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ELECTION—ITS DEFENSES AND EVIDENCES  
NO. 2920

A SERMON  
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*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1862.

*“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance…And you became followers of us, and of the Lord having received the word*

*in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.”***[1Th 1:4-6](tw://bible.*?id=52.1.4-52.1.6|_AUTODETECT_|)***.*

**AT the very announcement of the text, some will be ready to say, “Why preach upon so profound a Doctrine as Election?” I answer, because it is in God’s Word, and whatever is in the Word of God is to be preached! “But some Truths of God ought to be kept back from the people,” you will say, “lest they should make an ill use of them.” That is Popish doctrine! It was upon that very theory that the priests kept back the Bible from the people—they did not give it to them lest they should misuse it. “But are not some Doctrines dangerous?” Not if they are true and rightly handled. The Truth of God is never dangerous—it is error and reticence that are fraught with peril! “But do not men abuse the Doctrines of Grace?” I grant you that they do! But if we destroyed everything that men misuse, we would have nothing left! Are there to be no ropes because some fools will hang themselves? And must cutlery be discarded and denounced because there are some who will use dangerous weapons for the destruction of their adversaries? Decidedly not! Besides all this, remember that men read the Scriptures and think about these Doctrines and, therefore, often make mistakes about them. Who, then, shall set them right if we who preach the Word hold our tongues about the matter?**

**I know that some men who have embraced the Doctrine of Election have become Antinomians. Such men would probably have found other excuses for their misdeeds if they had not sheltered themselves under the shadow of this Doctrine. The sun will ripen the noxious weed as well as the fruitful plant, but that is not the fault of the sun, but of the nature of the weed, itself! We believe, however, that more persons are made Antinomians through those who deny the Doctrine than through those who preach it. One evidence of this is that in Scotland. You will scarcely find a congregation of Hyper-Calvinists—the simple reason being that the Church in Scotland holds entire the whole Doctrine upon this matter and her ministers, as a rule, are not ashamed to preach it fearlessly and boldly—and in connection with the rest of the faith.**

**Take any Doctrine and preach upon it exclusively, and you distort it. The fairest face in the world, with the most comely features, would soon become unseemly if one feature were permitted to expand while the rest were kept in their usual form. Proportion, I take it, is beauty—and to preach every Truth of God in its fair proportion, neither keeping back any nor giving undue prominence to any, is to preach the whole Truth as Christ would have it preached! On a Gospel thus entire and harmonious, we may expect to have the blessing of the Most High. So much by way of preface, not by way of apology. It is not my custom to offer any apology for speaking the Truth of God!**

I. **WHAT IS THIS DOCTRINE OF ELECTION? Let us try to understand it as spoken of in the text—“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”**

***There is such a thing as election* . Any man who should deny that man is a free agent might well be thought unreasonable, but *free will* is a different thing from free agency. Luther denounced free will when he said that “free will is the name for nothing.” And President Edwards demolished the idea in his masterly treatise. God is the universal Agent and does as He wills—and His will is supremely good. He is the superlative Agent and man, acting according to the devices of his own heart, is nevertheless overruled by that Sovereign and wise legislation which causes the wrath of man (that agency in which the creature cannot govern himself) to praise Him and the remainder thereof He restrains. How these two things are true I cannot tell. It is not necessary for our good, either in this life or the next, that we should have the skill to solve such problems. I am not sure that in Heaven we shall be able to know where the free agency of man and the Sovereignty of God meet, but both are great Truths. God has predestinated everything, yet man is responsible, for he acts freely and no constraint is put upon him even when he sins and wantonly and wickedly disobeys the will of God! But so many as are saved, you will say, are saved because they believe. Certainly it is so! It is most true—God forbid I should deny it—but why do they believe? They believe as the result of the working of the Grace of God in their hearts. Since every man who is saved confesses this, since every true Believer in the world acknowledges that something special has been done for him more than for the impenitent, the fact is established that God does make a difference. No one ever heard it laid as an impeachment against the Lord that He has made such a difference, so I cannot see why He should be impeached for intending to make that difference—which is the Doctrine of Election! I am saved, but I know it is not because of any goodness in me. And if you are saved, you will freely confess that it is the distinguishing love of God that has made you to differ. The Doctrine of Election is simply God’s intention to make the difference between people which you know exists. While He gives mercy to all, He gives more mercy to some so that the mercy already received shall be made effectual to their eternal salvation.**

***This Election of God is Sovereign* . He chooses as He wills. Who shall call Him to account? “Can I not do as I will with My own?” is His answer to every quibbler. “No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” is the solemn utterance that silences everyone who would impugn the Justice of the Most High. He has a right, seeing we are all criminals, to punish whom He will. As King of the universe, He doubtless acts with discretion, but still according to His Sovereignty. Wisely, not wantonly, He rules, but always according to the counsel of His own will. Election, then, is Sovereign.**

**Again, *Election is free*. Whatever may be God’s reason for choosing a man, certainly it is not because of any good thing in that man! He is chosen because God will do so. We can get no further. We get as far as those words of Christ, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight,” and there we stop—for beyond that no philosophy and no Scripture can take us.**

**As it is Sovereign and free, so *Election is irreversible*. Having chosen His people, He does not cast them away nor call back the word that is gone from His lips, for it is written, “He hates putting away.” He is of one mind and who can turn Him?**

**Once more, Election *is effectual*. For “whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”**

**And this *Election is personal*, for He calls out His children one by one by their names. He calls them even as He leads out the stars and so He brings them, every one, to the Father’s House above.**

**We have thus given a statement as to what this Doctrine is. There we will leave it. Our present objective is not so much to expound the Doctrine as to strike a blow or two at certain errors which are very common and which spring out of it. I know, dear Friends, there are some who are so afraid of this Doctrine that the mention of it produces alarm. If they were to meet a lion in their way, they would not be more terrified than they are when they see this Doctrine in Scripture or hear it from the pulpit!**

II. **Therefore, secondly, we will NOTICE WHAT ARE THE DEFENSES OF THIS DOCTRINE and try, if we can, should you be laboring under any distress of mind about it, to remove your difficulties.**

**Will you please remember, then, that *this is not a point which you can understand at the commencement of spiritual and religious life?*You would not teach your children, I suppose, to say their prayers backwards and begin at, “Amen.” And you are beginning at the wrong end when you want, first of all, to know your election instead of commencing with repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! Election is a lesson for the more advanced students. Faith and hope must be learned, first of all, in the infant class to which we all must go if we would be wise unto salvation.**

**Now, if a child should have a book of algebra put into his hand and should puzzle himself and say, “I shall never get an education, for I cannot understand this.” And then take down some ancient classic and say, “I cannot comprehend this, either,” you would say, “Dear Child, you have nothing to do with these yet! Here is a sampler book for you—a primer. Here you have A, B, C—learn this, first, and then, step by step, you shall attain to the rest.” Even so it is with us. Simple trust in Christ is the first thing you have to understand. After that you shall know the high, the sublime and the glorious Doctrine of God’s Decrees—but do not *begin* with these! You will mystify and ruin yourself—you will lose your way in a fog and get no good thereby.**

**Again, it is very certain that whatever this Doctrine may be—and we will have no dispute about it just now—*this Doctrine cannot possibly be inconsistent with certain plain promises in God’s Word*. Such promises as these—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Why, I might quote by the hour together some of these promises which are as wide as the poles—invitations that must not be narrowed, exhortations which are addressed to every man and woman under Heaven—in which every one of them is bidden to hear and live. “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters.” You know the class of promises to which I allude. Now these are the Words of God which are for you—get hold of them— come to Jesus Christ with them in your hands and rest assured the Doctrine of Election, instead of pushing you back, shall stand like the servants about your father’s table to make music while your whole being shall dance to the glorious tune! It shall be like a dish upon the table at the feast of the returning prodigal, of which you shall eat to the very full! It shall by no means repulse you or show anything to you which may keep you from hoping in Christ.**

**Once more, it is quite certain that whatever it may be, *this Doctrine of Election does not deliver you from your duty*. Now what is your duty? “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.” So much is this your absolute duty that, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed.” This, more than anything else is the reason of men’s condemnation! The Scripture says this is the one great sin. Of the Spirit of Truth we read that “when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin—of sin because they believe not on Me.” Very well, then—in as much as God has so put it, that He commands you this day to trust Christ and to believe on Him—that is what you have to see to—and you may rest perfectly sure that falling back on the Doctrine of Election in order to exonerate you from what God commands you to perform is but a pitiful pretense! You are *commanded* to believe and what God commands, no Doctrine may teach that it is unfit for you to do! May God help you to believe, for this Doctrine comes not to excuse you. The Gospel *commands* you and Election through the Holy Spirit *enables* you. It is your duty to believe, but no man ever was saved as a matter of duty, for that which saves is the gift of God. But your business now is with Christ, only, and not with the Decrees of the Father which are all in the keeping of Christ and shall presently be revealed to you. You have to go to Christ, first, and to His Father afterwards, for He says, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” You must go to the Cross to get to the Decree—you must go round by Redemption to get to Election—there is no other way.**

III. **In the third place let us see WHAT ARE THE EVIDENCES OF ELECTION. Our text says, very plainly too, that the Apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians. How did he know it? The way by which the Apostle knew it must be the method by which you and I are to know our election of God, too.**

**We have known more than once in our day of some men who pretended to know their election by their impudence. They had got into their head the presumption that they were elected and though they lived on in sin and still did as they liked, they imagined they were God’s chosen. This is what I call presuming upon election by sheer impudence.**

**We know of others, alas, who have imagined themselves to be elect because of the visions that they have seen when they have been asleep or when they have been awake—for men have waking dreams—and they have brought these as evidences of their election. These are of as much value as cobwebs would be for a garment! They will be of as much service to you at the Day of Judgment as a thief’s convictions would be to him if he were in need of a character to commend him to mercy. You may dream long enough before you dream yourself into Heaven—and you may have as many stupid notions in your head as there are romances in your circulating libraries—but because they are in your head they are not, therefore, in God’s Book. We need a more sure word of testimony than this and if we have it not, God forbid that we should indulge our vain heart with the dainty thought that we are chosen of God!**

**I have heard of one who said in an alehouse that he could say more than any of the rest, that he was one of God’s children. Meanwhile he drank deeper into intoxication than the rest. Surely he might have said, with an emphasis, that he was one of the *devil’s* children—and he would have been correct. When immoral men and women who live constantly in sin, prate about being God’s children, we discern them at once. Just as we know a crab tree when we see the fruit hanging upon it, we understand what spirit these people are of when we see their walk and conversation. Oh, it is detestable—loathsome above all loathsomeness— to hear men whose characters in secret are infamous, and whose lives are destitute of every Christian virtue, boasting as though they had the keys of Heaven and could set up whomever they would, and pull down whomever they might please! Blessed be God, we are not under their domination, for a more terrific set of tyrants than they are, the world has never known! And a more frightful reign of vice than they would inaugurate if they had their way, I am sure villainy, itself, cannot conceive! “Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” If Divine Grace does not make us holy, teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, it is not worth the having! Brothers and Sisters, if we are God’s elect we must have some substantial evidence to attest it!**

**According to our text, what are these evidences? They seem to be four. *The first evidence appears to be the Word of God coming home with power.*If you will turn to the verse, you will soon see how the Apostle says, “Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit.” The Gospel is preached in the ears of all—it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise *men would be the converters of souls*. Nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise *it would consist in the wisdom of man*. The power which converts souls does not even lie in the preacher’s simplicity or adaptation to his work—that is a secondary agency, but not the cause. Again, the power which converts souls does not even lie in the pathos which the speaker may employ. Men may weep to the tragic muse in a theater as well as to prophetic strains in a chapel! Their creature passions may be impressed through the acting on the stage as well as by the utterance of God’s own servants! No, there is something more than this needed and where it is absent, all preaching is nothing! We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit going with it, changing the will of man!**

**O Sirs! We might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Spirit is with the Word to give it power to convert the soul! We are reminded of Mr. Rowland Hill, who once met a man in the street at night, not quite drunk, but almost so. The man said, “Mr. Hill, I am one of your converts.” “Yes,” he said, “I dare say you are one of *mine*—but if you were one of *God’s*, you would not be in the state in which you now are.” Our converts are worth nothing. If they are converted by man they can be unconverted by man! If some charm or power of one preacher can bring them to Christ, some charm or power of another preacher can take them from Christ. True conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Spirit alone!**

**Well, then, my Hearers, did you ever, when listening to the Word, feel a Divine Power coming with it? Never mind where you were, whether in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s Cathedral, in this Tabernacle, or at some special service at one of the theaters—the place matters nothing. “Well,” perhaps you will say, “I have felt some impression.” Ah, but that may be wiped away! Have you ever felt something coming with the Word which you could not understand. Which, while it wooed you and won your heart, smote you as though a sword had gone through you and that not with a flesh wound, but with a wound that divides between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow, as if the Truth of God were, as indeed it is, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts?**

**Those who are really God’s elect can tell a tale something like this. “There was a time when the Word was to me like a great ten thongedwhip—my shoulders were stripped bare and every time the Word was preached it seemed to make a gash within my soul! I trembled. I saw God in arms against me. I understood that I was in debt to His Justice and could not pay—that I was involved in a controversy against my Maker and could not conquer. I saw myself stripped naked to my shame, leprous from head to foot, a bankrupt and a felon ready to be given over to a traitor’s doom.” Truly the Word came with power to your soul. “And,” you continue, “I remember, too, when the Truth of God came home to my heart and made me leap for very joy, for it took all my load away—it showed me Christ’s power to save! I had known the Truth before, but now I felt it! I had understood that Christ could save, but now that fact came home to me! I went to Jesus just as I was—I touched the hem of His garment and I was made whole! I found now that the Word was not a fiction—that it was the one reality. I had listened scores of times and he that spoke was as one that played a tune upon an instrument—but now he seemed to be dealing with *me*, putting his hand right into my heart and getting hold of *me*. He brought me first to God’s Judgment Seat and there I stood and heard the thunders roll! Then he brought me to the Mercy Seat and I saw the blood sprinkled on it, and I went home triumphing because my sin was washed away.” Oh, again I ask you, did the Word over come home with this power to your souls?**

**Since the day of your conversion has the Word ever rebuked you? Has it sometimes cut down your hopes? Do you sometimes, after hearing a sermon, feel as if it had been like a great hurricane bearing right through the forest of your thoughts, cleaving its own course, and leaving many a dead thing that you thought alive swept down to the ground? Do you feel, too, when you go home from the sanctuary, as if God Himself had been there? You did not know what else it could be. It could not have been the speaker nor the words he uttered, but the very God came and looked into your eyes and searched the thoughts of your mind—and turned your heart upside down and then filled it full again with His love and with His light, with His truth and with His joy, with His peace and with His desire after holiness? Is it so with you? Where the Word is not with power to your souls, you lack the proof of Election.**

**Remember, I do not say that it will always be so. You must not expect that God will speak with you every time—in fact, the preacher himself fails often and is painfully conscious of it. How shall one man always speak without sometimes feeling that he, himself, is not in a fit frame to be God’s mouthpiece? But though it be a clown from the country, if he preaches God’s Word, the Spirit will go with it! It is not the clown, nor yet the archbishop that does the work—it is the Word of God that is quick and powerful! Your evidence of Election is blotted and blurred unless the Word has come to you with demonstration of the Spirit and with His Power. People come and hear sermons in this place and then they go out and say, “How did you like it”—as if that meant anything to anybody— “How did you like it?” And one says, “Oh, very well.” And another says, “Oh, not at all.” Do you think we live on the breath of your nostrils? Do you believe that God’s servants, if they are really His, care for what you think of them? No, verily, but if you should reply, “I enjoyed the sermon,” they are inclined to say, “Then we must have been unfaithful or else you would have been angry—we must surely have slurred over something or else the Word would have cut your conscience as with the jagged edges of a knife! You would have said, ‘I did not think how I liked it—I was thinking how I liked myself and about my own state before God. That was the matter that exercised me, not whether he preached well, but whether I stood accepted in Christ, or whether I was a castaway.’” My dear Hearers, are you learning to hear like that? If you are not, if going to church and to chapel are to you like going to a play, or like listening to some orator who speaks upon temporal matters, then you lack the evidence of Election—the Word has not come to your souls with power.**

**But there is yet a second evidence of Election. *Those whom God has chosen receive the Word “in much assurance.”*They do not all receive it with full assurance—that is a Grace they get afterwards—but they receive it with *much* assurance. There are some professors who go upon very strange principles. It is indeed somewhat difficult to know what principles are enforced and acknowledged in this age, for there are persons whose principles allow them to say black and white are the same thing! And there are certain persons whose religious principles are not much unlike this. They put a hymn book in their pockets when they are going to a meeting. They put a comic song book in their pockets when they are going somewhere else. They can hold with the hare and run with the hounds. Such people as these never have any very great confidence in their religion—and it is very proper that they should not—for their religion is not worth the time they spend in making a profession of it!**

**But the true Christian, when he gets hold of principles, keeps them and there is no mistake about the grip with which he maintains his hold of them. “Ah,” he says, “that Word which I have heard with my ears is the very Truth of God and it is true to me, real and substantial to me—and here I clasp it with both hands—with a clasp that neither time, nor tribulation, nor death shall ever cause me to let go.” To a Christian his religion is a part of himself—he believes the Truth of God not because he has been told it or taught it by mother or friend, but because it is true to him in his inmost soul. He is like the servant girl who, when she could not answer her infidel master, said, “Sir, I cannot answer you, but I have a something in here that would if it could speak.” There is “much assurance.”**

**Sinners who have once felt their need of a Savior feel very much assurance about His preciousness. And saints that have once found Him precious have very much assurance about His Divinity, about His Atonement, about His everlasting Love, about His immortal dignity as a Prophet, a Priest and a King. They are sure of it. I know some persons who say if a man speaks positively, he is dogmatic. Glorious old dogmatism, when will you come back to earth? It is these, “ifs,” and “buts,” and qualifications—these, “perhapses,” and “maybe sos” that have ruined our pulpits! Look at Luther when he stood up for the glory of his God—was there ever such a dogmatist? “I believe it,” he said, “and therefore I speak it.” From that day, when on Pilate’s staircase, he was trying to creep up and down the stairs to win Heaven, when the sentence out of the musty folio came before him, “Justified by faith we have peace with God,” that man was as sure that works could *not* save him as he was of his own existence! Now, if he had come out and said, “Gentlemen, I have a theory to propound that may be correct. Excuse my doing so,” and so on, the Papacy would have been dominant to this day! But he knew God had said it and he felt that that was God’s own way to his own soul—and he could not help being dogmatic with that glorious force of secession which soon laid his foes prostrate at his feet!**

**Now have *you*received the Gospel “with much assurance”? If you have and you can say, “Christ is mine. I trust in Him and though I may sometimes have doubts about my own interest in Him, yet I do know by experience in my soul that He is a precious Christ—I know not by ‘*Paley’s Evidences*’ nor by ‘*Butler’s Analogy*,’ but I know by my heart’s inward evidence. I know by the analogy of my own soul’s experience that the Truth of God which I have received is no cunningly devised fable, but something that came from God to draw my soul up to God”—that is another evidence of Election! If you have that, never mind the rest! I hardly care whether you believe the Doctrine of Election or not—you are elect. As I have sometimes told a Brother who has denied the Doctrine of Final Perseverance, when I have seen his holy life, “Never mind, my Brother, you will persevere to the end and you will prove the Doctrine that you do not believe! You may not be able to receive the Doctrine I now preach, but if such has been your experience, when you get to Heaven you will wake up and say, ‘Well, I am one of the elect! I made a deal of fuss about it while on the earth, but I will make a deal of music about it now that I have got to Heaven. And I will sing more sweetly and loudly than all the rest, ‘Unto Him that has loved me and washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever!’”**

**But there is a third evidence. *Those who are chosen of the Lord desire to be like Him.* “You became followers of us and of the Lord,” the Apostle says in the text—by which he does not mean that they said, “I am of Paul, I am of Silas, I am of Timothy”—but that they imitated Paul so far as he imitated Christ. Thomas aˆ Kempis wrote a book about the imitation of Christ and a blessed book in some respects it is. But I would like the Holy Spirit to write in your hearts the imitation of Christ. It shall be to you a sweet proof that you are chosen of God. Are you Christlike or do you want to be? Can you forgive your enemy and can you love him and do him good? Can you say tonight, “I am no more any man’s enemy than is the baby that is just born”? And do you now desire to live unselfishly, to live for others, to live for God? Are you prayerful? Do you come to God in prayer as Jesus did? Are you careful of your words and of your acts as Christ was? I do not ask you if you are perfect, but I do ask whether you follow the Perfect One! We are to be followers of Christ, if not with equal steps, still with steps that would be equal if they could! If we follow Christ, that will be to others one of the surest proofs of our election, though perhaps to ourselves, if we are humble-minded, it will be no proof, since we shall rather see our blemishes than our virtues and mourn over our sins more than we rejoice in our Graces. If a man follows not Christ, those who look on may be safe enough in concluding that, whatever he may say about election, and however much he may prate about it, he is not the Lord’s. On that point I shall not say anything more because I have already enlarged upon it in a former part of the discourse.**

**In the last place I will say *the fourth evidence is the existence of spiritual joy in spiritual service*. If you look further, it seems that those of whose election the Apostle was sure, received the Word of God “in much affliction,” but, “with joy in the Holy Spirit.” What do you say about this, you whose religion consists of a slavish attendance upon forms that you detest? Look how many there are who go to a place of worship just because it is not respectable to stay away, but who often wish it were! And when many of your Christians get to the Continent, where is the Sabbath with them, then? Where is then their care for God’s House? See, too, with what misery some people at home go up to the House of the Lord. Why? Because they have come to regard it as a place where they ought to be very solemn. It is not a home to them—it is a prison. How different it is with your children when they come home for their holidays! How do they come into their father’s house? Dull, demure, as if they could not speak? No, bless their little hearts, they come running up to their father’s knees, so glad to be there, so glad to be home! That is how a man whose religion is his delight comes up to the House of the Lord. He feels that it is his Father’s House. He would be reverent, for his Father is God, but he must be happy, for God is his Father!**

**See again the Christian when he goes to his closet to pray. Ungodly persons will not go there at all. Or, if they do, it is because they want to win Heaven by it. But look, they go through their dreary prayers—and what a dreary thing it must be for a man to pray when he never expects to be heard and when he has no spirit of prayer! It is like a horse going round a mill grinding for somebody else and never getting any farther— doing the same tomorrow, the same the day after, and ever on and on. Sometimes as the little church bells sound in the morning in certain churches to fetch people out—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday there are some persons to be found there for early prayers—and they go to evening prayers, too, and a very good thing this would be if those who attend went there with holy joy! But there is the sexton and he says it is a great trouble to be always opening the doors like that when nobody comes except three old women that have got almshouses and two that expect them and are, therefore, there. Do you think that an acceptable service to God? But they who go because they would not stay away if they could—they who worship God because it is an *instinct* and a pleasure, a holy thing and honorable—these are men and women who delight in God’s Word and they give the best evidence of being chosen of God!**

**Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, who make your faces miserable that you may appear unto men to fast! Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that reads the heart asks not that your head may hang down like a bulrush, but that you may do deeds of mercy and walk humbly with your God! And you who can delight yourselves in your God shall have the desires of your heart! You that rejoice in the Lord, always, and triumph in His name shall go from strength to strength, and going at last to Glory, you shall find that you are there as the result of His Divine Purpose and Decree—and you shall give Him all the praise!**

**But now, I think I hear some say, “Oh, I want to know whether I am elect. I cannot say that the Word ever came to me with power. I cannot say I received it in much assurance. I cannot say I am a follower of Christ. I cannot say I have received the Word with joy.” Well, dear Beloved, then leave that question alone! Instead of that, let me ask another, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Christ to save your souls?” He will do it, if, just as you are, whoever you may be, you will come to Christ and give yourself up to Him to save you, to have you, to hold you for better, for worse, in life and through death. The moment you believe, you are saved! That act of faith, through the precious blood of Christ, will put away your every sin! You will not begin to be saved—you *are* saved. You will not be put into a salvable condition, but you shall be saved the moment you believe—completely and perfectly saved! “Oh,” says one, “I would I could trust Christ.” Say you so? “Whoever will, let him take,” let him *trust* Christ. God help you now to do it! Trust Jesus and you are saved! This is addressed to every one of you without exception, for, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” The Lord help you to trust Jesus and then you may go on your way with joy, “knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”**

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**[1Co 9:22-27](tw://bible.*?id=46.9.22-46.9.27|_AUTODETECT_|)***.*

**The Apostle Paul is here giving a description of the way in which he made everything help toward the fulfillment of his desire to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. He longed to be the means of winning souls. He desired that at the last his Master might be able to say to him, “Well done, you good and faithful servant.” And, therefore, everything with which he had to do was made to bend in that direction.**

22-24. ***I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know you not that they which run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?* No matter if 20 or a hundred had entered the race, “but one receives the prize.” Alas, out of these who appear to be running in the Christian ministry, how many will be prize-takers at the last? And out of those who seem to be running the race of the Christian life, how many will win the prize? Ah, Lord, You know!**

24. ***So run that you may obtain.* Do not speculate about what others will do, or not do, but see to your own running—“So run that you may obtain.” Salvation is all of Grace, but when a man is saved, he still has to run the Christian race and to be a runner as long as he lives.”**

25. ***And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things.* Here Paul is alluding to the athletic games and pugilistic encounters of the time. It was a matter of common notoriety that every man who was going to fight, or wrestle, or run, had to get himself into proper condition—to “go into training,” as we say in similar cases nowadays.**

25. ***Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we for an incorruptible crown.* The athletes who completed in the Grecian games passed through great self-denials and mortifications of the flesh in order that every part of their bodily frame might be tough and strong when they came forward to wrestle, or to run, or to fight. “Now,” says Paul, “if they do all that to gain a crown of parsley”—which was generally the crown given—truly, “a corruptible grown”—“how much more ought we to do in order to win a crown that fades not away—‘an incorruptible crown’”!**

26. ***I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air.*He would not leave a stone unturned, as it were, that he might gain the prize. He put out all his strength in the name of the Lord.**

27. ***But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection.* The Greek word, according to some, implies getting his body into the same position as a man does when, in a sport encounter, he gets his adversary’s head under his arm and smites him with all his might. So Paul says concerning his body, “I bring it into subjection and take care that it feels the full force of my will.” According to other interpreters, the verse may be read, “I drag my body off as a slave”—just as in some of those ancient fights, the victors dragged away their antagonists as slaves, Paul accounted his body to be as a slave to his soul and dragged it behind him in chains.**

27. ***Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* The Greek word which is translated, “a castaway,” is, “*adokimos*.” It might better have been rendered, “disapproved.” It certainly has no such meaning as that which has been generally given to it. Paul was not afraid of being cast away by God at the last! What he aimed at was this—as he had entered the lists, as a Christian minister, to fight for Christ, to wrestle against principalities and powers, to seek to win souls for Christ, he must keep his bodily powers and passions so in subjection that, at the last, when the prizes were distributed, he would be found to have won his. This is quite another matter from being “a castaway” from salvation and eternal life! Paul was saved and he knew it—and some of us know, to a certainty, that we are saved—but we also know that there is another crown to be won which the Lord will give to His servants who win in the great fight with sin. To win this crown is our high ambition and we long to hear the Master say to each one of us, in that day, “Well done, you good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord.”**

**—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection,* Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. **Sermon #648 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1**

÷1Th 1.5

DEGREES OF POWER ATTENDING THE GOSPEL

NO. 648

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 3, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance;  
as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.”** *1Th 1:5***.**

PAUL here claimed two things which are absolutely necessary to success in the Christian ministry. He could call the Gospel, “our Gospel,” and this is a foremost essential in a sent servant of Jesus Christ. Paul, Silas and Timothy, here speaking at once, declare the word which they had preached to be their own in a peculiar sense—every true minister must be able to do the same—we must, ourselves, have been saved before we preach salvation. “I believed, therefore have I spoken,” says the Psalmist. “We also believe, and therefore speak,” say the whole college of the Apostles. Without faith, the religious teacher is a mere pretender unworthy of respect.

The Christian minister must, however, not only believe the truth of what he asserts, but he must experimentally enjoy it. The farmer that labors must, himself, also first be a partaker of the fruit. Before Ezekiel delivered to the people the prophecies which were written in the roll, the voice came to him, “Son of man, eat this roll.” And he did not only take it into his mouth, where it was like honey for sweetness, but it descended even into his bowels and mingled with his innermost self. We must, ourselves, feel the weight of that burden of the Lord which we proclaim to others, or we shall not be ministers of the Apostolic sort, but rather shall be descendants of the hypocritical Pharisees who bound heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, upon other men’s shoulders but were not willing to touch them with so much as one of their fingers.

The Apostle Paul could, with peculiar propriety, call the Gospel his own. On the road to Damascus he had singularly experienced its mighty power. And afterwards—in many trials, in many difficulties, in varied experiences, in furious temptations—he had made each Truth of Scripture his own by having tasted its sweetness, handled its strength, proved its comfort and tried its power! Do not think of preaching, young man, until you have the Truth of God written on your very soul! As well think of steering the Great Eastern across the ocean without knowing the first principles of navigation! As well think of setting up as an ambassador without your country’s sanction as to dare to intrude yourself into the Christian ministry unless the Gospel is first your own.

No amount of training at Oxford, or Cambridge, or anywhere else—no extent of classical or mathematical teaching can ever make you a minister of Jesus Christ—if you lack the first qualification, namely a personal interest in salvation by Jesus Christ. What? Will you profess to be a physician while the leprosy is on your own brow? Will you attempt to stand between the living and the dead when you are, yourself, devoid of spiritual life? The priests of old were touched with the blood upon their thumb, toe and ear to show that they were consecrated everywhere. And none among us must dare to exercise any office for God among His people till first of all we know the cleansing, quickening, refining and sanctifying power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

It must be our Gospel before we may so much as think of aspiring to the high and holy office of the Gospel ministry. But this alone is not sufficient. The Christian minister, if he would imitate Paul, must be very careful of his manner of life among the people. He must be able to say without blushing, “You know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.” Unselfishness must be our prominent attribute—all must be done for our people’s sake. And then we must, in our lives, show the truthfulness of our unselfish professions. O God, how much of Grace is needed that Your servants may be clear of the blood of all men and make full proof of their ministry!

We are not appointed to stand as motionless way-posts to point the way with lifeless accuracy and unsympathizing coldness—this many have done, and while showing the road have never moved one inch in it themselves—such men shall have terrible judgment at the last. We are appointed to be guides to the pilgrims over the hills of life and we are bound to attend their footsteps and tread the road ourselves! Clambering up every Hill of Difficulty and descending every Valley of Humiliation, we are to be crying to the pilgrim band, “Be followers of us even as we are followers of Christ Jesus.”

It is not for us to say, “Go!” but, “Come!” We are not to bid you do anything without first doing it ourselves. It is an ill time with the preacher when he is compelled to say, “Do as I say and not as I do.” Evil practice will drown the best of preaching! Holy living, intense earnestness, passionate longing for souls, vehement importunity in prayer, humility and sincerity must so blend together in our walk and conversation, that having the Gospel to be our own, we may be fully fitted for the work of the Christian ministry—“for your sake”—that you who bear us may not find us unprofitable in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having said this much upon the ministry itself, we observe that our text deals mainly with the hearers, and therefore has a voice for you. We shall use the text for two purposes—first, by way of discrimination. And, secondly, for instruction.

I. The text suggests and very strongly, too, a thoroughly heartsearching DISCRIMINATION—a mode of testing ourselves by which our election may be proven, or our unregeneracy discovered. The Gospel comes to all who hear it. In our own land, especially among you who constantly attend places of worship, it comes to you all. If I understand Scripture aright, it is the same Gospel which comes to the unregenerate as to the regenerate. And though in some it is “a savor of death unto death,” and in others, “a savor of life unto life,” yet the distinction is not in the Gospel but in the way in which it is received or rejected.

Some of our Brethren—who are very anxious to carry out the decrees of God—instead of believing that God can carry them out Himself, always try to make distinctions in their preaching. They preach one Gospel to one set of sinners and another to a different class! They are very unlike the old sowers, who, when they went out to sow, sowed among thorns and on stony places and by the wayside. These Brethren, with profound wisdom, endeavor to find out which is the good ground. They insist upon it that not so much as a single handful of invitations may be cast anywhere but on the prepared soil.

They are much too wise to preach the Gospel in Ezekiel’s fashion to the dry bones in the valley while they are yet dead. They withhold any Word of the Gospel till there is a little quivering of life among the bones! And then they commence operations. They do not think it to be their duty to go into the highways and hedges and bid all, as many as they find, to come to the supper. Oh, no! They are too orthodox to obey the Master’s will! They desire to understand, first, who are appointed to come to the supper and then they will invite them! That is to say they will do what there is no necessity to do. They have not faith enough, or enough subjugation of will to the supreme commands of the great Master to do that which only faith dares do—namely, tell the dry bones to live—bid the man with the withered hand stretch out his arm and speak to him that is sick of the palsy and tell him to take up his bed and walk!

It strikes me that refusing to set forth Jesus to all men of every character and refraining from inviting them to come to Him is a great mistake. I do not find David suiting his counsels to the ability of men. David gives commands to ungodly men—“Be wise, therefore, O you kings; be instructed you judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little.” He did not withhold his exhortation because they were such rebels that they would not, and could not, kiss the king. No! He told them to do it whether they could or not!

So with the Prophets. They boldly say, “Wash you! Make you clean! Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.” One of them absolutely cries, “Make you a new heart and a new spirit,” (Eze 18:31). And yet, I doubt not, that he was perfectly agreed with that other Prophet who taught the powerlessness of man in those two memorable questions, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” These men did not think that they were to judge of what they were to preach by the degree of power in the hearers—they judged by the power which dwells in their God to make the Word effectual!

As it was with Prophets, so was it with Apostles! Peter cried to the crowd who gathered about the Beautiful Gate of the temple, “Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” They delivered the Gospel, the same Gospel, to the dead as to the living—the same Gospel to the non-elect as to the elect. The point of distinction is not in the Gospel, but in its being applied by the Holy Spirit, or left to be rejected of man. The same Gospel, it strikes me in the text, came to all! And the point of distinction was farther on, namely, in the operation of that Gospel upon the heart.

1. It appears, then, in the first place, that to some the Gospel comes only in words. Even here there are different levels. To some it only comes in words in a fashion that they scarcely know what it is all about. Some of you go to a place of worship because it is the right thing to do. You sit down on the seats and sit out an hour-and-a-half or so of penance. When that is done you feel you have performed a very proper act—but you have

no idea what the talk was all about. It may be said of you that hearing you do not hear for your ears are dull and heavy.

You know no more of the Divine mind than the men who were with Saul on the road to Damascus who heard a voice but saw no man. I believe a very large majority of church goers know no more of what the preaching is about than did Jonathan’s lad when he ran after the arrows. Their flight David well understood, “but the lad knew nothing of the matter.” Too many are merely the stolid, unthinking, slumbering worshippers of an unknown God. In others the Word comes in a little better sense, but still in words only. They hear it and they understand it in theory, and probably are much pleased with it, especially if it is delivered in a manner which suits their taste, or which commends itself to their understanding. They hear and they do not quite forget.

They remember and are gratified with illustrations, doctrinal truths, and so on—but when you have said that, you have said it all. The Gospel remains in them as certain potent drugs remain in the chemist’s bottles— they are there but they produce no effect. The Gospel comes to them as an unloaded cannon rumbles into its shed, or as a barrel of gunpowder is rolled into the magazine—there is no force in it because the fire of God’s Spirit is absent. The preacher lashes the air and whips the water. He woos the wind and invites the cloud when he preaches to such as these. They hear, but hear in vain—insensible as steel.

To others it comes in a preferable manner but still only in words. They are really affected by it—the tears stream down their cheeks! They scarcely know how to sit. They resolve, if they once get home, they will pray. They think of amending their lives—past follies and present dangers come before them and they are somewhat alarmed. But the morning cloud is not more fleeing, and the early dew vanishes not sooner than these good things of theirs! They look at their natural face in the glass of the Word, but they go away and forget what manner of men they are— because the emotion felt is produced by the words and not by the Spirit and Life of the Truth of God.

Why, Brothers and Sisters, men weep at a theater! And weep far more there than they do in many places of worship! Therefore, merely to weep under a sermon is no sign of having derived profit from it. Some of my Brethren are very great hands at unearthing the dead. They conduct you to the funeral urns of your parents, or remind you of your departed little ones, and possibly they may be the means of introducing better feelings by this kind of working upon your emotions! But I am not convinced of it—I am afraid that much of the holy water which is spilt from human eyes in our places of worship is not much more valuable than the holy water at the doors of the Catholic chapels! It is mere eye water, after all, and not heart sorrow.

Mere excitement produced by oratory is the world’s weapon in attaining its end. We want something more than that for spiritual purposes. If we could “speak with the tongues of men and of angels” and stir you up to as great an enthusiasm as ever Demosthenes worked in the Greeks of old— all that would avail nothing if it were only the effect of the preacher’s impassioned language and telling manner—the Gospel would have come to you “in word only.” And that which is born of the flesh is flesh and nothing more.

At this point I may very solemnly ask whether it is not true of some who compose the present congregation that you know the truth only in word? There is a certain class of persons, and some of them are present this morning, who are professional sermon hearers! You go one Sunday to hear Mr. A. And then another Sunday to hear Mr. B. And you carry with you our sacchraometers—instruments for measuring the quantity of sweetness in each sermon! And you take a gauge of the style and manner of the preacher. You estimate what blunders he makes and how he could be improved. And you compare or contrast him with somebody else, as if you were tea tasters tasting Souchong and Bohea, or cheese mongers trying Cheddar and American!

Some individuals of this order are little better than spiritual vagabonds without settled habitation or occupation! They go about from place to place, listening to this and to that and getting no good whatever. And as to doing good, the thought never enters their brain. You cannot expect that the Gospel will come to you in anything else but as a killing letter, for you go to hear it as merely words. You do not look for fruit—if you see leaves you are quite satisfied. You do not desire a blessing! If you did, you would receive it. It is at once one of the most wicked and one of the most foolish habits to waste our time in constantly criticizing God’s Word and God’s ministers.

Well said George Herbert, “Judge not the preacher, he is your judge.” What have you to do to say of God’s ambassador? That his words were not well mouthed? If God speaks by him, God knows who is best to speak for Him. And if his Master sent the man, beware lest you ill-treat him, or you may suffer like they of old who ill-treated the ambassadors of David and drove him to proclaim war against them.

2. According to the text, there are others to whom the Word comes with three accompaniments. The Apostle speaks of “power,” and “the Holy Spirit,” and “much assurance.” I do not think that the Word of God comes to many people with all these three things. It comes to a very numerous class with “power.” To a smaller number with “power and the Holy Spirit.” And to an inner circle of select ones “in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” If I have the meaning of this passage, and I am not so certain about it as to dogmatize, it strikes me that there are three degrees of effect produced by the Gospel.

At any rate, we shall not be wrong in saying that there is sometimes an effect produced by the Gospel which may be called “power,” but which, nevertheless, is not the power which saves. To many of you, my dear Hearers, the word of our Gospel has come with power upon your understandings. You have heard it, weighed it, judged it, and received it as being true and of Divine authority. Your understanding has assented to the various propositions which we have proclaimed as doctrines of Christ. You feel that you could not well do otherwise. These Truths of God agree so well and are so adapted at once to the ruin of your nature and to its best aspirations, that you do not kick, as some do, against it. You have been convinced of the authenticity and authority of the Gospel by the Gospel.

Perhaps you have never read “Paley’s Evidences,” and never studied

“Butler’s Analogy,” but the Gospel itself has come to you with sufficient power to be its own witness to you and your understanding joyfully acknowledges that this is the Word of God and you receive it as such. It has

done more than that—it has come with power to the conscience of some of you. It has convicted you of sin. You feel now that self-righteousness on your part is folly, and though you may indulge in self-righteousness, it is with your eyes open. You do not sin now so cheaply as you once did, for you know a little of the sinfulness of sin.

Moreover, you have had some alarms with regard to the ultimate end of sin. The Gospel has made you know that the wages of sin will be death. You feel that you cannot dwell with everlasting burnings. Your heart is ill at ease when you think upon the wrath to come. Like Felix you tremble when you are reasoned with concerning “righteousness and judgment to come.” And though you have put it off as yet and have said, “Go your way till I have a more convenient season,” yet it has come to you so far with a degree of power.

More than this, it has had an effect upon your feelings as well as upon your conscience. Your desires have been awakened. You have sometimes said, “Oh that I were saved!” You have advanced as far, at any rate, as Balaam when he said, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” Your feelings of hope are excited—you hope that you may yet lay hold of eternal life and your fears are not altogether dead—you tremble when under the Word of God. Natural emotions, which look like spiritual ones, have been produced in you by the beaming of the Word—though as yet the Gospel has not come with the Holy Spirit. Beyond all this, the Gospel has come with power to some of you on your lives. I can look with anxious pleasure upon some of you because I know the Gospel has done you much good, though it has not saved you.

Alas, there are others to whom it has only been for a time as a bit and bridle. But they have afterwards turned aside from it. There are those here, who, like the dogs, have gone back to their vomit and, like the sow that was washed, to their wallowing in the mire. We had hope for you once, but we must almost cease to hope. Certain persons rush into drunkenness after seasons of abstinence—having known the evil of the sin—and having professed to hate it. The passion has been too strong for them and they have fallen again into that deep ditch in which so many of the abhorred of the Lord lie and rot.

Oh, may God, in His infinite mercy, bring the Gospel with something more than this common power to your souls! May it come with “the Holy Spirit” as well as with power! You see, we have come up by steps to some considerable height already, but we now come to a far nobler elevation and speak of saving Grace. To many in this house, as at Thessalonica, the Word has come “in the Holy Spirit.” Brothers and Sisters, I cannot describe to you how it is that the Holy Spirit operates by the Word. The work of the Spirit is figured forth by some such mysterious timing as a birth, or as the blowing of the wind. It is a great secret, and therefore not to be expounded.

But many of you know it experimentally. The Holy Spirit, first of all, came to you as a great Quickener. How He made you live you do not know—but this you do know—that what you once had not, you now have! You know that there burns within you a vital spark of heavenly flame far different from that ordinary spark of life which had been there before! You now have different feelings, different joys, different sorrows from any you were conscious of before! While you were listening to the letter which kills, the Spirit of God came with it and the quickening Spirit made you live with a new, higher and more blessed life!

You now have within you Jesus Christ, who is Life and Immortality! You have Heaven begun within your heart! You have passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation! To you the Word of God has come with the Holy Spirit in a quickening sense. Then it entered with an illuminating power. It enlightened you as to your sins. What blackness you discovered in your sins when the Holy Spirit once cast a light upon them! Brethren, you had no idea that you were such sinners as you turned out to be. The Holy Spirit startled and astonished you with revelations of that great and fathomless depth of depravity which you found to be surging within your souls!

You were alarmed, humbled, cast into the dust. You began, perhaps, to despair—but the same illumination of the Spirit came in to comfort you— for He then showed you Christ Jesus! He showed you the unbounded power of His blood to take away your unbounded sins! He revealed to you His willingness to receive you just as you were, His suitability to your case and to your circumstances. And as soon as you saw Jesus in the light of the Holy Spirit you looked unto Him and were lightened—and therefore your face has never been ashamed.

So the Spirit of God came to you as light to dispel your darkness and give you joy and peace! Since that time you have experienced the Holy Spirit as comforting you. Amidst darkest shades He has risen as the sunlight upon your souls. Your burdens have been removed by Him, the blessed Paraclete! He has brought Christ, and the things of Christ, to your remembrance. He has opened up to you precious promises. He has cracked the shell and given you to partake of the kernel of the privilege of the Covenant of Grace. He has broken the bone and satisfied you with marrow and fatness out of the deep things of God. His dove-like wings, whenever they brood over you, bring order out of confusion and yield kindly comfort in the midst of adversity.

You have also felt the Holy Spirit in His inflaming energies. He has rested on you when you have heard the Word, as the Spirit of burning— your sin has been consumed by the holy revenge which you felt against it. You have been led to great heights of love to Christ, till you could sing—

*“Had I ten thousand thousand tongues,  
Not one should be silent!  
Had I ten thousand thousand hearts,  
I’d give them all to You.”*

When the Holy Spirit has blessed the Word, your heart has been like the altar of incense with the flame always burning and a sweet perfume going up, acceptable to the Most High!

Beloved, you have also felt the Holy Spirit with the Word as a spirit of rejoicing! Oh, the bliss we have sometimes tasted! I am very frequently heavy in spirit, but oh, the raptures which my heart has known when the Holy Spirit has shown me my eternal election of God! My standing in Christ Jesus! My completeness and acceptance in the Beloved! My security through the faithfulness of the eternal God! What delights come streaming into the soul when you read of everlasting love, of faithfulness never wavering, of affection never changing, of a purpose standing fast as

pillars of brass and firm as the eternal hills!

And oh, Beloved, what extravagance I was about to say, of joy do we sometimes feel in anticipation of the glory to be revealed! Looking from Nebo’s brow we see the landscape down below, but, better than Moses could do, we drink already of the rivers which flow with milk and honey and pluck ripe fruits from celestial trees. While in communion with Christ Jesus we get the best taste of the glory that remains. Now this it is to receive the Word, “in the Holy Spirit.” Beloved, I hope we know what this means and you who do not know it, may a prayer go up from every living soul here, “Lord, let the Holy Spirit go with the preaching of Jesus Christ and let it be made effectual unto salvation.”

Beloved, the highest point in the text is, “much assurance.” If I understand the passage, it means this—first, that they were fully persuaded of its truthfulness and had no staggering or blinding doubts about it. And secondly, that they had the fullest possible conviction of their interest in the Truth delivered to them! They were saved, but better still they knew that they were so! They were clean, but better still they rejoiced in their purity! They were in Christ, but what is more joyous still, they knew that they were in Christ! They had no doubts, as some of you have, no dark suspicions. The Word had come with such blessed demonstration that it had swept every doubt clean out of their hearts!

According to Poole the Greek word used here has in it the idea of a ship at full sail, undisturbed by the waves which ripple in its way. A ship, when the wind is thoroughly favorable and its full sails are bearing it directly into harbor, is not held back by the surging billows. True, the vessel may rock, but it neither turns to the right hand, nor to the left. Let the billows be as they may, the wind is sufficiently powerful to overcome their contrary motion and the vessel goes straight ahead.

Some Christians get the Gospel in that way. They have not a shadow of a doubt about its being true. They have not even the beginning of a doubt about their interest in it, and therefore they have nothing to do, but with God’s strong hand upon the tiller and the heavenly wind blowing right into the sail, to go straight on, doing the will of God and glorifying His name. May the Word come to you, dear Friends, as it does to so very few! May it come in “full assurance,” as well as in “power,” and in “the Holy Spirit!”

3. I shall leave this first head of the text when I observe that this is the way in which God’s elect are known. The Apostle says, “Knowing, Brethren beloved, your election of God.” Why? Knowing it not by making a guess about it—not by questioning you whether you are awakened sinners—whether you are sensible or insensible sinners! Not by waiting to preach the Gospel to you when you are prepared to receive the Gospel— but preaching the Gospel to you as you were and finding out who were the elect by this—that the elect of God received the Gospel as it came, “in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” This is the test of election—the Holy Spirit blessing the Word!

And, dear Friends, if the Holy Spirit has blessed it to you, you need not turn over the mysterious pages of the Divine decrees—for your name is there! You have not my word for it, but God’s Word for it. He would not have brought you to feel the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit if He had not, from before all worlds, ordained you unto eternal life! But mark and observe from the ensuing context—you must give good proof that it is so, or we cannot say, and even the Apostle could not have said—“Knowing, Brethren beloved, your election of God.”

We cannot tell whether the Word has come to you in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance unless there are the corresponding results. Listen to these words—“And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit: so that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. And to wait for His Son from Heaven whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

So you see an imitation of Apostolic example, a faith which becomes so known as to sound abroad, a joy which affliction itself cannot dampen, and a perseverance which is not to be turned aside by difficulties. You see a conversion which gives up the dearest idols and binds us to Christ and makes us watch and wait for Him—all these are necessary as proofs of the Holy Spirit having been with the Word. O Beloved, I would have you, the members of this congregation, not only converted, but so converted that there should be no doubt about it! I would love to have you not only Christians, but such fruit-bearing Christians that there can be no doubt that you have received the Word “in much assurance.”

Then shall it be equally clear that you are the elect of God. May the Lord grant that the word here may ever be like a powerful magnet thrust into a heap of steel filings and of ashes which shall attract all the filings and bring them out. For that is what the Gospel is to do—it is to discern between the precious and the vile! It is to be God’s winnowing fan to separate His elect from those who are left in their ruin. And it only can do this by the way in which it is received, proving the election of those who receive it, “in the Holy Spirit.” Thus much by way of discrimination.

II. Have patience for a few minutes while we now use the text by way of PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. It is clear from the text, by way of practical instruction, that it is not enough to preach the Gospel. Something more is needed for the conversion of souls than even that. I have stirred you up very often to assist me, dear Brethren, in training those of our young men who have been called to preach the Gospel—that they may be more efficient in their ministry—and you have kindly helped me.

But we must ever bear in mind that though God should privilege us to send out hundreds of His ministering servants, yet there will not be a solitary case of conversion worked by them, alone. We wish to do our best to erect fresh places of worship for this ever-increasing city and it is a happy day to me whenever I see the top stone brought out of a new House of Prayer! But not one single soul shall ever be made to rejoice in Christ Jesus by the mere fact of a place of worship being erected, or of worship being celebrated in it! We must have the energy of the Holy Spirit! There is the one all-important matter!

What is there practical about this? Why, then it becomes more and more imperatively necessary that we should be much in prayer to God that the Holy Spirit would come! We have the spirit of prayerfulness among us as a Church. Let me earnestly entreat you never to lose it. There are certain of my Brothers and Sisters here who are never absent from our great gathering on Monday evening, and whose prayers have brought down many blessings! But it is the part of fidelity for me to say that there are some of you who might be here if you would, but seldom favor us with your presence. Or, let me say, who seldom do yourselves the happiness of waiting up on God in Prayer Meetings. You are not the best of our members. You will never be the best of them if you stay away without having a justifiable excuse.

I do not say this to those who I know must be absent. And I do not say it to bring women out who ought to be seeing to their husbands, or to bring men out who ought to be attending to their shops. But I say it to some who might as well be here as not, and would bring no detriment to themselves whatever by being here. And I must qualify what I say with this—I have less to complain of in this respect than any man in Christendom, for there is no place that I ever knew or heard of where the Prayer Meeting bears so good and fair a proportion to the Sunday gathering as it does here.

But still, Brethren, we want you ALL to pray! I would I could see you all! Oh, it were a happy day if we could see this place full on Monday evening. I do not know why it should not be. It strikes me that if your hearts were once to get thoroughly warmed we should fill this house for prayer. And what a blessing we might expect to receive! Why, we have had such a blessing already that we have not room enough to receive it now! But still, as the cup begins to run over, let it run over and over. There are many churches in this neighborhood that can catch the spillover and may they be profited thereby!

Let us increase our praying as we increase our doing. I like that of Martin Luther, when he says, “I have so much business to do today that I shall not be able to get through it with less than three hours’ prayer.” Now most people would say, “I have so much business to do today that I must only have three minutes’ prayer—I cannot afford the time.” But Luther thought that the more he had to do the more he must pray, or else he could not get through it! That is a blessed kind of logic—may we understand it! “Praying and provender hinder no man’s journey.” If you have to stop and pray, it is no more an hindrance than when the rider has to stop at the farrier’s to have his horse’s shoe fastened, for if he went on without attending to that, it may be that before long he would come to a stop of a far more serious kind.

Let us learn from the text our own indebtedness to distinguishing and Sovereign Grace. You observe, Beloved, that the Gospel does not come with the power of the Holy Spirit to everybody. If, then, it has come to us, what shall we do but bless and praise the distinguishing Grace which made it come to us? You observe that the distinction was not in the persons themselves—it was in the way in which the Gospel came. The distinction was not even in the Gospel, but in the attendant Holy Spirit, making it effectual. If you have heard the Word with power, it was not, dear Brethren, because you were more ready, because you were less inclined to sin, or more friendly towards God. You were an alien, a stranger, a foreigner, an enemy—you were “dead in trespasses and sins”—even as others were and are.

There was in you, whatever Papists may say, no Grace of congruity to meet with the Grace of Christ. They say that there is something in man congruous to the Grace of God, so that when saving Grace comes to those who have the Grace of congruity they are saved. In me I know everything was incongruous, everything contrary to God. There was darkness and Light came. There was death and Life entered. There was hatred and Love drove it out! There was the dominion of Satan and Christ overcame the traitor—

*“Then give all the glory to His holy name, To Him all the glory belongs.  
Be yours the high joy still to sound forth His name, And praise Him in each of your songs.”*

A third practical lesson we will but hint at, namely, we see that there are degrees of attainment even among those who have received the Word with the Holy Spirit. Let us seek for the very highest degree! You are not generally satisfied with the same qualities of life—you desire to possess its comforts and luxuries. I will commend you if you carry this into spiritual things. Do not be content merely to be saved, merely to be spiritually alive—ask to be valiant for the Truth of God! I should feel it a great honor, I hope, to be the most common soldier if called upon to defend my country. But I must confess I should not like to be in the ranks always. I should like, at least, to be made a corporal very soon and a sergeant as soon as possible. And I should grumble wonderfully much if I could not rise to rank among the commissioned officers!

I should like to be found doing my very best and I would reach to the most prominent position if I might better serve my country than in the ranks. So I think it should be with the Christian. He is not to seek for honor among men, but, if he can, by getting more Grace be more serviceable to his God and bring more honor to His name, why let him press forward! Ah, my dear Brethren, what business have you to be sitting still and saying, “It is enough.” The “rest-and-be-thankful” policy is not much approved of in politics—and in religion it will never do!

On! Forward! Upward! As the eagle takes for its motto, “Superior,” and still mounts higher and higher and higher till the young wing which first trembled at the height has grown into the strong pinion which makes him companion of the sun and playmate with the lightning, so let the Christian do! If he has learned to “run and not be weary,” let him seek to “mount up as on the wings of eagles.” Onward, fellow soldier! Be yet more valiant till your name is written among the first three.

To close, does not this text, as a last practical lesson, show us indirectly how a privilege may become a curse? The Word of God has come to you all. I suppose there is not one here who has not heard the story of the love of God in Christ Jesus. You have been told many times that though man has fallen and offended God, yet the Lord has set forth His suffering Son, Christ Jesus, to be a Propitiation for sin and that through faith in His name, “Whoever believes on Him shall never perish.”

You have been told that God waits to be gracious and that whoever looks to Christ shall live! Whoever calls upon the Lord shall be saved!

Now, having heard this, regardless of what some may tell you, we feel bound, as in the sight of God, to warn you that if this comes “in word only” to you, it will increase your condemnation! Certain preachers think that this Word is not “a savor of death unto death” to any, but it is, it is! Whatever their theories, whatever hyper-Calvinistic theology may say, it is God’s Word that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than it shall be for cities like Capernaum and Bethsaida, which heard the Word and yet repented not!

You are not machines. You are not creatures merely to be acted upon— you are to act as well as to be moved. And every good word that reaches your ear is written down as a debt against you. There is no declaration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which, if refused, does not leave you more disobedient than you were. Remember how the Apostle states it—“Unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”

Now they could not have been disobedient if it was not their duty to obey. No man is disobedient where there is no law. It is, therefore, the duty of every sinner hearing the Gospel to believe it! And if he does not, this same stone shall fall upon him and shall grind him to powder. Kiss the Son, therefore, lest He, lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little. The same Savior who blesses will be angry. He who loves His people, grows angry with those who reject Him.

And when His wrath is kindled but a little, woe unto the object of it! Blessed are all they that trust in Him and may we be found among that blessed number to the praise and glory of His Grace, wherein He makes us to differ according to the appointment of His own Divine will. May God bless this assembly for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE GOSPEL IN POWER  
NO. 3551

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1917.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1872.

**“For our Gospel came not unto you in word only,” etc., [down to] “from the wrath to come”***1Th 1:5-10***.**

A WORKMAN likes to see that he has been doing something. It is very dispiriting if he has spent much toil and can see no result. God’s workmen by faith would continue still to labor, even if they saw nothing come of it, but it is much more comforting, much more easy for them to continue in service when they see that God is blessing them. Now it is not wrong for a Christian minister to speak about the conversions that have been worked under his ministry, for Paul says that he would have done so, only that others did it so constantly that there was no need of it. Paul, however, would not, under any circumstances, have done a wrong thing and, therefore, we gather that it is sometimes most allowable that we should see what has been done and should speak of it—and the more especially because if any good is done by any ministry, it is God that has done it—and all the glory is due to Him and to Him, alone!

Not to speak of what God has done would be ingratitude. It might have a semblance of humility, but in reality it would be disloyalty to the Most High. Paul, therefore, did not hesitate to speak of his converts at Thessalonica and of their good character—and of the good fruit which they had borne and the way in which they had spread abroad the Gospel. He did not boast—he gave God the glory of it, but he did speak of what had been done. And we think we may do the same in any measure in which God shall bless our work—any one of us may tell of it to the praise and glory of God and to the encouragement of our fellow laborers. Now the Apostle in this passage tells us what God had done at Thessalonica. We will proceed at once, for our text is long—we will proceed at once to the handling of it.

