would seek the  
Lord now! Cry mightily to the Divine Savior that He may now purge you  
with His precious blood from all the guilt of sin! Cry to Him that He may  
then go on with the second process by which He shall purge you from the  
power and habit and defilement of sin—and make you, like Himself—  
immaculate before the Omniscient! God grant it, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

NO. 1  
A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 7, 1855, **BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK  
*“***I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacobare not consumed. Malachi 3:6.**

IT has been said by someone that “the proper study of mankind is man.” I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God. The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the Person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity—so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with—in them we feel a kind of self-content and go our way with the thought, “Behold I am wise.” But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thoughts that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass’ colt and with the solemn exclamation, “I am but of yesterday and know nothing.” No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. We shall be obliged to feel—

*“* Great God, how infinite are You,  
What worthless worms are we!

But while the subject humbles the mind it also expands it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. He may be a naturalist, boasting of his ability to dissect a beetle, anatomize a fly, or arrange insects and animals in classes with well-nigh unutterable names. He may be a geologist, able to discourse of the megatherium and the plesiosaurus and all kinds of extinct animals. He may imagine that his science, whatever it is, ennobles and enlarges his mind. I dare say it does, but after all, the most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and Him crucified and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity. And while humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound! In musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief and in the influence of the Holy Spirit there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea—be lost in His immensity. And you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow—so speak peace to the winds of trial—as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. It is to that subject that I invite you this morning. We shall present you with one view of it—that is the immutability of the glorious Jehovah. “I am,” says my text, “Jehovah,” (for so it should be translated) “I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

There are three things this morning. First of all, an unchanging God. Secondly, the persons who derive benefit from this glorious attribute, “the sons of Jacob.” And thirdly, the benefit they so derive, they “are not consumed.” We address ourselves to these points.

I. First of all, we have set before us the doctrine of THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD. “I am God, I change not.” Here I shall attempt to expound, or rather to enlarge the thought and then afterwards to bring a few arguments to prove its truth.

1. I shall offer some exposition of my text by first saying that God is Jehovah and He changes not in His essence. We cannot tell you what Godhead is. We do not know what substance that is which we call God. It is an existence, it is a Being. But what that is we know not. However, whatever it is, we call it His essence and that essence never changes. The substance of mortal things is ever changing. The mountains with their snow-white crowns doff their old diadems in summer, in rivers trickling down their sides, while the storm cloud gives them another coronation. The ocean, with its mighty floods, loses its water when the sunbeams kiss the waves and snatch them in mists to Heaven. Even the sun himself requires fresh fuel from the hand of the Infinite Almighty to replenish his ever-burning furnace. All creatures change. Man, especially as to his body, is always undergoing revolution. Very probably there is not a single particle in my body which was in it a few years ago. This frame has been worn away by activity, its atoms have been removed by friction, fresh particles of matter have in the meantime constantly accrued to my body and so it has been replenished—its substance is altered. The fabric of which this world is made is ever passing away like a stream of water—drops are running away and others are following after, keeping the river still full—but always changing in its elements. But God is perpetually the same. He is not composed of any substance or material, but is Spirit—pure, essential and ethereal Spirit—and, therefore, He is immutable. He remains everlastingly the same. There are no furrows on His eternal brow. No age has palsied Him—no years have marked Him with the mementoes of their flight. He sees ages pass, but with Him it is ever now. He is the great I AM—the Great Unchangeable. Mark you, His essence did not undergo a change when it became united with the manhood. When Christ in past years did gird Himself with mortal clay, the essence of His divinity was not changed— flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh by a real actual change of nature. The two were united in hypostatical union, but the Godhead was still the same. It was the same when He was a babe in the manger, as it was when He stretched the curtains of Heaven—it was the same God that hung upon the Cross and whose blood flowed down in a purple river. The self-same God that holds the world upon His everlasting shoulders and bears in His hands the keys of death and Hell. He never has been changed in His essence, not even by His incarnation—He remains everlastingly, eternally, the one unchanging God, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither the shadow of a change.

2. He changes not in His attributes. Whatever the attributes of God were of old, they are the same now. And of each of them we may sing, As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. Was He powerful Was He the mighty God when He spoke the world out of the womb of non-existence? Was He the Omnipotent when He piled the mountains and scooped out the hollow places for the rolling deep? Yes, He was powerful then and His arm is unpalsied now. He is the same giant in His might. The sap of His nourishment is still wet and the strength of His soul stands the same forever. Was He wise when He constituted this mighty globe, when He laid the foundations of the universe? Had He wisdom when He planned the way of our salvation and when, from all eternity, He marked out His awful plans? Yes and He is wise now. He is not less skillful, He has not less knowledge. His eyes which see all things are undimmed. His ears which hear all the cries, sighs, sobs and groans of His people, are not rendered heavy by the years which He has heard their prayers. He is unchanged in His wisdom. He knows as much now as ever—neither more nor less. He has the same consummate skill and the same infinite forecasting. He is unchanged, blessed be His name, in His justice Just and holy was He in the past—just and holy is He now. He is unchanged in His Truth—He has promised and He brings it to pass. He has said it and it shall be done. He varies not in the goodness, generosity and benevolence of His nature. He is not become an Almighty tyrant, whereas He was once an Almighty Father. His strong love stands like a granite rock unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity. And blessed be His dear name, He is unchanged in His love. When He first wrote the Covenant, how full His heart was with affection to His people. He knew that His Son must die to ratify the articles of that agreement. He knew right well that He must rend His best Beloved from His heart and send Him down to earth to bleed and die. He did not hesitate to sign that mighty Covenant. Nor did He shun its fulfillment. He loves as much now as He did then. And when suns shall cease to shine and moons to show their feeble light, He still shall love on forever and forever. Take any one attribute of God and I will write semper idem on it (always the same). Take any one thing you can say of God, now, and it may be said not only in the dark past, but in the bright future. It shall always remain the same—“I am Jehovah, I change not”—impressed on His heart it remains.

3. Then again, God changes not in His plans. That man began to build, but was not able to finish and, therefore, he changed his plan—as every wise man would do in such a case—he built upon a smaller foundation and commenced again. But has it ever been said that God began to build but was not able to finish? No. When He has boundless stores at His command and when His own right hand would create worlds as numerous as drops of morning dew, shall He ever stay because He has not power? Or reverse, or alter, or disarrange His plan because He cannot carry it out? “But,” say some, “perhaps God never had a plan.” Do you think God is more foolish than yourself then, Sir? Do you go to work without a plan? “No,” you say, “I have always a scheme.” So has God. Every man has his plan and God has a plan, too. God is a master mind—He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it—and once having settled it, mark you, He never alters it. “This shall be done,” says He and the iron hand of destiny marks it down and it is brought to pass. “This is My purpose,” and it stands, nor can earth or Hell alter it. “This is My decree,” says He. Promulgate it angels—rend it down from the gate of Heaven you devils. But you cannot alter the decree. It shall be done. God alters not His plans—why should He? He is Almighty and, therefore, can perform His pleasure. Why should He? He is the All-wise and, therefore, cannot have planned wrongly. Why should He? He is the everlasting God and, therefore, cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? You worthless atoms of existence, ephemera of the day! You creeping insects upon this bay leaf of existence! You may change your plans, but He shall never, never change

His . Then has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am safe—  
*“* My name from the palms of His hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impressed on His heart it remains,  
In marks of indelible Grace.*”*

4. Yet again, God is unchanging in His promises. Ah, we love to speak about the sweet promises of God. But if we could ever suppose that one of them could be changed—we would not talk anything more about them. If I thought that the notes of the bank of England could not be cashed next week, I would decline to take them and if I thought that God’s promises would never be fulfilled—if I thought that God would see it right to alter some word in His promises— farewell Scriptures! I want immutable things—and I find that I have immutable promises when I turn to the Bible—for, “by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie,” He has signed, confirmed and sealed every promise of His. The Gospel is not “yes and no,” it is not promising today and denying tomorrow. The Gospel is “yes, yes,” to the glory of God. Believer, there was a delightful promise which you had yesterday—and this morning when you turned to the Bible the promise was not sweet. Do you know why? Do you think the promise had changed? Ah, no, you changed— that is where the matter lies. You had been eating some of the grapes of Sodom and your mouth was thereby put out of taste and you could not detect the sweetness. But there was the same honey there, depend upon it—the same preciousness. “Oh,” says one child of God, “I had built my house firmly once upon some stable promises. There came a wind and I said, O Lord, I am cast down and I shall be lost.” Oh, the promises were notcast down. The foundations were not removed. It was your little “wood, hay, stubble” hut that you had been building. It was thatwhich fell down. You have been shaken on the rock, not the rock under you. But let me tell you what is the best way of living in the world. I have heard that a gentleman said to a Negro, “I can’t think how it is you are always so happy in the Lord and I am often downcast.” “Why Massa,” said he, “I throw myself flat down on the promise—there I lie. You stand on the promise— you have a little to do with it and down you go when the wind comes. And then you cry, ‘Oh, I am down.’ Whereas I go flat on the promise at once and that is why I fear no fall.” Then let us always say, “Lord there is the promise. It is Your business to fulfill it.” Down I go on the promise flat! No standing up for me. That is where you should go—prostrate on the promise. And remember, every promise is a rock, an unchanging thing. Therefore, at His feet cast yourself and rest there forever!

5. But now comes one jarring note to spoil the theme. To some of you God is unchanging in His threats. If every promise stands fast and every oath of the Covenant is fulfilled, hark you, Sinner—mark the word—hear the death knell of your carnal hopes! See the funeral of the fleshy trusting. Every threat of God, as well as every promise shall be fulfilled. Talk of decrees! I will tell you of a decree —“He that believes not shall be damned.” That is a decree and a statute that can never change. Be as good as you please, be as moral as you can, be as honest as you will, walk as uprightly as you may—there stands the unchangeable threat—“He that believes not shall be damned.”

What do you say to that, Moralist? Oh, you wish you could alter it and say, “He that does not live a holy life shall be damned.” That will be true. But it does not say so. It says, “He that believesnot” Here is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. But you cannot alter it—you either believe or be damned, says the Bible. And mark—that threat of God is as unchangeable as God Himself. And when a thousand years of Hell’s torments shall have passed away you shall look on high and see written in burning letters of fire, “He that believes not shall be damned.”

“ But, Lord, I am damned.” Nevertheless it says “ shall be” still. And when a million years have rolled away and you are exhausted by your pains and agonies, you shall turn up your eye and still read “SHALL BE DAMNED,” unchanged, unaltered. And when you shall have thought that eternity must have spun out its last thread—that every particle of that which we call eternity must have run out, you shall still see it written up there, “SHALL BE DAMNED.” O terrible thought! How dare I utter it? But I must. You must be warned, Sirs, “lest you also come into this place of torment.” You must be told rough things, for if God’s Gospel is not a rough thing, believe me, the Law is a rough thing.

Mount Sinai is a rough thing. Woe unto the watchman that warns not the ungodly! God is unchanging in His threats. Beware, O Sinner, for “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”  
6. We must just hint at one thought before we pass on and that is—God is unchanging in the objects of His love— not only in His love, but in the objects of it—  
*“* If ever it should come to pass  
That sheep of Christ might fall away,  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,  
Would fall a thousand times a day.  
If one dear saint of God had perished, so might all. If one of the Covenant Ones is lost, so may all be and then there is no Gospel promise true. Then the Bible is a lie and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once, when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God has loved me once, then He will love me forever— *“* Did Jesus once upon me shine,  
Then Jesus is forever mine.  
The objects of everlasting love never change. Those whom God has called, He will justify. Whom He has justified, He will sanctify. And whom He sanctifies, He will glorify.  
I. Thus having taken a great deal too much time, perhaps, in simply expanding the thought of an unchanging God, I will now try to prove that He is unchangeable. I am not much of an argumentative preacher, but one argument that I will mention is this—the very existence and Being of a God seem to me to imply immutability. Let me think a moment. There is a God. This God rules and governs all things—this God fashioned the world—He upholds and maintains it. What kind of Being must He be? It does strike me that you cannot think of a changeableGod. I conceive that the thought is so repugnant to common sense that if you for one moment think of a changing God, the words seem to clash and you are obliged to say, “Then He must be a kind of man,” and you have a Mormonism idea of God!  
I imagine it is impossible to conceive of a changing God. It is so to me. Others may be capable of such an idea, but I could not entertain it. I could no more think of a changing God than I could of a round square, or any other absurdity. The thing seems so contrary that I am obliged, when once I say, God, to include the idea of an unchanging Being.  
2. Well, I think that one argument will be enough, but another good argument may be found in the fact of God s perfection. I believe God to be a perfect Being. Now, if He is a perfect Being, He cannot change. Do you not see this? Suppose I am perfect today. If it were possible for me to change, should I be perfect tomorrow after the alteration? If I changed, I must either change from a good state to a better—and then if I could get better, I could not be perfect now— or else from a better state to a worse—and if I were worse, I should not be perfect then. If I am perfect, I cannot be altered without being imperfect. If I am perfect today, I must be the same tomorrow if I am to be perfect then. So, if God is perfect, He must be the same—for change would imply imperfection now, or imperfection then.  
3. Again, there is the fact of God s infinity, which puts change out of the question. God is an infinite Being. What do you mean by that? There is no man who can tell you what he means by an infinite being. But there cannot be two infinities. If one thing is infinite, there is no room for anything else—for infinite means all. It means not bounded, not finite, having no end. Well, there cannot be two infinities. If God is infinite, today, and then should change and be infinite tomorrow, there would be two infinities. But that cannot be.  
Suppose He is infinite and then changes, He must become finite and could not be God—either He is finite today and finite tomorrow, or infinite today and finite tomorrow, or finite today and infinite tomorrow—all of which suppositions are equally absurd. The fact of His being an infinite Being at once quashes the thought of His being a changeable Being. Infinity has written on its very brow the word “immutability.”  
4. But then, dear Friends, let us look at the past—and there we shall gather some proofs of God’s immutable nature. “Has He spoken and has He not done it? Has He sworn and has it not come to pass?” Can it not be said of Jehovah, He has done all His will and He has accomplished all His purpose?” Turn you to Philistia—ask where she is. God said, “Howl Ashdod and you gates of Gaza, for you shall fall,” and where are they? Where is Edom? Ask Petra and its ruined walls. Will they not echo back the truth that God has said, “Edom shall be a prey and shall be destroyed”? Where is Babel and where is Nineveh? Where is Moab and where is Ammon? Where are the nations God has said He would destroy? Has He not uprooted them and cast out the remembrance of them from the earth?  
And has God cast off His people? Has He once been unmindful of His promise? Has He once broken His oath and Covenant, or once departed from His plan? Ah, no. Point to one instance in history where God has changed! You cannot, Sirs—for throughout all history there stands the fact—God has been immutable in His purposes. I think I hear someone say, “I can remember one passage in Scripture where God changed!” And so did I think, once. The case I mean, is that of the death of Hezekiah. Isaiah came in and said, “Hezekiah, you must die, your disease is incurable, set your house in order.”  
He turned his face to the wall and began to pray. And before Isaiah was in the outer court, he was told to go back and say, “you shall live fifteen years more.” You may think that proves that God changes. But really, I cannot see in it the slightest proof in the world. How do you know that God did not know that? Oh, but God didknow it—He knew that Hezekiah would live. Then He did not change, for if He knew that, how could He change? That is what I want to know. But do you know one little thing?—that Hezekiah’s son Manasseh was not born at that time. And had Hezekiah died there would have been no Manasseh and no Josiah and no Christ, because Christ came from that very line!  
You will find that Manasseh was twelve years old when his father died—so that he must have been born three years after this. And do you not believe that God decreed the birth of Manasseh and foreknew it? Certainly. Then He decreed that Isaiah should go and tell Hezekiah that his disease was incurable and then say also in the same breath, “But I will cure it and you shall live.” He said that to stir up Hezekiah to prayer. He spoke, in the first place as a man. “According to all human probability your disease is incurable and you must die.” Then He waited till Hezekiah prayed—then came a little “but” at the end of the sentence.  
Isaiah had not finished the sentence. He said, “you must put your house in order for there is no human cure—but” (and then he walked out. Hezekiah prayed a little and then he came in again and said) “ But I will heal you.” Where is there any contradiction there, except in the brain of those who fight against the Lord and wish to make Him a changeable Being?  
II. Now secondly, let me say a word on THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS UNCHANGEABLE GOD IS A BENEFIT. “I am God I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Now, who are “the sons of Jacob”? Who can rejoice in an immutable God?  
1. First, they are the sons ofGod s election. For it is written, “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated, the children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil.” It was written, “The elder shall serve the younger.” “The sons of Jacob—  
Now then, how many of you have had personal manifestations? “Oh,” you say “that is enthusiasm—that is fanaticism.” Well it is a blessed enthusiasm, too, for the sons of Jacob have had peculiar manifestations. They have talked with God as a man talks with his friend—they have whispered in the ear of Jehovah. Christ has been with them to sup with them and they with Christ. And the Holy Spirit has shone into their souls with such a mighty radiance that they could not doubt about special manifestations. The “sons of Jacob” are the men who enjoy these manifestations.  
4. Then again, they are men of peculiar trials. Ah, poor Jacob! I should not choose Jacob’s lot if I had not the prospect of Jacob’s blessing. For a hard lot his was. He had to run away from his father’s house to Laban’s—and then that surly old Laban cheated him all the years he was there—cheated him of his wife, cheated him in his wages, cheated him in his flocks and cheated him all through the story. By-and-by he had to run away from Laban who pursued him and overtook him. Next came Esau with four hundred men to cut him up root and branch. Then there was a season of prayer and afterwards he wrestled God—and had to go all his life with his thigh out of joint. And a little further on, Raphael, his dearly beloved, died. Then his daughter Dinah is led astray and the sons murder the Shechemites. Then his dear son, Joseph, is sold into Egypt and a famine comes. Then Reuben goes up to his couch and pollutes it—Judah commits incest with his own daughter-in-law and all his sons become a plague to him. At last Benjamin is taken away and the old man, almost broken-hearted, Cries, “Joseph is not and Simeon is not and you will take Benjamin away?” Never was man more tried than Jacob—all through the one sin of cheating his brother! All through his life God chastised him. But I believe there are many who can sympathize with dear old Jacob. They have had to pass through trials very much like his. Well, cross-bearers, God says, “I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Poor tried Souls! You are not consumed because of the unchanging nature of your God. Now do not get to fretting and say, with the self-conceit of misery, “I am the man who has seen affliction.” Why “the Man of Sorrows” was afflicted more than you! Jesus was indeed a mourner. You only see the skirts of the garments of affliction. You never have trials like His. You do not understand what troubles mean. You have hardly sipped the cup of trouble—you have only had a drop or two, but Jesus drunk the dregs. Fear not, says God, “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob,” men of peculiar trials, “are not consumed.”  
5. Then one more thought about who are the “sons of Jacob,” for I should like you to find out whether you are “sons of Jacob,” yourselves. They are men of peculiar character. For though there were some things about Jacob’s character which we cannot commend, there are one or two things which God commends. There was Jacob’s faith, by which Jacob had his name written among the mighty worthies who obtained not the promises on earth but shall obtain them in Heaven. Are you men of faith, Beloved? Do you know what it is to walk by faith, to live by faith, to get your temporary food by faith, to live on spiritual manna—all by faith? Is faith the rule of your life? If so, you are the “sons of Jacob.”  
Then Jacob was a man of prayer—a man who wrestled and groaned and prayed. There is a man up yonder who never prayed this morning, before coming up to the House of God. Ah, you poor Heathen, don’t you pray? “No!” he says, “I never thought of such a thing—for years I have not prayed.” Well, I hope you may before you die. Live and die without prayer and you will pray long enough when you get to Hell. There is a woman—she did not pray this morning. She was so busy sending her children to the Sunday school she had no time to pray. No time to pray? Had you time to dress? There is a time for every purpose under Heaven and if you had purposed to pray, you would have prayed. Sons of God cannot live without prayer. They are wrestling Jacobs. They are men in whom the Holy Spirit so works that they can no more live without prayer than I can live without breathing. They must pray. Sirs, mark you, if you are living without prayer, you are living without Christ. And dying like that, your portion will be in the lake which burns with fire. God redeem you, God rescue you from such a lot! But you who are “the sons of Jacob,” take comfort, for God is immutable.  
III. Thirdly, I can say only a word about the other point—THE BENEFIT WHICH THESE “SONS OF JACOB” RECEIVE FROM AN UNCHANGING GOD. “Therefore you sons Jacob are not consumed.” “Consumed?” How? How can man be consumed? Why, there are two ways. We might have been consumed in Hell. If God had been a changing God, the “sons of Jacob” here this morning, might have been consumed in Hell. But for God’s unchanging love I should have been a stick in the fire. But there is a way of being consumed in this world. There is such a thing as being condemned before you die—“condemned already.” There is such a thing as being alive and yet being absolutely dead. We might have been left to our own devices—and then where would we be now? Reveling with the drunkard, blaspheming Almighty God? Oh, had He left you, dearly Beloved, had He been a changing God—you had been among the filthiest of the filthy and the vilest of the vile! Cannot you remember in your life seasons similar to those I have felt? I have gone right to the edge of sin—some strong temptation has taken hold of both my arms so that I could not wrestle with it. I have been pushed along, dragged as by an awful Satanic power to the very edge of some horrid precipice. I have looked down, down, down and seen my portion. I quivered on the brink of ruin. I have been horrified, as, with my hair upright, I have thought of the sin I was about to commit—the horrible pit into which I was about to fall! A strong arm has saved me. I have started back and cried, O God, could I have gone so near sin and yet come back again? Could I have walked right up to the furnace and not fallen down, like Nebuchadnezzar’s strong men, devoured by the very heat? Oh, is it possible I should be here this morning, when I think of the sins I have committed and the crimes which have crossed my wicked imagination? Yes, I am here, unconsumed, because the Lord changes not. Oh, if He had changed, we should have been consumed in a dozen ways. If the Lord had changed, you and I should have been consumed by ourselves—for after all, Mr. Self is the worst enemy a Christian has. We would have proved suicides to our own souls. We would have mixed the cup of poison for our own spirits, if the Lord had not been an unchanging God and dashed the cup out of our hands when we were about to drink it. Then we would have been consumed by God, Himself, if He had not been a changeless God. We call God a Father—but there is not a father in this world who would not have killed all his children long ago, so provoked would he have been with them—if he had been half as much troubled as God has been with His family. He has the most troublesome family in the whole world—unbelieving, ungrateful, disobedient, forgetful, rebellious, wandering, murmuring and stiff-necked. Well it is that He is long-suffering, or else He would have taken not only the rod, but the sword to some of us long ago! But there was nothing in us to love at first, so there cannot be less now. John Newton used to tell a whimsical story and laugh at it, too, of a good woman who said, in order to prove the doctrine of Election—“Ah, Sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards.” I am sure it is true in my case and true in respect to most of God’s people. For there is little to love in them after they are born. If He had not loved them before, He would have seen no reason to choose them after—but since He loved them without works, He still loves them without works. Since their good works did not winHis affection, bad works cannot severthat affection—since their righteousness did not bind His love to them, so their wickedness cannot snap the golden links. He loved them out of pure Sovereign Grace and He will love them still. But we should have been consumed by the devil and by our enemies— consumed by the world, consumed by our sins, by our trials and in a hundred other ways if God had ever changed!  
Well, now, time fails us and I can say but little. I have only just cursorily touched on the text. I now hand it to you. May the Lord help you “sons of Jacob” to take home this portion of meat. Digest it well and feed upon it. May the Holy Spirit sweetly apply the glorious things that are written! And may you have “a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined!” Remember God is the same, whatever is removed. Your friends may be disaffected, your ministers may be taken away, everything may change—but God does not. Your Brothers and Sisters may change and cast out your name as vile—but God will still love you! Let your station in life change and your property be gone. Let your whole life be shaken and you become weak and sickly. Let everything flee away—there is one place where change cannot put his finger. There is one name on which mutability can never be written. There is one heart which never can alter. That heart is God’s—that name Love— *“* Trust Him, He will never deceive you.  
Though you harshly of Him deem;  
He will never, never leave you,  
Nor will let you quite leave Him.

*“* Are the sons of God*’* s election,  
Who through Sovereign Grace believe;  
By eternal destination  
Grace and Glory they receive.

God ’s electare here meant by “the sons of Jacob”—those whom He foreknew and foreordained to everlasting salvation! 2. By “the sons of Jacob” are meant, in the second place, persons who enjoy peculiar rights and titles. Jacob, you  
know, had no rights by birth, but he soon acquired them. He exchanged a mess of pottage with his brother, Esau, and  
thus gained the birthright. I do not justify the means. But he did also obtain the blessing and so acquired peculiar rights.  
By “the sons of Jacob” is meant persons who have peculiar rights and titles. Unto them who believe, He has given the  
right and power to become sons of God. They have an interest in the blood of Christ. They have a right to “enter in  
through the gates into the city”—they have a title to eternal honors. They have a promise to everlasting glory. They  
have a right to call themselves sons of God. Oh, there are peculiar rights and privileges belonging to the “sons of Jacob.” 3. Next, these “sons of Jacob” were men of peculiar manifestations. Jacob had had peculiar manifestations from his  
God and thus he was highly honored. Once at night he lay down and slept. He had the hedges for his curtains, the sky for  
his canopy, a stone for his pillow and the earth for his bed. Oh, then he had a peculiar manifestation. There was a ladder  
and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He thus had a manifestation of Christ Jesus as the ladder which  
reaches from earth to Heaven—up and down which angels came to bring us mercies. Then what a manifestation there  
was at Mahanaim when the angels of God met him—and again at Peniel, when He wrestled with God and saw Him face  
to face. Those were peculiar manifestations—and this passage refers to those who, like Jacob, have had peculiar manifestations.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2156 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ROBBERS OF GOD

NO. 2156

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 27, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me!”  
Malachi 3:8.**

These Prophets would have made poor royal chaplains if those who dwell in kings’ houses have to use smooth speech. Malachi here charges the people with robbery and with the very worst form of it, namely, sacrilege. He speaks for the Lord and says, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me.” It ill becomes the messengers of Heaven to be the flatterers of rebels. If they should descend to such baseness, they might well expect that their Maker would take them away. The Lord sends His servants to speak the Truth in all its plainness, to denounce sin with all fidelity and to publish God’s sentence of condemnation against those who continue in their iniquity. Men’s souls are to be dealt with honestly and, if need be, sternly. God’s Truth is to be handled with vigorous plainness, for the Lord has said, “He that has My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully.”