And you will note that he tells us, first, what he had preached at Thessalonica. Then how it had come to the people. And thirdly, what had been the result of this to themselves. And fourthly, what had been the result of it to other people. First, the Apostle tells us—  
I. WHAT WAS PREACHED AT THESSALONICA. He says, “Our Gospel”—(note that word)—“Our Gospel came not unto you in word only.” Why does Paul call it, “our Gospel”? He did not invent it! He did not think it out and make it fresh every Sunday. No, it was Christ’s Gospel long before it was Paul’s Gospel. Yet he calls it our Gospel by way of distinction, for there were other gospels. There were those who came and said, “This is the Good News!” And others, on the other hand, who said, “This is the Good News,” but Paul says that there was another Gospel and he adds, “Yet not another, but there are some that trouble you.” He, therefore, put down his foot and he said, “Bring what gospels you like, each of you, but I have a Gospel which I preach, distinct from yours, and that Gospel it is which I have preached to the Thessalonians and which has not come to them in word only.” In these times, Beloved, there must be made a distinction between men’s gospel and God’s Gospel, for nowadays man’s gospel is popular enough. Somebody thinks until his head aches and he gets into nonsense—and then he comes and brings this forward as something fresh. Men go to the bottom of a subject until they stir the mud at the bottom and cannot see their own way, themselves, and nobody else can either—and then forthwith they come out with something marvelous! And, having used some words that are hard to pronounce and harder still to understand, they earn a cheap name for being great scholars and profound divines. Well, let such go their way—that is their gospel, but we have another Gospel from that—one which we have gained in another way and which we desire to propagate in another fashion! Paul said, “our Gospel,” then, by way of distinction.

But he also meant this—it was his Gospel because it had been committed to him. He had received it as a sacred deposit. He was, as it were, a steward for God—put into commission to preserve and keep alive the Truth of God in the world—and Paul did keep it unadulterated, so that when he closed his life he could say, “I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith.” Whoever may have adulterated the Gospel, Paul did not. He gave it forth as Christ gave it to him. Oh, that each one of us who is called to preach the Gospel and, indeed, every church member would feel that the Truth of God is committed to us to keep it in the world! Our grandfathers kept it at the stake and on the cruel rack—and when they went in their chariots of fire to Heaven, they left the Truth to their sons to preserve. Handed down to us in the long line of martyrs and confessors, Covenanters and Puritans, what will we do with it now? Will we not feel that all the cost expended on it in the centuries past demands of us that we should spend the same—if there is a necessity for it—even our blood and that, while we live, it shall never be said that in our life, in our prayer, in our conversation, or in our preaching, the Gospel suffered anything at our hands? “I know whom I have believed,” said Paul, and, “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” Or rather, as some read it, “He is able to keep my deposit, that which He committed to me to keep. Christ also will keep and preserve the Gospel pure and clear, even until time’s latest hour.” The Lord grant it, for His name’s sake!

But I think the Apostle used the term, “our Gospel,” not only for distinction and because he felt it was committed to his trust, but because he had enjoyed it, himself, and had experienced it. What right has any man to preach that which he has not himself enjoyed and made his own? I have heard of a certain physician who usually tried his own medicines upon himself—and surely this should always be the practice of those who serve the heavenly Physician. How shall we come and preach of the Balm of Gilead, which is to heal all wounds, if our wounds are unhealed? What a wretched case must that man be in who talks of regeneration, but is not born-again! Who preaches faith, but has never believed! Who talks of pardon, but has never been washed in the precious blood! Who speaks of the righteousness of Christ, but is shivering in the nakedness of his own corruption! Ah, wretched man, to be a herald of good news while he, himself, partakes not therein! Ezekiel, before he had to go and speak of the message of God, had that message given to him, and what was said? “Son of man, eat this roll.” He had to take the message written on the roll and eat it—and when it was in his own body—then it was that he could tell it out with great power! It is a good old saying, “If your preaching is to go to the heart, it must come from the heart.” It must first have moved our souls before we can ever hope to move the souls of others!

The Lord is my witness that in preaching to you here, Beloved, these many years, I have preached to you what I have tasted and handled of the good Word of God. I have preached the Doctrine of human sin, for I have felt its power, felt its bitterness and shame, and lain in the dust before God, even in despair. I have preached to you the power of the precious blood to cleanse from sin, for I have looked to Christ’s dear wounds and found cleansing there. We have only spoken to you what we have, ourselves, known and felt, and proved to be true—and I would go to my chamber this night wretched, indeed, if I had no other assurance of the Truth of God of my message than that which I could find in the experience of other men! Now many of you are engaged in preaching Christ to others and in teaching Christ to the children in the schools. Always speak out of the fullness of your own hearts, for when you can say, “I have tried this. I am rejoicing in this,” then your words will be pretty sure to come with power to the hearts of those that hear you. The man who desires to bring others to Christ should imitate Elisha, the Prophet, who, when he found the child dead in the bed and that it could not be raised to life by any other means, went and put his mouth upon the child’s mouth, his hands upon the child’s hands and his feet upon the child’s feet—and then, by-and-by, the life was restored to the child. We must feel an inward sympathy with those whom we would bring to Christ! And then we must tell out from our own soul what we know about the Savior and it will be sure to come with freshness and with power, God, the Holy Spirit, blessing it! This, then, I think, was Paul’s reason for calling it, “our Gospel”—the Gospel committed to him and the Gospel which he had tasted and handled personally. Now I shall want you to observe in the second place—

II. HOW THE GOSPEL CAME TO THE THESSALONIANS. He describes it as coming in four degrees. First, he says, “It came not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Spirit.” And, fourthly, in much assurance. Now these four words enable me to divide the present audience. To all who have been here present, who have been sitting in these pews for any length of time, our Gospel has certainly come in the Word of God. They have all heard it—heard it, too, so as to understand the run, the gist of it. They have heard it in many forms and shapes commending itself to their attention. But, oh, it is to be feared that there are some to whom it has come in word only and it is, indeed, to the preacher (and more still it should be to those who are in such plight) sad that this life-giving Word should be only a word. There was the Gospel feast and the message was sent, but they who were invited came not to the feast. They heard the message—that was all. Here are sick men lying at Bethesda’s pool—they see the water and that is all—but they step not in and are not healed. Oh, to lie sick, with healing within reach! To be hungry and bread hard by! To be thirsty, with the stream flowing at one’s feet and not to drink! Remember dear Hearers, that if the Word of God comes to you as word only, today, it will one day be something more than that, for it is an undoubted Truth of Scripture that hearers are responsible for what they hear. “Take heed how you hear!” shall have to be answered for at the Day of Judgment. “You heard the Gospel, but you rejected it!”—shall be one of the charges brought against those who listened to it—and it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than it shall be for such an one! I would now like to divide the congregation upon this question, “How many are now here to whom the Gospel has come in word, only?” Let conscience speak! Let each man put his hand upon his heart and answer, “Is that my case?” If so, may it not be your case any longer, no, not a single day longer, but may the Word of God come to you in another way!

But there were, secondly, some to whom it came in power. Now there are hearers to whom the Gospel comes with an awakening power. They used to be careless, but they cannot be, now! They hear the words, “Eternity! Eternity! Eternity,” ringing in their ears and it startles and awakens them. They cannot be at ease while they are at enmity with God! They feel that their nest is stirred up. It has come with power to them. More than that, there are some to whom the Word has come with crushing effect—it has struck them down! It has bruised their righteousness. It has dashed to shivers their hopes of themselves and though they have not looked to Christ for the true hope, yet they feel the power of the Gospel which lays all other hopes in the dust! Ah, I know some of you have felt the power of the Gospel, for you went home and prayed, perhaps dozens of times—after hearing the sermon! You have gone up to your chambers and you have begun to pray, but the next morning you have forgotten. Your goodness has been like the morning dew and has melted when the heat of the day’s cares have come upon it. Alas! Alas! Alas! In many a furrow we have sown in vain! We have cast the Seed on stony ground, we have thrown it on the highway side and we have lost our pains—nevertheless, we are to continue to preach the Gospel, for in some it will come with a greater power than this!

Again, I would entreat another division of the house. I know there are some who will come under this head. They are not saved, but still they cannot ridicule it—they cannot pass it off with indifference. It is like a sharp two-edged sword—it pierces, cuts and wounds. I pray God it may kill them spiritually, that they may yet be made alive!

Now the third degree of the coming of the Word to Thessalonica was that it came in the Holy Spirit. Ah, here is the blessed way, for if it shall come in any other power than this, it will come in vain! But if it comes in the Holy Spirit, oh, then—then its end is achieved, for the Holy Spirit quickens men by a mysterious operation which we cannot describe—but which some of us have felt! It comes upon men and creates in them a new life and whereas they were dead in sin, they begin to live as they never lived before! That same Spirit then enlightens them, showing them a thousand Truths of God in a light in which they never saw them before. They find they have entered into a new world. They have passed from darkness into marvelous light! Then the Spirit of God begins to purify them. He purges them from this sin and that and He refines and renews them. He is in them as a Spirit of burning—consuming sin—a cleansing Spirit purging them from unrighteousness! Then He comes as a consoling Spirit and gives them joy and peace, lifts them up above their cares, their temptations, their doubts and fills them with a preface of eternal bless! Oh, blessed is that man to whom our Gospel comes with the Holy Spirit! Beloved, we do not wonder if persons sneer at the Gospel in itself, or if others hear it and are unaffected by it, for the Gospel, in itself, is like a sword without a warrior’s arm to wield it. But when the Spirit of God comes, man is a doubter no longer! When He lays home the Truth of God, He cuts so to the dividing of soul and spirit, joint and marrow, so that men are convinced, converted, saved—and the Truth is to them, indeed a living thing! Pray, O beloved members of this Church, pray that the Word of God, even our Gospel, may come with the Holy Spirit!

But there was a fourth class to whom the Word came in a yet higher degree, for it is added, “and with much assurance.” To all Christians it comes with the Holy Spirit, but to some with a still greater degree of spiritual power! They believe the Gospel, but they do not believe it timidly— they accept it as a matter of firm, solid, indisputable fact! They grasp it as with an iron hand and their own interest in it does not remain a question. No, they know whom they believe and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to Him. They believe in Christ with the faith of Abraham, which staggered not at the promise through unbelief. Clouds and darkness have gone away from their sky and they see the clear blue ether of God’s own Presence above them. They rejoice in the Lord always, and again they do rejoice. There are some such in this house. I bless God for every one of them. May there be many more, for you that possess full assurance are the men who are strong for service! Having the joy of the Lord in your souls, it becomes your strength as you go forth to fight the Master’s battles because you feel the Master’s Love! The Lord give us many, many such in the Church, to whom the Word of God shall come with the Holy Spirit and with much assurance! Now this is how the Word of God came to them. I must pass on to the third point, and that is—

III. WHAT HAD BEEN THE RESULT OF THIS IN THEMSELVES? You will kindly observe that the Apostle first says, “You became followers of us and of the Lord.” A man, when he is first converted, is not fit to be a leader—he has to be a follower. We do not take recruits and make them captains! They must be drilled. They must go into the rank and file a bit. So one of the first things that Divine Grace does is to make a man a disciple, that is, a learner—and then he sees in God’s Word what his life and conduct should be and, looking about him, he sees some whom God has blessed with His Grace whose life and conduct is according to the Word—and he follows God’s servants, but not slavishly. He draws a distinction between them and their Master and only follows them as long as they keep company with their Lord. “You became followers of us and of the Lord.” Brothers and Sisters, I know that many of you here present, when the Word of God came to you, became followers of holy men. If you heard of any good action, you desired to imitate it. If you read any biography that told of noble deeds, you aspired to emulate such deeds. And when you read the Character of your Lord and Master in the four Evangelists, you asked that you might have Grace to live a life of self-sacrifice, of devotion to God and of philanthropy to men. Well, this is no mean work of Divine Grace when a man is brought to be a follower of that which is good.  
At the same time he tells us that these people received the Word of God “in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” I know that there are some in this house who, when they received the Gospel, had to suffer for it, but they rejoiced to do so! From the day in which they publicly put on Christ, they were jeered—they became subjects of derision. Some have gone back from us because they could not bear the perpetual taunt, but others of you have been kept by the Grace of God and made able to bear any stigma or any sneer! And, indeed, is it not a small thing to bear the jests and jeers of men if the heart is right towards God? What do we care—what should we care though all men point the finger and should hiss because of it? Be true to God, Believer, and to your conscience, too, and you may well receive the Word “with joy of the Holy Spirit,” even “in much affliction”! This is one proof of every Christian minister’s ministry, when he can point to a people who have become followers of that which is good and have continued to follow when they have been made to suffer for it!  
But it appears that these people at Thessalonica went farther. They grew out of being followers in some sense and, therefore, became leaders. “So that you were examples to all Believers in Macedonia and Achaia.” Now it is a very easy thing for a Christian to be an example to a sinner. He ought to be—and he is not a Christian if he is not. I won’t give twopence for your religion if you do not set a fair example to the ungodly. But it is a higher degree of Divine Grace when a man becomes an example even to Christians—when he is such a Believer that others may look upon him as the typical Christian, for that is the word used here—may regard him as the type of what a Christian ought to be! Paul says that some of those degraded idolaters to whom he had preached the Gospel, first followed him and the Lord, and afterwards grew in Grace so that they stood in the front rank and became an example to Believers! Let me hold this up, Beloved, to your emulation. Let none of us be content to be according to the ordinary cold Christianity of this age! What cold, poor stuff it is! If the Lord, Himself, should come, would He find faith in the earth? Where is the zeal of the days gone by? Where is the ardor, where is the courage of the ages that have gone? If these things are found nowhere else, O my Brother, seek to have them in your own soul! Ask God, if you are compelled to see others decline, that you may not decline, for God’s Grace can make you an example to the rest of His people! There are such here tonight of whom I might speak—only the Lord bless them and keep them as they are—for I have seen Apostolic Christianity here! If I have seen it nowhere else, I have seen it here among some of my Brothers and Sisters here present, whose service for the Lord shall be remembered in the Day of Account! They wish it not to be known here, nor will it be, but they have, with tears and prayers, devoted themselves to Christ and served Him well—and He will remember them in that Day.  
Further, the Apostle goes on to tell us what was done by these Thessalonians—that they turned from idols. Oh, that God might turn all of us from every idol that we have! We do not worship gods of wood and stone, but how many professors are there still who worship learning? Let them seek it, but let them not worship it! There are some that worship fame, others that worship pleasure. This city is full of idolaters from end to end! When the Grace of God comes, it makes men worship the unseen God and leave their idols to those that choose them. Turning from idols, it appears that these people served the living God. They did not merely acknowledge that He was the living God, but they began to serve Him! They put forth their strength in His cause. So will it be among us wherever the Word has come with the Holy Spirit—we shall spend and be spent in the service of our Creator and Redeemer! And he adds that they waited for the coming of the Lord. Oh, this is a high mark of Grace, when the Christian expects his Lord to come—and lives like one that expects Him every moment! If you and I knew tonight that the Lord would come before this service was over, in what state of heart should we sit in these pews? In that state of heart we ought to be! If I knew that I would see my Lord before another sun should rise, how would I preach? I ought to preach just in that way as though He were sure to come at once and there could be no doubt about it! We would hold very loosely the things of this world if we knew that Christ was speedily coming—and so loose we ought to hold them! We would care but little for the discomforts of life if we knew that it would all be over and Christ would come very shortly— so little ought we to think of life’s discomforts. Blessed is that man whose soul is always looking for the coming of the Lord! He may not study texts of Scripture to know the times and seasons, but if he is always expecting that his Lord may come at any time, and shall live under the feeling of that belief and in the power of it, he will be the holy man! “What manner of persons,” says Peter, “ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” Such we desire to be by the power of the Holy Spirit! Thus we have noticed what the Grace of God did for the Thessalonians themselves. Now let us mark—  
IV. WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THIS TO OTHERS?  
And here I wish to speak practically to the members of this Church. Thessalonica was a seaport. It was also a principal town in Macedonia. Therefore, whatever was done in Thessalonica was pretty sure to be known throughout Macedonia and the rest of Greece. If the Church at Thessalonica had been a dull, sleepy Church, as some Christian Churches are, it would have lost a fine opportunity of doing good—but being a thoroughly awake Church, really full of God’s own power—from that Church was sounded forth the Word of God throughout all Greece! And when the ships left that port they carried the tidings to Asia Minor and to other lands, so that Thessalonica became the starting point for the heralds of the Cross. Now if there is any place in the world that ought to feel its responsibility, it is London. We are not egotistical, I think, when we say that it is the very heart of the world! Whatever is done here is sure to be known and an earnest Church in London is only what it should be! A Church in London of any prominence that is sleepy, dull, and cold will have a very heavy account to render when the great Master shall come! The Church at Thessalonica sounded forth the Gospel involuntarily, and also voluntarily. They did it involuntarily, for their very lives spoke! If they did not preach, they were so full of faith, good works and holiness, that other people talked about it. And the matter was known and the work of God in the hearts of the Church could be perceived in the lives of the members—and so it went out. Oh, how happy would any pastor be whose people should be so godly, so united, so generous, so persevering, so prayerful, so full of faith and of the Holy Spirit that everywhere they should be spoken of and through them, through their conduct, the Word of God should be sounded abroad! See to that, my Brothers and Sisters—see to it. God has placed us where we are observed by many. Give them something to observe worth seeing! With the eyes of a multitude of witnesses upon us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us!  
But then the Church at Thessalonica sent out the Word voluntarily. I have no doubt that if they had any men among them that could preach the Gospel, they bade them go and preach it! And if any went on their travels, whether they were sea captains or merchants who went from place to place, or persons of influence, or whatever they might be—they said to them, “Wherever you go, keep up the propaganda. Preach the Gospel! Tell of Jesus Christ! Be, all of you, missionaries.” Now in this I can rejoice and will rejoice that it has been so among us. At this present moment I suppose that not less than 300 of our sons that have been borne upon our knees are preaching the Gospel while I am preaching here—I mean ministers of Christ preaching the Gospel! Besides that, all round these streets are our Evangelists preaching at street corners. There ought to be more of them. Some of you that come to hear me on Sunday nights ought not to come. If you have got the Grace of God in your heart, come and get enough spiritual meat to feed you, but remember that London is perishing for the lack of the Gospel! How dare you, then, sit still to enjoy the Gospel while men are perishing? There are lodging houses that are accessible! There are halls, large and small! There are the street corners! There are all sorts of places where Jesus can be preached! Oh, let us labor with all our might to make Him known throughout the length and breadth of this great city!  
At this moment we have our sons, the sons of this Church, preaching in Australia, in America—an abundance of them there, preaching the Gospel of Christ—in the islands of the Pacific—all through every portion of our Dominions. God be thanked that there are so many, but there ought to be many more. I propound as a theory, not that a Christian man ought to say, “Am I called to preach the Gospel?” but that he ought to say, “Am I excused from preaching the Gospel?” The old plan was for young men to preach before the Church to see if they could preach. I think we must bring them all up to make them prove that they cannot preach. Now Mr. Oncken has been blessed in Germany, as you knew, to the raising of many Baptist Churches, and he always works upon this theory—Every member of the church must say, when he comes in, what he can do. If he says he cannot do anything, and he is old, and infirm, and bed-ridden, very well, he can serve God by patiently suffering. But if he has any ability and says, “I cannot do anything,” then the reply is, “You cannot come into the Church.” We cannot have any drones—we must have all working bees in the hive. I think it would be a good resolution for the Tabernacle to expel every member that is not doing something or other for the Lord Jesus Christ. I am afraid some of you would have to go!  
Well, we won’t move that resolution, but we will move another—that every member who has been a drone up till now shall pray to be a bee! That everyone who has done nothing shall ask the Lord to help him to begin! That those who have done half as much as they could, will do the other half! And that those who are doing all they can will always try to do a little more, for it is always that point of doing more than you can do that, in the long run, is the best kind of doing—for then you have to lean upon God’s strength when you have gone to the limit of your own—and there is the point where the results are pretty sure to follow! I ask the prayers of the dear Brothers and Sisters who have been with us—some of them 16 and 17 years in this service—that God would not stay His hand in our midst. That as He has multiplied us to an unexampled company of some 4,500 persons or thereabouts in membership, that He may give us unexampled Grace! That our zeal and earnestness, and enthusiasm may be in proportion to the number and that the success achieved for God may be commensurate with the responsibilities laid upon us. I sound the clarion again tonight! As God said, “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward,” so would I speak to you. Forward in God’s name! Forward! The world still lies in the Wicked One. Forward, you light-bearers! Scatter the darkness! Satan still laughs at God! Forward, with the invincible weapon of the Cross and put him to flight!  
Now sound your trumpets around the walls of Jericho—continue still to compass it. Now let the trumpet sound and the wall shall fall flat to the ground by the power of the eternal God. Forward! I hear the angels say it! Forward! I seem to hear innumerable spirits say, beckoning us like the Man of Macedonia, who beckoned Paul across the sea, Forward! The very powers of Hell behind us might well drive us on. Forward! The love of Christ within us shall impel us and let each man and women here that has been redeemed by blood, resolve tonight, in Jehovah’s strength, to do for God and for His Truth something more than yet we have thought of— to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! God bless you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **1 Thessalonians 1.**

Verse 1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the Church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is very full of Christ. His heart is full of love to God our Father and, therefore, it is that twice over in as many lines he mentions both names. He uses no vain repetitions, as the heathen do—his inmost soul is taken up with communion with the Father and with the Son—and so in one single verse he twice gives us their names!

2-4. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. Paul had a very high opinion of the Church in Thessalonica and no doubt it deserved it. See how he speaks of it—with such confidence. “Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Their character was such that he felt sure that he saw the mark of God’s elect about them and he speaks most positively of them—perhaps more positively than he does of any other Church. Well, there were three grand signs. There was the work of faith, the labor of love and the patience of hope. And where we see three works of the Spirit, we may be fully persuaded that electing love is there.

5. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit. And in much assurance; as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. Paul never had a happier time in preaching, it would seem, than when he preached to these Thessalonians! He felt a power resting upon him. He spoke the Gospel with great positiveness and assurance and, consequently, the people received it in power—and the assurance of the hearer made the assurance of the speaker! It is a great mercy when it is so.

6. And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. Ah, dear Friends, we read of one that he was more honorable than his brethren because his mother bore him with sorrow. And so when faith is born in the heart in the midst of affliction, it is a very precious faith. It is faith, indeed. “Having received the Word in much affliction with joy.” I seem to see that joy of theirs floating, like Noah’s ark, above the floods of their affliction. It seems to be a contradiction that we can be in affliction and yet be full of joy. But many a Believer will tell you that there is no contradiction in it. He knows what it is to be sorrowful and yet to be always rejoicing!

7. So that you were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. Brothers and Sisters, let us not only be Christians, but let us be examples of Christians! They are sure to pick out the best for an example. Oh, that we might be such that if God, Himself, were to select Christians to show what they are like, He might select us to be examples!

8-10. For from you the Word of the Lord has sounded out, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. And to wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come. Paul here states that all the Churches abroad knew what a wonderful time he had had with the Thessalonians and with what alacrity they had received the Gospel—and how they had turned away from their idols in thorough earnest to become worshippers of the living God! This was a great comfort to Paul and he speaks about them here with great joy!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷1Th 1.8

SOUNDING OUT THE WORD OF THE LORD  
NO. 2076

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything.”***1Th 1:8***.**

PAUL went to Thessalonica from Philippi with a sore back but with a sound heart. He went resolved to spend and to be spent for his Lord in that city. On the first three Sabbaths he spoke to the Jews in the synagogue but he soon found that they were obstinately resolved to reject Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Therefore he directed his attention to the heathen of Thessalonica and among them he had wonderful success. Large numbers of persons, some of honorable rank, turned from their idols to worship the living God and he soon gathered about him an enthusiastic people.

During his stay at Thessalonica he pretty nearly wore himself out—for he had determined that he would accept no help from the people who appeared to have been in great straits at that time. He toiled night and day at his trade of tent-making but even then could not earn sufficient income to survive. He might have failed to maintain his existence had not the Believers at Philippi sent once, and again, to assist him. Thus, being affectionately desirous of winning them to Jesus, the Apostle was willing to have given to them not the Gospel of God, only, but even his own life. The Lord accepted the cheerful sacrifice and gave the Apostle the reward he sought.

The Thessalonians not only received the Word with joy of the Holy Spirit but became zealous in making it known. Their intensity of faith helped to spread the Gospel, for their lives were notably affected by it. And for their earnestness and godliness they were everywhere talked of. Living in a trading town, to which many went and from which many came, their singular devotion to the faith of the Lord Jesus became the theme of conversation all over Greece. And thus enquiry was promoted and the Gospel was sounded out far and wide. In their case, learners speedily became teachers. The Lord Jesus had thus not only given them drink but He had made them into a well overflowing, to refresh the thirst of thousands.

They had heard the Gospel trumpet and now they had become trumpeters themselves! In their lives the echoes of Paul’s preaching were preserved. This was a very happy circumstance for the tried Apostle and greatly cheered his spirit. These Thessalonians must have been especially gracious people for Paul to praise them so heartily. “As the fining-pot for silver and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise.” Many can bear slander better than they could endure praise. Many, when commended,

become puffed up. But the Thessalonians were in such a happy spiritual condition that Paul could safely speak of them as, “examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”

That praise was all the more precious because it was not indiscriminate—“not laid on with a trowel,” as the Proverb puts it. The Thessalonians had faulty ones among them. The best Church that ever existed has had in it imperfect members. And the very virtues of the Thessalonians carried them into certain faults. They were notable for their expectation of the coming of the Lord and certain of them became fanatical and ceased from work because of the speedy approach of the last day. The Apostle was obliged to talk to them about this in his two Epistles, and even to lay down the rule very strongly—“If any man will not work, neither let him eat.” Under whatever pretense men might cease from their daily callings they were not to be maintained by their Brethren. These good people were too ready to be deceived by idle rumors of coming wonders.

Even the Thessalonian Church had its spots. But, then, there are spots on the sun and yet we do not speak of it as a dark body since its light so much preponderates. Grave faults in the Thessalonian Church did not prevent our honest Apostle from awarding praise where praise was due. When a man is sound at heart, praise does not become an intoxicating wine, but an invigorating tonic. Feeling a modest fear that he does not deserve the warm commendation, the good man is anxious to live up to the character imputed to him. This will be the case, however, only with those whose spiritual life is vigorous.

I entreat you, dear Friends, to learn practically from these Thessalonians by being led to imitate them. May it be truly said of us also, “From you sounded out the Word of the Lord”! It is true even now in a measure— may it be far more so! The expression to which I would call your attention is this—“From you sounded out the Word of the Lord.” It reminds us of a trumpet and its far-sounding notes. Having heard the Gospel sounding within, they in return sounded it out.

First, let us carefully look at the trumpeters. What sort of men are these who make God’s Word to sound out? When we have talked about the men we will look at their trumpets and see how it is that they give forth so telling a sound. Next, we will speak of the need of such a trumpet blast just now. And close by enquiring whether we are not called to give forth that trumpet sound.

I. We begin by looking at THE TRUMPETERS. Who are these by whom the Word of the Lord is sounded out? I shall hastily give you a picture of these Thessalonians drawn from Paul’s letters to them.

Observe at the outset that they were a people whom the three cardinal Graces were conspicuous. Kindly look at the third verse—“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope.” The three Divine sisters—Faith, Hope, Love—linked hands in their lives. These were with them in their best condition—faith working, love laboring, hope enduring. Faith without works is dead. Faith performing her work with energy is healthy and alive. Paul saw the Thessalonian Believers to be fulfilling the lifework of a true faith.

Nor was faith left to work alone—at her right hand was love, sweetening and brightening all. Their love did not consist in words or in mere amiability of temper. But it worked with a will. They threw their whole hearts into the cause of God—they loved Jesus and rapturously waited for His appearing. They loved one another and shared the sufferings of their leaders in the time of persecution. They exhibited a labor of love—it was not work, only, but in intensity it deserved to be called “labor.”

As for hope—that bright-eyed Grace which looks within the veil and realizes things not seen as yet—it was peculiarly their endowment. This enabled them to bear with patience their suffering for Christ—whether it lay in false accusation, or in the spoiling of their goods. Of them it could be said, “Now abides faith, hope, charity, these three.” Brethren, it is of no use for us to attempt to sound out the Word of the Lord if we have not the spiritual power which lies in those three Divine Graces.

These are of first importance. Those precious Truths of God which faith believes, which love delights in, which hope relies upon—these are the Truths of God we shall diligently make known. We believe, and therefore speak. We love, and therefore testify. We hope, and therefore make known.

Next I note these Thessalonian Believers were a people whose election was clear. Read the fourth verse—“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.” Paul said the same of them in the second Epistle (2:13)—“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” They were not ashamed to believe the doctrine of election as some professors are. They rejoiced in having been chosen of God from the beginning. They saw the practical nature of election for they perceived that they were chosen unto sanctification.

Their lives were such as to prove that they were the Lord’s chosen people for they became choice Brethren. They gave evidence of the secret choice of God by their holy lives. I hope this is true of us as a people—we are old-fashioned enough to rejoice in the electing love of God and Free Grace has a sweet sound to our ears. If it is so, we ought to bring forth fruits worthy of it. Gratitude for Sovereign Grace and eternal love should operate upon us mightily. Let the slaves of Law go to their tasks with a lash at their backs—the chosen of God will serve Him with delight and do ten times more from love than others from hope of wages. None can show forth the praises of God like those who taste His especial love and know the unutterable sweetness of it.

These trumpeters had received the Word of God themselves in much assurance and with much power. Note the fifth verse—“For our Gospel came not unto you in word, only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” The Apostle also says, in the thirteenth verse of the second chapter, “For this cause, also, we thank God without ceasing, because, when you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you

received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.”

Beloved, it is a poor thing to receive the Gospel in word only. You then say, “Yes, it is true, I believe it.” And there the matter ends. It is a far different matter to feel the power of the Word as it comes from the Omnipotent Lord so as to have your heart broken by it and then healed by it. To receive the Gospel as indisputable, infallible and Divine is to receive it, indeed. To receive it not because you think a certain way but because it carries conviction with it and bears you away by its irresistible force—that is to receive it in its power.

Beloved, I do not believe a man will spend his life in spreading a doctrine which has never mastered his spirit. But when the Truth of God takes possession of a man and holds him by force as a strong man armed keeps his own house, then will he run up his flag and openly acknowledge the Mighty One who reigns within. He who believes, and is sure, is the man who will propagate the faith and desire that others should accept it. What a difference there is between the man who has felt the Omnipotence of Truth and another who merely professes to entertain sound opinions!

If the almighty Word has carried you captive you will hold it fast and nothing will persuade you either to surrender it or to stifle it. The Thessalonians were a people whose constancy was proven. They received the Word “with much affliction.” The Apostle says, “For you, Brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for you also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.” The assault by the mob, recorded in Acts 17, was, doubtless, only one of their many trials. They remained steadfast and enthusiastic under all their tribulations. And therefore the Gospel was sounded out by them.

Cowards hold their tongues—but brave men are not to be put down. Having already borne slander, reproach and misrepresentation of every kind, we are not abashed but rather are hardened to endurance and publish our belief more unreservedly than ever. We have nothing to conceal, nothing to fear. Slander can say no more. Therefore we, the more boldly sound forth the Word of God. Brethren, unless you can hold on in rough weather and bear up under opposition you will do little in sounding out the Word of God. Trumpets must be made of hard metal and trumpeters must have something of the soldier about them, or little will come of it.

Again—these people really and lovingly served God. Look at the ninth verse—“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” I have no doubt many of these folks had been great devotees of their idols for it is amazing what idolaters will do for their deities! At this day the gifts of Hindus to idol shrines put to shame the offerings given by Christians to their Lord. Have you not heard how they were likely to throw their very lives away beneath the wheels of the chariot of their demon god? Shall hideous deities of wood and stone command a zeal which is not shown in the service of the living God?

I doubt not that these Thessalonians became as earnest worshippers of the living Jehovah as they had once been earnest votaries of their idols. They turned from idols but they turned to serve God. They were not turned in opinion, only, but in a practical manner. What a pity it is that to many Christian professors, religion is opinion, and conversion a feeling! Do not many live as if God were a myth and the service of God a sham? If God is God, serve Him—service is the right of Godhead. Does not the Lord Himself say, “If then I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear?”

Oh, that to us the service of the Lord may be a delight—and then it will he as natural to us to sound out the Word of the Lord as it is for birds to sing! For one thing the Thessalonians were peculiarly notable—they were enthusiastic expectants of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says of them in the tenth verse that they waited for the Son of God from Heaven. They really expected Christ to come and to come speedily. They even carried this expectation beyond its proper bounds—they grew impatient of the Lord’s apparent delay. Some of their number died and they laid it to heart as though in their case their hope had failed.

Paul wrote to them concerning this—“But I would not have you to be ignorant, Brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” They were not losers by their death. Those who remained alive till the advent would have no preference over those who slept. In their case there was no need to write “of the times and the seasons,” for they well knew that the Lord would come as a thief in the night. They came to expect the immediate coming of the Lord as to fall into unhealthy excitement about it. And it was needful for Paul, to prevent their becoming fanatical, to say, “Now we beseech you, Brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.”

Paul delighted to see them waiting for the coming of Christ. But he also prayed, “The Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.” He wishes rest to the troubled—but this unrest was a virtue carried to excess. We are not, many of us, in danger of exaggeration in that direction. I fear that we are more likely to forget the Lord’s coming, or to treat it as an unpractical speculation. If any Truth of God should arouse us this should do it—yet even the wise virgins, as well as the foolish, are all too apt to slumber and sleep because the Bridegroom delays His coming.

Hear you not the midnight cry? Does not this startle you? “Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go out to meet Him.” If you hearken to that call you will be the men to sound out the Word of the Lord in every place. If we, as a Church and people are more and more influenced by the expectation of our Lord’s appearing, we shall be more eager to spread His Gospel. Remember that He may come at once. Those things of which Paul spoke as hindering His coming have now come and gone. Eighteen centuries and

more have passed away since Paul wrote that the Lord comes quickly. Stir up yourselves then, to use all diligence. Proclaim His Word and according to your ability go forth into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. You that look for your Lord—you are the men who should herald His coming by a clear testimony to His name in every place.

Thus I have given you hints as to what kind of men are likely to sound forth the Word of God. Judge, my Brethren, whether you yourselves have these qualifications. It is my sincere impression that they are to be found in many of you.

II. Secondly, let us notice THEIR TRUMPETS. “From you sounded out the Word of the Lord.” Their testimony was distinct, clear, resonant and far-sounding. We may find an illustration in the silver trumpets of the sanctuary which were sounded to gather the people together. Let your trumpets ring out the call to assemble to our Lord Jesus, the true Shiloh—unto whom shall the gathering of the people be. We may further think of the Jubilee trumpet which early in the morning proclaimed clearance of debts, release from bondage and restoration to lost heritages. Such are the glad announcements of the Gospel. Let us hasten to make them.

Trumpets are also blown in time of war—many are the allusions to this in Scripture. Oh, that the Church of God may boldly sound the war trumpet, at this time, against impurity, intemperance, false doctrine and loose living! Our Lord has come to send a sword upon earth in these matters. Oh that from each one of us the war blast may be sounded without fear or hesitation! Gladly would we also earn the name given to the Apostles, “They that turn the world upside down.” For at present it is wrong side up. A trumpet is also used simply for musical purposes and the testimony of the Church to her Lord Jesus should be the most melodious sound the ears of man have ever heard—

*“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!”*

Oh, to sound forth the glorious name “with trumpet and sound of cornet,” that multitudes might be compelled to hear it! Oh, to make all earth and Heaven ring with that dear name! Somebody writing upon this verse compares the sounding forth to the voices of Church bells. I will suppose that you are sojourning among the hills and have almost lost reckoning of the days. How clearly are you told that it is the Sabbath morning when you hear the sweet voices of the bells from yonder tower far away! The call comes through the wood and over the moor and it seems to say, “Come here and worship, for the day of rest has come.”

Each Church should find in its living members its best peal of bells. Every individual, great and little, should give forth his sound—no one should be dumb, Oh that it were always so—that everyone would constantly show forth the praises of the Lord! The Lord of Hosts is with us. Let us lift up the shout of a King. He is All in All to us. Let us make Him known. God grant us to realize that we may give a loud fanfare upon the silver trumpets to our coming Prince!

What was the means by which these excellent people made the Gospel to sound out? It was made known by the remarkable conversions which happened among them. These men had been idolaters and had fallen into many lusts common in those times. Paul’s preaching had made a change which none could have looked for. They had been brought to worship the true God and to look for His Son from Heaven and to walk worthy of their high calling. Everybody asked, “Why, what has happened to these Thessalonians? These people have broken their idols—they worship the one God. They trust in Jesus. They are no longer drunken, dishonest, impure, contentious.”

Everybody talked of what had taken place among these converted people. Oh, for conversions plentiful, clear, singular and manifest—so the Word of God may sound out! Our converts are our best advertisements and arguments. Have you not known a whole town startled by the conversion of one great sinner? A distinct, clear-cut conversion will often astound an entire parish and compel the crowd to say, “What is this Word of the Lord?” Brothers and Sisters, may your own conversions and those of many around you proclaim aloud the power of the Word of God and the efficacy of faith in the precious blood of Jesus.

The attention commanded by their conversion was further secured by their unmistakable, unquestionable character. They became such godly, honest, upright, sober, saintly people that all who observed them took note of their excellence. They were Christians, indeed, for they were Christians in their deeds. Their whole lives were affected by their faith—both at home and abroad. They were so admirable in character that they had become examples to those who were already saved. Notice in the seventh verse the remarkable expression, “You were examples to all that believe.” It is not so difficult to become an example to the ungodly, for their level is a low one. But it is a high attainment to become an example to those who fear God.

This requires Divine Grace. If even saints may copy from you, you had need write a good hand. The Thessalonians had attained to this, and it was by this that they were able to give such voice to the Gospel. Holy living is a grand pulpit. A godly character has a louder voice in it than the most eloquent tongue. Character is our Chrysostom—holiness has a golden mouth. The Apostle says that their lives were so complete a publication of the Gospel that he did not need to call attention thereto. He writes, “We need not to speak anything”—as much as to say, “We have only to point to you.” Shall I ever feel that I have little need to preach in words since my people preach far better by their lives? Yes, there are many cases among you concerning which I might say—“There, watch that friend’s life and see what the Gospel is—there is no need for me to tell you.”

Nobody stands on a summer day and points upward, saying, “There is the sun.” No, the great light sheds its radiance everywhere and nobody mistakes him for the moon or a star. Oh, that all of us were of such a character that none should mistake us! Till we have more grace in our hearts and more holiness in our lives, we shall lack the greatest means of

making the Gospel known. We must shine by our works if men are to see our light. Oh, what a sounding forth of the Word will your holy lives be! Without these, all is vain. If the life contradicts the voice, it will be as when a trumpet is stopped up and blow as you may, no sound is heard.

I have no doubt that the Thessalonians added to their character many earnest efforts for the spread of the Truth of God. They went about telling what they had heard, believed and enjoyed. Some of them became preachers of the Word at home and others went abroad to publish the glad tidings. Jesus would be made known to the poor in the back slums of Thessalonica and talked of to the sailors on board the vessels and to the merchants on the wharfs. Are you, Beloved, all of you, making Jesus known? Are there any of you silent? Have we not among us some who should now be working in foreign lands? Have we not in these pews many whose voices should be heard in our streets? We shall never be as we ought to be till every talent is utilized. We must be all at it, always at it, and at it with all our might. We have not come to this yet. May the love of Christ constrain us thereto!

Meanwhile, it was by their faith that their teaching was made so clear and forcible. They were intense Believers, so that Paul says, “Your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.” They did not half-heartedly teach what they half-heartedly believed. They accepted the teaching of the Apostle as being not the word of man but the Word of God. And so they spoke with the accent of conviction. Those who heard them felt that they were enfeebled by no doubts but were filled with full assurance of the eternal verities. Their goods were spoiled—they were themselves brought before magistrates and yet they stood fast in the faith and had no secret mistrust. There was no moving them, although the philosophers sneered at them and the superstitious persecuted them. They stood like rocks amid raging seas. This was a trumpet for the Gospel blasting loudly.

When holy constancy is to the front under reproach and ridicule, the Gospel is sounded as with a bugle note and men are compelled to hear it. Brothers and Sisters, you possess this confidence. Have it more and more! May we have among us remarkable conversions, unquestionable character, earnest effort and intense faith. And these will be to us all the trumpet that we need. We need not blow our own trumpets nor borrow the whistles of politics or amusement. But the Word of the Lord will by these sound forth all around us. I cannot keep you long upon these points—my aim is not to fill up the time but to fill you with an eager desire to sound out the Truth of God.

III. Oh that the Holy Spirit would put fire into my sermon—that its live coals may touch your hearts while I say that THERE IS NEED, AT THE PRESENT TIME, FOR A TRUMPET BLAST OF THIS KIND.

Brethren, the Word of the Lord ought to be sounded out because it is the Word of God. If it is the word of man let him spread it as he can. We are not concerned to help him. The word of man comes from a dying source and it will return to it. But the Word of the Lord endures forever—

*“Float, float, you winds, His story!  
And you, you waters, roll,  
Till, like a sea of glory,  
It spreads from pole to pole.”*

The Word of the Lord is so all-important that it should have a free course, run and be glorified. When He gives the word, great should be the company of them that publish it. If you believe the Gospel to be the Divine Word you dare not withhold it. The stones would cry out if you were silent.

With many of us this is a matter of solemn obligation. The Word of God has been to us life from the dead, deliverance out of bondage, food for our hunger, strength for our weakness, comfort for our sorrow and satisfaction for our hearts. Spread it then—

*“Can you, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high,  
Can you, to men unenlightened,  
The lamp of life deny?”*

Seeing that God’s Word has come to you with power and has saved you from all evil, you must sound it abroad.

Remember too, that this is salvation to the perishing. Did not one dear Brother and deacon on Monday night pray to the Lord with great fervor, reiterating these words, “They are perishing, they are perishing, they are perishing, Lord, save them!”? You believe that men are diseased with sin and that Christ is the only remedy—will you not tell them the remedy? You see men dying without hope—will you not tell them where there is hope as to the hereafter? You tremblingly feel that for souls to die without accepting the Savior is eternal woe—will you not pray for them, in Christ’s place, to be reconciled to God? O Sirs, by everything that is terrible in the doom of those who die in unbelief, I charge you, sound out the Word of the Lord! As you will shortly appear before the judgment seat of Christ, be clear of the blood of all men. The Gospel has power to save today and to save forever—sound it out!

This is a time in which the Word of the Lord is much abused. Many venture to say that it has lost its power and has proved unsuitable to the age. They tell us that we need something more advanced than it. O you that love it, avenge this insult by manifesting its power in your lives and by sounding out the old Gospel with new vigor! By your holy characters, and by your incessant labors, force men to see the power of the Divine Word. Let its secret power be embodied in your practical consecration and proclaimed in your incessant witness-bearing. When I wish to speak best, my tongue fails me. I am a poor advocate. But oh, I pray you, by the glory of the Ever Blessed—which is tarnished by the foul mouths of ungodly men—seek with sevenfold energy to make known Christ Crucified and the way of salvation by faith in Him!

If you have slept until now, “Awake, awake! Put on strength!” for the enemy is at the gate. I beseech you, now that Christ’s crown and Throne are assailed by His adversaries, put on your armor, grasp the sword and stand up for the sacred cause.

At this time many other voices are clamoring to be heard. The air is full of din. Men have devised new methods by which to elevate the race and loud are the voices that proclaim the man-invented nostrums. “Shall we be heard?” cries one, “if we lift up our voices?” Yes, if you take the Gospel trumpet you will enforce a hearing. It chanced one evening, when there was a large gathering of friends at the Orphanage that our boys were sweetly discoursing a hymn tune upon their bells. An American organ was being played as an accompaniment and all the gathered company were singing at their best, making a rushing flood of music.

Just then I quietly hinted to our friend, Mr. Manton Smith, to put in a few notes from his silver cornet. And when he placed it to his lips and threw his soul into it, the lone man was heard above us all. Bells, organ, voices—everything seemed to yield before that one clear blast of trumpet music! So will it be with the Gospel. Only sound it out as God’s own Word and let the power of the Holy Spirit go with it, and it will drown all music but its own. At any rate, you will have done your part and will be no longer responsible, even if men do not hear it, if from your very soul you sound out the Word of the Lord.

Need I say more to show you how needful it is that we now should put a tongue into the heavenly doctrine and let it proclaim salvation to all lands?

V. I want, during my last few minutes, to hint to the members of this Church and to those many friends far and near who have so generously associated with me in holy enterprises that WE ARE THE PEOPLE TO GIVE FORTH THIS SOUND.

It is our duty, first of all, because of our position. Thessalonica was a well-chosen center because it was a place of great resort. Ships were always coming into that port and going out again. Whatever was done at Thessalonica would soon be known in all quarters. We are placed in a central position in London. Who does not know the Tabernacle? Here the tribes come up and here the multitudes continually assemble. Friends from the country flock to this spot. And on any summer Sabbath, persons from all countries are in these pews and aisles. I state the simple truth when I speak of this house as known to some of all nations, and therefore what is done here, is done in the heart of England and in the center of the world.

If you, as a Church, can sound forth by your character and exertions the Word of God, you are in the most fit place for it. The position demands it of you—act not unworthily. Providence has forced us into prominence. We have not desired it, but we are known and observed by multitudes. If, Beloved, we keep the fire burning here it will be a beacon seen afar. If we are consecrated men and women we have a great opportunity. If my helpers will see to it that nothing fails in this place, we shall encourage many. But we shall dispirit thousands unless we carry on the work here with great vigor, the Lord being our helper.

Nor can I forget our numbers. There may have been Churches of larger numbers than ours but I have never heard of them. In this I do not glory but I dare not conceal from you the anxiety which it causes me. If little is done by such an assembly it will be a great disgrace to us all. I am overwhelmed with the thought of more than five thousand souls united here in Church fellowship. Large numbers may be our weakness. We may become a mere horde of men without discipline, without unity, without power. But I trust in the great Lord that it shall not be so. If God has caused us to be as large as almost any other ten Churches put together, does He not call upon us to exert ourselves with tenfold energy to spread abroad the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?

I am sorely burdened with this great host—will you allow it to be a burden? Will you not make it a joy? Will all these professed Believers make up a crowded hospital? Shall not this house rather be a barrack of soldiers? Shall not our voice be louder for our Lord than if we were but five hundred instead of five thousand? How would I plead with you if I knew how! Do not make this community a gigantic failure. God grant that, remembering our numbers, we may not be satisfied with a thin and feeble voice for Jesus. Our voice should be as the noise of many waters. Is it so? Is it as much so as it ought to be? Oh, for the Spirit of God among us as a rushing mighty wind!

Through our agencies we ought to sound out the Word of the Lord very loudly. At this moment you have, by the College, sent out more than seven hundred preachers of the Word into all countries. Oh, that they were all as faithful as some are! Many are the Churches presided over by those trained in your school of the Prophets—pray that the Lord may be with them. Your orphan children are growing up—oh, that they may be a seed to serve the Lord! Your peddlers are going from door to door with holy literature. Oh for the power of God with their laborious efforts! Your Evangelists are heard by tens of thousands—implore the unction from on high for them.

The sermons preached in this place are not only printed in our own tongue but many of them are translated into other languages and are widely read. This is no mean agency for good. All this, and much more which I will not speak upon, I mention not to boast, but that we may be humbled under our responsibilities and may cry to God for His power. All this, if the Holy Spirit is with us, must accomplish great results. But without Him—and we shall be without Him unless we are a holy, godly, earnest, Christ-loving people—nothing will be accomplished. Our agencies will become burdens to us until that which should be the armor of our warfare will become the sepulcher of our life. I feel this more than anyone else since the very finding and using of funds for so great a work would crush me if the Lord were not my helper.

Beloved, I press home upon you the duty of sounding out the Word of God because of your prayers. If there is a people under Heaven that constantly meets in large numbers to pray, we are that people. However some of you are lax on this point, but I am bound to say that I rejoice in your gatherings for prayer. In this you are my joy and crown. God be praised for it! But if any cry to God and then do not work for Him, what hypocrisy it is! What if we ask Him to save souls and never lift a finger to spread

the Gospel? Is this truthful? Dare we hang the trumpet on the wall and then pray, “Lord, let it be blown”? No. By the honesty of your hearts set that trumpet to your lips if you desire its sound to go forth. Give it your very life’s breath. Lift up your voice with strength—lift it up! Be not afraid.

Once more—you have stood with me in solemn protest against the declensions of the age. He who knows all things knows what this has cost me. But your love has been a great relief to me in the bitter sorrow. We will have no complicity with error—we will not aid the Philistines in shearing away the locks of the Gospel’s strength. Having protested, we must justify our position by our lives. We shall be dishonored unless we have the power of God especially resting upon us—that may be a small thing— but the Truth of God itself will be dishonored. And this we cannot bear.

If the Gospel is indeed true—and we have no doubt about it—we beseech the God of Truth to grant us the sign and seal from Heaven by baring His holy arm in our midst. Today, again, I lay the sacrifice upon the altar by reasserting the old Gospel against the down-grade of the times. The God that answers by fire let Him be God! May the tongues of fire descend and rest on you. May you who are with me, whether in London or in the utmost parts of the earth, be inflamed with zeal and fired with love. May the water in the trenches be licked up by the flame and the whole sacrifice be consumed with Heaven’s own fire till the people, once deluded by Baal, shall be forced to cry, “Jehovah, He is the God! Jehovah, He is the God!”

May the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ triumph in the midst of the earth and become, as it always has been, the Truth by which the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed! The Lord grant it. Labor, all of you to secure it.

I have not preached to sinners. I leave that, for once, to you. I lay on you this burden—that you each one make the Word of the Lord to sound out “so that we need not to speak anything.” God grant it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE AND A BODY OF DIVINITY  
NO. 1806

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 26, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to  
wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.”** *1Th 1:9-10***.**

IN Thessalonica the conversions to the faith were remarkable. Paul came there without prestige, without friends and when he was in the very lowest condition, for he had just been beaten and imprisoned at Philippi, and had fled from that city. Yet it mattered not in what condition the ambassador might be—God, who works mighty things by weak instruments, blessed the word of His servant, Paul! No doubt when the Apostle went into the synagogue to address his own countrymen, he had great hopes that, by reasoning with them out of their own Scriptures, he might convince them that Jesus was the Christ. He soon found that only a few would search the Scriptures and form a judgment on the point. The bulk of them refused, for we read of the Jews of Berea, to whom Paul fled from Thessalonica, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

Paul must have felt disappointed with his own countrymen. Indeed, he often had cause to do so. His heart was affectionately warm toward them, but their hearts were very bitter towards him, reckoning him to be a pervert and an apostate. But if he seemed to fail with the Jews, it is evident that he was abundantly successful with the Gentiles! These turned from their idols to serve the living God and their turning was so remarkable that the Jews charged Paul and Silas with turning the world upside down! In those days there was a good deal of practical atheism abroad and, therefore, the wonder was not so much that men left their idols, as that they turned unto the living God. It became a matter of talk all over the city and the Jews, in their violence, helped to make the matter more notorious, for the mobs in the street and the attack upon the house of Jason all stirred the thousand tongues of rumor.

Everybody spoke of the sudden appearance of three poor Jews, of their remarkable teaching in the synagogue, the conversion of a great multitude of devout Greeks and of the chief women not a few. It was no small thing that so many had come straight away from the worship of Jupiter and Mercury to worship the unknown God—who could not be seen, nor imaged—and to enter the kingdom of one Jesus who had been crucified! It set all Macedonia and Achaia wondering and, as with a trumpet blast, it awakened all the dwellers in those regions. Every ship that sailed from Thessalonica carried the news of the strange ferment which was moving the city—men were caring for religion and were quitting old beliefs for a new and better faith.

Thessalonica, situated on one of the great Roman roads, the center of a large trade, thus became a center for the Gospel. Wherever there are true conversions, there will be more or less of this kind of sounding forth of the Gospel. It was especially so at Thessalonica, but it is truly so in every Church where the Spirit of God is lifting up men from the dregs of evil, delivering them from drunkenness, dishonesty, uncleanness, worldliness and making them to become holy and earnest in the cause of the great Lord! There is sure to be a talk when Grace triumphs! This talk is a great aid to the Gospel. It is no small thing that men should have their attention attracted to it by its effects—for it is both natural and just that thoughtful men should judge of doctrines by their results—and if the most beneficial results follow from the preaching of the Word of God, prejudice is disarmed and the most violent objectors are silenced.

You will notice that in this general talk the converts and the preachers were greatly mixed up—“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you.” I do not know that it is possible for the preacher to keep himself distinct from those who profess to be converted by him. He is gladly one with them in love to their souls, but he would have it remembered that he cannot be responsible for all their actions. Those who profess to have been converted under any ministry have it in their power to damage that ministry far more than any adversaries can do. “There!” says the world when it detects a false professor, “this is what comes of such preaching!” They judge unfairly, I know, but most men are in a great hurry and will not examine the logic of their opponents—while many others are so eager to judge unfavorably that a very little truth, or only a bare report, suffices to condemn both the minister and his doctrine. Every man that lives unto God with purity of life brings honor to the Gospel which converted him, to the community to which he belongs and to the preaching by which he was brought to the knowledge of the Truth of God.

But the reverse is equally true in the case of unworthy adherents. Members of Churches, will you kindly think of this? Your ministers share the blame of your ill conduct if ever you disgrace yourselves. I feel sure that none of you wish to bring shame and trouble upon your pastors, however careless you may be about your own reputations. Oh, that we could be freed from those of whom Paul says, “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” When these are in a Church, they are its curse! The Thessalonians were not such— they were such a people that Paul did not blush to have himself implicated in what they did. He was glad to say that the outsiders “show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven.”

Quitting this line of thought, I would observe that these two verses struck me as being singularly full. Oceans of teaching are to be found in them. A father of the Church in the first ages was apt to cry, “I adore the infinity of Holy Scripture.” That remark constantly rises from my lips when I am studying the sacred Word! This Book is more than a book—it is the mother of books, a mine of truth, a mountain of meaning! It was an ill-advised opinion which is imputed to the Muslims at the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, when they argued that everything that was good in it was already in the Koran and, therefore, it might as well be destroyed.

Yet it true with regard to the inspired Word of God, that it contains everything which appertains to eternal life. It is a Revelation of which no man can measure! It compasses Heaven and earth, time and eternity! The best evidence of its being written by an Infinite mind is its own infinity. Within a few of its words there lie hidden immeasurable meanings, even as perfume enough to sweeten leagues of space may be condensed into a few drops of oil of roses. The first part of my text contains a summary of Christian experience. The second part contains a body of divinity. Here is ample room and verge enough. It is not possible to exhaust such a theme!

I. The first part of the text contains A SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE— “What manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from Heaven.” Here we have, in miniature, the biography of a Christian man. It begins, first, with the entering in of the Word—“What manner of entering in we had unto you.” When we preach the Word, you listen and, so far, the Word is received. This is a very hopeful circumstance. Still, the hearing with the outward ear is comparatively a small matter or, at least, only great because of what may follow from it. The preacher feels, even with some who listen with attention, that he is outside the door. He is knocking and he hopes that he is heard within—but the Truth of God is not yet received—the door remains shut, an entrance is not granted and in no case can he be content to speak with the person outside the door. He desires an entrance for the Word.

All is fruitless until Christ enters into the heart. I have seen the following—the door has been a little opened and the man inside has come to look at the messenger and, more distinctly, to hear what he may have to say. But he has taken care to secure the chain on the door, or hold it with his hand, for he is not yet ready to admit the guest who is so desirous of entering. The King’s messenger has sometimes tried to put his foot in when the door has stood a little open, but he has not always been successful and has not even escaped from a painful hurt when the door has been forced back with angry violence. We have called again and again with our message, but we have been as men who besieged a walled city and were driven from the gates! Yet we had our reward, for when the Holy Spirit sweetly moved the hard heart, the city gates have opened of their own accord and we have been received joyfully!

We have heard the hearty cry, “Let the Truth of God come in! Let the Gospel come in! Let Christ come in! Whatever there is in Him, we are willing to receive! Whatever He demands, we are willing to give! Whatever He offers us we are glad to accept! Come and welcome! The guest chamber is prepared. Come and abide in our house forever!” The Truth has its own ways of entrance, but in general it first affects the understanding. The man says, “I see it! I see how God is just, and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus! I see sin laid on Christ that it may not be laid on me and I perceive that if I believe in Jesus Christ my sins are put away by His Atonement.” To many, all that is needed is that they should understand this fundamental Truth of God, for their minds are prepared of God to receive it. Only make it plain and they catch at it as a hungry man at a piece of bread! They discover, in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, the very thing for which they have been looking for years—and so the Truth of God enters by the door of the understanding.

Then it usually commences to work upon the conscience, conscience being the understanding exercised upon moral truth. The man sees himself a sinner, discovering guilt that he was not aware of—and he is thus made ready to receive Christ’s pardoning Grace. He sees that to have lived without thinking of God, without loving God, without serving God was a great and grievous crime. He feels the offensiveness of this neglect. He trembles, he consents unto the Law, that it is good, and he acknowledges that if the Law condemns him, he is worthy to be condemned.

When it has thus entered into the understanding and affected the conscience, the Word of God usually awakens the emotions. Fear is awakened and hope is excited. The man begins to feel as he never felt before. His whole manhood is brought under the heavenly spell! His very flesh creeps in harmony with the amazement of his soul. He wonders and dreads, weeps and quivers, hopes and doubts. No emotion is asleep—life is in all! When a tear rises to his eye, he brushes it away, but it is soon succeeded by another. Repentance calls forth! The proud man is broken down; the hard man is softened. The love of God, in providing a Savior; the unsearchable riches of Divine Grace, in passing by transgression, iniquity and sin—these things amaze and overwhelm the penitent! He finds himself suddenly dissolved, where before he was hard as adamant, for the Word is entering into him and exercising its softening power.

By-and-by the entrance is complete, for the Truth of God carries the central castle of Mansoul and captures his heart. He who once hated the Gospel now loves it! At first he loves it, hoping that it may be his, though fearing the reverse—yet admitting that if it brought no blessing to him, yet it was a lovable and desirable thing. By-and-by the man ventures to grasp it, encouraged by the Word that bids him lay hold on eternal life. One who in digging his land finds a treasure, first looks about for fear lest someone else should claim it. But soon he dares to examine his prize more carefully and, at length, he bears it in his bosom to his own home. So it is with the Gospel—when a man finds it by the understanding, he soon embraces it with his heart and, believe me, if it once gets into the heart, the archenemy, himself, will never get it out again! Oh, that such an entrance with the Gospel might commence the spiritual life of all here present who are as yet unsaved!

What comes next? Well, the second stage is conversion. “They themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how you turned from idols to serve the living and true God.” There came a turning, a decided turning. The man has come so far in carelessness, so far in sin and unbelief, but now he pauses and he deliberately turns around and faces in that direction to which, up to now, he had turned his back. Conversion is the turning of a man completely around—to hate what he loved and to love what he hated! Conversion is to turn to God decidedly and distinctly by an act and deed of the mind and will. In some senses we are turned, but in others, like these Thessalonians, we turn. It is not conversion to think that you will turn, or to promise that you will turn, or resolve that you will turn—but actually and in very deed to turn—because the Word of God has had a true entrance into your heart. You must not be content with a reformation! There must be a revolution—old thrones must fall and a new king must reign. Is it so with you?

These Thessalonians turned from their idols. Do you tell me that you have no idols? Think again and you will not be quite so sure. The streets of London are full of fetish worship and almost every dwelling is a temple crammed with idols. Why, multitudes of men are worshipping not calves of gold, but gold in a more portable shape! Small circular idols of gold and silver are much sought after. They are very devoutly worshipped by some and great things are said concerning their power. I have heard the epithet of “almighty” ascribed to an American form of these idols! Those who do not worship gold may yet worship rank, name, pleasure, or honor. Most worship self—and I do not know that there is a more degrading form of worship than for a man to put himself on a pedestal and bow down thereto and worship himself! You might just as well adore cats and crocodiles with the ancient Egyptians as pay your life’s homage to yourselves. No wooden image set up by the most savage tribe can be more ugly or degrading than our idol when we adore ourselves!

Men still worship Bacchus. Do not tell me they do not! Why, there is a temple to him at every street corner. While every other trade is content with a shop or a warehouse, this fiend has his palaces in which plentiful libations are poured forth in his honor. The gods of unchastity and vice are yet among us. It would be a shame, even, to speak of the things which are done for them in secret. The lusts of the flesh are served even by many who would not like to have it known. We have many gods and many lords in this land! God grant that we may see, through the preaching of the Gospel, many turning from such idols! If you love anything better than God, you are idolaters! If there is anything you would not give up for God, it is your idol! If there is anything that you seek with greater fervor than you seek the Glory of God, that is your idol—and conversion means a turning from every idol!

But then that is not enough, for some men turn from one idol to another. If they do not worship Bacchus, they become teetotalers and possibly they worship the golden calf and become covetous. When men quit covetousness, they sometimes turn to profligacy. A change of false gods is not the change that will save—we must turn unto God—to trust, love and honor Him, and Him alone! After conversion comes service. True conversion causes us “to serve the living and true God.” To serve Him means to worship Him, to obey Him, to consecrate one’s entire being to His honor and Glory and to be His devoted servant. We are, dear Friends, to serve the “living” God.

Many men still have a dead God. They do not feel that He hears their prayers. They do not feel the power of His Spirit moving upon their hearts and lives. They never take the Lord into their calculations. He never fills them with joy, nor even depresses them with fear. God is unreal and inactive to them. But the true convert turns to the living God, who is everywhere and whose Presence affects him at every point of his being. This God he is to worship, obey and serve.

Then it is added, to serve the true God—and there is no serving a true God with falsehood. Many evidently serve a false god, for they utter words of prayer without their hearts—and that is false prayer, unfit for the true God who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. When men’s lives are false and artificial, they are not a fit service for the God of Truth. A life is false when it is not the true outcome of the soul—when it is fashioned by custom, ruled by observation, restrained by selfish motives and governed by the love of human approbation. What a man does against his will is not, in truth, done by himself at all. If the will is not changed, the man is not converted and his religious life is not true. He that serves the true God acceptably does it with delight. To him, sin is misery, and holiness is happiness. This is the sort of service which we desire our converts to render— we long to see rebels become sons. Oh the sacred alchemy of the Holy Spirit who can turn men from being the slaves of sin to become servants of righteousness!

Carefully notice the order of life’s progress. The entering in of the Word of God produces conversion and this produces service. Do not put those things out of their places. If you are converts without the Word entering into you, you are unconverted. And if professing to receive the Word, you are not turned by it, you have not received it! If you claim to be converted and yet do not serve God, you are not converted. And it you boast of serving God without being converted, you are not serving God! The three things are links which draw on each other.

A fourth matter follows to complete this Christian biography, namely, waiting—“To wait for His Son from Heaven.” That conversion which is not followed up by waiting is a false conversion and will come to nothing. We wait, dear Brothers and Sisters, in the holy perseverance of faith. Having begun with Christ Jesus our Lord, we abide in Him—we trust and then we wait. We do not look upon salvation as a thing which requires a few minutes of faith and then all is over—salvation is the business of our lives! We receive salvation in an instant, but we work it out with fear and trembling all our days. He that is saved continues to be saved and goes on to be saved from day to day, from every sin and from every form of evil! We must wait upon the Lord and renew the strength of the life which He has imparted. As a servant waits on her mistress, or a courtier upon his king, so must we wait upon the Lord.

This waiting also takes the shape of living in the future. A man who waits is not rising on the wages of today, but on the recompenses of a time which is yet to come—and this is the mark of the Christian—that his life is spent in eternity rather than in time! And his citizenship is not of earth but of Heaven! He has received a believing expectancy which makes him both watch and wait. He expects that the Lord Jesus will come a second time and that, speedily. He has read of His going up into Heaven and he believes it! And he knows that He will come back in like manner as He went up into Heaven. He looks for the Second Advent with calm hope. He does not know when it may be, but he keeps himself on the watch as a servant who waits his Lord’s return. He hopes it may be today. He would not be amazed if it were tomorrow, for he is always looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God.

The coming of the Lord is his expected reward! He does not expect to be rewarded by men, or even to be rewarded of God with temporal things in this life, for he has set his affection upon things yet to be revealed, things eternal and infinite. In the day when the Christ shall come and the heavens which have received Him shall restore Him to our earth, He shall judge the world in righteousness and His people with His truth—and then shall our day break and our shadows flee away! The true Believer lives in this near future. His hopes are with Jesus on His Throne and with Jesus crowned before an assembled universe! The convert who has come to this condition is assured of his salvation. See how he has been rising from the time when he first held the door ajar! He is assured of his salvation, for Paul describes him as one who is delivered from the wrath to come and, therefore, he looks with holy delight to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once he was afraid of this, for he feared that Jesus would come to condemn him. But now he knows that when the Lord appears, his justification will be made plain to the eyes of all men. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.” And so he cries, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!” He would hasten rather than delay the appearing of the Lord! He groans in sympathy with travailing creation for the manifestation of the sons of God! He cries with all the redeemed host for the day of the Savior’s Glory! He could not do this were he not abundantly assured that the day would not seal his destruction, but reveal his full salvation.

Here, then, you have the story of the Christian man briefly summed up, and I think you will not find a passage of merely human writing which contains so much in so small a compass. It has unspeakable wealth packed away into a narrow casket. Do you understand it? Is this the outline of your life? If it is not, the Lord grant that His Word may have an entrance into you this morning—that you may now believe in Jesus Christ and then wait for His glorious appearing.

II. I shall need you to be patient with me while I very briefly unfold the second half of this great roll. Here, even to a greater degree, we have multum in parvo—much in little. A BODY OF DIVINITY packed away in a nutshell! “To wait for His Son from Heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.” To begin my body of divinity, I see here, first, the Deity of Christ. “To wait for His Son.” “His Son.” God has but one Son in the highest sense. The Lord Jesus Christ has given to all Believers power to become the sons of God, but not in the sense in which He, and He, alone, is the Son of God. “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten you?” “When He brings in the First-Begotten into the world, He says, Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

The Eternal Sonship is a mystery into which it is better for us never to pry. Believe it. But how it is, or how it could be—it is certainly not for you or for me to attempt to explain. There is one “Son of the Highest,” who is “God—of the substance of the Father, begotten before all worlds,” whom we, with all our souls, adore, and acknowledge to be most truly God— doing so, especially, every time in the benediction we associate Him with the Father and with the Holy Spirit as the one God of blessing.

Side by side with this in this text of mine is His humanity. “His Son whom He raised from the dead.” It is for man to die. God, absolutely considered, dies not. He, therefore, took upon Himself our mortal frame and was made in fashion as a Man. Then willingly, for our sakes, He underwent the pangs of death and, being crucified, was dead and so was buried, even as the rest of the dead. He was truly Man, “of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting”—of that we are confident. There has been no discussion upon that point in these modern times, but there was much questioning thereon in years long gone—for what is there so clear that men will not doubt it or mystify it? With us there is no question either as to His Deity, which fills us with reverence, or His Manhood, which inspires us with joy! He is the Son of God and the Son of Mary. He, as God, is, “immortal, invisible.” And yet, for our sakes, He was seen of men and angels—and in mortal agony yielded up the ghost. He suffered for our salvation, died upon the Cross and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, being verily and truly Man.

Notice a third doctrine which is here, and that is the unity of the Divine Person of the Lord, for while the Apostle speaks of Christ as God’s Son from Heaven, and as One who had died, he adds, “even Jesus.” That is to say, one known, undivided Person! Although He is God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ! There is but one Person of our blessed and adorable Lord—“one altogether; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person.” He is God. He is Man—perfect God and perfect Man—and, as such, Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. There have been mistakes about this made in the Church, though I trust not by any one of us here present. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ in the unity of His Divine Person as the one Savior of men.

Furthermore, in our text we perceive a doctrine about ourselves very plainly implied, namely, that men by nature are guilty, for otherwise they would not have needed Jesus, a Savior. They were lost and so He who came from Heaven to earth bore the name of Jesus, “for He shall save His people from their sins.” It is clear, my Brothers and Sisters, that we were under the Divine wrath, otherwise it could not be said, “He has delivered us from the wrath to come.” We who are now delivered were once “children of wrath, even as others.” And when we are delivered, it is a meet song to sing, “O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comforted me.” We were guilty, otherwise we had not needed a propitiation by the Savior’s death! We were lost, otherwise we had not needed One who should seek and save that which is lost! And we were hopelessly lost, otherwise God Himself would not have shared our nature to work the mighty work of our redemption. That Truth is in the text—and a great deal more than I can mention just now.

But the next doctrine, which is one of the fundamentals of the Gospel, is that the Lord Jesus Christ died for these fallen men. He could not have been raised from the dead if He had not died. That death was painful and ignominious—and it was also substitutionary—“for the transgression of My people was He stricken.” In the death of Christ lay the essence of our redemption. I would not have you dissociate His life from His death—it comes into His death as an integral part of it—for as the moment we begin to live, we, in a sense, begin to die, so the Man of Sorrows lived a dying life which was all preparatory to His passion. He lived to die, panting for the baptism with which He was to be baptized, and reaching forward to it. But it was especially, though not only, by His death upon the Cross that Jesus put away our sin. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. Not even the tears of Christ, nor the labors of Christ could have redeemed us if He had not given Himself for us as an Offering and a Sacrifice.

“He die, or justice must,” or man must die. It was His bowing His head and giving up of the ghost which finished the whole work. “It is finished” could not have been uttered except by a bleeding, dying Christ! His death is our life. Let us always dwell upon that central Truth of God and when we are preaching Christ risen, Christ reigning, or Christ coming, let us never so preach any of them as to overshadow Christ crucified! “We preach Christ Crucified.” Some have put up as their ensign, “We preach Christ glorified,” and we, also, preach the same. But yet, to us it seems that the first and foremost view of Jesus by the sinner is as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Therefore do we preach, first, Christ Crucified, while at the same time we do not forget that blessed hope of the child of God—namely, Christ in Glory soon to descend from Heaven.

The next doctrine I see in my text is the acceptance of the death of Christ by the Father. “Where is that?” you ask. Look! “Whom He raised from the dead.” Not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but the Father had a distinct hand therein. God as God gave the token of His acceptance of Christ’s Sacrifice by raising Him from the dead. It is true, as we sometimes sing—

*“If Jesus had not paid the debt,*

*He never had been at freedom set.”*  
The Surety would have been held in prison to this day if He had not discharged His suretyship engagements and wiped out all the liabilities of His people. Therefore it is written, “He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” In His glorious rising from the dead lies the assurance that we are accepted, accepted in the Beloved—the Beloved being Himself certainly accepted because God brought Him again from the dead!

Further on we have another doctrine, among many more. We have here the doctrine of our Lord’s Resurrection, of which we spoke when we mentioned the acceptance of His offering. Christ is risen from the dead. I pray you, do not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as though He were now dead. It is well to dwell upon Gethsemane, Golgotha and Gabbatha, but remember the empty tomb, Emmaus, Galilee and Olivet! It is not well to think of Jesus as forever on the Cross or in the tomb. “He is not here, but He is risen.” You may “come and see the place where the Lord lay,” but He lies there no longer! He has burst the bands of death by which He could not be held, for it was not possible that God’s Holy One could see corruption! The rising of Jesus from the dead is that fact of facts which establishes Christianity upon an historical basis and, at the same time, guarantees to all Believers their own resurrection from the dead! He is the first fruits and we are the harvest.

Further, there is here the doctrine of His Ascension—“to wait for His Son from Heaven.” It is clear that Jesus is in Heaven or He could not come from it. He has gone before us as our Forerunner. He has gone to His rest and reward. A cloud received Him out of sight. He has entered into His Glory. I doubt not our poet is right when he says of the angels—

*“They brought His chariot from on high,  
To bear Him to His Throne.  
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, ‘The glorious work is done!’”*

That ascension of His brought us the Holy Spirit. He “led captivity captive, and received gifts for men.” And He gave the Holy Spirit as the largess of His joyous entry to His Father’s courts, that man on earth might share in the joy of the Conqueror returning from the battle! “Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in,” was the song of that bright day!

But the text tells us more—not only that He has gone into Heaven, but that He remains there, for these Thessalonians were expecting Him to come “from Heaven” and, therefore, He was there. What is He doing? “I go to prepare a place for you.” What is He doing? He is interceding with authority before the Throne of God. What is He doing? He is from yonder hilltop looking upon His Church, which is as a ship upon the sea buffeted by many a storm. In the middle watch you shall see Him walking on the waters, for He perceives the straining of the oars, the leakage of the timbers, the rending of the sails, the dismay of the pilot, the trembling of the crew—and He will come to us and save us! He is sending heavenly succors to His weary ones! He is ruling all things for the salvation of His elect and the accomplishment of His purposes. Glory be to His blessed name!

Jesus is in Heaven with saving power, too , and that, also, is in the text. “His Son from Heaven, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.” I alter the translation, for it is a present participle in the case of each verb, and should run, “Even Jesus, delivering us from the coming wrath.” He is, at this moment, delivering! “Therefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” He is away in Heaven, but He is not divided from us—He is working here the better because He is there! He has not separated Himself from the service and the conflict here below. He has taken the post from which He can best observe and aid. Like some great commander who, in the day of battle, commands a view of the field and continues watching, directing and so winning the fight, so is Jesus in the best place for helping us! Jesus is the master of legions, bidding His angels fly here and there, where their spiritual help is needed. My faith sees Him securing victory in the midst of the earth. My God, my King, You are working all things gloriously from Your vantage ground and, before long, the groans and strifes of battle shall end in Hallelujahs unto the Lord God Omnipotent! Christ’s residence in the heavens is clearly in the text.

Here is conspicuously set forth the Second Coming, a subject which might well have occupied all our time—“To wait for His Son from Heaven.” Every chapter of this Epistle closes with the Second Advent. Do not deceive yourselves, oh you ungodly men who think little of Jesus of Nazareth! The day will come when you will change your minds about Him. As surely as He died, He lives! And as surely as He lives, He will come again to this earth! With an innumerable company of angels, with blast of trumpet that shall strike dismay into the heart of all His enemies, Jesus comes! And when He comes, there shall be a time of judgment and the rising, again, of the dead. And “Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.” He may come tomorrow! We know not the times and the seasons—these things are in the Father’s keeping—but that He comes is certain! And that He will come as a thief in the night to the ungodly is certain, too! Lay no flattering unction to your souls as though when He was crucified there was an end of Him—it is but the beginning of His dealings with you, though you reject Him. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

A further doctrine in the text is that Christ is a deliverer—“Jesus delivering us from the coming wrath.” What a blessed name is this! Deliverer! Press the cheering title to your breast. He delivers by Himself—bearing the punishment of sin. He has delivered! He is delivering! He always will deliver them that put their trust in Him. But there was something to be delivered from, and that is, the coming wrath, which is mentioned here. “Oh,” says one, “that is a long way off, that wrath to come!” If it were a long way off, it were wise for you to prepare for it. He is unsafe who will be destroyed most certainly, however distant that destruction may be! A wise man should not be content with looking as an ox does, as far as his eyes can carry him, for there is so much beyond which is as sure as that which is seen!

But it is not far-off wrath which is here mentioned. The text says, “who delivers us from the coming wrath.” That is, the wrath which is now coming, for wrath is even now upon the unbelieving. As for those Jews who had rejected Christ, the Apostle says of them in the 16th verse of the next chapter, “Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” The siege of Jerusalem and the blindness of Israel are a terrible comment upon these words. “Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.” It is said of everyone that believes not in Christ Jesus that, “the wrath of God abides on him.” “God is angry with the wicked every day.” This wrath abides upon some of you. It is the joy of Believers that they are delivered from this wrath which is daily coming upon unbelievers—and would come upon themselves if they had not been delivered from it by the atoning Sacrifice.

There is evidently in the text the doctrine of a great division between men and men. “He has delivered us.” All men have not faith and, therefore, all men are not delivered from wrath. Today there is such a division—the “condemned already” and the “justified” are living side by side. But before long the separation shall be more apparent. While some will go away into everlasting punishment, the people of God will be found pardoned and absolved—and so will be glorified forever!

Lastly, there is here the doctrine of Assurance. Some say, “How are you to know that you are saved?” It can be known! It ought to be known. “Surely,” cries one, “it is presumption to say that you are sure.” It is presumption to live without knowing that you are delivered from wrath! Here the Apostle speaks of it as a thing well known, that, “Jesus delivers us from the coming wrath.” He does not say, “if,” or, “perhaps,” but he writes that it is so and, therefore, he knew it, and we may know it! My Brothers and Sisters, you may know that you are saved! “That would make me inexpressibly happy,” cries one! Just so, and that is one of the reasons why we would have you know it this day. God says, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life” and, therefore, the Believer may be sure that he has it! Our message is, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.”

God make you to escape that dreadful doom! May you be delivered from the wrath which is coming for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—** *Act 17:1-10***; 1 Thessalonians 1.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—485, 483, 484.

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÷1Th 2.13

THREE SIGHTS WORTH SEEING  
NO. 1979

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING MARCH 24, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For this cause we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God which also works effectually in you that believe. For you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.”***1Th 2:13-14***.**

PAUL seems very much at home when he is writing to the Church at Thessalonica. In his letters to that favored people he unveils his inmost feelings. He is rather apt to do so when he feels himself quite at ease, for Paul is by no means a man shut up within himself who is never at home to anyone. When he is battling with an ungrateful people, he keeps himself to sharp words and strong arguments, but when he is writing to a loving, attached, affectionate Church, he lets them have the key of his heart and he lays bare before them his secret emotions. I feel as if we were interviewing Paul to-night—as if we were all sitting in a room with him, Silas and Timothy—and were hearing their private conversation. We have come to a roundtable conference with them and we are listening to their talk about the ministry which God had committed to them. Even in these two verses we hear of how these holy preachers loved the Gospel, told out the Gospel and saw that Gospel take hold of their hearers’ hearts.

They were not obliged to be reticent about their own conduct, or their experience with the Thessalonian friends—they were able to tell the story of their transactions with the Church of Thessalonica from the very beginning. It is a happy thing to be the pastor of a Church where one may wear his heart upon his sleeve. In certain positions, prudence demands that we keep ourselves to ourselves until we know more of the character of those who surround us. This is by no means pleasant. Indeed, it is a painful thing to go through life like a man in armor who scarcely dares to move a single plate of steel lest somebody should wound him in an unguarded place! One is glad to know that on the face of this earth there is a Church where the minister feels himself as much at home as a brother among his brothers and sisters and as safe as a father among his sons, since he is not afraid of being misunderstood. It is my joy that for many years I have found such a place of peace, so that I can say with the Shunammite, “I dwell among my own people.”

But to return to our text—we find the Apostle at home, telling out his thoughts in the freest manner. Indeed, he seems to me to show us three sights of the most interesting kind, which it will be pleasing and profitable for us to consider with care. I shall try to speak upon these three things, one after the other.

The first is, ministers giving thanks. “For this cause we also thank God without ceasing.” Then we have the cause of it, which brings up a second beautiful sight, namely, hearers receiving the Word of God. Paul speaks of them thus—“When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also works effectually in you that believe.” In these words we find a window into the heart of the Thessalonian Christians and what we see is like a vault of jewels! Then we have a third thing which is exceedingly interesting, namely, new converts exhibiting the family likeness, turning out to be very much like the Believers of older Churches. Born many miles away from Judea, with a sea dividing them from the first country where the Gospel was preached, yet these Thessalonian Gentiles, when converted, looked wonderfully like the converts from among the Jews—“For you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews.”

I. To begin, then, we are asked out to a little social party. We are placed in a corner of a cozy room where we have license and favor to gaze upon MINISTERS GIVING THANKS.

Paul, Silas and Timothy make up a little meeting. No doubt the Lord is with them, for they form what He has made a quorum. They are within the number to which the promise is made—“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” These three godly ministers are holding what, if I use a Greek word, I may call a holy eucharistical service—a service of thanksgiving. “For this cause, we also thank God without ceasing.” It is a pleasant sight to see anybody thanking God, for the air is heavy with the hum of murmuring and the roads are dusty with complaints and lamentations. It is a delightful vision to see hard-working, earnest ministers of Christ met together and occupying their time with thanksgiving, for many waste their hours in speculations, doubts and discussions. Let us turn aside and look into their smiling faces! It will do us good to see who these good men were and how they came to be in this thankful condition.

And, first, I would remark that this thankfulness of theirs followed upon sore travail. It is of no use for you to say, “I shall thank God for a harvest,” if you neither plow nor sow. You will have no harvest without labor and patience. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,” but if there is no sowing and no tears, there is no promise of any kind of reaping. I have known young preachers envy those who have had many converts and I do not wonder that they should. But if they, themselves, desire to be greatly useful and successful, they must go the same way to work that others have done. In the cause and Kingdom of Christ, although the race is not to the swift, it certainly is not to the sluggish—and although salvation is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, it certainly is not of him that does not will and does not run! We may sit and sigh as long as we like, but we shall see no result from lethargy! Dead bees make no honey either in the land of Grace or of Nature. Neither is anything worked by merely rolling up your sleeves and making a brave show. We may plot and we may plan. We may propose and we may expect, but expectations and proposals will fall to the ground like apple-blossoms that have never knit unless we stir ourselves up in the name of God and throw all the strength we have into the work of faith and labor of love!

We shall fail unless we cry for much more strength than Nature will yield us. With a vehemence that will not take a denial, we must plead with the Lord until we prevail, for in this matter, “the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” Yes, Paul, Silas and Timothy, you would not be sitting together thanking God if you had not, for many a day, put your shoulders to the wheel! If you had not labored night and day; if you had not exercised much labor and travail and been willing to impart to the people not only the Gospel, but even your own lives, you would never have rejoiced together in the way you have described. Ministers giving thanks to God are ministers who have worked!

And this work of theirs had been backed by holy living , for the Apostle is bold to declare, “You are witnesses, and God, also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you that believe.” Brothers, we shall not win success unless we hunt for it by careful lives. You wish to see your Sunday school class converted. You are anxious to be blessed in your tract-district. You want to see that little Mission Hall crowded and souls converted. Begin by looking to your own life! As the man is, depend upon it, so will his life-work be! There will not come out of any one of us that which is not in us. You must fill the pitcher or you cannot go round and fill the cups of those who thirstily ask you for water. That which you would impart of Grace or life must be in yourself, first, and when God has worked it in you, then it shall be yours to work out! The Water of Life must be placed in you to be a well of Living Water, springing up—and then the Word of God shall be fulfilled in you—“Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Personal piety is the backbone of success in the service of God! You can be sure of that. Our mistakes and blunders in the work itself usually originate in faults in the closet, faults in the family, faults in our own souls. If we were better, our works would be better. If we walk contrary to God, He will walk contrary to us.

We cannot be too careful of our conduct if we aspire to be used of the Lord. Though the Lord is jealous of all His servants, He is especially jealous of those whom He honors in service. “Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.” That which He might have passed over in one of His common servants, He will not wink at in those whom He largely blesses. Therefore, dear Friends, let us remember that rejoicing servants of God must be holy servants of God. They shall not give thanks for the purity of their people unless they, themselves, have set a holy example. This renders all work for Christ a very solemn thing. May we always think it so and never go to it in a trifling spirit, but with many cries to the Holy One of Israel that He would make and keep us clean and bright as vessels fit for the Master’s use!

You see, dear Friends, that these three Brothers who met together and were thanking God, were men who had worked and who had lived holily. But further notice that when they congratulated each other, this mode of expressing their joy by thankfulness prevented their falling into anything like self-laudation. Neither Paul, nor Silas, nor Timothy had any reason to glory—and they did not meet together for self-glorification, or for mutual admiration! They glorified God and thanked Him without ceasing. Let us copy the example of these holy men. Brother, be much in thanking the Lord. If you have had one soul converted by your teaching, thank God! If in your class in the Sunday school, or if in your own family at home you have had one conversion, thank God! I am afraid that we fail in thankfulness. We pray for blessings and forget to praise for them. We are not grateful enough.

I was chiding myself last Tuesday. I think that I selected 28 persons whom I could venture to propose for Church fellowship out of many who came. What a number it was! I felt, when the day was over, very weary with the blessed service, and then I chided myself that I had permitted weariness to come in when I should rather have been praising and blessing God. I could not help my weakness and yet I thought my gratitude ought to have borne me above it. Oh, I remember the day when I would have given my eyes—yes, given my head—for 28 converts! I feel that I would sacrifice my all for such a blessing even now! To think that God should send so many in one week and give me evidence that there are plenty more to follow! Was not this a delight? They still keep coming to confess Christ in great numbers! We ought to be very joyful for this. The whole Church should bless God for so many and pray for more. If it were one soul saved by 20 years’ work, we ought to feel that we could dance for joy and count the service to be as nothing. But hundreds added to the Church should carry us up to the third Heaven of delight! As Jacob forgot all his toils when at last he could call the beloved Rachel his own, so should we count nothing hard, laborious, or trying, so long as souls are saved! Oh, to bring souls to God! Whenever we think of it, or see it done, let us say, like these three holy men, “For this cause we also thank God without ceasing.”

Notice that this thankfulness was of a social kind. “We thank God.” They all joined in it. Why, if there is a soul saved anywhere, we ought to all thank God for it! I hope that over at Walworth Road this week there may be some brought to Christ by their special meetings. And if they are so brought, glory be to God! What does it matter which Church they join? We hear of God blessing Mr. Moody or somebody else right away in America. Glory be to God for it! The success of any Church is our success. It is all in the family! Let us praise God for it. But some are accustomed to look with a rather jealous eye at God’s blessing other denominations, or other preachers. Let us fight against this spirit! O Brothers, those of us who have had the most of God’s blessing, what a mercy it would be if we were cut out altogether by better and more useful men! Let our star cease to shine if brighter stars will but shine and more souls see the blessed Light of God! Do not, those of you whom God has blessed, feel that you would gladly get out of the way and leave a clear road for somebody else if the Lord would use them more than you? If you do not feel so, I am afraid that the Master will put you out of the way because you are not completely absorbed in His Glory. When we are up to the neck in consecration, we are willing to be made nothing of if God can be glorified thereby! When we cannot be content to see Christ glorified by others and ourselves laid on the shelf, there is a little bit of self left and we must try to get rid of it.

At any rate, let us rejoice with those that do rejoice and triumph in the success of our Brothers. Be it ours to make joint-stock in praising God for all that He works by us all! What a sweet thing it would be if we more often met together, when God blessed us, and said, “For this cause we thank God”! We ought all to join in the hallelujahs of the Church over souls saved by Grace. We must not waste our time in allotting the success to this man, or to that man. Let us at once give all the glory to God! One cries, “It was Timothy that did it.” “Oh, no!” says another, “Silas is the man that brought me to Christ.” “Ah!” says another, “but I like to hear Paul. He is the master preacher. That young Timothy—why, he is nothing and Silas is nowhere by the side of Paul.” Such comparisons are odious. This kind of talk is evil! All God’s servants belong to you all and you must get all the good you can out of them. But to compare and to contrast them is to trifle! Let ministers discourage such vain talk among their people by their hearty love to each other. It is good for God’s servants to get together and to make a common heap of their spoils—and send up a joint thanksgiving for the joint results of their joint labor. “For this cause we thank God without ceasing.” Yes, and we do, my Brothers! I can see some here tonight who I know join with me in thanksgiving, as I join heartily with them whenever I think of them. I will bless and praise God for His exceeding mercy in saving souls by them, by me and by all His workers!

One thing more is to be noticed: this was a continual thanksgiving day, for the Apostle says, “For this cause we also thank God without ceasing.” Our gratitude to God should be as lasting as life, as constant as the bounty to which it bears witness. Our American friends have one Thanksgiving Day in the year, but it was Thanksgiving Day all the year round with Paul and Silas and Timothy when they thought of the Thessalonians! They felt as it they never could leave off thanking God for the Thessalonians, for they knew, by sad experience, that all Churches were not of the same happy kind. There were those Corinthians, forever quarrelling and thus grieving the Apostle. “Never mind,” he says, “we will thank God for the Thessalonians.” Oh, but there are those Galatians! They have gone off the line, bewitched by Judaizing teachers. They have wandered into “modern thought” and left the old orthodox faith. “Yes,” says the Apostle, “those Galatians are a burden to me but, then, blessed be God for the Thessalonians!” So I think we ought to bless God for those that are kept, for those that are true and for those that are faithful—and when our harp is made to hang upon the willows because part of the work is barren and unfruitful, yet let us not cease to praise and bless the Lord our God for that part of the work which prospers! Let us magnify Him for those that are brought to know His name. “For this cause we also thank God without ceasing because you received the Word of God.”

This spirit of thanksgiving tends to make us stronger and stronger for labor in days to come. Yes, let us sing unto the Lord instead of sighing unto ourselves! Let us not rob Him of His revenue of praise even in our most desponding moments. “Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.” What if Satan does not appear to fall from Heaven? What if the devils do not seem to be subject unto us? Yet let us rather rejoice because our names are written in Heaven! O child of God, fall back upon what the Lord has done and this shall make you encounter every difficulty with a brave heart! What the Lord has done is but a token of what He is going to do! Let us hold the fort and look for better times. Never let us dream of fainting or retreating! Do not say, “I will give it up because of the Galatians.” No, but go at it again because of the Thessalonians. Do not say, “I am worried and wearied with the Corinthians.” No, but with your heart full of joy, persevere in your Master’s service because many Thessalonians have received the Word, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God! Hallelujah, there is still something to sing about! Bring out the trumpets—we are not yet silenced, nor shall we be while the Lord lives! The walls of Jericho will be more likely to fall before our trumpets than our trembling.

So I have painted for you an ancient interior—you can see those three good men singing together to the praise of God as they think of their Thessalonian converts.

Ah, my Hearers, you could make some of us very happy! If you gave your hearts to the Lord, how you would cheer and comfort us! And some of you that do love the Lord would do us a world of good if you would come and tell us what the Lord has done for your souls. If you have been blessed, do not hide it! If you do, you will rob us of our wages, for our wages come to us very much through our knowing that God has blessed our ministry. Think of this and treat us fairly and kindly, even as we have sought your good. I, for one, have had such weary times of wolf hunting that I should be heartily glad to have the quiet joy of watching the young lambs and noting the growth of the sheep.

Now we leave the ministers, and think of the people.  
II. The second sight which we have to look at is HEARERS RECEIVING THE WORD. Let us keep close to the text. “When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God which also works effectually in you that believe.”  
Notice, first, these people received the Word of God. They were willing to hear it; they were anxious to hear it; they heard it and they were attentive in the hearing of it! They lent a willing ear and a ready mind. They did not quibble, dispute and question, but they received the Word of God. Happy preacher who has such people to deal with! If we have them not, let us work on till we gather them. Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, let us tell the people our Lord’s message. But if God favors us with receptive hearers, let us be instant in season and out of season! A good bit of soil like that ought to be most diligently plowed and sown. Thank God, there are, I trust, many here who have received the Word of God so far that they are willing to learn and anxious to know its meaning and feel its power! Among you our labor is lightened by hope and cheered with expectation.  
But next, these people had doubly received the Word of God. At least the Word is twice mentioned in our version. “When you received the Word of God which you heard of us, you received it.” In the Greek those are two different words altogether. The second, “received,” might, perhaps, better be read, “accepted.” I do not think that I should be straining a point if I read it, “You welcomed it.” They first received it by eagerly hearing it. They wanted to know what it was all about. They were attentive to it and wanted to understand it. When they had heard it, they rejoiced, and said, “Oh, yes, yes, yes, this is the very thing we need!” They embraced it. That word will do—they embraced it! They put their arms around it and would not let it go. They were hospitable to the Gospel and said, “Come in, you blessed of the Lord. Come and live in our hearts!” They assented and they consented to the Word of the Lord. They first appreciated the Gospel and then they apprehended it by faith. They were like the man that was hungry in a foreign land and he could not make the people quite understand. But as soon as they brought an article of food which he liked he fell to, directly, and made them comprehend that he would be glad for more of that sort of thing. By his hearty reception of what they brought, the hungry man said plainly, “Bring some more of that.”  
So we have a people about us, thank God, that are looking out for the Gospel! They are always willing to hear it if men will but preach it! And when they do get it, they mean business and feed upon the Word with hearty appetite. How glad I am to feed men that will eat! It is a pleasure, indeed. The spiritually hungry welcome heavenly food—they take it into themselves and receive it as the bread their soul craves! Oh, what a mercy it is when sermons are preached which feed souls and souls hear so as to feed thereon! It is a happy day when a full Christ and empty sinners meet!  
Now, I am persuaded, dear Friends, that if any of you do not know the Gospel—really do not know it—and yet are heavy of spirit and cannot rest and are unhappy, it will be a very blessed thing for you to find out what the Gospel is. I am pretty sure that many of you are in such a condition that as soon as you really know that the doctrine proclaimed to you is God’s Gospel, you will receive it into your very souls and say, “There is none like it. That is the very thing we have been looking for all our lives.” I think I hear one of you say, “I have been hunting after this for years. I did not know that there was anything like it, but it suits me to a turn! It fits me as a key fits a lock—it enters every ward of the lock of my soul as if it were made for me.”  
Brothers and Sisters, I bear witness that when I received the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it seemed to me as if Jesus Christ had made the Gospel on purpose for me and for me only! If there had been nobody else in the world and Jesus had made a Gospel for me only, it could not have been more adapted for me! His Gospel exactly suited that poor sinner who, on one snowy morning, looked to Him and was lightened! My dear Hearer, you will find Jesus the very Savior for you. “But I am an out-of-the-way sinner,” cries one. Have you never heard of Him who can have compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way? What a wonderful text that is for you—you out-of-the-way ones! He can have compassion on those that are out of the way! There is a remedy in the Gospel for your disease. For the particular shape your malady has taken, the Lord has a special eye. His Son, Jesus, has a plaster suited for your peculiar sore—a medicine adapted to your peculiar need. May the Holy Spirit bring you to receive it as these Thessalonians did!  
And then, if I may trouble you to look at the text again, you will notice that the word, “it” is in italics. And so is the word, “as.” Let me read the text again—“When you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you received not the word of men.” You see I have left out the, “it,” and the, “as,” because they are not really there, though they are correctly added by the translators as giving the meaning of the Apostle. Verbally they are not in the text. I take the sentence out of its connection and say that these Thessalonians received not the word of men. And I like them for that! Oh, but there were very learned men in those days! When Paul was on the earth and a little before his day, some of the greatest natural minds that ever existed were in Greece teaching the people. Yet the Thessalonians were in such a state that they received not the word of men! They did not listen to Plato, or accept Socrates, for there was a something about them which made them hunger for more than the philosophers could bring them. God’s elect are of that mind. You may know the Lord’s sheep by the fact that “a stranger they will not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers.” They will not receive the word of man! It is too light, too chaffy, too frothy for them. You may put it before them in the daintiest guise, illustrate it with poetry and prove it by the fictions of science—but they will not feed on such wind! They receive not the word of men! They will not have it! They want something more substantial.  
To come back to our translation—they received not the Gospel as the word of men. In these days there are some who receive the Gospel, but they receive it as the word of men. This is their spirit—“Yes, I know that such is the view that is held by Mr. Black. But there is another view held by Dr. White and another view is upheld by Professor Gray. All these different ‘views’ are supposed to be very much upon a par.” Beloved Friends, this is not our way! There is the Truth of God and there is a lie! And I want you always to feel that there is a solemn difference between the true and the false—and that no lie is of the Truth of God. “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” If one says, “Yes,” and the other says, “No,” it cannot be that they are both true! Salvation is of Grace—or of works—it cannot be of both! Salvation is the work of God or else of man—it cannot be a joint-stock-company affair! There is the Truth of God and there is error—and these are opposite to each other. Do not indulge yourselves in the folly with which so many are duped—that the Truth of God may be error, and error may be the Truth of God—that black is white, and white is black, and that there is a whitey-brown that goes in between, which is, perhaps, the best of the whole lot!  
There is an essential difference between man’s word and God’s Word— and it is fatal to mistake the one for the other. If you receive even the Gospel as the word of man you cannot get the blessing out of it, for the sweetness of the Gospel lies in the confidence of our heart that this is the Word of God. You fall back upon Holy Scripture in the grief of an aching heart, but you cannot rest, however soft the pillow of the promise may seem to be, till you can surely say, “I know that it is of God.” If you have even a shadow of a doubt about it, comfort oozes out. The life of comfort flies before doubt, even as love is said to fly out the window when want comes in the door. Prick the heart—yes, with but a needle’s point—and life will go! And prick the heart of faith—yes, even with the smallest doubt—and the life of joy is gone! The joy of faith and the strength of faith, yes, and the life of faith, are gone when you distrust the Word of the Lord!  
Are we, then, infallible? No, but the Book is! Do we infallibly understand the Book? No, but the Spirit of God will teach us what He, Himself, means—and of those Truths which He teaches us we get so firm a grip that we say, “No, no; I am never going to argue about this any more! This is proved to my heart and soul beyond all further question. It is woven into my experience. It has stamped itself on my consciousness. It has done that for me which no lie could do. This is the Revelation of God and I will die sooner than I will ever, by any action of mine, permit a doubt to be cast upon it.” Brothers and Sisters, do you accept the Word of God as Infallible? Thus have I learned the Gospel of Christ. Have you learned it in this fashion? Then you have received the Gospel aright, but not else.  
To receive the Gospel as the word of man is not to receive the Gospel! But to receive it as a Revelation from God—true, sure, Infallible, so as to risk your whole soul on it and to feel that there is no risk—this is to receive the Gospel in truth! After this manner we receive it with the deepest reverence—not as a thing that I am to judge, but as that which judges me! Not as a matter of opinion, but as a sure Truth with which I must make my opinion agree! It makes all the difference whether we rule the truth or the Truth of God rules us! The reverent obedience of the understanding to the Word

of the Lord is a great part of sanctification.  
To receive the Gospel as the Word of God is to receive it with strong assurance. Other things may be true, but this must be true. Other things may be questioned, but this must be implicitly believed. This Gospel of Jesus Christ is of God as surely as you live—and you have not received it at all if you do not know it to be the Word of God.  
It is to receive it with obedience, because it comes with authority—to say, “This I must yield to. Other truths I may be master of, but this is master of me. Other truths I may or may not hold—they may not be of sufficient importance for me to bow before them. But this Truth has God Himself enshrined within it and, therefore, I cannot be disobedient to the heavenly vision.” With man’s statements we are men, but before God’s Truth we are converted into little children. Is this so with you?  
This Gospel, if it is received as the Word of God, comes with power. Do not let us be misunderstood—the power we mean is by no means a common thing! It is not the force of persuasion, nor the energy of rhetoric. It is Divine Power—the finger of God! There is still in the world a miraculous force—the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit. It does not have us speak with tongues, neither do we hear it in rushing, mighty wind. But it is as unmistakable to those who have it as if it did come with such extraordinary signs! Sometimes a Truth of God has been borne in upon my soul—and I doubt not you can say the same—with an inward evidence which is beyond all argument for force and certainty. Though it is not logical, we are more sure than if conquered by reasoning! We prefer it to the demonstrations of mathematics so far as our own assurance is concerned. In my own case, I could not see, but I did more than see—my inner soul without eyes beheld the essential principle of the Truth of God! I did not touch it and yet my inner soul handled it, tasted it, fed on it. It went into the secret spring-head and well-spring of my being and became one of its first principles.  
If any man said that the Lord Jesus was not able to save and that His Gospel was not true, I snapped my fingers at him! I could not stop to answer him because he seemed to be willfully denying self-evident fact—and there is no answering such folly! For a man to tell me that the Gospel is not true, when the Spirit seals it on my heart, is all in vain! He might as well tell me that there was no light when I stood gazing on a landscape in the brightness of the sun, or assure me that there was no such thing as air when the strong north wind was on my cheeks. He might as well tell me that there was no nutriment in food when I had just lost my hunger and felt refreshed by what I had eaten. There are some things that we have no patience to argue about—we have done with discussion concerning them!  
If you do not know spiritual things, ask God to let you know them. But you are out of court as a witness—you cannot prove a negative, nor can your negative disprove our positive! We cannot argue with you who are dead in sin and have not received, as yet, spiritual senses. What can you know? Why should we dispute with the blind concerning colors? How can we discuss music with the deaf?  
“Oh,” says one, “but I do not believe in your spiritual experience!” I did not say you did! On the contrary, I expected you not to believe in it. But what does that prove? Why, only that you have no spiritual perception! It is true that you have not perceived spiritual things, but it is no proof that there are none to perceive! The whole case is like that of the Irishman who tried to upset evidence by non-evidence. Four witnesses saw him commit a murder. He pleaded that he was not guilty and wished to establish his innocence by producing 40 persons who did not see him do it. Of what use would that have been? So, if 40 people declare that there is no power of the Holy Spirit going with the Word of God, this only proves that the 40 people do not know what others do know. If there are four of us that know it—well, we shall not cease our witness. We receive God’s Word as the Word of God because it comes to us with that power which effectually works in them that believe. It works in us a horror of sin, a detestation of self-confidence and an aspiration after holy and heavenly things. It works in us love to God and good-will to men. It works in us aspirations after the Divine. It works in us victory over evil from day to day and, while it does that, the proof of it is within us! The witness and seal of the Truth of the Gospel are within our own character and being and we cannot, therefore, give up our confidence.  
People who have come to this pass make their ministers glad! Paul, Silas, and Timothy are all happy men when surrounded by hearers who have received the Gospel in all its Divine authority and power!  
III. Now my time has gone, otherwise my third point would have been a very interesting one. These three men are rejoicing in CONVERTS WHO ARE EXHIBITING A FAMILY LIKENESS.  
I only call your attention to the fact that the Apostle says, “You, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus.” Here are people converted in Judea and they are of a strongly Jewish type. Quite another set of people over at Thessalonica become converted to Christ—and though they are thoroughly of the Greek type—they are very much like the converts in Judea! They know nothing about the Law of Moses. They have been heathens—worshipping idols—and yet, when they are converted, the strange thing is that they are exceedingly like those Jews over yonder, to whom idolatry was an abomination!  
Greek Believers are like Hebrew Believers! They have never spoken to one another and nobody has been there to tell them the peculiarities of Christians and yet a family likeness is distinctly visible! Were you never startled with this, that if, in the preaching of the Gospel today, we were to bring to the Lord Jesus a person of high rank and another of the very lowest extraction, they have the same experience—and upon the greatest of subjects they talk in the same way? “Oh, but,” you say, “they pick up certain phrases.” No, no! They differ in speech! The likeness is in heart and character. I frequently meet with converts who have not attended this place of worship more than half-a-dozen times, but they have been converted—and when they come to tell the story of their inner life you would suppose that they had been born and bred among us, and had learned all our ways, for, though they do not use the phrases which we use, yet they say the same things! The fact is, we are all alike—lost and ruined—and we are born again in the same way. And we find the Savior in the same way. And we rejoice in Him when we do find Him, after much the same fashion, and express ourselves very much after the same style. Believers differ in many things and yet they are alike in the main things. There are no two exactly alike in all the family of God—and yet the likeness to the Elder Brother is to be seen more or less in each one!  
It is to me one of the evidences of the Truth of God and Divine Nature of the work of Grace in the heart, that if you take a Hottentot in his kraal— and he is converted—and you take a university man who has won all the degrees of learning, and he is converted, yet you would not know Sambo from the Doctor when they begin to talk about the things of God! The Hottentot’s English may be broken, but his theology is sound! The uneducated man’s words may limp, but his heart will leap! Ruin, redemption and regeneration are the chief subjects in every case.  
When I am talking, sometimes, with young converts and they put their statements oddly and ignorantly, I am reminded of Brother Taylor, when he was getting old. The old man sometimes lost the thread of his discourse and whenever he did so, he used to say, “There, I cannot find the end of that sentence, but I am bound for the Kingdom! Brethren, I am bound for the Kingdom!” Off he went to something else, for though he could not complete the paragraph, he was bound for the Kingdom! Some Brothers and Sisters cannot see to the end of their own experience, but they are bound for the Kingdom! They cannot put this and that together to make it ship-shape—but you can see that they are bound for the Kingdom! There is the same tear of repentance, the same glance of faith, the same thrill of joy, the same song of confidence—each one, according to his measure, enjoys the same life if he is, indeed, bound for the Kingdom! The babe is like the man and the man reminds you of the babe. We are one spirit in Christ Jesus!  
I will not enlarge except to say that it makes us sing for joy when we can see in ourselves a likeness to the children of God. We, too, resemble the early saints in our experiences. Opposition and tribulation come to us in our measure as they did to them. There are the same afflictions, the same persecutions, the same trials wherever the work of Christ goes on— but there is the same mighty God to carry on the work of Grace and the same promises of Grace to be fulfilled to every Believer!  
Dear Friends, are you believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? If you are, joy and rejoice with me! But if you are not, oh, how I wish you were! Whatever comforts of life you enjoy, you are missing the only thing that makes life worth having. If you are not yet resting on Christ Jesus, you have not yet found out the kernel of the nut. You are boring away at the hard shell of life and unless you turn to Christ you will die worrying and wearying over the shell—and you will never taste the sweet kernel. If you did but know our Lord Jesus. If you did but trust Him. If you did but find salvation in Him, then you would find that if earth cannot be Heaven, it can become marvelously like it! The earnest of our everlasting inheritance may be enjoyed even here. Would God you would seek my Lord and Master, for if you seek Him, He will be found of you! What a pleasure it would be if everyone at this time would receive the Gospel as the Word of God! Spirit of God, grant that it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— 1 Thessalonians 1.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—433, 483, 331.

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÷1Th 2.18

SATANIC HINDRANCES

NO. 657

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 29, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Satan hindered us.”***1Th 2:18***.**

PAUL, Silas and Timothy were very desirous to visit the Church at Thessalonica, but they were unable to do so for the singular reason announced in the text, namely, “Satan hindered us.” It was not from want of will, for they had a very great attachment to the Thessalonian Brethren and they longed to look them in the face again. They said of the Thessalonians, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers: remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father.”

Their will was overruled as to visiting the Church together, but being anxious for its welfare, they sent Timothy alone to minister for a time in its midst. It was not want of will which hindered them, but want of power. They were not prevented by God’s special Providence. We find on certain occasions that Paul was not allowed to go precisely where his heart would have led him. “They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”

“They were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia,” but their course was directed towards Troas that they might preach in Europe the unsearchable riches of Christ. They could not, however, trace their absence from Thessalonica to any Divine interposition. It appeared, to them, to proceed from the great adversary—“Satan hindered them.” How Satan did so it would be useless to affirm dogmatically, but we may form a reasonable conjecture. I find in the margin of my pulpit Bible by Bagster, this note, which may probably be correct: “Satan hindered Paul by raising such a storm of persecution against him at Berea and other places, that it was deemed prudent to delay his visit till the storm was somewhat allayed.”

Yet I can hardly allow this to have been the only hindrance, for Paul was very courageous, and having a strong desire to visit Thessalonica, no fear of opposition would have kept him away. He did not shun the hottest part of the battle, but like a truly valiant champion, delighted most to be found in the thick of his foes. Possibly the antagonism of the various philosophers whom he met with at Athens and the heresies at Corinth, from which it seems that this Epistle was written, may have called for his presence on the scene of action. He felt that he could not leave struggling churches to their enemies—he must contend with the grievous wolves and unmask the evil ones who wore the garb of angels of light.

Satan had moved the enemies of the Truth of God to industrious opposition and thus the Apostle and his companions were hindered from going to Thessalonica. Or it may be that Satan had excited dissensions and discords in the churches which Paul was visiting and therefore he was obliged to stop first in one, and then in another, to settle their differences—to bring to bear the weight of his own spiritual influence upon the various divided sections of the Church to restore them to unity.

Well, whether persecution, or philosophic heresy, or the divisions of the Church were the outward instruments we cannot tell, but Satan was assuredly the prime mover. You will, perhaps, wonder why the devil should care so much about Paul and his whereabouts. Why should he take so much interest in keeping these three men from that particular Church? This leads us to observe what wonderful importance is attached to the action of Christian ministers. Here is the master of all evil, the Prince of the Power of the Air, intently watching the journeying of three humble men. And apparently far more concerned about their movements than about the doings of Nero or Tiberius!

These despised heralds of mercy were his most dreaded foes. They preached that name which makes Hell tremble. They declared that righteousness against which Satanic hate always vents itself with its utmost power. With malicious glance the archenemy watched their daily path and with cunning hand hindered them at all points. It strikes us that Satan was desirous to keep these Apostolic men from the Church of Thessalonica because the Church was young and weak and he thought that if it was not fostered and succored by the preaching and presence of Paul he might yet slay the young Child.

Moreover, he has of old a fierce hatred of the preaching of the Gospel and possibly there had been no public declaration of the Truth throughout Thessalonica since Paul had gone and he was afraid lest the fire-brands of Gospel Truth should be again flung in among the masses and a gracious conflagration should take place. Besides, Satan always hates Christian fellowship—it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. He attaches far more importance to godly communion than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation—and so he would keep Paul away from these Brethren who might have gladdened his heart and whose hearts he might have cheered.

He would hinder their fraternal communion that they might miss the strength which always flows from Christian communion and Christian sympathy. This is not the only occasion in which Satan has hindered good men—indeed, this has been his practice in all ages and we have selected this one particular incident that some who are hindered by Satan may draw comfort from it and that we may have an opportunity (if the Spirit of God shall enable us) of saying a good and forceful word to any who count it strange because this fiery trial has happened to them.

I. Let us open our discourse by observing that IT HAS BEEN SATAN’S PRACTICE OF OLD TO HINDER, WHEREVER HE COULD, THE WORK OF GOD. “Satan hindered us,” is the testimony which all the saints in Heaven will bear against the arch enemy. This is the witness of all who have written a holy line on the historic page, or carved a consecrated name on the rock of immortality—“Satan hindered us.” In sacred Writ, we find Satan interfering to hinder the completeness of the personal character of individual saints. The man of Uz was perfect and upright before God and to all appearances would persevere in producing a finished picture of what the Believer in God should be.

Satan could find no fault with his actions and only dared to impute wrong motives to him. He had considered Job and he could find no mischief in him—but then he hinted to God, “Have You not made an hedge about him and about his house and about all that he has on every side?” Satan sought to turn the life-blessing which Job was given of God into a curse, and therefore he buffeted him sorely. He stripped him of all his substance. The evil messengers trod upon one another’s heels—and their tidings of woe only ceased when his goods were all destroyed and his children had all perished.

The poor afflicted parent was then struck in his bone and in his flesh till he was made to sit upon a dunghill and scrape himself with a potsherd. Even then the picture had no blot of sin upon it—the pencil was held with a steady hand by the patient one. And therefore Satan made another attempt to hinder his retaining his holy character—he excited his wife to say, “Why do you hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” This was a great and grievous hindrance to the completion of Job’s marvelous career, but, glory be unto God, the man of patience not only overcame Satan, but he made him a steppingstone to a yet greater height of illustrious virtue!

You know the patience of Job and you would not have known it if Satan had not illuminated it with the blaze of flaming afflictions! Had not the vessel been burnt in the furnace, the bright colors had not been so fixed and abiding. The trial through which Job passed brought out the luster of his matchless endurance in submission and resignation to God! Now, just as the enemy of old waylaid and beset the Patriarch to hinder his perseverance in the fair path of excellence, so will he do with us. You may be congratulating yourself this morning, “I have up to now walked consistently. No man can challenge my integrity.”

Beware of boasting! Your virtue will yet be tried! Satan will direct his engines against that very virtue for which you are the most famous. If you have been up to now a firm Believer, your faith will, before long, be attacked. If up till now you have been meek as Moses, expect to be tempted to speak unadvisedly with your lips. The birds will peck at your ripest fruit and the wild hoar will dash his tusks at your choicest vines. O that we had among us more eminence of piety, more generosity of character, more fidelity of behavior! In all these respects, I doubt not, many have set out with the highest aims and intentions, but alas, how often have they had to cry, “Satan hindered us!”

This is not the enemy’s only business—he is very earnest in endeavoring to hinder the emancipation of the Lord’s redeemed ones. You know the memorable story of Moses—when the children of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, God’s servant stood before their haughty oppressor with his rod in his hand and in Jehovah’s name he declared, “Thus says the Lord, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” A sign was required. The rod was cast upon the ground and it became a serpent. At this point, Satan hindered. Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses. We read that the magicians did so with their enchantments, whether by devilish arts or by sleight of hand, we need not now enquire—in either case they did the devil service and they did it well—for Pharaoh’s heart was hardened when he saw that the magicians worked, in appearance, the self-same miracles as Moses.

Brethren, take this as a type of Satan’s hindrances to the Word of the Lord. Christ’s servants came forth to preach the Gospel. Their ministry was attended with signs and wonders. “My kingdom is shaken,” said the Prince of Evil, “I must bestir myself.” And straightway he sent magicians to work lying signs and wonders without number. Apocryphal wonders were and are as plentiful as the frogs of Egypt. Did the Apostles preach the sacrifice of Christ?—the devil’s Apostles preached the sacrifice of the “mass.” Did the saints uplift the Cross?—the devil’s servants upheld the crucifix! Did God’s ministers speak of Jesus as the one infallible Head of the Church?—the devil’s servants proclaimed the false priest of Rome as standing in the same place!

Romanism is a most ingenious imitation of the Gospel—it is the magicians, “doing so with their enchantments.” If you study well the spirit and genius of the great Antichrist, you will see that its great power lies in its being an exceedingly clever counterfeit of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as tinsel could counterfeit gold, and paste could simulate the gem and candlelight could rival the sun in its glory and a drop in the bucket could imitate the sea in its strength, it has copied God’s great masterpiece, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And to this day, as God’s servants scatter the pure gold of the Truth of God, their worst enemies are those who utter base coin on which they have feloniously stamped the image and superscription of the King of kings.

You have another case farther on in history—and all Old Testament history is typical of what is going on around us now. God was about to give a most wonderful system of instruction to Israel and to the human race, by way of type and ceremony, in the wilderness. Aaron and his sons were selected to represent the great High Priest of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. In every garment which they wore there was a symbolical significance—every vessel of that sanctuary in which they ministered taught a lesson—every single act of worship, whether it were the sprinkling of blood or the burning of incense, was made to teach precious and important Truths of God to the sons of men. What a noble roll was that volume of the Book which was unfolded in the wilderness at the foot of Sinai!