Yet notice that Malachi constantly mixes promises with threats and while he is like a sharp two-edged sword against the evil of the people, he is as the balm of Gilead to those who feel their disease of sin and desire to be healed of it. Between the peals of thundering warning there are silver showers of gracious encouragement! He has tempest for sin but peace for those who confess it. Almost the next verse after our text is, “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Faithful ministries have in them a blending of the Law to drive with the Gospel to draw. Brothers, we must use the Law for its ordained purpose. If we omit the discovery and denunciation of evil, we have neglected a very essential part of our duty, for if men are not convinced of sin, how will they desire pardon? If conscience is not awakened, to what can we address ourselves? It is in vain to bring forth the promises, for the promises are no more sweet to the self-righteous than bread to a man filled with dainties. What cares a man for justification by faith who has the conceit that he is already justified by his own acts? Only those who feel their wounds will plead for heavenly surgery. I pray that I may so preach this morning that while I shall not be harsh in spirit, I may bear hard upon those spirits which are resting in their own innocence! I wish so to speak that we shall, all of us, see our own shortcomings so as to be startled into confession and prayer and led humbly to trust in the great Sacrifice!

It is a very serious charge which the Prophet brings in the text—he calls men thieves and robbers. He charges the whole nation with robbing God. We ought seriously to consider a charge so serious and, especially since at this day it may lie against ourselves. We shall come to this consideration, noticing in the text astonishment indicated: “Will a man rob God?” The Prophet asks in amazement, as if such a thing could not be. Secondly, we shall spend a little time in pressing home the solemn charge. This will come under the head of confession assisted. We shall mention, in detail, certain forms which this robbery may take in order that we may search our own conduct and see whether we are guilty of the crime. If guilty, may we be moved to repentance of the sin and faith in the glorious Sin-Bearer through whom we may be pardoned, even though guilty of treason against the King of kings!

Lastly, we shall help the penitent to the right way under the head of repentance directed. If we have robbed God, though the crime is, in itself, most terrible, it is not beyond the reach of mercy. There is forgiveness with God for this, also, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. I shall speak about the way by which forgiveness may be obtained. Oh, for the Holy Spirit to guide mind and heart and tongue in this solemn matter!

I. First, then, in the text there is ASTONISHMENT INDICATED—“Will a man rob God?” The question is asked as if it were improbable, if not impossible. A man, an insignificant creature, dependent upon his God for the breath whereby he lives—will he rob God—the good, the just, the great and terrible One who can crush him in a moment? “Will a man rob God?”

In the first place, the astonishment arises from the fact that the action is altogether unnatural. It is illogical and self-condemnatory. If we have a God, how dare we rob Him? Look at the heathen—they must have a God— and since they know no better god, the heathen make to themselves gods of wood, of stone or of clay. When they have made these false gods they pay them homage as if, indeed, they were gods! For them they build temples, altars and shrines. Nations in the olden times had no banks, but treasures deposited in temples were safe from robbery. It was not supposed that a thief would break into a temple—to do so was a flagrant crime. There was an awe upon the minds of men which rendered it an audacious felony to rob their deities, false though they were! Men who would have plundered palaces, kept back from the temple of Jupiter, or Minerva, or Diana! No man would rob even an image which he thought to be a god.

If the heathen would not rob their gods, shall we dare to do so who have so much light as to the one living and true God? Will men who profess and call themselves Christians venture upon a profanity from which the heathen retreated with a shudder? Even Goths and Vandals, in the days of their invasions of civilization, have been known to stand back at the door of a Church when the minister of Christ has come forward to protest against its plunder. If the fierce heathen learned to respect the holy place, surely it will be a high felony if we, knowing the true God, dare to break in upon the sacred enclosure of His honor and rob Him of His Glory which is His spiritual treasure! To rob God is a superfluity of naughtiness, an extravagance of crime, an excess of presumptuous provocation! Can man be guilty of it? “Will a man rob God?”

In the next place, to rob God is terribly daring. If the thief robs his fellow man, who is his equal, he has cause to fear the law—he should reckon upon being searched out by vigilance and punished by justice. But what are the police and the magistrates and the judges of this lower sphere compared with the Judge of all the earth? “Will a man rob God?” The crime is the more audacious because done in God’s Presence. If the robber could go behind the Lord’s back to rob Him, his insolence would not be so manifest—but since the Lord’s eyes are everywhere present, the offense is rank and impudent! The worst of thieves will not often steal from us to our face—robbery is done in the dark, or on the sly, or by a cunning trick. But since no place is behind the back of God and there is no spot where His eyes are not observant—when a man robs God—he does it before His face!

“Will a man rob God?” What? God, whose eyes are fixed upon him? Will he thus defy his Maker? We lift up our hands in amazement that such a crime should be even conceived, much less committed! Yet, before I have done this morning, I shall have to show that many of us, in different ways, have been guilty of this audacious crime. “Will a man rob God?”

Furthermore, it is shamefully ungrateful! God has made us and not we ourselves, therefore we are bound to serve Him and every righteous instinct forbids our robbing Him. Shall a creature injure its Creator? If we live, it is by His forbearance. “Will a man rob God” who spares him? If saved, it must be by His Divine redemption—will a man rob his Redeemer? If provided with food for the body, it must be by God’s daily bounty—will a man rob his constant Benefactor? O Preserver of men, will men rob You? Believers in the Lord Jesus, God is your Father and from you this crime would have a sevenfold heinousness! Will a man rob his own Father? Can it be that one in whose heart there pulses the life of God would be guilty of such an infamy as to rob God? I fear it is so, but in such a case it is ingratitude of so black a type as to be well-near incredible. Ingratitude in every land and in every age has been abhorred of just men. It is a fiendish vice. It is at once contemptible and unendurable—we not only despise, but hate it. Every voice hoots down ingratitude. Yet when a man robs God, it is ingratitude written in capital letters— ingratitude that will sink the soul into the lowest Hell. “Will a man rob God?” The Lord deliver us from conduct so base!

It is senselessly injurious to the man himself. To rob God is to plunder ourselves. The man who lives for God does, indeed, and of truth, in the highest sense, live to his own happiness. He that robs God of himself robs himself of God and to lose God is to miss our highest good. To rob God is to waste our own substance, yes, to write one’s own death-warrant. Belshazzar takes from Jehovah the holy vessels and drinks wine from them at his drunken banquet. And it is written, “That night was Belshazzar slain.” When a man robs God by withholding more than is meet from the poor, it tends to poverty. None rob God and really prosper. There are

those who waste their substance upon their own lusts and so rob God— but their profligacy tends to disease, sadness of heart and eternal ruin.

When a man robs God he is despoiling his own estate. Every penny that is withheld from God’s treasury is put into a bag that is full of holes. Such gain impoverishes. He that serves God brings a blessing upon himself and his posterity—he that robs God should listen to the words which follow my text: “You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me.” Because of this comes the devourer which swallows up the estate, the waster that eats up the increase of the field and the destroyer which shipwrecks the result of commerce. If a man knew that when he robbed God he was cutting the throat of his own happiness—burying in a wretched sepulcher his peace for the present and his hope for the future—surely he would pause before he laid his hand upon the Lord’s heritage! In the sight of the curse that goes with the injustice, “Will a man rob God?”

Once more—“Will a man rob God” when he is so certain of punishment? A man who is a thief hopes to escape, for human search can be baffled. If he were sure that he would be taken, tried and condemned, the burglar would not break into the house—but he hopes by dexterity to evade, or by false statements to escape from the hand of the law—and therefore he ventures upon the crime. Now, no man can hope to escape when he robs God. O Robber, where will you go? In what secret place will you hide yourself? It was said of a Roman emperor, when Rome was at its highest power, that for him the whole world was but one great jail in which all who offended Caesar were prisoners. Wherever an offender fled, the Roman law would reach him. For him there was no foreign land which could protect him in exile, no distant country in which he could live unseen. Once obnoxious to Caesar, he was a doomed man.

And where, O Rebel against God, can you go? If you should mount to Heaven, there He reigns in splendor! If you should dive to Hell, there He rules in terror! Far off upon the sea His hand would reach you. Though your ship should fly before the tempest, He would outstrip you. Darkness affords no concealment and the grave no shelter. God is everywhere and His justice finds out His enemies. Thus says the Lord, “Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out from there. And though they are hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I command the serpent and he shall bite them.”

“Will a man rob God” when He thus involves Himself in sure detection and punishment? Yes, the robber of God is already detected! God has seen him in the act! The witness against him is unerring. “Will a man rob God?” How can he be so foolhardy? Will he stretch out his hand against God and strengthen himself against the Almighty? Let him be wise and no more dream of robbing the Infinite One. Put all these things together and I think you will share the Prophet’s astonishment at the crime of robbing God—and you will earnestly pray, “God grant that we may never be guilty of such wickedness.” We hope we have been kept from the worst forms of this sin, for we regard it with abhorrence, as the deadliest of evils.

II. And now, secondly, I am coming to closer quarters with you than under the first head. Now we occupy ourselves with CONFESSION ASSISTED. I would aid my hearers in examining their lives and hearts, holding a candle for conscience. I will mention, first, common forms of this robbery. Here are some of them. Many men, throughout a life which has been prolonged by God’s forbearance, have never given to God even the semblance of worship. Neither in their hearts, nor in private prayer, nor in their families have they paid worship to the Lord. They have never once set up an altar in their family, nor called upon the name of the Lord.

It may be there are men and women here who are parents and heads of households and yet after 30, 40, 50 or more years they have never rendered unto God the glory due unto His name. Never have they sung His praises with delight, nor offered prayer in humility. The holy Name has never been on their lips except in carelessness or profanity. Do I speak too roughly when I take such a person by the hand and say to him, “You have robbed God throughout your whole life”? He made you but He has had nothing from you. He has fed you day by day and in His hands your breath is, but you have done Him no service. If a man buys a cow, he counts upon its milk. If he keeps a horse, he looks for its labor. If he owns a dog, he expects it to come to his whistle. Will God make you, feed you, keep you in life and bless you—and is He to have no return? “Will a man rob God?”

Many of you think if you maintain your families, pay your debts and live soberly, all is done that you need think about. God is nowhere and nothing to you. As far as you can do so you have put God out of the world—you live as if there were no God. My Friend, this cannot be right. This injustice to the greatest and the best of Beings—this lack of thought of Him who daily thinks of you, must be wrong! Bow your head in shame and confess your fault at once! Many are in the habit of robbing God in another way. When God prospers them and things go well with them, you may hear them exclaim, “I am a lucky fellow! Bless my lucky stars!” By speeches of this sort they rob God of the thanks they owe Him.

It is silly and wicked to talk about a fictitious power called fortune, or good luck! Though the hand of God is distinctly to be seen in the prosperity which men enjoy, they refuse to see it and talk of chance! God forgive you! You are robbing Him of His praise. Others, when they prosper in the world, pay homage to themselves, their industry, their prudence or their business tact. Self-made men they call themselves. Self-made men are, as a rule, very badly made—it would be a great mercy if they could be broken up and made anew in Christ Jesus. But when a man begins to brag and boast of what he has gathered by his own genius, he robs God of the honor due to His goodness. Look at Nebuchadnezzar—he walks through his great city—he marks the broad walls of Babylon and admires the hanging gardens, bearing forests high in the air and he exclaims, “Behold this great Babylon which I have built!”

A few weeks after, as a maniac, he was eating grass with oxen, having been driven from the dwellings of men. When his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws, then he knew how soon the

glorious Lord of Heaven and earth can lay the mighty monarch level with the beasts. Then he humbled himself and blessed the Most High! Then he praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion! I do not wish that you should be bereft of your wits, but you may be. Perhaps, if your best reason returned, even that which pride has, for awhile, driven away, it might serve the purpose I desire—for you to remember that it is God that gives you power to get wealth. Prosperity, however much it may come by your own industry, is, nevertheless—when you get to the bottom of it—to be ascribed to the great favor of God who permits you to enjoy health and strength—to exercise your industry and to carry out your undertakings. By forgetfulness of the fountain of all blessings, a man robs God.

I must add here that even men who, in their hearts, fear the Lord, may be guilty of this sin. If the Lord has seen fit to make you useful, it will be horrible if you take the praise of it to yourself. It is very easy for the preacher, when his congregation is large, to think, “This is due to my eloquence.” And when there are conversions he may be wicked enough to whisper to himself, “This is due to my fidelity.” Ah, me! Shall we sacrifice to our own net because it is full of fish? Shall the axe that fells the tree glorify itself against the hand that uses it? The Lord grant we may never fall into this sin! Are you seeking to win the souls of your children for Christ? Yet maybe you do not gather large classes, nor see many conversions. May it not be because the Lord could not trust you with great success? Some workers must not succeed for it would be at the cost of their souls—they would take the glory to themselves and so rob God.

I knew a man whom God greatly blessed in a certain place, so that his preaching turned it upside down. He built a large house of prayer and filled it with eager hearers. There was such a stir as had not been known before. He was a successful soul-winner, and he knew it. Alas, he knew it and you could see that he knew it! He was a man of remarkable ability as a speaker, and he knew it. He was eminent for influence and his speech and bearing betrayed that eminence. Where is he now? I cannot tell you. But there came a sudden stop to usefulness—a foolish action—and the man became an affliction to the gracious. If we sit up for masters, instead of being obedient servants, we shall be ordered on foreign service and shall no more see the King’s face. Alas, our robbery of God by assuming honor for ourselves may prove that the root of the matter was never in us and that our spiritual power was only lent to us, as it was to Judas, but we were never children of the kingdom. “Will a man rob God?” Ah, me, how common are these offenses! The Lord preserve us from them!

Now I will mention doctrinal forms of this evil. “Will a man rob God?” Oh, my Friends, how many in these evil days rob God in this fashion! Some deny the godhead of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I know no greater robbery than to take away from the Ever-Blessed Son of God His right to be regarded as equal with God. To think of the eternal Word as only the creature of a day is base robbery! To regard Him whose name is Emmanuel, “God with us,” as a mere teacher or example, but not, “very God of very God,” is treason! If any man here has so robbed the Christ of God, the Lord have mercy upon him.

“Will a man rob God?” Some rob the Holy Spirit of His Personality. He is spoken of by them as an influence, but not as true God. He is spoken of as, “It,” instead of, “He.” And He is not worshipped as one Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity. Too many practically ignore Him and preach as if they could do without His aid. Thus they rob Him of His true position in reference to the things of God. O Friends, beware of robbing God the Holy Spirit, for this is to tread on tender ground! It is possible, also, to rob the Divine Father. In preaching the sacrifice of Christ it is possible to extol the Son at the expense of the Father. It will never do to make it appear that Jesus died to make the Father merciful. God the Ever-Blessed, the first Person of the sacred Trinity, is Love and therefore He gave His Son to die for men.

We are to worship the Son even as we worship the Father! To magnify the love of the Son above the love of the Father would be to rob God! May none of us dishonor any one Person of the sacred Three. Concerning each Divine Person let us sing—

*“Then let us adore, and give Him His right, All glory and power, and wisdom and might; All honor and blessing, with angels above, And thanks never-ceasing, for infinite love.”*

Though we understand not the mystery of the Trinity, let us believe and worship and so escape the sin of robbing God. Beloved, some yield to the temptation to limit the legal claims of God. They rob Him of His rights under His just and righteous Law. It has been taught by certain divines that God does not require from us perfect obedience to His Law, but only asks sincere obedience. If we go as far as we can, that will suffice—so they tell us. This is not true, for the Law of the Lord stands fast forever, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

To tone down the demands of this perfect Law and absolve men from their duty to obey every portion of it is to rob God and to teach others to do so. Although by reason of our sinfulness we cannot render perfect obedience, God is not to be blamed for that and neither is He to lose His due. If I cannot pay, yet the debt remains. I am under obligation to the Law to keep it. It is written, “Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.” It is ours to come before God saying, “The Law is holy and just and good but I am carnal, sold under sin.” If we do not consent unto the Law, that it is good, we rob God of His goodness, wisdom and justice in making such a Law.

Not a few rob God, also, by rebelling against His Sovereignty. I have known men to bite their lip and grind their teeth in rage when I have been preaching the Sovereignty of God. Yet it is true and who is he that replies against God? He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. He demands, “Is it

not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?” Men seem to think that God is under obligation to grant salvation to guilty men—that if he saves one He must save all. They talk about rights as if any man had any right before the Throne of God except the right to be punished for his sin! Mercy can only be shown to the guilty on the ground of the royal prerogative. It must be the free act of God’s Grace, done at His own good pleasure if any guilty man is saved from death.

The doctrinaires of today will allow a god, but he must not be King— that is to say, they choose a god who is no god and rather the servant than the ruler of men! We, however, declare on God’s behalf, that “it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy”— and at the sound of this doctrine they stamp their feet with rage! They would rob God of His crown and leave Him neither throne nor will. This will not do for me! My heart delights to say, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” Whatever is His pleasure shall by my pleasure. Even if the Lord condemns me, I cannot say that He is unjust. But if He has mercy upon me, I must ascribe it wholly to His free and Sovereign Grace! Rob not God of His Sovereignty but rejoice that the Lord reigns and does as He wills.

I fear that many rob God of the Glory of his Free Grace which is akin to His Divine Sovereignty and is one of the brightest jewels of His crown. God saves not according to merit, but according to mercy. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life.” Salvation is freely given, not because man merits it, but because Jehovah wills it. All salvation is of Divine Grace and not of works. I say it is of Free Grace and it is muttered that the expression is a tautology. I know it is—but we want to be understood. Salvation comes because God wills to save. Grace is given to the most unworthy of the sons of men to show that it is of Grace and not of debt!

But, ah, these knaves—they drag in human goodness or strength by the heels if they cannot get it in any other way! To spoil the freeness of Sovereign Grace and so to rob God of Glory is the ambition of many a preacher! One drop of human merit put into a sea of Free Grace preaching will spoil it all. “If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.” Stand to it, Brothers and Sisters, that by GRACE we are saved! In these evil days stand boldly out and protest against every Gospel that conceals Sovereign Grace as the fountain of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Now I will come closer home to certain of you, while I mention practical forms of this robbery of God. With too many God is robbed of that part of time which belongs to Him. And what part of time does He claim? One day in seven! He has given six days to us to use for our business, but He has reserved one day in seven for Himself and this He has done for our good. Christ our Lord has taken away whatever of bondage there was about the Sabbath Law, as interpreted by the Jewish Rabbis. And by example and by speech He has told us that acts of necessity, acts of mercy and acts of piety are allowable on Sunday. The bitter observance of the Sabbath was opposed by our Lord, that He might bring to us the true rest.

Yet, in many ways, men are conspiring to rob God of the day which He has hallowed. The little which remains of sacredness about this day is now being threatened to our national injury. Give up the Sabbath and you reduce the nation to slavery. A week without a Sabbath is perpetual bondage. This break of a day’s rest makes it possible for the toiling man to live. Alas, at this day the very highest in the land are setting the example of disregarding the sanctity of the Lord’s-Day! I grieve to have to say it of one who has been otherwise regarded, but so it is, that, by royal example, the day is turned from its holy purpose. It is not only from the ribald and the profane that our Christian Sabbath is in danger, but from those whose example has weight about it because of the honor justly paid to long years of virtue. God forgive the error and cause it to cease!

Brothers and Sisters, we must, to the utmost of our power, conserve for God His holy day or we shall be guilty of robbing Him! Very sincerely did we sing just now—

*“Welcome, sweet day of rest,  
That saw the Lord arise;  
Welcome to this reviving breast,  
And these rejoicing eyes.”*

All time is the Lord’s due and all the life of man. Let us not rob Him of our youth. He says to the young, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” Young man, do not rob God of your prime! Do not give to the world and to sin the morning of your days while the dew of youth is upon you. Rob not God of your early manhood but give Him your flower in its bud. Every day and all the day—and the whole of life belongs to God. Do not let us waste a minute in that which would provoke Him to anger, but let Him have each moment, for He prepares for us an eternity of reward.

“Will a man rob God?” Many rob God by not giving Him their hearts. “My son,” said He, “give Me your heart.” He claims you—give Him yourself. He made you and He alone can save you—give Him yourself. Will a man rob God? I pray you, do not! Render to the Lord your spirit, soul and body. Have you a faculty which you only use for self? You are robbing God—for the talent, the strength, the life you have are all His. These are the pounds which you must put out to interest for your Lord. If even your single pound is not used for Him, you will be found guilty of unfaithfulness in your stewardship.

Those may be said to rob God who have never borne testimony to the Grace which they believe they have received. You have been saved but you have never told anybody of the wondrous blessing—no, not your own wife! You have been converted—at least you hope so—but you have never confessed it, even to your children! Are you not robbing God of the revenue of Glory which would come to Him through the testimony which you are sent into the world to bear? If all Christians were dumb as you are, God would have no witness left on the face of the earth! Will men rob God of the confirmation of His Word which a gracious experience furnishes? You have

influence—will you rob God of this, also? We have all some influence, even as we all cast a shadow as we walk in the sun! Are you using your influence for God? If not, you are robbing Him of a great gift which He meant you to use for the glory of His name and the extension of His kingdom.

Perhaps you have more than influence—you have power—for you are the head of a family and you can command your household and your children after you. Are you leading servants and children in a wrong road? You are the Lord-Lieutenant in your own little sphere and are you using that power in a rebellious manner? Do you teach others to do what you, yourself, know to be evil? Alas, you rob God! Will you continue to rob God? In making you a father, a mother, an employer of labor and so forth, the Lord has entrusted you with a measure of His own power—will you use it against your Sovereign Lord? Are you a leader in society? Will you rob God? Are you a senator? Will you go into the Parliament House to vote for Acts which will be prejudicial to morals and religion? Are you a magistrate and will you wink at evil? Will you tolerate the indecencies and immoralities of our streets? Shall justice be the servant of vice? God forgive men who thus rob God!

Will men rob God of His portion of their wealth? I must not leave this out, for it is necessary to speak out in the matter of consecration of property. How many professors of religion are robbing God? If we are Christians, we profess that all we have belongs to God. You do not dispute that statement. Well, then, when a man hoards up all he can scrape together— is he not robbing God? When a man dies enormously rich, as many professing Christians have done, must they not have robbed God? Can it be said that they have discharged their stewardship aright when they have kept their Master’s property for themselves? It is better for a Christian to die comparatively poor than enormously rich! Rich wills may go to show that the deceased did not use his pounds for his Lord, but for himself.

Do not many Christians fail to see that God is the first owner of their possessions? They dribble out a little to His cause but is there not robbery in that which is withheld? They could not have the face to deny something and, as compared with their neighbors, they are even generous—but as compared with their obligations to God, have they not robbed Him? If we spend upon ourselves beyond bounds. If we lay out upon luxury more than is necessary. If we are superabundantly self-indulgent and are not consecrating a fair proportion of our substance to the cause of God and the help of the poor, we are assuredly robbing the Most High! I fear that many a wealthy man on his dying bed will find that gold makes a hard pillow. He will endure many a pang of conscience if he has seen missions languish, the Church of God impeded in her efforts and a thousand good efforts nipped in the bud from lack of money which he might have given. The work of the Lord would never go a-begging if Believers were but commonly honest to their Redeemer’s cause. If I plead like this, somebody raises an objection but I cannot help it. I seek nothing for myself—but I urge my Master’s claims.

“Will a man rob God?” I close this help to confession which, I think, must have come home to many of you, when I say that with certain persons there are peculiar forms of this evil. When yonder friend lay sick and thought himself at death’s door, he said, “O Lord, raise me up!” And then he vowed unto the Lord to devote a portion of his means to holy purposes. If he has not kept that sacred promise, I put the question to him with emphasis, “Will a man rob God?” Many years ago there came a friend to this place in fearful anxiety of mind. He told me that he had years before made a vow to give to God a very considerable amount but he had delayed payment. The result, at last, was that his conscience troubled him and he could get no rest either day or night. He was greatly relieved when he handed over the amount to the Orphanage and College and other works. Certainly he found it that day more blessed to give than to receive!

When I thanked him for such large help, he said, vehemently, “Do not thank me. I thank you for taking the trouble to use this money for the Lord. It is a great relief to me to be rid of this amount, for I fear I have not acted honestly towards the Lord my God.” Vow slowly, pay promptly! Do not hasten to say, “I will do this or that”—but when you have once said it, see that you do it and do it to the fullest. Be not like Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the price of the land which they professed to give to the Lord and to His Church. Never let us boast that we have done this or that for the Lord if we have not really done so to the letter—for in so doing we shall stand on hazardous ground. I leave the matter with God and your own consciences, only asking once more the solemn question, “Will a man rob God?”

III. Very briefly I would conclude with REPENTANCE DIRECTED. If any here are convicted by their own conscience, I ask them not to go out as they did who were convicted by our Lord, but I do ask that while we remain here we may feel a deep sense of shame because of our shortcomings towards God. If in any one of the ways mentioned we have robbed God, may confusion cover us. You that cannot say you have served Him at all, repent of such a robbery of God! You strong men and lovely women who are sitting here—who gave you your strength and beauty? Have you all your lives lived for self? What? No thought of God? Your Creator you have forgotten—He to whom you rightly belong you have practically denied. Confess the wrong! Humble yourself about it and may God the Holy Spirit work a sound conviction which shall lead you to real penitence.