How God declared Himself and the Glory of the coming Messiah in the persons of Aaron and his sons! What then? With this Satan interfered. Moses and Aaron could say, “Satan hindered us.” Korah, Dathan and Abiram arrogantly claimed a right to the priesthood. And on a certain day they stood forth with bronze censers in their hands, thrusting themselves impertinently into the office which the Lord had assigned to Aaron and to his sons. The earth opened and swallowed them up alive—true prophecy of what shall become of those who thrust themselves into the office of the priesthood where none but Jesus Christ can stand!

You may see the parallel this day. Christ Jesus is the only Priest who offers sacrifice of blood and He brings that sacrifice no more—for having once offered it He has perfected forever those who are set apart. “This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Paul, with the strongest force of logic, proves that Christ does not offer a continual sacrifice, but that, having offered it once and for all, His work is finished and He sits down at the right hand of the Father.

Now, this doctrine of a finished Atonement and a completed sacrifice seemed likely to overrun the world—it was such a gracious unfolding of the Divine mind that Satan could not look upon it without desiring to hinder it. And, therefore, look on every hand, and you can see Korah, Dathan and Abiram in those churches which are branches of Antichrist—I mean the Anglican and the Roman. Men to this very day call themselves, “priests,” and read prayers from a book in which the rubric runs, “Then shall the priest say”—these arrogate to themselves a priesthood other than that which is common to all the saints—some of them even claim to offer a daily “sacrifice,” to celebrate an unbloody sacrifice at the thing which they call an “altar”!

And they claim to have power to forgive sins, saying to sick and dying persons, “By authority committed unto me I absolve you from all your sins.” This in England! And this throughout Europe! This is the great hindrance to the propagation of the Gospel—the priestly pretensions of a set of men who are no priests of God, though they may be priests of Baal. Thus the ministers of Jesus are made to cry, “Satan hinders us.” Take another instance of Satanic hatred. When Joshua had led the tribes across the Jordan they were to attack the various cities which God had given them for a heritage and from Dan to Beersheba the whole land was to be theirs. After the taking of Jericho, the first contact into which they came with the heathen Canaanites ended in disastrous defeat to the servants of God.

“They fled,” it is written, “before the men of Ai.” Here, again, you hear the cry, “Satan hindered us.” Joshua might have gone from city to city exterminating the nations, as they justly deserved to be, but Achan had taken of the accursed thing and hidden it in his tent. Therefore no victory could be won by Israel till his theft and sacrilege had been put away. Beloved, this is symbolic of the Christian Church. We might go from victory to victory—our home mission operations might be successful and our foreign agencies might be crowned with triumph—if it were not that we have Achans in the camp at home!

When churches have no conversions it is more than probable that hypocrites concealed among them have turned away the Lord’s blessing. You who are inconsistent, who make the profession of religion the means of getting wealth! You who unite yourselves with God’s people, but at the same time covet the goodly Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold, you are they who cut the sinews of Zion’s strength! You prevent the Israel of God from going forth to victory! Ah, little do we know, Beloved, how Satan has hindered us. We, as a Church, have had much reason to thank God, but how many more might within these walls have been added to the number of this Church if it had not been for the coldness of some, the indifference of others, the inconsistency of a few and the worldliness of many more? Satan hinders us not merely by direct opposition, but by sending Achans into the midst of our camp!

I will give you one more picture. View the building of Jerusalem after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians. When Ezra and Nehemiah were found to build, the devil was sure to stir up Sanballat and Tohiah to cast down. There was never a revival of religion without a revival of the old enmity. If ever the Church of God is to be built, it will be in troublous times. When God’s servants are active, Satan is not without vigilant followers who seek to counteract their efforts. The history of the Old Testament Church is a history of Satan endeavoring to hinder the work of the Lord.

I am sure you will admit it has been the same since the days of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was on earth Satan hindered Him. He dared to attack Him to His face! And when that failed, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and men of all sorts hindered Him. When the Apostles began their ministry, Herod and the Jews sought to hinder them. And when persecution availed not, then all sorts of heresies and schisms broke out in the Christian Church—Satan still hindered them. A very short time after the taking up of our Lord, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, had become like earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter. The glory had departed and the luster of Truth was gone, because by false doctrine, lukewarmness and worldliness, Satan hindered them.

When the Reformation dawned, if God raised up a Luther, the devil brought out an Ignatius Loyola to hinder him. Here in England, if God had his Latimers and his Wickcliffes, the devil had his Gardiners and Bonners. When in the modem reformation Whitfield and Wesley thundered like the voice of God, there were ordained reprobates found to hinder them, to hold them up to opprobrium and shame. Never, since the first hour struck in which goodness came into conflict with evil, has it ceased to be true that Satan has hindered us!

From all points of the compass, all along the line of battle—in the vanguard and in the rear—at the dawn of day and at midnight, Satan has hindered us. If we toil in the field he seeks to break the plowshare. If we build the walls he labors to cast down the stones. If we would serve God in suffering or in conflict—Satan hinders us everywhere.

II. We shall now, in the second place, INDICATE MANY WAYS IN WHICH SATAN HAS HINDERED US. The Prince of Evil is very busy in hindering those who are just coming to Jesus Christ. Here he spends the main part of his skill. Some of us who know the Savior recollect the fierce conflicts which we had with Satan when we first looked to the Cross and lived.

Others of you here this morning are just passing through that trying season—I will address myself to you. Beloved Friends, you long to be saved, but ever since you have given any attention to these eternal things you have been the victim of deep distress of mind. Do not marvel at this! This is usual, so usual as to be almost universal! I should not wonder if you are perplexed with the doctrine of election. It will be suggested to you that you are not one of the chosen of God, although your common sense will teach you that it might just as well be suggested to you that you are, since you know neither the one nor the other, nor indeed can know until you have believed in Jesus.

Your present business is with the precept which is revealed, not with election which is concealed. Your business is with that exhortation, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” It is possible that the great battlefield between predestination and free will may be the dry and desert place in which your soul is wandering—now you will never find any comfort there! The wisest of men have despaired of ever solving the mystery of those two matters and it is not at all probable that you will find peace in puzzling yourself about it.

Your business is not with metaphysical difficulty, but with faith in the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is simple and plain enough. It is possible that your sins now come to your remembrance and though once you thought little enough of them, now it is hinted to you by Satanic malice that they are too great to be pardoned—to which, I pray you, give the lie, by telling Satan this Truth—“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” It is very likely that the sin against the Holy Spirit much molests you. You read that whoever shall speak a word against the Holy Spirit it shall never be forgiven him.

In this, too, you may be greatly tried. And I wonder not that you are, for this is a most painfully difficult subject. One fact may cheer you—if you repent of your sins, you have not committed the unpardonable offense, since that sin necessitates hardness of heart forever. And so long as a man has any tenderness of conscience and any softness of spirit, he has not so renounced the Holy Spirit as to have lost His Presence. It may be that you are the victim of blasphemous thoughts. This very morning, since you have been sitting here, torrents of the filth of Hell have been pouring through your soul.

At this be not astonished, for there are some of us who delight in holiness and are pure in heart, who nevertheless, have been at times sorely tried with thoughts which were never born in our hearts, but which were injected into them—suggestions born in Hell, not in our spirits—to be hated and to be loathed, but cast into our minds that they might hinder and trouble us. Now, though Satan may hinder you as he did the child who was brought to Jesus, of whom we read that as he was, “coming, the devil threw him down and tore him,” yet do you come notwithstanding! For though seven devils were in him, Jesus would not cast the coming sinner out. Even though you should feel a conviction that the unpardonable sin has fallen to your lot, yet dare to trust in Jesus! And, if you do do that, I warrant you there shall be a joy and a peace in believing which shall overcome him of whom we read, that he has “hindered us.”

But I must not stop long on any one point where there are so many. Satan is sure to hinder Christians when they are earnest in prayer. Have you not frequently found, dear Friends, when you have been most earnest in supplication, that something or other will start across your mind to make you cease from the exercise? It appears to me that we shake the tree and no fruit drops from it. And just when one more shake would bring down the luscious fruit, the devil touches us on the shoulder and tells us it is time to be gone! And so we miss the blessing we might have attained. I mean that just when prayer would be the most successful we are tempted to abstain from it.

When my spirit has sometimes laid hold upon the Angel, I have been painfully conscious of a counter influence urging me to cease from such importunity and let the Lord alone, for His will would be done. Or if the temptation did not come in that shape yet in some other, to cease to pray because prayer, after all, could not avail. O Brethren, I know if you are much in prayer you can sing Cowper’s hymn*—*

*“What various hindrances we meet  
In coming to the Mercy Seat.”*

The same is true of Christians when under the promptings of the Spirit of God, or when planning any good work. You have been prompted, sometimes, to speak to such a one. “Run, speak to that young man,” has been the message in your ear. You have not done it—Satan has hindered you. You have been told on a certain occasion—you do not know how, (but believe me, we ought to pay great respect to these inward whispers), to visit such-and-such a person and help him. You have not done it—Satan hindered you. You have been sitting down by the fire one evening reading a missionary report concerning Hindustan, or some district destitute of the Truth of God and you have thought, “Now I have a little money which I might give to this object.” But then it has come across you that there is another way of spending it more profitably on your family—so Satan has hindered you.

Or you yourself thought of doing a little in a certain district by way of preaching and teaching, or commencing some new Ragged School, or some other form of Christian effort—but as sure as ever you began to plan it, something or other arose and Satan hindered you. If he possibly can, he will come upon God’s people in those times when they are full of thought and ardor and ready for Christian effort that he may murder their infant plans and cast these suggestions of the Holy Spirit out of their minds.

How often, too, has Satan hindered us when we have entered into the work! In fact, Beloved, we never ought to expect a success unless we hear the devil making a noise. I have taken it as a certain sign that I am doing little good when the devil is quiet. It is generally a sign that Christ’s kingdom is coming when men begin to lie against you and slander you and the world is in an uproar, casting out your name as evil. Oh, those blessed tempests! Do not give me calm weather when the air is still and heavy and when lethargy is creeping over one’s spirit. Lord, send a hurricane, give us a little stormy weather! When the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls, then God’s servants know that the Lord is abroad and that His right hand is no longer in His bosom—that the moral atmosphere will get clear—that God’s kingdom will come and His will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven!  
“Peace, peace, peace!” That is the flap of the dragon’s wings! The stern

voice which proclaims perpetual war is the voice of the Captain of our salvation. You say, how is this? “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Peace, physical, Christ makes. There is to be no strife with the fist, no blow with the sword, but moral peace and spiritual peace can never be in this world where Jesus Christ is, so long as error is there.

But, you know, Beloved, that you cannot do any good thing but what the devil will be sure to hinder you. What then? Up and at him! Cowardly looks and faint counsels are not for warriors of the Cross! Expect fights and you will not be disappointed. Whitfield used to say that some Divines would go from the first of January to the end of December with a perfectly whole skin. The devil never thought them worth while attacking! But, said he, let us begin to preach with all our might, and soul, and strength the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and men will soon put a fool’s cap on our heads and begin laughing at us and ridiculing us—but if so, so much the better!

We are not alarmed because Satan hinders us! Nor will he only hinder us in working—he will hinder us in seeking to unite with one another. We are about to make an effort, as Christian churches in London, to come closer together and I am happy to find indications of success. But I should not wonder but what Satan will hinder us and I would ask your prayers that Satan may be put to the rout in this matter, and that the union of our churches may be accomplished. As a Church ourselves, we have walked together in peace for a long time, but I should not marvel if Satan should try to thrust in the cloven foot to hinder our walking in love and peace and unity.

Satan will hinder us in our communion with Jesus Christ. When at His table we say to ourselves, “I shall have a sweet moment now,” but just then vanity intrudes. Like Abraham, you offer the sacrifice, but the unclean birds come down upon it and you have need to drive them away. “Satan hindered us.” He is not omnipresent, but by his numerous servants he works in all kinds of places and manages to distract the saints when they would serve the Lord.

III. In the third place THERE ARE TWO OR THREE RULES BY WHICH THESE HINDRANCES MAY BE DETECTED AS SATANIC. I think I heard somebody saying to himself this morning, “Yes, I should have risen in the world and have been a man of money now if it had not been that Satan hindered me.” Do not believe it, dear Friend! I do not believe that Satan generally hinders people from getting rich. He would just as soon that they should be rich as poor. He delights to see God’s servants set upon the pinnacle of the temple, for he knows the position to be dangerous.

High places and God’s praise do seldom agree. If you have been hindered in growing rich, I should rather set that down to the good Providence of God which would not place you where you could not have borne the temptation. “Yes,” said another, “I had intended to have lived in a certain district and done good and have not been able to go—perhaps that is the devil.” Perhaps it was—perhaps it was not. God’s Providence will know best where to place us. We are not always choosers of our own locality—and so we are not always to conclude when we are hindered and disappointed in our own intentions that Satan has done it, for it may very often be the good Providence of God.

But how may I tell when Satan hinders me? I think you may tell first, by the object. Satan’s object in hindering us is to prevent our glorifying God. If anything has happened to you which has prevented your growing holy, useful, humble and sanctified, then you may trace that to Satan. If the distinct object of the interference to the general current of your life has been that you may be turned from righteousness into sin, then from the object you may guess the author. It is not God who does this, but Satan. Yet know that God does, sometimes, put apparent hindrances in the way of His own people—even in reference to their usefulness and growth in Grace—but then His object is still to be considered—it is to try His saints and so to strengthen them! While the object of Satan is to turn them out of the right road and make them take the crooked way.

You may tell the suggestions of Satan, again, by the method in which they come—God employs good motives, Satan bad ones. If that which has turned you away from your object has been a bad thought, a bad doctrine, bad teaching, a bad motive—that never came from God, that must be from Satan. Again, you may tell them from their nature. Whenever an impediment to usefulness is pleasing, gratifying to you—consider that it came from Satan. Satan never brushes the feathers of his birds the wrong way—he generally deals with us according to our tastes and likes. He flavors his bait to his fish. He knows exactly how to deal with each man and to put that motive which will fall in with the suggestions of poor carnal nature.

Now, if the difficulty in your way is rather contrary to yourself than for yourself, then it comes from God. But if that which now is a hindrance brings you gain, or pleasure, or emolument in any way, rest assured it came from Satan. We can tell the suggestions of Satan, once more, by their season. Hindrances to prayer, for instance, if they are Satanic, come out of the natural course and relation of human thoughts. It is a law of mental science that one thought suggests another and the next the next and so on—as the links of a chain draw one another.

But Satanic temptations do not come in the regular order of thinking. They dash upon the mind at odd times. My soul is in prayer—it would be unnatural that I should then blaspheme—yet then the blasphemy comes. Therefore it is clearly Satanic and not from my own mind. If I am set upon doing my Master’s will and presently an unfaithful thought assails me and—being apart from the natural run of my mind and thoughts—it may be at once ejected as not being mine and may be set down to the account of the devil, who is the true father of it.

By these means I think we may tell when Satan hinders and when it is our own heart, or when it is of God. We ought carefully to watch that we do not put the saddle on the wrong horse. Do not blame the devil when it is yourself. And on the other hand, when the Lord puts a bar in your way, do not say, “That is Satan,” and so go against the Providence of God. It may be difficult at times to see the way of duty, but if you go to the Throne of God in prayer you will soon discover it. “Bring here the ephod,” said David, when he was in difficulty. Say the same! Go to the great High Priest whose business it is to give forth the oracle! Lo, upon His breast hangs the Urim and Thummim and you shall, from Him, find direction in every time of difficulty and dilemma.

IV. Supposing that we have ascertained that hindrances in our way really come from Satan, WHAT THEN? I have but one piece of advice and that is—go on—hindrance or no hindrance, in the path of duty as God the Holy Spirit enables you. If Satan hinders you, I have already hinted that this opposition should cheer you. “I did not expect,” said a Christian minister, “to be easy in this particular pastorate, or else I would not have come here. I always count it,” he said, “to be my duty to show the devil that I am his enemy and if I do that, I expect that he will show me that he is mine.”

If you are now opposed and you can trace that opposition distinctly to Satan, congratulate yourself upon it—do not sit down and fret! Why, it is a great thing that a poor creature like you can actually vex the great Prince of Darkness and win his hate! It makes the race of man the more noble that it comes in conflict with a race of spirits and stands foot to foot even with the Prince of Darkness himself. It is a dreadful thing, doubtless, that you should be hindered by such an adversary, but it is most hopeful—for if he were your friend—you might have cause to fear, indeed!

Stand out against him because you now have an opportunity of making a greater gain than you could have had, had he been quiet. You could never have had a victory over him if you had not engaged in conflict with him. The poor saint would go on his inglorious way to Heaven if he were unmolested. But being molested, every step of his pathway becomes glorious! Our position today is like that described by Bunyan, when from the top of the palace the song was heard*—*

*“Come in, come in,  
Eternal glory you shall win.”*

Now merely to ascend the stairs of the palace, though safe work, would not have been very ennobling. But when the enemy crowded round the door and blocked up every stair and the hero came to the man with the ink-horn, who sat before the door and said, “Write my name down, Sir,” then, to get from the lowest step to the top where the bright ones were singing—every inch was glorious! If devils did not oppose my path from earth to Heaven, I might travel joyously, peacefully, safely—but certainly without renown! But now, when every step is contested in winning our pathway to Glory, every single step is covered with immortal fame! Press on then, Christian! The more opposition, the more honor!

Be in earnest against these hindrances when you consider, again, what you lose if you do not resist him and overcome him. To allow Satan to overcome me would be eternal ruin to my soul. Certainly it would forever blast all hopes of my usefulness. If I retreat and turn my back in the day of battle what will the rest of God’s servants say? What shouts of derision will ring over the battlefield? How will the banner of the Covenant be trailed in the mire! Why, we must not, we dare not, play the coward—we dare not give way to the insinuation of Satan and turn from the Master— for the defeat were then too dreadful to be endured.

Beloved, let me feed your courage with the recollection that your Lord and Master has overcome. See Him there before you. He of the thorncrown has fought the enemy and broken his head—Satan has been completely worsted by the Captain of your salvation! And that victory was representative—he fought and won it for you! You have to contend with a defeated foe and one who knows and feels his disgrace! And though he may fight with desperation, yet he fights not with true courage, for he is hopeless of ultimate victory. Strike, then, for Christ has destroyed him! Down with him, for Jesus has had him under His foot! You, weakest of all the host, you will be triumphant, for the Captain has triumphed before you!

Lastly, remember that you have a promise to make you gird up your loins and play the man this day—“Resist the devil and he shall flee from you.” Christian minister, resign not your situation! Do not think of sending in your resignation because the Church is divided and because the enemy is making headway! Resist the devil! Flee not, but make him flee! Young Christian men—you who have begun to preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or visit from house to house—though Satan hinders you very much I pray you, now, redouble your efforts! It is because Satan is afraid of you that he resists you, because he would rob you of the great blessing which is now descending on your head. Resist him and stand fast.

You Christians pleading in prayer—let not go your hold upon the Covenant Angel—for now that Satan hinders you it is because the blessing is descending! You who are seeking Christ, close not those eyes! Turn not away your face from Calvary’s streaming tree—now that Satan hinders you, it is because the night is almost over and the daystar begins to shine! Brethren, you who are most molested, most sorrowfully tried, most borne down, yours is the brighter hope—be courageous now—play the man for God, for Christ, for your own soul—and the day shall yet come when you, with your Master, shall ride triumphantly through the streets of the New Jerusalem!

Sin, death and Hell will be captive at your chariot wheels and you, with your Lord, will be crowned as victor, having overcome through the blood of the Lamb! May God bless dear Friends now present. I do not know to whom this sermon may be most suitable, but I believe it is sent especially to certain tried saints. The Lord enable them to find comfort in it! Amen.

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—***1Pe 4:12**Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
Sermon #1758 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Th 3.8

THE PASTOR’S LIFE WRAPPED UP WITH HIS PEOPLE’S STEADFASTNESS A PLEADING REMINDER FOR THE NEW YEAR  
NO. 1758

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.”  
***1Th 3:8***.

MINISTERS who are really sent of God greatly rejoice in the spiritual prosperity of their people. If they see God’s Word prosper, they prosper. If the Church of God is blessed, they are blessed. Their life is wrapped up in the spiritual life of their people. Never is the servant of God so full of delight as when he sees that the Holy Spirit is visiting his hearers, making them to know the Lord, and confirming them in that heavenly knowledge. On the other hand, if God does not bless the word of His servants, it is like death to them! To be preaching and to have no blessing makes them heavy of heart—the chariot wheels are taken off and they drag heavily along—they seem to have no power nor liberty. They get depressed and they go back to their Master with this complaint, “Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

He revives and cheers them—and they come back to their service—but if they do not see a manifest blessing resting upon the people, they cry and sigh and are like dying men. If the Lord willed to do so, He might have made robots to preach and these would only need to be wound up and allowed to run down again! They would have known no feelings of joy or of sorrow and would have been invulnerable to the arrows of grief. We have heard of the Iron Duke. Iron preachers would have been enduring instruments and would never have been laid aside by mental depression. But the sympathy of the preacher is God’s great instrument for blessing the hearer! If you read a sermon in a book it is good, but if you hear it preached fresh from the man’s heart, it is far more effective. There is a living fellow-feeling about it, and that is the power which God has, in all ages, been pleased to use—the power of a spirit which He has made sensitive with affection—so sensitive that it rises to joy when its affectionate purpose is accomplished and sinks to depths of grief when that purpose fails.

This, I take it, is what the Apostle means when he says, “Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” The people can make the pastor happy beyond expression by their being rich in Grace and happy in Christ! But they can make him miserable beyond all description if they are either unstable or insincere. Dearly Beloved, I have often rejoiced in God as I have seen the work of the Spirit among you. It is no small joy that for many years we have never been without an increase to the Church. With few exceptions we have never gathered at our monthly communions without receiving a considerable number into our membership.

During these years some have turned back, to our great sorrow, and some have flagged, to our solemn grief. But others have persistently carried on the work of God and have developed gifts and graces which have made them qualified for larger spheres. At this day those at home come behind in no gifts and those abroad do not forget the hallowed training of Zion. In every part of the earth some are engaged in holy service who have gone out from this Church. For all this, our heart must be grateful. But these are evil times. These are times, the like of which I have not seen before, in which the foundations are removed and “what shall the righteous do?” The winds are out. The tacklings are loosed. The mariners reel to and fro! Everything seems to be drifting. Men know not where they are!

Half the professing Christians of the present day do not know their heads from their heels and the half that do know seem inclined to take to their heels and run rather than stand steadfast in the faith and wait till evil days are over! It is time that we spoke to you concerning steadfastness—that you be not like idle boys that leap hedges and ditches after every nest that silly birds may choose to make—but that you keep to the King’s Highway of holiness and truth and hold fast to the doctrines and the practices which are taught us in the Word of God. I say to you by this discourse, “Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.”

It is a matter of life and death to us that you should be rooted, grounded, and settled. Notice first, that some are not in the Lord. Secondly, some appear to be in the Lord, but they are not standing fast. And thirdly, that some in the Lord stand fast in the Lord and these are our life—“Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.”

I. First, SOME ARE NOT IN THE LORD AT ALL. A solid mass of infidelity and godlessness hems us in. Our heart is heavy because this great city is determined to shut its eyes to the Light of God . There are streets upon streets in which none attend the House of God and we have it on credible information that in certain districts if one man in a street is seen to go regularly to a place of worship, his neighbors mark him as a singular being. The home-born Londoner of the working classes, as a rule, has no care for a place of worship. If I were living in the country, I think I would be content with but half a wage sooner than to come and dwell in this ungodly place!

Our members try to bring up their children in God’s fear, but they are often compelled to quit their homes because of the filthy conduct of those who defile our streets. Yet this is not my present theme. Our greater sorrow is that there are many who hear the Gospel and are not in the Lord! We are not sorry that they should come to hear the Word of God—would to God that all Christless souls would hear of Christ! But we are sorry that they have come month after month, year after year, and have received no saving benefit. I still meet, here and there, with those who tell me, “I used to hear you in Park Street and Exeter Hall,” and yet I gather from them that they are undecided. I have small hope for them if 30 years of ministry have not brought them to Christ!

At any rate, these many years add to the dreadful probability that they will continue to make the Word of God to be unto themselves a savor of death unto death. If I could pick out of this audience, tonight, by Infallible guidance, one man or one woman and could point to that person and say, “Such a one will certainly go down to Hell to endure the everlasting wrath of God”—and if you knew that I was speaking like a Prophet from God and that it was certainly so—you would turn round and look with deepest grief upon that doomed soul! You would shudder to be sitting in the same pew! And yet though, thank God, we may not speak with that certainty, the probability grows so great as almost to amount to a certainty concerning those upon whom entreaties have been wasted, upon whom expostulations have been wasted, by whom invitations have been refused, that they will continue to harden their hearts until at last they sink into the place where mercy never enters!

Ah, Lord, these are heavy tidings and Your saints feel them! I know I am speaking to many who deeply sympathize with me when I say that the thought of this is a worm that makes our joys decay. I mean the thought that some of you contribute to God’s work and are, in many points, excellent—and yet you lack the one thing necessary—and after having joined with God’s people in outward acts of devotion you will be driven from His Presence forever! O Infinite Mercy, grant that it may not be so, but may these men and women, even now, be led to believe in Jesus and be saved! We die when we think of those who are not in the Lord at all! How it would revive us if we could see them saved!

If there is a deadening influence about the thought that some few among us are not converted, think of what the effect must be upon a minister’s mind if he shall have labored long and seen no fruit. There may be instances in which a man has been faithful, but not successful—places where, for a time, the dew falls not and the softening influences of the Spirit are not given. Then the soil breaks the plowshare and the weary ox is ready to faint. I began to preach while yet a youth, scarcely 16 years of age, but before I had preached half a dozen times I saw persons affected by those sermons. I pined to find some heart that had looked to Jesus while I had preached Him—and I have photographed upon my memory, at this very moment, a very humble clay-walled cottage which seemed to me to be a sacred spot, for I was told by a venerable deacon that it was the house of a poor woman who had sought and found the Savior through my ministry.

I did not let the week conclude till I had seen her, for I hungered for the joy of meeting with one whom I had brought to Christ! If I found one soul converted, I took heart and looked for more. Brothers, are you working for Jesus? Then you know what it is to feel the shadow of death when you do not win a soul! Does it not seem hard to be knocking for Christ against a door that never opens, but has fresh bolts put on it to keep it closed? Be not ashamed of yourself because you feel distressed—it proves your capacity for being used. By-and-by God will bless you and then you will understand the text, “Now we live.” You will find that your pulse is quickened, your heart’s blood warmed—you will be filled with a more Divine life as you rise nearer to the dignity of a savior of men and taste the unspeakable joys for which Christ laid down His life!

II. We notice, secondly, that THERE ARE SOME WHO PROFESS TO BE IN CHRIST, BUT THEY CERTAINLY ARE NOT STANDING FAST. This is a Marah—a bitter well. This is a source of heartbreak and of sore tribulation to the servant of God in whom the Spirit of God dwells, namely, that, first, there are many over whom we rejoice who, nevertheless, altogether apostatize. Use the best judgment that you can, there will be some added to a Church who are not really the Lord’s people. They run well—“What hinders them that they should not obey the truth?” They appear to begin in the Spirit, yet, by-and-by, they attempt to be made perfect in the flesh.

Oh, foolish ones, “Who has bewitched you?” They seem to be all that we want them to be, for a time, but soon they are nothing that they should be. And this does not happen merely during the first six months or so, otherwise we might set them on probation, but, alas, it has happened to men that have grown gray in the Church—esteemed and honored—and yet they have fallen till their names cannot be mentioned without sorrow! We can never feel sufficiently grateful to our Lord for allowing a Judas to be among the 12, for thus, He, Himself, bore what has been to His servants the most crushing of grief! The man that went to the House of God in company with us has betrayed, not only us, but our Master, and the Truth of God. This has often happened in the history of the Church and, therefore, we may expect it. But whenever it comes, it is a stab to the very soul! Paul, I think, if he were here, would say, “Now we die, because these men do not stand fast in the Lord.”

Happy am I to have been so largely spared this heart-wounding calamity! Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, we live, if you stand fast in the Lord! But it is as death to us if you turn aside! But there are other forms of instability. Many do not behave in such a way that we could remove their names from the Church roll, but they decline in Grace. Far too many grow worldly and it is especially the case when they grow wealthy. Well did one say to me the other day who has risen to riches, “I almost regret that I have ever changed my position, for I find my difficulties wonderfully increased—my difficulties especially with my family. They ask for things, now, in the form of amusements which they never would have thought of if I had not become wealthy.”

When a man toils and moves to heap riches together, he is laboriously endeavoring to make it difficult for himself to be saved. Yet some think that the main objective of life is to load themselves so that they cannot easily follow after Christ. It is poor progress to grow rich in gold but poor in Grace. We see others whom we look upon as likely to be leaders and helpers, who, if not from this cause, yet from some other, are diverted from the work of God. We do not, now, expect to see them at Prayer Meeting—it would be rather astonishing if they came! We do not dare expect them to conduct a tract society, or a lay-preaching association, or a Sunday school class, for they are careless as to the salvation of souls.

We know some who were once full of zeal, but now they are neither cold nor hot. These may seem trifles to the thoughtless, but they are not trifles to those who watch after their souls and will have to give an account! Whenever I have seen it, I have said to myself, “How much of this is due to me? How much must I blame myself for this?” And one cannot answer that question immediately. Many thoughts and searching considerations are needed, but, believe me, there is nothing which eats more like a sharp acid into a man’s inmost soul to cause him a daily grief than when he sees those that profess to be servants of Christ not answering to the processes of Grace, but acting like worldly men!

There are some of whom I must speak even weeping because they vex our spirit by their neglect of their Master’s business. In these days there are other forms of this lack of steadfastness and they come up in this way. Some are always shifting their doctrinal opinions. Within the last 10 years we have had the most remarkable selection of abominations in the way of new doctrines that ever cursed our human race! If all the heresies that have been put forth were true, I do not know whether there would remain either Heaven, or Hell, or earth, or God, or man—for all these have been removed by the foul finger of doubt! Some go in not so much for disbeliefs as for fanaticisms and, believing nothing one day, the world is to believe everything the next!

We have already miracles restored to us and a daring person has arisen who assumes the name of Christ! A bottomless pit of fanaticism is yawning. Hell from beneath is vomiting all manner of absurdities to vex the Church of God. Now is the time for steadfastness! It is a blessed thing for a man to know what he believes and to hold to it—to have no ear for novelty-mongers, but to say—“If it is new, it is not true. I have my colors nailed to the mast and I cannot take them down.” We know some who are not steadfast in their service of Christ. When a man claims to be perfect, he is wholly useless to us—he is sure to leave his work. He needs all his time to admire his own perfections! It is not possible for him to be of any further service among such poor sinners as we are—and off he goes to stand by himself and say, “God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are.” I would a great deal sooner remain imperfect and be of some use to God, than brag of my excellence and do nothing!

Brothers, stick to your work for God! If you preach, preach on! If called to teach in the Sunday school, at your peril leave your class! If God has bid you go from door to door with tracts, stick to it, and when the Lord Himself shall come, you cannot be found in a better position than in that of discharging the offices to which He has called you! He would not have us stand with our mouths wide open gazing into the air! The best position for a servant, when his Master comes, is to be found doing his Master’s will. We live, if you stand fast in the Lord as to doctrine and as to holy service, and especially we live if the Lord keeps you, dear Brothers and Sisters, true in the matter of holy conversation. I call that holiness which minds its work at home. I call that holiness which makes a kind father, a true brother, an obedient child and makes me mind my daily calling and see that I make others happy and so commend the Gospel to them.

See to it that your personal characters in secret before God, at home before your friends and outside in the world where eagle eyes watch to perceive your infirmities, are spotless and unblameable! For then we live! But when men can turn round and fling in our teeth, “These are your Christians, and they deal as others deal and talk as others talk,” then down goes our spirit and we wish we could die! It is life to lead a band of earnest steadfast men who know the Truth of God and live the Truth of God and are ready to die for the Truth of God! This is an honor of which we feel we are unworthy, though we aspire to it. But to lead inconsistent, dubious, half-hearted, idle people onward to some imaginary goal is a doom compared with which death, itself, is delight.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, the reason why every true minister sinks in heart when those who seem to be in Christ do not stand fast is this—unless men are steadfast, the Church is weakened. The strength of any Church must be the aggregate of the strength of all the members put together. Therefore if you have a set of weak Brethren, you multiply the weakness of each one by the number of the membership. What a hospital is the result! If each Believer is strong, then the whole Church is strong. And that is our desire—we pine to see the Church of God vigorous in her holy calling! If Believers are steadfast, then God is glorified. Transient piety brings no glory to God! God is not honored by that religion which is taken up today and laid down tomorrow. It is only by perseverance—yes, and perseverance to the end, that glory is brought to God.

The minister is disappointed of his reasonable expectations when men do not stand fast. He is like a farmer who sees the seed grow and just when it is about to yield him a crop, he spies out black smut and his wheat is blighted. He may well weep over the fact that it went so far and yet so utterly failed! Judge, you mothers, what it is to nurse your children till they are near to manhood and then to see them sink into the grave. You have wished, perhaps, that you had been childless sooner than see your dear offspring taken from you. Very similar is the sorrow of the true pastor—when he expects that God will be glorified by his converts, they turn aside and his work is lost. Or if they do not turn aside unto perdition, yet if they are unstable, their joy is lessened and their usefulness is marred. And this is no small thing.

We live in your joy and if you miss it, we grieve for your incalculable loss, for believe me, there is no joy like the highest form of Christianity— and to lose this is a catastrophe! The beginnings of piety are often bitter— and difficult advances are often made through the sea and through the terrible wilderness—but the higher stage of piety is the Beulah land from which you look into the Paradise of God, yourself living on the borders of it! If any child of God should miss this highest joy, it is a most heavy grief to those who watch for their souls. Be you steadfast, for so we live.

III. Then THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE IN THE LORD AND WHO STAND FAST IN THE LORD—and these are our life! They are our life because their holy conduct fills us with living confidence. I tell you, Brothers and Sisters, when I have seen the holy generosity of members of this Church making sacrifices to serve the Lord. When I have seen the holy courage of Brothers and Sisters standing up for Jesus and bearing reproach for the sake of principle—and speaking out the Truth of God in defiance of ridicule. When, in fact, I have seen many things that I will not mention now—I have said to myself, “These are fruits that could not have been produced except by the Truth and by the Spirit of God!”

Then have I felt very confident in the Gospel which has been so adorned by your actions. Certain of our Beloved elders and deacons passed away, to our deep sorrow, not very long ago, and when I came down from their death chambers, I did not require any further argument to prove the religion of the Lord Jesus—the Holy Spirit set His seal upon the Truth by their joyful departures. If infidels had met me as I left those choice deathbeds, I would not have argued with them for a single moment—I would have simply laughed them to scorn—for I would have felt like a man that has looked at the sun till he cannot bear the blaze of it any longer—and then hears a blind man swear that there is no sun! With what confidence we speak when holy lives and joyful deaths prove the Gospel!

Again, how often have I seen fears which have crept into my soul driven away by my dear people! This is a time of fear, when all Solomon’s men that keep watch about his bed had need, each one, to carry his sword drawn because of fear in the night. Yet, when I have seen God’s people steadfast, my fears have fled! Yes, I have said the Lord keeps the feet of His saints. He is as a wall of fire round about His own. If it were possible, the powers of evil would deceive the very elect—but it is not possible! The saints are steadfast and each steadfast one cheers his minister and helps him to lay aside his anxieties and to rejoice in the certainty that the Gospel will triumph!

The steadfast become our life by stimulating us to greater exertion. I believe that the steadfast help the minister to a high degree of usefulness. When the man of God sees his people living to God at a high rate of piety, he speaks many things which otherwise he never would have spoken. He glories in the work of God and with no bated breath or trace of hesitation, he points to his people and cries, “See what God has done!” He exults over his converts with a holy joy. He cries, “See what they used to be and what they are now! See how life has been made to spring up in the midst of death and how the Light of God shines, where before, darkness reigned.”

Take away the living evidences of Divine power from the Church and you lower the preacher’s spirit at once—and deprive him of power to demonstrate his commission by the signs that follow it. I am sure, dear Friends, you would have a deadening influence on me if you were not steadfast in holiness. How can I preach up holiness if someone sitting in the gallery looks down and says, “Yonder is one of his members and a worse thief I do not know!” Can I preach up the glory of Grace when someone cries, “Fine talk, but I saw one of the members of his Church half drunk the other night! Is that what is meant by the free spirit?” If behind me there is a regiment of deceivers and hypocrites, my position is horrible. Surely I had better give over the preaching of the Gospel when you give over the living of the Gospel! My task, in itself difficult, is rendered absolutely impossible if while I preach one thing, you live another!

Happily it has not been so among you and you will not permit it to be so in the future. May God of Infinite Mercy grant to me that I may live because Christ lives in you! That I may be strong because I can fall back upon you as my “living Epistles, known and read of all men!” Of godly established Christians, I may quote the words of David, “Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them: he shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” The best answer to all the opponents of the old-fashioned Gospel is the godly zeal of an earnest Church. “Now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” I had many things to say to you, but my time has gone. Only may God the Holy Spirit dwell with the preacher that he may preach the Lord Jesus and not himself. And may the Spirit of God dwell with you, dear members of this Church, that you may live under His influence and may bear His fruit unto the Glory of God!

As for you that are members of other Churches, may the Lord make you to be to your own pastors, their joy and crown! It will be ill for you if, in the Day of Judgment, they have to give an ill account of you. We do not think enough about that trial which each man will have to undergo, or of that account which all under shepherds will have to render in the Last Great Day. It is written, “If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands.” Oh, my Master, when You search my garments for the blood of souls, grant that I may be found clear of the blood of all men! What a Heaven this will be! Remember that other Word of God, “If the watchman warns them, and they take no heed of the warning, they shall perish; but he has delivered his soul.”

May every one of us take care to deliver his soul! It is my highest prayer to be able to make full proof of my ministry, that in all of you I may have an unquestioned testimony to my lifelong fidelity to my Lord and to your souls. Pray for me daily and for yourselves, also, that by our steadfastness this favored Church may be made to live and flourish till our Lord Himself shall come!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Thessalonians 1;** *1Th 2:18* **to** *1Th 3:13***.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—686, 667, 684.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3077 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Th 4.13

DEATH—A SLEEP  
NO. 3077

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1908. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.”** *1Th 4:13***.**

[On January 31, 1892, the Beloved preacher, “after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep.” That verse was the text of the Sermon (#2243, Volume 38) published on the day of his funeral, to which Mrs. Spurgeon gave the title, “HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org. Sixteen years have elapsed since his Home-going, but C. H. Spurgeon “yet speaks” by means of the printed page, and so many unpublished manuscripts still remain that the publication of the Sermons can still be continued for several years, by God’s Grace.]

THERE may be some few extraordinary cases “where ignorance is bliss” and where “‘tis folly to be wise.” But for the most part, ignorance is the mother of misery—and if we had more knowledge, we would find it a tower of strength against many fears and alarms which beget sadness and sorrows in dark untutored minds. True it is that the utmost diligence of the student cannot shield his body or his mind from fatigue and distress. In guarding against one class of ills, we may become exposed to another—as Solomon testifies that “much study is a weariness of the flesh,” and again, “in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increases knowledge, increases sorrow.” Still, let it be remembered that “wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense”—in the increase of either we may augment our cares, yet in the increase of both we think there is a remunerative profit!

But I would commend to you a wisdom which springs not up from earth, but comes down from Heaven. He that is rich towards God knows that “the blessing of the Lord, it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” And he that is made wise unto salvation, has received that wisdom which “gives life to them that have it.” If we had more celestial wisdom, I believe we would have more of heavenly joy and less of carnal sorrow. Many a Doctrine of the Gospel becomes the means of sadness and misery to the heart simply because it is not understood. Ignorance of the Bible often troubles men’s hearts and consciences—and prevents them from finding that peace of God which a little more knowledge of it would be sure to give them. And I am certain that ignorance or forgetfulness of many of the exceedingly great and precious promises of God and of the marvelous things He has engaged to do for His people, often causes our eyes to flow with tears and our hearts to be overwhelmed with suffering. The more a Christian knows of his religion, the better for his peace and for his happiness! The Apostle says, “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren.” He knew that was an ill condition and we may well shun it. Depend upon this—the more thoroughly you understand the Gospel, the more you will find that the Gospel blesses you and makes you happy! Each word that Eternal Wisdom speaks is pure. Give heed, then, to the sure word of Scripture and so shall you journey as with chart in hand, escaping a thousand dangers to which benighted travelers are exposed— and enjoying a thousand delights which they cannot discern! But alas for those who walk in darkness! They have nothing to cheer or enliven, but everything to frighten and terrify them.

Leaving this preliminary point, for I trust you seek to avoid all ignorance and ask God to lead you into the knowledge of all Truth of God, I proceed now to the special application of my text, as the Holy Spirit has designed to place a lamp in the sepulcher where darkness was known to hold an undisputed sway. And here we have, first, an affecting metaphor—a metaphor for death—“those who are asleep.” Secondly, there is a solemn distinction. There are some that die without hope and there are others for whom we sorrow not as for them that are without hope. And then, thirdly, there is a very gentle exhortation—not to sorrow for those who sleep in Jesus, “even as others which have no hope.”

I. So, in the first place, here is A MOST AFFECTING SIMILE—“those who are asleep.”  
Scripture continually uses the term, “sleep,” to express death. Our Savior did. He said, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps.” And so well, with such an evident and appropriate truthfulness, did He describe death as being a sleep, that His disciples mistook the sense of His words and said, “Lord, if he sleeps, he shall do well.” But Jesus spoke not of the transient sleep of the weary, but of the deep slumber of death. And very frequently, even in the Old Testament, you find it said that certain persons “slept with their fathers, and were buried in a sepulcher.” Nor did they count that sleep a hopeless end of life, but as David said, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness”—they expected to awake from that slumber into which they believed death did cast their bodies. In the New Testament the same emblem is continually used. And it is very pleasant to remember that in the old catacombs of Rome, where the bodies of many saints were buried, it is continually found inscribed on their graves, “She sleeps.” “He sleeps in Jesus.” “He shall wake up one day” and similar epitaphs which mark the firm belief of Christians that sleep was a very fine and beautiful picture of death!  
Allow me to guard against an evil supposition that may spring up here. When death is called a sleep, it is not because the soul sleeps— that, we are told by Holy Scripture, rises at once to Heaven. The soul of the saint is found at once before the Throne of God. It is the body which is said to sleep. The soul sleeps not! Absent from the body, it is present with the Lord. It stretches its wings and flies away up to yonder realm of joy! And there, reveling in delight, bathing itself in bliss, it finds a rest from the turmoil of earth infinitely better than any rest in sleep. It is the body, then, that sleeps, and the body only. I will try and tell you why we think the metaphor is used for the sleep of the body.

In the first place, because sleep is a suspension of the faculties, but not a destruction of the body. When we see anyone naturally asleep, we believe that body will wake up again. We do not suppose that those eyes will be sealed up in perpetual darkness, that those bones and that flesh will lie dormant, never more to feel the consciousness of being, or stir with the impulse of life. No, we expect to see the functions of life resumed, the eyelids open to admit the cheering rays of light and the limbs to become again exercised with activity. So, when we bury our dead in their graves, we are taught to believe that they are asleep. Our faith, (which is warranted by the Word of God), discerns in the corruption of death a suspension of the powers of the body rather than an annihilation of the matter itself. The earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, but it cannot be destroyed. Though the bones are scattered to the four winds of Heaven, yet at the call of the Lord God, they shall come together again, bone to bone. Though the eyes are first glazed and then devoured from their sockets, they shall be surely restored—that each saint in his own flesh may see God! In this confidence we deposit the body of each departed saint in the grave as in a bed. We doubt not that God will guard the dust of the precious sons and daughters of Zion. We believe that in the Resurrection there shall be a perfect identity of the body. You may call it unphilosophical if you please, but you cannot show me that it is unbiblical! Science cannot demonstrate it, you say. But then science cannot disprove it. Reason stands abashed while Revelation lifts her trumpet-tongue and exclaims, “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.”

Look not, then, on the corpse of your Brother or your Sister in Christ, Beloved, to take an eternal farewell. Say rather, “When I stretch myself on my couch at night, I hope to wake at the first call of the busy morn. But I not only hope, I am sure that this sleeping heir of immortality shall awake from the sound slumbers of his sepulchral repose at the dawn of the heavenly Bridegroom’s appearing.” “Ah,” says one, “‘twas but an hour or two ago I was in the closed chamber where my little baby is laid out. I lifted the coffin lid and looked at its dear little placid face, and I can quite believe what you say—death is a sleep—it seemed just like it.” “No,” says another, “it was only yesterday that I was in a London graveyard, appalled with the sight of skulls and bare, disjointed bones, and I can never look upon death in the way you represent.” Now then, my Friends, mark this well, for I can give one reply to you both—it is not by the exercise of your sense, but by the exercise of your faith that you are to get this blessed hope! You might bitterly gaze on the face of the dead long enough before you would catch a symptom of returning life. You might grope about in the dark damp vault long enough before a ray of light would show you an avenue by which the captives can be liberated from their gloomy cells. No, no! You must visit the tomb of Jesus! You must go and “see the place where the Lord lay”—then you will soon perceive how the stone is rolled away and how to rise again is made possible and certain, too!

Moreover, the term, “sleep,” is beautifully used to express the quiet of the body. It rests from labor. Look on the sleeper. He has been weary. He has toiled all day long, but there is no weariness now. He breathes softly. Sometimes a dream may disturb him, but he is not weary—he is resting in the unconsciousness of slumber. It is often pleasing to look upon the face of a weary sleeper. Have you ever passed along a country lane and there, by the roadside, seen the harvestman as he is resting awhile from his toils, lying down upon the bank? What a heavy sleep he has and what a blessed smile there is on his countenance while he is enjoying that rest! Such is the natural sleep of the body, from which comes the metaphor of my text. And is not this sleep of death a resting after toil? The poor limbs are weary. They are now stretched in the grave and covered over with the green sod, that they may not hear the noise above their heads nor be disturbed by the busy din. They are put in their quiet abodes, down deep there in the earth, that none may alarm them. And now let the cannon roar over their tomb, let the thunder shake the sky, let the lightning flash—no sight nor sound can startle them, or cause them dreams! In such still chambers of retirement, their troubles are now over. “There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest.” The body has gone through its battle. The warrior sleeps, the conqueror rests. His brow shall soon be decked with laurels—the very brow which now slumbers in the tomb awhile shall yet rise again to wear the crown of everlasting life! But now it rests awhile till the preparations are complete for the triumphant entry into the Kingdom of God when Christ shall come to receive body and soul into their everlasting resting place!

Note again, sleep is used as a figure for death to show us the entire unconcern which the dead feel concerning anything which is going on below. The sleeper knows nothing of what is going on. The thief may be in the house, but he knows it not. There is a storm, but he slumbers and knows no terror. There may happen a thousand accidents abroad, or even in the chamber where he rests, but as long as sleep can hold him fast, he shall be entirely unconcerned about them and shall not notice them! And such, Beloved, is the case with the dead. Their bodies, at least, are entirely free from concern. Empires may totter, kingdoms fall and mighty revolutions shake the world, but none of these things will—

*“Ever make their hearts ache, or*

*Break the spell of their profound repose.”*There may be a falling away, a backsliding in the Church, but the minster in the grave knows it not. The tongue of Wickliffe shall not move with stern rebuke. The eyes of Knox shall not flash with indignation. Yes, and each bodily organ through which the mind was known to reveal itself is now closed. “So man lies down and rises not: till the heavens are no more they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.”

There is a yet sweeter view of this metaphor which I will now point out to you. Sleep, you know, is a means of refreshment by the recruiting of our exhausted strength to fit us for a fresh exercise of our faculties when we awake. Such, too, is death. The sleep of death is requisite as a preparation for Heaven, so far as the body is concerned. The soul must be prepared by a blessed change worked upon it in this time-state. But the body awaits its full redemption until the Resurrection. Though I may not follow the metaphor in the process by which the change is worked, I can believe it will quite hold good in the result. The refreshing of the body is of course gradually brought about during the hours of sleep, just as changes are successively going on in the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies. The awaking of the one and the sprouting of the other, in health and vigor, result from causes that take place in the interval. But I am not prepared to say that it is exactly so with the sleeping dust of man’s earthly tabernacle. The greedy worm that devours it, the general corruption that preys upon it and the foul earth with which it mingles may consume that which is corruptible. But these can have no power to refine the nature, or to produce the glorious likeness to be borne by the saints. You must always guard against straining a figure, especially when, by doing so, you would make it contradict the plain didactic teachings of the Scriptures. We do not look down into the grave as if it were a refining pot to purify our nature, or a bath in which the garments of mortality are to be cleansed—we look upward to Heaven, from whence the Savior shall come—“our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

Once more, there is a very precious word in connection with this sleep which we must not overlook. At the 14th verse it says that they “sleep in Jesus.” Sweet thought! This teaches us that death does not dissolve the union which subsists between the Believer and Christ. When the body dies, it does not cease to be a part of Christ! “Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?” said the Apostle to those who were still living in the world. And now, as to those whose earthly course is done, our departed friends “sleep in Jesus”—they are as much in Christ now as they were when upon earth! And their bodies, which were precious to the Lord and preserved as the apple of His eye, are as precious to Him now as they ever were! It was once their delight to have communion with Jesus in His death and Resurrection, as knowing themselves one with Him when He died and rose again. And not less surely did Jesus hold fellowship with them in their death, making Himself known to them when they endured their last struggle. How often have we seen the eyes brighten up with an almost supernatural brilliance just before they were closed on all beneath the skies! How often have we seen the hand raised with the parting expression of triumph, and then laid motionless by the side! How often has the Presence of the Beloved sustained the frail tenement of the expiring Christian till he has defied death “to quench his immortality, or shake his trust in God!”

And mark how the saints in Jesus, when their bodies sleep in peace, have perpetual fellowship with Him—yes, better fellowship than we can enjoy! We have but the transitory glimpse of His face—they gaze upon it every moment. We see Him “through a glass, darkly.” They behold Him “face to face.” We sip of the brook by the way—they plunge into the very ocean of unbounded love! We look up, sometimes, and see our Father smile. Look whenever they may, His face is always full of smiles for them. We get some drops of comfort, but they get the honeycomb itself. They have their cup filled with new wine, running over with perennial, unalloyed delights. They are full of peace and joy forever. They “sleep in Jesus!”

Beloved, such a description of death makes us wish to sleep too! O Lord, let us go to sleep with the departed! O happy hour when a clod of the valley shall be our pillow! Though it is so hard, we shall not be affected by it. Happy hour, when earth shall be our bed! Cold shall be the clay, but we shall not know it—we shall slumber and we shall rest. The worm shall hold carnival within our bones and corruption shall riot over our frame, but we shall not feel it. Corruption can but feed on the corruptible—mortality can but prey upon the mortal.

Oh, let me rest! Come, night, and let me slumber! Come, my last hour! Let me bow myself upon the bed! Come, Death, oh, come lightly to my couch! Yes, strike if you will, but your stroke is the loving touch that makes my body slumber! Happy, happy, they who die in the Lord!

II. Now, secondly, here is A SOLEMN DISTINCTION.  
All men die, but all men die not alike. There are two sorts of death. I speak not now of the inferior animals—of them we never read in Scripture that they sleep—I speak of MAN, concerning whom it is certain that “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” There is the death of the righteous, which is peaceful, happy and joyous beyond expression! In its future consequences there is, moreover, the death of the wicked, sad in itself, but doleful, indeed, in its inevitable results throughout a dread eternity! Come, then, Beloved, let us consider this distinction. There are some, we must infer from this text, for whom we can sorrow as those for whom we have no hope. While there are others for whom we are told we may not thus sorrow— concerning their death we have every hope and every joy.  
Turning for a moment to the heathen nations, we do not wonder that there is a great deal of grief expressed at their funerals, that they hire women who pluck their hair, make hideous noises and distress their bodies with all kinds of unnatural contortions in order to express the utmost agony—while the relatives and friends cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes and spend their time in weeping and wailing and lamentations. We do not wonder that such customs should prevail and be handed down among those who have no knowledge of a resurrection! They suppose that when the body is consigned to the tomb, they shall never see it again, so we do not marvel that they should cry— *“Weep for the dead, and bewail her!  
Weep for the dead, and bewail her!  
She is gone; she is gone!  
We shall see her no more—  
Weep for the dead, and bewail her!”*

You see, there is no hope in their case to mitigate their woe. But in a nominally Christian land, although we are persuaded that all men will have a resurrection, yet how many die of whom we have no hope! I mean to say, we have, in the first place, no hope of ever meeting them again. We frequently sing in our Sunday school—our little children sing—

*“Oh, that will be joyful,  
Joyful, joyful!  
When we meet to part no more!”*

But there is another side to that Truth of God—  
*“Oh, that will be doleful,  
Doleful, doleful!  
When we part to meet no more!”*

When our wicked friends die, if we are righteous, we must remember that we shall never meet them again. We may behold them, but it will be a hideous sight. We may see them as Lazarus saw the rich man in Hell. We may behold them with the great gulf fixed between us—but remember that the last shake of the hand with an ungodly relative is an everlasting farewell! That last whisper of sympathy on the dying bed is indeed final— we shall never address them with another soft word of comfort, never again shall we call them friends—we are parted then, forever. Death, like some mighty earthquake, shakes two hearts apart which seemed to be indissolubly united—and a great gulf of fire and wrath shall separate them. One in Heaven and the other in Hell—they shall never meet again—there is no hope of it.

Some of you we could not bear to lose, yet, if you fall asleep, we shall with holy assurance consign you to your grave and say, “Lord, we thank You that it has pleased You to take to Yourself our beloved Brother.” Yet, alas, there are many here—oh, we pray God that they may not die, for we know we should never see them again in peace, and joy, and happiness! There are some of you, now within the reach of my voice—judge you of whom I speak—concerning whom, if you were now to depart, we might say, as David did, “O my son, my son, Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son!” If you were now to depart, we might indeed take up a very bitter cry. We might ask the owl and the bittern, with their dismal hoots, to assist our lamentations. We would have need to weep for you, not because your bodies were dead, but because your souls were cast away into unutterable torment! O Sirs, if some of you were to die, it would be your mother’s grief, for she would bitterly reflect that you were gnashing your teeth in fell despair! She would recollect that you were beyond the reach of prayer, cast away from all hope and from all refuge—that she could never see you again—her destiny to be forever with her Lord in Heaven, but your doom to be forever shut out!

Young men and women, yes, and all of you who have had pious friends who have gone before, should you not like to meet them before the eternal Throne? Can you bear the dread thought that you are separated from some of them forever because you are not the Lord’s children, neither do you seek the things that belong to your peace? I think you wish to meet them there, do you not? But you never shall unless you tread the steps they trod, and walk the road they loved. If your hearts are not towards Jesus. If your souls are not given to Him, how can you? For if your way is not the same, your end must differ. You shall not meet at the goal of Heaven unless you meet at the wicket gate on earth, enter in by the strait gate and go along the strait and narrow road! Oh, if some of you were about to die, your minister would have to go to your bedside and say, “Adieu, I shall never see you again.” And were you to look up, and say, “what, Sir—no more?” He might answer, “I have seen you many a time in God’s House. We have sung together, we have prayed together, we have worshipped together in the same sanctuary. But it is all over now. I shall never see you again!” “What, never, Minister? Never hear your voice again?” “No, never! Unless you are in Christ now, farewell forever!” O poor Soul, what a sorrowful thing to shake hands forever, to bid good-bye forever—one to descend to endless flames and the other to mount to realms of everlasting bliss! We may, indeed, sorrow for them, if we have no hope of ever meeting them again.

But we would not grieve so much about not meeting them again if we knew that they were happy, even though we should never see them. But, then, for those who die without Christ, we sorrow because we have no hope that they have any happiness. Or even if they were now in misery and we might cherish the thought that they would one day escape, we could not then sorrow for them as those that have no hope. But, alas, we recollect that our lost friends are lost forever! We recollect that there is no shadow of a hope for them! When the iron gate of Hell is once closed upon them, it shall never be unbarred to give them free exit! When once shut up within those walls of sweltering flame which girdle the fiery gulf, there is no possibility of flight! We recollect that they have, “forever,” stamped upon their chains—“forever” carved in deep lines of despair upon their hearts! It is the Hell of Hell that everything there lasts forever! Here, time wears away our griefs and blunts the keen edge of sorrow, but there, time never mitigates the woe. Here, the sympathy of loving kindred, in the midst of sickness or suffering, can alleviate our pain, but there, the mutual upbraiding and reproaches of fellow sinners give fresh stings to torment too dreadful to be endured! Here, too, when Nature’s last palliative shall fail, to die may be a happy release—a man can count the weary hours till death shall give him rest. But, oh, remember, there is no death in Hell! Death, which is a monster on earth, would be an angel in Hell! But the terrible reality is this, “Their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.”

Must we go one step further? It is terrible work to deliver these warnings, but it would be still more terrible to hide any Truth of God, however bitter. When we have uttered a pitiful lament for heathen nations and when we have spoken with deeper emotion of the profane, the profligate, and the despisers of God, we have not finished. These have not the semblance of peace in their own breasts. But alas, alas, there are many who die in the delusion of a false peace! What avails it that they uttered pious sentiments with their lips if their hearts were not changed? What though they received “the bread and wine” in nature’s extremity? Will the sacramental opiate serve them instead of the inward witness of reconciliation to God? Oh, hear this, you that are at ease! Listen, all you whose religion stands in outward forms—“Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.” I confess to you that the metaphor which charms me in the one case appalls me in the other, so great is the distinction among the sleepers! Look at the man who has sought to be justified by the works of the Law, or in some way perverted the Gospel of Christ. With a fatal lull of conscience he nestles down securely. “As when a hungry man dreams and, behold, he eats; but he awakes and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreams and behold, he drinks; but he awakes and, behold, he is faint and his soul has appetite.” He sleeps the deep sleep of death, prepared, as he supposes, to meet the Judge. When he awakes, the spell shall be dissolved. The terrible sentence, “Depart,” awaits him! O Beloved, I tremble to think that a man may go up with jaunty step to the threshold of Heaven only to be cast down to the nethermost pit! As you stand among the graves of your departed friends, I beseech you to examine yourselves! Only as you can say, “To me to live is Christ,” have you a right to add, “and to die is gain.”

But now there is the case of the Christian. Is it not matter for consolation and holy joy, with some of us, that concerning beloved friends of ours who now sleep quietly in their graves, we have not to sorrow as those who have no hope? The death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord! On their account we have cause rather to rejoice than to weep. And why? Because we hope that they are safely housed in Heaven. Yes, more—we have the firm persuasion that already their redeemed spirits have flown up to the eternal Throne! We believe that they are at this moment joining in the hallelujahs of Paradise, feasting on the fruits of the Tree of Life, and walking by the side of the river, the streams whereof make glad the heavenly city of our God! We know they are supremely blessed—we think of them as glorified spirits above who are “forever with the Lord.”

We have that hope and then we have another hope concerning those— we hope that though we have buried them, they shall rise again! In the verse following our text it is written, “Those also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” We rejoice that not only do “they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them,” but that after they have rested a little while, their bodies shall rise again! We know that their Redeemer lives and we are certain that He will, at the latter day, stand upon the earth and that they shall stand on the earth with Him! We rejoice that the dead in Christ shall rise first—that they shall come on that day when, “with clouds descending,” “He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them who believe.” We look for a day when buried bodies shall be living frames once more! We expect that glazed eyes shall again be radiant with light! We believe that dumb lips shall yet sing, that deaf ears shall yet hear and that lame feet shall yet leap like the hart!

We are looking for the time when we shall meet the saints in their very bodies and shall know them. It is our hope that they shall rise again and that we shall meet them and shall know them. I trust you all firmly believe that you will recognize your friends in Heaven. I consider the doctrine of the non-recognition of our friends in Heaven a marvelously absurd one! I cannot conceive how there can be any communion of saints in Heaven unless there is mutual recognition. We could not hold communion with unknown beings! If we knew not who they were, how could we be able to join their company? Moreover, we are told that we shall “sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” I suppose we shall know those blessed Patriarchs when we sit down with them. And if we know them, there is but one step to the supposition that we shall know all the general assembly! Moreover, there will be but very little difficulty in discovering them because every seed has its own body by which we are taught that everybody, being different from any other body when sown, will, when it rises in a spiritual fashion, be in like manner different from any other. And although the spiritual body may have none of the lineaments upon its face like we have, and no marks as we have, because it will be far more glorious and splendid, yet it will have so much identity that we, being instructed, shall be able to say of it, “This is the body that sprang from such a seed,” just as we recognize the different kinds of corn or flowers that spring from the different kinds of seed that are sown! Take away recognition and you have taken away, I think, one of the joys of Heaven. There seems to me a great deal of Heaven’s sweetness in the little verse (to quote another of the children’s hymns)—

*“Teachers, too, shall meet above.  
And our pastors whom we love  
Shall meet to part no more.”*

III. And now, in the third place, we HAVE A GENTLE EXHORTATION. The exhortation here is delicately hinted at—that the sorrow of bereaved Christians for their Christian friends ought not to be at all like the sorrow of unconverted persons for their ungodly relatives. We are not forbidden to sorrow—“Jesus wept.” The Gospel does not teach us to be stoics—we ought to weep, for it was intended that the rod should be felt, otherwise we could not “hear the rod, and who has appointed it.” If we did not feel the stroke when our friends were taken away, we would prove ourselves worse than heathen men and publicans. God’s Grace does not take away our sensibilities, it only refines them and, in some degree, restrains the violence of their expression. Still, there ought to be some difference between the sorrow of the righteous and the sorrow of the wicked.  
First, there should be a difference in its vehemence. It may be natural to the unbridled passions of an ungodly man, who has lost his wife, to tear his hair, to throw himself upon the bed, to clutch the body, to declare it shall not be buried, to rave through the house cursing God and saying all manner of hard things of His dispensations. But that would not do for a Christian. He must not murmur. A Christian may stand and weep. He may kiss the dear cold hand for the last time and rain showers of tears on the lifeless body while “pity swells the tide of love.” But God and His religion demand that he should say, after doing this, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He may weep—he ought to. He may sorrow—he ought to. He may wear the clothes of mourning—God forbid that we should ever believe in any religion which should proscribe our showing some outward signs of sorrow for our friends!—yet we may not, and we must not weep as others weep! We must not always carry the red and tearful eye. We must not always take with us the face that is downcast and distressed. If we do, the world will say of us that our conduct belies our profession and our feelings are at variance with our faith.  
Again, there is another thing we must never allow to enter into our grief— the least degree of repining. A wicked man, when he sorrows for those who are gone without hope, not infrequently murmurs against God. But it is far otherwise with the Christian! He meekly bows his head, and says, “Your will, O God, be done.” The Christian must still acknowledge the same gracious hand of God, whether it is stretched forth to give or to take away. The language of his faith is, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; though He should take all away, yet will I not repine.” I do not say that all Christians are able to maintain such a cheerful submission of spirit. I only say that they ought to and that such is the tendency of the Christian religion—had they more of the Spirit of God within their hearts, that would be their habitual disposition. We may sorrow, Beloved, but not with repining. There must be resignation mixed with the regret. There must be the yielding up, even with grateful acquiescence, that which God asks for—seeing we believe that He does but take what is His own.  
And now, there is just one further observation. I believe that when the Christian sorrows, he ought to be as glad as he is sorrowful. Put your sadness in one scale and your gladness in the other scale—then see if the reasons for praise is not as weighty as the reasons for grief. Then you will say, “She is gone—here is a tear for her. She is in Heaven—here is a smile for her. Her body is with the worms. Weep, eyes. Her soul is with Jesus! Shout, lips! Yes, shout for joy! The cold sod has covered her, she is gone from my sight, she sleeps in the sad, sad grave—bring me the clothes of mourning. No, she is before the Throne of God and the Lamb— blessed forever! Lend me a harp and let me thank my God! She has joined the white-robed host on yonder blessed plains! O hearse and funeral, O shroud and garments of woe, you are most fitting for her! I have lost her and she, herself, with many a pang and struggle, has passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but O joyous face! O songs of gladness! O shouts of rapture! You are equally becoming!—for when she passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, she feared no evil, for Your rod and Your staff did comfort her. Now, beyond the reach of death’s alarms, she does bathe her soul in seas of bliss—she is with her Lord.”  
It is well to have a little singing as well as weeping at a funeral. It well becomes the burial of the saints. Angels never weep when saints die— they sing. You never heard a saint say, when he was dying, “There are angels in the room. Listen! You can hear them sobbing because I am dying.” No, but we have often heard a saint say, “There are angels in the room and I can hear them singing.” That is because angels are wiser than we are. We judge by the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears—but angels judge after another fashion. They “see and hear and know” the joys of the blessed and therefore they have no tears—but they have songs for them, and they sing loudly when the Christian is carried Home, like a shock of corn fully ripe.  
And now, beloved, we shall soon all of us die. In a few more years, I shall have a gravestone above my grave. Some of you, hope, will say, “There lies our minister, who once gathered us together in the house of God and led us to the mercy-seat, and joined in our song. There lies one who was often despised and rejected of men, but whom God did nevertheless bless to the salvation of our souls, and sealed his testimony in our hearts and consciences by the operation of the Holy Ghost.” Perhaps some of you will visit my tomb, and will bring a few flowers to scatter on it, in glad and grateful remembrance of the happy hours we spent together. It is quite as probable that your tombs will be built as soon as mine. Ah, dear friends! should we have to write on your tombstones, “She sleeps in Jesus,” “He rests in the bosom of his Master,” or should we have to speak the honest truth, “He has gone to his own place”? Which shall it be? Ask yourselves, each one of you, where will your soul be? Shall it mount up there, —

***“Where our best friends, our kindred, dwell,  
Where God our Savior reigns;” —***or, —  
***“Shall devils plunge you down to hell,  
In infinite despair?”***

You can ascertain which it will be; you can tell it by this: Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you love the Lord Jesus? Do you stand on Christ, the solid rock? Have you built your hope of heaven alone on him? Have you, as a guilty sinner, cast yourself at his mercy-seat, looking to his blood and righteousness, to be saved by them, and by them alone? If so, fear not to die; ye shall be safe, whene’er the summons comes to you. But if not, tremble, tremble! ye may die to-morrow,-ye must die one day; it will be a sad thing so to die as to be lost beyond recovery. May God Almighty grant that we may be all saved at last, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

÷1Th 4.17

“FOREVER WITH THE LORD”  
NO. 1374

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“So shall we be forever with the Lord.”***1Th 4:17***.**

WE know that these words are full of consolation, for the Apostle says in the next verse, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” The very words, it appears, were dictated by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to be repeated by the saints to each other with the view of removing sorrow from the minds of the distressed. The comfort is intended to give us hope in reference to those who have fallen asleep. Look over the list of those beloved in the Lord who have departed from you, to your utmost grief, and let the words of our text be a handkerchief for your tears.

Sorrow not as those that are without hope, for they are with the Lord though they are not with you and, by-and-by, you shall surely meet them where your Lord is the center of fellowship forever and ever. The separation will be very transient—the reunion will be everlasting! These words are, also, intended to comfort the saints with regard to themselves. And I pray that they may be a cordial to any who are sick with fear—a matchless medicine to charm away the heartache from all Believers. The fact that you bear about a dying body is very evident to some of you by your frequent and increasing infirmities and pains and this, it may be, is a source of depression of spirits.

You know that when a few years are gone you must go the way from where you shall not return, but be not dismayed, for you shall not go into a strange country alone and unattended. There is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother who will not fail you nor forsake you! And, moreover, you are going Home—your Lord will be with you while you are departing— and then you will be with Him forever. Therefore, though sickness warns you of the near approach of death, be not in the least dismayed! Though pain and weariness should make your heart and flesh fail, yet doubt not of your triumph through the Redeemer’s blood!

Though it should sometimes make your flesh tremble when you remember your many sins and the weakness of your faith, yet be of good cheer, for your sins and weakness of faith will soon be removed far from you—and you shall be in His Presence where there is fullness of joy—and at His right hand where there are pleasures forevermore! Comfort yourselves, then, both with regard to those who have gone before and in reference to the thought of your own departure.

Observe that the comfort which the Apostle here presents to us may be partly derived from the fact of the Resurrection, but not chiefly, for he does not so much refer to the words, “The dead in Christ shall rise,” as to

these last—“so shall we be forever with the Lord.” It is a great Truth of God that you will rise again. It is a sweeter Truth that you will be “forever with the Lord”! There is some consolation, also, in the fact that we shall meet our departed Brothers and Sisters when we shall all be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Blissful will be the general assembling of the redeemed, never again to be broken up—the joy of meeting, never to part, is a sweet remedy for the bitterness of separation.

There is great comfort in it, but the main stress of consolation does not lie even there. It is pleasant to think of the eternal fellowship of the godly above, but the best of all is the promised fellowship with our Lord— “So shall we be forever with the Lord.” Whatever else you draw comfort from, neglect not this deep, clear and overflowing well of delight! There are other sources of good cheer in connection with the Glory to be revealed, for Heaven is a many-sided joy. But still, none can excel the glory of communion with Jesus Christ! We comfort one another, in the first place and most constantly with these words, “So shall we be forever with the Lord.”

I shall view our text, in order to our comfort at this time, in three lights. I look upon it, first, as a continuance—we are with the Lord even now and we always shall be. Secondly, as an advancement—we shall, before long, be more fully with the Lord than we are now. And thirdly, as a coherence—for we both are and shall be with Him in a close and remarkable manner.

I. I regard the text as A CONTINUANCE of our present spiritual state— “So shall we be forever with the Lord.” To my mind, and I think I am not incorrect in so expounding, the Apostle means that nothing shall prevent our continuing to be forever with the Lord. Death shall not separate us, nor the terrors of that tremendous day when the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God shall be heard. By Divine plan and arrangement, all shall be so ordained that, “So shall we be forever with the Lord.” By being caught up into the clouds, or in one way or another, our abiding in Christ shall remain unbroken. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so shall we walk in Him, whether in life or in death.

I understand the Apostle to mean that we are with the Lord now and that nothing shall separate us from Him. Even now, like Enoch, we walk with God and we shall not be deprived of Divine communion. Our fear might be that in the future state something might happen which would become a dividing gulf between us and Christ, but the Apostle assures us that it will not be so—there shall be such plans and methods used that, “so shall we be forever with the Lord.” At any rate, I know that if this is not the Truth of God, here intended, it is a Truth worthy to be expounded and, therefore, I do not hesitate to enlarge upon it.

We are with the Lord in this life in a high spiritual sense. Read you not, in the Epistle to the Colossians, “for you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God”? Were you not “buried with Him in Baptism wherein, also, you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead”? Do you not know what it is to be dead to the world in Him and to be living a secret life with Him? Are you not risen with Christ? Yes, and do you not understand, in some measure, what it is to be raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus? If you are not with Him, Brothers and Sisters, you are not Christians at all, for this is the mark of the Christian—that he follows with Christ.

It is essential to salvation to be a sheep of Christ’s fold—no, more—a partaker of Christ’s life, a member of His mystical body, a branch of the spiritual vine! Separated from Him we are spiritually dead. He Himself has said, “If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. And men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.” Jesus is not far from any of His people—no, it is our privilege to follow Him wherever He goes—and His loving words to us are, “Abide in Me, and I in you.” May He enable us sweetly to realize this! We are, dear Brothers and Sisters, constantly with Christ in the sense of abiding union with Him, for we are joined unto the Lord and are one spirit.

Sometimes this union is very sweetly apparent to ourselves.” We know that we are in Him that is true,” and in consequence we feel an intense joy, even Christ’s own joy fulfilled in us! For the same reason we are at times bowed down with intense sorrow, for being in and with Christ, we have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, being made conformable with His death. This is such sweet sorrow that the more we experience it, the better—

*“Live or die, or work or suffer,  
Let my weary soul abide,  
In all changes whatever,  
Sure and steadfast by Your side.  
Nothing can delay my progress,  
Nothing can disturb my rest,  
If I shall, wherever I wander,  
Lean my spirit on Your breast.”*

This companionship is, we trust, made manifest to others by its fruits. It ought always to be so —the life of the Christian should be manifestly a life with Christ. Men should take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

They should see that there is something in us which could not have been there if it were not for the Son of God—a temper, a spirit, a course of life which could not have come by Nature—but must have been worked in us through Grace which has been received from Him in whom dwells a fullness of Grace, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters, if we are what we ought to be, our life is spent in conscious communion growing out of continued union with the Lord Jesus Christ! And if it is so, we have that rich assurance which is written by the Beloved John, “If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you, also, shall continue in the Son and in the Father.”

We are with Him, dear Friends, in this sense, too, that His unchanging love is always set upon us, and our love, feeble though it sometimes may be, never quite dies out. In both senses that challenge of the Apostle is true, “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” We can say, “I am my Beloved’s and His desire is towards me.” And, on the other hand, we, also testify, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” He claims us and we claim Him! He loves us and we love Him! There is a union of heart between us. We are with Him, not against Him! We are in league with Him, enlisted beneath His banner, obedient to His Spirit. For us to live is Christ—we have no other aim!

He is with us by the continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is with us and shall be in us forever. His anointing abides on us and because of it we abide in Christ Jesus! He has sent us the Comforter to represent Himself and through that Divine Paraclete He continues to be with us—and so, even now we are forever with the Lord. Our Lord has, also, promised to be with us whenever we are engaged in His work. That is a grand word of encouragement, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Think not, therefore, that it will be the first time of our being with Christ when we shall see Him in Glory, for even now He manifests Himself unto us as He does not unto the world.

Has He not often fulfilled His promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”? We have heard the sound of our Master’s feet behind us when we have been going on His errands. We have felt the touch of His hands when we have come to the forefront of the battle for His sake. And we have known that He dwells in us by His Spirit and is with us by the power with which He has attended our work, and the deeds which He has worked by the Gospel which we have proclaimed. The Lord Jesus is with His Church in her tribulation for His name’s sake and He will forever be so, for He forsakes not His saints. “Fear not, I am with you,” is as much a word of the Lord under the Gospel as in Old Testament times. By the power of His blessed Spirit Jesus abides with us and through this present dispensation He enables us to be “forever with the Lord.”

But, my Brethren, the time is coming when we shall die unless the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout in the meanwhile. Assuredly in the article of death we shall still be with the Lord—

*“Death may my soul divide  
From this abode of clay  
But love shall keep me near Your side  
Through all the gloomy way.”*

“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” This makes dying such wonderful work to the people of God, for then, especially, is Jesus seen to be near! By death they escape from death—and from now on it is no more death for them to die! When Jesus meets His saints, there seems no iron gate to pass through, but in a moment they close their eyes on earth and open them in Glory!

Beloved, there should be no more bondage through fear of death since Christ attends His people even in their descent into the tomb and strengthens them upon the bed of languishing. This has been a great joy to many departing saints. A dying Believer who was attended by an apothecary who was, also, a child of God, was observed to be whispering to himself while dying. His good attendant, wishing to know what were his last words, placed his ear against the dying man’s lips and heard him repeating to himself, again and again, the words, “Forever with the Lord. Forever with the Lord.” When heart and flesh were failing, the departing one knew that God was the strength of his life and his portion forever— and so he chose for his soft, low-whispered, dying song, “Forever with the Lord.”

After death we shall abide, awhile, in the separate, disembodied state and we shall know as to our soul what it is to be still with the Lord, for what does the Apostle say? “Knowing that when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord.” The dying thief was to be, that day, with Christ in Paradise, and such shall be our lot as soon as our souls shall have passed out of this tenement of clay into that wondrous state of which we know so little. Our pure spirits shall “come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.”

Who is dismayed when such a prospect opens up before him? Yes, and this body which shall fall asleep, though apparently it shall be destroyed, yet shall not be so, but shall only slumber awhile and then awake again and say, “When I awake I am still with You.” Constantly death is described as sleeping in Jesus—that is the state of the saint’s mortal frame through the interval between death and resurrection. The angels shall guard our bodies—all that is essential to complete the identity of our body shall be securely preserved so that the very seed which was put into the earth shall rise, again, in the beauty of efflorescence which becomes it. All, I say, that is essential, shall be preserved intact, because it is still with Christ.

It is a glorious doctrine which is stated by the Apostle in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the 5th chapter, at the 9th and 10th verses, “For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” In due time the last trumpet shall sound and Christ shall come and the saints shall be with Him. The infinite Providence has so arranged that Christ shall not come without His people, for, “Them, also, that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him.” The saints shall be with Him in the Advent as they are now. Our souls shall hear the shout of victory and join in it! The voice of the archangel shall be actually heard by all His redeemed and the trumpet of God shall be sounded in the hearing of every one of His beloved, for we shall be with Jesus all through that glorious transaction.

Whatever the glory and splendor of the Second Advent, we shall be with Jesus in it! I am not going to give you glimpses of the revealed future, or offer any suggestion as to the sublime history which is yet to be written, but most certainly there is to be a last general Judgment and then we shall be with Christ, assessors with Him at that day. Being ourselves, first acquitted, we shall take our seat upon the Judgment Bench with Him. What does the Holy Spirit say by the Apostle—“Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know you not that we shall judge angels?” The fallen angels, to their shame, shall, in part, receive the verdict of their condemnation from the lips of men—and thus vengeance shall be taken upon them for all the mischief they have done to the sons of men.

Oh, think of it! Amidst the terror of the tremendous Day you shall be at ease, resting in the love of God and beholding the Glory of Christ and, “so shall you forever be with the Lord.” There is, moreover, to be a reign of Christ. I cannot read the Scriptures without perceiving that there is to be a millennial reign, as I believe, upon the earth and that there shall be new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Well, whatever that reign is to be, we shall reign also! “And he that overcomes and keeps My words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of My Father.” “And have made us unto our God kings and priests and we shall reign on the earth.”

He shall reign, but it will be “before His ancients gloriously.” We shall be partakers in the splendors of the latter days, whatever they may be, and, “So shall we be forever with the Lord.” The particular incident of the text does not exhaust the words, but you may apply them to the whole story of God’s own children. From the first day of the spiritual birth of the Lord’s immortals until they are received up into the seventh Heaven to dwell with God, their history may be summed up in these words, “So shall we be forever with the Lord.” Whether caught up into the clouds or here below on this poor afflicted earth—whether in Paradise or in the renovated earth, in the grave or in Glory—we shall always be with the Lord!

And when comes the end and God alone shall reign and the mediatorial kingdom shall cease, ages, ages and ages shall revolve, but “so shall we be forever with the Lord.” The saints immortal shall be with their Covenant Head, free from sorrow. All tendency to sin, all fear of change or death shall be gone! And their intimate communion will last on forever—

*“Blessed state! Beyond conception!  
Who its vast delights can tell?  
May it be my blissful portion,  
With my Savior there to dwell.”*

I think the text looks like a continuation of what is already begun, only rising to something higher and better. To be with Christ is life eternal— this we have already and shall continue to have and—“so shall we be forever with the Lord.”

II. Secondly, most assuredly, Brethren, the text is A GREAT ADVANCEMENT—“So shall we be forever with the Lord.” It is an advancement upon this present state, for however spiritual-minded we may be and however in consequence, thereof, we may be very near unto our Lord Jesus, yet still we know that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord. This life, at its very best, is still comparatively an absence from the Lord, but in the world to come we shall be more perfectly at home. Now, we cannot, in the highest sense, be with Christ, for we must, according to the Apostle’s phraseology, “depart, and be with Christ; which is far better.” But there we shall be forever beholding His face unveiled. Earth is not Heaven, though the Believer begins the heavenly life while he is upon it. We are not with Christ as to place, nor as to actual sight—but in Glory we shall be!

And it is an advancement, in the next place, upon the present state of the departed, for though their souls are with the Lord, yet their bodies are subject to corruption. Still does the sepulcher contain the blessed dust of the fathers of our Israel. Though scattered to the four winds of Heaven, the martyr’s ashes are still with us. The glorified saints are not as yet consciously “with the Lord” as to their complete manhood, but when the grand event shall occur of which Paul speaks, the body shall be reanimated. This is our glorious hope! We can say with the Patriarch Job—“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

Know you not, Brothers and Sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God? That is, as they are. But this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality—and then shall the entire manhood, the perfected manhood, the fully developed manhood, of which this manhood is, as it were, but a shriveled seed—be in the fullest and most Divine sense, forever with the Lord! This is an advancement, even, upon the present state of departed saints in Paradise!

And now let us consider this glorious condition to which we shall be advanced. We shall be with the Lord in the strongest possible meaning of that language. So with Him that we shall never mind earthly things again, shall have no more to go into city business, or into the workshop, or into the field. We shall have nothing to do but to be engaged forever with Him in such occupations as shall have no tendency to take us off from communion with Him. We shall be so with Him as to have no sin to becloud our view of Him! Our understanding will be delivered from all the injury which sin has worked in it and we shall know Him even as we are known. We shall see Him as a familiar Friend and sit with Him at His marriage feast. We shall be with Him so as to have no fear of His ever being grieved and hiding His face from us again.

We shall never again be made to cry out in bitterness of spirit, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him.” We shall always know His love, always return it and always swim in the full stream of it, enjoying it to the fullest! There will be no lukewarmness to mar our fellowship. He shall never have to say to us, “I would you were either cold or hot.” There shall be no weariness to suspend our ceaseless bliss—we shall never have to

cease from fellowship with Him because our physical frame is exhausted through the excessive joy of our heart—the vessel will be strengthened to hold the new wine. No doubts shall intrude into our rest, neither doctrinal doubts nor doubts about our interest in Him, for we shall be so consciously with Him as to have risen 10,000 leagues above that gloomy state.

We shall know that He is ours, for His left hand shall be under our head and His right hand shall embrace us and we shall be with Him beyond all hazard of ever losing Him. The chief blessedness seems, to me, to lie in this, that we will always are with Him and with Him always. Now we are with the Lord in conscious enjoyment, sometimes, but then we are away from Him. But there it will be constant, unwavering fellowship! No break shall ever occur in the intimate communion of the saints with Christ. Here we know that our high days and bright Sabbaths with their sweetest joys, must have their eventides and then come the work-days with the burden of the week upon them. But there the Sabbath is eternal, the worship endless, the praise unceasing, the bliss unbounded. “Forever with the Lord.”

Speak of a thousand years of reigning? What is that compared with, “forever with the Lord”? The millennium is little compared with “forever”— a millennium of millenniums would be nothing to it! There can come no end to us and no end to our bliss, since there can be no end to Him— “because I live, you shall live also.” “Forever with the Lord.” What will it mean? I remember a sermon upon this text by a notable preacher, of which the heads were as follows—“Forever life, forever light, forever love, forever peace, forever rest, forever joy.” What a chain of delights! What more can heart imagine or hope desire? Carry those things in your mind and you will get, if you can drink into them, some idea of the blessedness which is contained in being forever with the Lord!

But remember these are only the fruits—not the root of the joy. Jesus is better than all these! His company is more than the joy which comes out of it. I do not care so much for, “life forever,” nor for, “light forever,” as I do for, “forever with the Lord.” Oh, to be with Him! I ask no other bliss and cannot imagine anything more heavenly. Why, the touch of the hem of His garment healed the sick woman! The sight of Him was enough to give life to us when we were dead! What, then, must it be to be with Him actually, consciously and always? To be with Him no more by faith, but in very deed with Him forever? My soul is ready to swoon away with too much joy as she drinks in even her shallow measure into the meaning of this thought—and I dare not venture further.

I must leave you to muse your souls into it, for it needs quiet thought and room for free indulgence of holy imagination till you make your soul dream of this excess of joy. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.”—

*“O glorious hour! O blessed abode!  
I shall be near and like my God.  
And flesh and sin no more control  
The sacred pleasures of my soul.”*

We love to think of being with Jesus under the aspect which the text specially suggests to us. We are to be forever with the Redeemer, not only as Jesus the Savior, but as the Lord. Here we have seen Him on the Cross and lived thereby. We are with Him now in His Cross-bearing and shame and it is well—but our eternal companionship with Him will enable us to rejoice in Him as the Lord. What did our Master say in His blessed prayer? “I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.”

It will be Heaven for us to be forever with Him as the Lord! Oh, how we shall delight to obey Him as our Lord! How we shall triumph as we see what a Lord He is over all the universe! And what a conqueror He is over all His enemies! He will be more and more the Lord to us as we see all things put under Him. We shall forever hail Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. How we will adore Him, there, when we see Him in His Glory! We worship Him, now, and are not ashamed to believe that the Man of Nazareth is, “very God of very God.” But oh, how His Deity will shine upon us with infinite brightness when we come to be near Him! Thanks be to His name, we shall be strengthened to endure the sight and we shall rejoice to see ourselves in the full blaze of His glory!

Then shall we see what our poet endeavored to describe when he said *— “Adoring saints around Him stand,  
And thrones and powers before Him fall!  
The God shines gracious through the Man, And sheds sweet glories on them all.”*

We shall be forever with the Lord and His Lordship shall be most upon our minds! He has been raised into Glory and honor and is no more able to suffer shame!—

*“No more the bloody spear,  
The Cross and nails no more!  
For Hell itself shakes at His word,  
And all the heavens adore.”*

III. Now we come to our third point and shall consider what, for lack of a better word, I entitle A COHERENCE. Those who are acquainted with the Greek language know that the, “with,” here, is not meta, which signifies being in the same place with a person, but one which goes much further and implies a coherence—the two who are with each other are intimately connected. Let me show you what I mean.

We are to be forever with the Lord. Now, the Christian’s life is like the life of His Lord and so it is a life with Christ. He was in all things with His Brethren and Grace makes us to be with Him. Just hurriedly look at your spiritual experience and your Lord’s life and see the parallel. When you were newly born as a Christian, you were born as Jesus Christ was, for you were born of the Holy Spirit. What happened after that? The devil tried to destroy the new life in you, just as Herod tried to kill your Lord— you were with Christ in danger, early and imminent. You grew in stature and in Grace and, while Grace was yet young, you staggered those who

were about you with the things you said, did and felt, for they could not understand you! Even thus, when He went up to the Temple, our Lord amazed the doctors who gathered around Him.

The Spirit of God rested upon you, not in the same measure, but still, as a matter of fact, He did descend upon you as He did upon your Lord. You have been with Him in Jordan’s stream and have received the Divine acknowledgment that you are, indeed, the child of God. Your Lord was led into the wilderness to be tempted—and you, too, have been tempted by the devil. You have been with the Lord all along, from the first day until now. If you have been, by Grace, enabled to live as you should, you have trod the separated path with Jesus! You have been in the world, but not of it, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. Therefore you have been despised—you have had to take your share of being unknown and misrepresented because you are even as He was in the world. “Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.”

As He was here to serve, you have been with Him as a servant. You have carried His yoke and counted it an easy load. You have been crucified to the world with Him. You know the meaning of His Cross and delight to bear it after Him. You are dead to the world with Him and wish to be as one buried to it. You have already, in your measure, partaken of His Resurrection and are living in newness of life. Your life story is still to be like the life story of your Lord, only painted in miniature. The more you watch the life of Christ the more clearly you will see the life of a spiritual man depicted in it—and the more clearly will you see what the saints’ future will be.

You have been with Christ in life and you will be with Him when you come to die. You will not die the expiatory death which fell to His lot, but you will die feeling that “it is finished” and you will breathe out your soul, saying, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” Then our Lord went to Paradise and you will go there, too. You shall enjoy a sojourn where He spent His interval in the disembodied state. You shall be with Him and like He is and then like He, you shall rise when your third morning comes. “After two days will He revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.” “Your dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.”

You shall also ascend as Christ did. Do you catch the thought? How did He ascend? In clouds. “A cloud received Him out of their sight” and a cloud shall receive you. You shall be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall you be always with the Lord, in the sense of being like He, walking with Him in experience and passing through the same events. That likeness shall continue forever and forever. Our lives shall run parallel with that of our Lord! Think, then, Beloved—we are to be like Christ as to our character! We are to be with the Lord by sharing His moral and spiritual likeness! Conformed to His image, we shall be adorned with His beauty!

When the mother of Darius saw two persons entering her pavilion, she, being a prisoner, bowed to the one whom she supposed to be Alexander. It turned out to be Hyphestion, the King’s favorite. Upon discovering that it was Hyphestion the lady humbly begged Alexander’s pardon for paying obeisance to the wrong person, but Alexander answered, “You have not mistaken, Madam, for he, also, is Alexander,” meaning that he loved him so much that he regarded him as his other self. Our Lord looks on His Beloved as one with Himself and makes them like Himself. You remember, Brothers and Sisters, how John bowed down before one of his fellow servants, the prophets in Heaven? It was a great blunder to make, but I dare say you and I will be likely to make the same, for the saints are so like their Lord!

Don’t you know that “we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is”? Christ will rejoice to see them all covered with the Glory which His Father has given Him! He will not be ashamed to call them Brethren. Those poor people of His who were so full of infirmity and mourned over it so much—they shall be so like He that they shall be at once seen to be His Brothers and Sisters! Where shall such favored ones be found? We shall be with Him in the sense that we shall be partakers of all the blessedness and Glory which our adorable Lord now enjoys. We shall be accepted together with Him. Is He the Beloved of the Lord? Does His Father’s heart delight in Him, as well it may?

Behold you, also, shall be called Hephzibah, for His delight shall be in you! You shall be beloved of the Father’s soul. Is He enriched with all manner of blessings beyond conception? So shall you be, for He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen us in Him! Is Christ exalted? Oh, how loftily is He lifted up to sit upon a glorious high Throne forever! But you shall sit upon His Throne with Him and share His exaltation as you have shared His humiliation! Oh, the delight of thus being joint-heirs with Christ and with Him in the possession of all that He possesses!

What is Heaven? It is the place which His love suggested, which His genius invented, which His bounty provided, which His royalty has adorned, which His wisdom has prepared, which He, Himself, glorifies! In that Heaven you are to be with Him forever! You shall dwell in the King’s own palace! Its gates of pearl and streets of gold shall not be too good for you. You who love Him are to abide with Him forever—not near Him in a secondary place, as a servant lives at the lodge gate of His master’s mansion—but with Him in the same palace in the metropolis of the universe! In a word, Believers are to be identified with Christ forever!

That seems, to me, to be the very life and essence of the text—with Him forever—that is, identified with Him forever. Do they ask for the Shepherd? They cannot behold Him to perfection except as surrounded by His sheep! Will the King be illustrious? How can that be if His subjects are lost? Do they ask for the Bridegroom? They cannot imagine Him in the fullness of joy without His bride! Will the Head be blessed? It could not be if it were separated from the members. Will Christ be forever glorified?

How can He be if He shall lose His jewels? He is the Foundation and what would He be if all His people were not built upon Him into the similitude of a palace?

O Brothers and Sisters, there shall be no Christ without Christians! There shall be no Savior without the saved ones! There shall be no Elder Brother without the younger brethren! There shall be no Redeemer without His redeemed! We are His fullness and He must have us with Him. We are identified with Him forever! Nothing can ever divide us from Him. Oh, joy, joy forever! Hallelujah!—

*“Since Christ and we are one,  
Why should we doubt or fear?  
If He in Heaven has fixed His Throne,  
He’ll fix His members there.”*

Two or three practical sentences. One word is this—this, “with the Lord” must begin now. Do you wish to be forever with the Lord? You must be with Him by becoming His disciple in this life. None come to be with the Lord hereafter who are not with the Lord here in time. See to it, dear Hearers, see to it, lest this unspeakable privilege should never be yours. Next, every Christian should seek to be more and more with Christ, for the growth and glory of your life lies there. Do you want to have Heaven below? Be with Christ below! Do you want to know, at once, what eternal bliss is? Know it by living with the Lord now.

The next word is, how plainly, then, the way of life is to be with the Lord. If you want to be saved, Sinner, you must be “with the Lord.” There is no other way! Come near to Him and lay hold upon Him by faith. Life lies there. Come to Him by a humble, tearful faith. Come at once! And, lastly, what must it be to be without the Lord? What must it be to be against the Lord? For it comes to that, “He that is not with Me,” He says, “is against Me”—to be forever without the Lord, banished from His love, light, life, peace, rest and joy! What a loss this will be!

What must it be to be forever against the Lord! Think of it—forever hating Jesus, forever plotting against Him, forever gnashing your teeth against Him—this is Hell, this is time infinite of misery, to be against the Lord of Love and Life and Light. Turn from this fatal course! Believe on Him—“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.” Amen.

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÷1Th 5.6

SLEEP NOT  
NO. 1022

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

**“Let us not sleep, as do others.”** *1Th 5:6***.**

WE do not usually sleep towards the things of this world. We rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness for Mammon’s sake. In this age of competition, most men are wide enough awake for their temporal interests. But so is it, partly through our being in this body, and partly through our dwelling in a sinful world, that we are all of us very apt to sleep concerning the interests of our souls. We drive like Jehu for this present world, but loiter for the world to come. Nothing so much concerns us as eternity, and yet nothing so little affects us. We work for the present world, and we play with the world to come.

Quaint old Quarles long ago likened us to roebucks as to the earth, and snails as to the heart. And then he oddly enough rebuked this fault in rugged verse—

*“Lord, when we leave the world and come to You, How dull, how slur, are we!  
How backward! How preposterous is the motion Of our ungainly devotion!  
Our thoughts are millstones, and our souls are lead, And our desires are dead.  
Our vows are fairly promised, faintly paid, Or broken, or not made.  
Is the road fair, we loiter. Clogged with mire, We stick or else retire.  
A lamb appeals a lion, and we fear  
Each bush we see a bear.  
When our dull souls direct our thoughts to You, As slow as snails are we.  
But at the earth we dart our winged desire, We burn—we burn like fire!”*

A piece of news about a fire in another continent makes a sensation in all our homes, but the fire that never shall be quenched is heard of almost without emotion. The discovery of a gold-field will affect half the markets in the world, and send a thrill through the public pulse. But when we speak of that blessed City where the streets are of gold, how coolly men take it all, regarding it as though it were a pretty fiction, and as if only the things which are seen were worthy of their notice. We sleep when heavenly things and eternal things are before us. Alas, that it should be so.

Even those choice spirits which have been awakened by the Holy Spirit, and not only awakened into life, but aroused into ardor, have to complain that their fervor very frequently is chilled. I was recommended to try a pillow of hops to obtain sleep during my late illness, but I find now that I want a waking pillow rather than a sleeping pillow. And I am of the same mired as that ancient saint who preferred a roaring devil to a sleepy devil.

How earnest, how diligent, how watchful, how heavenly ought we to be, but how much are we the reverse of all this.

When in this respect we would do good, evil is present with us. We would have our hearts like a furnace for Christ, and, behold, the coals refuse to burn. We would be living pillars of light and fire, but we rather resemble smoke and mist. Alas, alas, alas that when we would mount highest, our wings are clipped, and when we would serve God best, the evil heart of unbelief mars the labor. I knew it would be seasonable—I hoped it might be profitable if I spoke a little to you tonight, and to myself in so doing, concerning the need that there is that we shake ourselves from slumber, and leave the sluggard’s couch.

I intend to take the text in reference, first, to those who are born again from the dead, and secondly, in reference to those who are still in the terrors slumber of their sin. And I shall gather my illustrations tonight from no remote region, but from the same Word of God, from which I take the text. The text says, “Let Us not sleep, as do others.” We will mention some “others,” whose histories are recorded in Scripture, who have slept to their own injury, and I pray you let them be warnings to you.

I. First, to those of you who are THE PEOPLE OF GOD, let me say, “Let us not sleep, as do others.”  
1. First, let us not sleep as those disciples did who went with their Lord to the garden and fell a slumbering while He was agonizing. Let us not be as the eight who slept at a distance, nor as the highly-favored three who were admitted into the more secret chamber of our Lord’s woes, and were allowed to tread the precincts of the most holy place where He poured out His soul, and sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He found them sleeping, and though He awakened them, they slept again and again. “What, could you not watch with Me one hour?” was His gentle expostulation.  
They were slumbering for sorrow. Though our Lord might in our case make an excuse for us as He did for them—“The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak”—let us endeavor, by His Grace, not to need such an apology by avoiding their fault. “Let us not sleep, as do others.”  
But, beloved fellow Christians, are not the most of us sleeping as the Apostles did? Behold our Master’s zeal for the salvation of the sons of men! Throughout all His life, He seemed to have no rest. From the moment when His ministry began He was ever toiling, laboring, denying Himself. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. Truly He might have taken for His life’s motto—“Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” So intent was He on saving souls that He counted not His life dear unto Him. He would lay it down, and that amidst circumstances of the greatest pain and ignominy—anything and everything would He do to seek and to save that which was lost.  
Zeal for His chosen Church, which was God’s House, had eaten Him up—for His people’s sakes He could bear all the reproaches of them that reproached God, and though that reproach broke His heart, He still persevered and ceased not till salvation’s work was done. He was incessant in toil and suffering, but what are we? There is our Lord, our great Exemplar, before us now. Behold Him in Gethsemane! Imagination readily sees Him amid the olives. I might say that His whole life was pictured in that agony in the garden, for in a certain sense it was all an agony. It was all a sweating, not such as distils from those who purchase the staff of life by the sweat of their face, but such as He must feel who purchased life itself with the agony of His heart.  
The Savior, as I see him throughout the whole of His ministry, appears to me on His knees pleading, and before His God agonizing—laying out His life for the sons of men. But, Brethren, do I speak harshly when I say that the disciples asleep are a fit emblem of our usual life? As compared, or rather, contrasted with our Master, I fear it is so. Where is our zeal for God? Where is our compassion for men? Do we ever feel the weight of souls as we ought to feel it? Do we ever melt in the presence of the terrors of God which we know to be coming upon others? Have we realized the passing away of an immortal spirit to the judgment bar of God? Have we felt pangs and throes of sympathy when we have remembered that multitudes of our fellow creatures have received, as their eternal sentence, the words—“Depart you cursed into the everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels”?  
Why, if these thoughts really possessed us, we should scarcely sleep! If they became as real to us as they were to Him, we should wrestle with God for souls as He did and become willing to lay down our lives, if by any means we might save some. I see by the eye of faith, at this moment, Jesus pleading at the Mercy Seat. “For Zion’s sake,” He says, “I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest.” And yet, we around Him lie asleep, without self-denying activity, and almost without prayer— missing opportunities—or when opportunities for doing good have been seized, using them with but a slothful hand, and doing the work of the Lord, if not deceitfully, yet most sluggishly.  
Brethren, “let us not sleep, as do others.” If it is true that the Christian Church is to a great extent asleep, the more reason why we should be awake. And if it is true, as I fear it is, that we have, ourselves, slumbered and slept, the more reason now that we should arise and trim our lamps and go forth to meet the Bridegroom! Let us, from this moment, begin to serve our Master and His Church more nearly after the example which He Himself has set us in His consecrated life and blessed death. Let us not sleep then, as did the disciples at Gethsemane—  
**“O You, who in the garden’s shade,  
Did wake Your weary ones again,  
Who slumbered at that fearful hour,  
Forgetful of Your pain!  
Bend over us now, as over them  
And set our sleep-bound spirits free.  
Nor leave us slumbering in the watch  
Our souls should keep with you!”**  
2. A second picture we select from that portion of the Inspired Pages which tell us of Samson. Let us not sleep as that ancient Hebrew hero did, who, while he slept, lost his locks, lost his strength and by-and-by lost his liberty, lost his eyes, and ultimately lost his life. I have spoken under the first head of our slumbering in respect to others, but here I come to ourselves. In our slumbering with respect to ourselves, Samson is the sad picture of many professors. We are about to sketch a portrait of one whom we knew in years gone by. He was “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”  
Years ago, the man we picture—and it is no fancy portrait for we have seen many such—when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, did mighty things. And we looked on and wondered, yes, we envied him, and we said, “Would God we had an hour of such strength as has fallen upon him.” He was the leader among the weak, and often infused courage into faint hearts. But where is he now? All our Israel knew him, for his name was a tower of strength. And our enemies knew him, too, for he was a valiant man in battle.  
Where is this hero now? We hear little of him now in the fields of service where once he glorified his God and smote the enemies of Israel. We do not meet him now at the Prayer Meeting, or in the Sunday school, or at the Evangelist station. We hear nothing of his seeking for souls. Surely he has gone to sleep! He thinks that he has much spiritual goods laid up for many years, and he is now taking his rest. He has had his share, he says, of labor, and the time has come now for him to take a little ease.  
It is our loss and his peril that he has allowed himself to fall into such a drowsy condition. O that we could bestir him!—

“ *Break his bonds of sleep asunder—  
Rouse him with a peal of thunder.”*  
Alas, carnal security is always a Delilah. It gives us many a dainty kiss,

and lulls us into tranquil slumbers which we imagine to be God’s own peace, whereas the peace of fascination and of satanic enchantment is upon us. Yes, we have seen the good man—we could not doubt that he had been both good and great—yet we have seen him lying asleep. And, perhaps, some of us who have never been so distinguished or done so much, though, nevertheless, in our own small way we have done something for God, and yet we, too, lie in Delilah’s lap.

Blessed be His name who has not suffered us to lead quite a useless life! But possibly we are degenerating and beginning, now, to take things more easily than we did. In our fancied wisdom we half rebuke what we call our “juvenile zeal.” We are prudent now and wise—would God we were not prudent and not wise—and were as foolish as we used to be when we loved our God with zeal so great that nothing was hard and nothing was difficult! If we were called upon to do it for His name’s sake, we gladly did it.

Now, what do I see in Samson while he lies asleep in Delilah’s lap? I see peril of the deadliest sort. The Philistines are not asleep. When the good man slumbers and ceases to watch, Satan does not slumber, and temptations do not cease to waylay him. There are the Philistines looking on while you see the razor softly stealing over the champion’s head. Those locks, bushy and black as a raven, fall thickly on the ground! One by one the razor shears them all away till the Nazarite has lost the hair of his consecration.

I am terribly fearful lest this should happen to ourselves. Our strength lies in our faith. That is our Samsonian lock. Take that away and we are as weak as other men, yes, and weaker still—for Samson was weaker than the weakest when his hair was gone—though before that stronger than the strongest. By degrees, it may be, Satan is stealing away all our spiritual strength. Oh, if it is my case, I shall come up into this pulpit and I shall preach to you, and shake myself, as I have done before, and perhaps expect to see sinners saved, but there will be none! And, possibly, some of you, also, when you awake a little, will go forth to preach in the streets or to seek after men’s souls as you have done before, but, alas, you will find the Philistines will bind you, and that your strength has passed away while you slept.

Your glory has gone—gone amidst the deluding dreams which lulled you—gone not to come back except with bitterest grief, with eyes, perhaps, put out forever. Many backsliders will die thanking God, if ever their strength returns to them, and perhaps it never may till their dying hour. Oh, Brethren, warned by what has happened, not to Samson only, but to many of the Lord’s greatest champions, “Let us not sleep, as do others.”

3. Now we change the picture again. It is the same subject under other forms. You remember our Savior’s parable concerning the tares and the wheat? There was an enclosure which was reserved for wheat only, but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the good corn. Now you who are members of the Church of Christ need not that I should enter into a full explanation of the parable. Neither is this the time, but it will suffice to say that when false doctrines and unholy practices have crept into a Church, the secret cause of the mischief has usually been that the Church, itself, was asleep.

Those who ought to have been watchmen, and to have guarded the field, slept—and so the enemy had ample time to enter and scatter tares among the wheat. Now my last illustration spoke to you of your own dangers, this ought to appeal to you with equal force because it concerns dangers incident to that which is dearest to you, I hope, of anything upon earth—namely, the Church of the living God. An unwatchful Church will soon become an unholy Church. A Church which does not carefully guard the Truth of God as it is in Jesus will become an unsound Church, and, consequently, a degenerate Church. It will grieve the Holy Spirit and cause Him to remove His power from the ministry and His Presence from the ordinances.

It will open the door for Satan, and he is quite sure to avail himself of every opportunity of doing mischief. I believe that the only way, after all, in any Church to purge out heresy in it is by having more of the inner life. By this fire in Zion shall the chaff be burned up. When the constitution of a man is thoroughly sound, it throws out many of those diseases which otherwise would have lingered in his system. And good physicians sometimes do not attempt to touch the local disease but they do their best to strengthen the general constitution—and when that is right, then the cure is worked.

So, here and there, there may be a defalcation in the one point—that of doctrine, or in the other—as to an affair of practice. And so it may be necessary to deal with the disordered limb of doctrine, or you may have to cut out the cancer of an evil custom. But as a rule, the main cure of a Church comes by strengthening its inner life. When we live near to Jesus, when we drink from the Fountain Head of eternal Truth and purity, when we become personally true and pure, then our watchfulness is, under God, our safeguard—and heresy, false doctrine, and unclean profession are

kept far away.

Sleeping guards invite the enemy. He who leaves his door unlocked asks the thief to enter. Watchfulness is always profitable and slothfulness is always dangerous. Members of this Church, I speak to you in particular, and forget for the moment that any others are present. We have enjoyed these many years the abiding dew of God’s Spirit, shall we lose it? God has been in our midst and thousands of souls—tens of thousands of souls have been brought to Jesus! God has never taken away His hand, but it has been stretched out still—shall we, by sinful slumber sin away this blessing? I am jealous over you with a holy jealousy. Trembling has taken hold on me lest you lose your first love. “Hold fast,” O Church, “that which you have received that no man take your crown.”

Our sins will grieve the Spirit! Our sleepiness will vex the Holy One of Israel. Unless we wake up to more earnest prayerfulness and to closer fellowship with Christ, it may be we shall hear the sound such as Josephus tells us was observed at the destruction of Jerusalem, when there was heard the rustling of wings and the voice that said “Let Us go from here.” O Lord, though our sins deserve that You should forsake us, yet turn not away from us, for Your mercy’s sake! Tarry, Jehovah, for the sake of the precious blood! Tarry with us still! Depart not from us. We deserve that You should withdraw, but, oh, forsake not the people whom You have chosen!

By all the love You have manifested towards us, continue Your loving kindness to Your unworthy servants. Is not that your prayer, you that love the Church of God? I know it is, not for this Church only, but for all others where the power and Presence of God have been felt. Pray continually for the Church, but remember this is the practical exhortation arising out of it all—“Let us not sleep, as do others,” lest in our case, too, the enemy come and mar the harvest of our Master by sowing tares among the wheat.

4. Only one other picture, and a very solemn one, still addressing myself to God’s people. We are told that while the bridegroom tarried, the virgins who had gone out to meet Him slumbered and slept. O virgin Hearts! “Let us not sleep, as do others.” When the cry was heard—“Behold, the Bridegroom comes,” they were all slumbering, wise and foolish alike. O you wise virgins who have oil in your vessels and lamps, “sleep not, as do others,” lest the midnight cry come upon you unaware. The Lord Jesus may come in the night. He may come in the heavens with exceeding great power and glory before the rising of another sun.

Or He may tarry awhile, and yet though it should seem to us to be long, He will come quickly, for one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Suppose, however, He were to come tonight? If now, instead of going along to your homes and seeing once more the streets busy with traffic, the sign of the Son of Man should be revealed in the air because the King had come in His Glory, and His holy angels with Him, would you be ready? I press home the question. The Lord may suddenly come—are you ready? Are you ready? You who profess to be His saints—are your loins girt up, and your lamps trimmed?  
Could you go in with Him to the supper, as guests who have long expected Him, and say, “Welcome, Welcome Son of God”? Have you not much to set in order? Are there not still many things undone? Would you not be afraid to hear the midnight cry? Happy are those souls who live habitually with Jesus, who have given themselves up completely to the power of His indwelling Spirit—who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. “They shall walk with Him in white for they are worthy.” Wise are they who live habitually beneath the influence of the Second Advent, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of God.

We would have our window opened towards Jerusalem. We would sit as upon our watchtower whole nights. We would be ready to go out of this Egypt at a moment’s warning. We would be of that host of God who shall go out harnessed, in the time appointed, when the signal is given. God grant us Grace to be found in that number in the day of His appearing, but, “Let us not sleep, as do others.” I might say, let us not sleep as we have done ourselves. God forgive us and arouse us from this good hour. I feel as if I do not want to go on to the second part of my subject at all, but would be quite content to stand here and speak to you who love the Lord.

Brothers and Sisters, we must have an awakening among us. I feel within my soul that I must be awakened myself, and my oven necessities are, I believe, a very accurate gauge of what is wanted by the most of you. Shall our season of triumph, our march of victory, come to an end? Will you turn back after all that God has done for you? Will you limit the Holy One of Israel? Will you cease from the importunities of prayer? Will you pause in the labors of zeal? Will you bring dishonor upon Christ and upon His Cross? By the living God who sleeps not, neither is weary in His deeds of love, I beseech you, slumber not, and be not weary nor faint in your mind. “Be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

II. But I must pass on to the second part of our subject. I have now to speak TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NOT CONVERTED. And if I felt as I ought to feel, it would be sorrowful work even to remember that any of you are yet unsaved. I like to see these little children here. I pray God they may grow up to fear and love Him, and that their young hearts may be given to our dear Lord and Master while they are yet boys and girls. But I overlook them just now, and speak to some of you who have had many years of intelligent hearing of the Word of God, and are still unsaved. Pitiable objects!

You do not think so. But I repeat the word, Pitiable objects! The tears which flood my eyes almost prevent my seeing you. You fancy you are very merry and happy, but you are to be pitied, for “the wrath of God abides on you.” “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.” You will soon be where no pity can help you and where the Lord Himself will not help you. May God give you ears to hear the words of affectionate warning which I address to you now! “Let us not sleep, as do others.”

I beg you not to sleep, as did Jonah. He was in the vessel, you remember, when it was tossed with the tempest, and all the rest in the vessel were praying, but Jonah was asleep. Every man called upon his god except the man who had caused the storm. He was the most in danger, but

he was the most careless. The ship captain and mate, and crew all prayed, every man to his god, but Jonah carelessly slept on. Now, do not some of you here live in houses where they all pray but you? You have a godly mother, but are yourself godless.

John, you have a Christian father, and brothers and sisters, too, whom Christ has looked upon in love, and they pray for you continually. But the strange thing is that your soul is the only one in the house which remains unblest, and yet you are the only one who feels no anxiety or fear about the matter! There are many of us in this house who can honestly say that we would give anything we have if we could save your soul! We do not know what we would not do, but we know we would do all in our power if we could but reach your conscience and your heart.

I stand often in this pulpit almost wishing that I had never been born because of the burden and distress it brings upon my soul to think of some of you who will die and be lost forever! Lost, though you love to listen to the preacher! Lost, though you sometimes resolve to be saved! We are praying for you daily, but you—you are asleep! What do you do, while we are preaching, but criticize our words? You act as if we discoursed to you as a piece of display, and did not mean to plead as for life and death with you that you would escape from the wrath to come.

Observations will be made by the frivolous among you during the most solemn words, about someone’s dress or personal appearance. Vain minds will be gadding upon the mountains of folly, while those who are not, by far, so immediately concerned, are troubled and have deep searching of heart about those very souls. I believe God is going to send a revival into this place. I have that conviction growing upon me, but it may be that though the gracious wave may sweep over the congregation, it will miss you. It has missed you up to this hour.

Around you all the door is wet, but you, like Gideon’s fleece, are dry, and you sleep though the blessing comes not upon you—sleep though sleep involves a certain and approaching curse. O slumbering Jonah, in the name of the Host on High, I would say to you, “Awake you that sleep, and call upon your God. Perhaps He shall deliver you, and this great tempest shall yet be stayed.” Yes, I would put it above a perhaps, for they that seek the Lord shall find Him, if they seek Him with full purpose of heart.

Let us change the illustration now, and take another. You remember Solomon’s sluggard? What did he do? It was morning, and the sun was up—yes, the dawning of the day had passed some hours, and he had not yet gone forth to labor. There was a knock at his door and he opened his eyes a little. He listened and he said, “Leave me alone.” “But will you never get up?” “Yes, I will be up soon. But I want a little more sleep: only a little.” Then came another knock, for his master would have him in the field at work. But he turned over again, and he grumbled within himself, and said, “A little more slumber.”

He slept hour after hour. Yes, but he did not mean to sleep hours. All he intended was to sleep five minutes. But minutes fly rapidly to men who dream. If at the first onset he had known that if he fell asleep he would slumber till noon, he would have been shocked at such abominable laziness. But what harm could it be just to turn over once more? Who would deny him another wink or two? Surely there can be no fault found with one more delicious doze? Now, there are in this congregation persons who have said to themselves many times, “That appeal is right. My conscience gives assent to that Gospel demand. It shall be attended to very soon. I must, however, enjoy a little pleasure first—not much. I do not mean to risk my soul another twelve months, but we will stay till next Sunday. Then I shall have got over certain engagements which now stand in my way.”

Well, Sirs, you know, some of you, that it has been Sunday after Sunday, and then it has grown to be year after year! And still you are saying a little more sleep and a little more slumber. I met one the other day—I do not see him here tonight but I generally see him on the Sunday. I think he heard the first sermon I preached in London—that is many years ago now. And that man loves me—I know he does. And I can say I love him. But if he dies as he is, he is a lost man. He knows it. He has told me so, and he has said, “Pray for me.” But, oh, what is the benefit of my praying for him if he never prays for himself?

It is grievous to know that many of you are in the same dreadful way of procrastinating and putting off. You would do anything to help the Church, too. And if you knew that I needed anything you would be among the first to do it for me, such is your kindness. You are kind to your minister, but you are cruel to your souls. You have held your soul over Hell’s mouth for these twenty years by your continual delays and indecisions. Yet you never meant it. No, you thought long ago that you would have given your heart to Christ. One of these days I shall have to bury you, and it will be with no hope of your future happiness, for it has always been, “A little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands,” till your “poverty shall come upon you as one that travels, and your want like an armed man.”

Alas, it shall be eternal poverty, and the armed man shall be the archdestroyer from whom none can escape! O young man and young woman, do not procrastinate! Delay is the devil’s great net, and it is filled wish exceeding great fishes. Yet does not the net break. Oh that you could break through it! May God help you to do it, for to you I would say, “Let us not,” in this respect, “sleep, as do others.”

Again, the picture changes. Do you remember the story in the Acts of the Apostles of the young man who sat in the third loft while Paul was preaching? It could not have been a dull sermon, I should think. But Paul preached till midnight. That was rather long. You do not allow me such liberal time. And when Paul preached on, Eutychus went to sleep until he fell from the third loft, and was taken up dead. It is true that Paul prayed, and he was restored to life by a miracle. But I have known many an Eutychus fall dead under the Word who were never known to live again. I do not mean that I have known many go to sleep in the House of God and fall from the third loft.