Next, as much as lies in you, make restitution. See how the Prophet put it. “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house.” God requires that of you who have defrauded Him. You are not to say, “I am sorry,” and then go on in the same unrighteous manner. If you have wronged any man, never rest till you have made restitution to him. If in business, by petty pilfering or deception, you have dishonestly profited to the injury of another, set it right. You cannot expect to have peace in your conscience till you have, to the utmost of your power, rectified the wrong. As to the Lord Himself, if you have robbed Him, attend to that business. “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse.” Support His cause. Pay your fair proportion of the expenses of His house and do not

withhold that which is due.

Above all things, behold the great Maker of restitution. There is One who said, “I restored that which I took not away.” The Lord Jesus, alone, can put away the guilt of your robberies of God! He gave Himself to remove sin. Yes, He gave Himself up to the stroke of the sword of Justice that sinners might not perish. He died between two thieves, for there are many robbers of God in the land. The justice of God is appeased for your robberies by the death of Jesus. Look to God without fear! Look to Him and be saved! He is willing freely to forgive all your trespasses for Jesus’ sake. Only trust Him—only trust Him now and He will set you at liberty from the curse which follows all who rob God. Believe and your sin is gone—

*“Sunk as in a shoreless flood,  
Drowned in the Redeemer’s precious blood.”*

Lastly, if you are saved, say in your soul, “The past is forgiven and my fearful robberies of God are pardoned. Therefore I will rob Him no more. By God’s help it shall be my delight to spend and be spent for Him and—

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

I plead for perfect consecration—anything short of that is robbery of God! To live alone for Him who loved you and gave Himself for you is your debt to God—anything short of that is robbery of God. Chosen before all worlds, will you not be the Lord’s? Adopted into the family of Grace, will you not serve your heavenly Father? Made an heir of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ, will you not glorify Him who has raised you to this dignity? Ordained to everlasting bliss, a crown awaiting your brow, a palm of victory prepared for your hand, a mansion in Glory made ready for you by your glorious Forerunner—will you not glorify your God?

Need I plead with you? No, I will not! As you love Christ who has loved you, I beseech you, present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God which is your reasonable service. Be not so unreasonable as to refuse your life, your all for His dear sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Malachi 2:17; 3.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—907, 605, 576.  
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PROVING GOD

NO. 3036

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1856.

**“Prove Me now.”  
Malachi 3:10.**

IT was my pleasure and my privilege, some time ago, to address you from the whole of this verse—“Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in your house, and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

If I rightly remember, we had at that time enough room, but very soon afterwards, when we strove to serve our God more, He did really pour us out such a blessing that we had not room to receive it! Then we enlarged this house—still the blessing flowed so copiously that there was no room to receive it and I might have preached again from the same text, to remind you again of the promise. This morning, feeling that we are about to enter on a new enterprise to God’s honor and Glory, I thought I would endeavor to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, for which purpose I select such a text as this, “Prove Me now.”

According to the laws of our country, no man can be condemned until his guilt is proved. It were well if we all carried out the same justice toward God which we expect from our fellow men, but how frequently will men condemn the acts of their God as being hard and unkind! They do not say so—they dare not—they scarcely admit that they think so, but there is a kind of lurking imagination hardly amounting to a deliberate thought which leads them to fear that God has forgotten to be gracious and will no longer be mindful of them. Let us never, my Friends, think harshly of our God till we can prove something against Him. He says to all His unbelieving children who are doubtful of His goodness and His Grace, “Prove Me now. Have you anything against Me? Can you prove anything that will be dishonorable to Me? Wherein have I ever broken My promise? In what have I ever failed to fulfill My word? Ah, you cannot say that. Prove Me now, if you have anything against Me—if you can say anything against My honor—if you have hitherto not received answers to prayer and blessings according to promise. Set me down as false, I beseech you, until you have so proved Me.”

Moreover, not only is it unjust to think ill of anyone until we can prove something against him, but it is extremely unwise to be always suspicious of our fellow creatures. Though there is much folly in being over credulous, I question if there is not far more in being over suspicious. He who believes every man will soon be bitten, but he who suspects every man will not only be bitten, but devoured! He who lives in perpetual distrust of his fellow creatures cannot be happy—he has defrauded himself of peace and happiness—and assumed a position in which he cannot enjoy the sweets of friendship or affection. I would rather be too credulous towards my fellow creatures than too suspicious. I had rather they should impose upon me by making me believe them better than they are, than that I should impose upon them by thinking them worse than they are. It is better to be sometimes cheated than that we should cheat others—and it is cheating others to suspect those on whose characters there rests no suspicion. We acknowledge such morality among men, but we act not so towards God—we believe any liar sooner than we believe Him! When we are in trial and trouble, we believe the devil when he says God will forsake us. The devil, who has been a liar from the beginning, we credit—but if our God promises anything, we say, “Surely this is too good to be true.” And we doubt the fulfillment because it is not brought to pass exactly at the time and in the way we anticipate! Let us never harbor such suspicions of our God. If we say in our haste, “All men are liars,” let us preserve this one Truth of God, “God cannot lie.” His counsel is immutable and He has confirmed it by an oath, “that we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” in Christ Jesus. Let not our faith, then, dally with fear. Let us rather seek Grace—that we may confidently believe and assuredly rely on the words which the lips of God speak. “‘Prove Me now,’ if any of you are suspicious of My Word. If you think My Grace is not sweet, taste and see that the Lord is gracious. If you think that I am not a rock and that My work is not perfect, come now, tread upon the rock and see if it is not firm—build on the rock and see if it is not solid. If you think My arm shortened that I cannot save, come and ask and I will stretch it out to defend you. If you think that My ear is heavy that I cannot hear, come and try it—call upon Me and I will answer you. If you are suspicious, make proof of My promises, so shall your suspicions be removed. But, oh, doubt Me not until you have found Me unworthy of trust! ‘Prove Me now.’”

In these words I find a fact couched, a challenge given, a time mentioned, and an argument suggested. Such are the four points I propose to consider this morning.

I. First, then, we have THE FACT that God allows Himself to be proved—“Prove Me now.”  
In meditating on this subject, it has occurred to me that all the works of Creation are proofs of God—they evidence His eternal power and Godhead. But inasmuch as He is not only the Creator, but the Sustainer of them all, they make continual proof of Him, His goodness, His faithfulness and His care. I think when God launched the sun from His hand and sent it on its course, He said, “Prove Me now; see, O sun, if I do not uphold you till you have done your work and finished your career. You may rejoice ‘as a strong man to run a race,’ but while you fulfill your circuits, and nothing is hid from your heat, you shall prove My Glory and shed light upon My handiwork.” When the Almighty whirled the earth in space, I think He said, “Prove Me now, O ‘seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night,’ refreshing you with incessant Providences.” And to each creature He made, I can almost think the Almighty said, “Prove Me now. Tiny gnat, you are about to dance in the sunshine—you shall prove My goodness. Huge leviathan, you shall stir up the deep and make it frothy—go forth and prove My power. You creatures whom I have endowed with various instincts, wait on Me—I will give you your meat in due season. And you, you mighty thunder and you swift lightning, go teach the world reverence and show forth My Omnipotence.” Thus, I think, all God’s creatures are not merely proofs of His existence, but proofs of His manifold wisdom, His loving kindness and His Grace! The meanest and the mightiest of His created works, each and all, in some degree prove His love and teach us how marvelous is His Nature. But He has given to man this high prerogative above all the works of His hands, that he alone should make designed and intelligent proof. The things of earth prove God—the cattle on a thousand hills low forth His honor and the very lions roar His praise! Yet they do it not with intent, judgment and will—and although the sun proves the majesty and the might of its Master, yet the sun has neither mind nor thought and it is not its intention to glorify God. They do but prove Him unintentionally. But the saint does it intentionally.  
It is a great fact, Beloved, that God will have all His children to be proofs of the various attributes of His Nature. I do not think any one of the children of God proves all of God, but that they are all proving different parts of His one grand Character so that when the whole history of Providence shall be written and the lives of all the saints shall be recorded, the title of this book will be, “Proofs of God.” There will be one compendious proof that He is God and changes not—that with Him there “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” You will remember how one saint peculiarly proved the long-suffering of God in that he was permitted to pursue his career to the utmost verge of destruction—and while he hung on a cross, the patience that had borne with him so long, brought salvation to him at last! He was “in the article of death,” falling into the Pit, when Sovereign Grace broke the fall, everlasting arms caught his soul and Jesus Himself conducted him to Paradise! Then again, you will remember another saint who plunged into a thousand sins and indulged in the foulest lust—but she was brought to Christ! Out of her did He cast seven evil spirits and Mary Magdalene was made to prove the richness of our Savior’s pardoning Grace as well as the sweetness of a pardoned sinner’s gratitude! It is a fact that the Lord is ready to forgive—and this woman is a great proof of it. There was Job who was tortured with ulcers and made to scrape himself with a potsherd. He proved “that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy.” From him we get evidence that God is able to sustain us amidst unparalleled sufferings.  
Let me note how Solomon proved the bounty of God. When he asked for wisdom and knowledge, the Lord not only granted his request, but added riches and wealth and honor to his store. And how did Solomon magnify this proof of Divine bounty as he translates the experience of his dream into the counsel of his Proverbs? While he advises us to get wisdom, he assures us that “length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.” And then, once more, how great a proof of God’s special Providence in maintaining in this world “a remnant according to the election of Grace” we derive from the history of Elijah. There sat the venerable Seer beneath a juniper tree in the lonely desert— a great but sorrowful man—an honored but a dejected Prophet of the Most High. Do you mark him as he comes to Horeb, takes up his lodging in a cave and complains in the awful solitude of his soul, “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away”? Oh, had his fears been realized, what a blank would earth have been without a saint! But Elijah proved from the mouth of God the impossibility! He learned for our sakes, as well as his own, what a reservation God has made in reasons of direst persecution! It is proved that there shall always be a Church in the world while earth’s old pillars stand!  
Nor need we suppose that the testimony of the witnesses is closed. Each of God’s saints is sent into the world to prove some part of the Divine Character. Perhaps I may be one of those who shall live in the valley of ease, having much rest, and hearing sweet birds of promise singing in my ears. The air is calm and balmy, the sheep are feeding round about me and all is still and quiet. Well, then, I shall prove the love of God in sweet communing. Or, perhaps I may be called to stand where the thunderclouds brew, where the lightning plays and tempestuous winds are howling on the mountaintop. Well, then, I am born to prove the power and majesty of our God amidst dangers! He will inspire me with courage! Amidst toils He will make me strong! Perhaps it shall be mine to preserve an unblemished character and so prove the power of sanctifying Grace in not being allowed to backslide from my professed dedication to God. I shall then be a proof of the Omnipotent power of Grace which alone can save from the power as well as the guilt of sin! The divers cases of all the Lord’s family are intended to illustrate different parts of His ways—and in Heaven I think one part of our blest employ will be to read the great book of the experience of all the saints and gather from that book the whole of the Divine Character as having been proved and illustrated! Each Christian is a manifestation and display of some attribute or other of God—a different part may belong to each of us, but when the whole shall be combined, when all the rays of evidence shall be brought, as it were, into one great sun and shine forth with meridian splendor—we shall see in Christian experience a beautiful Revelation of our God!  
Let us remember, then, as an important fact, that God intends us to live in this world to prove Him. And let us seek to do so, always endeavoring as much as we can to be finding out and proving the attributes of God. Remember, we have all the promises to prove in our lifetime—and it shall be found, in the Last Great Day, that every one of them has been fulfilled! As the promises are read through now, it may be asked, “Who is a proof of such a promise?” Perhaps the question relates to some promises of almost universal application—and millions of saints will rise and say, “We proved the truth of that.” Or there may be a promise in the Bible that it will seldom fall to the lot of one of God’s children to prove—it is so peculiar and few shall have been able to understand it. But mark, there will be some witnesses to attest it, and all the promises shall be fulfilled in the united experience of the Church. Such, then is the fact—God allows His children to prove Him.  
II. And now, secondly, we have here A CHALLENGE GIVEN TO US— “Prove Me now.” “You who have doubted Me, prove Me. You who mistrust Me, prove Me. You who tremble at the enemy, prove Me. You who are afraid you cannot accomplish your work, believe My promise and come and prove Me.”  
Now, I must explain this challenge to you, as to the way in which it has to be carried out. There are different sorts of promises given in God’s Word which have to be proved in different ways. In the Bible there are three kinds of promises. In the first class I will place the conditional promises, such as are intended for certain characters—given only to them and then only on certain conditions. There is a second class, referring exclusively to the future—the fulfillment of which does not relate to us at the present time. Then there is a third and most glorious class called absolute promises, which have no conditions whatever, but which graciously supply the requirements that the conditional promises demand.  
To begin with conditional promises—we cannot prove a conditional promise in the same way as an absolute one. The manner of proving must accord with the character of the promise to be proved. Let me mention, for example, “Ask, and you shall receive.” Here it is quite obvious that I must ask in order to verify the promise. I have a condition to fulfill in order to obtain a benefit. The way to test the faithfulness of the Promiser and the truth of the promise is plainly this—comply with the stipulation. Very different is the promise and equally different the proof, when God says, “I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.” Here we have the simple will of the Almighty. Such a promise is to be proved in a very different manner from the fulfillment on our part of a condition—but more of this soon.  
In order to prove conditional promises, then, it is necessary for us to fulfill the condition that God has annexed to them. He says, “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith.” No man can prove God, with reference to this promise, till he has brought all the tithes into the storehouse—for it is, “herewith,” this promise has to be proved. Suppose the Lord says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” The only way of proving Him is by calling upon Him in the time of trouble. We may stand as long as we like and say, “God will fulfill that promise.” Yes, that He will, but we must fulfill the condition! And it behooves us to seek Grace of Him to enable us to do so, for we cannot prove such promises unless we fulfill the conditions appended to them. There are many very sweet conditional promises—one of them helped to save my soul at rest, it was this, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” The condition there is, “Look unto Me.” But you cannot prove it unless you look unto Christ! Here is another, “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” What a blessed promise that is! But then you cannot prove the promise unless you call on the name of the Lord. So that whenever we see the promise to which a condition is attached, if we wish to prove it in our own experience, we must ask of God to give us Grace to fulfill the condition! That is one way of proving God.  
But some will say, “Do not these conditions restrict the liberality and graciousness of God’s promises?” Oh, no, Beloved, for first, the conditions are often put to describe the persons to whom the promises are made. Hence, my Brother, when it is written, “He forgets not the cry of the humble,” the promise fits your chastened soul. When the Lord says, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word.” And when He says, “I will satisfy her poor with bread,” you can, some of you, take comfort that the promise finds you in the fit condition to receive the blessing! But again, if the condition is not a state, but a duty, then let it be prayer—He gives the spirit of prayer! Let it be faith—He is the Giver of faith! Let it be meekness—He it is who clothes you with meekness! Thus the conditions serve to commend the promises to God’s own children and to show the bounty of Him who gives “Grace for Grace.”  
But then there is the absolute promise and that is the largest and best promise of all, for if they were all conditional promises and the conditions rested with us to fulfill, we would all be damned! If there were no absolute promises, there would not be a soul saved! If they were all made to characters and no absolute promise were made that the characters should be given, we would perish, notwithstanding all God’s promises. If He had simply said, “He that believes shall be saved,” we should all be lost, for we could not believe without His Grace. Now, the absolute promise is not to be proved by doing anything, but by believing in it. All I can do with an absolute promise is to believe it. If I were to try to fulfill a condition, it would not be accepted by God because no condition is appended to that kind of promise. He might well say to me, “If you have fulfilled the condition of another promise, you shall have it, but I have put no condition to this one. I have said, ‘I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My ways; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.’ That is a promise without any condition.” Although the child of God may have sinned, yet the promise stands good that he shall be brought to know his error, to repent, and be wholly forgiven! Such a promise we can only believe—we cannot fulfill any condition relating to it. We must take it to God and say, “Have You said that Christ ‘shall see of the travail of His soul’? Lord, we believe it. Let Him see of the travail of His soul. Do you say, ‘My Word shall not return unto Me void”? Lord, do as You have said. You have said it, Lord—do it.” Has He said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? Then go and say, “Lord, I come now. Do as you said.” On an absolute promise, I can tell you, faith gets good foothold! Conditional promises often cheer the soul, but it is the absolute promise which is the rock that faith delights to stand upon!  
Now, beloved Friends, what promise has been laid this day to your hearts? Many of you have one that God gave you when you arose from your beds. I am always sure to have the most happy day when I get a good text in the morning from my Master. When I have had to preach two or three sermons in a day, I have asked Him for a morning portion, and preached from it. And I have asked Him for an evening portion, and preached from it, after meditating on it for my own soul’s comfort—not in the professional style of a regular sermon-maker, but meditating upon it for myself. Such simple food has done more good than if I had been a week in manufacturing a sermon, for it has come warm from my heart just after it has been received in my own conscience and, therefore, it has been well spoken, because well known, well tasted, and well felt! What is your promise, then? Is it a conditional one? Then say, “Lord, I beseech You, enable me to fulfill the condition.” And if the promise is applied to your soul with a condition, He will give you both the condition and the promise, for He never gives by halves. Has He put into your soul, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man

his thoughts”? Then He will give you Grace to forsake your ways and your thoughts too! He will not give you the conditional promise without, in due time, giving you the condition, too.  
But have you got an absolute promise laid to your soul? Then you are a happy man! Has God laid to your inmost spirit some of those great and precious promises, such as this, “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed”? Pause not to ask for conditions—take the promise just as it is! Go on your knees and say, “Lord, You have said it.” Again, has the Lord promised, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you”? Plead it! Or are you in trouble? Search out the suitable promise and say, “You have said, ‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.’ I believe you, Lord! I am tried, but you have said I shall have no trial that I am not able to bear. Lord, give me all-sufficient Grace, and make me more than conqueror!” Go and prove God! Be not afraid with any amazement. If He gives you a single word, He means that you should bring it to Him and tell it to Him again—for you know He has said, “I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” Do, I beseech you, put the Lord in mind of His own promises and He will most assuredly fulfill them! Here is a challenge to all the redeemed, “Prove Me now.”  
III. In the third place, there is A SEASON MENTIONED—“Prove Me now.”  
Do you know what is the most perilous time in a Christian’s life? I think I could hit upon it in a moment—“now.” Many persons—I might well near say all Christians—are always most apprehensive of the present hour. Suppose they are in trouble? Though they may have had ten times worse troubles before, they forget all about them and, “now,” is the most critical day they ever knew! Or, if they are at ease, they say— *“Far more the treacherous calm I dread  
Than tempests rolling over my head”—*  
and they think no position in life more dangerous than “now.” The lions are before them—how great their danger! And when, a little while ago, they lost their roll in the arbor of ease, how dreadful it was then! And when they got to the slippery ground, going downhill, “now” seemed their greatest danger! When they get a little further and Apollyon meets them, “Here,” they say, “is the worst trial of all.” Then comes the Valley of the Shadow of Death and they say, “Now this is the most serious period of my life!” In fact, it is right that we should feel in some degree that “now” is just the time we ought to be guarded. Yesterdays and tomorrows we may leave, but “now” is the time we must be watchful. God never lays tomorrow’s promise on my heart today, because I am not in immediate need of it. The promises are given in the time, in the place and in the manner He has designed and intended they should be fulfilled. But no doubt some of you will sympathize with me when I say that “now” is the time when the Christian thinks he can trust God the least. “Oh,” he says, “if I were in the same state as I was before, I would be happy. I believe that I could have trusted my Master better then, but just now I cannot lay my head so confidently on the Savior’s breast. I remember, when I was sick, how sweet the promises were. I could then say—  
*“‘Sweet to lie passive in His hands,  
And know no will but His.’*  
But now I am altered. Somehow or other, a languor has come over me. I cannot believe that I am a Christian.” You compare yourself with some Brother and feel quite sure that if you were only like he, you would have faith. Go and speak to that Brother and he will say, “If I were like you, I would be better off.” And so they would change experiences, each failing to trust God under his own circumstances. But the Lord is pleased to always give us a word that suits the particular position we may be in— “Prove Me now.”  
To allegorize a moment. There is a ship upon the sea. It is the ship which the Lord has launched and which He has said shall come to its desire haven. The sea is smooth. The waves ripple gently and bear the ship steadily along. “Prove Me now,” says the Lord. The mariner stands on the deck and says, “Lord, I thank You that You have given me such smooth sailing as this. But ah, my Master, perhaps this very ease and comfort may destroy my Grace.” And a Voice says, “Prove Me now, and see if I cannot keep you amidst the storm.” Soon the heavens have gathered blackness, the winds have begun to bluster and the waves lift up their voices while the poor ship is tossed to and fro on the yawning winds. I hear a Voice which says, “Prove Me now.” Look, the ship has been dashed upon the rocks—she has been broken well near in sunder and the mariner sees her hold filling with water, while all his pumps cannot keep her empty! The Voice still cries, “Prove Me now.” Alas, the ship well-near sinks—another wave will be enough to swamp her! It seems as if one more drop will submerge her. Still the Voice cries, “Prove Me now.” And the mariner does prove God—and he is delivered safely from all his distresses. “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end,” but, “so He brings them unto their desired haven.” Now the ship is scudding merrily along before the winds and, lo, she comes to the verge of the horizon. The mists have gathered round her. Strange phantoms dance to the waves of night—a lurid light flits through the shades and soon the darkness come again. Something broods about the ship that the mariner has never seen before. The water is black beneath his vessel’s prow. The air hangs damp and thick above him. The very sweat is clammy on his face. Fresh fear has got a hold of him that he never felt before. Just then, when he knows not what to do, a Voice cries, “Prove Me now.” And so he does! He cries unto the Lord and is saved!  
Ah, dear Friends, I might give you a hundred illustrations. I think this old Bible speaks to me today. I have wielded it in your midst as God’s soldier. This sword of the Spirit has been thrust into many of your hearts and though they were hard as adamant, it has split them in sunder! Some of you have had sturdy spirits broken in pieces by this good old Jerusalem blade. But we shall be gathered together tonight where an unprecedented mass of people will assemble, perhaps, from idle curiosity, to hear God’s Word—and the Voice cries in my ears, “Prove Me now.” Many a man has come, during my ministrations, armed to his very teeth and having on a coat of mail—yet has this tried weapon cut him in two and pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow! “Prove Me now,” says God, “go and prove Me before blasphemers! Go and prove Me before reprobates, before the vilest of the vile and the filthiest of the filthy! Go and prove Me now.” Lift up that life-giving Cross and let it again be exhibited! Into the regions of death go and proclaim the Word of Life! Into the most plague-smitten parts of the city, go and carry the waving censer of the incense of a Savior’s merits and prove, now, whether He is not able to stop the plague and remove the disease!  
But what does God say to the Church? “You have proved Me before. You have attempted great things, though some of you were faint-hearted and said, ‘We should not have ventured.’ Others of you had faith and proved Me. I say again, ‘Prove Me now.’” See what God can do just when a cloud is falling on the head of him whom God has raised up to preach to you! Go and prove Him now—see if He will not pour you out such a blessing as you had not even dreamed of—see if He will not give you a Pentecostal blessing! “Prove Me now.” Why should we be unbelieving? Have we one thing to make us so? We are weak—what of that? Are we not strongest in our God when we are weakest in ourselves? We are fools, it is said—so we are, and we know it—but He makes fools to confound the wise. We are base, but God has chosen the base things of the world. We are unlearned—  
*“We know no schoolman’s subtle art”—*  
yet we glory in infirmity when Christ’s power rests upon us. Let them represent us as worse than we are! Let them give us the most odious character that has ever been given to man—we will bless them and wish them good. What though the weapon are a stone, or even the jaw-bone of an ass, if the Lord directs it? “Do you not know,” say some, “what wise men say?” Yes, we do, but we can read their oracles backwards. Their words are the offspring of their wishes. We know who has instructed them and do you shrink from the Truth of God, or do you shrink from His Grace? In either case, you have not the love to your Master that you should have. If you are brave men and true, go on and conquer! Fear not, you shall yet win the day! God’s holy Gospel shall yet shake the earth once more! The banner is lifted up and multitudes are flocking to it—the Pharisees have taken counsel together—the learned stand confounded— the sages are baffled. They know not what to do! The little ones God has made great and he that was despised is exalted. Let us trust Him, then. He will be with us even to the end, for He has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”  
IV. The last division of my subject is AN ARGUMENT and I have already preached on that—“Prove Me now.”  
Why should we prove God? Because, Beloved, it will glorify Him if we do. Nothing glorifies God more than proving Him. When a poor hungry child of God, without a crust in the cupboard, says, “Lord, You have said that bread shall be given me and water shall be sure. I will prove You”— more Glory is given to God by that simple proof of Him than by the hallelujahs of the archangels! When some poor despairing sinner who has been fluttering round the Word, in hopes that he may— *“Light on some sweet promise there,  
Some sure defense against despair”—*  
when such an one gives credence to God’s promise in the very teeth of evidence against him, staggering not at the promise through unbelief, then he glorifies God! If you are, this morning, in your own apprehension an almost damned sinner, and you feel yourself to be the vilest of all—if you will believe this, that Christ loves you and that Christ came to save you, sinner as you are—you will glorify God as much by doing that as you will be able to do when your fingers shall sweep across the string of the golden harps of Paradise! We glorify God by proving Him. Try God. This is the way to bring out the glorious points of the Christian character. It is in being singularly qualified for the duties of our holy Christian warfare, in being singularly courageous and singularly ready with the martyr-spirit, to imperil ourselves for His service, that we may bring glory to God! God says, “Prove Me now.” Saint, will you rob Him of His honor? Will you not do that which shall crown Him, in the estimation of the world, with many more crowns? Oh, prove Him, for by so doing you will glorify His name!  
Prove Him again, for you have proved Him before. Can you not remember that you were brought very low and yet you can say, “This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles”? What? Will you not prove Him again? Mind you not the goodness you have proved? When you said, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped,” did He not support you so that you could say with the Psalmist, “Nevertheless I am continually with you: you have held me by my right hand”? Has your foot slipped? Can you not thus far witness to His mercy? Then trust in it to still hold you up!  
Again, accept this challenge! Prove God’s Word, as He has called you to do, and how much blessing it will give to yourself! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we endure 10 times as much anxiety in this world as we need because we confide not in Divine promises half as much as we might. If we were to live more on God’s promises, and less on creature feelings, we would be happier men and women, all of us! Could we live always in faith on the promises, the shafts of the enemy could never reach us. Let us constantly, then, seek to prove Him! How much good Mr. Muller has done by proving God! He is called by God to a special work. What does he do? He builds an orphan asylum and trusts to God. He has no regular income, but he says, “I will prove to the world that God hears prayer.” So he lives in the exercise of prayer and though he may, at times be brought to his last shilling, yet there is never a meal that his children sit down to without sufficient bread. Our work may be different from his, but let us seek, whatever our work is, to do it so that when anyone reads of it, he will say, “He tried God in such-and-such a promise and his life was a standing proof that that promise did not fail.” Whatever your promise is, let your life be seen to be the working out of the problem which has to be proved, and like any proposition of Euclid, which is stated at the beginning and proved at the end, so may we find a text put at the beginning of our lives as a promise to be fulfilled—and seen at the close, demonstrated, proved, and carried out!  
But, dear Friends, let me just conclude by asking those here who have been brought to know their lost and ruined state, to remember this message, “Prove Me now.” Thus says my God unto you, O Sinner, “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” My dear Hearer, are you lost and ruined? Prove God now! He says, “Call unto Me, and I will answer you.” Come now, and call unto Him. “Knock,” He says, “and it shall be opened unto you.” Lift up the knocker of Heaven’s door and sound it with all your might! Or, suppose you are too weak to knock—let the knocker fall down of itself. He has said, “Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Go and prove the promise now! Try to prove it. Are you a poor, sick and wounded sinner? You are told that Jesus Christ is able and willing to heal your wounds and extract the poison from your veins. Prove Him, prove Him, poor Soul! You think yourself to be a lost one— therefore I urge you, in Christ’s name, to prove this promise—“I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” Take this to Him and say, “O God, I need faith to trust Your Word! I know You mean what You have said. You have said, this morning, by the mouth of your minister, ‘Prove Me now.’ Lord, I will prove You now, this very day, even till nightfall if You do not answer me! I will still keep fast by Your promise.”  
Do this, my Beloved, and you will not be gone long before you will be able to sing—  
*“I’m forgiven, I’m forgiven!  
I’m a miracle of Grace.”*  
Now, do not stand still and say, “God will not hear such an one as I am. My disease is too bad for Him to cure.” Go and see, put your hand on the hem of His garment and then if the blood is not staunched, go and tell the world that you have proved God wrong. Go and tell it, if you dare. But oh, you cannot. If you touch the hem of His garment, I know what you will say—“I have tasted that the Lord is gracious. He said, ‘Trust in Me, and I will deliver you.’ I have trusted in Him and He has delivered me!” For the promise will always have its fulfillment. “Prove Me now,” says God.