I mean this, that they have heard the Word, and heard the Word till they have been preached into sleep of the deepest kind, and at last preached into Hell. If we, by our preaching do not wake you, we rock your cradles, and make you more insensible every time we warn you. The

most startling preaching in a certain time ceases to arouse the hearers. You know the great boiler factories over here in Southwark. I am told that when a man goes inside the boiler to hold the hammer, when they are fixing rivets, the sound of the copper deafens him so that he cannot bear it, it is so horrible. But, after he has been a certain number of months in that employment, he hardly notices the hammering—he does not care about it.

It is just so under the Word. People go to sleep under that which once was like a thunderbolt to them. As the blacksmith’s dog will lie under the anvil where the sparks fly into his face, and yet go to sleep, so will many sinners sleep while the sparks of damnation fly into their faces. Horrible that it should be so! It would need an earthquake and a hurricane to move some of you! I wish they would come if they would stir you. But even such terrors would be of no avail—only the trumpet which will arouse the dead will ever awaken you.

Oh, dear Hearers, remember that to perish under the Gospel ministry is to perish with a vengeance. If I must be lost, let it be as a Zulu Kaffir, or as a Red Indian who has never listened to the Truth of God. But it is dreadful to go down to the pit with this as an aggravation—“You knew your duty, but you did it not. You heard the warning, but you would not receive it. The medicine was put to your lips, but you preferred to be diseased. The Bread was placed before you, and the Living Water, but you would not take them. Your blood is on your own heads.”

Oh, may this never be said of any of us! May we never sleep under the Word as do others, lest we die in our sins. And, as I told you the other Sunday night, I think that is one of the most dreadful words in the Bible where Christ said twice, one time after another—“If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” To die on a dunghill, or in a ditch, or on the rack, or on the gallows is nothing compared with this—to die in your sins! To die in your sins! And yet this will be your lot if you continue much longer to sleep, as do others.

Another picture. Not to detain you too long. Do you remember in David’s life when he went with one of his mighty men at night into Saul’s camp and found the king and his guards all asleep? There were certain men of war who ought to have watched at Saul’s bed to take care of their master who lay in the trench, but no one was awake at all. And David and his friend went all among the sleepers, treading gently and softly lest they should wake one of them. By-and-by they came to the center of the circle where lay the king, with a cruse of water at his bolster, and his spear stuck in the ground.

Little did he know, as he slept so calmly there, that Abishai was saying to David—“Let me strike him. It shall be but this once.” How easily that strong hand with that sharp javelin would have pinned the king to the ground! Only one stroke, and it would be done—and David’s enemy would pursue him no more forever. I think I see you, O you sleeping Sinners, lying in the same imminent peril. At this moment the evil one is saying— “Let me smite him. I will smite him but this once. Let me prevent his hearing the Gospel this night. Let me thrust the javelin of unbelief into his soul but this once. And then the harvest will be past, the summer will be ended, and he will not be saved.”

Slumbering Sinner, I would gladly shout as the thunder of God if thereby I could arouse you. Man, the knife is at your throat, and can you sleep? The spear is ready to smite you, and will you still dream? I think I see the angel of justice who has long been pursuing the sinner who is rejecting Christ, and he cries—“Let me smite him! He has had time enough. Let me smite him!”

Or, as Christ puts it in the parable, there has come one into the vineyard who has looked at you, the barren tree, and seen no fruit. And he has come these three years, and now he is saying—“Cut it down! Why let it cumber the ground?” O Mercy, stay the axe! O God, bid the enemy put away the spear, and let the sleeper wake, not in Hell, but still on mercy’s plains, where there is a Christ to forgive him and a Spirit to sanctify him! Imploringly, I, your Brother, beseech you tonight to turn unto the living God! Even now in this your day, attend to the things which make for your peace—

*“Today, a pardoning God  
Will hear the suppliant pray.  
Today, a Savior’s cleansing blood  
Will wash your guilt away.  
But Grace so dearly bought  
If yet you will despise,  
Your fearful doom with vengeance fraught, Will fill you with surprise.”*

The last picture is this (may it never be seen in you)—there went once into a tent, which he thought to be friendly, a mighty man who had fought a battle and lost the day. Hot of foot and full of fear, Sisera came into the tent of Jael to ask for water, and she gave him milk. She brought forth butter in a lordly dish. He drank, and then, all weary, he threw himself along in the tent. He is a photograph of many ungodly men who have gone where they thought they had friends. For sinners think *sinners* their friends, and think *sin* their friend—and they have asked for pleasure, and they have had it.

And, now, after having had their fill, and eaten butter in a lordly dish, they are tonight in contentment, sleeping in supposed security. They have gone into the house of the Evil One to find pleasure, and they are going there again tonight, and they will continue there, and try to find rest in the house of their enemies. Sometimes it is the house of the strange woman. Often it is the settle of the drunkard, or the chair of the scorner, where men think to rest in peace. Oh, hark you, Man, and beware! Fly from the ways of the destroyer—fly from the haunt of the strange woman—as for your very life!

Fly from every den of sin, for lo, she comes stealthily, the tent pin is in her left hand, and in her right hand the workman’s hammer. Many mighty has she slain before you, for she hunts for the precious life, and her chambers lead down to death. If you sleep on but another night, or even another hour, the destroyer may have done the deed, and you may be fastened to the earth forever—the victim of your own delusions. I may be in error, but I think I speak to some man tonight who must now immediately change his ways, or else the jaws of Hell will close upon him. I do not desire to speak my own words, or my own thoughts, but to speak as the Divine wind blows through my soul.

And I think I am warning someone tonight of whom, if he turns not, it will soon be written, as of another in the Book of Proverbs, “He goes after her straightway, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till a dart strike through his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, and knows not that it is for his life.” In the name of the Ever Blessed and Most Merciful, “turn! Sinner, turn ! Why will you die?” Your course is destruction, and is near its end. Awake! Why do you sleep? Sleep to others is dangerous. To you it is *damnable*. Awake, arise, or be forever ruined. May God’s Grace bestir you!

Some of you tonight are like Lot and his daughters in the burning city. You must flee. You must flee at once out of Sodom or you will perish in it. Behold, we would put our hand upon you tonight, and press you to flee, the Lord being merciful unto you. His servants and His Spirit constrain you to make haste. Linger not! Look not back! Hesitate not! To your knees! To your knees! “Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon him while He is near.” To the Cross! To the Cross! *There* is your shelter—the mountain where the only refuge can be found from the vengeance of God.

Behold the wounds of Jesus, God’s Beloved Son given for the guilty, slaughtered for the sinful— ***“Thereis life ina look at the crucified One!  
There is life at this moment for you!”***

***—*** and for all who look. But it may be that if this night you look not to Jesus, His Cross may never appear before your eyes again—for they will be sealed in death. Before long, Jael’s tent pin shall have passed through Sisera’s skull—the sin shall have destroyed the sinner—the sin that is unto death shall have shut up the spirit in despair. Oh, may God, who is mighty to save, turn you to Himself at this moment!

“Sound the trumpet in Zion: sound an alarm in My holy mountain,” seems to ring in my ears. And I would gladly sound that alarm to God’s saints, and to sinners, too. May He call many by His Grace, and awaken us all. And His shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—[1 Thessalonians 5](tw://bible.*?id=52.5.0|_AUTODETECT_|).** Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

AWAKE! AWAKE!  
NO. 163

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 15, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.”** *1Th 5:6***.**

WHAT sad things sin has done. This fair world of ours was once a glorious temple, every pillar of which reflected the goodness of God and every part of which was a symbol of good but sin has spoiled and marred all the metaphors and figures that might be drawn from earth. It has so deranged the Divine economy of nature that those things which were matchless pictures of virtue, goodness and Divine plenitude of blessing have now become the figures and representatives of sin.

‘Tis strange to say but it is strangely true, that the very best gifts of God have by the sin of men become the worst pictures of man’s guilt. Behold the flood, breaking forth from its fountains—it rushes across the fields, bearing plenty on its bosom. It covers them awhile and then it does subside and leaves upon the plain a fertile deposit into which the farmer shall cast his seed and reap an abundant harvest. One would have called the breaking forth of water a fine picture of the plenitude of Providence, the magnificence of God’s goodness to the human race. But we find that sin has appropriated that figure to itself. The beginning of sin is like the breaking forth of waters.

See the fire—how kindly God has bestowed upon us that element to cheer us in the midst of winter’s frosts. Fresh from the snow and from the cold we rush to our household fire and there by our hearth we warm our hands and glad we are. Fire is a rich picture of the Divine influences of the Spirit, a holy emblem of the zeal of the Christian. But alas, sin has touched this and the tongue is called “a fire,” “it is set on fire of Hell,” we are told and it is evidently so often when it utters blasphemy and slanders. Jude lifts up his hand and exclaims, when he looks upon the evils caused by sin, “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles.”

And then there is sleep, one of the sweetest of God’s gifts, fair sleep— *“Tired nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep.”*God has selected sleep as the very figure for the repose of the blessed. “They that sleep in Jesus,” says the Scripture. David puts it among the peculiar gifts of grace—“So He gives His Beloved sleep.” But alas, sin could not let even this alone. Sin did override even this celestial metaphor and though God Himself had employed sleep to express the excellence of the state of the Blessed, yet sin must have even this profaned, before itself can be expressed. Sleep is employed in our text as a picture of a sinful condition. “Therefore let us not sleep as do others but let us watch and

be sober.”

With that introduction I shall proceed at once to the text. The “sleep” of the text is an evil to be avoided. In the second place, the word “therefore” is employed to show us that there are certain reasons for the avoiding of this sleep. And since the Apostle speaks of this sleep with sorrow, it is to teach us that there are some, whom he calls “others,” over whom it is our business to lament, because they sleep and do not watch and are not sober.

I. We commence, then, in the first place, by endeavoring to point out the EVIL WHICH THE APOSTLE INTENDS TO DESCRIBE UNDER THE TERM SLEEP. The Apostle speaks of “others” who are asleep. If you turn to the original you will find that the word translated “others” has a more emphatic meaning. It might be rendered (and Horne so renders it), “the refuse”—“Let us not sleep as do the refuse”—the common herd, the ignoble spirits—those that have no mind above the troubles of earth.

“Let us not sleep as do the others,” the base ignoble multitude who are not alive to the high and celestial calling of a Christian. “Let us not sleep as do the refuse of mankind.” And you will find that the word “sleep,” in the original, has also a more emphatic sense. It signifies a deep sleep, a profound slumber. And the Apostle intimates that the refuse of mankind are now in a profound slumber.

We will now try to explain what he meant by it. First the Apostle meant that the refuse of mankind are in a state of deplorable ignorance. They that sleep know nothing. There may be merriment in the house but the sluggard shares not in its gladness. There may be death in the family but no tear wets the cheek of the sleeper. Great events may have transpired in the world’s history but he knows not of them. An earthquake may have tumbled a city from its greatness, or war may have devastated a nation, or the banner of triumph may be waving in the gale and the clarions of his country may be saluting us with victory—but he knows nothing—

*“Their labor and their love are lost  
Alike unknowing and unknown.”*

The sleeper knows not anything. Behold how the refuse of mankind are alike in this! Of some things they know much but of spiritual things they know nothing. Of the Divine Person of the adorable Redeemer they have no idea. Of the sweet enjoyments of a life of piety they cannot even make a guess. Towards the high enthusiasms and the inward raptures of the Christian they cannot mount. Talk to them of Divine doctrines and they are to them a riddle. Tell them of sublime experiences and they seem to them to be enthusiastic fancies. They know nothing of the joys that are to come.

And alas, for they are oblivious of the evils which shall happen to them if they go on in their iniquity. The masses of mankind are ignorant. They know not—they have not—the knowledge of God. They have no fear of Jehovah before their eyes. Blindfolded by the ignorance of this world they march on through the paths of lust to that sure and dreadful end—the everlasting ruin of their souls. Brethren, if we are saints, let us not be ignorant as are others. Let us search the Scriptures, for in them we have eternal life, for they do testify of Jesus. Let us be diligent. Let not the Word depart out of our hearts. Let us meditate therein both day and night that we may be as the tree planted by the rivers of water. “Let us not sleep as do others.”

Again, sleep pictures a state of insensibility. There may be much knowledge in the sleeper. But it is hidden, stored away in his mind. It might be well developed if he but could be awakened. But he has no sensibility, he knows nothing. The burglar has broken into the house—the gold and silver are both in the robber’s hands. The child is being murdered by the cruelty of him that has broken in but the father slumbers. Though all the gold and silver that he has and his most precious child are in the hands of the destroyer he is unconscious. How can he feel, when sleep has utterly sealed his senses?

Lo, in the street there is mourning. A fire has just now burned down the habitation of the poor and houseless beggars are in the street. They are crying at his window and asking him for help. But he sleeps and what does he care though the night is cold and though the poor are shivering in the blast? He has no consciousness. He feels not for them. There, take the title deed of his estate and burn the document. There, set light to his farmyard! Burn up all that he has in the field, kill his horses and destroy his cattle. Let now the fire of God descend and burn up his sheep. Let the enemy fall upon all that he has and devour it. He sleeps as soundly as if he were guarded by the angel of the Lord.

Such are the refuse of mankind. But alas, that we should have to include in that word “refuse” the great bulk thereof! How few there are that feel spiritually! They feel acutely enough any injury to their body, or to their estate but alas, for their spiritual concerns they have no sensation whatever! They are standing on the brink of Hell but they tremble not. The anger of God is burning against them but they fear not. The sword of Jehovah is unsheathed but terror does not seize upon them. They proceed with the merry dance, they drink the bowl of intoxicating pleasure.

They revel and they riot—still do they sing the lascivious song—yes, they do more than this. In their vain dreams they do defy the Most High, whereas if they were once awakened to the consciousness of their state, the marrow of their bones would melt and their heart would dissolve like wax. They are asleep, indifferent and unconscious. Do what you may to them. Let everything be swept away that is hopeful—that might give them cheer when they come to die—they feel it not. For how should a sleeper feel anything? “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others but let us watch and be sober.”

Again—the sleeper cannot defend himself. Behold yonder prince. He is a strong man, yes, and an armed strong man. He has entered into the tent. He is wearied. He has drunk the woman’s milk. He has eaten her “butter in a lordly dish.” He casts himself down upon the floor and he slumbers. And now she draws near. She has with her, her hammer and her nail.

Warrior! You could break her into atoms with one blow of your mighty arm but you cannot now defend yourself. The nail is at his ear, the woman’s hand is on the hammer and the nail has pierced his skull. For when he slept he was defenseless. The banner of Sisera had waved victoriously over mighty foes. But now it is stained by a woman. Tell it, tell it, tell it! The man—who when he was awake made nations tremble—dies by the hand of a feeble woman when he sleeps.

Such are the refuse of mankind. They are asleep. They have no power to resist temptation. Their moral strength is departed, for God is departed from them. There is the temptation to lust. They are men of sound principle in business matters and nothing could make them swerve from honesty—but lasciviousness destroys them. They are taken like a bird in a snare, they are caught in a trap, they are utterly subdued. Or maybe it is another way that they are conquered. They are men that would not do an unchaste act, or even think a lascivious thought. They scorn it. But they have another weak point—they are entrapped by the glass. They are taken and they are destroyed by drunkenness.

Or, if they can resist these things and are inclined neither to looseness of fire nor to excess in living, yet maybe covetousness enters into them by the name of prudence. It slides into their hearts and they are led to grasp after treasure and to heap up gold. Even though that gold is wrung out of the veins of the poor and though they do suck the blood of the orphan. They seem to be unable to resist their passion. How many times have I been told by men, “I cannot help it, Sir, do what I may, I resolve, I reresolve but I do the same. I am defenseless. I cannot resist the temptation!” Oh, of course you cannot while you are asleep. O Spirit of the living God, wake up the sleeper! Let sinful sloth and presumption both be startled, lest haply Moses should come their way and finding them asleep should hang them on the gallows of infamy forever!

Now, I come to give another meaning of the word “sleep.” I hope there have been some of my congregation who have been tolerably easy while I have described the first three things, because they have thought that they were exempt in those matters. But sleep signifies also inactivity. The farmer cannot plow his field in his sleep, neither can he cast the grain into the furrows, nor watch the clouds, nor reap his harvest. The sailor cannot reef his sail, or direct his ship across the ocean while he slumbers. It is not possible that on the Exchange, or the mart, or in the house of business men should transact their affairs with their eyes fast closed in slumber.

It would be a singular thing to see a nation of sleepers. For that would be a nation of idle men. They must all starve. They would produce no wealth from the soil, they would have nothing for their backs, nothing for clothing and nothing for food. But how many we have in the world that are inactive through sleep! Yes, I say inactive. I mean by that, that they are active enough in one direction but they are inactive in the right. Oh, how many men there are that are totally inactive in anything that is for, or for the welfare of their fellow creatures? For themselves, they can “rise up early and sit up God’s glory late and eat the bread of carefulness.”

For their children, which is an alias for themselves, they can toil until their fingers ache—they can weary themselves until their eyes are red in their sockets—till the brain whirls and they can do no more. But for God they can do nothing. Some say they have no time, others frankly confess that they have no will—for God’s Church they would not spend an hour— while for this world’s pleasure they could lay out a month. For the poor they cannot spend their time and their attention. They may haply have time to spare for themselves and for their own amusement but for holy works, for deeds of charity and for pious acts they declare they have no leisure. The truth is, they have no will.

Behold how many professing Christians there are that are asleep in this sense! They are inactive. Sinners are dying in the street by hundreds. Men are sinking into the flames of eternal wrath. But they fold their arms. They pity the poor perishing sinner but they do nothing to show that their pity is real. They go to their places of worship, they occupy their wellcushioned easy pew. They wish the minister to feed them every Sabbath. But there is never a child taught in the Sunday-School by them. There is never a tract distributed at the poor man’s house. There is never a deed done which might be the means of saving souls.

We call them good men, some of them we even elect to the office of deacons and no doubt good men they are. They are as good as Anthony meant to say that Brutus was honorable, when he said, “So are we all, all honorable men.” So are we all, all good, if they are good. But these are good and in some sense—good for nothing. For they just sit and eat the bread but they do not plow the field. They drink the wine but they will not raise the vine that does produce it. They think that they are to live unto themselves, forgetting that, “no man lives unto himself and no man dies unto himself.”

Oh, what a vast amount of sleeping we have in all our Churches and Chapels. For truly if our Churches were once awake—so far as material things are concerned—there are enough converted men and women and there is enough talent with them and enough money with them and enough time with them, God granting the abundance of His Holy Spirit, which He would be sure to do if they were all zealous—there is enough to preach the Gospel in every corner of the earth. The Church does not need to stop for want of instruments, or for want of agencies.

We have everything now except the will. We have all that we may expect God to give for the conversion of the world, except just a heart for the work and the Spirit of God poured out into our midst. Oh, Brethren, “let us not sleep as do others.” You will find the “others” in the Church and in the world—“the refuse” of both are sound asleep.

Before, however, I can dismiss this first point of explanation, it is necessary for me just to say that the Apostle himself furnishes us with part of an exposition. The second sentence, “let us watch and be sober,” implies that the reverse of these things is the sleep which he means. “Let us watch.” There are many that never watch. They never watch against sin.

They never watch against the temptations of the enemy. They do not watch against themselves, nor against “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye and the pride of life.” They do not watch for opportunities to do good, they do not watch for opportunities to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to succor them that are in need.

They do not watch for opportunities of glorifying Jesus, or for times of communion. They do not watch for the Promises. They do not watch for answers to their prayers. They do not watch for the second coming of our Lord Jesus. These are the refuse of the world—they watch not, because they are asleep. But let us watch—so shall we prove that we are not slumberers.

Again—let us “ be sober.” Albert Barnes says this most of all refers to abstinence, or temperance in eating and drinking. Calvin says not so— this refers more especially to the spirit of moderation in the things of the world. Both are right. It refers to both. There are many that are not sober. They sleep because they are not so. For insobriety leads to sleep. They are not sober—they are drunkards, they are gluttons. They are not sober— they cannot be content to do a little business—they want to do a great deal. They are not sober—they cannot carry on a trade that is sure—they must speculate. They are not sober—if they lose their property, their spirit is cast down within them and they are like men that are drunken with wormwood.

If on the other hand, they get rich, they are not sober—they so set their affections upon things on earth that they become intoxicated with pride, because of their riches. They become purse-proud and need to have the heavens lifted up higher, lest their heads should dash against the stars. How many people there are that are not sober! Oh, I might especially urge this precept upon you at this time, my dear Friends. We have hard times coming and the times are hard enough now. Let us be sober. The fearful panic in America has mainly arisen from disobedience to this command— “Be sober,” and if the professors of America had obeyed this Commandment and had been sober, the panic might at any rate have been mitigated, if not totally avoided.

Now, in a little time you who have any money laid by will be rushing to the bank to have it drawn out, because you fear that the bank is tottering. You will not be sober enough to have a little trust in your fellow men and help them through their difficultly and so be a blessing to the commonwealth. And you who think there is anything to be had by lending your money at usury will not be content with lending what you have got but you will be extorting and squeezing your poor debtors that you may get the more to lend. Men are seldom content to get rich slowly but he that hastens to be rich shall not be innocent.

Take care, my Brethren—if any hard times should come in London, if commercial houses should smash and banks be broken—take care to be sober. There is nothing will get us over a panic so well as everyone of us trying to keep our spirits up—just rising in the morning and saying, “Times are very hard and today I may lose my all. But fretting will not help it, so just let me set a bold heart against hard sorrow and go to my business. The wheels of trade may stop. I bless God, my treasure is in Heaven. I cannot be bankrupt. I have set my affections on the things of God. I cannot lose those things. There is my jewel. There is my heart!”

Why, if all men could do that, it would tend to create public confidence. But the cause of the great ruin of many men is the covetousness of all men and the fear of some. If we could all go through the world with confidence and with boldness and with courage, there is nothing in the world that could avert the shock so well. I suppose the shock must come. And there are many men now present who are very respectable, who may expect to be beggars before long. Your business is so to put your trust in Jehovah that you may be able to say, “Though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, God is my refuge and strength a very present help in trouble therefore will I not fear.”

And doing that, you will be creating more probabilities for the avoidance of your own destruction than by any other means which the wisdom of man can dictate to you. Let us not be intemperate in business, as are others. But let us be awake. “Let us not sleep”—not be carried away by the sleepwalking of the world, for what is it better than that—activity and greed in sleep? “But let us watch and be sober.” Oh, Holy Spirit help us to watch and be sober.

II. Thus I have occupied a great deal of time in explaining the first point—What was the sleep which the Apostle meant? And now you will notice that the word “therefore” implies that there are CERTAIN REASONS FOR THIS. I shall give you these reasons. And if I should cast them somewhat into a dramatic form, you must not wonder. They will the better, perhaps, be remembered.

“Therefore,” says the Apostle, “let us not sleep.” We shall first look at the chapter itself for our reasons. The first reason precedes the text. The Apostle tells us that, “we are all the children of the light and of the day. Therefore let us not sleep as do others. I marvel not when, as I walk through the streets after nightfall, I see every shop closed and every blind drawn. And I see the light in the upper room significant of retirement to rest. I wonder not that a half an hour later my footsteps startles me and I find none in the streets. Should I ascend the staircase and look into the sleepers’ placid countenances, I should not wonder.

For it is night, the proper time for sleep. But if some morning at eleven or twelve o’clock, I should walk down the streets and find myself alone and notice every shop closed and every house shut up and hearken to no noise, I should say, “‘Tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis wonderful. What are these people at? ‘Tis daytime and yet they are all asleep.” I should be inclined to seize the first rapper I could find and give a double knock and rush to the next door and ring the bell and so all the way down the street. Or go to the police station and wake up what men I found there and bid them make a noise in the street.

Or go for the fire engine and bid the firemen rattle down the road and try to wake these people up. For I should say to myself, “There is some pestilence here, the angel of death must have flown through these streets during the night and killed all these people, or else they would have been sure to have been awake.” Sleep in the daytime is utterly incongruous. “Well, now,” says the Apostle Paul, “you people of God, it is daytime with you. The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you with healing in His wings. The light of God’s Spirit is in your conscience. You have been brought out of darkness into marvelous light. For you to be asleep, for a Church to slumber is like a city in bed in the day, like a whole town slumbering when the sun is shining. It is untimely and unseemly.”

And now, if you look at the text again, you will find there is another argument. “Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love.” So, then, it seems, it is wartime. And therefore, again, it is unseemly to slumber. There is a fortress yonder, far away in India. A troop of those abominable Sepoys have surrounded it. Bloodthirsty Hellhounds. If they once gain admission they will rend the mother and her children and cut the strong man in pieces. They are at the gates—their cannons are loaded—their bayonets thirst for blood and their swords are hungry to slay.

Go through the fortress and the people are all asleep. There is the warden on the tower, nodding on his bayonet. There is the captain in his tent, with his pen in his hand and his dispatches before him, asleep at the table. There are soldiers lying down in their tents ready for the war but all slumbering. There is not a man to be seen keeping watch. There is not a sentry there. All are asleep. Why, my Friends, you would say, “Whatever is the matter here? What can it be? Has some great wizard been waving his wand and put a spell upon them all? Or are they all mad? Have their minds fled?

“Surely, to be asleep in wartime is indeed outrageous, Here, take down that trumpet, go close up to the captain’s ear and blow a blast and see if it does not awake him in a moment. Just take away that bayonet from the soldier that is asleep on the walls and give him a sharp prick with it and see if he does not awake.” But surely, surely, nobody can have patience with people asleep when the enemy surround the walls and are thundering at the gates.

Now, Christians, this is your case. Your life is a life of warfare—the world, the flesh and the devil are a hellish trinity and your poor nature is wretched mud work behind which to be entrenched. Are you asleep? Asleep? When Satan has fireballs of lust to hurl into the windows of your eyes? When he has arrows of temptation to shoot into your heart? When he has snares into which to trap your feet? Asleep? When he has undermined your very existence and when he is about to apply the match with which to destroy you, unless Sovereign Grace prevents? Oh, sleep not, soldier of the Cross! To sleep in wartime is utterly inconsistent. Great Spirit of God forbid that we should slumber!  
But now, leaving the chapter itself, I will give you one or two other reasons that will, I trust, move Christian people to awake out of their sleep. “Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!” Then comes the ringing of a bell. What is this? Here is a door marked with a great white cross. Lord, have mercy upon us! All the houses down that street seem to be marked with that white death cross. What is this? Here is the grass growing in the streets. Here are Cornhill and Cheapside deserted! No one is found treading a solitary pavement. There is not a sound to be heard but those horse hoofs, like the hoofs of death’s pale horse upon the stones, the ringing of that bell that sounds the death knell to many and the rumbling of the wheels of that cart and the dreadful cry, “Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!”

Do you see that house? A physician lives there. He is a man who has great skill and God has lent him wisdom. A little while ago, while in his study, God was pleased to guide his mind and he discovered the secret of the plague. He was plague-smitten himself and ready to die but he lifted the blessed vial to his lips and he drank a draught and cured himself. Do you believe what I am about to tell you? Can you imagine it? That man has the prescription that will heal all these people. He has it in his pocket. He has the medicine which, if once distributed in those streets, would make the sick rejoice and put that dead man’s bell away.

And he is asleep! He is asleep! He is asleep! O you Heavens! Why do you not fall and crush the wretch? O earth! How could you bear this demon upon your bosom? Why not swallow him up? He has the medicine! He is too lazy to go and proclaim the remedy. He has the cure and is too idle to go out and administer it to the sick and the dying! No, my Friends, such an inhuman wretch could not exist! But I can see him here today. There you are! You know the world is sick with the plague of sin and you yourself have been cured by the remedy which has been provided. You are asleep, inactive, loitering. You do not go forth to—

*“Tell to others round,  
What a dear Savior you have found.”*

There is the precious Gospel—you do not go and put it to the lips of a sinner. There is the all-precious blood of Christ—you never go to tell the dying what they must do to be saved. The world is perishing with worse than plague—and you are idle! And you are a minister of the Gospel. And you have taken that holy office upon yourself. And you are content to preach twice on a Sunday and once on a weekday and there is no remonstrance within you. You never desire to attract the multitudes to hear you preach. You had rather keep your empty benches and study propriety, than you would once, at the risk of appearing over-zealous, draw the multitude and preach the Word to them.

You are a writer—you have great power in writing. You devote your talents alone to light literature, or to the production of other things which may furnish amusement but which cannot benefit the soul. You know the Truth but you do not tell it out. Yonder mother is a converted woman— you have children and you forget to instruct them in the way to Heaven.

You yonder are a young man, having nothing to do on the Sabbath-Day and there is the Sunday-School. You do not go to tell those children the sovereign remedy that God has provided for the care of sick souls. The death-bell is ringing even now.

Hell is crying out, howling with hunger for the souls of men. “Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Bring out the sinner! Let him die and be damned!” And there are you professing to be a Christian and doing nothing which might make you the instrument of saving souls—never putting out your hand to be the means in the hand of the Lord of plucking sinners as brands from the burning! Oh, may the blessing of God rest on you, to turn you from such an evil way that you may not sleep as do others but may watch and be sober. The world’s imminent danger demands that we should be active and not be slumbering.

Hark how the mast creaks! See the sails there, rent to ribbons. Breakers ahead! She will be on the rocks directly. Where is the captain? Where is the boatswain? Where are the sailors? Ahoy there! Where are you? Here’s a storm come on! Where are you? You are down in the cabin. And there is the captain in a soft sweet slumber. There is the man at the wheel, as sound asleep as ever he can be. And there are all the sailors in their hammocks. What? And the breakers ahead? What? The lives of two hundred passengers in danger and here are these brutes asleep? Kick them out. What is the good of letting such men as these be sailors, especially in such a time as this?

Why, out with you! If you had gone to sleep in fine weather we might have forgiven you. Up with you, Captain! What have you been doing? Are you mad? But hark! The ship has struck—she will be down in a moment. Now you will work, will you? Now you will work when it is of no use and when the shrieks of drowning women shall toll you into Hell for your most accursed negligence in not having taken care of them. Well that is very much like a great many of us, in these times, too.

This proud ship of our commonwealth is reeling in a storm of sin. The very mast of this great nation is creaking under the hurricane of vice that sweeps across the noble vessel. Every timber is strained and God help the good ship, or alas, none can save her. And who are her captain and her sailors, but ministers of God, the professors of religion? These are they to whom God gives grace to steer the ship. “You are the salt of the earth.” You preserve and keep it alive, O children of God. Are you asleep in the storm? Are you slumbering now? If there were no dens of vice, if there were no harlots, if there were no houses of profanity, if there were no murders and no crimes, oh, you that are the salt of the earth—you might sleep.

But today the sin of London cries in the ears of God. This behemoth city is covered with crime and God is vexed with her. And are we asleep, doing nothing? Then God forgive us! But surely, of all the sins He ever does forgive, this is the greatest, the sin of slumbering when a world is damning—the sin of being idle when Satan is busy, devouring the souls of men. “Brethren let us not sleep” in such times as these. For if we do, a curse must fall upon us, horrible to bear.

There is a poor prisoner in a cell. His hair is all matted over his eyes. A few weeks ago the judge put on the black cap and commanded that he should be taken to the place from where he came and hung by the neck until dead. The poor wretch has his heart broken within him, while he thinks of the pinion, of the gallows and of the drop and of after-death. Oh, who can tell how his heart is rent and racked while he thinks of leaving all and going he knows not where? There is a man there, sound asleep upon a bed. He has been asleep there these two days and under his pillow he has that prisoner’s free pardon. I would horsewhip that scoundrel, horsewhip him soundly, for making that poor man have two days of extra misery.

Why, if I had had that man’s pardon, I would have been there. If I rode on the wings of lightning to get to him I should have thought the fastest train that ever run but slow, if I had so sweet a message to carry and such a poor heavy heart to carry it to. But that man, that brute, is sound asleep, with a free pardon under his pillow, while that poor wretch’s heart is breaking with dismay! Ah, do not be too hard with him—he is here today. Side by side with you this morning there is sitting a poor penitent sinner. God has pardoned him and intends that you should tell him that good news. He sat by your side last Sunday and he wept all the sermon through, for he felt his guilt.

If you had spoken to him then, who can tell? He might have had comfort but there he is now—you do not tell him the good news. Do you leave that to me to do? Ah, Sirs, but you cannot serve God by proxy. What the minister does is nothing to you. You have your own personal duty to do and God has given you a precious Promise. It is now on your heart. Will you not turn round to your neighbor and tell him that Promise? Oh, there is many an aching heart that aches because of our idleness in telling the good news of this salvation. “Yes,” says one of my members, who always comes to this place on a Sunday and looks out for young men and young women whom he has seen in tears the Sunday before and who brings many into the Church, “yes, I could tell you a story.”

He looks a young man in the face and says, “Haven’t I seen you here a great many times?” “Yes.” “I think you take a deep interest in the service, do you not?” “Yes, I do—what makes you ask me that question?” “Because I looked at your face last Sunday and I thought there was something at work with you.” “Oh, Sir,” he says, “nobody has spoken to me ever since I have been here till now and I want to say a word to you. When I was at home with my mother, I used to think I had some idea of religion but I came away and was bound apprentice with an ungodly lot of youths and have done everything I ought not to have done. And now, Sir, I begin to weep, I begin to repent. I wish to God that I knew how I might be saved! I hear the word preached, Sir but I want something spoken personally to me by somebody.”

And he turns round, he takes him by the hand and says, “My dear young Brother, I am so glad I spoke to you. It makes my poor old heart rejoice to think that the Lord is doing something here still. Now, do not be cast down. For you know, ‘This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ ” The young man puts his handkerchief to his eyes and after a minute, he says, “I wish you would let me call and see you, Sir.” “Oh, you may,” he says. He talks with him, he leads him onward and at last by God’s grace the happy youth comes forward and declares what God has done for his soul and owes his salvation as much to the humble instrumentality of the man that helped him as he could do to the preaching of the minister.

Beloved Brethren, the bridegroom comes! Awake! Awake! The earth must soon be dissolved and the Heavens must melt! Awake! Awake! O Holy Spirit arouse us all and keep us awake!

III. And now I have no time for the last point and therefore I shall not detain you, suffice me to say in warning, there is AN EVIL HERE LAMENTED.

There are some that are asleep and the Apostle mourns it. My fellow Sinner, you that are this day unconverted, let me say six or seven sentences to you and you shall depart. Unconverted man! Unconverted woman! You are asleep today, as they that sleep on the top of the mast in time of a storm. You are asleep as he that sleeps when the floods are out and when his house is undermined and being carried down the stream far out to sea. You are asleep as he who in the upper chamber, when his house is burning and his own locks are singeing in the fire—he knows not the devastation around him.

You are asleep—asleep as he that lies upon the edge of a precipice with death and destruction beneath him. One single start in his sleep would send him over but he knows it not. You are asleep this day. And the place where you sleep has so frail a support that when once it breaks you shall fall into Hell—and if you wake not till then, what a waking it will be!

“In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” And he cried for a drop of water but it was denied him. “He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” This is the Gospel. Believe in Jesus and you shall “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

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THE ENCHANTED GROUND  
NO. 64

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 3, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others. But let us watch and be sober.”** *1Th 5:6***.**

As the spiritual guide of the flock of God along the intricate mazes of experience, it is the duty of the Gospel minister to point out every turning of the road to Heaven, to speak concerning its dangers or its privileges, and to warn any whom he may suspect to be in a peculiarly perilous position. Now there is a portion of the road which leads from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, which has in it, perhaps, more dangers than any other portion of the way. It does not abound with lions. There are no dragons in it. It has no dark woods and no deep pitfalls. Yet more pilgrims have been destroyed in that portion of the road than anywhere else! Not even Doubting Castle, with all its host of bones, can show as many who have been slain there. It is the part of the road called the Enchanted Ground. The great geographer, John Bunyan, well pictured it when he said—“I then saw in my dream, that they went on till they came into a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy, if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep: therefore he said unto Christian, I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up my eyes. Let us lie down here and take a nap.

CHR. “By no means, said the other, lest sleeping, we never wake again.”  
HOPE. “Why, my Brother? Sleep is sweet to the laboring man. We may be refreshed if we take a nap.”  
CHR. “Do you not remember that one of the Shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground? He meant by that, that we should beware of sleeping. Therefore ‘let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.’”  
There is no doubt, many of us, Beloved, are passing over this plain and I fear that this is the condition of the majority of churches in the present day. They are lying down on the settles of Lukewarmness in the Arbors of the Enchanted Ground! There is not that activity and zeal we would wish to see among them. They are not, perhaps, notably heterodox. They may not be invaded by the lion of persecution—they are somewhat worse than that—they are lying down to slumber, like Heedless and Too-Bold in the Arbor of Sloth! May God grant that His servants may be the means of awakening the Church from its lethargy and stirring it up from its slumbers, lest professors should sleep the sleep of death!  
This morning I intend to show you what is meant by the state of sleep into which Christians sometimes fall. Secondly, I shall use some considerations, if possible, to wake up such as are slumbering. Thirdly, I shall mark sundry times when the Christian is most liable to fall asleep—and shall conclude by giving you some advice as to the mode in which you should conduct yourselves when you are passing over the Enchanted Ground and feel drowsiness weighing down your eyelids.  
I. First, WHAT IS THAT STATE OF SLEEP INTO WHICH THE CHRISTIAN MAY FALL? It is not death. He was dead once, but he is now alive in Christ Jesus. And, therefore, he shall never die eternally. But though a living man shall not die, being quickened by an immortal life, yet that living man may sleep and that sleep is so nearly akin to death that I have known slumbering Christians mistaken for dead, carnal sinners! Come, Beloved, let me picture to you the state of the Christian while he is in a condition of sleep.  
First, sleep is a state of insensibility and such is that state which too often is upon even the best children of God. When a man is asleep, he is insensible. The world goes on and he knows nothing about it. The watchman calls beneath his window and he sleeps on. A fire is in a neighboring street—his neighbor’s house is burned to ashes—but he is asleep and knows it not! Persons are sick in the house but he is not awakened. They may die and he weeps not for them. A revolution may be raging in the streets of his city. A king may be losing his crown. But he that is asleep shares not in the turmoil of politics. A volcano may burst somewhere near him and he may be in imminent peril, but he escapes not. He is sound asleep, he is insensible! The winds are howling, the thunders are rolling across the sky and the lightning flashes at his window. But he that can sleep on, cares not for these and is insensible to them all. The sweetest music is passing through the street. But he sleeps and only in dreams does he hear the sweetness. The most terrific wailings may assail his ears. But sleep has sealed them with the wax of slumber and he hears not. Let the world break in sunder and the elements go to ruin—keep him asleep and he will not perceive it! Christian, behold your condition! Have you not sometimes been brought into a condition of insensibility? You wished you could feel, but all you felt was pain because you could not feel. You wished you could pray. It was not that you felt prayerless, but it was because you did not feel at all! Once you sighed—you would give a world if you could sigh now! Once you used to groan—a groan, now, would be worth a golden star if you could buy it! As for songs, you can sing them, but then your heart does not go with them. You go to the House of God. But when “the multitude that keep the holy day” in the full tide of song send their music up to Heaven, you hear it, but your heart does not leap at the sound. Prayer goes solemnly like the evening sacrifice up to God’s Throne—once you could pray—but now, while your body is in the House of God, your heart is not there. You feel you have brought the chrysalis of your being but the fly is gone away from it—it is a dead lifeless case! You have become like a formalist. You feel that there is not that savor, that unction in the preaching, that there used to be. There is no difference in your minister, you know. The change is in yourself. The hymns and the prayers are just the same but you have fallen into a state of slumber! Once if you thought of a man’s being damned, you would weep your very soul out in tears. But now you could sit unmoved at the very brink of Hell and hear its wailings. Once the thought of restoring a sinner from the error of his ways would have made you start from your bed at midnight and you would have rushed through the cold air to help to rescue a sinner from his sins. Now, talk to you about perishing multitudes, and you hear it as an old, old tale. Tell you of thousands swept by the mighty flood of sin onwards to the precipice of destruction—you express your regret, you give your contribution—but your heart goes not with it! You must confess that you are insensible— not entirely, but too much so. You want to be awake, but you groan because you feel yourselves to be in this state of slumber.  
Then again, he that sleeps is subject to many illusions. When we sleep, judgment goes from us and fancy holds carnival within our brain. When we sleep, dreams arise and fashion in our head strange things. Sometimes we are tossed on the stormy deep and another we revel in kings palaces. We gather up gold and silver as if they were but the pebbles of the shore. And another time we are poor and naked, shivering in the blast. What illusions deceive us! The beggar in his dreams becomes richer than Plutus. And the rich man as poor as Lazarus. The sick man is well, the healthy man has lost his limbs, or is dead. Yes, dreams make us descend to Hell, or even carry us to Heaven. Christian, if you are one of the sleepy brotherhood, you are subject to many illusions. Strange thoughts come to you which you never had before. Sometimes you doubt if there is a God, or if you exist, yourself! You tremble lest the Gospel should not be true. And the old Doctrine which once you held with a stern hand, you are almost inclined to let go! Vile heresies assail you. You think that the Lord who bought you was not the Son of God! The devil tells you that you are none of the Lord’s and you dream that you are cast away from the love of the Covenant. You cry—  
*“I would, but cannot sing!  
I would, but cannot pray,”*  
and you feel as if it were all in question whether you are one of the Lord’s or not! Or perhaps your dreams are brighter and you dream that you are somebody, great and mighty, a special favorite of Heaven. Pride puffs you up. You dream that you are rich and have need of nothing, while you are naked, poor and miserable. Is this your state, O Christian? If so, may God wake you up from it!  
Again, sleep is a state of inaction. No daily bread is earned by him that sleeps. The man who is stretched upon his couch neither writes books, nor tills the ground, nor plows the sea, nor does anything else. His hands hang down, his pulse beats and there is life, but he is positively dead as to activity. Oh, Beloved, here is the state of many of you. How many Christians are inactive! Once it was their delight to instruct the young in the Sunday school—but that is now given up. Once they attended the early Prayer Meeting—but not now. Once they would be hewers of wood and drawers of water—but, alas—they are now asleep! Am I talking of what may happen? Is it not too true almost universally? Are not the churches asleep? Where are the ministers who preach? We have men who read their manuscripts and talk essays—but is that preaching? We have men who can amuse an audience for 20 minutes—is that preaching? Where are the men who preach their hearts out and reveal their souls in every sentence? Where are the men who make it not a profession, but a vocation—the breath of their bodies, the marrow of their bones, the delight of their spirits? Where are the Whitfields and Wesleys, now? Are they not gone, gone, gone? Where are the Rowland Hills, now, who preached every day and three times a day and were not afraid of preaching everywhere, the unsearchable riches of Christ? Brothers, the church slumbers. It is not merely that the pulpit is a sentry box with the sentinel fast asleep, but the pews are affected! How are the Prayer Meetings almost universally neglected? Our own Church stands out like an almost solitary green islet in the midst of a dark, dark sea! By God’s Grace we are one bright pearl in the depths of an ocean of discord and confusion! Look at neighboring churches. Step into the vestry and see a smaller band of people than you would like to think of, assembled round the pastor, whose heart is dull and heavy. Hear one Brother after another pour out the dull monotonous prayer that he has said by heart these 50 years and then go away and say, “Where is the spirit of prayer, where is the life of devotion?” Is it not almost extinct? Are not our churches “fallen, fallen, fallen, from their high estate”? God wake them up and send them more earnest and praying men!  
Once more—the man who is asleep is in a state of insecurity. The murderer smites him that sleeps. The midnight robber plunders his house that rests listlessly on his pillow. Jael smites a sleeping Sisera. Abner takes away the spear from the bolster of a slumbering Saul. A sleeping Eutychus falls from the third loft and is taken up dead. A sleeping Samson is shorn of his locks and the Philistines are upon him. Sleeping men are always in danger. They cannot ward off the blow of the enemy or strike another. Christian, if you are sleeping, you are in danger! Your life, I know, can never be taken from you—that is hid with Christ in God. But oh, you may lose your spear from your bolster! You may lose much of your faith. And your cruse of water wherewith you moisten your lips may be stolen by the prowling thief! Oh, you little know your danger! Even now the black-winged angel takes his spear and, standing at your head, he says to Jesus, (to David) “Shall I smite him? I will smite him but once.” (David says) our Jesus whispers, “You shall not smite him. Take his spear and his cruse, but you shall not kill him.” But oh, awake, you who slumber! Start up from the place where you now lie in your insecurity. This is not the sleep of Jacob, in which ladders unite Heaven and earth and angels tread their ascending rounds. But this is the sleep where ladders are raised from Hell and devils climb upward from the pit of Hell to molest your spirit!  
II. This brings me to the second point, SOME CONSIDERATIONS TO WAKE UP SLEEPY CHRISTIANS. I remember once in my life having a sleepy congregation. They had been eating too much dinner and they came to the Chapel in the afternoon very sleepy, so I tried an old expedient to awaken them. I shouted with all my might, “Fire! Fire! Fire!” When starting from their seats, some of the congregation asked where it was and I told them it was in Hell for such sleepy sinners as they were! So, Beloved, I might cry, “Fire! Fire!” this morning to awaken sleepy Christians! But that would be a false cry, because the fire of Hell was never made for Christians at all—and they need never tremble at it! The honor of God is engaged to save the meanest sheep and whether that sheep is asleep or awake, it is perfectly safe, so far as final salvation is concerned. There are better reasons why I should stir up a Christian and I shall use a very few of them.  
And first, O Christian, awake from your slumber, because your Lord is coming. That is the grand reason used in the text. The Apostle says, “You are all the children of light and the children of the day.” You know perfectly well that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. You, Brothers and Sisters, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief! O Christians, do you know that your Lord is coming? In such an hour as you think not, the Man who once hung quivering on Calvary will descend in Glory! “The Head that once was crowned with thorns” will soon be crowned with a diadem of brilliant jewels! He will come in the clouds of Heaven to His Church. Would you wish to be sleeping when your Lord comes? Do you want to be like the foolish virgins, who, while the bridegroom tarried, slumbered and slept, or like the wise ones? If our Master were to appear this morning, are there not half of us in such a state that we would be afraid to see Him? Why? You know, when a friend comes to your house, if he is some great man, what brushing and dusting there is! Every corner of the room has its cobwebs removed! Every carpet is turned up. And you make every effort to have the house clean for his coming. What? And will you have your house dusty and the spiders of neglect building the cobwebs of indolence in the corners of your house when your Lord may arrive tomorrow? And if we are to have an audience with the Queen, what dressing there is! How careful will men be that everything should be put on aright, that they should appear properly in court dress! Do you not know, servant of the Lord, that you are to appear before the King in His beauty and to see Him soon on earth? What? Will you be asleep when He comes? When He knocks at the door, shall He have for an answer, “The good man is asleep. He did not expect You”? Oh, no! Be like men who watch for their Lord, that at His coming He may find you ready! Ah, you carnal professors who attend plays and balls, would you like Christ to come and find you in the middle of your dance? Would you like Him to look you in the face in the opera? Ah, you carnal tradesmen, can you cheat and then pray after it? Would you like Christ to find you cheating? You devour widows’ houses and for a show make long prayers. You would not mind Him coming in the middle of your long prayer. But He will come just as that poor widows’ house is sticking in your throat, just as you are swallowing the lands of the poor oppressed one and putting in your own pocket, the wages of which you have defrauded the laborer! Then He will come and how terrible will He be to such as you! We have heard of the sailor, who, when his ship was sinking, rushed to the cabin to steal a bag of gold—and though warned that he could not swim with it tied it about his loins—he leaped into the sea with it and sank to rise no more! And I am afraid there are some rich men who know not how to use their money, who will sink to Hell, strangled by their gold, hanging like millstones round their necks! O Christian, it shall not be so with you—but wake from

your slumbers, for your Lord comes!  
But again, Christian, you are benevolent. You love men’s souls and I will speak to you of that which will touch your heart. Will you weep while souls are being lost? A Brother here, some time ago, rushed into a house which was burning and he saved a person from it. He then returned to his wife and what did she say to him? “Go back again, my husband and see if you cannot save another. We will not rest till all are delivered.” I think that is what the Christian would say, “If I have been the means of saving one soul, I will not rest until I have saved another.” Oh, have you ever thought how many souls sink to Hell every hour? Did the dreary thought that the death knell of a soul is tolled by every tick of yonder clock ever strike you? Have you ever thought that myriads of your fellow creatures are now in Hell—and that myriads more are hastening there? And yet do you sleep? What? Physician, will you sleep when men are dying? Sailor, will you sleep when the wreck is out at sea and the life boat is waiting for hands to man it? Christian, will you tarry while souls are being lost? I do not say that you can save them—God, alone, can do that—but you may be the instrument! And would you lose the opportunity of winning another jewel for your crown in Heaven? Would you sleep while work is being done? Well, said the British king, at the Battle of Agincourt, “Come on and conquer”—  
*“And gentlemen in England—now a-bed,  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here— And hold their manhood cheap, when any speaks That fought with us upon this glorious day.’’*  
So I think, when souls are being saved, Christians in bed may think themselves accursed they are not here! Sleepy Christian, let me shout in your ears—you are sleeping while souls are being lost—sleeping while men are being damned—sleeping while Hell is being peopled—sleeping while Christ is being dishonored—sleeping while the devil is grinning at your sleepy face—sleeping while demons are dancing round your slumbering carcass and shouting it in Hell that a Christian is asleep! You will never catch the devil asleep. Let not the devil catch you asleep! Watch and be sober, that you may be always up to do your duty.  
I have no time to use other considerations, though the subject is large enough and I should have no difficulty in finding sticks enough to beat a sleeping dog with. “Let us not sleep as do others.”  
III. Now it may be asked, WHEN IS THE CHRISTIAN MOST LIABLE TO SLEEP?  
First, I answer, he is most liable to sleep when his temporal circumstances are all right. When your nest is well feathered, you are then most likely to sleep. There is little danger of your sleeping when there is a bramble bush in the bed. When all is downy, then the most likely thing will be that you will say, “Soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years—take your rest—eat, drink and be merry!” Let me ask some of you, when you were more straitened in circumstances, when you had to rely upon Providence each hour and had troubles to take the Throne of Grace—were you not more wakeful than you are now? The miller who has his wheel turned by a constant stream goes to sleep but he that attends on the wind, which sometimes blows hard and sometimes gently, sleeps not, lest haply the full gust might rend the sails, or there should not be enough to make them go round! Those who live by the day often sleep not by day, but they sleep in the night—the sleep of the Beloved. Easy roads tend to make us slumber. Few sleep in a storm. Many sleep on a calm night. He is a brave boy, indeed, who can have his eyes sealed when “upon the high and giddy mast, in bosom of the rude imperious surge.” But he is no wonder who sleeps when there is no danger. Why is the Church asleep now? She would not sleep if Smithfield were filled with stakes, if Bartholomew’s bells were ringing in her ears! She would not sleep if Sicilian Vespers might be sung on tomorrow’s eve. She would not sleep if massacres were common. But what is her condition? Every man sitting under his own vine and his own fig tree—none daring to make him afraid. Tread softly! She is fast asleep! Wake up, Church! Or else we will cut down the fig tree about your ears. Start up! For the figs are ripe, they hang into your sleepy mouth and you are too lazy to bite them off!  
Now, another dangerous time is when all goes well in spiritual matters. You never read that Christian went to sleep when lions were in the way. He never slept when he was going through the River Death, or when he was in Giant Despair’s castle, or when he was fighting with Apollyon. Poor creature! He almost wished he could sleep, then. But when he had got half way up the Hill Difficulty and came to a pretty little arbor—in he went and sat down and began to read his roll. Oh, how he rested himself! How he undid his sandals and rubbed his weary feet! Very soon his mouth was open—his arms hung down and he was fast asleep! Again, the Enchanted Ground was a very easy, smooth place, and liable to send the Pilgrim to sleep. You remember Bunyan’s description of some of the arbors—“Then they came to an arbor, warm and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims. For it was finely worked above head, beautified with greens and furnished with benches and settles. It also had in it, a soft couch, where the weary might sleep. The arbor was called the Slothful’s Friend and was made on purpose to allure, if it might, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest, there, when weary.” Depend upon it, it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness! Old Erskine said a good thing when he remarked—“I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil.” There is no temptation half as bad as not being tempted! The distressed soul does not sleep. It is after we get into confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. Take care, you who are full of gladness. There is no season in which we are so likely to fall asleep as that of high enjoyment. The disciples went to sleep after they had seen Christ transfigured on the mountaintop. Take heed, joyous Christian, good times are very dangerous—they often lull you into a sound sleep!  
Yet there is one more thing. And if I ever were afraid of anything, I would fear to speak before my grave and reverend fathers in the faith, the fact that one of the most likely places for us to sleep in is when we get near our journey’s end. It is ill for a child to say that, and I will, therefore, back it up by the words of that great pilot, John Bunyan—“For this Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has, therefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way and so it stands against us within the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary? And when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey’s end? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is paced so near to the land, Beulah, and so near the end of their race. Therefore let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happen to them as it has done to these who, as you see, are fallen asleep and none can awake them.” May a child speak to those who are far before him in years and experience? But I am not a child when I preach. In the pulpit we stand as ambassadors of God and God knows nothing of childhood or age. He teaches whom He wills and speaks as He pleases! It is true, my Brothers and Sisters, that those who have been years in Grace are most in danger of slumbering. Somehow we get into the routine of the thing—it is usual for us to go to the House of God. It is usual for us to belong to the church and that, of itself, tends to make people sleepy. Go into some of your churches in London and you will hear a most delicious sermon preached to a people all sound asleep! The reason is that the service is all alike. They know when they have got to the third, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” when they have passed the general confession and when they have got to the sermon—then it is the time to sleep for 20 minutes! If the minister should smite his ecclesiastic fist upon the Bible, or enliven his faculties with a pinch of snuff, or even use his pocket handkerchief, the people would wake up because it would be something out of the usual course! Or, if he uttered an old sentiment, they might be awakened and would probably think that he had broken the 59th Commandment, in making some of the congregation smile! But he never violates decorum. He stands the very mirror of modesty and the picture of everything that is orderly. I have digressed, but you will see what I mean.  
If we are always going on the same road we are liable to sleep. If Moab gets at ease and is not emptied from vessel to vessel, he sleeps on, for he knows no change. And when years have worn our road with a rut of godliness, we are apt to throw the reins on our horse’s neck and sleep soundly!  
IV. Now, lastly, let me give a little GOOD ADVICE to the sleeping Christian. But Christian, if you are asleep, you will not hear me! I will speak gently, then, and let you sleep on. No I will not! I will shout in your ears, “Awake you that sleep! Arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light! Go to the ant, you sluggard—consider her ways and be wise. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem. Put on your glorious array, you Church of the living God.”  
But now what is the best plan to stay awake when you are going across the Enchanted Ground? This book tells us that one of the best plans is to keep Christian company and talk about the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful said to themselves, “Let us talk together and then we shall not sleep.” Christian said, “Brother where shall we begin?” And Hopeful said, “We will begin where God began with us.” There is no subject so likely to keep a man awake as talking of the place where God began with him! When Christians talk together, they won’t sleep! Hold Christian company and you will not be so likely to slumber. Christians who isolate themselves and stand alone are very liable to lie down and sleep on the settle or the soft couch—but if you talk much, together, as they did in old times, you will find it extremely beneficial. Two Christians talking together of the ways of the Lord will go much faster to Heaven than one! And when a whole Church unites in speaking of the Lord’s loving kindness, verily, Beloved, there is no way like that of keeping themselves awake!  
Then let me remind you that if you will look at interesting things, you will not sleep. And how can you be kept awake in the Enchanted Ground better than by holding up your Savior before your eyes? There are some things, it is said, which will not let men shut their eyes if they are held before them. Jesus Christ, Crucified on Calvary, is one of these! I never knew a Christian go to sleep at the foot of the Cross. But he always said—  
And he said, too— *“Here I’d sit forever viewing  
Mercy’s streams in streams of blood.”*  
But he never said, “Here I would lie down and sleep,” for he could not sleep with that shriek, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani?” in his ears! He could not sleep with, “It is finished!” going into his very soul. Stay near to the Cross, Christian, and you will not sleep.  
Then I would advise you to let the wind blow on you. Let the breath of the Holy Spirit continually fan your temples and you will not sleep. Seek to live daily under the influence of the Holy Spirit—derive all your strength from Him and you will not slumber!  
Lastly, labor to impress yourself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which you are going. If you remember that you are going to Heaven, you will not sleep on the road! If you think that Hell is behind you and the devil pursuing you, I am sure you will not be inclined to sleep. Would the manslayer sleep if the avenger of blood were behind him and the City of Refuge before him? Christian, will you sleep while the pearly gates are open, the songs of angels waiting for you to join them? A crown decorated with delight to be worn upon your brow? Ah, no— *“Forget the steps already trod  
And onward urge your way!  
Weak as you are, you shall not faint,  
Or, fainting, shall not die.  
He feeds the strength of every saint,  
He’ll help you from on high.”*  
Dearly Beloved, I have finished my sermon. There are some of you that I must dismiss, because I find nothing in the text for you. It is said, “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.” There are some here who do not sleep at all because they are positively dead. And if it takes a stronger voice than mine to wake the sleeper, how much more mighty must be that voice which wakes the dead? Yet even to the dead I speak. For God can wake them, though I cannot. O, dead Man! Do you not know that your body and your soul are worthless carrion? That while you are dead, you lie abhorred of God and abhorred of man? That soon the vulture of remorse will come and devour your lifeless soul—and though you have lived in this world these 70 years (perhaps) without God and without Christ—in your last hour, the vulture of remorse shall come and tear your spirit? And though you now laugh at the wild bird that circles in the sky, he will soon descend upon you and your death will be a bed of shrieks, howling and wailings and lamentations! Do you not know that afterwards that dead soul will be cast into Hell? And as in the East they burn the bodies, so your body and your soul together shall be burned in Hell1 Go not away and dream that this is a metaphor! It is the Truth of God! Say not it is a fiction—laugh not at it as a mere picture! Hell is a positive flame—it is a fire that burns the body, albeit that it burns the soul, too! There is physical fire for the body and there is spiritual fire for the soul. Go your way, O Man—such shall be your fate. Even now your funeral pile is building, your years of sin have laid huge trees across each other. Look! The angel is flying down from Heaven with a brand already lit! You are lying dead upon the pile—he puts the brand to the base. Your disease proves that the lower parts are kindling with the flame—those pains of yours are the crackling of the fire. It shall reach you soon, old Man—it shall reach you soon, you poor diseased one! You are near death and when it reaches you, you shall know the meaning of the fire that is unquenchable and the worm that dies not!  
Yet while there is hope I will tell you the Gospel. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be,” must be “damned.” He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, that is—with a simple naked faith, comes and puts his trust in Him—shall be saved! But he that believes not shall inevitably—hear it, men and women and tremble—he that believes not shall assuredly be damned.