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GOD’S JEWELS

NO. 2970

A SERMON  
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**“And they shall be Mine, says the LORD of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.”  
Malachi 3:17.**

THESE words were spoken in a very graceless age, when religion was peculiarly distasteful to men, when they scoffed at God’s altar and said of His service, “What a weariness it is!” and scornfully asked, “What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?” Yet even those dark nights were cheered by bright stars. Though the great congregations of God’s House were but a mockery, yet there were smaller assemblies which God gazed upon with delight. Though the house of national worship was often deserted, there were secret conventicles of those who “feared the Lord” and who “spoke often, one to another,” and our God, who regards quality more than quantity, had respect to these elect twos and threes! He “listened and heard” and He so approved of that which He heard that He took note of it and declared that He would publish it. “A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.” Yes, and He valued so much these hidden ones, “faithful among the faithless found,” that He called them His “jewels.”And He declared that in the great day when He should gather together His “segullah,” His regalia—the peculiar treasure of kings—He would look upon these hidden ones as being more priceless than emeralds, rubies, or pearls! “They shall be Mine,” He said, “in the day when I gather up My jewels into My casket to be there forever.”

We will try to work out this metaphor of jewels. Our first point shall be that God’s people are compared to jewels. Our second, the making up of the jewels. And our third, the privilege of being found among them.

I. THE LORD COMPARES HIS PEOPLE TO JEWELS.  
From the remotest antiquity, men have thought much of precious stones. Almost fabulous prices have been paid for them and there have been instances in which most bloody wars have been waged for the possession of a certain jewel renowned for its brilliance and size. Men hunt after gold, but the diamond they pursue with even greater eagerness. Five hundred men will work for a whole year in the diamond mines of Brazil when the entire produce of the year might be held in the hollow of your hand! And princes will give whole principalities, or barter the estates of half a nation in order to possess one peculiar brilliant of rare excellence. We wonder not, therefore, that the Lord, who elsewhere likens the precious sons of Zion to fine gold, should here compare them to jewels. However little they may be esteemed by men, the great JewelValuer, the Lord Jesus Christ, esteems them as precious beyond all price! His life was as dear to Him as life is to us, and yet all that He had, even His life, did He give for His elect ones. He counted down the price of His jewels in drops of bloody sweat in the gloomy Garden of Gethsemane. His very heart was set astir, streaming with priceless blood in order that He might redeem His people. We may compare our Lord to that merchant seeking goodly pearls, who, when He had found the one pearl of His Church, for the joy thereof went and sold all that He had that He might make it His own!  
Our God sets great value upon those whom He calls His jewels, as we may gather not only from their costly redemption, but from the fact that all Providence is but a wheel upon which to polish and perfect them. Those stupendous wheels, which Ezekiel saw, were but a part of the machinery of the great Lapidary by which He cuts the facets of His true brilliants and makes His diamonds ready for His crown, for is it not written that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”? The Lord values His people very highly—not only the rich among them, not alone the most gracious among them—but the very least and most unworthy among Believers are Jehovah’s jewels! To fear the Lord and think upon His name are very simple indications of piety, yet, if we only come up to the standard which these evidences indicate, we are dear to God. What though we may possess no singular gifts or eminent graces. What though our voice may never be heard among the crowds of populous cities, yet still, if we “think upon His name,” and our hearts are set towards the Lord Jesus, we are precious to Him!  
Jewels well portray the Christian because they are extremely hard and durable. Most jewels will scratch glass. Some of them will cut it while they, themselves, will not be cut by the sharpest file. And many of them will be uninjured by the most potent acids. The Christian is such an one. He has within him a principle which is incorruptible, undefiled and destined to endure forever! In Pompeii and Herculaneum, diggers have discovered gems in an excellent state of preservation, while statuary and implements of iron have been destroyed. Jewels will last out the world’s lifetime and glitter on as long as the sun shines! Rust does not corrupt them, nor does the moth devour them though the thief may break through and steal them. The Christian is born of an incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever. The world has often tried to crush or destroy God’s diamonds, but all the attempts of malicious fury have failed. All that enmity has ever accomplished has only been, in the hands of God, the means of displaying the preciousness and brilliance of His jewels! The sham Christian, who is but a paste gem, soon yields to trial— he evaporates into a little noxious gas of self-conceit—and it is all over with him. A little heat of persecution and the man-made Christian— where is he? But the genuine Christian, the true gem, the choice jewel of God will survive the fires of time and, when the fast dissolving Day shall arrive, he shall come forth from the furnace without a flaw!  
The jewel is prized for its luster. It is the brilliance of the gem which, in a great measure, is the evidence and test of its value. It is said that the colors of jewels are the brightest known and are the nearest approaches to the rays of the solar spectrum that have yet been discovered. Certainly there is no light like that which is reflected from the sincere Christian! The renewed heart catches the beams of the Sun of Righteousness and reflects them—not without some refraction, for we are mortal—but still, with much of glory, for we are immortal and God dwells in us! Look how the diamond flashes and sparkles! It is of the first water when, with certain other conditions, it is also without cloudiness and without spots. And oh, when a Christian is truly what a saint should be—what a luster, what a brilliance there is about him! He is like the Lord Jesus Christ, humble yet bold, teachable yet firm, gentle yet courageous! Like his Master, he goes about doing the will of Him that sent him. And though the wicked world may not love him, it cannot but perceive his brightness!  
Look at Richard Baxter, in Kidderminster—what a flashing diamond he was! He had some spots, no doubt, but his brightness was most surprising! Even swearers on the ale-bench could not but know that He was a Heaven-born spirit! We might quote honored names out of all Christian churches which would be at once discerned by you as God’s flashing brilliants because there is about them so little of the cloudiness of Nature—and so much of the brightness of Grace that he must be blind, indeed, who does not admire them! Precious stones are the flowers of the mineral world, the blossoms of the mines, the roses and lilies of earth’s caverns. Scarcely has the eye ever seen a more beautiful object than the breastplate of the high priest, studded with the 12 gems, each with its own separate ray melting into a harmony of splendor and, albeit that the trickeries of pomp have but little influence over men of sober minds, I scarcely believe that there exists a single person who is altogether impervious to the influence of a crown set with ruby, pearl, emerald and a bright array of other costly gems!  
There is a beauty, a Divine and superhuman beauty, about a Christian. He may be humbly clad and miserably housed. He may be poor and his name may never be mentioned among the great. But jewelers value a rare stone, none the less, because of its ill-setting. Beloved, nothing so delights God, next to the Person of His own dear Son, as the sight of one of those whom He has made like unto the Lord Jesus! Know you not that Christ’s delights are with the sons of men and that the holiness, the patience, the devotion, the zeal, the love and the faith of His people are precious to Him? The whole creation affords no fairer sight to the Most High than an assembly of His sanctified people in whom He sees the beauty of His own Character reflected. May you and I have much of “the beauty of holiness” given to us by the Holy Spirit! May the Lord look upon us with Divine satisfaction because He sees in us the rays of the solar spectrum of His own ineffable perfection!  
Christians are comparable to jewels because of their rarity. There are not many precious stones in the world. Of the smaller sorts, there may be many, but of the rarer gems, there are so few that a little child might write them. Only six very large diamonds (called paragons) are known in the world and God’s people are but few compared with the unregenerate multitude who are as the pebbles in the brook. The Christian belongs, like the ruby, the diamond and the emerald, to the choicest of created things. These stones are the aristocracy of minerals and Christians are the aristocracy of men. They are God’s nobles. The roll of Battle Abbey— have you ever looked it through? Well, it is of little consequence. There is a better roll by far—and if your name is written there, it will be of infinitely more consequence to you! In Doomsday Book—is there a name there at all like yours? Never mind whether there is or not. There is a Doom’s Day Book which will be of more value in the day of doom than Doomsday Book has ever been among the sons of men. Not many wise men after the flesh, not many great and noble have their names inscribed there—but all who are written in Heaven are, in another sense, wise, and great, and noble—for God has made them so through His own Grace. Not many are the gems which enrich the nations and not many are the saints who shine among men. The way to Heaven is narrow, and the Savior sorrowfully says, “Few there are that find it.” There is a city where pearl, jasper, carbuncle and emerald are as common things. O fair Jerusalem, when shall these eyes behold your turrets and your pinnacles?  
It is worthy of observation, too, that a jewel is the production of God. Diamonds have been burned and other jewels have been resolved into their elements. But, after the most laborious attempts, no chemist has yet been able to make a diamond. Men can cut the Gordian Knot, but they cannot tie it again. Lives have been wasted in attempts to produce precious stones, but the discovery is still unmade—they are the secret productions of God’s own skill—and chemists fail to tell how they were produced, even though they know their elements. So the world thinks it knows what a Christian is, but it cannot make one. All the wit in the world put together could not find out the secret of the Heaven-born life! And all the so-called “sacraments,” vestments, priests, prayers, and paraphernalia of Popery cannot create a Christian! “Yes,” says one, “we take a little water and we make an infant a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.” Sir, you make yourself a liar—and nothing better when you so speak—for it is neither in your power, nor in the power of any other man to regenerate a soul by any performance, either with or without water! You may never wash a flint long enough before you can wash it into a diamond. To make jewels for Christ’s crown is God’s work and God’s work alone! We might preach until our tongues grew dumb and men’s ears grew deaf, but not a living soul would ever receive Divine Grace by our talk alone—the Spirit must go with the Word of God, or it is so much wasted breath! The Lord alone can create a child of Grace! And a Christian is as much a miracle as was Lazarus where he rose from the tomb. It is as great a work of Deity to create a Believer as it is to create a world!  
It is worthy of remark, too, that jewels are of many kinds. Perhaps there is not a single ray in the spectrum which is not represented among them—from the purest white of the diamond, the red of the ruby, the bright green of the emerald, to the blue of the sapphire. So is it with God’s people. They are not all alike and they never will be! All attempts at uniformity must fail and it is very proper that they should. We need not wish to be one in the sense of uniformity, but only in the sense of unity— not all one jewel, but many set in one crown. It little matters whether we shine with the sapphire’s blue, or the emerald’s green, or the ruby’s red, or the diamond’s white, so long as we are the Lord’s in the day when He makes up His jewels!  
Jewels are of all sizes, yet they are all jewels. One is a Koh-I-Noor, a very mountain of light, but it is not any more a diamond because it is large, though it is more precious. The smallest dust of the diamond that comes from the lapidary’s wheel is made of the same material as the richest jewel that sparkles in the monarch’s crown and, even so, those Christians who have but little faith and little Grace, are still as much the Divine workmanship as the brightest and most precious in the believing family! And what is more, they shall be in the casket when the others are there, for it is said of them all, “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.”  
Once more, jewels are found all over the world. In the most frozen regions, on the tops of mountains and in the depths of mines, jewels have been discovered, but they are said to be most numerous in tropical regions. So, Christians are to be found everywhere. Blessed be the name of God, the Eskimos have sung the praises of Immanuel in the regions of eternal ice! And the children of the sun

have learned to adore the Sun of Righteousness in the midst of the torrid zone! But in England, which is the tropical region of Divine Grace, the land where the Gospel is preached in our streets, we find the most of Believers, as also in a few other happy lands which, like our own fair island, lie upon the Equinoctial line of Gospel privilege, where the Grace of God has given the Gospel in its greatest purity!  
Wherever the jewels have been found, though they differ in some respects, yet they are all alike in others. Kings delight in them and are glad to use them as regal ornaments. So, wherever the Lord finds His precious ones, East or West, or North or South, He sees something in them in which they all agree, and He delights in them. Our Lord Jesus counts them to be His true ornaments with which He arrays Himself as a bridegroom adorns himself with ornaments, and as a bride decks herself with jewels. God delights in Christians, come from whatever part they may. Although they may be of many tongues and though the colors of their skins may vary, yet are they still very, very precious in His sight— and they shall be His in that day when He makes up His jewels!  
II. In the second place, let us consider THE MAKING UP OF THE JEWELS.  
We have not come to the day of the making up of the jewels, for some of them are at this hour hidden and undiscovered. There is no doubt that many precious stones will yet be found. Diamond hunters are, at this moment, looking for them in the caverns of the earth and washing the soil of the mines to find them. Many of the chosen of God are not yet manifested. The missionaries in heathen lands are toiling to discover them amid the mire of idolatry. My daily business and calling is that of a jewel hunter—and this pulpit is the place where I try to separate the precious from the vile. Sunday school teachers and other workers are also diamond hunters. They deal with gems far more precious than millions of gold and silver. Oh, that all Christians were seekers of souls, for there is much need of all hands and it is a work which well rewards the laborer. All the chosen are not yet saved. Blood-bought multitudes remain to be gathered in! Oh, for Grace to seek them diligently! Because of the absence of so many of the Lord’s gems, the “making up” of the jewels has not yet taken place—but the time for that is hastening on!  
Many jewels are found, but they are not yet polished. They are precious gems, but it is only lately that they have been lifted up from the mine. When the diamond is first discovered, it glitters but little. You can see that it is a precious gem, but perhaps one half of it will have to be cut away before it sparkles with fullest splendor. The lapidary must torment it upon his wheel and many hundreds of pounds must be spent before perfection is reached. In some cases, thousands of pounds have been expended before the diamond has been brought to its full excellence. So it will be with many of the Lord’s people—they are justified, but they are not completely sanctified. Corruption has to be subdued, ignorance removed, unbelief cut away, worldliness taken off before they can be set in the crown of the great King! For this also the King waits and His jewels are not “made up.”  
Many of the Lord’s gems are but partly polished. Indeed, there are none on earth yet perfect. This is not the land of perfection! Some persons dream of it—their pretensions are but a dream. We have heard some say that they were perfect, but they were not perfect in the virtue of humility, or they would not have boasted after so vain-glorious a fashion! The saints are still in the Lapidary’s hands. The Master is taking off first one angle and then another, and rending away much which we have foolishly cherished—but through this cutting process we shall sparkle gloriously before long, so that those who knew us on earth will be amazed to see the difference in Heaven! Perhaps it will be part of the joy of Heaven to perceive our conquest over sin, to see how the Divine hand has shed a glory and beauty upon the poor dull stones of earth!  
The making up is delayed, too, because certain of the gems which have been partly polished are missing. “Oh,” you say, “does the Lord ever lose any of His gems? “No, not forever, but for a time they may be missing. A certain blue diamond that was very greatly renowned was, by some means, lost at the time of the French Revolution and has never been heard of since. It is somewhere, however, and God knows where it is— and it is still a diamond. And so there are some of His people who go astray and we cannot tell where they are. But still, “the Lord knows them that are His” and, “the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Backslider, you were once a jewel in the church—you were put down in the book as a church member, but from the casket of the church, Satan stole you. Ah, but you did not belong to him and he cannot keep you! You have agreed to be his, but your agreement does not stand for anything. You did not belong to yourself and so you could not give yourself away. Christ has the first and only valid claim to you and will yet obtain His rights by the Omnipotence of His Grace. Because of these missing jewels, the long-suffering of God waits. But the day is coming—its axles are hot with speed—when sardius, topaz and carbuncle shall glisten in the same crown with emerald, sapphire and diamond, nor shall ligure, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx, or jasper be lacking—they shall all be “set in gold in their enclosing.”  
III. Upon THE HONORABLE PRIVILEGE of being numbered with the crown jewels of Jehovah, we will utter hardly more than a few sentences, and we will preface them with words of self-examination.  
“They shall be Mine.” This does not include all men, but only “those that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.” Standing in the midst of this immense assembly and remembering that a very large proportion of my Hearers are professors of faith in Christ, I am happy to be in such a great jewel house! But when I reflect that it is a very easy thing, indeed, to imitate a jewel so that the counterfeit cannot be detected except by the most skillful jeweler, I feel solemnly impressed with the desire that none of you may be deceived! It is not very long ago that a lady possessed a sapphire supposed to be worth £10,000. Without informing her relatives, she sold it and procured an imitation of it so cleverly fashioned that when she died, it was valued by a jeweler in order that the probate duty might be paid upon it—and the trustees of the estate actually paid probate duty upon it to our government on £10,000 for what was not really worth more than a few pence—for they imagined that it was the real sapphire.  
Now if in examining material jewels, men well skilled have been thus deceived, you will not wonder if, in connection with the jewels of mind and spirit, it is so difficult to detect an impostor! You may deceive the minister, the deacons and the church—no, you may easily deceive yourselves and even pay the probate duty! You may be making sacrifices and discharging duties on account of true religion, as you think, but really for something which is not worth the name! Beloved in the Lord, be zealous for vital godliness! Hate hypocrisy, shun deception and watch against formality! I will make a pause and give you time, in a few minutes of silence, to pray that ancient and necessary prayer, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” All paste gems and all the glass imitations will surely be detected in the day which will burn as an oven! May we be found among the Lord’s genuine jewels in that dread testing day!  
If we are the Lord’s, then what privileges are ours! Then are we safe. If we really pass the scales at the last, there will be no more questioning, suspicions, beatings, weighing, or cutting. If the Great Valuer accepts us as being genuine, then we shall be secure forever!  
Nor is this all, Beloved. We shall also be honored. Remember where the jewels are to shine forever. Jesus Himself shall wear them as His glory and joy! Believers will be unrivalled illustrations of the Glory of Divine Grace throughout all ages. Can you see our glorious WellBeloved? There He sits—adored of angels and admired of men! But what are the ornaments He wears? Worlds were too small to be signets upon His fingers and the zodiac too poor a thing to bind the sandals of His feet. But, oh, how bright He is, how glorious! And what are the jewels which display His beauty? They are souls redeemed by His death from going down into the Pit! Blood-washed sinners! Men and women who, but for Him, would have been tormented forever in the flames, but who now rejoice to sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” So then—once acknowledged to be Christ’s, you are not only safe, but you will be in the closest communion with Christ throughout eternity! It is a bliss, the thought of which may well flash with vehement flame through your hearts even now, that you are, one day, to display the Glory of Immanuel that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God! You are to be His “gold rings set with the beryl.” With you as His reward, His Person will be “as bright as ivory overlaid with sapphires.” You are so dear to Him that He bought you with His own blood because you could not be “gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price thereof.” Your redemption by His death proves that your soul could not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire! And when the ever-glorious God shall exhibit your sanctified spirit as an illustration of His glorious Character and work, no mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for your worth will be above rubies! The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal you, nor shall the precious crystal be compared to you.  
But I hear a mournful voice crying, “All this is concerning the precious ones, but there is nothing for me. I was in hopes that there would have been something for a sinner like me.” Well, what are you, then? Are you not a jewel? “No,” you cry, “I am not a jewel. I am only a common stone. I am not worth the picking up—I am just one of the many pebbles on the shore of life—and the tide of death will soon wash me into the great ocean of eternity! I am not worthy of God’s thoughts. I am not even worth His treading upon—I shall, with multitudes of others, be swallowed up in the great deep of wrath and never be heard of again!”  
Soul, did you never hear this text? “I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” What stones were they? They were ordinary loose stones in Jordan’s bed. John was standing in the river baptizing and pointing to those worthless pebbles not worth picking up. He said, “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Even so, this night, God is able of these stones around me in this vast throng to make gems which shall be His treasure in the day when He makes up His jewels! You cannot thus exalt yourselves, nor can I do it for you, but there is a secret and mysterious process by which, by Divine art, the common stone is transmuted into the diamond! And though you are a stone black with sin, or blood-red with crime—though you are a flinty stone with jagged edges of blasphemy—though you are such a stone as Satan delights to throw at the Truth of God, yet God can transform you into a jewel! He can do it in an instant!  
Do you know how He can do it? There is a wondrous rod with which He works matchless transformations. That rod is the Cross! Jesus Christ suffered that sinners might not suffer! Jesus Christ died that sinners might not die, but that “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”! Sinner though you are—if you come beneath the Cross and trustingly look up to God’s dear Son, you shall be saved! And that salvation includes a complete change of nature by which you shall fear the Lord, think upon His name and mingle with those who speak often, one to another, with the certainty of being the Lord’s when He makes up His jewels!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MALACHI 3; 4.

Malachi 3:1. Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me. The name Malachi means “my messenger.” The reference here is, of course, to John the Baptist who was to prepare the way of the Lord.

1. And the lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple. Now, the Temple at Jerusalem is utterly destroyed, so how can the Jews still think the Lord, whom they profess to seek, will suddenly come to His Temple? He must have come there already—so we know He did—for there is not one stone of the Temple left standing upon another—“The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple”

1. Even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the LORD of Hosts. Christ was the great Messenger of the Covenant, the Messenger of mercy. And the Lord’s own people, even in that ancient time, delighted in anticipating the coming of the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed Messenger of the Lord of Hosts!

2. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap. All that only looked like religion, but was not real and genuine was purged away at His coming. He was like a refiner’s fire, consuming the false pretensions of the Pharisees and the vain boastings of the Scribes. There is, in the religion of Jesus Christ, a power that is a great purgative and a great refiner!

3. And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. Christ comes suddenly, but He comes to stay. “He shall sit.” If He comes into our heart at this moment—and He may come there suddenly—He will come to stay there and He will sit there “as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

3. And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness. Those men called to holy service shall offer unto the Lord offerings in righteousness after He has cleansed and purified them. You cannot worship God rightly until you have been cleansed by Christ. Till then, you are like priests with defiled feet, unfit to come into the sanctuary of God. But when Christ has purified you, fail not to draw near to God and to present your thanks offering to Him.

4, 5. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, says the Lord of Hosts. See how hard taskmasters are put, by Divine Inspiration, with sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers? They do not think badly of themselves, but the Lord thinks badly of them! And His judgment is always just.

6. For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. This is their comfort—even the Immutability of God is on the side of His people! He is just and always just! He hates sin and always hates sin! Yet that unchangeableness of His is always on the side of the people of His choice!

7. Even from the days of your fathers you are gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the LORD of Hosts. You wanderers from God, take this invitation home to your hearts and act upon it! Arise and return unto your Father, for when you are yet a great way off, He will see you and will run to meet you, and have compassion upon you—“Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says the Lord of Hosts.”

7. But you said, Wherein shall we return? God takes notice of what men say to Him after He has spoken to them. He will take notice of what you say when you go out of this House of Prayer. Erring men usually have something to say for themselves. The self-righteous can always invent some excuse, or ask some question, as they did here—“Wherein shall we return?”

8. Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. They were always ready to deny or question a just accusation, instead of letting it operate upon their conscience, so they asked about this charge.

8. But you say, Wherein have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings. They had kept back from God’s service the money which was necessary for the carrying on of the worship of His house. We read, in Nehemiah 13:10, that “the Levites and the singers that did the work, were fled, everyone, to his field,” for they could not live at Jerusalem because “the portions of the Levites had not been given them”—their supply of provisions having been stopped through the meanness of the people who had thus robbed the Lord “in tithes and offerings.”

9. You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. They could not make out why they were so poor and why they could not get on! The real reason was that there was a curse resting upon all that they did because they had robbed God.

10. Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the LORD of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. They had kept themselves poor by their own meanness! If they had behaved rightly towards God, He would have enriched them with the bounties of His Providence. The very windows of Heaven would have been thrown open to give them abundance for all their needs.

11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the LORD of Hosts. The locust and the caterpillar came up and ate their harvests—all because God was angry with them—and He alone could change their miserable circumstances.

12. And all nations shall call you blessed: for you shall be a delightsome land, says the LORD of Hosts. God is able, simply with a turn of His hand, or a glance of His eyes, to enrich or to impoverish. He gives in a thousand ways that we cannot control and He takes from us in as many ways which perhaps we cannot understand. It is always best to be right with God.

13-15. Your words have been harsh against Me, says the LORD. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against You? You have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yes, they that work wickedness are set up; yes, they that tempt God are even delivered. Those were indeed bad old times when the mass of the people looked only to their own temporal comfort! When they saw the wicked become rich, they wished that they were wicked, too, in order that they might be rich. They thought that it was of no use to serve God! But happily there was another set of people in the land, as there always is, more or less. God never leaves Himself without witnesses—and when the wicked are proudest, God’s people are often boldest.

16. Then. At that very time—  
16. They that feared the LORD spoke often, one to another. They could not bear to hear their God thus spoken of, so they went to one another’s houses. They found one another out and talked to one another.  
16. And the Lord listened. He loves to listen to the holy talk of a holy people. “The Lord listened.”  
16. And heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name. That is a very precious expression. You cannot, perhaps, speak much for the Lord, yet you think the more about Him—and God remembers those who think upon His name. Yet, often, thinking leads to speaking and there ought to be no speaking without previous thought! God loves to listen to the thoughtful conversation of a loving people who stand true to Him in the midst of an ungodly crowd—and He thinks very highly of them.  
17. And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels. “Others, who thought much of themselves, shall be thrown away like worthless pebbles, but these faithful ones shall be Mine in that day when I am putting My jewels into My crown, for they shall be precious in My sight.”  
17. And I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him. When the sword of the enemy is drawn from its sheath. When disease is putting down its myriads. When God’s vengeance has laid hold upon the ungodly He will be a hiding place for His people and will care for them as a man would anxiously care, not only for his son, but for his only son, one who is obedient and faithful to his father—“his own son that serves him.”  
18. Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked. Not now, but then—by-and-by there shall be a distinguishing mark set upon all mankind! “Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked.”  
18. Between him that serves God and he that serves Him not. Malachi 4:1, 2. For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you. Here is the difference, “But unto you.”  
2. That fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise. Not like a scorching and burning oven as the sun of the heavens is in the East, but He shall arise!  
2. With healing in His wings and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. All is right with those who are right with God!  
3-6. And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the LORD of Hosts. Remember you the Law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their father, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. The Old Testament ends with the mutterings of a curse, but the New Testament begins with a message of blessing concerning the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! What a mercy to come from under the Old Covenant unto the New!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1415 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GREAT DIFFERENCE

NO. 1415

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 19, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Where is the God of Judgment?”  
Malachi 2:17.**

**“Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.” Malachi 3:18.**

You were not here, I am thankful to say, last Lord’s-Day evening, for it was your duty and privilege to stay away to give others an opportunity of hearing. My subject, then, [Sermon #1414, No Difference] was our heavenly Father who makes His sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good and sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust. Then I set forth the universal benevolence of God and the way in which He stays the operations of Justice to give space for forbearance and long-suffering. Now this fact, this gracious fact, which ought to lead man to repentance, has, through the perversity of human nature, been used for quite another purpose. Men have said, “He blesses the evil as well as the good. The sun shines on all alike. The rain indiscriminately enriches the field of the tyrant and the pasture of the generous heart—where is the God of Judgment? Is there such a God? Is it not one and the same whether we fear Him or disregard Him?”

Side by side with this has run another circumstance perhaps even more readily misunderstood. God is, in this life, preparing His people for a better world and part of that process is effected by trial and affliction so that it frequently happens that the godly are in adversity while the wicked are in prosperity. Having no such designs toward them as toward His people, the Lord permits the wicked to enjoy themselves while they may, so that oftentimes they are as bullocks fattened in rich pastures—but they forget that they are fattened for the slaughter! The righteous, brought very low, are often in poverty, frequently in sickness and not seldom in despondency of spirit—but all to prepare them for Glory! From the trials of the godly, which are all sent in wisdom and in love, shortsighted man has inferred that God has no regard to human character and even treats those worst who serve Him best.

In Malachi’s days the blaspheming crew even said that God takes sides with the wicked and they wearied God by saying—“Everyone that does evil is good in the sight of the Lord and He delights in them.” Then again they uttered the old rude but plain-spoken question, “Where is the God of Judgment?” Truly Brothers and Sisters, in looking with these poor eyes upon the affairs around us, they do appear to be a great tangle and snarl, a mixed medley of strange happenings. We see the true princes of the earth walking in the dust and beggars riding upon horses! We mourn as

we see servants of God and heirs of Heaven lying, like Lazarus, sick at the gate of the ungodly miser, while the vicious libertine is rioting in luxury and drinking full bowls of pleasure!

Until we perceive the clue, Providence is a labyrinth into whose center we can never penetrate. But there is a clue which opens all its secrets! There is a God of Judgment, not sitting in Heaven in blind indifference, but looking down upon the sons of men and working out purposes of righteousness at all times. At this time I propose to speak upon the fact that God does put a difference between the righteous and the wicked and makes no mistake between Egypt and Israel. The Lord knows them that are His and in His dealings, which we cannot always understand, He has not confused His people with the world, nor does the rod of the wicked rest upon the lot of the righteous. He has a right hand of acceptance for them that fear Him and He has a left hand of punishment for those that fear Him not.

This distinction is not so apparent, yet, as it shall be, but we shall now trace the gradual widening of the division between the two classes and show that still there is a God of Judgment and that, by-and-by, even the blindest eye shall be able to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

I. First, then, THERE ARE SIGNS OF SEPARATION between the righteous and the wicked. The first sign is seen in the evident difference of character. “They that feared the Lord” are spoken of. That is to say, there are still some on the face of the earth who believe that there is a God, who believe in the Revelation which He has given, who accept the Atonement which He has provided and who delight to be obedient to the will which He has declared. How came they to fear the Lord? The answer is, it is a gift of His Grace and a work of His Spirit wherever it is found. It makes a distinction very deep, very vital and, consequently, very lasting, for it shall continue throughout eternity!

Let us bless God that in the worst times He still has a remnant according to the election of Grace! And when blasphemers grow bold in sin and say, “Where is the God of Judgment?” there are at least a few hidden ones who nevertheless look up and behold the Lord exalted above the rage of His foes. There will always be a band who bow the knee and worship the Most High because their hearts stand in awe of Him. God is beginning to separate His chosen from the world when He gives them an inward sense of His Presence and a consequent holy fear and sacred awe of Him. The dividing work begins here—in the bent and current of the heart.

This difference in real character soon shows itself in a remarkable change of thought and meditation. According to the passage before us, those who are said to, “fear the Lord,” are also described as those who, “thought upon His name.” Their thoughts are not always towards the transient things of this world, but they are much engaged with the eternal God and His truth—they are not always groveling after the creature, but soaring towards the Creator. The Hebrew word has the idea of “counting”—they reckon the Lord as the chief consideration when they count up their arguments for action. Others do not take Him into the reckoning, they act as if there were no God at all. But the righteous make much of Him and account Him to be the greatest factor in all their calculations— they fall back upon God in trouble—and joy most of all in Him when they are glad.

They reckon not without the Lord of Hosts. They say, “The best of all is, God is with us.” And concerning any action, if it is contrary to His mind, they reject it. If it is according to His will they think upon Him and they delight to carry it out. This makes a great difference in their course of life and also in their happiness. Dear Hearers, I trust there are many among you who can truly say that your meditation of God has been very sweet and you have been glad in the Lord. This, then, is working out a distinction between you and the wicked who forget God. You fear the Lord and you take delight in meditating upon Him in secret, but this, the worldling cannot understand. This makes a distinction between you and the careless which does not long exist without operating in a further direction— you grow weary of their frivolous conversation and they cannot endure your serious observations! And so two parties are formed, as of old there were two lines—the sons of God and the children of Cain.

You will soon see Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob living over again if you watch the thoughtless worldling and the pious Christian and mark how much they differ. Therefore there grows out of this difference of thought and feeling a separation as to society. “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another,” which shows that they often met and that they delighted in one another’s company. Each man felt himself feeble in the midst of the ungodly and, therefore, he sought out a Brother that he might be strengthened by association. Each man felt himself to be like a sheep in the midst of wolves, but knowing the nature of sheep to be gregarious, each one sought his fellow, that they might make up a flock, hoping that, as a flock, they might gather round the Good Shepherd. Yes, and in the ungodliest times there are not only gracious people here and there, but these chosen souls, by some means or other, make mutual discoveries and come together and so form the visible Church of the living God!

In Rome, in the days of the Caesars, when to be a Christian meant to be condemned to die without mercy, if Believers could not meet in their houses, they would meet in the abodes of the dead—in the Catacombs— but they must meet. It is the nature of God’s children that they do not like going to Heaven alone, but prefer to go up to the temple in bands and companies—and the more the merrier, as the proverb has it—for they delight to go with the multitude that keep Holy Day and they rejoice to fly in flocks like doves to their windows. There is a Divine sweetness in Christian communion and every true saint delights in it! The essence of our religion is love and he that loves not the Brethren, loves not God and lacks an essential point of the Christian character.

By the exercise of holy Brotherhood the Lord continues to call out His own people and thus to create a manifest separation. Likeness of character and thought produce a mutual affection and so a corporate body is formed and the solitary secret ones become manifest in the mass. The

chosen stones are quarried and are built into the similitude of a palace— what if I say that they come together bone to His bone to fashion the spiritual body of the Lord Jesus Christ? This distinct association leads on to a peculiar occupation—for, “they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.” They heard others speak against the Lord and they resolved to speak, too. Of others the Lord complained, “your words have been stout against Me, says the Lord,” and these men felt that it would be a shame if they were silent. They did not cast their pearls before swine, yet they wore their pearls where those who were not swine, but saints, could see them! In society where the Truth of God would be appreciated, they were not backward to declare it—“they spoke often one to another.”

It was a time of noise and tumult. It was a time of speaking very bitterly against the Lord. Therefore when they met together they spoke for the Lord and each one opened his mouth that the Lord might not lack for witnesses. I take it that the expression means that they renewed and repeated their testimony. “They spoke often one to another.” They said, “Ah, we can answer what the ungodly are saying! Our experience testifies that they speak not aright. It is not a vain thing to serve God. How do you find it, Brother?” Then the Brother would say, “I find it exceedingly comforting and cheering to my soul. They have said, What profit is it that we have kept His ordinances? But I have found it exceedingly profitable, for in keeping His commandments there is great reward.” Then a third would say, “It has enriched our souls to walk according to the mind of God and in the blessed ordinances of His house our souls have been fed and exceedingly nourished.”

A fourth would add, “The ungodly say it is in vain that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts—do you find it so, Brother?” The reply would be, “No, my mournful days have often been most profitable, like the days of shower and cloud which have most to do with the harvest.” “Besides,” said another, “we do not walk mournfully before the Lord as a rule, for we rejoice before Him, yes, in His name we do exceedingly rejoice!” Thus, you see, by their testimony, the one to the other, they supported each other’s minds against the popular infidelities of the time. They set their thoughtful experience against the vicious falsehoods of unbelieving men and so they both honored God and benefited each other.

When they “spoke often one to another” I have no doubt they expressed their affection, one for the other. They said, “Let us not marvel if the world hates us! Did not our Master say, ‘It hated Me before it hated you’? Did He not tell us to beware of man? Did He not remind us that our worst enemies should be those of our own household.” “Yes, Brothers and Sisters,” they would say, one to another, “let us love one another, for love is of God.” The elders would speak like John the Divine and say, “Little children, love one another.” And the younger ones would respond by acts and words of loving respect to the older saints. Their mutual expressions of love would increase love! As when we lay live coals together, they burn the better, so loving intercommunications increase the heat of affection till it glows like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame!

No doubt, for we know by what we see, this speaking, one to another, assisted each other’s faith. One might be weak, but they were not all weak at once! One and another would be strong just then. We all have our ups and downs, but the mercy is that when one is sinking, another is rising! It will frequently happen that if the sun does not shine on my side of the hedge, it is shining on yours, and you can tell me that the sun is not snuffed out but that it will shine on me, too, by-and-by. Commerce makes nations rich and Christian communion makes Believers grow in Grace. Speaking often, one to another, with the view of helping the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees is a means of great blessing to the souls of Christians!

When they met, one would tell what he knew which his Brother or Sister might not know, and a third would say, “I can confirm that statement and add something more,” and so the first speaker would learn as well as teach. Then a fourth Brother would say, “But there is yet another Truth which stands in relation to that which you have stated, do not overlook it.” Thus by communion in experience and each one expressing what the Lord had written upon his heart, the whole would be edified in righteousness. Now, Beloved, it is in proportion as the children of God speak often, one to another, in this way that the Church is brought out into a visible condition. A silent Church might grope through the world unobserved, but a speaking Church—speaking often within itself—is of necessity soon heard beyond the doors of the house in which it dwells!

Soon does the sound of Gospel music steal over hill and dale. “Their sound has gone forth throughout all the earth and their words unto the end of the world.” The speaking together of assembled saints at Pentecost led to the gift of tongues and then they spoke so that every man in His own language heard the wonderful works of the Lord! An increase of private communion among the saints would lead to a fuller public communication to the outside and the world would receive a blessing. Thus I have shown you that the Lord thus gradually begins to separate a people to Himself. The fear of the Lord in the heart and the thought of God in the mind lead to association in persons of similar mold—hence arises the Church. Then the interchange of expression between the godly makes them zealous and this leads to public testimony and the people of God are revealed!

You will say that this does not prove that God is dealing differently with them from other men. “Where is the God of Judgment?” is the question, and how is it to be answered? My reply is, in all this the Lord is putting a difference. To work His fear in the heart is an act of Sovereign Grace, but to enable the soul to find deep enjoyment in meditating upon Divine things is a reward as well as a gift of Grace—and a reward more valuable than if He gave the God-fearing man wealth and fame! Christian society is also no small token of the Divine favor and is another reward of the Godfearing. I do not know how you find it, but I can truly assert that my choicest delights are with the people of God. What a great deal some of us owe to Christian fellowship! People whom we should never have known and never have thought of speaking to are now our choicest friends and have been and are incalculably helpful to us. Christian love has enlarged

our family circle wonderfully! We have come to be intertwisted, the one with the other, and the separate threads have ceased to be such for they have become a threefold cord which cannot be broken! And this is no small gift of Divine Grace.

Moreover, the communications which have arisen out of this society in which we have edified one another, have they not been very precious to us? Can you not say you had rather dwell for a day in the courts of the Lord than reign in the tents of wickedness for ages? Is it not so that when we are able to rejoice together and tell our experiences, we find a pleasure which makes the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad? Best of all, it is in the midst of these communications where holy society yields us gracious fellowship, that God Himself is found! This is the grand distinction in God’s relation to the universe at this present time—that He is with His people and they know it—while He is far from the wicked. The Lord listened and heard of old and He still listens and hears—and the Lord answers the prayers of His children out of His holy place—and sends tokens of acceptance to those who praise and magnify His name.

“The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Oh come, let us exult before Him, for He is not far away, nor has He hidden His face from us, but He dwells between the cherubim and shines forth among His saints in the Person of His dear Son and manifests Himself to us as He does not to the world! Even now, Israel in Egypt is not Egypt, for God is pitying the sighs and cries of His people! Israel in the Arabian desert is not Arabian, for, lo, the fiery cloudy pillar, like an lifted up standard, gathers around it a separated people. Lo, “The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” Even now the faithful, in going out from the world and being separate, find the promise fulfilled—“I will dwell in them and walk in them. And I will be their God and they shall be My people.” There is the first answer to the question, “Where is the God of Judgment?” The separation is already beginning—there are signs of it now!

II. Secondly, THERE ARE PREPARATIONS FOR A FINAL SEPARATION and these are, at this moment, proceeding. What these preparations are we learn from the 16th verse—“The Lord listened and heard it and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name.” There is a day coming in which He will separate the two sorts of men, the one from the other, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. The great net is now dragging the sea bottom—the day is coming when the net shall be hauled in and drawn to shore. What a medley it contains of good and bad fish, of creeping things, weeds, shells and stones—this mass must be separated! Then will come the putting of the good into vessels and the casting of the bad away.

When that is done it will be executed with great solemnity and care. There will be great discrimination used in the dividing of the righteous from the wicked and, as at a trial, everything proceeds upon evidence, the separating work is being prepared for us every day because the evidence is being collected and recorded. The evidence in favor of the righteous might be forgotten if it were not duly preserved in order that in the day when the separation shall be consummated there may be no mistake and nobody may be able to challenge the decision of the great Judge. Remember this, dear Friends, that evidence is being written down in a book— evidence of fidelity to God in evil times. When others were thinking against God and speaking against God, there were some who spoke on His behalf because they feared Him and thought upon His name—and their conduct was reported upon and chronicled!

God’s gracious eyes never overlooks one single act of decision for Him in the midst of blasphemy and rebuke. If the timid girl in the midst of a Christless family still patiently endures reproach and holds on to her Master’s Truth—though she cannot speak eloquently—behold, it is written in the book! Though her tears may often be her strongest expressions, they are in the book, also, and shall not be forgotten! When the workman in the shop speaks a word against filthy language, a word for the sacredness of the Sabbath, a word for his Lord, it is all written in the Book of Remembrance! A commission is instituted for the collection of evidence as to those that fear the Lord and think upon His name.

Are you, dear Friends, furnishing evidence, do you think, evidence which will prove that you are truly godly? Do you clearly stand out from among your fellows and are you manifestly separate, so that even Satan himself at the Last Great Day will not be able to challenge the evidence that will be given, that you did, indeed, fear the Lord when others reviled Him? This evidence is being taken by the Lord Himself! There is much consolation in this, because others might be prejudiced and give an unfavorable view of what we do. But when the Lord Himself bears witness, the truth will be manifested. “The Lord listened and heard.” It is a very strong expression! He not only “listened,” as one trying to hear, but He did actually hear all that was said! What a witness God will be in favor of His saints! If we really fear Him and think upon His name He will set our holy fear, our godly thought and our gracious talk in evidence on our behalf.

He reads our motives and these are a deep and vital part of character. Others might err, but He cannot—what He hears is accurately heard and correctly understood. Evidence is being collected, then, by a Witness who is Truth itself! This evidence is before God’s eyes at all times. If you notice, “the book of remembrance was written before Him,” as if while every item was being put down, the book lay open before His gaze. From Him the record is no more concealed than the act itself—past deeds of virtue are present to His eyes. Every recorded act of Grace is especially noticed by the Lord. Every separate word of faithfulness and act of true God-fearing life is noted, weighed, estimated, valued and safely preserved in memory to justify the verdict of the last grand dividing day!

Think of it, then, Beloved Brothers and Sisters—all that Divine Grace is working in you of humble faithfulness to God is being recorded! No annual report will proclaim it. It will never be printed in a magazine, nor advertised through the newspapers so as to bring you renown. But a Book of Remembrance is written before the Lord Himself! There it lies before Him whose single approval is more than fame! There, read a page—“Such an one thought upon My name. So-and-So spoke to his brother concerning

Me and helped to the mutual edification of the body and to the bearing of powerful testimony for My Truth against the assaults of error.”

This evidence, moreover, dear Friends, is of a spiritual kind and this is one reason why it is taken down by God and by no one else, for it is evidence concerning the state of the heart in reference to God! And who is to form that estimate but the Lord who searches the heart? Who is to know the thoughts of the mind, save God alone? There is an ear that hears thought. Though it is not indicated by a sound so loud as the tick of a clock, nor so audible as the chirping of a little bird, yet every thought is vocal to the mind of the Most High and it is written down in the Remembrance Book! Certain great actions which every man applauds may never go into that book because they were done from motives of ostentation, but the thought which nobody could have known and which must otherwise have remained in oblivion is recorded by the Lord and shall be published at the last assize!

Perhaps it ran thus, “What can I do for Jesus? How can I help His poor people? How can I cheer such-and-such a languishing spirit? How can I defeat error? How can I win a wandering soul for my Master?” Such thoughts as these are reckoned worthy of record and they are supplying evidence which, in His gracious love, the Lord is collecting that the sentence of His great tribunal may be justified to all. That evidence concerns apparently little things, for it mentions that “they spoke one to another.” Of course people will gossip when they get together—what is there in talk? Oh, but what sort of gossip was it? That is the question! For a holy theme turns gossip into heavenly fellowship! It is written, they “thought upon His name.” Surely it is not much to think? Ah Brethren, thinking and speaking are two very powerful forces in the world and out of them the greatest actions are hatched. Thoughts and words are the seeds of far-reaching deeds and God takes care of these embryos and germs—men do not even know of them and if they did know, would not esteem them—but they are put down in the Book of Remembrance which lies always open before the Most High!

Now, all this is going on every day and every night as certainly as time’s sands drop through the hour-glass. Letter after letter, stroke by stroke, the story is being written in the Book of Remembrance and though men see it not, the evidence is being gathered up to be used in that dread solemnity in which, amidst the pomp of angels, the great Infallible shall separate the blessed of His Father from those who are accursed! Thus every day the God of Judgment is working towards the time when even the most careless shall discern between the righteous and the wicked.

III. This brings us to the third point that IN THAT SEPARATION GREAT PRINCIPLES WILL BE MANIFESTED. I shall only have time to mention them rapidly. First, the principle of election will be displayed. God will have a people who are more His than other men can be. “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day.” “All souls are Mine,” says God, and His witness is true, but He rejects some souls because of sin and says, “You are not My people.” As for His chosen, they are His portion, His peculiar treasure, His regalia, His crown jewels and they shall be His forever. Then will special love and peculiar choice be manifest, for in the day of the separation it shall be seen that the Lord knows them that are His and while He counts others to be as mere stones of the field, He has set His heart upon the saints who are the gems of His crown.

And then will come, as the next principle, the fact of essential value— namely, that the Lord’s people are not only His but they are His jewels. There is something in them which Grace has put there, which makes them to be more precious than other men. “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.” God’s Grace makes His children to be purer, holier, heavenlier than the rest of mankind—and they are rightly divided from the impure and worthless mass. They will at the last, by evidence, be proved to have been jewels among men and nobody shall be able to question their worth. They shall be confessed by all men to have been precious stones and pebbles, gold and dross.

Then will come up the next principle of open acknowledgment. They were the Lord’s and they shall be acknowledged as such. “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day.” He Himself will declare the fact, for it is written, “He is not ashamed to call them Brethren,” and in that day the Lord Jesus will say, “Here am I, and the children that You have given Me.” Oh, what a joy it will be to be thus openly confessed by Jesus Himself! Now we are unknown if we are God’s people, for the world knows us not because it knew not our Master Himself. We are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God. But when He who is our Life shall appear, then shall we, also, appear with Him in Glory! “Then shall your righteousness shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Then shall be carried out the principle that there is nothing hid which shall not be known and those who were secretly servants of the Lord shall have evidence of that fact read aloud before assembled worlds—and God, the judge of all— shall not be ashamed to declare, “They are Mine, they are My peculiar treasure.”

But even in their case the principle of mercy will be conspicuous. I want you to notice very specially. “When I make up My jewels they shall be Mine, and I will spare them.” Sparing applies to those who, under another mode of judgment, would not escape. Had it been a question of merit as under Law, they would have been doomed as well as others, but the Lord says, “I will spare them.” O God, even though You have made Your chosen to be Your treasure, yet You do spare them, for the evidence does not prove them meritorious, but shows that they were saved in Christ Jesus and, therefore, taught to fear You. When the Apostle had received great kindness from a friend whom he had valued, he offered a prayer for him which you may be sure would be a very earnest and comprehensive one, but it was this—“The Lord have mercy upon him in that Day.”

That is all we can expect and, blessed be God, it is all we need! The matter of justice is settled by our Great Substitute and to us mercy comes freely! The brightest saint that ever reflected the image of Christ on earth will have to be saved by mercy from first to last! “I will spare them,” He says, for He might have dealt otherwise with them had He taken them on

grounds of Law and judged them apart from the mercy which flows through the atoning Sacrifice! True, they were jewels and they were the Lord’s own treasure. But if He had laid up their sins as evidence, instead of their marks of Grace—if that Book of Remembrance which is written before Him had contained an account of their shortcomings and their transgressions as the basis of judgment—it would have gone otherwise with them. But now He calls to remembrance their godly fear, their sacred thoughts and their holy conversation and He spares them!

They will be dealt with on the principle of relationship, also. “I will spare them as a man spares his own that serves him.” You spare your son when you know he is doing his best to serve you. He has made a blunder and if he had been a mere hired servant you might have been angry, but you say, “Ah, I know my boy was doing all he could and he will do better, soon, and therefore I cannot be severe. I see that he is imperfect, but I see equally well that he loves me and acts like a loving son.” The word here used signifies pity or compassion, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” He will at the last look upon us with a love which has pity mingled with it, for we shall need it in that Day. He will “remember that we are dust” and will accept us, though cognizant of all the faults there were and of all the infirmities that there had been.