**“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing, Which before the Cross I spend.”**

P.S.—It is frequently objected that the preacher is censorious—he is not desirous of defending himself from the charge. He is confident that many are conscious that his charges are true and if true, Christian love requires us to warn those who err. Nor will candid men condemn the minister who is bold enough to point out the faults of the Church and the age, even when all classes are moved to anger by his faithful rebukes and pour on his head the full vials of their wrath. IF THIS IS VILE, WE PURPOSE TO BE VILER, STILL!—C. H. S.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3167 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Th 5.8

THE CHRISTIAN’S HELMET  
NO. 3167

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, IN THE YEAR 1866.

**“And for a helmet the hope of salvation.”***1Th 5:8***.**

THE very mention of a helmet may well seem to REMIND EVERY CHRISTIAN HERE THAT HE IS A SOLDIER.  
I. If you were not soldiers, you would not need armor. But being soldiers, you need to he clad from head to foot in armor of proof. I suppose every Christian here knows, as a matter of theory, that he is a Christian soldier and that he has been enlisted under the banner of the Cross to fight against the powers of darkness until he wins the victory. But we all need to have our memories refreshed upon this matter, for soldiering, in time of war, at any rate, is not a very pleasant occupation—and the flesh constantly attempts to give it over. That “we have no abiding city here,” is a Truth of God which we all know and yet the most of us try to make the earth as comfortable for ourselves as if it were to be our abiding residence! We are all soldiers—we know that—but still, too many Christians act as if they could be the friends of the world and the friends of God at the same time. Now, Christian, remember once and for all that you are a soldier! Did you dream, young man, that as soon as you were baptized and added to the Church, the conflict was all over? Ah, it was then but just beginning! Like Caesar, you then crossed the Rubicon and declared war against your deadly enemy. You drew your sword—you did not sheathe it. Your proper note on joining the Church is not one of congratulation, as though the victory were won, but one of preparation—for now the trumpet sounds and the fight begins! You are a soldier at all times, Christian! You ought to sit even at your table as a soldier sits and you should go out especially into the world as a soldier goes out. Never take off your armor, for if you do, in some unguarded moment you may meet with serious wounds! But keep your armor always about you and be watchful, for you are always in the midst of enemies wherever you may be! And even when the persons who surround you are your friends, there are still evil spirits, unseen of men, who watch for your tripping—and you must not put up your sword, for you are to wrestle against principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness in high places—against whom you must always be on the watch. You are a soldier, Christian—remember that!  
Nor are you a soldier in barracks, or at home, but you are a soldier in an enemy’s country. Your place is either in the trenches or else in the thick of the battle! You who are sick are like soldiers in the trenches. You are patiently hoping and quietly waiting, as it were, upon the ramparts, looking for the time to come. But others of you, out in business and engaged in the concerns of life, are like soldiers marching in a long file to the conflict, like the housemen dashing on to the front of the battle. More or less, according to your circumstances, you are all exposed to the foe and that at every period of life!  
Where are you, let me ask, but in the country of an enemy who never gives any quarter? If you fall, it is death! The world never forgives the Christian—it hates him with a perfect hatred and it longs to hurt him. Only let the world see you commit half a stumble and they will soon report and magnify it! What might be done by other men without observation, if it were done by a Christian, would be noticed, reported and misrepresented. The world understands that you are its natural antagonist. Satan perceives in you a representative of his old enemy, the Lord Jesus, and you may rest assured that he will never give you quarter if once he gets an opportunity of destroying you! Mind the enemy, mind the enemy, for he is one of a malicious spirit!  
You have to fight with one, too, who never yet made a truce. You may come to terms and parley, but the powers of evil never do. You may hang out the white flag if you like. The foe may seem, for a time, as though he gave you credit, but never give your foe any credit! He hates you when he seems to love you best. “Dread the Greeks, even when they bring you gifts,” said the tradition of old—and let the Christian dread the world most when it puts on its softest speeches! Stand, then, upon your guard, you warriors of the Cross, when least you fear, the cringing foe will come behind you and stab you under the pretense of friendship! Your Master was betrayed with a kiss, and so will you be unless you watch unto prayer.  
You have to do with an enemy who never can make any peace with you, nor can you ever make any peace with him. If you become at peace with sin, sin has conquered you—and it is impossible, unless you give up the fight and yield your neck to the everlasting thralldom—that there should ever be peace for so much as a moment. Oh, Christian, see how guarded you ought to be! How necessary to be clothed with your armor! How necessary to have it of the right kind, to keep it bright and to wear it constantly! You are a soldier, a soldier in battle, a soldier in the foeman’s country, a soldier with a cruel and malicious enemy who knows neither truce nor parley, and who gives no quarter, but will fight with you till you die! Heaven is the land where your sword should be sheathed—there shall you hang the banner high—but here we wrestle with the foe and must do so till we cross the torrent of death. Right up to the river’s edge must the conflict be waged. Foot by foot and inch by inch must all the land to Canaan’s happy shore be won. Not a step can be taken without conflict and strife—but once there, you may lay aside your helmet and put on your crown, put away your sword, and take your palm branch— your fingers shall no longer need to learn to war, but your hearts shall learn the music of the happy songsters in the skies! This, then, is the first thought—that you are a soldier.  
II. But the second thought is BEING A SOLDIER, LOOK TO YOUR HEAD.  
Soldiers, look to your heads! A wound in the head is a serious matter. The head, being a vital part, we need to be well protected there. The heart needs to be guarded with the breastplate, but the head needs to be protected quite as much, for even if a man should be true-hearted, yet if a shot should go through his brain he would not be worth much as a soldier—his body would strew the plain. The head must be taken care of. There are a great many Christian people who never have any trouble with their heads at all. There are certain religionists who get their hearts warmed and then they think that that is enough. Now, give me above everything else a good warm heart, but oh, to have that warm heart coupled with a head that is well taken care of! Do you know that a hot head and a hot heart together do a deal of mischief, but with a hot heart and a cold brain you may do a world of service to the Master. Have right Doctrine in the head and then set the soul on fire and you will soon win the world! There is no standing in that man’s way whose head and heart are both right—but to neglect the head has been a serious mischief with many Christians. They have been almost powerless for usefulness because they have not taken care of their brains. They have got to Heaven, but they have not got many victories on the road because their brains have been out of order. They have never been able to clearly understand the Doctrines—they have not been able to give a reason for the hope that is in them. They have not, in fact, looked well to the helmet which was to cover their heads!  
The text refers us to our head because it speaks of a helmet—and a helmet is of no use to any part except the head. Among other reasons why we should preserve the head in the day of battle, let us give these— the head is peculiarly liable to the temptations of Satan, of self and of fame. It is not easy, you know, to stand on a high pinnacle without the brain beginning to reel. And if God takes a man and puts him on a high pinnacle of usefulness, he had need to have his head taken care of. If a Brother is possessed of a considerable amount of wealth, there is a great danger in that wealth unless there is a wealth of Divine Grace as well as a wealth of gold. If a man is well spoken of, his sphere may not be very large, but if everybody praises him, he will also need to have his head well protected—for the little praise, even though it should come from fools—would be too much for a fool. If a man can stand commendation, he can stand anything. The severest trial which a Christian has to bear is probably the trial which comes from his kind but inconsiderate friends who would puff him up, if they could, by telling him what a fine fellow he is. If your friends will not do this, you will probably have a friend within who will do it for you—and if you should forget it, the devil will not! “What a capital sermon you gave us this morning, Mr. Bunyan,” said a friend where John had been preaching. “You are too late,” said Bunyan, “the devil told me that before I came out of the pulpit.” Yes, and he will be sure to do it—and hence the need of having a helmet to put on the head so that when you are successful, when you are getting on in life, when friends are speaking well of you—you may not get intoxicated with it! Oh, to have a good, cool helmet to put on your brain when it begins to get a little hot with praise, so that you may still stand fast and not be borne down by vanity! O Vanity, Vanity, Vanity, how many you have slain! How many who then seemed upon the very brink of greatness have stumbled upon this stumbling-block—men who seemed as though they would enter Heaven—but a little bit of honor, some glittering bribe, a golden gift has turned them aside and they fail! Take care of your heads, Brothers and Sisters!  
And is not the head liable to attacks from skepticism? People who have no brains are not often troubled with doubts, but people who have brains have probably felt that whether they resolved to use them or not, the brains would use themselves. It is very good of our good fathers to tell us not to read dangerous books, very good of them, indeed! But we do read them for all that—and though we sometimes tell the young folks not to read this and that heretical treatise, and we wish they would take our advice—yet somehow or other they get hold of such things and will ponder them. Brothers and Sisters, I believe that in such times as these, when everything is so free, and when discussion is so common—we must expect that our young fellows will look at a great many things which they had better leave alone—and their heads will be endangered thereby, for the bullets of skepticism threaten to go right through their brains! Well, what then? As we cannot take Christians out of the way of the bullets, we should give them a helmet to preserve them from them! He who has a hope of salvation—a good hope that he is saved, a hope that he shall see the face of Christ with joy at last—is not afraid of all the quibbles of skepticism! He may hear them all and for a moment be staggered by them, as a soldier might be who had a sudden shock or even a wound, but after a while he recovers and feels sound enough to enter into the conflict again. And the Christian can say—  
*“Let all the forms that men devise  
Assail my faith with treacherous art—  
I’d call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”*  
It has been very well observed that a man is not often a very thorough democrat after he gets a little money in the bank. Well, I think it is very likely that when a man gets a little stake in his country, he begins to be, to the merest extent, conservative. As soon as ever a man gets a stake in Christianity and feels that he has got salvation in Jesus Christ, he gets to be very, very conservative of the old-fashioned Truth of God. He cannot give up the Bible, then, because it is a broad land of wealth to him! He cannot give up Christ, for He is his Savior, his salvation. He cannot give up a single promise because that promise is so dear to his own soul. The helmet of salvation, then, will preserve the head in times of skepticism!  
The head, again, is very greatly in danger from the attacks of personal unbelief. Who among us has not doubted his own interest in Christ? Happy are you who are free from such trouble! But there are seasons with some of us when we turn our title deeds over and we are sometimes afraid lest they should not be genuine. There are times when, if we could, we would give a world to know that we are Christ’s, for at times we cannot—  
*“Read our title clear  
To mansions in the skies.”*  
Well, Beloved, this is very dangerous to our heads, but the man who has got the helmet of a right, sound, God-given hope of salvation—who has received from God the Holy Spirit a helmet which I am going to describe, by-and-by—when these doubts and fears come, they may distress him for a little while, but he knows the smell of gunpowder and he is not afraid! In the midst of all of Satan’s accusations, or the rising up of his old corruptions, or the threats of the flesh and of the world, he stands calm and unmoved because he wears as a helmet, the hope of salvation!  
Nor are these all the dangers to which the head is exposed. Some persons are attacked by threats from the world. The world brings down its double-handled sword with a tremendous blow upon the heads of many Christians. “You will suffer the loss of all things for Christ if you are such a fanatic as to do as you do. You will be poor, your children will need bread, your wife will be worse than a widow if you are such a fool.” “Ah,” says the Christian, “but I have a hope of salvation!” And the blow, when it comes, does not go through his head, but just falls on the helmet and the world’s sword gets blunted. “I can afford to be poor,” said Dr. Gill, when one of his subscribers threatened to give up his seat and would not attend if the doctor preached such-and-such a Doctrine. So says the Christian, “I can afford to be poor. I can afford to be despised. I have in Heaven a better and more enduring substance.” So, by the use of this blessed helmet he is not destroyed by the threats of the world!  
We want our young people to wear this helmet, too, because of the errors of the times. The errors of the times are many. We have to deal not merely with skepticism, but with superstition. They are tempted on the one side, they are tempted on the other. This and that you will have cried up. “Lo here,” and, “Lo there!” And there will be many misled who are not the people of God. “If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect”—but the elect are not deceived because their heads are not vulnerable to these errors, for they wear the hope of salvation and they are not afraid of all the “ites” or the “isms” in the world. The man knows he is saved. Once you get to know Christ personally and that He loved you and gave Himself for you—and then rejoice that you are forgiven and justified through Him—the world will count you stupid and obstinate, but you will stand firm and be able to resist all its sarcasm

and its ridicule. He who has made a refuge of Jesus Christ may stand safe, whatever errors may invade the land!  
They tell us that the Church of God is in great danger and that Popery will spread over the land altogether. I believe it will, but that it will spread over the Church of God—no—I know far better than that! The Church of God can never be in danger! Every man in whom is the life of God would be as ready to die tomorrow for the Truth as our forefathers were in the Marian days! Rest assured there would still be found men and women to stand in the burning piles if the times required them— and our prisons would not long be without heavenly-minded tenants if the Truth needed to be defended by suffering, even unto death! There is danger, great danger! There never was such danger in modern times of Popery spreading over the land as now. But there is no danger to the man who has his helmet on! No, let the arrows fly thick as hail and let the foes have all political power and all the prestige of antiquity that they may—a little body of true-hearted Christians will still stand out at the thick of the onslaught and cut their way to Glory and to victory through whole hosts because their heads are guarded with the heavenly helmet of the hope of salvation! Soldiers, then, take care of your heads! I will say no more on that point.  
III. God has provided a covering for your heads, let us therefore now CONSIDER THE HELMET WITH WHICH HE WOULD HAVE YOUR HEADS PROTECTED.  
“The hope of salvation!” This is not the hope I spoke about this morning, for that was the hope that salvation was possible. This helmet is made up of an actual hope that, being already saved in Christ Jesus, you should abide unto eternal life. It is a personal hope, founded upon personal conviction—and is worked in us by the Holy Spirit.  
To begin, then, describing this helmet. Who is its Giver? You ask our friend, the soldier, where he gets his uniforms, and he answers that he gets them from the government stores. He gets his uniforms from Her Majesty. And that is how we must get our helmets. If any of you construct helmets of hope for yourselves, they will be of no use to you in the day of battle! The true helmet of hope must come from the heavenly arsenal! You must go to the Divine Storehouse, for unto God belongs salvation and the hope of salvation must be given to you by His free Grace. A hope of salvation is not purchasable. Our great King does not sell His armor, but gives it freely to all who enlist. They take the shilling and accept faith. They trust Christ and they are enlisted—and then the armor is given them gratis. From head to foot they are arrayed by Grace!  
Do you ask, who is the Maker of this helmet? Weapons are valued often according to the maker. A known maker gets his own price for his articles. Armorers of old took much trouble with the ancient helmets because a man’s life might depend upon that very useful means of defense. So we have here the name of God the Holy Spirit upon this helmet! A hope of salvation is the work of God the Holy Spirit in our soul. It is the Spirit who brings us to Jesus, shows us our need of Him and gives us faith in Him—and it is that same Spirit who enables us to hope that we shall endure to the end and enter into eternal life. Be not satisfied with a hope which is natural, but have a hope that is supernatural! Rest not satisfied with that which is made in the workshop of Nature. Go not to those who buy and sell for themselves, but go to the blessed Spirit, who gives freely and upbraids not!  
Or would you inquire, further, of what metal this helmet is made? That it is made of hope, we are told, but it is of the utmost consequence that it is a good hope! Beware of getting a base hope, a helmet made of paltry metal. There were some helmets they used to wear in the olden times which looked very well, but they were of no more use than brown-paper hats. And when a soldier goes into the fight with one of those on, the sword went through his skull. Get a good helmet, one made of the right metal. This is what a Christian’s hope is made of—he believes that Christ came into the world to save sinners. He trusts Christ to save him and he hopes that when Christ comes, he shall reign with Him. He believes that when the trumpet sounds, he shall rise with Christ and that in Heaven he shall have a secure dwelling place at the right hand of the Father. This hope is made up of proper and fitting deductions from certain truthful statements. That Christ died for sinners is true. That He died to save all who trust in Him is true. That I trust Him is true. Therefore that I am saved is true! And, being saved, that I shall inherit all His promises is a matter of course!  
Some people have a hope, but they do not know where they get it from, nor do they know a reason for it. When some people die, you hear it said, “I hope, I hope he is gone to Heaven.” Well, I wish he may have gone, but I dare not say of some that I hope so, because hope must have a reason. An anchor is of no use without its barb. It must be able to hold fast. It must have, at any rate, the modern anchor—some weight about it with which it can hold to the bottom. Hope must have its barb, too! It must have its reason, it must have its weight. If I say I hope such-andsuch, I am foolish for hoping it if I have not a reason for hoping. If you were to say you hoped the person sitting next to you would give you a thousand pounder, it would be a most absurd hope! You may wish it if you like, but what ground have you for the hope? But if somebody owes you a thousand pounds and you have his acknowledgement of the debt, you may then very well say that you hope it will be paid, for you have a legitimate right to expect it. Such is the Christian’s hope! God has promised to save those who believe. Lord, I believe You—You have promised to save me, and I hope you will—I know You will! The Christian’s hope is not a fancy, not a silly desire. It did not spring up in the night, like Jonah’s gourd, and it will not wither in a night. The Christian’s hope is something that will bear a crack from a club, or a cut from a sharp sword. It is made of good metal. John Bunyan said of a certain sword that it was “a true Jerusalem blade”—and I may call this a true Jerusalem helmet and he that wears it need not fear!  
Having shown the metal of which the helmet is made, let me now describe the strength of the helmet. It is so strong that he who wears it is invulnerable under all sorts of assaults. He may stagger under a blow, but he cannot be hurt by it. Recollect what David said. All the troubles in the world once set on David and began to beat him—and they gave him many terrible blows. They thought they had certainly ruined him. David was bleeding and was full of wounds. He half thought he would die and he tells us, himself, that he would have fainted, only he had a bottle of cordial with him called faith. He says, “I had fainted if I had not believed.” But just at the time when they thought he would faint and die, suddenly the old hero that slew Goliath made all his enemies fly before him as he cried, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God.” And he laid about him right and left, as he should. “I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.” “Hope you in God,” Christian! Oh that blessed word, HOPE! You know what the New Zealanders call hope? They call it in their language, “the swimming thought,” because it always swims. You cannot drown it—it always keeps its head above the wave! When you think you have drowned the Christian’s hope, up it comes, all dripping from the brine, and cries again, “Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him!” Hope is the nightingale that sings in the night. Faith is the lark that mounts up towards Heaven, but hope is the nightingale that cheers the valley in the darkness! Oh, Christian, be thankful that you have so strong a helmet as this which can bear all assaults and can keep you unwounded in the midst of the fray!  
This hope of salvation is a helmet which will not come off. It is of main importance, you know, to have a helmet that will not be knocked off the first thing in the fight. That is why our policemen are dressed differently from what they used to be, because their hats used to get knocked off the very first thing. So it will be with some people’s helmets if they have a commonplace hope—but the Christian wears a helmet that he cannot get off. There was once a good soldier of Jesus Christ—this soldier happened to be a woman, however, and some women are the best soldiers Christ ever had—they are His true Amazons! This good woman had been much attacked by a skeptical person and when she was very much confused with some of his knotty questions, she turned round and said to him, “I cannot answer you, Sir, but neither can you answer me, for I have a something within me that you cannot understand which makes me feel that I could not give up what I know of Christ for all the world.” You see, he could not get her helmet off—and the devil himself cannot drag the Christian’s helmet off when he has once got it fairly buckled on. The world can neither give nor take away the hope of a Christian! It comes from God and He will never withdraw it, for His gifts and calling are without repentance. Once let this helmet be put on and He will never remove it, but we shall hope on and hope always until we shall see His face at the last!  
I should like to go round among this regiment, as the commanding officers sometimes do, to have a look at you. This helmet is an oldfashioned kind of armor and in the old days the lieutenants and other officials, when they went round the regiment, used to look not only to see that the men had their helmets, but to see that they had oiled them, for in those times they used to oil their helmets to make them shine and to keep the various joints, buckles and so on, in good order. No rust was ever allowed on the helmets and it is said that when the soldiers marched out with their bronze helmets and their white plumes, they shone most brilliantly in the sun. David speaks, you know, of “anointing the shield.” He was speaking of a bronze shield which had to be anointed with oil. Now, when God anoints His people’s hope—when He gives them the oil of joy, their hope begins to shine bright in the light of the Savior’s Countenance—and what a fine array of soldiers they then are! Satan trembles at the gleaming of their swords—he cannot endure to look upon their helmets. But some of you do not keep your hope clear—you do not keep it bright. It gets rusty out of use and then before long it gets to sit uncomfortably upon you and you get weary with the fight. O Holy Spirit, anoint our heads with fresh oil and let Your saints go forth tonight terrible as an army with banners!  
Do not let it be overlooked that the helmet was generally considered to be a place of honor. The man put his plume in his helmet. He frequently wore his crest there and in the thick of the fight the captain’s plume was seen in the midst of the smoke and dust of battle—and the men pressed to the place where they saw it. Now, the Christian’s hope is his honor and his glory. I must not be ashamed of my hope! I must wear it for beauty and for dignity and he who has a right good hope will be a leader to others. Others will see it and will fight with renewed courage. And where he hews a lane of the foes, they will follow him, even as he follows his Lord and Master who has overcome and sits down upon His Father’s Throne! I hope there are many Christians here who keep their helmets bright—and that there are many more who desire to have such helmets to protect themselves and to grace their profession.  
IV. YET THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO HAVE NO HELMETS. The reason is obvious. They are not Christ’s soldiers.  
Of course the Lord Jesus does not provide anybody with armor but those in His service. But Satan knows how to give you a helmet, too. His helmets are very potent ones. Though the sword of the Spirit can go right through them, nothing else can. He can give and has given some of you a headpiece that covers your entire skull—a thick headpiece of indifference, so that no matter what is preached, you do not care. “What do I care?” you say—and that is your helmet.  
Then he puts a piece in the front of the helmet called a brazen forehead and a brow of brass. “What do I care?” That is your cry. Then he takes care to fit the helmet right over your eyes so that you cannot see— yes, though Hell itself is before you, you do not see it! “What do I care?” Then he also knows how so to fit the helmet that it acts as a gag to your mouth so that you never pray. You can swear through it, but you cannot pray! Still you stick to your old cry, “What do I care?”  
Ah, it is not very likely that any sword of mine will get at your head! Arguments will not move you, for that is a question that cannot very well be argued—“What do I care?” It is all very well for you to say that, but oh, I pray God the Holy Spirit to get at your head, notwithstanding that horrible helmet, for if not, God has a way of dealing with such as you are— when you come to die, you will sing another song! When you come to lie there upon that bed of sickness and the grim day of eternity is in view, you will not be able to say quite so gaily as you do now, “What do I care?” And when the trumpet rings through earth and Heaven and your body starts up from your grave—and you see the great Judge upon His Throne—you will not be able to say, then, “What do I care?” Your head will then be bare to the pitiless tempest of Divine wrath! Bareheaded, you must be exposed to the everlasting storm that shall descend upon you. And when the great angel binds you up with your fellows in bundles to burn, you will then feel that you are not able to say, “What do I care?” for cares will come upon you like a wild deluge when you are banished from His Presence and all hope is gone!  
Oh, I wish you would take off that helmet! May God grant you Grace to unbuckle it tonight, never to put it on again! Do care. You are not a fool, my Friend, are you? It is only a fool who says, “What do I care?” Surely you care about your soul! Surely Hell is worth escaping from! Surely Heaven is worth winning! Surely that Cross on which our Savior died is worth thinking of! Surely that poor soul of yours is worth caring about! Do, I pray you, think, and not go hastily on. Oh, may Jesus Christ, who died for such as you are, bring you to trust Him! And then, unbuckling all that evil armor of, “What do I care?” you will bow before His Cross and kiss His hands—and He will put upon you the golden helmet of a hope of salvation and you will rise, one of the Kings own soldiers, to fight His battles and win an immortal wreath of everlasting victory! May it is so with every one of us!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *1Th 5:1-28***.**

Verses 1, 2. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. It will be a great surprise to the wicked. It will take them by surprise. Just at that moment when they least expect it, Christ will come, and as the thief comes to destroy and to kill, so will the coming of Christ be the death of their carnal ease—the destruction of their earthly hopes!

3. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. A terrible text that—“They shall not escape.” They shall not escape by their own power or force or wisdom! They shall not escape even by the annihilation which they might well desire, but which shall not come to them. They shall not escape.

4. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. You know that Christ will come. You expect the dissolution of this present state. To you, therefore, it will come as one who calls at daytime. You cannot know the hour. You must not know it. But since you know that He will come, and come to your joy—and since you are in the light, you look with gladness to that coming!

5, 6. You are all the children of light and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others. If we were children of the night, sleep is a proper occupation for the night, but as we are the children of the day, let us not sleep as others.

6. But let us watch and be sober. Watchfulness and sobriety are appropriate duties for the day. To be always serving our Lord with constancy and to keep ourselves from the fascinations of the world which make men’s minds drunk—may these two things be our daily care.

7. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night. There are a few who have reached to such a pitch of shameless idleness that they sleep in the day. And there are others who have come to such a state of debauchery that they are drunk in the day. But this is not the common way of things, nor even in the judgment of the most licentious of the world is this at all a proper state of things. “They that sleep, sleep in the night. They that are drunk are drunk in the night.” Let us who are of the day be sober, and let us of course be awake, but let us be more than awake, since watchfulness is here joined to wakefulness and watchfulness in a soldier requires that his armor be on. So Paul pushes the parallel a little farther.

8. But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. Soldiers, when they sleep, take off their armor. But in the day when they are awake and on their guard they wear their armor and are ready for the fray. See how much is involved in Christian wakefulness. God help us to carry out every virtue to its legitimate consequences—not to be wakeful after a fashion, but wakeful after God’s fashion!

9. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. In making us children of light, he gave evidence that our appointment was for the light—that His eternal ordinances were that through the light of Gospel Grace we should, by and by, enter into the light of eternal Glory. “God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

10. Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. They who have served their day and generation, when they sleep, are not parted from their Lord. They become not the children of the darkness by that fact, for He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him. Whether we are living here or living there, we shall still live together with Him.

11. Therefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, just as you also are doing. The more of this the better. Christian people should constantly converse with one another for mutual edification.

12, 13. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. You see, in the Church of old they edified one another, but for all that, they did not cast off God’s ordinance of Christian ministry. There was rule in the Church, then, as there should be now—and the Apostle, when he speaks of this individual edification, this mutual instruction—does not forget to notice those who were the pastors of the flock. He says, “Know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.”

13. And be at peace among yourselves. How can a Church prosper if it is not?  
14-16. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but always follow that which is good both among yourselves and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Here follows a string of Christian precepts—a golden chain. “Rejoice evermore.”  
17-19. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Do not despise His operations, either in yourselves or in your brethren. Do not quench Him by neglect, much less by open opposition!  
20-22. Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. Not from that which other people choose to think evil, but from all real evil whatever it is—even from the very shadow that it casts and the shape which it assumes!  
23-26. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. Give one another a hearty shake of the hands. That is the western interpretation of the eastern form. Outward forms differ. The inward sense abides the same. Let brotherly love continue in a hearty friendliness among yourselves.  
27, 28. I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The Grace of our lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷1Th 5.16

REJOICE EVERMORE  
NO. 1900

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 23, 1886, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Rejoice evermore.”***1Th 5:16***.**

THIS is a sunny precept. When we read it, we feel that the time of the singing of birds has come. That joy should be made a duty is a sure token of the blessedness of the New Covenant. Because Jesus has suffered, we are encouraged, commanded and enabled to rejoice. Only the Man of Sorrows and His chosen Apostles can teach for a precept such a word as this—“Rejoice evermore.” Happy people who can be thus exhorted! We ought to rejoice that there is a command to rejoice! Glory be unto the God of happiness who bids His children be happy. While musing on this text, I seem carried in spirit to the green woods and their bowers. As in a dell, all blue with flowers, where the sun smiles down upon me through the half-born oak leaves, I sit down and hear the blessed birds of the air piping out their love-notes—their music says only this—“Rejoice evermore.” All that I see, and hear, and feel surrounds me with garlands of delight, while the fairest of all the shepherds of Sharon sings to me this delicious pastoral—“Rejoice evermore.” The very words have breathed spring into my soul and set my heart blossoming! Thus am I also made to be as a daffodil which long has hidden away among the clods, but now, at last, ventures to lift up her yellow lily and ring out her golden bell. Who can be sad, or silent, when the voice of the Beloved says, “Rejoice evermore”?

Our Apostle speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, permanent duty to be always carried out by the people of God. The Lord has not left it to our own option whether we will sorrow or rejoice, but He has pinned us down to it by positive injunction—“Rejoice evermore.” He will have this cloth of gold spread over the whole field of life. He has laid down as first and last, beginning, middle and end—“Rejoice evermore.” Some things are to be done at one time, some at another, but rejoicing is for all times, forever and forevermore, which, I suppose, is more than ever, if more can be! Fill life’s sea with joy up to the high water mark. Spare not, stint not, when rejoicing is the order of the day. Run out to your full tether, sweep your largest circle when you use the golden compasses of joy!

Some things being once done are done with and you need not further meddle with them; but you have never done with rejoicing. “Rejoice evermore.”

Our text is set in the midst of many precepts . Notice how from the 14th verse, the Apostle packs together a number of duties of Christian ministers and Church members—one towards another. “We exhort you, Brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.” All these things are to be done in turn, according as occasion requires, but, “rejoice evermore.” You have plenty to do, but this thing you have always to do. You shall never be able to fold your hands for lack of some holy task or other, but be not worried— be not fretted by what you have to do—on the contrary, take up the sacred duties with alacrity, welcoming each one of them and entering upon them with delight! Rejoice in each one, because you “rejoice evermore.” You will have to warn the unruly and their rebellious tempers will, perhaps, irritate you. Or, if in patience you possess your soul, yet you may grow sad at having so melancholy a duty to perform, but be not troubled, even by the grief of injured love. Warn the unruly, but “rejoice evermore.”

Do not pause in the blessed service of rejoicing when you are called upon to comfort the feeble-minded. There is a danger that the feebleminded may rob you of your comfort, but let it not be so. In attempting to lift them out of the waters you may, perhaps, be almost drowned, yourself—your deliverance will lie in the sweet words, “Rejoice evermore.” You will lose your power both to warn the unruly and to comfort the feebleminded if you lose your joy. The joy of the Lord will be your strength in all these matters. Therefore, “rejoice evermore.” Close at your hand will lie the weak who need supporting and you may be half saying to yourselves, “We wish that all God’s people were strong, that we might unitedly spend all our strength against the foe instead of having to use it at home for supporting our own weak soldiers.” But be not dejected on that account—while you are supporting the weak, still, “rejoice evermore.” Your rejoicing will be a great support to the faint—your ceasing to rejoice will be a terrible confirmation of their sorrow! Lend the feeble a hand, but do not stop your own singing! Does not a mother carry her baby and sing at the same time?

As you turn about, you find all men gathering to hinder you, to grieve you, to slander you, or to make use of you for their base purposes. But be not grieved. Put up with your poor fellow creatures since the Lord puts up with you, but do not leave off rejoicing! As you are patient towards all men, let your patience have a flavor of joy in it. However great the provocations that you endure, still, “rejoice evermore.” As it is written, “With all your sacrifices you shall offer salt,” so let it be your settled purpose with every other duty to offer rejoicing. I am sure, Brothers, that we make a very great mistake if we get like Martha—cumbered with much serving—for that cumbering prevents our serving our Master well. He loves to see those who serve in His house of a cheerful countenance. He wants not slaves to Grace His Throne. He would have His children wait upon Him with a light in their faces which is the reflection of His own! He would have His joy fulfilled in them, that their joy may be full. It is His royal pleasure that His service should be delight, His worship, Heaven, His Presence, Glory! Let your hearts be sanctified, but let not your hearts be troubled. Amidst a thousand duties give not way to a single anxiety! While you are desirous to honor God in everything, yet be not overburdened, even, with the cares of His cause and service, lest you put forth the hand of Uzzah to stay the Ark of the Lord. The Lord forbade His priests to wear garments that caused sweat and He will not have any of us fret and worry about His cause so as to lose our rest in Himself. Wrestle for a blessing, but still “rejoice evermore.”

The command to rejoice is set in the midst of duties—it is put there to teach us how to perform them all.  
Also notice that our text comes just after a flavoring of trouble and bitterness. Read verse 15—“See that none render evil for evil unto any man.” Children of God are apt to have evil rendered to them. They may have slanderous reports spread about them. They may be accused of things they never dreamed of. They may be cut to the heart by the ingratitude of those who ought to have been their friends, but still they are bid, “rejoice evermore.” Even rejoice in the persecution and in the slander! “Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.” So says our Lord. “Rejoice,” He says, “and be exceedingly glad.”  
There is an expression in the Greek that never has been rendered into English, and never will be—agalliasthe. Old Trapp half puns upon the agalliasthe as he says, “dance a galliard.” I do not know what a “galliard” was, but I suppose that it was some very joyous kind of dance. Certainly we know of no better way of translating our Lord’s word than by—exult, or leap for joy. Even when your good name shall be tarnished by the malice of the wicked, then you are to leap for joy! When are you to be wretched? Surely despondency is excluded. If slander is to make us dance, when are we to fret? Suppose some other kind of trial should come upon you? You are still to rejoice in the Lord always. The dearest friend is dead—“rejoice evermore.” The sweet babe is sickening, the darling of your household will be taken away—“rejoice evermore.” Trade is ebbing out, prosperity is disappearing from you—you may even be brought to poverty—but, “rejoice evermore.” Your health is affected, your lungs are weak, your heart does not beat with regularity, very soon you may be sick unto death, but, “rejoice evermore.” Shortly you must put off this tabernacle altogether! Tokens warn you that you must soon close your eyes in death, but, “rejoice evermore.” There is no limit to the exhortation! It is always in season! Through fire and through water, through life and through death, “rejoice evermore.”  
Now and then a commentator says that the command of our text must mean that we are to be in the habit of rejoicing, for there must necessarily be intervals in which we do not rejoice. It is to be “constant but intermittent.” so one good man says. I do not know how that can be, though I know what he means. He means that it ought to be the general tenor of our life that we rejoice, yet he evidently feels that there must be black clouds, now and then, to vary the abiding sunshine. He warns us that there will be broken bits of road where as yet the steam roller has not forced in the granite. But that will not do as an interpretation of the text, for the Apostle expressly says, “Rejoice evermore”—that is, rejoice straight on and never leave off rejoicing! Whatever happens, rejoice! Come what may, rejoice! If the worst darkens to the worst—if the night lowers into a sevenfold midnight, yet, “rejoice evermore!” This carillon of celestial bells is to keep on ringing through the night as well as through the day. “Rejoice, rejoice, you saints of God at every time, in every place, and under every circumstance. Joy, joy, forever! Rejoice evermore. In the midst of a thousand duties, amid the surges of 10,000 trials, still rejoice.” There is to be about the Christian a constancy of joy.  
I am bound to mention that among the curiosities of the Churches I have known many deeply spiritual Christian people who have been afraid to rejoice. Much genuine religion has been “sickened over with the pale cast of thought!” Some take such a view of religion that it is, to them, a sacred duty to be gloomy! They believe in the holiness of discontent, the sanctity of repining—and they recoil from grateful joy as if it were the devil in the form of an angel of light! One of the commandments of the saints of misery is, “Draw down the blinds on Sunday.” Another is, “Never smile during a sermon—it is wicked.” A third precept is, “Never rest yourself and be sure that you never let anybody else rest for an instant. Why should anybody be allowed a moment’s quiet in a world so full of sin? Go through the world and impress people with the idea that it is an awful thing to live.”  
I have known some very good people spoiled for practical usefulness— and spoiled as to being like the Lord Jesus Christ by their deeply laid conviction that it was wicked to be glad. Well do I remember an earnest Christian woman who saw me when I was first converted, full of the joy of the Lord and joyfully assured of my salvation in Christ Jesus. She seemed distressed at the sight of so much joy! She shook her head. She looked at me with that heavenly-minded pity which these good people usually lay by in store. It seemed to her a dreadful thing that so young a Christian should dare to know whom he had believed! If you had been a Christian a hundred years you might, perhaps, begin to think it possible that you were saved—but to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ straight away like a little child—and at once to rejoice in His salvation seemed to this dear old Christian woman to be an act of such shocking temerity that she could only shake her dear head and prognosticate all sorts of horrible things!  
Since then I have found a great many like she and when I have seen them shake their heads they have not shaken me half so much as she shook my heart on that first occasion! I know them, now, and I know that there is, after all, nothing in that shake of the head. The fact is that they ought to shake their heads about themselves for getting into so sad a state while this text stands on the sacred page, “Rejoice evermore.” It cannot be a wise and prudent thing to neglect this plain precept of the Word of God! It cannot be an unsafe thing to do what we are commanded to do! It cannot be a wrong thing for a Believer to abide in that state of mind which is recommended by the Holy Spirit in words so plain and so unguarded, “Rejoice evermore.”  
Oh, dear Friends, you may rejoice! God has laid no embargo upon rejoicing! He puts no restriction upon happiness. Do believe it that you are permitted to be happy! Do believe that there is no ordinance of God commanding you to be miserable. Turn this Book over and see if there is any precept that the Lord has given you in which He has said, “Groan in the Lord always, and again I say, groan.” You may groan if you like. You have Christian liberty for that, but, at the same time, do believe that you have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you! He bids you rejoice and yet, again, He says “rejoice.” Some of God’s sheep dare not go into the Lord’s own pasture. It is dark and thick with rich and luscious food—and into that field their Shepherd has already led them. Yet they dream that there is a gate and that gate is shut—and across it is written this word—“Presumption.” They are afraid to feed where God has made the best grass to grow for them because they are afraid of being presumptuous! The fear is groundless, but painfully common.  
Oh that I could deliver the true Believer from this evil influence! If you are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, everything that there is in Christ is yours! If you are resting in Jesus Christ, though you have only lately begun to trust in Him, the whole Covenant of Grace with all its infinite supplies belongs to you and you have the right to partake of that which Grace has provided! Jesus invites you to eat and drink abundantly. Beloved in the Lord, the only sin that you can commit at the banquet of love will be to deny yourselves! The feast is spread by royal hands—and royal bounty bids you come! Hold not back through shame or fear! Come and saturate your souls with goodness. “Eat you that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness,” for so God permits you to do.  
But I go a step farther and that is, that it is a sin not to rejoice. I will not say it harshly—I should like to say it as softly and tenderly as it could be put—but it must be said and I must not take away from the force of it by my tenderness. If it is a command, “Rejoice evermore,” then it is a breach of the command not to rejoice evermore! And what is a breach of a command? What is a neglect to obey a precept? Is it not a sin—a sin of shortcoming, though not of transgression? Beloved, why do your faces wear those gloomy colors? Why do you distrust? Why do you mourn? Why are you continually suspicious of the faithfulness of God? Why are you not rejoicing when there is God’s Word for it, first permitting, and then commanding you? Come, you unhappy and dolorous professors, question yourselves rather than others! O you forlorn one, cease to judge those whose eyes flash with exultation!  
Next time that you meet with a rejoicing Christian, do not begin to chide him, but quietly chide yourself because you do not rejoice. As for you who are swift of foot, I hope that you will not say an unkind word of poor Mephibosheth who is lame in both his feet, for he is dear to David and he shall sit at David’s table. But, on the other hand, Mephibosheth, in his lameness, must not grow bitter and censorious and find fault with Asahel who is fleet of foot as a young roe, or otherwise it may seem almost too ridiculous! No, no, Heavy-Heart, chide not the glad. Glad-Heart, deal not roughly with the sorrowful! Bear one another’s burdens and share one another’s joys! If there is any chiding, let it be the chiding of Little-Faith, sorrowfully bemoaning his own weakness of Grace. Oh that God would help us to be faithful to our own experiences—then we shall not criticize others, but judge ourselves.  
All this by way of introduction.  
I. And now, just for a minute or two, I desire to speak upon THE QUALITY OF THIS REJOICING which is commanded in our text. May the Holy Spirit enable me to set before you the select taste and special quality of a Believer’s life-long joy! “Rejoice evermore.”  
Brothers and Sisters, this is not carnal rejoicing. If it were, it would be impossible to always keep it up. There is a joy of harvest, but where shall we find it in winter? There is a joy of wealth, but where is this joy when riches take to themselves wings and fly away? There is a joy of health, but that is not always with us, for the evil days come and the years of weakness and sorrow. There is a joy in having your children round about you. Sweet are domestic joys, but these do not last forever. At the house of the happiest, knocks the hand of death! No, if your joys spring from earthly fountains, those fountains may be dried up and then your joys are gone. If the foundation of a man’s joy is anywhere on earth, it will be shaken, for there is a day coming when the whole earth shall shake and even now it is far from being a stable thing.  
Build not on the floods and what are outward circumstances but as waves of the changeful sea! No, Beloved, it cannot be carnal joy which is commanded here, since carnal joy in the nature of things cannot be forevermore. I know not that carnal joy is commanded anywhere. Men are permitted to rejoice in the things of this life, but that is the most that we can say. They are forbidden to rejoice too much in these things, for they are as honey, of which a man may soon eat till he is sickened. The joy which God commands is a joy in which it is impossible to go too far. It is a heavenly joy, based upon things which will last forever, or else we could not be bid to “rejoice evermore.”  
Again, as this joy is not carnal, so I feel quite sure that it is not presumptuous. Some persons ought not to rejoice. Did not the Prophet Hosea say, “Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for you have departed from your God”? There are some persons who rejoice and it would be well if a faithful hand were to dash the cup from their lips! They have never fled to Christ for refuge—they have never been born again—they have never submitted themselves to the righteousness of God and yet they are at ease in Zion. Ah, wretched ease! Many are ignorant of their ruin, strangers to the remedy of Grace, strangers to the blood that bought redemption—and yet they rejoice in their own righteousness. They have a joy that has been accumulated through years of false profession, hypocritical formality and vain pretence. Such as these are not told to “rejoice evermore.”  
There must be sound reasons for rejoicing, now, or there can be no reason for rejoicing always. If your joy will not bear looking at, have done with it! If, when you run with the footmen of common self-examinations in time of health, they weary you, what will you do when you contend with the black horsemen of dark thought in the hour of death? The joy that will abide forever is the joy to be sought after! But joy which a man cannot justify never ought to be thought of as enduring “evermore.” Is your hope fixed on what Jesus did for sinners on the Cross? Are you really a partaker of the life that is in Him? Have you been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? If so, it is safe for you to rejoice at once and it will be equally safe for you to “rejoice evermore!” Is it not clear that the rejoicing commanded in our text is not a presumptuous joy, or a carnal joy?  
Again, dear Friends, I feel bound to add that it must not be a fanatical joy. Certain religious people are of a restless, excitable turn and never feel good till they are half out of their minds. You would not wonder if their hair should stand bolt upright, like the quills of the fretful porcupine. They are in such a state of mind that they cry, “hallelujah,” at anything or nothing, for they feel ready to cry, or shout, or jump, or dance. I do not condemn their delirium, but I am anxious to know what goes with it? Come here, Friend. Let us have a talk. What do you know? What? Is it possible that I offend you the moment I seek a reason for the hope that is in you? Is it so that you do not know anything of the Doctrines of Grace? You were never taught anything? The object of the institution which enlisted you is not to teach you, but only to excite you! It pours boiling water into you, but it does not feed you with milk. That is a miserable business!  
We like excitement of a proper kind and we covet earnestly a high and holy joy, but if our rejoicing does not come out of a clear understanding of the things of God and if there is no Truth of God at the bottom of it, what does it profit us? Those who rejoice without knowing why can be driven to despair without knowing why—and such persons are likely to be found in a lunatic asylum before long. The religion of Jesus Christ acts upon truthful, reasonable, logical principles—it is sanctified common sense. A Christian man should only exhibit a joy which he can justify and of which he can say, “There is reason for it.” I pray you, take care that you have joy which you may expect to endure forever because there is a good solid reason at

the back of it. The excitement of animal enthusiasm will die out like the crackling of thorns under a pot—we desire to have a flame burning on the hearth of our souls which is fed with the fuel of Eternal Truth and will, therefore, burn on forevermore.  
I go a little farther, and I say that I believe that this joy which is commanded here, “Rejoice evermore,” is not even that high and Divine exhilaration which Christians feel upon special occasions. We could tell of rapturous ecstasies and sublime joys which, if they are not Heaven, itself, are so near akin to it that we would not change them for the place that Gabriel fills when nearest to his Master’s Throne! Oh, there are times when God’s Elijah, having brought down the fire from Heaven, girds up his loins and runs before Ahab’s chariot with a Divine enthusiasm which onlookers cannot understand! There are moments on the top of the mountain when Peter is no fool for saying, “Let us build three tabernacles.” It is so good to be there that we would willingly stay on that mountain and never come down again to the bustle, turmoil and sin of a guilty world!  
Now, you are not commanded in the text to be always in such a high, exalted, rapturous state of mind as that. “Rejoice evermore,” but you cannot always rejoice at that rate! I have said that you cannot and I mean it literally. There is a physical impossibility in it! The strain upon the mind would be much too great. We could not live in such a condition of excitement and tension. Sometimes we can swim in the deep waters, but who can always swim? We can take to ourselves the wings of eagles and soar beyond the stars—but we are not condors and cannot always fly—we are more like the sparrows which find a house near the altar of God. When we cannot mount as on wings, we think it quite sufficient if we can run without weariness and walk without fainting. The ordinary joy of the Christian is that which is commanded here—it is not the joy of Jubilee but of every year. It is not the joy of harvest but of all the months. “Rejoice evermore.” No, Miriam, no, not always the timbrel! Not every day, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” There is other work for you. No, Moses, not every day, “Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy.” No, you have other work to do among these rebels, quite as honoring to your God and quite as useful as writing Israel’s triumphal hymn!  
No, James and John and Peter, not always on the top of Tabor. Sometimes in the house of death with your Master where the young girl is raised. And sometimes in Gethsemane to keep watch, if you can, while He sweats great drops of blood. You are to “rejoice evermore,” but you are not always to be clashing the high-sounding cymbals—sometimes the softer psaltery must satisfy your hand. All days are not holidays. There was a day when Job lost his cattle and his children and yet blessed the name of the Lord. All days are not wedding days. There was a day wherein Jacob cried, “All these things are against me!” All days are not as the days of Heaven upon earth. And until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we shall have to bear about a joy that is rather a lamp in the night than a sun in the day—a joy that gladdens us when we are cast down, rather than lifts us up to ecstasy.  
I hope that you catch my thought, though I am afraid that I do but dimly put it. This shows you what kind of joy could not always be with us. The joy that can always be with us is a part of ourselves—a power of the new nature which God works in us by His own Spirit. It consists in the great cheerfulness of the new-born disposition—a full conviction that whatever God does is right—a sweet agreement with the Providence of God—let it ordain what it will, an intense delight in God, Himself, and in the Person of His dear Son. And, consequently, a quietness, a calm, a stillness of soul, “the peace of God which passes all understanding.” This holy rejoicing is a drop of the essence of Heaven! You have heard of “songs without words”—such is the joy of the Lord in the soul—a sort of silent song forever sung within the spirit. It is a quiet making of music with every pulse of the heart, a living Psalmody before God with every heaving of the lungs.  
I hope that you know what it means, or that if you do not, you may soon learn. This is a joy that has no wear and tear about it. You can keep, from year to year, the even tenor of this way, for this is the pace for which men’s minds were made. “Rejoice evermore.” You can live to be as old as Methuselah in this frame, for this rejoicing will never tear you to pieces. It will conserve you and act as the salt of your physical, mental, and spiritual man.  
Thus much upon the quality of this joy.  
II. Suffer a few words upon THE OBJECT OF THE REJOICING, in order to help you, dear Friends, to indulge it. “Rejoice evermore.” How can we keep this feast? What are the objects of such a joy as this?  
God helping us, we can always rejoice in God. What a God we have! “God, my exceeding joy,” said the Psalmist. “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord.” Every attribute of God, every characteristic of God is an inexhaustible gold mine of precious joy to every man who is reconciled to God. Delight yourself in God the Father, His electing love, His unchanging Grace, His illimitable power, His transcending Glory, in your being His child and in that Providence with which He orders all things for you! Delight yourself in your Father God! Delight yourself, also, in the Son, who is, “God with us.” God with us before the earth was, in the Covenant Council when He became our Surety and our Representative. God with us when His delights were with the sons of men. Delight in Him as Man suffering, sympathizing with you. Delight in Him as God putting forth infinite wisdom and power for you. I would need a month in which to give a bare outline of the various points of our Lord’s Divine and human Character which furnish us with objects of joy! Do but think of Him. Do but for a moment consider His love and if you are at all right in heart, it must bring unspeakable pleasure to you—  
*“Jesus, the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast.”*  
Then think of the Holy Spirit and rejoice in Him as dwelling in you, quickening you, comforting you, illuminating you, and abiding with you forever. Think of the Triune God and be blessed.  
Then muse upon the Covenant of Grace. Think of redemption by blood. Think of Divine Sovereignty and all that has come of it in the form of Grace to men. Think of your effectual calling, your justification, your acceptance in the Beloved. Think of your final perseverance. Think of your union with the glorious Person of the Well-Beloved and of all the life and all the Glory that is wrapped up in that surpassing truth. “Rejoice evermore.” With such a God, you have always a source of joy!  
I believe, dear Friends, that if we are right-minded, every doctrine of the Gospel will make us glad, every promise of the Gospel will make us glad, every precept of the Gospel will make us glad. It you were to go over a list of all the privileges that belong to the people of God, you might pause over each one and say, “I could rejoice always in this if I had nothing else.” If ever you fail to rejoice, permit me to exhort you to awaken each one of the Graces of the Spirit to its most active exercise. Begin with the first of them—faith. Believe, and as you believe this and that out of the 10,000 blessings which God has promised, joy will spring up in your soul! Have you exercised faith? Then lead out the sister Grace of hope. Begin hoping for the resurrection, hoping for the Second Coming, hoping for the glory which is then to be revealed. What sources of joy are these!  
When you have indulged hope, then go on to love and let this fairest of the heavenly sisters point you to the way of joy. Go on to love God more and more and to love His people and to love poor sinners. And, as you love, you will not fail to rejoice, for joy is born of love! Love has on her left hand sorrow for the griefs of those she loves, but at her right hand a holy joy in the very fact of loving her fellows, for he that loves does a joyful thing. If you cannot get joy either out of hope, or faith, or love, then go on to patience. I believe that one of the sweetest joys under Heaven comes out of the severest suffering when patience is brought into play. “Sweet,” says Toplady, “to lie passive in Your hands and know no will but Yours.” And it is so sweet, so inexpressibly sweet, that to my experience the joy that comes of perfect patience is, under certain aspects, the most Divine of all the joys that Christians know this side of Heaven. The abyss of agony has a pearl in it which is not to be found upon the mountain of delight. Put patience to her perfect work and she will bring you the power to rejoice evermore.  
I will suppose that you have gone through all this and that you still say, “I cannot rejoice as I would.” Then arise, dear Brothers and Sisters, and gird yourself for holy exercise. Begin with prayer. Prayer will make the darkening cloud disappear and then you will rejoice. If supplication is over and you are not rejoicing, then sing a Psalm. “Bring here the minstrel.” Often does holy music set the Prophet going. Let us sing a song unto the Lord and if we have no joy in our hearts, already, we shall not have sung very many verses before rejoicing will drop on us like the dew which soaks the dry and dusky tents of the Arabians. If neither prayer nor praise will do it, then read the Word. Sit still and meditate on what the Lord has spoken. Go up to the Communion Table—gather with the people of God in sweet mutual converse. Or go out and preach, my Brothers, to sinners! Go to the Sunday school class, and tell the dear children about Christ. In Christian labor you will joy in the Lord as you would not have rejoiced in Him if you had been at home idle.  
At any rate, when you do not rejoice, say to yourself, “Come, Heart, this will not do. Why are you cast down, O my Soul?” I have heard of a mother that whenever her children began to cry and grow fretty, she said, “They must have medicine.” She was sure that they were not well. Whenever you begin to fret and worry, say to yourself, “I must take heavenly medicine, for I am not right. The leaves of the Scriptures are for my healing—I will use them for my soul’s good. If my heart were right, I would rejoice in the Lord, and as I am not rejoicing I must resort to the great Physician.”  
Brothers and Sisters, we must rejoice. Why should we not rejoice, since all things are ours? Heaven is ours in the future and earth is ours in the present. With the past and all its sins blotted out, the future and all its needs provided for by the bounty of an unchanging God, why should we be sad? If we are not glad, the stars may rebuke us as they twinkle amid the darkness—the sun may rebuke us for refusing to shine in the light of God. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us obey the Word that says, “Rejoice evermore.”  
III. Lastly, somebody will say, “But why should we rejoice?” What are THE REASONS FOR THIS REJOICING? We ought not to need arguments to persuade us to be happy! The worldling says that, “he counts it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away.” The child of God may count it the wisest thing to cast his care upon his God. You do not need an argument for rejoicing, but if you did, it is found in the command of your Lord, who says to you, “Rejoice evermore.”  
Rejoicing wards off temptation. The Christian may be tempted, but little impression is made upon him by the pleasurable bait if he is happy in the Lord. There is a passage in Paul—I forget, just now, where it is— where he speaks of putting on the armor of light. It is fine poetry as well as solid fact that we wear the armor of light. And part of the meaning is that we are so surrounded with seraphic joy that nothing can tempt us. The joy which we wear is far superior to any which the Evil One can offer us and so his temptation has lost its power. What can the devil offer the joyous Christian? Why, if he were to say to him, “I will give you all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, if you will fall down and worship me,” the Believer would reply to him, “Fiend, I have more than that! I have perfect contentment! I have absolute delight in God. My soul swims in a deep sea of bliss as I think of God.” The devil will speedily quit such a man as that, for the joy of the Lord is an armor through which he cannot send the dagger of his temptation!  
This joy of the Lord will shut out worldly mirth from the heart. The rejoicing Christian is not the kind of man that needs to spend his evenings in a theater. “Pooh!” he says, “what can I do there?” You say to the man who has once eaten bread, “I will take you to such a grand feast. I will show you a company of swine all feeding upon husks. Look upon them, see how they enjoy themselves! You shall have as much as you like and be as happy as they are.” He says, “But you do not know me! You do not understand me. I have none of the qualities that link me with swine! I cannot enjoy the things which they enjoy.” He that is once happy in God pours contempt upon the most sublime happiness that a worldling can know! It is altogether out of his line. He does not know their mirth, even as they do not know his rejoicing. I suppose that the fish of the sea have joys suitable to their natures. I do not envy them—I am not inclined to dive into their element. It is so with the children of God—they are not inclined to go after worldly things when they are happy in the Lord.  
But your miserable professors who simply go to a place of worship because they ought to go, and who are very good because they dare not be anything else, they have no joy in the Lord! They go to the devil for their joy—they openly confess that sometimes they must have a bit of pleasure and, therefore, they go to questionable amusements. No wonder that they are found in Satan’s courts, looking up to him for delights, since they find no rejoicing in the ways of the Lord!  
He that rejoices in the Lord always will be a great encouragement to his fellow Christians. He comes into the room— you like the very look of his face. It is a half-holiday to look at him and as soon as he speaks, he drops a sweet word of encouragement for the weak and afflicted. We have some Brothers and Sisters round about us whose faces always refresh me before preaching! Their words are cheering and strengthening. Those who rejoice in the Lord evermore cannot help perfuming the room where they are with the aroma of their joy. Others catch the blessed contagion of their contentment and become happy, too.  
This is the kind of thing that attracts sinners. They used, in the old times, to catch pigeons and send them out with sweet salves on their wings—other pigeons followed them into the dovecote for the sake of their perfume and so were captured. I would that everyone of us had the heavenly anointing on our wings, the Divine perfumes of peace, joy and rest! For then others would be fascinated to Jesus, allured to Heaven. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1039 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Th 5.17

“PRAY WITHOUT CEASING”  
NO. 1039

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 10, 1872 BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Pray without ceasing.”***1Th 5:17***.**

THE position of our text is very suggestive. Observe what it follows. It comes immediately after the precept, “Rejoice evermore,” as if that command had somewhat staggered the reader and made him ask, “How can I always rejoice?” and, therefore, the Apostle appended an answer, “Always pray.” The more praying the more rejoicing! Prayer gives a channel to the pent-up sorrows of the soul—they flow away and in their place streams of sacred delight pour into the heart. At the same time the more rejoicing the more praying! When the heart is in a quiet condition and full of joy in the Lord, then also will it be sure to draw near unto the Lord in worship. Holy joy and prayer act and react upon each other.