He still will accept us because we are His own sons in Christ Jesus and, by His Grace, desire to serve Him. We do not serve Him to become sons, but because we are sons. It is a sweet name for a child of God—a son-servant—one who is a servant to his father and, therefore, because he is his son, serves not for wage, nor of compulsion, but out of love. Such service is mentioned as evidence of sonship and not as a claim—and we shall be saved through Grace, our holy service of sonship being the proof of that Grace..

Beloved, on these principles will God make the final division. He will say, “You are Mine—I chose you. You are My saints and there is a gracious excellence in you. I acknowledge you as Mine and I am not ashamed to do so, for you bear My Nature. I chose you in mercy and, in consequence of My having chosen you, I have made you to be My son-servants and so I accept your holy conversation as the token of your sincere love to Me and I receive you into My Glory to be Mine forever and ever.

IV. And now, lastly, comes the sure truth that THE SEPARATION, ITSELF, WILL BE CLEAR TO ALL. Then shall you mourn, you sorcerers and adulterers, you that oppress the hireling and turn aside the stranger from his right, you false swearers and enemies of God! You now can go on your way and say, “God cares nothing about righteous or wicked, He deals with all alike, or even smites His children worst of all.” But you shall look another way, by-and-by. Compelled to turn your heads in another direction from that of this poor fleeting world, you shall see something that will astound you! For though you wish it not, even you and much more the godly shall then “discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.” The division will be sharp and decisive!

Wherever you read in the Bible you find only two classes. You never read of three—you find the righteous and the wicked—him that fears God and him that fears Him not. A certain order of persons puzzle us in making division here below because we do not know to which party they belong. But when the Book of Remembrance is finished and shall be opened, there will be no sort of difficulty in knowing them—the two classes shall roll apart like the two portions of the Red Sea when Moses lifted up his rod—and there shall be a space between. On which side, my dear Hearer, you that are hesitating between two opinions—on which side will you be?

There will be no border land, no space for non-committal and neutrality—you will, then, be among the fearers of God or among those that fear not His name! Who may abide the day of His coming? That coming may be very speedy, for none of us knows the day nor the hour when the Son of Man shall appear. The separation will be sharp and decisive. There will be no undecided ones left. And it will obliterate a host of pretensions, for the day comes that shall burn as an oven and all the proud shall be as stubble. The Pharisee who thought he took his place among those that were the jewels of creation will find that the coming of the Lord will burn up his phylacteries and his broad hems—and utterly consume all his boasts as to fasting thrice in the week and taking mint and anise and cumin—for these things were never written in the Book, nor worth recording there.

What was put there was fearing the Lord and thinking upon His name and speaking one to another. Ceremonials and niceties of observance are not thought worth a stroke of the recording pen! There is nothing in the Book to act as evidence for the proud, but everything to condemn him! Therefore the Day shall burn him up and utterly consume him and his hopes! That division will be universal, for all they that do wickedly shall be as stubble, not one of them escaping. Though they hid their wickedness and bore a good name. Though they concealed their sin even from those who watched them. Though they entered the Church and gained honors in it as Judas did in the college of the Apostles, yet that Day shall discover all that do wickedly! Talk how they may and speak as they please, their outward conduct will be the index of their inner alienation from God—and in the hour of their judgment the fire shall consume them from off the earth!

Then shall both classes perceive that the distinction involves two very different fates. Once the righteous were in the fire and, according to the third chapter and the third verse, the Lord sat as a refiner and purified them in a furnace like silver! But now the tables are turned and the proud—and they that do wickedly—are in a more terrible fire! The Day shall burn as an oven! The righteous were profited by their fire, for they were good metal—and to part with the dross was no loss! But the wicked are such base metal that they shall utterly fail in the testing fire. The tables will be turned, again, for the righteous were under the feet of the wicked—they ridiculed and mocked them and called them “cants and hypocrites.”

But then the ungodly shall be laid low and the righteous shall tread them as ashes under their feet. The cause of evil will be a worn-out thing—it will be burnt up and there will be nothing left of it upon the

earth but memories of its former power and of the fire by which it perished. That Day comes and let the mighty ones among the sons of men who rebel against God know it! They shall no more be able to resist the terror of His Presence than the stubble is able to stand against the blazing fire. When they pine forever in the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched, they will know the God of Judgment and see how utterly He consumed them out of the land!

Look at the lot of the righteous. When Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise upon the earth and gild it with His own light, there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth—and the righteous shall go forth and leap for joy like cattle which, before, had been penned in the stall! No works of the ungodly shall be left. As far as this world is concerned, they shall be utterly and altogether gone. There shall then be no tavern songs or ale-house ribaldry. There shall be no village profligate around whom shall gather the youth of the hamlet to be led away by his libidinous and blasphemous words. There shall then be no shameless reviler who shall provide a hall where blasphemers may congregate to try which can utter the blackest profanities against the Lord of Hosts. There shall be no shrine of virgin, or of saint, or idol, or image, or crucifix. Superstition shall be swept away!

There shall be no congregations where pretended preachers of the Gospel shall deal out new philosophies and suggest newly invented skepticisms, or which at least they hoped men would accept as new, though they were the old errors of the past picked off the dunghill upon which they had been thrown by disgusted ages! Sin shall all be gone and not a trace of it shall be left! But here shall dwell righteousness and peace! The meek shall inherit the earth and the saints shall stand, each one in his lot, for the Lord Himself shall reign gloriously among His ancients! From every hill and every vale shall come up the one song of Glory unto the Most High and every heart that beats shall magnify His name, who at last has answered the question, “Where is the God of Judgment?”

Then, cast into the nethermost Hell, in the place appointed for the devil and his angels, the ungodly shall never ask again, “Where is the God of Judgment?” And saints, triumphant in their Lord, with whom they shall reign forever in eternity, shall also perceive that He, “discerns between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.” Beloved Hearer, where? O where will you be? Where shall I be in that Day?

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“THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

NO. 1020

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 12, 1871, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is**

**nothing hid from the heat thereof.”  
Psalm 19:4, 5, 6.  
“The Sun of Righteousness.”  
Malachi 4:2.**

WE should feel quite justified in applying the language of the 19th Psalm to our Lord Jesus Christ from the simple fact that He is so frequently compared to the sun. And especially in the passage which we have given you as our second text, wherein He is called “the Sun of Righteousness.” But we have a higher justification for such a reading of the passage, for it will be in your memories that in the 10th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul, slightly altering the words of this Psalm, applies them to the Gospel and the preachers thereof. “Have they not heard?” said he, “Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” So that what was here spoken of the sun by David, is referred by Paul to the Gospel, which is the light streaming from Jesus Christ, “the Sun of Righteousness.”

We can never err if we allow the New Testament to interpret the Old— comparing spiritual things with spiritual is a good mental and spiritual exercise for us. And I feel, therefore, that we shall not be guilty of straining the text at all when we take the language of David in relation to the sun and use it in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not your hearts often say, “What shall we do, or what shall we say to render honor unto our Redeemer?” Have you not often felt confounded as to what offering you shall bring to Him? If you had been possessor of all the worlds, you would have laid them at His feet. If the universe had been your heritage, you would cheerfully have resigned it to Him, and felt happy in stripping yourself of everything, that He might be rendered the more glorious by your sacrifice.

Since you have not all this wealth, have you not again and again asked of your soul—  
*“Oh what shall I do,  
My Savior to praise?”*

I would write the best of poems if so I could extol Him, but the faculty is not in me. I would sing the sweetest of songs, and compose the most melting music, if I could, and count art, and wit, and music exalted by being handmaidens to Him. But how shall I adore Him, before whom the best music on earth must be but discord? And how shall I set Him forth, the

very skirts of whose garments are bright with insufferable light? At such times you have looked the whole world through to find metaphors to heap upon Him. You have culled all the fair flowers of Nature, and made them into garlands to cast at His feet. And you have gathered all earth’s gems and precious things to crown His head, but you have been disappointed with the result, and have cried out with our poet—

*“The whole creation can afford  
But some faint shadows of my Lord.  
Nature, to make His beauties known,  
Must mingle colors not her own.”*

At such times, while ransacking land, and sea, and sky for metaphors, you have probably looked upon the sun, and have said—“This great orb, the lord of light and lamp of day, is like my Savior. It is the faint image of His excellent Glory whose countenance shines as the sun in its strength.” You have done well to seize on such a figure. What Milton calls the golden-tressed sun is the most glorious object in creation, and in Jesus the fullness of Glory dwells. The sun is at the same time the most influential of existences, acting upon the whole world, and truly our Lord is, in the deepest sense, “of this great world both eye and soul.” He, “with benignant ray sheds beauty, life, and joyance from above.”

The sun is, moreover, the most abiding of creatures. And therein it is also a type of Him who remains from generation to generation, and is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The king of day is so vast and so bright that the human eye cannot bear to gaze upon him. We delight in his beams, but we should be blinded should we continue to peer into his face. Even yet more brilliant is our Lord, for as God, He is a consuming fire—but He deigns to smile upon us with milder beams as our Brother and Redeemer.

Jesus, like the sun, is the center and soul of all things, the fullness of all good, the lamp that lights us, the fire that warms us, the magnet that guides and controls us. He is the source and fountain of all life, beauty, fruitfulness, and strength. He is the Fosterer of tender herbs of penitence, the Quickener of the vital sap of Grace, the Ripener of fruits of holiness, and the Life of everything that grows within the garden of the Lord. Whereas to adore the sun would be idolatry—it were treason not to worship ardently the Divine Sun of Righteousness. Jesus Christ is the great, the glorious, the infinitely blessed. Even the sun fails to set Him forth— but, as it is one of the best figures we can find, it is ours to use this day. We will think of Jesus as the Sun this morning—first as in the text. Secondly, as He is to us. And then, thirdly, for a few minutes, we will bask in His beams.

I. First, then, we will contemplate Jesus AS THE SUN IN THE TEXT. Note how the passage begins—“In them has He set a tabernacle for the sun.” Kings were accustomed in their pompous progresses through their dominions to have canopies of splendor borne aloft over them so that marching in the midst of their glittering soldiery they were, themselves, the main attraction of the gorgeous pageant. Our Lord Jesus Christ in His Church is, as it were, traversing the heavens in a majestic tabernacle, and, like the sun, scattering His beams among men. The Redeemer is canopied by the adoration of His saints, for He “inhabits the praises of Israel.”

He is, from day to day, advancing in His glorious march through the universe, conquering and to conquer, and He will journey onward till the dispensation shall terminate and the Gospel age shall be closed by His second advent. When the text says that there is a tabernacle set for the sun in the firmament, we are reminded of Christ as dwelling in the highest heavens. He is not alone the Christ of ancient history, but He is the Christ of today. Think not always of Him as the lowly Man despised and rejected, as nailed to the Cross, or buried in the tomb. He is not here, for He is risen, but He still exists, not as a dream or phantom, but as the real Christ.

Doubt it not, for up yonder, in the seventh Heaven, the Lord has set a tabernacle for the Sun of Righteousness. There Jesus abides in splendor inconceivable, the Joy and Glory of all those blessed spirits who, having believed in Him on the earth, have come to behold Him in the heavens—

*“Bright, like a sun, the Savior sits,  
And spreads eternal noon.  
No evenings there, nor gloomy nights,  
To want the feeble moon.”*

That Jesus lives is a deep well of consolation to the saints, and did we always remember it our hearts would not be troubled. If we always remembered that Jesus both lives and reigns, our joys would never wither. We worship Him, it is true, as one who was slain and has redeemed us unto God by His blood. But we also extol Him as one who is “alive forever more, and has the keys of death and of Hell.”

Let your faith today behold Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, even the Father. He sits there because His atoning work is done, and He is receiving the infinite reward which His Father promised Him. He is exalted as a King upon His Throne until His enemies are made His footstool. He dwells within His tabernacle of praise, adored and admired by angels and glorified spirits. He sits there, not as a weary one, feeble and exhausted, but with the keys of universal monarchy at His girdle, for “the government is upon His shoulder, and His name is called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God.”

I want you fully to grasp the thought of the living Savior—of the Sun in His tabernacle in the highest heavens, for this must be the fulcrum upon which we shall work this morning. We shall get our leverage here—the living Savior, the mighty Savior, the reigning Savior. He is the Church’s Joy and Hope in the present and for all years to come. The text proceeds to speak of Jesus as the Sun, and describes Him, first, as a Bridegroom coming out of His chamber. A beautiful description, indeed, of the sun when he rises in the early morning. He comes forth from the vast obscure, as from within a secret chamber. He withdraws the veil of night, and floods the earth with fluid gold. From curtains of purple and vermillion, he looks forth, and scatters orient pearl around him. Clad with a blaze of glory, he begins the race of day.

Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, when He rose from the dead, was as the sun unveiling itself. He came forth from the sepulcher as a bridegroom from his chamber. Observe that dear name of bridegroom. The Lord of Heaven and earth, between whom and us there was an infinite distance, has deigned to take our humanity into union with Himself of the most intimate kind. Among men there is no surer mode of making peace between two contending parties than for a marriage to be established between them. It has often been done so, and thus wars have been ended, and alliances have been established.

The Prince of Peace on Heaven’s side condescends to be married to our nature, that from now on Heaven and earth may be as one. Our Lord came as the Bridegroom of His Church out of His chamber when He was born of the virgin and was revealed to the shepherds and the wise men of the east. Yet, in a certain sense, He still continued in His chamber as a Bridegroom all His life, for He was hidden and veiled. The Jewish world knew not their King—though He spoke openly in their streets and sought not mystery—yet He was unknown, they did not discern Him. And in some respects He did not, then, desire to be discerned, for He often bade His disciples to tell no man what was done. That was the time when the Bridegroom was in His chamber, being made perfect through suffering and perfectly conformed unto His Church, hearing her sicknesses and her sorrows, suffering her wants, enduring her shame, and thus completing the marriage union between the two.

To this end He actually descended by dark steps of anguish into the silent inner room of the grave, and there He slept in His chamber, perfectly wedded to His Church. Come and look at Him, you who admire the Lover of your souls—He stooped to death and the sepulcher because manhood had fallen under their yoke. His Church was subject to death, and He must die. She deserved to suffer the penalty due to God’s insulted Law, and, therefore, Jesus bowed His head to the stroke—

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

And He did bear them, and in the darksome chamber of the tomb He proved how true a Bridegroom He was to His Church. Before His great race began, of which we are soon to speak, it behooved our mighty Champion to descend into the lowest parts of the earth and sleep among the dead. Before every day there is a night where darkness seems to triumph. It behooved Christ to suffer, and then to rise again. His descent was necessary to His ascent—His sojourn in the chamber to His race and victory.

Thus I have introduced to you the prelude of the race—the Bridegroom in His chamber. Now observe the coming out of it. The sun comes forth, at the appointed hour, from the gates of day, and begins to gladden the earth. Even so on the third day, early in the morning, Jesus, our Lord, arose from His sleep and there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulcher. Then did the Sun of Righteousness arise. Then did the great Bridegroom come forth from His chamber and begin His joyful race.

It must have been a ravishing sight to have beheld the risen Savior— well might the disciples hold Him by the feet and worship Him. I think if ever angels sung more sweetly at one time than another, it must have been on that first Easter morning when they saw the Divine Champion break His bonds of death asunder and rise into the glorious resurrection life. Then was He revealed to the sons of men. And, no longer hidden, He began to tell His disciples the meaning of those enigmas which had been dark to them—things which they had not understood—which seemed inexplicable, were all opened up by Him, for now was His time to come out of His chamber.

His words, though plain enough, had aforetime hidden Him even from those who loved Him. But now He speaks no more in proverbs, but shows them openly concerning Himself and the Father. He has laid aside the incognito in which He traversed the earth as a stranger, and He is now Divinely familiar with His friends, bidding them even touch His hands and His side. In His death the veil was rent, and in His resurrection the High Priest came forth in His robes of Glory and beauty. In a little while He was gone away, but He returned from the secret chambers of the ivory palaces, and showed Himself unto His disciples.

Blessed were the eyes that saw Him in that day. Though during the forty days in which our Lord lingered among His followers upon earth we may truly say that He had come out of His chamber, we perceive that He more fully did so when, after the forty days had been accomplished, He took His disciples to the top of Olivet and there ascended into Heaven, out of their sight. Then had the Sun, indeed, ascended above the horizon to make His glories stream along the heavens! See you not the angelic bands poising themselves upon the wing in mid-air, waiting until He shall return all glowing with the victory after the long and deadly fight? Mark you well that matchless spectacle as He is “seen of angels.”—

*“The helmed cherubim  
And sworded seraphim  
Are seen in glittering ranks,  
With wings displayed.”*

They have hastened to meet the Prince of Glory, and attend Him to His ancient patrimony. Right glad are all the heavenly band to welcome back the Captain of the Lord’s Host, and, therefore, they harp in loud and solemn choir to Heaven’s triumphant Heir. As for the glorified of mortal race, redeemed of old by His blood which in the fullness of time was shed, they hail Him with most glad hymn, and lift up their sweetest symphonies to extol Him who finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness! Then the Bridegroom came out of His chamber with fit marriage music—His beauties hidden awhile in the chamber, where He was regarded as without form or comeliness—He blazed forth with renewed splendor, such as confounded both sun and moon.

In another respect, Christ came out of His chamber at His ascension, because, when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, He received and gave gifts for men. The gifts were intended for the manifestation of Himself. His Church, which is His body, was by His own command sitting, still, in the chamber, tarrying till power was given. But, on a sudden the Bridegroom’s power was felt, for there was heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind which filled all the place, and then descending upon each favored head came the cloven tongue, and straightway you could see that the Bridegroom had come out of His chamber, for the multitude in the street began to hear His voice.

It was Peter that spoke, we say, but far rather was it Christ, the Bridegroom, who spoke by Peter. It was the Sun, from the chambers of the east, bursting through the clouds, and beginning to shine on Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and Rome, and Egypt, and making the multitudes in far-off lands to see the day which Prophets and kings had waited for, but which had never visited their eyes. Do you hear the joyful motion among the people—the joy mingled with the sorrows of repentance? This is the singing of birds, and these the dewdrops which hail the rising Sun.

The people cry, “What must we do to be saved?” The shadows are fleeing. They believe in Jesus, and are baptized into His name—the true light is shining. Three thousand souls are added in one day to the Church, for truly the Bridegroom is awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouts by reason of wine (Psa. 78:65)! Then was the Gospel race commenced with a glorious burst of strength, such as only our champion could have displayed. Meditate at your leisure upon this first general manifestation of our Lord to the general multitude. He had not gone out of Israel before. “I am not sent,” said He, “save to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.” Palestine was His chamber—He went to the windows of it, and looked forth on Tyre and Sidon wistfully.

But He had not come forth of His chamber till that day when the Gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles, also. And in fulfillment of the gift of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh, the Apostles went everywhere preaching the Word of God. When even we, the dwellers in the far off northern isles, received the Gospel, then, indeed, had the Bridegroom come forth out of His chamber!

But enough of this, or time will fail me. After the coming forth, we have to consider in the text His course. The course of Jesus has been as that of the sun, or like that of a mighty champion girded for running. Notice, under this head, His continuance. Our Lord’s Gospel has been no meteor that flashed for a while and then passed away, but it has remained as the sun in the heavens. What systems of philosophy have come and gone since on Calvary the Christ of God was lifted up? What speculations, what lo-heres and lo-theres have shone forth, have dazzled fools, and have been quenched in the night since He left the chamber of His marriage? Yet He continues still the same.

Nor, Brothers and Sisters, are there any marks of decrepitude either in Him or in His Gospel. They tell us that the idolatry of Hindustan is evidently crumbling—it falls not yet, but it is worm-eaten through and through. Equally sure is it that the false prophet holds but a feeble swath among his followers, and we can all see that though popery makes desperate efforts, and its extremities are vigorous, yet it is paralyzed at its heart, and the Vatican is made to feel than its time of power is short. As for the Gospel, it wears the dew of its youth after eighteen centuries of struggles. And it predominates most in those young nations which have evidently a history before them.

The old systems are now most favored by those nations which are left behind in the race of civilization, but the peoples whom God has made quick by nature are those to whom He has given to be receptive of His Grace. There are grand days coming for the Church of God! Voltaire said that he lived in the twilight of Christianity—and so he did, but it was the twilight of the morning—not the twilight of the evening. Glory be unto God, the little cloud the size of a man’s hand is spreading! It begins to cover the heavens, and the day is not far distant when the sound of abundance of rain shall be heard.

Christ was not a strong man who bounded forth at a leap, and then put forth no more strength. He rejoiced to continue His work, and to run His race. He was not a shooting star that sparkles for a moment, but a sun that shall shine throughout the livelong day. Note next in this metaphor the unity of our Lord’s course, for it is clear in the text—“Rejoicing as a strong man to run the race.” A race is one thing—there is the one goal— and the man gathers up his strength to reach it. He has nothing else to think of. They may throw the golden apples in his road, but he does not observe them. They may sound harp and sackbut to the right, and breathe the lute or sweeter instruments of music to the left, but he is deaf to all.

He has a race to run, and he throws his whole strength into it. This is a fit image of our Lord. He has never turned aside, He has never been compelled to retrace His steps, to revise His doctrine, to amend His system, or change His tactics. On, on, on has the course of Jesus been, shining more and more unto the perfect day. A certain people, nowadays, who yet dare to call themselves Christians are always hankering after something new, pining for novelties, and boasting of their fresh discoveries. Though, indeed, their fresh things are only fragments of broken images of heresies, which our fathers dashed to shivers centuries ago. The great thinkers of the present day are nothing more than mere translators—you know the London meaning of that word—buyers of old shoes who patch them up, and send them forth again as if they were something new.

Old shoes and clothes are common enough among those Gibeonites who would deceive Israel, and whose boast is that they have come from far and bring us treasures of wisdom from remote regions. Sirs, we want not your new things, for our Lord’s race is the same as of old, and as He continues in one course so also will we. To spread righteousness and, in so doing, to save sinners and to glorify God—this is the one purpose of Christ—from it He will never cease, and nothing shall ever tempt Him from the pursuit of it. Look, I pray you, with pleasure and see how our Lord, from His first coming out of His chamber until now has continued still in the Gospel to shine forth with rays of glory, without variableness or shadow of a turning.

Though we believe not, He abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself. He changes not in work or way. For Zion’s sake He works up to now, and the pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hand. But now, observe next, the no

table idea of strength which the text conveys to us. “Rejoicing as a strong man to run his race.” It is no drudgery for the ascended Lord to carry on His cause—

*“The baffled prince of Hell  
In vain new efforts tries,  
Truth’s empire to repel  
By cruelty and lies.  
The infernal gates shall rage in vain  
Conquest awaits the Lamb once slain.”*

There is a race to be run but Jesus is strong enough for it. He does not come panting up to the starting place and from there go creeping on. But like a strong man He surveys the course. He knows that He is equal to it, and, therefore He delights in it. When He began His race He was opposed, but the opposition only made Him triumph the more readily, for “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.”

When our Lord arose like the sun, the clouds were thick and heavy, but He painted their fleecy skirts with gold. Persecution hung over the eastern horizon, but He turned it into the imperial purple of His Sovereignty. As He pursued His course the ice of centuries melted, the dense gloom of ages disappeared. No chains could bind Him, and no bonds could hold Him. He dashed on with undiminished energy, and the gates of Hell could not prevail. As no cloud has ever stayed the sun as he has “whirled his car along the ethereal plain,” so no difficulties impeded the onward course of the Gospel in the days of its dawning. To the first days of the Church, Thomson’s lines to the sun are fully applicable—

*“Now, flaming up the heavens, the potent sun Melts into limpid air the high-raised clouds, And morning fogs, that hovered round the hills, In party-colored bands, till wide, unveiled, The face of Nature shines, from where earth seems Far stretched around, to meet the bending sphere.”*

The Gospel soon shed its light in every land, and all nations felt its benign power. Men ceased to persecute and bowed before the Cross. Soon fresh clouds arose, and the Church passed through them. Errors and heresies multiplied. Filthy dreamers led away a huge apostasy. Rome became the mother of harlots and abominations, but the true Church, and the true Christ within her, went right on. The Church was not less triumphant in her second trial than in her first.

Papal Rome was overcome as surely as pagan Rome. Popes were no more her conquerors than bloody emperors had been of yore. To the thoughtful eye the Sun of Christ is not less bright over the valleys of Piedmont than over the waves of the sea which bore Paul and his fellow Apostles. The Champion’s race was as eager and as triumphant as before. Since then, dense banks of spiritual deadness and false teaching have barred the visible heavens and have appeared to mortal sight an ebony wall impenetrable as steel, but the Lord reigns.

He that sits in the heavens does laugh—the Lord does have them in derision. Strong is His right hand, and His enemies shall be broken. On goes the Sun of Righteousness—nothing impedes Him—His tabernacle is above them all. He rides on the heavens, yes, He rides on the wings of the wind. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Christ has failed in nothing. The decrees have been executed. The eternal purposes have been fulfilled. The elect have been saved—His kingdom is established—and shall continue as long as the sun. Who shall stay His hand? Who shall resist His will?

Observe, therefore, how the force is coupled with joy. Weakness brings sorrow, but strength begets joy. Christ is always glad and He would have His people rejoice, for His cause goes right on and He shall not fail nor be discouraged. He rejoices as He divides the spoil with the strong. When a man has a task to do which is easy to him, and which he can readily perform, he sings at his work. And so this day does Christ rejoice over His Church with joy, and triumph over her with singing. His cause goes on in spite of foes, and His strength is so great that even the battle fills Him with delight.

I remember to have heard a Welsh preacher make use of the following simile. He was speaking of the joy of Christ in Heaven, and he said, “You tell me that the Church is sorrowful on earth and I tell you that Christ is joyous in Heaven. And then you ask me how this can be? You see yonder mother with her babe, and she is washing the child. Its face is foul and she desires to see it shine with brightness. She would see it white as the marble mingled with the redness of the rose. Therefore she washes it—but the child cries. It is fretful and knows not what is good for it—so it whines and struggles. The mother does not cry, or share its sorrow, she keeps on singing because she knows that all is right and that her darling will smile like a cherub when all is over. She sees the good results coming, while the babe only feels the present discomfort, so she sings her song and never stops, let the child cry as it may.”

And so the Lord Jesus has pleasure in His work. He is purifying His Church, and making her fit to be presented to Himself, and though she winces and laments, it is the flesh that makes her to do so. The Lord sings still joyously because He sees the end from the beginning! Earth may be swathed in mist, but the Sun is never so, He shines gloriously evermore. The text mentions one other fact connected with Jesus as the Sun—“There is nothing hid from the heat thereof,” by which is meant nothing is able to escape the powerful influence of Christ Jesus. His own chosen people must, in due season, feel His power to save.

They may wander as they do, and sin as they may—but when the time appointed comes they shall be redeemed out of the land of the enemy. The sun’s power is felt in the dark and deepest mines. That there is a sun still shining might be discoverable even in the heart of the earth! And so, in the dark haunts of sin, God’s elect shall be made to feel the Sovereign power and Omnipotent Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you and I shall die, and when we shall be buried in the grave, we shall not there be hid from the heat of this Sun of Righteousness. By-and-by He shall kindle life within our bones again. He shall create a soul within the ribs of death, and we shall spring upward as the grass, and as the willows by the watercourses when the sun renews the year.  
Our dry bones shall live, and in our flesh we shall we see God. Meanwhile, while the gracious operations of Christ thus fall on all His elect, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof, other operations are at work on all the sons of men. He rules in Providence over all people, whether they believe in Him or not, and if men do not accept the Gospel, yet they are affected by it in some way or other. Even the dark parts of the world feel something of the Presence of the Christ of God. Responsibility is heaped on those that hear of Him and reject Him. He becomes a savor of death unto death where He is not a savor of life unto life. There is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

Oh, how this ought to encourage you Christian people to work! The Lord has gone before you—there is nothing hid from the heat of His Presence. Jesus is King of the dark settlements of the heathen, and He reigns in the lowest haunts of London’s vice. Go there, for you are not intruders. You have a right to go anywhere in your Master’s dominions. And the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof. Be not afraid to face the vilest blasphemer, or the most foul-mouthed infidel, for Christ is Master—and if you bring the Gospel before His enemy—he will be made to feel its power, either so as to yield to it a willing submission, or else to be condemned by it.

In either case, you shall have done your part, and uttered your testimony, and freed your head of his blood. In these thoughts combined, we see Christ Jesus, the risen Savior, pursuing His ever glorious course till He shall descend again the second time to take His people to Himself to reign with Him.

II. Very briefly, indeed, in the second place. Let us think for a moment of JESUS AS A SUN TO US. Worship and bless our Savior! It is ever meet and right to do so. Let Him be extolled and be very high. Some would give Him a secondary place, let it never be so with us. As the sun is the center, so is Christ. As the sun is the great motor, the first source of motive power, so is Christ to His people. As the sun is the fountain from which light, life, and heat perpetually flow, so is the Savior. As the sun is the fructifier by which fruits multiply and ripen, so is Christ—and as the sun is the regulator and rules the day, and marks the seasons—even so is Jesus owned as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Think these thoughts over in the following respects. When you take the Bible remember that Christ is the center of the Scriptures. Do not put election in the center. Some do, and they make a one-sided system. Do not put man in the center—some do, and they fall into grievous errors. Christ is the center of the entire system of the Gospel, and all will be seen to move with regularity when you perceive that He is the chief fixed point. You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him. He is the center and King of all Truth. He is the center of the Church, too. Not the pastor, not the Church itself, not any rule or government, no bishop, no priest, and no Pope can be our center—Christ alone is our central sun.

We follow as planets where He leads the way—around Him we revolve, but we own no other Lord. Let it be so in the world that even there Christ governs and is the center of all history. You will understand history better when you know this—for this is the key of the world’s story—the reason for the rise and fall of empires. You shall understand all things when you know Immanuel, God with us. And let Him have this place in your hearts. There enthrone Him! Establish Him as the central sun, and let Him rule your entire being, enlightening your understanding, warming your hearts, filling all your powers, passions, and faculties with the fullness of His Presence. To have Christ in us, the hope of Glory—oh, what blessedness! But let us take care that it is so, for we know not Christ aright unless we give Him such a place in our hearts as the sun occupies in God’s world.

III. But time fails me, and we must now pass on to the last point, and let us for a minute or two BASK IN HIS BEAMS. How shall we do it? First, we must realize that He Is. Sinner, saint, Christ lives—He who trod the wave of Galilee lives on! He who was marked with the nails rules on! Oh, Sinner, does not that comfort you? The Savior lives! The Redeemer lives! He who forgives sins still lives. Saint, does not this comfort you? The Man of the tender heart still lives—with a bosom still to be leaned upon—and with lips still ready to speak endearing words. There is a tabernacle for the Sun—He is not extinct. He shines still, He blesses still. Bask in His beams, then, by realizing that He Is.

Then come and lay your souls beneath His Divine influence. O my Soul, if you are guilty, come and rest in His Atonement. If you are unrighteous come and take His righteousness. If you are feeble lay hold upon His strength. If you can not pray, accept Him as your Intercessor. If you are in yourself nothing, take Him to be your All in All. Some creatures delight to warm themselves in the sun, but oh, what a pleasure it is to sun oneself in the Presence of Christ. Never mind how little I am, how nothing I am, how vile I am, how foul I am. All I am He has taken to Himself, and all He has belongs to me. I sin, but He has taken all my sin—He is righteous and all His righteousness is mine. I am feeble, He is mighty—His mightiness is mine, I wrap myself in His Omnipotence.

Christ is All and Christ is mine. Why, I utterly fail when trying to talk about such things as these—talking is but stuttering on such a theme! Faith must enjoy, rather than express, her delight. Come, plunge, all of you, into this sea of sweetness—dive deep into this abyss of happiness— Christ Jesus is yours forever and forever! The sun is very great but it is all for me, and Christ is very bright and glorious, and He is all my own.

Then next, if you would sun yourself in His beams, imbibe the joy of His strength. He is like a bridegroom rejoicing to run his race. Now, Brothers and Sisters, I am often afraid, lest in serving God, we should grow dispirited and downcast, and think that things are not going on as they should. Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength. If you begin to say, “Our cause is very feeble, the Gospel will not prevail among us,” you will slacken your efforts. Do not so, but remember that Jesus Christ does not fret or sadden Himself about His kingdom. He runs with full strength and rejoices as He runs. And I bid you, in the power of the Holy Spirit, do the same. Cast away your doubts and fears, the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He will deliver His adversaries into your hands.  
I fret and worry myself, sometimes, about these inventors of new doctrines, and those Ritualists who bring up the old rates and stale tallow of the past ages. Let us fret no more, but think that these are only like the clouds to the great sun. The Gospel will still proceed in its career. Let us laugh the enemies of God to scorn and defy them to their faces. They defy the Lord God of Israel as did the Philistine of old, but God Himself is mightier than they, and the victory is sure to the true Church and to the Gospel of His Son. Be very courageous! Be not alarmed with sudden fear! Trust in Jehovah, for the Lord will surely give unto His own servants the victory in the day of battle.

And Brethren, if you would sun yourselves in Christ’s beams, let me bid you reflect His light whenever you receive it. He is the Sun and you are the planet, but every planet shines, shines with borrowed light. It conceals no light, but sends back to other worlds what the sun has given to it. Cast back on men the light which Jesus gives you. Triumph in Christ’s circuit—that it is so broad as to comprehend the world, and compass all time. Enlarge your own hearts, and let your light shine far and wide, believing that the power of God which gives you light will go with the light which you reflect.

Comfort your hearts! “Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Who shall stop the Christ of God in His race? Let him first go pluck the sun from his sphere. Who shall stay the champion of God who has girt Himself for His race? Whoever comes in His way, woe unto him, for if Samson smote a thousand men hip and thigh, what shall our Immortal Samson do? Let all the armies of Pope and devil come against Him, He will utterly defy them, and drive them like chaff before the wind.

Sing you unto His name, for He has triumphed gloriously! Begin the everlasting song, for He is the Lord and God, and to the uttermost ages shall He reign! Yes, forever and ever is He priest and King. God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 19.  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1463B Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE RISING SUN

NO. 1463B

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

**“But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”  
Malachi 4:2.**

THE Jews expected that the coming of the Messiah would exalt every one of the Israelite race. Their expectations were great, but they were also carnal and sensuous since they looked for an earthly king who would make the despised nation victorious over all its enemies and enrich every man of Abraham’s race. The Scriptures gave them no ground for such universal expectations, but quite the reverse. In the chapter which is now before us the Prophet explains that the coming of Christ would certainly be like the rising of the sun, full of glory and of brightness, but the results would not be the same to all. To those who thought that they were righteous and despised others, but who were wicked in their conversation—the rising of that sun would bring a burning, withering day.

Read the first verse. “The day comes that shall burn as an oven and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble.” They shall not be like plants full of sap that would flourish in the tropical heat, but like stubble which becomes drier and drier until it takes fire—“and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord, that it shall leave them neither root nor stock,” for so might it be translated, and then the figure would be congruous throughout. It would scorch up the stubble in which there was no life, so intense would be the heat. Now that was the consequence of Christ’s coming. The religion of the Jews at His coming was dry and dead, like stubble.

The Pharisee thought that he was righteous because he put on a broad phylactery, tithed anise and mint, cumin and such trifles. The Sadducee thought much of himself because he was a man of common sense, a thinker, a rationalist. And other sects of that period found equally frivolous grounds for glorying. The ministry of Christ dried them right up and they have ceased to be. We use the name of Pharisee and Sadducee today, but there is no person in the world who would like to wear either name!

The result of Christ’s coming, by His Spirit as well as by His personal Advent, is always much the same. Should the Spirit of God visit this Church with revival it will not have an equally beneficial effect upon all. To some, the rising of this Sun will bring healing and blessing; but to others it will bring scorching and withering. Know you not that the summer which fills the corn and makes it hang its golden head, blushing in very modesty for the blessing which has come upon it, fetches up also the noxious weeds from their secret lairs?

Tares gather encouragement from the sun as well as does the wheat and so the bad come to their ripeness as well as the good. But the ripeness of that which is bad is only a hurrying on to destruction—the dry

ness of the stubble is the preparation for its being utterly consumed. We may well pray for revival, but we must not suppose that to the mere formalist a revival will bring a blessing. It may possibly disgust him and drive him from religion altogether. He will discover that he has no true religion as he sees the work of the Spirit of God around him and so the day of the Lord will, to him, “burn as an oven”—and being proud and at the same time doing wickedly, his empty profession of religion will consume like the stubble.

The coming of the Messiah was to bring to another class a fullness of blessing and it is of these we have to speak. “But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise,” not with scorching, but, “with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth”—you shall not be dried up, burnt and destroyed—but you shall “grow up as calves of the stall.” You shall obtain great blessings through the Presence of your Lord! Two things will take up our attention. The first is, the description of the people of God—“Unto you that fear My name.” And the second is, the blessing which is promised to them—“the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”

I. Here are TRUE SAINTS DESCRIBED. Let us look at them. The description may be divided into two parts. First, here is their abiding character—they fear the name of the Lord—and secondly, we gather from the text their Providential character, a character which is not always theirs, but into which they sometimes fall, namely, that they need healing, for were they not sick there would be no need of the promise that the Sun of Righteousness should arise upon them with healing in His wings!

Notice then, first, their abiding character—they fear the name of the Lord. I am delighted to think that this promise is given to this particular character, for it thus comes to beginners in Grace. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”—it is not the highest Grace, nor the loftiest attainment of the spiritual nature. Bless the Lord, therefore, you weak and feeble ones, that the promise is given to you! You fear the Lord. There are times when we ask ourselves whether we know the rapture of love and we greatly question whether we ever had the assurance of faith, but even then, we know that we have an awe of God.

Jonah in the ship was in a very sinful state of mind and was fleeing from God, but yet he did not hesitate to say, “I am an Hebrew and I fear the Lord.” This is the abiding character of the saints in their worst state. If they backslide, they still fear the name of the Lord. They fear it at times very slavishly, with the spirit of bondage, but they fear it. They lose the evidence of their sonship and they cease to walk in the light, but they still have a fear of the Most High—they do not treat Him lightly, they could not sin against Him cheaply—there is still within their hearts a sense of His greatness.

It generally assumes the form of a reverence of His Person. They know there is a God and they are sure that He made the heavens and the earth. They are equally clear that He is everywhere present, marking the ways of men. Others may blaspheme, but they cannot; others may sin and make merry with it, but sin costs them dear; others may feast themselves without apprehension, but they cannot, for they fear the Lord. I know that this expresses all true religion and has a very comprehensive meaning, but it suits my purpose just now to view it as a description of Believers, which is true of them all, into whatever state they may come. They still fear the Lord.

Now, Soul, do you tremble before God? There is something in that. I do not ask you whether you tremble at Hell. That were no sign of Grace, for what thief will not tremble at the gallows? I do not ask you if you are afraid of death. What mortal man is not, unless he has a good hope through Divine Grace? But do you tremble in the Presence of God because you have offended Him? And do you tremble in the presence of sin lest you should offend Him? Does it ever come over you thus—“How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Just as some men are kept back from crime by the fear of the law, are you kept back from folly by the fear of God? Just as some are impelled to energy by the fear of poverty, so are you impelled to the Divine service by a sense of the fact that not to serve Him is to abide under His wrath?

It is a low and small matter compared with the higher Graces which God works in His people, but it is still a precious thing to tremble, even, at His Word. I am glad to think that many of you have lately begun to fear God. I bless His name that you cannot live, now, as you once did. You are uneasy in your former careless way. I am right glad of it and though I cannot be sure that this fear may not be a slavish fear, yet I hope for the best and pray that it may ripen into that real fear of God which is always a work of Grace in the soul, so that the promise of our text may belong to you.

Now, Beloved, I have said that the description which is here given of the people of God denotes not only their abiding character, that they fear the Lord, but it also mentions their occasional character. They sometimes fall into a condition which they deplore and the text intimates this, first, by the fact that the Sun of Righteousness is to arise upon them, for this implies that they were in the dark until then. Whatever other light there may be, we, every one of us, know that until the sun rises our condition is one of comparative darkness.

There are children of God who walk in darkness, dear children of God, too. Indeed, I am inclined to think that every child of God gets into the dark sometimes. Some begin with brightness and then they get a cloudy time in the middle of their experience; while others have their worst darkness at last. Knox and Luther had their sharpest temptations when they came to die. It has been well said that God sometimes puts His children to bed in the dark. It does not matter, for they wake up in the light—in the eternal morning! But a dark season usually happens to us somewhere between the new birth and Heaven—perhaps to make the brightness all the brighter when the night shall be forever ended.

Are you in the dark at this moment, dear Brother, and are you wondering at it because everybody else seems so lively in their religion? Dear Sister, does it seem to you as if, though you have been a Believer for years, you were never in a worse state than now, while others are rejoicing? Then ask yourself—Do you still fear the Lord? Is your soul humbled in the Presence of His majesty and have you a desire for His Glory? Never despair! The Sun shall rise upon you soon! Very clear is it from the text, too, that the children of God may sometimes be in ill health, for the Sun of Righteousness is to arise upon them with healing in His wings—which would not be so necessary a promise if they were not sick.

A Christian may be bowed down with grievous spiritual maladies. His pulse may beat slowly; his heart may become feeble; he may be alive and that may be about all. Lethargy may seize him, palsy may make him tremble despondently. He may have wandered from his God. Alas, even a feverish fit may be upon him, in which he shakes with unbelief from head to foot! It may be his eyes have become so blinded that he cannot see afar off and his ears may be dull of hearing. He may be like the fools in the Psalm, whose souls abhorred all manner of meat.

He may have put away from him the comforts of the promises and he may be brought very low—yet he shall not die, but live and proclaim the works of the Lord—for the soul sickness of a saint is not unto death! He shall be recovered from it and he shall sing of the Lord whose name is, “Jehovah Rophi, the Lord That Heals You.” Oh, child of God, if you are in a sick and sorrowing state, cry mightily unto your Lord and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon you with healing in His wings!

Note, again, that the children of God, according to our text, may be in a condition of bondage, for it is said that when the Sun of Righteousness arises, “they shall go forth as calves of the stall.” Understand the figure. The calf in the stall is shut up, tied up with a halter at night, but when the sun rises, the calf goes forth to the pasture. The young bullock is set free! So the child of God may be in bondage. The remembrance of past sins and present unbelief may halter him up and keep him in the stall, but when the Lord reveals Himself, he is set free! Even true children of God may sometimes have to cry like Paul that they are sold under sin. They may forget the blood of redemption for a season and think themselves still to be slaves—and yet they are the true children of God. Hence the beauty of the promise that they shall go forth.

Yes, and there is more in the text. The children of God may be in such a state that they are not growing, for else we should not have the promise, “You shall go forth and grow up” when the Sun of Righteousness shall shine. Do you, my dear Brother, feel as if you had not grown in Grace for months? You need the Sun of Righteousness to shine upon you and you will grow as the plants do! The trees are all bare in winter and their branches apparently dead—but bring us the spring sun and the buds will begin to swell, the leaves will appear and the trees shall blossom and yield fruit! So shall it be with you. The Lord has not left you! You may have stopped growing for a while, but you shall grow again!

Once more, the child of God may get into such a condition that he has lost his joy, for I will tell you a secret about the text—it might be and probably ought to be translated, for the Septuagint has it so, and the Hebrew has that force, “They shall go forth and leap like calves of the stall.” The young cattle may have been kept under cover in the winter, but when the sun brings the spring, the fields are green and you let the calves loose. There is joy about the creatures’ movements! Even so, when the Lord appears to His people, they move with delight and dance for joy of heart! The Lord’s love within them shall make them give expression to their joy! I pray that you may feel this intense delight in Gospel liberty and leap for joy!

Thus I have described the people to whom the promise comes. II. My second and most pleasing duty is TO OPEN UP THE PROMISE ITSELF. “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise.” Child of God in the dark, in prison, ungrowing and unhappy, what a promise is here for you! “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise.” His rising is to do it all! There is nothing for you to do—no works for you to perform in order to get the needed blessing. The Sun of Righteousness shall arise! Now, the rising of the sun is one of the most wonderful things in Nature, not merely for its grandeur and beauty, but for its sublime display of strength. Who could hold back the horses of the sun? What hand could block the golden wheel of his chariot, or bid him stay his course?  
The time is come for him to rise and lo, he delights the world with dawn! Holy Spirit, such is Your power! When it is Your time to work, who can stand against You? As the sun floods the whole earth with his splendor and no power can hinder his movements, so will the Holy Spirit work and none can stop Him. Plead then, this promise tonight and cry—“O Sun of Righteousness, arise upon those that fear You! Come in all Your majesty and wealth of Grace! Pour upon us Your light and heat and life and fill this place with Your Glory!”  
Now mark what will be the result of His rising. As soon as ever this Sun is up and Christ begins to shine upon His people, they enjoy a clear light! They were in the dark before, but they are in the light, now! I have been living, for a while, in a country where the sun is everything. The temperature and the atmosphere are made salubrious and delicious, I had almost said celestial, by his presence. When he shines not, the sick pine and the healthy are gloomy! But when clouds no longer veil his face, we are as in the garden of the Lord! Everything depends upon the sun! Step down into a valley where he has not shone and you will find frost—cross the street into the shade and you shiver in the cold.  
So clear does the atmosphere become through the removal of all fogs and mists that sometimes we have seen a hundred miles across the sea, rising up like a fair vision, the distant mountains of Corsica! I cannot help using the illustration because it is so distinctly before me! When the Sun of Righteousness arises upon a Christian and shines full upon him, he does not see islands a hundred miles away, but he sees the golden gates of the Celestial City, the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off—for the Presence of Christ endears the atmosphere and enables us to see the invisible! Unto you that fear His name may the Sun of Righteousness arise and give you just such clearness and light!  
But according to the text, the Sun of Righteousness, when He rises on those that fear the Lord, gives them healing. There is healing in His wings. By the wings of the sun are meant the beams that shoot up from it into the air, or seem to slant down from it when it is aloft in the sky. There is really healing to men’s bodies in the sun. Have we not seen them come to the sunny land consumptive, doubled with weakness—and as they have sat in the sun and warmed themselves for a few weeks, the wounds within the lungs have begun to heal and the consumptive man has breathed again and you have seen that he would live? Some have gone there who scarcely could speak and beneath the sun they began to speak again, like men whose youth has been renewed! The sun is the great physician. Where he enters not the physician will be needed, but where he shines, men speedily revive.  
As for the Sun of Righteousness, oh, how He heals the sick! I would like you sick Christians to sit in His sunlight by the year together, if you did nothing else but bask there as animals delight to bask in the sun. The flowers know the sun and they turn their cups to him and drink in of the health he gives them from his golden store. Oh, that we had as much sense to know the Sun of Righteousness, that we might by prayer, meditation and holy living, bask and sun ourselves in His delicious beams! We shall be strong, indeed, if He rises upon us with healing in His wings. He has risen, but we wander into the shade! He has risen, but we get into the ice wells of worldliness and sin—and shut out His warmth—and then we wonder why we are sick, but sick we always shall be till we come out into the Light again and Jesus shines on us from morn till eve!  
I must not enlarge upon any one point, for my time is limited, but I would have you notice how the text says that when the Sun of Righteousness shines, the Christian gets his liberty. “You shall go forth.” I have been staying where the invalid does not venture out if the wind blows and if there is a little chill and the sun is not bright he must stay indoors or lose the benefit he has received. But when the sun is out and the air is calm, then he goes forth and leaves his bedroom and is all alive once more. There are Christians who have been kept indoors a long time. They have not walked the length of the promise, nor spied out the breadth of the Covenant, nor climbed to the top of Pisgah to gaze upon the landscape!  
O Beloved, if the Sun of righteousness, even the Lord Jesus, shall shine upon you, you will go forth not only to enjoy Christian life, but to enter into Christian service—and you will go further afield to bring others to Christ! Then you will begin to grow! That is another effect of the sun and how wonderfully the sunlight makes things grow. Here we have in our hot-houses little plants that we think so wonderful that we show them to our friends and put them on our tables as rarities. But I have seen them in the sunny south 10 times as large growing in the open fields because the sun has looked upon them! The rarities of our country are the commonplaces of the land of the sun!  
I have known Christians who have received a little faith and been perfectly astonished at it—and God has blessed them with a little love to Jesus—and they have felt as though they were splendid saints! But if they lived in the sunlight they might move mountains by their faith and their love would lead them to devote their whole life to Jesus—and yet they would not be astonished. The Sun of Righteousness can produce fruits rich and rare. Our cold, sunless land, beneath its cloud and fog—what can it yield in the winter? In more favored parts of the earth, even in our winter, the trees are golden with fruits. So is it with the soul. What can it grow if it lives in worldliness? What can it produce if it lives to itself? But when it knows the love of Jesus and the power of His Grace, even in its worst estate it brings forth the richest and the rarest fruit to the glory of His Grace!  
I shall close by exhorting my fellow Church members to live in the sunlight. Get out of the shadows! There are dreary glens in this world where the sun never shines—they are called glens of pleasure and sometimes the pale moon looks down on them with sickly ray. But the saint knows the light of the sun from the light of the world’s moon. Get away from those chill places into the clear light. “But,” says one, “I did not know there were joys in religion.” My dear Friend, do you know true religion, then? For it is, “a thing of beauty and a joy forever.” He who knows not Christ has seen the sun, but till he has known Him, he has seen but the glow-worm’s glitter! Peace, deep peace, he never knew who never knew the power of the blood! And joy, real joy, such as angels call joy, he never knew who never trusted in the Savior’s atoning Sacrifice!  
Oh, come you depressed and distressed and despondent ones whose religion has been slavery and whose profession has been bondage—get a true Baptism into Christ by faith in Him and when you have been plunged into the Godhead’s deepest sea, then shall you know a joy and peace which pass all understanding! The world gives them not—it cannot take them away. “Unto you that fear the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.” I want to encourage those who fear the Lord a little, I mean the seekers. Come into the Light! Come and welcome! None will question your right! I never heard of anybody, yet, who said, “I must not sit in the sun. The sun is not mine.”  
The lords of this world have hedged in every acre and there is scarcely a sterile mountainside which is not guarded with, “trespassers beware.” But they cannot hedge in the blessed sunlight! No, not even for an hour. Through the poor man’s window, though the glass is broken and stuffed up with rags, a beam of sunlight will pierce its way as gladly as into the halls of monarchs! It shines on the beggar’s rags as well as on the prince’s scarlet and it is free! When Diogenes bade Alexander get out of his sunlight, he had a right to do so, for the sunlight belonged as much to Diogenes in his tub as to Alexander who had conquered a world! O meanest of the mean in your own judgment; lowest of the low in your own esteem; guiltiest of the guilty as your conscience calls you before God—know that the Sun of Righteousness has risen and His light is free!  
Come into the sunlight! Come into the sunlight! “Oh, but I shall get better soon. I am sick, but I shall get better soon.” Come into the sunlight, Man, for there is healing beneath the wings of the Sun of Righteousness, but nowhere else. “I am kindling a fire. I am hoping that I may get warm by the sparks of my own kindling.” Come into the sunlight, Man. What were all your fires? Though you should set Lebanon upon a blaze and take all the timber that ever grew on Sirion to make a pile, what were it as compared with yonder mighty furnace of the sun which has burnt on for ages and will burn on till the last eye of mortal man shall have looked upon it?  
O Soul, go not about with your whims and your fancies to save yourself! Come into the sunlight! Come into the sunlight, Man! “But perhaps I may not.” Who is the poorer if the sunlight shines on you? There is enough for others even though it pours its floods on you. The sun is no brighter if you have not his beams! He will be no duller though you and a thousand like you should lie by the century together basking in his light. So with Jesus! “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” If you take all the mercy that can be needed to lift you up from the gates of Hell, to Heaven, itself, He will have as much mercy left!  
If all the merit you can need to save your condemned spirit and make you into a child of God should be yours, as I pray it may, there will be as much merit left in Christ as ever! Why keep back? Why keep back? “But I am so base.” Does not the sun shine on dunghills? May not the mercy of God shine on you, you dunghill sinner? You cannot be too low! You cannot be too vile! The infinite mercy of God, like the infinite light of the sun, can reach you. “Alas, I am dark.” And what night was too dark for the sun to turn it into day? “Alas, I am cold.” But what iceberg was too cold for the sun to thaw it? What winter was too severe for the sun to turn it into summer?  
Yield yourself up, you icicle! Yield to the sun and it will melt you. Yield yourself up, you dead and shriveled twig, to that dear sunbeam which waits to kiss you and it will awaken life within you, and warm you till you shall be loaded with rich fruit, to the praise and glory of the Sun of Righteousness which has risen upon you! The Lord grant it may be so with us all, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Malachi 3, 4.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—795, 799, 19. LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—Although I am still weak upon my knees, I am so greatly refreshed in spirit that I feel able to return to preach on Sunday, April 13. Glad tidings of the Lord’s work at home have greatly cheered me and I am also rejoiced that most of the work committed to me has prospered during my absence. This is a great point gained, for now all will know that the work is a living one and does not depend upon personal oversight. I heartily thank all the workers and givers, and most of all our gracious God who has kept them faithful. Right glad shall I be to see the beloved Tabernacle people again. I beg to be daily remembered in prayer and I am  
Yours to serve,

*C.H. SPURGEON*  
Mentone, March 14, 1879  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #3172 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS

NO. 3172

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 11, 1866.

*“But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.”  
Malachi 4:2.*

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #1020, Volume 18— “THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS” and #1463B,  
Volume 25—THE RISING SUN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS great promise was fulfilled at the coming of our Lord. There were many waiting for it, like Anna and Simeon, mourning the darkness in which they dwelt and scarcely cheered by a single star, for the voice of prophecy had ceased. Then suddenly Christ came and so the Sun of Righteousness arose upon those who feared the Lord! They went forth into blessed liberty, rejoicing in Him. And afterwards their light was greatly increased in brightness and their life in happiness as they grew in Divine knowledge and holiness. It is difficult for us to conceive the revulsion of feeling which must have come into the hearts of such patient waiters for the Lord as Anna and Simeon. They must have triumphed exceedingly, magnifying the Lord, with Mary, that at last He had come—the Light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the Glory of His people, Israel!

This promise has also had a practical fulfillment in the deathbed experiences of God’s people. Tortured with disease, they have been lying in the darkness and gloom of death. Perhaps fears have come in and physical infirmity has been the platform upon which Satan has planted his heavy guns of temptation. But suddenly a wondrous light has surprised them—their dying bed has become a throne of glory! They have found themselves arrayed in royal garments as though it were their coronation rather than their departure out of this world. They have been enabled to sit upright in the bed and to tell others that they had beheld the brightness of the coming Glory and that they had experienced in their souls the foretaste of unspeakable and Divine joys even before their bodies were released from infirmity and pain! Though the body has been bound fast with cords, the soul has mounted up as on the wings of eagles, in sacred rapture and holy bliss! The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon them! Before their earthly sun went down, the heavenly Sun lit up their sky with a sacred high, eternal noon! And unto you who fear the name of the Lord, whatever gloom may surround your departure from the earth, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings and one day you shall find Him rise even upon your mortal bodies—

*“From beds of dust and silent clay*

*To realms of everlasting day”—*  
your very bodies shall wing their flight to dwell—  
*“Forever with the Lord!”*  
While the promise in the text has had these two fulfillments, there is no doubt that it awaits another. We are looking for the return of the Lord Jesus! And though, perhaps, we have no right to expect that He will come today or tomorrow—for there are many prophecies which apparently must be fulfilled before He comes, and which may require long periods of time—yet we are to expect Him and are to be as servants who know that their master will come to call them to account. Perhaps just when the Christian Church shall become most weary. When the hands of her ministers shall hang down through feebleness. When the warriors shall be “faint, yet pursuing,” when Gog and Magog and the hosts of the enemy shall have gathered themselves together for battle and everything seems to forebode a long dark night for the Church and for the world— perhaps just then Christ will suddenly appear in the clouds of Heaven! Perhaps at such a time as that, the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings and the triumphant saints shall go forth to meet Him clothed with His brightness, sharing in His Kingdom! And as the next verse solemnly tells us, treading down the wicked who shall be as ashes beneath their feet in the day of their Lord’s appearing! Perhaps this is to be the great fulfillment of the text.  
But I do not intend to dwell tonight upon any of these three probable fulfillments of the prophecy. I want rather to talk about matters which more nearly concern us just now and to put a few practical soul-matters before this entire congregation, hoping that God may press them home upon some—so that they may find healing beneath the wings of Christ tonight!  
I. The text speaks, you will observe, of a certain class of persons— THOSE WHO FEAR GOD’S NAME.  
The great multitude of people in the world do not fear the name of God. They do not care whether there is a God or not. If there were no God, their conduct would not be very different from what it is now. God is not in all their thoughts—they live as if they were their own creators and sustainers—and practically join in the language of Pharaoh, “Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?” Now, for such people, the Bible contains no blessing—why should it when they reject both it and the God who wrote it?  
But there are some in the world—thank God, more now, perhaps, than at any former period—who do fear God. Some have not advanced far in this heavenly wisdom—they are like scholars on the first form at school.

They fear God just as much as this—that they would not willfully sin . They are checked from presumptuous sins by the fear of God and this is well. It is so good a thing that I believe it is like that smoking flax which Christ will not quench! And that man who really fears to sin because God would see him and who desires to do right because God would have him do right is not far from the Kingdom of God if, indeed, he is not actually in the Kingdom!

Others have advanced so far in this fear that they have been brought into torment by it. They know that they have already sinned and they dread the thought of the terrible One who has said that, He “will by no means clear the guilty.” They have heard the thunder of that dreadful verse, “Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them”—and they therefore fear God. It is a fear that brings bondage, but even that is better than no fear at all! They believe God and they tremble—and we are thankful to see them trembling, for now, perhaps, they will begin to say within themselves, “We will seek our Father’s face! We will fly to Him and ask Him to save us from His own wrath through His Son.”

This fear in some, however, has happily advanced still further. They have come to fear God with a childlike fear. Their sin has been forgiven. They have put their trust in the Savior. They have heard the voice which said, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” And now they fear God with a fear with which love is perfectly consistent—they fear Him as a loving, tender-hearted child fears to disobey a gracious, kind, wise, loving father. God is in their thoughts. No, more—God is in their hearts! They love Him. They could not bear to live without God—they would be orphans—their Father would be gone! Without God they would be poverty stricken, for their wealth is found in Him.

I know there are some of you here who could do wonderfully well without a God. Indeed, you would be much happier than you now are if it could be proved that there is no God, for the thought of God is a bugbear to some of you and you try as much as possible to shut the ears of your soul against the cry of conscience when it tells you that there is a God—a God who will bring you into judgment for all your actions! Well, the promise in the text is not for you, but it is for those who realize that there is a God and who have respect unto His Word—who tremble before Him and yet who rejoice in Him, having been brought near to Him by the precious blood of Jesus—and having been reconciled to Him by Christ Jesus, the Mediator between God and man. Dear Friend, if you do but fear God, take the text and live upon it! It is a precious hive of honey and you may extract the utmost sweetness from it! Let us go to it, now, and feed upon it as it is here given to us as food from Heaven for our souls.

II. Having found out the persons to whom the text is addressed, let us next notice that according to this verse, SOME OF THOSE WHO FEAR GOD ARE IN THE DARK.

They fear God, but they have not any happiness. They are doubtful, timid and possibly they are constitutionally dull and sad. Besides that, they are diseased and need the “healing” of which the text speaks. They are not what they want to be—they have a bad temper to struggle against, or some besetting sin to mourn over.

Now observe the promise that is given to them, that they shall be visited in a remarkable manner by the Lord Jesus and that, in consequence of this visitation, they shall receive the two things that they specially need, namely, light and healing! They are in the dark, so they shall receive light and comfort! They are sick in soul, but they shall receive healing from Christ. The great blessing promised is that Christ shall appear to them, but see in what an aspect it is said that He shall appear. He is called, “the Sun of Righteousness.” What a title for our blessed Lord! He who did hang upon Calvary in the thickest darkness was the Sun of Righteousness! He is sometimes compared to a star, but this figure is more full and more worthy of Him. Christ is the center of the universe! “Without Him was not anything made that was made.” By Him all things consist.” As the sun, with secret bands, keeps all the planets in their places and is the great regulator of the solar machinery, so is Christ the great center of the world—and especially of His own Church. Forth from the sun floods of heat and light are continually being scattered. We do not know that the sun borrows anything from any other source. He is himself the source, in his stupendous furnace, of the light and heat which gladden all the worlds of which he is the center and controller. So is it with our Savior—borrowing nothing, but having all fullness dwelling within Himself, He pours forth, out of His own inexhaustible heart of Infinite Mercy and Compassion—floods of light to make glad the ignorant and floods of heat to comfort the sorrowing!

We can scarcely bear to look upon the sun! He is an orb of such surpassing splendor, giving out continually such vast masses of light, if I may use the expression and, oh, who could look upon the unveiled splendor of the Lord Jesus? Perhaps if we could see Him as He now is in Heaven, we might feel as if we were not prepared for so great a sight, our eyes not yet being strong enough to be able to bear the burning splendor of the great Sun of Righteousness! If you could get any adequate idea of the light and heat that come from the sun, you might then form some faint conception of the—

*“Streams of mercy, never ceasing”—*  
which flood the universe from Christ, the great central orb of the Love of God! Oh, happy are they who bask in His beams! Blessed are they who walk in His light! Best of all and most happy are they who, like Milton’s angel standing in the sun, dwell amid the very fullness of Christ’s Glory where He sits upon His Father’s Throne!  
Christ, then, is the Sun of Righteousness. Now, Sinner. Now, Trembler. If you fear God, Christ will be a sun to you! You will have no need of knowledge, then, depend upon it, for He shall teach you all things! If Christ shall arise upon you, you shall see your sins clearly enough, but you shall also see God and, therefore, you shall see hope! You shall see pardon, you shall see peace, you shall see Heaven! What will not the sun reveal? Everything is in darkness till he appears—but when he rises, everything is discovered. And oh, poor troubled Soul, you see nothing and you know but little until Christ comes to you! But if He shall arise upon you as the Sun of Righteousness, you shall know all that you need to know and perceive everything that is delightful and comforting—and so your heart shall be glad!

But the figure employed in the text is a double one. It is said that sometimes in the East, after a long time of calm, the very air gets putrid and the glowing sand reflects the burning heat till, presently, a refreshing land breeze comes up with the sunrise. So Christ is here pictured as a sun—His beams being like the wings of some gigantic golden eagle— and those wings, like refreshing winds, bringing health to the poor sickly inhabitants of earth who are ready to die. Certainly when Christ comes in all His splendor of Light, for He is “the Light of the world,” He comes also with health to sick souls! Do not believe, Soul, that your sickness is incurable, though Satan may tell you a thousand times that it is! If Christ comes to deal with you, Man, though your disease should be the deadly cancer of blasphemy, He can cure it! Though you should have the fever of drunkenness within your soul, Christ can heal you of that fiery malady! I ventured to say this morning that there is now no hospital for

incurable souls [See Sermon #720, Volume 12—THE GOSPEL’S HEALING POWER— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] because  
Christ can cure all manner of spiritual diseases!

You perceive that the text does not say that they who fear the name of the Lord shall be cured of their spiritual maladies by what they do themselves. No, but that Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise upon them and in His light they shall obtain the health they lack! Get Jesus, poor Soul, and you need not trouble yourself about much else. There is everything that a sinner requires in the Person of the appointed Savior. Arise, O You blessed Jesus Christ, like the sun upon the darkness, that some who are in this place may now leave their sins and rejoice in Your power to save!

You perceive also that the way in which those who fear the Lord get light is not by their raising the sun—that would be impossible, but it is through the sun, itself, rising upon them. Some sinners seem to think that they are to get comfort and light for themselves—but it is not so—Christ must bring it all to you. You are not to bring anything to Jesus, but to come to His fullness to receive everything! Do you understand me, Man? Supposing that you are full of sin, full of hardness of heart and of everything that is bad and contrary to the mind of God, yet if you are saved, it will be by Christ appearing to your mind’s eye—and that mind’s eye seeing Him—and your soul trusting in Him. And if you do so, you are saved. “What?” you say, “is there nothing for me to do?” There is nothing for you to do in order that you may be saved, but believe in Jesus! You shall do many things after you are saved—I shall go on to tell you of them directly—but the work of saving your soul does not rest with you. Christ is the Savior and He will do it all! You are not to help in that work—

*“It is not your tears of repentance or prayers  
But the blood that atones for the soul!  
On Him, then, who shed it, believing at once  
Your weight of iniquities roll!  
We are healed by His stripes—would you add to the Word? And He is our righteousness made!  
The best robe of Heaven He bids you put on—  
Oh, could you be better arrayed?  
Then doubt not your welcome, since God has declared There remains no more to be done!  
That once in the end of the world He appeared  
And completed the work He begun.”*

Imagine people lighting their candles after the sun has risen! “Oh,” they say, “but we may as well add to the light.” But do your candles add to the light when you have the sunlight? Do they not rather mock the light? Are they not an impertinence in the presence of the great orb of day? And, Sinner, do not light your candles to add to the light of the Sun of Righteousness! Do not bring your nothingness and your emptiness to add to the perfection of Christ’s finished work! You cannot help Him to save you, so do not insult Him by attempting to do so! But just take the text and from your heart, pray, “O God, let the Sun of Righteousness arise upon me with healing in His wings, for I do—I trust and fear Your name!”

I hope this Truth will not pass away from your memories. I feel so concerned lest any of you should miss the blessing that God is giving us just now. I know I have with me the opinion of hundreds who fear the Lord, that God is very marvelously present with us as a Church and that He has been so for some little time. But I fear lest the cloud should pass away before the heavenly rain falls upon more of you! I trust that it will not, but that you may receive the blessing in your souls!

III. Now I must go on to observe THAT WHICH IS TO FOLLOW IN THE CASE OF THOSE UPON WHOM THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARISES. The promise to them in the text is, “You shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.”

It is a subject of great anxiety to earnest Church Officers as to what will become of our young converts. Many are added to our numbers who know but little of the Doctrines of Grace. Now you perceive that here is the blessing for them which may remove our anxiety—may all of you who have lately been converted share in that blessing!

The promise is that they “shall go forth.” Of course this means that they shall enjoy spiritual liberty. When Christ comes into the heart, whatever bondage there may have been there before, it all disappears in His Presence! Where Jesus comes, He is the true Liberator. No chains are worn in the court of King Jesus! The moment He enters the heart, He proclaims perfect emancipation and—

*“The prisoner leaps to lose his chains.”*  
Yet the realization of this emancipation may be gradual. And a true convert may be saying, “I wish I could enjoy the promises and go forth and walk at liberty in the green pastures.” Well do I recollect when I heard some Believers singing—

*“Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given!  
More happy but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven!”*

And I thought then, “Ah, I shall never be able to sing that! It is too high a note for me.” But I can sing it now and sing it truthfully, too—and so will you who have but just seen Christ, be able to do—you shall go forth in the liberty with which Christ makes His people free!

You shall go forth, too, in Christian ordinances. Perhaps you say, “I should be afraid to be baptized—it is such a solemn thing to profess death, burial and resurrection with Christ—I do not think I could dare to do that. And as to going before a Christian Church and avowing my faith in Jesus, I am afraid I could not do that—my lips would be tightly closed through fear. And I could not feel at liberty to come to the Master’s Table. I would be so afraid of eating and drinking condemnation to myself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” Ah, poor Trembler, I know just how you feel! But when the Sun of Righteousness arises upon your soul, you will get liberty in all these matters and will go forth in obedience to your Lord’s commands! If a stranger were to come to your house, he would stand at the door, or wait in the hall. If he were a person of any sense, he would not think of walking into your parlor, or your drawing room, or your bedroom, for he would not be at home there. But your child makes himself free in your house because he is at home. So is it with the child of God, for a child may come where a stranger may not venture to go! When the Holy Spirit has become to you the Spirit of Adoption, you will go forth to Christian ordinances without fear!

So will it be with the Christian’s inward privileges. I know you think, poor Seeker, that you never may “rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory.” If you may but just get inside Christ’s door, or sit at the end of His Table, you think you will be well content. Ah, but you shall not have any less privileges than the greatest of God’s children! God makes no differences between His children as far as their privileges are concerned. He will not make us His hired servants, but we, even we, shall feast upon the fatted calf and shall have the music and the dancing as much as if we had never gone astray. Yes, young Christian, you shall go forth! You do not know what is before you. There is the goodly land and it is all yours! Do not imagine that you are always to be a babe in Grace—you shall grow and become, I hope, a full-grown man in Christ Jesus—yes, a father in Israel! Imagine not that you are always to be like that little green blade which is just peeping up above the cold sod—you shall one day be like the corn in the ear—yes, more! You shall one day be like the golden corn which bends its head through its ripeness and the glad harvest home shall be shouted over you. You shall not always be weak and feeble and afraid to enjoy your Christian privileges. You would not know yourself if you could see what you will yet be! The songs you are yet to sing, the grapes of Eshcol you are yet to pluck, the fair days of joy you are yet to spend, the feasts and banquets, the real enjoyments which you are yet to know on this side of the grave might well make you happy if you could but get a foretaste of them! Yes, you shall go forth—only have Christ as your Savior and there shall be no end to your happiness! Let the Sun of Righteousness but rise upon you and your light shall never be put out!

But that is not all, for the text also says, “You shall grow up as calves of the stall.” That is to say, these very people who are so timid, now, shall advance in the Divine Life at the fastest rate. The calf grows very rapidly and it ought to do so when it is put into the stall on purpose to help it to grow. The reference is to the calves that are stalled for fattening—those that are fatted regularly, fatted abundantly by those whose aim it is to make them grow! So the text tells the young Christian that he shall grow like the calf in the stall. God’s ministers shall feed him. God’s Word shall be the granary out of which his food shall come and God’s Spirit shall enable him to feed upon that food and make him grow! Christ Himself shall be that poor trembler’s daily bread, his meat and his drink. He who feeds upon Christ must grow! It is no cause for wonder if the saints are fat and flourishing—and bring forth fruit in old age when they feed upon Christ! Whenever a Christian has to say, “My leanness, my leanness, woe is unto me,” it cannot be because suitable food has not been supplied—it must be because he has not fed upon it—for if we have fed upon Christ Jesus, how can we help growing in faith, knowledge, holiness and every spiritual gift?

I am hopeful, therefore, for our young members, that God will take care of them and that they will surprise us by the advance which they will make. I only hope that they will surpass all who have ever gone before them. Ah, dear young Friends, never take us as an example in stopping short of the Christian ideal! Follow us as far as we follow Christ! But go beyond the very best of us when you see that we come short of what we ought to be. I hope you will be more earnest, more prayerful, more conscientious, more diligent than any of us have been! May the next generation of Christians outshine the present one and so may it continue to be until Christ Himself comes and His Church shall be in her glory! Do you recollect that passage in the Revelation about the woman clothed with the sun? How bright she must be! But that is the Christian Church—and it is also you, in your measure, for you are to be clothed with the sun. Your brightness and holiness are to be such that men shall know that the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you! You have not any light in yourselves, but when you receive the light from Christ, take care that you reflect it! How bright should those be who shine in the beams of Jesus Christ Himself!

There is one translation of the last clause of the text which I should like to mention. It is thought by some eminent divines that the word rendered, “stall,” also bears the meaning of, “yoke.” If it is so, then the genuine Christian grows up like the heifers that wear the yoke. That is to say, he is a worker as well as a feeder. He grows, but he is willing to bear the yoke and serve his Lord. I would not thank God for the addition to this Church of a man who would be idle, captious, selfish. I would deprecate such a diminution of our strength, even though it might be an augmentation of our numbers. The members we want are those who are willing to consecrate themselves wholly to the Lord—and to whom religion is a reality! With many it is a sham, a mere pretence, a thing to make them appear respectable, but not a matter which eats up their life and takes away their energy, bearing them onward in service as in a chariot of fire! May you who are converted grow up as heifers that wear the yoke! May you plow to the end of your field and back again—and on and on, plowing in the Master’s service till the time shall come for the yoke to be taken from your necks! The crest and the motto of the American Baptist Missionary Union should be ours—the crest is an ox standing between a plow and an altar, and the motto is—“Ready for either.” May we be ready to be offered up in death or to serve God in life!

Now I have to say this to you who fear the Lord and who are seeking to have Christ in your hearts—seek to get Him as the Sun of Righteousness shining within you. And ask, after you have Christ, that you may be helped to grow in Grace—that you may not be dull and heavy as some have been, that you may not be cumberers of the ground, that you may not be the mere baggage of Christ’s army impeding the march of His heroes—but that you may be men and women who shall be swifter than eagles and bolder than lions—consecrated—to whom work shall be pleasure and loss shall be gain! Who, as the arrow speeds from the archer’s bow, turning neither to the right nor to the left, shall speed onward to the prize of your high calling, thinking of nothing except winning Christ and being found in Him!

May God grant us this blessing now! Let the prayer be breathed, “Arise upon us, Sun of Righteousness,” and then let the other prayer follow, “Make us to go forth and to grow up like calves of the stall, and may we serve You, O God, and receive Your blessing world without end! Amen.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**LUKE 10:25-42.**

Verses 25-28. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How do you read it? And he answering, said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. And He said unto him, You have answered right: this do and you shall live. Do any of you want to live by the Law? There is the Law. Does any man here pretend that he has kept it? Let me ask any man here who would justify himself by his own works—have you thought of God today? How much time have you spent with God? Or yesterday, how much of your time did you give Him—how many minutes? Would you venture to say that you spent a quarter of an hour in prayer? No. Perhaps if it comes to the truth, you did not spend five minutes. Now, if you loved God with all your heart and all your soul, and all your strength, and all your mind, do you think that five minutes would satisfy such a love as that? Oh, no, Sirs! You that are unconverted give God no love at all—and how can you think, therefore, that you are keeping His Law which puts it so strongly, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart? And with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself”? Have you ever done that? Neither the first nor the second table have you kept intact!

29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? The Savior then related this incident which I have no doubt was really a fact.

30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. It was a very dangerous road, a very lonely part—and robberies were very frequent there.

31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. He did not like the look of wounds and blood. It is a very convenient thing not to recollect the miseries of your fellow men. Do not think about their poverty—it might spoil your digestion! Do not think about their drunkenness—you might have to become a teetotaler! Do not think about their sin—you might have to go and preach in the street to them! You can live so easily and pleasantly, and even be a priest and be called, “His Reverence,” if you are very careful which side of the road you take. “He passed by on the other side.”

32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side. There are some whose looks are evidently esteemed by themselves to be so very precious that when they have given them, they give nothing more! He may have meant, “I will see into it.” There are a great many who are very diligent in their promises to see into a case, but we do not see much come of what they say. They also pass by on the other side. Neither the priest nor the Levite acted as a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves.

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. He looked, approached, drew near, “came where he was.”  
33. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him. He did not ask him how he got there, or say to him, ‘Why, Man, you must have been very foolish to travel alone! My dear Friend, next time you come this way, you must come armed. Did you not know this was a very ugly part of the road? And I think you are ill-advised to have been travelling quite so late.” Oh, we have many dear friends who always favor us with their rebukes when our wounds are bleeding! “He had compassion on him.”  
34. And went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Oil and wine—two very good things for external application— and he used them for that. Wondrous healers, these were known to be. They were expensive things, too. He had brought them for his own comfort and he freely used them for this poor man. Then he set him on his own beast—so he had to walk. He accepted the inconvenience. He relinquished his own comfort for the sake of doing good. “And he brought him to an inn and took care of him”—perhaps he sat up all night with him. He took care of him after he had got him into the inn. He did not immediately commend him to the care of some paid person, but he first took care of him. But this good Samaritan had urgent business and was obliged to go about it.  
35. And on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you. “This is my piece of work. I want to finish it and as I cannot stay, will you kindly supply the ready money, and when I come again, I will repay you?”  
36, 37. Which, now, of these three, do you think was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Oh, you lawyer, why did you not say, “The Samaritan”? Of course he did not like to use that word! Oh, no, we never mention them—the “Samaritans.” “The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” So he would not honestly say, “The Samaritan,” but he made a roundabout of it and said, “He that showed mercy on him.”  
37. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise. May we all be enabled to do so by exercising constant love to those who are in need!  
38. Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. There were not so very many that kept open house for Christ. But Martha did. It was her house.  
39. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. She was free to do so. It was not her house. She need not attend to the hospitalities of it. Her sister was quite equal to it and so Mary did well to avail herself of the opportunity of sitting at Jesus’ feet and hearing His Word.  
40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me. She wanted to get so much ready—to have everything nice. So she came almost scolding the Master! She was out of temper, surely, that day. She had gotten to be troubled. Dear Friends, it is not wrong to labor and to work and do all we can, but it is wrong to grow cumbered with it—to get fretful, anxious, worried about this thing and that! You will not do it any better. You will probably do less and you will do it worse. She was “cumbered about much serving.”  
41, 42. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary. “You have forgotten much. Looking after many things, you have failed to remember the chief, the only necessary thing.”  
42. And Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. And so He let her still sit there and hear His blessed Words—  
*“Oh, that I could forever sit With Mary at the Master’s feet— Be this my happy choice!”*