Observe, however, what immediately follows the text: “In everything give thanks.” When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude. When we joy in God for what we have and believingly pray to Him for more, then our souls thank Him both in the enjoyment of what we have and in the prospect of what is yet to come. Those three texts are three companion pictures representing the life of a true Christian. The central sketch is the connecting link between those on either side. These three precepts are an ornament of Divine Grace to every Believer’s neck—wear them, every one of you, for glory and for beauty!

“Rejoice evermore.” “Pray without ceasing.” “In everything give thanks.” But we cannot spare any time for the consideration of the context—we must advance to the precept in hand. Our text, though exceedingly short, is marvelously full and we will discuss it under the following heads. We shall ask and answer four questions. What do these words imply? Secondly, What do they actually mean? Thirdly, How shall we obey them? And, fourthly, Why should WE especially obey them?

I. WHAT DO THESE WORDS IMPLY? “Pray without ceasing.” Do they not imply that the use of the voice is not an essential element in prayer? It would be most unseemly, even if it were possible, for us to continue unceasingly to pray aloud. There would, of course, be no opportunity for preaching and hearing—for the exchange of friendly conversation, for business, or for any other of the duties of life—while the din of so many voices would remind our neighbors rather of the worship of Baal than that of Zion. It was never the design of the Lord Jesus that our throats, lungs, and tongues should be forever at work.

Since we are to pray without ceasing, and yet could not pray with the voice without ceasing, it is clear that audible language is not essential to prayer. We may speak a thousand words which seem to be prayer, and yet never pray. On the other hand, we may cry into God’s ear most effectually and yet never say a word. In the book of Exodus God is represented as saying to Moses, “Why do you cry unto Me?” And yet it is not recorded that Moses had uttered so much as a single syllable at that time. It is true that the use of the voice often helps prayer. I find, personally, that I can pray best when alone if I can hear my own voice. At the same time it is not essential. It does not enter at all into the acceptability, reality, or prevalence of prayer. Silence is as fit a garment for devotion as any that language can fashion.

It is equally clear that the posture of prayer is of no great importance, for if it were necessary that we should pray on our knees we could not pray without ceasing—the posture would become painful and injurious. To what end has our Creator given us feet if He desires us never to stand upon them? If He had meant us to be on our knees without ceasing, He would have fashioned the body differently and would not have endowed us with such unnecessary length of limbs. It is well to pray on one’s knees. It is a most fitting posture. It is one which expresses humility, and when humility is truly felt kneeling is a natural and beautiful token of it. But, at the same time, good men have prayed flat upon their faces. They have prayed sitting, have prayed standing, have prayed in many postures—the posture does not enter into the essence of prayer. Consent not to be placed in bondage by those to whom the bended knee is reckoned of more importance than the contrite heart

It is clear, too, from the text, that the place is not essential to prayer, for if there were only certain holy places where prayer was acceptable and we had to pray without ceasing, our Churches ought to be extremely large so that we might always live in them! And they would have to comprise all the arrangements necessary for human habitations. If it is true that there is some sanctity this side of a brick wall more than there is on the other side of it. If it is true that the fresh air blows away Divine Grace and that for the highest acceptance we need arches, pillars, aisles, chancels and such, then farewell, you green lanes and fair gardens! Farewell lovely woods, for from now on we must, without ceasing, dwell where your fragrance and freshness can never reach us!

But this is ridiculous! Therefore I gather that the frequenting of some one particular place has little or nothing to do with prayer. And such a conclusion is consistent with the saying of Paul upon Mars’ Hill, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands.” “Pray without ceasing.” That precept at one stroke overthrows the idea of particular times in which prayer is more acceptable or more proper than at others. If I am to pray without ceasing, then, every second must be suitable for prayer. And there is not one unholy moment in the hour, nor one unaccepted hour in the day, nor one unhallowed day in the year!

The Lord has not appointed a certain week for prayer, but all weeks should be weeks of prayer. Neither has He said that one hour of the day is more acceptable than another. All time is equally legitimate for supplication, equally holy, equally accepted with God or else we should not have been told to pray without ceasing. It is good to have your times of prayer. It is good to set apart seasons for special supplication—we have no doubt of that—but we must never allow this to gender the superstition that there is a certain holy hour for prayer in the morning, a specially acceptable hour for prayer in the evening and a sacred time for prayer at certain seasons of the year.

Wherever we seek the Lord with true hearts He is found by us! Whenever we cry unto Him He hears us. Every place is hallowed ground to a hallowed heart, and every day is a holy day to a holy man. From January to December the calendar has not one date in which prayer is forbidden! All the days are red-letter days—whether Sundays or weekdays they are all accepted times for prayer. Clear, then, is it from the text that the voice, the posture, the place, the time—none of them enter into the essence of prayer—or else, in this case, we should be commanded to perform an impossibility which we are quite certain is not after the manner of the Lord our God.

There is one other thing implied in the text, namely, that a Christian has no right to go into any place where he could not continue to pray. Pray without ceasing? Then I am never to be in a place where I could not pray without ceasing. Hence, many worldly amusements, without being particularized, may be judged and condemned at once. Certain people believe in ready-made prayers cut and dried for all occasions, and, at the same time, they believe persons to be regenerated in Baptism though their lives are anything but Christian. Ought they not to provide prayers for all circumstances in which these, the dear regenerated, but graceless sons and daughters of their Church, are found?

As, for instance, a pious collect for a young prince or nobleman who is about to go to a shooting match, that he may be forgiven for his cruelty towards those poor pigeons who are only badly wounded and made to linger in misery? Or, also, a prayer for a religious and regenerated gentleman who is going to a horserace, and a collect for young persons who have received the Grace of confirmation upon their going to the theater to attend a very questionable play? Could not such special collects be made to order?

You revolt at the idea? Well, then, have nothing to do with that which you cannot ask God’s blessing upon! Have nothing to do with it, for if God cannot bless it, you may depend upon it—the devil has cursed it! Anything that is right for you to do you may consecrate with prayer! Let this be a sure gauge and test to you—if you feel that it would be an insult to the Lord of Heaven for you to ask His blessing upon what is proposed to you—then stand clear of the unholy thing! If God does not approve, neither must you have fellowship with it! These matters are clearly implied in the precept, “Pray without ceasing.”

II. But now, WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN? If it does not mean we are to be always on our knees, nor always saying prayers, nor always in Church or in meeting—and does not mean that we are to consider any day as unfit for praying—what then? The words mean, first, a privilege. Secondly, a precept—“Pray without ceasing.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, in these words assures you that you may pray without ceasing. There is no time when you may not pray. You have permission here given to come to the Mercy Seat when you will—for the veil of the Most Holy place is torn in two from the top to the bottom—and our access to the Mercy Seat is undisputed and indisputable.

Kings hold their formal receptions upon certain appointed days, and then their courtiers are admitted. But the King of kings holds a constant reception! The monarch whose palace was in Shushan would have none approach him unless he sent for them. But the King of kings has called for all His people, and they may come at all times. They were slain who went unto the King Ahasuerus unless he stretched out his scepter to them. But our King never withdraws His scepter—it is always stretched out, and whoever desires to come to Him may come now, and come at any time. Among the Persians there were some few of the nobility who had the peculiar and special right of an audience with the king at any time they chose. Now that which was the peculiar right of a very few and of the very great is the privilege of every child of God!

He may come in unto the King at all times. The dead of night is not too late for God! The breaking of the morning, when the first gray light is seen, is not too early for the Most High! At midday He is not too busy! And when the evening gathers He is not weary with His children’s prayers. “Pray without ceasing,” is, if I read it correctly, a most sweet and precious permit to the Believer to pour out his heart at all times before the Lord. I hear its still small voice saying, “Come to the Mercy Seat, O My child, whenever you will! Come to the treasury of Grace whenever you desire—

*“The happy gates of Gospel Grace*

*Stand open night and day.”*  
The doors of the temple of Divine Love shall not be shut. Nothing can set a barrier between a praying soul and its God. The road of angels and of prayers is forever open. Let us but send out the dove of prayer and we may be certain that she will return unto us with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. Evermore the Lord has regard unto the pleadings of His servants and waits to be gracious unto them.

Still, however, it is a precept, “Pray without ceasing.” And what does it mean? It means a great Truth of God which I cannot very well convey to you in a few words, and, therefore, must try and bring it out under four or five points. It means, first, never abandon prayer. Never, for any cause or reason cease to pray! Imagine not that you must pray until you are saved, and may then stop. For those whose sins are pardoned, prayer is quite as necessary as for those mourning under a sense of sin. “Pray without ceasing,” for in order that you may persevere in Grace you must persevere in prayer. Should you become experienced in Grace and enriched with much spiritual knowledge, you must not dream of restraining prayer because of your gifts and Graces.

“Pray without ceasing,” or else your flower will fade and your spiritual fruit will never ripen. Continue in prayer until the last moment of your life—

*“Long as they live must Christians pray,  
For only while they pray they live.”*  
As we breathe without ceasing, so must we pray without ceasing. As there is no attainment in life, of health, or of strength, or of muscular vigor which can place a man beyond the necessity of breathing, so no condition of spiritual growth or advance in Grace will allow a man to dispense with

prayer—  
*“Let us pray! Our life is praying.  
Prayer with time alone may cease—  
Then in Heaven, God’s will obeying,  
Life is praise and perfect peace.”*

Never give up praying, not even though Satan should suggest to you that it is in vain for you to cry unto God. Pray in his teeth—“pray without ceasing.”

If for awhile the heavens are as brass and your prayer only echoes in thunder above your head, pray on! If, month after month your prayer appears to have miscarried and no reply has been vouchsafed to you, yet still continue to draw near unto the Lord! Do not abandon the Mercy Seat for any reason whatever. If it is a good thing that you have been asking for, and you are sure it is according to the Divine will, continue to pray! If the vision tarries, wait for it—pray, weep, entreat, wrestle—agonize till you get that which you are praying for. If your heart is cold in prayer, do not restrain prayer until your heart warms—but pray your soul unto heat by the help of the ever-blessed Spirit who helps our infirmities! If the iron is hot, then hammer it. And if it is cold, hammer it till you heat it!

Never cease prayer for any reason or argument. If the philosopher should tell you that every event is fixed, and, therefore, prayer cannot possibly change anything, and, consequently, must be folly—still, if you cannot answer him and are somewhat puzzled—go on with your supplications notwithstanding all. No difficult problem concerning digestion would prevent your eating, for the result justifies the practice! And so no quibble should make us cease prayer, for the assured success of it commends it to us! You know what your God has told you, and if you cannot reply to every difficulty which man can suggest, resolve to be obedient to the Divine will, and still, “Pray without ceasing.” Never, never, never renounce the habit of prayer, or your confidence in its power!

A second meaning is this. Never suspend the regular offering of prayer. You will, if you are a watchful Christian, have your times of daily devotion fixed not by superstition, but for your convenience and remembrance. Just as David, three times a day, and as another saint, seven times a day sought the Lord, be sure to keep up your daily prayer without intermission. This advice will not comprehend the whole range of the text—I am not pretending that it does. I am only mentioning it now as supplementary to other thoughts.

“Pray without ceasing,” that is, never give up the morning prayer, nor the evening prayer, nor the prayer at midday if such has grown to be your habit. If you change hours and times, as you may, yet keep up the practice of regularly recurring retirement, meditation, and prayer. You may be said to continue in prayer if your habitual devotions are maintained. It would be quite correct for me to say that I know a man who has been always begging ever since I have been in London. I do not think that I ever passed the spot where he stands without seeing him there. He is a blind person and stands near a Church. As long as my recollection serves me he has been begging without ceasing.

Of course he has not begged when he has been asleep. He has not begged when he has gone home to his meals. Nor did you understand me to have asserted anything so absurd when I said he had begged without ceasing for years. And so, if at those times when it is proper for you to separate yourself from your ordinary labors—if you continue perseveringly begging at Mercy’s Throne—it may be, with comparative correctness, said of you that you pray without ceasing. Through all hours are alike to me, I find it profitable to meet with God at set periods, for these seem to me to be like the winding up of the clock. The clock is to go all day, but there is a time for winding it up. And the little special season that we set apart and hedge round about for communion with our God seems to wind us up for the rest of the day. Therefore, if you would pray without ceasing, continue in the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, and let it be perpetually an ordinance with you that your times of prayer are not broken in upon.

That, however, is only a help, for I must add, thirdly, between these times of devotion labor to be much in ejaculatory prayer. While your hands are busy with the world, let your hearts still talk with God—not in 20 sentences at a time, for such an interval might be inconsistent with your calling—but in broken sentences and interjections. It is always wrong to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another, and that we should do if we spoiled study or labor by running away to pray at all hours. But we may, without this, let short sentences go up to Heaven. Yes, and we may shoot upwards cries and single words, such as an, “Ah,” an, “Oh,” an, “O that.” Or, without words we may pray in the upward glancing of the eye or the sigh of the heart.

He who prays without ceasing uses many little darts and hand grenades of godly desire which he casts forth at every available interval. Sometimes he will blow the furnace of his desires to a great heat in regular prayer, and, as a consequence, at other times the sparks will continue to rise up to Heaven in the form of brief words, and looks, and desires. Fourthly, if we would pray without ceasing we must be always in the spirit of prayer. Our heart, renewed by the Holy Spirit, must be like the magnetized needle which always has an inclination towards the pole. It does not always point to that pole—you can turn it aside if you will—in an iron ship it exhibits serious deflections. Under all circumstances it is not exactly true—but if you put your finger to that needle and force it round to the east, you have only to take away the pressure and immediately it returns to its beloved pole again.

So let your heart be magnetized with prayer so that if the finger of duty turns it away from the immediate act of prayer, there may still be the longing desire for prayer in your soul—and the moment you can do so, your heart reverts to its beloved work. As perfume lies in flowers even when they do not shed their fragrance upon the gale, so let prayer lie in your hearts. But, perhaps the last meaning that I shall give has the most of the Truth of the text in it, namely this—Let all your actions be consistent with your prayers and be, in fact, a continuation of your prayers. If I am to pray without ceasing, it cannot mean that I am always to be in the act of direct devotion, for the human mind, as at presently constituted, needs variety of occupations and it could not, without producing madness or imbecility, continue always in the exercise of one function.

We must, therefore, change the modus or the manner of operation if we are ceaselessly to continue in prayer. We must pursue our prayers, but do it in another manner. Take an instance. This morning I prayed to God to arouse His people to prayerfulness. Very well—as I came to this house my soul continued to ejaculate, “O Lord, awaken Your children to prayerfulness.” Now, while I am preaching to you and driving at the same point, am I not praying? Is not my sermon the continuation of my prayer—for am I not desiring and aiming at the same thing? Is it not a continuing to pray when we use the best means towards the obtaining of that which we pray for? Do you not see my point? He who prays for his fellow creatures and then seeks their good is still praying!

In this sense there is truth in that old saying—  
*“He prays best that loves best  
Both man, and bird, and beast.”*

Loving is praying. If I seek in prayer the good of my fellow creature, and then go and try to promote it, I am practically praying for his good in my actions! If I seek, as I should, God’s glory above everything, then if all my actions are meant to tend to God’s glory, I am continuing to pray though I may not be praying with my thoughts or with my lips! Oh, that our whole life might be a prayer! It can be. There can be a praying without ceasing before the Lord, though there be many pauses in what the most of men would call prayer.

Pray, then, without ceasing, my Brothers and Sisters. Let your whole life be praying. If you change the method, yet change not the pursuit but continue still to worship, still to adore. This I think to be the meaning of our text—never altogether abandon prayer. Do not suspend the regular offering of prayer. Be much in earnest ejaculations. Be always in the spirit of prayer, and let the whole of your life be consistent with your prayer and become a part of it.

III. HOW CAN WE OBEY THESE WORDS? First, let us labor as much as we can to prevent all sinful interruptions. “Pray without ceasing.” Then if it is impossible to be in the act of prayer, always, at least let us be as much as possible in that act. And let us prevent those interruptions which I mentioned in the early part of my discourse—the interruptions occasioned by our own sin. Let us endeavor to keep clear, as far as we can, of anything and everything in ourselves or round about us that would prevent our abounding in supplication.

And let us also keep clear of interruptions from the sins of others. Do others forbid us to pray? Let us not be afraid of their wrath. Remember Daniel, who while he was under the penalty of being cast into a den of lions, yet opened his window towards Jerusalem and prayed seven times a day as he had done before. Under no threats—and for no bribes—let us ever cease to pray. In private let us always pray. And if duty calls us to do so where others observe us, let us so much fear the eyes of God that we shall not dare to fear the eyes of man!

Let us next avoid all unnecessary interruptions of every sort to our prayer. If we know that any matter from which we can escape has a tendency to disturb the spirit of prayer within us, let us avoid it earnestly. Let us try, as much as possible, not to be put off the scent in prayer. Satan’s object will be to distract the mind, to throw it off the rails, to divert its aim. But let us resolve before God we will not turn aside from following hard after Him. Sir Thomas Abney had for many years practiced family prayer regularly. He was elected Lord Mayor of London and on the night of his election he must be present at a banquet. But when the time came for him to call his family together in prayer, having no wish either to be a Pharisee or to give up his practice, he excused himself to the guests in this way—he said he had an important engagement with a very dear Friend and they must excuse him for a few minutes.

It was most true, his dearest Friend was the Lord Jesus, and family prayer was an important engagement. And so he withdrew for awhile to the family altar and in that respect prayed without ceasing. We sometimes allow good things to interrupt our prayers and thus make them evil. Mrs. Rowe observes in one of her letters that if the 12 Apostles were preaching in the town were she lived and she could never hear them again, if it were her time for private devotion she would not be bribed out of her closet by the hope of hearing them! I am not sure but what she might have taken another time for her private devotions and so have enjoyed both privileges—but at the same time, supposing she must have lost the prayer and have only got the preaching in exchange, I agree with her—it would have been exchanging gold for silver!

She would be more profited in praying than she would be in hearing, for praying is the end of preaching. Preaching is but the wheat stalk while praying is the golden grain itself—and he has the best who gets it. Sometimes we think we are too busy to pray. That, also, is a great mistake, for praying is a saving of time. You remember Luther’s remark, “I have so much to do today that I shall never get through it with less than three hours’ prayer”? He had not been accustomed to take so much time for prayer on ordinary days, but since that was a busy day, he must have more communion with his God!

But, perhaps our occupations begin early, and we therefore say, “How can I get alone with God in prayer?” It is said of Sir Henry Havelock that every morning when the march began at six, he always rose at four that he might not miss his time for the reading of the Scripture and communion with his God. If we have no time we must make time, for if God has given us time for secondary duties, He must have given us time for primary ones—and to draw near to him is a primary duty! We must let nothing set it aside. There is no real need to sacrifice any duty—we have time enough for all if we are not idle. And, indeed, the one will help the other instead of clashing with it!

When Edward Payson was a student at College, he found he had so much to do to attend his classes and prepare for examinations that he could not spend as much time as be should in private prayer. But, at last, waking up to the feeling that he was going back in Divine things through his habits, he took due time for devotion and he asserts in his diary that he did more in his studies in a single week after he had spent time with God in prayer, than he had accomplished in 12 months before. God can multiply our ability to make use of time. If we give the Lord His due, we shall have enough for all necessary purposes. In this matter seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Your other engagements will run smoothly if you do not forget your engagement with God.

We must, dear Friends, in order to pray without ceasing, strive against indolence in prayer. I believe that no man loves prayer until the Holy Spirit has taught him the sweetness and value of it. If you have ever prayed without ceasing you will pray without ceasing! The men who do not love to pray must be strangers to its secret joy. When prayer is a mechanical act and there is no soul in it, it is a slavery and a weariness. But when it is really living prayer, and when the man prays because he is a Christian and cannot help praying—when he prays along the street, prays in his business, prays in the house, prays in the field—when his whole soul is full of prayer, then he cannot have too much of it. He will not be backward in prayer who meets Jesus in it, but he who knows not the Well-Beloved will count it a drudgery.

Let us avoid, above all things, lethargy and indifference in prayer. Oh, it is a dreadful thing that ever we should insult the majesty of Heaven by words from which our heart has gone! I must, my Soul, I must school you to this, that you must have communion with God! And if in your prayer you do not talk with God, you shall keep on praying till you do! Come not away from the Mercy Seat till you have prayed! Beloved Brothers and Sisters, say unto your soul—“here have I come to the Throne of Grace to worship God and seek His blessing, and I am not going away till I have done it. I will not rise from my knees because I have spent my customary minutes, but here will I pray till I find the blessing.”

Satan will often leave off tempting when he finds you thus resolute in prayer. Brethren, we need waking up! Routine grows upon us. We get into the mill-horse way—round, and round, and round the mill. From this may God save us! It is deadly. A man may pray 20 years with regularity, as far as the time goes, and the form goes—and have never prayed a single grain of prayer in the whole period! One real groan fetched from the heart is worth a million litanies! One living breath from a gracious soul is worth 10,000 collects! May we be kept awake by God’s Grace, praying without ceasing.

And we must take care, dear Brethren, again, if we would perform this duty, that we fight against anything like despair of being heard. If we have not been heard after six times we must, as Elijah, go again seven times! If our Peter is in prison, and the Church has prayed God to liberate him, and he is still in fetters bound in the inner prison, let us pray on, for one of these days Peter will knock at the gate! Be importunate! Heaven’s gate does not open to every runaway knock. Knock, and knock, and knock again—and add to your knocking and to your asking, seeking—and be not satisfied till you get a real answer!

Never cease from prayer through presumption. Guard against that. Feel, O Christian, that you always need to pray. Say not, “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” You are, by nature, still naked and poor, and miserable. Therefore, persevere in prayer and buy of the Lord fine gold, and clean raiment, that you may be rich and fitly clothed. Thus I have tried to set before you, Beloved, how, by resisting presumption and despair, indolence and lethargy, and trying to put aside all sinful and other interruptions we may pray without ceasing.

IV. Now, very briefly, in the last place, WHY SHOULD WE OBEY THIS PRECEPT? Of course we should obey it because it is of Divine authority! But, moreover, we should attend to it because the Lord always deserves to be worshipped. Prayer is a method of worship. Continue, therefore, to always render to your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer, your Father, the homage of your prayers!

With such a King let us not be slack in homage. Let us pay Him the revenue of praise continually. Evermore may we magnify and bless His name. His enemies curse Him—let us bless Him without ceasing! Moreover, Brethren, the spirit of love within us surely prompts us to draw near to God without ceasing. Christ is our Husband. Is the bride true to her marriage vows if she cares not for her Beloved’s company? God is our Father. What sort of a child is that which does not desire to climb on its father’s knee and receive a smile from its father’s face? If you and I can live day after day and week after week without anything like communion with God, how does the love of God dwell in us?

“Pray without ceasing,” because the Lord never ceases to love you, never ceases to bless you, and never ceases to regard you as His child. “Pray without ceasing,” for you need a blessing on all the work you are doing. Is it common work? “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Is it business? It is vain to rise up early and sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness, for without God you cannot prosper. You are taught to say, “Give us this day our daily bread”—an inspired prayer for secular things. Oh, consecrate your seculars by prayer!

And, if you are engaged in God’s service, what work is there in which you can hope for success without His blessing? To teach the young, to preach the Gospel, to distribute tracts, to instruct the ignorant—do not all these need His blessing? What are they if that favor is denied? Pray, therefore, as long as you work. You are always in danger of being tempted— there is no position in life in which you may not be assaulted by the enemy. “Pray without ceasing,” therefore. A man who is going along a dark road where he knows that there are enemies, if he must be alone and has a sword with him, he carries it drawn in his hand—to let the robbers know that he is ready for them. So Christian, pray without ceasing! Carry your sword in your hand—wave that mighty weapon of all-prayer of which Bunyan speaks! Never sheathe it, for it will cut through coats of mail!

You need fear no foe if you can but pray. As you are tempted without ceasing, so pray without ceasing. You need always to pray, for you always need something. In no condition are you so rich as not to need something from your God. It is not possible for you to say, “I have all things,” or, if you can, you have them only in Christ, and from Christ you must continue to seek them. As you are always in need, so beg always at Mercy’s gate. Moreover, blessings are always waiting for you. Angels are ready with favors that you know not of, and you have but to ask and have! Oh, could you see what might be had for the asking you would not be so slack! The priceless benisons of Heaven which lie on one side as yet, oh, did you but perceive that they are only waiting for you to pray, you would not hesitate a moment!

The man who knows that his farming is profitable and that his land brings forth abundantly will be glad to sow a broader stretch of land another year. And he who knows that God answers prayer and is ready, still, to answer it, will open his mouth yet wider that God may fill it! Continue to pray, Brothers and Sisters, for even if you should not need prayer yourself, there are others who do—there are the dying, the sick, the poor, the ignorant, the backsliding, the blaspheming, the heathen at home and the heathen abroad. “Pray without ceasing,” for the enemy works incessantly, and as yet the kingdom has not come unto Zion. You shall never be able to say, “I left off praying, for I had nothing to pray for.” On this side of Heaven objects for prayer are as multitudinous as the stars of the sky!

And, now, I said I would say a word as to why we ought to especially pray, and that shall close the sermon. Beloved Friends, this Church ought to pray without ceasing! We have been, in years past, notable for prayer. If ever a Church has prayed it has been, by God’s Grace, this Church. I might find many faults with some who hinder prayer, but yet I must say in God’s sight I know and feel that there has been living prayer in this Church for many years, and hence it is we have had many years of peace and prosperity. We have lacked nothing because we have not lacked prayer. I do not doubt we might have had much more if we had prayed more—still prayer has been very mighty here.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, suppose you had no pastor. Suppose the preacher was gone from you, and that the black cloth upon this pulpit was not for a deceased elder of the Church but for the preacher, himself? You would pray, would you not? Will you not pray for me, then, while I live? If you would pray for another to come, will you not pray for me while I am here? I desire to discharge my office before you in God’s sight with all earnestness, but I cannot without your prayers! And as being gone from you, you would lift up many sighs and you would with prayers ask for a successor, pray for me while I am yet with you!

Beloved, you have prayed very earnestly for the pastor when he has been sick. Your prayers have been his consolation and his restoration. Will you not pray for him now that he is able to preach the Gospel—that his health may be sanctified to God’s service and the ministry of the Truth of God may be mighty in the winning of souls? I ask it of you. I think I might claim it of you. I do beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, pray for me! Suppose again, dear Brethren, there were no conversions in our midst, would you not pray? And since there are a great many conversions, should that be a reason for leaving off? Shall we worship God the less because He gives us more? Instead of one prayer which would go up were there no conversions, there should be 10 now that He continues to work salvation among us!

Suppose we were divided, and had many schisms, and jealousies, and much bickering—would not the faithful ones pray in bitterness of spirit? Will you not pray, since there are no divisions and much Christian love? Surely, I say again, you will not treat God the worse because He treats you the better! That were foolish, indeed! Suppose we were surrounded today with hosts of persecutors and error everywhere crept into our midst and did us damage—would you not pray, you who love the Lord? And now that we live in days of peace, and error, though it prowls around, is kept out of our fold, will you not commune with the Lord all the more? I will say yet a third time, shall we pray the less because God gives the more?

Oh no! But the better He is to us the more let us adore and magnify His name! Just now we need to pray because some are growing cold and turning to their old sins. We need to pray because we are doing much for Christ. Every agency is in full work. We need a great blessing upon great efforts. We have had such results from prayer as might make a man’s ears to tingle who should hear of them for the first time—our history as a Church has not been second, even, to Apostolic history itself! We have seen God’s arm made bare in the eyes of all the people—and to the ends of the earth the testimony of this pulpit has gone forth and thousands have found the Savior—all in answer to many prayers!

Pray, then, without ceasing! O Church in the Tabernacle, hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown! Oh, continue to be a praying Church that we, together, when we shall stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, pastor and people, may not be accused of being prayerless nor of being slack in the work of the Lord! I earnestly hope all this will tend to make tomorrow’s day of prayer more earnest and intense. But yet more do I pray that at all times all of us may be fervent, frequent, instant and constant in prayer—praying in the Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus.

÷2Th 1.3

THE NECESSITY OF GROWING FAITH

NO. 1857

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 30, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all abounds toward each other.”** *2Th 1:3***.**

LAST Lord’s-Day I tried to say cheering and encouraging words to “Little-Faith.” I trust that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, did thereby strengthen some to whom the Savior said, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” But none of us would desire to remain among the LittleFaiths—we long to press forward in our march to the better land. If we have just started in the heavenly race, it is well, for there are grounds of comfort about the first steps in the right way, but we are not going to stop at the starting-point! Our desire is towards the finish line and the crown. My prayer, at the commencement of this discourse, is that we may, each of us, rise out of our little faith into the loftier region of assurance, so that those who love us best may be able to say, “We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly.”

The Church of Jesus Christ at Thessalonica did not commence under very propitious circumstances. Remember that oft-quoted text about the Bereans—“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.” That record does not relate to the converts in Thessalonica, but to those Jews who heard Paul preach in the synagogue and refused to test his teaching by a reference to the Old Testament. They were not a noble sort of people and yet, from among them, there were taken by almighty Grace a certain company who were led to believe in the true Messiah! Thus they became more noble than even the Bereans, for we do not hear of a Church in Berea, neither was an Epistle written to the Bereans. Thessalonica received two Epistles, bright with hearty commendations. Paul praised the Philippians, but the Thessalonians he praised even more, thanking God at every remembrance of them, and glorying in them among the Churches of God for their patience and faith.

I shall ask you, with your Bibles open, to see whether we cannot account in some measure for this remarkable condition of things. The verse before us is full of thanksgiving to God for the growth of the Thessalonians in faith and in love. And to my mind, it sounds like an echo of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. The First Epistle is the key and the cause of the Second. Very often a man’s success in this place, or in that, will tally with his own condition of heart in relation to that place. As we sow we reap. The Grace of God enabled Paul to sow toward the Thessalonians with great hopefulness, trust and prayerfulness and, consequently, he reaped plentifully.

Observe how (1Th 1:2-3) Paul began by distinctly recognizing the existence of faith and love in that Church. “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” Recognize the root and then look for the flower! See that faith is in the soul, smile upon it and foster it—and then you may expect that the faith will steadily increase. In our text Paul mentions faith as growing and love as abounding, while in the next verse he mentions patience, which is the outgrowth of hope—“the patience of hope.” He noticed in the Thessalonians the birth of those three Divine sisters—faith, hope, and charity! That which he recognized with pleasure, he afterwards saw growing exceedingly! Those who cherish the seed shall rejoice in the plant. Observe in the children under your care the first blossoms of any good thing and you shall observe its increase! Despise not the day of small things. When you have learned to recognize faith in its buds, you shall soon see faith in its flowers and faith in its fruits! Do not overlook feeble Grace, or criticize it because it is as yet imperfect—mark its beginnings with thankfulness and you shall behold its advance with delight!

In addition to recognizing the beginnings of faith, Paul labored hard to promote it. Look in the second chapter and read verses 7, 8, 11, 12—“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God, only, but also our own souls because you were dear unto us. As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto His kingdom and glory.” He threw his whole strength into the work of building that Church, toiling night and day for it and, consequently, he obtained his desire—for still it is true in the farming of God, that those who sow and steep their seed in the tears of earnestness, shall doubtless come again, rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them!

Paul had accompanied his public labors with his private prayers. See how 1Th 3:12 tallies with our text—“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love, one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.” This was his prayer—and he received exactly what he prayed for. He saw abounding love in each one towards every other! The Lord seemed to have noted the wording of Paul’s prayer and to have answered him according to the letter of his request. If we open our mouth wide, the Lord will fill it! Brothers and Sisters, what we comfortably recognize in its gracious beginnings—what we labor to increase and what we earnestly guard with prayer shall, in due time, be granted to us!

More than this—Paul had gone on to exhort them to abound in love and faith. Look at Chapter 4, verse 9—“As touching brotherly love you need not that I write unto you: for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed you do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, Brethren, that you increase more and more.” Paul did not only quietly pray for the Church, but he added his earnest admonitions. He bids them increase more and more and, in response, they do increase, so that he says, “your faith grows exceedingly.” When a man says, “more and more,” it is only another way of saying, “exceedingly.” Is it not so? There was a big heart in Paul towards the Thessalonians. He wanted them to grow in faith and love “more,” and then, to take another step and add another, “more,” to it! The exhortation being given out of a full heart, behold, God has fulfilled it to His servant and the people have willingly followed up the Apostolic precept!

But Paul had added faith to his prayers and his exhortations. Look at Chapter 5:23, 24, and see if it is not so. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it.” When we are sure that God will do it, it will surely be done! We miss many a blessing because we ask without faith. The Apostle believed that he had the petition which he had sought of the Lord and he received according to his faith. He who can firmly believe shall, before long, fervently pour out thanksgiving! The Church at Thessalonica, the child of Paul’s prayers, the child of his labors and, at last, the child of his faith, obtained a remarkable degree of faith and an amazing warmth of love. The Lord give to us, who are workers, the mind and spirit of Paul, and lead us to follow him in our conduct to others, and then I do not doubt that our good wishes shall be realized! If we are right, ourselves, we shall see prosperity in the Churches, or classes, or families whose good we seek—and as we feel bound to pray about them, we shall also feel bound to thank God concerning them.

Before I plunge into the sermon, I should like to pause and ask whether we, as Christian men and women, are such that Paul could say of us, “We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all abounds toward each other.” What do you think? Could your pastor bless God for you? Could your nearest and dearest Christian friend feel that he was bound to always thank God for you? If not, why not? Oh that we may rise into such a happy state that we shall be the cause of gratitude in others! It ought to be so—we ought to glorify God—causing men to see our good works and praise our Father in Heaven.

One more question—Do you think we are in such a condition that it would be safe for anybody to praise us? Would it be safe to ourselves for us to be thus commended and made subjects of thankfulness? It takes a great deal of Grace to be able to bear praise. Censure seldom does us much harm. A man struggles up against slander and the discouragement which comes of it may not be an unmixed evil, but praise soon suggests pride and is, therefore, not an unmixed good. “As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise.” Would it be safe if Paul were, here, to say good things about you as he did about the Thessalonians? Did it not prove that the Brothers and Sisters, there, were sober, well-established Believers?

Once more, do you ever feel it in your heart to talk like this about your fellow Christians? Paul was in a fine condition when he could thus extol his Brethren. Few men are ready with hearty commendations of others. We are greedy in receiving praise and niggardly in dispensing it. We seldom speak too kindly of one another. Now and then you hear a person say, “There is no such thing as love in the Church at all.” I know that gentleman very well and I never saw any excess of love in him. I heard one say, “Brotherly love is all a mockery; there is no reality in Christian charity”—and truly, he measured his own corn very accurately! Most men would see others better if their own eyes were clearer. When a man honestly feels that his fellow Christians are, for the most part, much better than himself and that he would willingly sit at the feet of many of them, then he is, himself, in a healthy state. I admire the Grace of God in many around me! I see their imperfections as though I did not see them! I am not looking for the thorns, but for the roses—and I see so many of them that my heart is glad and in spirit I bless the name of the Lord!

The man who can commend the work of the Lord in others without saying a word about himself, has, by that fact, given himself a good character. His eyes must have been washed in the fountains of Love. They must have been cleansed from the dust of pride, envy and self, or he would not have so seen or so spoken. I love the text because it is an instance of a man of great Grace, of a man under the Inspiration of the Spirit of God who yet delighted to speak enthusiastically of a Church which certainly was far from perfect. I delight in that eye which can be a little blind to faults while it exercises a clear vision in seeing all that is good and praiseworthy towards God!

So, then, we come to our text and the subject runs thus—for us to grow in faith is a subject for devout thanksgiving. And, in the second place, it is an object for diligent endeavor. Thirdly, if we greatly grow in faith it will be the source of other growth, for as faith increases, love, patience and every other virtue will flourish.

I. For us to grow and increase in faith is A SUBJECT FOR DEVOUT THANKSGIVING. Paul gives a commendation of the Thessalonian Church which is exceedingly warm and hearty. One critic says the words may be regarded as somewhat extravagant, after the mode of the Apostle when he wishes to be emphatic. He writes fervidly—“Your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds.” It is an intense and unreserved commendation. As I have already said, this Church was not absolutely perfect for, because of the love of every one towards another and their great kindness towards the poor, certain unworthy persons encroached upon their liberality. To use a very rough word, beggars were multiplied among them as they always are where generosity abounds. Shame that it should be so. Read chapter 3, Verse 11—“For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.” There had been, also, among them, here and there, a person of loose life and of sharp business dealings—and to such Paul spoke in the First Epistle—but these flies in the pot of ointment did not destroy its sweetness. They were, comparatively, so few, that Paul speaks of the whole body with warm praise. When our faith shall grow and our love abound, it may be proper for a pastor to speak with unrestricted admiration of what the Lord has done.

The blessing of increased faith is of unspeakable value and, therefore, praise should be largely rendered for it. Little faith will save, but strong faith is that which builds up the Church, which overcomes the world, which wins sinners and which glorifies God. Little-Faith is slow and feeble and, to suit his pace, the whole flock travel softly. Little-Faith is a wounded soldier and has to be carried in an ambulance by the armies of the Lord. But faith which grows exceedingly lifts the banner aloft, leads the van, meets hand to hand the foes of our Prince and puts them to the rout! If we were invoking blessings upon a Church, we could scarcely ask for a larger blessing than that all the Brothers and Sisters might be strong in faith, giving glory to God! Strong-Faith ventures into large endeavors for Christ and, therefore, missions are projected. Strong-Faith carries out the projects of holy zeal and, therefore, daring ideas are turned into facts! Strong-Faith is a shield against the darts of error and, therefore, she is the object of the contempt and hatred of heresy.

Strong-Faith builds the walls of Zion and casts down the walls of Jericho. Strong-Faith smites the Philistines hip and thigh and makes Israel to dwell in peace. Oh that the night of Little-Faith were over and that the day of glorious faith would come! Soon would our young men see visions and our old men dream dreams if faith were more among us. When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith in the earth? At the revival of faith, we shall see another Pentecost with its rushing mighty wind and its tongues of flame—but during our lack of faith we still abide in weakness and the enemy will exact upon us. O God, we beseech You, make Your face to shine upon us! Cause our faith to grow exceedingly and our love to abound yet more and more! Then shall there be times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord.

Paul thus fervently gave thanks to God because the blessing came to the Church at a remarkably seasonable time. The people of Thessalonica had risen against the Church and persecuted it. Thus, without were fights, but within there were no fears, for the Brethren were firm in faith and fervent in love. The Church was subject to constant tribulation, but its faith grew exceedingly. Has it not often been so with the Lord’s people? Times of cloud and rain have been growing times. Pharaoh dealt harshly with Israel, but the more he oppressed them, the more they multiplied! The more the Church of God is trod down, the more it rises into power and influence! The bush burns and is not consumed. No, rather, it flourishes in the flame! I say not that this increase of faith is the immediate effect of persecution, but it is singularly the attendant put upon it. God knew that when His poor servants were hauled to prison; when they were brought before rulers and kings for His name’s sake; when they were robbed of their goods, they needed increased strength and, therefore, He gave it to them by growth in faith. As the persecution rose upon them like a deluge, their confidence in God rose above it—like Noah’s ark, which rose higher, the deeper the waters became! They stood fast in the day of trial and became an example to all other Churches, whether persecuted or not—and this because their faith grew exceedingly!

Beloved, I pray for each member of this Church that your confidence in God may rise from ebb to flood. We need it much just now. This is a time of depression in trade, when many are suffering need and almost all find their means decreased. We need to be rich in faith, for we are growing poor in pocket! Many children of God cannot find employment in which to earn their bread. This is, moreover, a time of abounding vice. Perhaps never in our memories were any of us so shocked as we have been of late by the discoveries of unspeakable abominations! We need that our faith should grow exceedingly, for sin runs down our streets in torrents! It is also a period of grievous departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. Looking back to our younger days, we are amazed at the progress of error. We mourned, in those days, that men trifled with the Doctrines of the Gospel, but what shall we say now, when men deride those Doctrines and mock at them as antiquated fables? The foundations of the earth are removed and only here and there will you find a man who bears up the pillars—therefore we need that our faith should be exceedingly steadfast. I charge you, Brothers and Sisters, to be rooted and grounded in faith, seeing the times are evil! I cannot speak emphatically enough upon the abounding dangers of the times—they demand of us that we be not of doubtful minds, but that we take firm hold of the Infallible Truths of God and endure as seeing Him who is invisible! He that cannot say, “I believe and am sure,” is one born out of due time.

The Apostle’s commendation was meet and fit, since, if there is any growth in faith, it is the work of God’s Spirit. Faith is the gift of God in its beginnings and it is equally the gift of God in its increase. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, God gave it to you. And if you have faith as a spreading tree, God has given the increase. The infancy of faith is of God and so is its perfect manhood. In the natural world, we ought as much to admire God’s hand in growth as in creation for, indeed, the bursting out of spring, the advance of summer and the maturity of autumn are all a sort of creation seen in detail. Even thus the progress of faith reveals the same power as the commencement of faith. If you do not look to God for more faith, you will never have more faith—great faith in its strong broad current flows as much from the fountainhead of Grace as in its first trickling stream of hope in Christ. Let God have all the glory of faith from its Alpha to its Omega!

If you are a strong man in Christ Jesus, take heed that you do not sacrifice to your own net, nor burn incense to your own drag and glorify your own experience as if you made yourself strong and rich in the things of God. We are bound to render all the thanksgiving unto God—it is meet that it should be so. Look how the Apostle puts it—“We are bound to thank God always for you.” I like the modesty of that. He does not so much say that he thanked God, though he did do so. But in deep humility he admits the debt which he could not fully pay. He did not judge his thanksgivings to be sufficient, but acknowledged that he was still under bonds to render more praise. I rejoice to be bound with these bonds, to be bound to thank God every day and all day! I wear these golden fetters and count them my best ornaments! “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar.” I would be bound over not to keep the peace, but to keep praise forever. Let the Altar of Incense be always burning, yes, flaming higher and higher with the sweet spices of love and gratitude. Blessed be God for what He is doing for His people when He causes their faith to grow—for it is a blessing so immense, so incalculable that our praises ought to rise to the height and glory of loud-sounding hallelujahs!

Brothers and Sisters, let us bless God for every good man we know whose faith has grown, for every holy woman whose love in the Church is manifest to all! And when we have done so, let us turn our eyes to God and say, “Lord, make me such a one that others may glorify You in me, also. I am, as yet, sadly weak and undeveloped. Make me to grow till all Your image shall be seen in me and my fellow Christians shall bless You concerning me.” Thus have I set growth in faith before you as a subject for thanksgiving. It is, indeed, a jewel worth more than both the Indies!

II. In the second place, it is worthy to have AN OBJECTIVE OF DILIGENT ENDEAVOR. If you have it not, labor speedily to attain it. As the merchantman seeks goodly pearls, so seek a growing faith. Covet, earnestly, the best gifts and the noblest Graces. Never be self-satisfied, but cry with Jabez, “Oh that the Lord would bless me, indeed, and enlarge my coast.”

Why? Because the proof of faith lies in the growth of faith. If you have a dead faith, it will always be the same. But if you have the faith of God’s elect, it must grow! If I heard of a child that was born some years ago and had never grown, I should begin to guess that my friend was entrapping me and that the child was dead from birth. Life in its earliest stages is always attended with growth. Brothers and Sisters, you must have more faith, or we shall fear that you have no faith—you must have more love, or else, for sure, you have no love at all. That which does not grow unto God does not live unto God!

We ought to have more faith because God’s Truth deserves it. It ought to be the easiest thing in the world for us to trust God. To believe every word of the Lord should be an act to which we need not to be exhorted—it should be as natural as for the lungs to heave, or the heart to beat! We ought, as children of God, to believe our Father by instinct, even as young eaglets hide under their mother’s wing. We ought to exercise faith even as the eye sees and the ears hear because thereunto we were created by the Holy Spirit. It should be a necessity of our spiritual existence that we must and will trust the Lord Jesus Christ yet more and more! I pray that it may be so, for unbelief is a horrible crime. Have you doubted God? Have you, in any sense, mistrusted Him? Have you limited the Holy One of Israel? Then continue not the slave of such a sin, but give unto God your heart’s confidence from this time forward and forever.

Moreover, we ought to grow in faith because it will be so much for our own spiritual health, strength and joy. Does Little-Faith know what he might be, do and enjoy if he could only quit its littleness? There are many ways of being a Christian, as there are many ways of being an Englishman—but all are not equally desirable. I may be an Englishman in banishment, or in the workhouse, or in prison—but I prefer to be an Englishman at home, in health and at liberty. So you may be a Christian and be weak, timorous and sad. But this is not desirable—it is better to be a happy, holy, vigorous, useful Christian! As your being an Englishman does not depend on your health or wealth, so neither does your salvation turn upon the strength or joy of your faith—yet much does depend on it. Why not glorify God on the road to Heaven? Why not have foretastes of it now?

It is not my desire to go through the world in miserable style, singing always—  
*“Do I love the Lord or not?  
Am I His, or am I not?”*

I infinitely prefer to so trust God that my peace may be like a river and my righteousness like the waves of the sea! Look at the difference between Abraham, the Father of the faithful, and his nephew, Lot. Lot was righteous, but he was, by no means, as strong in faith as Abraham. Neither was he as great or as happy. Abraham is calm, bold, royal. Lot is greedy, timid, trembling. Lot, in Sodom, is, with difficulty, made to run for his life, while Abraham, alone with God, is interceding for others! Lot escapes from a burning city with the loss of all things, while Abraham dwells peacefully with the Lord who is the Possessor of Heaven and earth. Abraham’s faith makes him rise like some lone Alp till he touches the very Heaven of God! It is well to be Lot, but it is infinitely better to be Abraham! Seek the highest degree of faith, for if this is in you and abounds, you shall not be barren or unfruitful. Heaven lies that way. More faith, more rest of heart. To grow heavenly we must grow more believing.

The question is, how is this to be done? How is my faith to be made to grow exceedingly? I have already told you that it is the work of the Holy Spirit—but He still uses us for the increase of our own faith! If we are to grow in faith, certain evils are to be avoided with scrupulous care. Avoid continual change of doctrine. If you have a tree in your garden and you transplant it often, it will yield you scanty fruit. Those who are everything by turns and nothing long, are, “ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth of God.” Unstable as water, they shall not excel! Those Brothers and Sisters who believe this, today, and that, tomorrow, and the other thing the next day, do not believe anything in downright earnest! They cannot grow! They are not rooted and grounded. Like the moon, they are always changing—and what light they have is cold and sickly. He who can change his religion, has none to change! Those who prefer philosophy to Christ, never knew Him!

Then, again, if you had a tree and did not transplant it, but began to dig away the earth from it, removing the ground in which it stood, you would impoverish it and prevent its fruitfulness. I know certain professors who are giving up the ground which their souls should grow in. One doctrine after another is forsaken till nothing is held to be important. They do not believe much, now, and they are on the line to believe nothing at all. The experiment of the Frenchman who had just brought his horse to live on a straw a day, when it died, is being repeated among us, faith being literally starved to death! What low diet some men prescribe for their souls! Marrow and fatness they do not even smell! How can your faith grow when vital Truths of God are abandoned, or held with feeble grasp? Oh for a band of Puritan Believers! Oh for a troop of spiritual Ironsides!

Next, a tree cannot grow if it is shut out from sun, rain and dew. Without heavenly influences, we must be barren. Plant a little tree right under a great oak so that it is always in the shade and it cannot grow! Clear the big tree away or the sapling will dwindle to death. Some men’s faith cannot grow because it is overshadowed by worldliness, by tolerated sin, by love of riches, by the pride of life, by cares of lower things. The pursuit of Christ Crucified must be all-absorbing or it will be ineffectual. To know what you believe and to abide steadfast in it, is the way to be robust in faith. Men whose hearts are not in their trades, men who chop and change—these are the men whose names appear in the Gazette—are not many spiritual bankruptcies due to the same cause?

There are methods which the spiritual farmer uses to cause faith to grow. First, faith grows by an increase of knowledge. Many persons doubt because they are not instructed. Some doubt whether they shall hold on to the end—they are ignorant of the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints! Some are in despair because they find evil desires arising in their hearts—they do not know the teaching of Scripture as to the two natures and the warfare between flesh and spirit. Many think themselves condemned because they cannot wholly keep the Law—they forget that they are justified by faith! A great deal of unbelief vanishes when knowledge, like the morning sun, drives away the mists! Unbelief is an owl of the night and when the sun rises, it hides away in a dark corner. Study the Word of God—give your heart to searching it! Seek to get at the inner teaching and learn the analogy of faith. Practice deep-sea fishing and you will reach those mysterious Truths which are the secret riches of the soul. These Truths are much despised now, but those who rejoice in them will find their faith growing exceedingly.

Better still than mere knowledge, which, alone, would puff you up, faith grows by experience. When a man has tried and proved a thing, then his confidence in it is largely increased. Take a promise and test it, and then you will say, “I know that is so.” When you have tested it again and again, and again, nobody will be able to shake you, for you will say, “I have tasted and handled of this good Word of God. I have made it my own and I am not to be driven from it.” The experienced Christian is the established Christian. The man who proved all things is the man who holds fast that which is good. God give Grace to increase our faith by knowledge and by experience!

Faith also grows by much meditation and walking with God. If you want to believe in a man, you must know him. Half the disputes between Christian people arise from their not knowing one another. There is a hymn of Mr. Sankey’s which I venture to alter thus—

*“When we know each other better*

*The mists will roll away.”*  
When we know each other, our suspicions, prejudices and dislikes will speedily disappear. I am sure it is so with our God. When you walk with Him; when your communion with Him is close and constant, your faith in Him will grow exceedingly. Some of you, I am afraid, do not give five minutes in the day to meditation. You are in too great a hurry for that. In London life, men get up in a hurry even as they went to bed in a hurry and slept in a hurry! They swallow their breakfast in a hurry; they have no time to digest it; the bell is ringing at the station and they must hurry to catch the train! They reach business in a hurry. They hurry through it and they hurry to get back from it. Men cannot think, for they have barely time to blink their eyes. As to an hour’s meditation and reading the Scriptures and communing with God, many professors, nowadays, would think they committed robbery against the god of this world if they took half-anhour out of their service to give it to fellowship with the world to come! If our faith is to grow exceedingly, we must maintain constant conversation with God.

Another way of increasing faith is by much prayer. Pray for faith and pray with faith—thus shall your soul become firm in its reliance on the promises. It is while we wrestle with the Angel that we find out our weakness, as the sinew of our thigh shrinks. But, at the same time, we prove our God-given strength, since as princes we wrestle with God and prevail! Power from prayer as well as power in prayer is what we need. On our knees we gather strength till doubting and fearing disappear.

We must be careful to render obedience to God. A man cannot trust God while he lives in sin. Every act of disobedience weakens confidence in God. Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God. And he that trusts God, obeys God. He that is without faith is without works and He that is without works is without faith. Do not oppose faith and good works to one another, for there is a blessed relationship between them. And if you abound in obedience, your faith shall grow exceedingly.

Again, faith grows by exercise. The man who uses the little faith he has will get more faith. But he that says, “I have not enough faith for suchand-such work” and, therefore, shrinks back, shall become more and more timid, till, at last, like a coward, he runs away! Go forward with your little faith and to your surprise it shall have grown as you have advanced! Accomplish much and then endeavor something more, and something more. I have often used an illustration taken from a person who teaches the art of growing taller. I do not believe in that art—we shall not add a cubit to our stature just yet. But part of this professor’s exercise is that in the morning, when you get up, you are to reach as high as you can and aim a little higher every morning, though it is only the hundredth part of an inch. By that means you are to grow. This is so with faith. Do all you can and then do a little more—and when you can do that, then do a little more than you can. Always have something in hand that is greater then your present capacity. Grow up to it and when you have grown up to it, grow more! By many little additions, a great house is built. Brick by brick, up rose the pyramid! Believe and yet believe more! Trust and have further trust! Hope shall become faith and faith shall ripen to full assurance and perfect confidence in God Most High!

This then, Brothers and Sisters, is what I commend to you. May God the Holy Spirit help you all to go from faith to faith.  
III. Finally, this growing faith becomes THE CENTER OF OTHER CHRISTIAN GRACES. “Your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all abounds toward each other.” A firm faith in Gospel Truths will make us love one another, for each Doctrine of Truth is an argument for love. If you believe in God as having chosen His people, you will love His elect. If you believe in Christ as having made Atonement for His people, you will love His redeemed and seek their peace. If you believe in the Doctrine of Regeneration and know that we must be born again, you will love the regenerate. Whatever doctrine it is that is true, it ministers toward the love of the heart. I am sure you will find a deep, firm, fervent unity with one another in those that hold the Truth of God in the love of it. If you are not filled with brotherly love, it must be because you are not firmly believing that Truth which works toward love.  
Firmness in the faith ministers toward the unity of the Church. The Church at Thessalonica did not have a secession, or a split, as some call it—the Church at Thessalonica did not divide under the pressure of persecution—they adhered closely to one another! As they were hammered all the more, the more they were consolidated. They were welded into one solid mass by the hammer of persecution and the fire of love—and the reason was because they each one held the Truth of God with all firmness. I am always afraid of a Church that is made up of mixed elements— when some are Calvinistic, some Arminian, some Baptist and some Paedobaptist. When the minister who holds them together dies, they will disintegrate. When certain reasons that now make them cohere, cease to exist, the Church will divide like quicksilver—each little bit breaking into smaller bits—and so they will go rolling about in innumerable factions. But given a Church that holds the Truths of God firmly, with deep and strong faith, then if the pastor dies, or 20 pastors die, they believe in a Pastor who lives forever—and whoever comes or does not come—the Truth they hold, holds them in living unity. I cannot imagine a greater blessing for you as a Church, in years to come, than for each man and woman to be intelligently established in the Truth of God you have received. Who shall separate the men who are one in Christ by the grip of mighty faith? I commend firm faith to you with all my heart as the source of love and the means of unity in years to come.  
This faith breeds patience in men and patience assists love. Truth to tell, God’s people are, some of them, an amazing tribe! A countryman was accustomed to say that if God had not chosen His people before they were born, He would never have done so afterwards. There is truth in that saying. Therefore if a man loves his fellow Christians as an act of mere nature, he will often feel himself baffled. He will say, “They acted very unkindly to me. Who can love people that are so ill-mannered, so ungrateful?” But when faith is strong, you will say, “What is that to me? I love them for Christ’s sake. If I am to have a reward, it shall come from my Lord Christ. As for God’s people, I love them despite their faults. Over the head of the mistaken judgements they form of me, I love all my Brethren.” The way to make men better is not to be always censuring them, but to love them more. The quickest way to win a sinner is to love him to Christ! The quickest way to sanctify a Believer is to love him into purity and holiness! Only faith can do this. May faith, therefore, grow exceedingly, for faith, by working patience, helps us to bear with others.  
If there is anything grand, good, desirable—anything Christ-like, anything God-like—the way to it is to let your faith grow exceedingly! If this Church is to become more and more a missionary Church, as I pray God it may, your faith must grow exceedingly! If you are to stand fast as a breakwater in these times of departure from the faith once delivered to the saints, your faith must grow exceedingly! If you are to be made a blessing to this wicked city and shine like a lighthouse over this sea of London, your faith must grow exceedingly! If God has brought you as a Church, together with other Churches, to the Kingdom for such a time as this—if you are to achieve your destiny and work for God and glorify His name— your faith must grow exceedingly!  
The man who is timorous and faint-hearted, let him go home—he is not fit for the day of battle. The age requires heroes! The chicken-hearted are out of their place in this perilous century! You that know what you know and believe what you believe, whose tramp is that of fearless warriors— you have a high calling—fulfill it! You shall see what God will do for you and with you! And it shall be written in the pages of eternity that at such a time the Church grew in its faith and, therefore, God used it for His Glory.  
May it be so. May those among us who have no faith be led to Jesus. O Believers, try your own faith by speaking to unbelievers as they go away this morning! This afternoon, in the Sunday school, prove your faith by winning your dear children for Christ! Try your faith every day in the week by giving sinners no rest until they come to Christ! God bless you, each one, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH  
NO. 205

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 18, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“We are bound to thank God always for you, Brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds.”***2Th 1:3***.**

**“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet.” Whether we shall praise God or not, is not left to our opinion Although the commandment saith not, “Thou shalt praise the Lord,” yet praise is God’s most righteous due, and every man, as a partaker of God’s bounty, and especially every Christian, is bound to praise God, as it is meet. It is true we have no authoritative rubric for daily praise; we have no commandment left on record specially prescribing certain hours of song and thanksgiving; but still the law written upon the heart, teacheth us with divine authority that it is right to praise God; and this unwritten mandate hath as much power and authority about it, as if it had been recorded on the tables of stone, or handed to us from the top of thundering Sinai. The Christian’s duty is to praise God. Think not ye who are always mourning that ye are guiltless in that respect; imagine not that ye can discharge your duty to your God without songs of praise. It is your duty to praise him. You are bound by the bonds of his love as long as you live to bless his name. It is meet and comely that you should do so. It is not only a pleasurable exercise, but it is the absolute duty of the Christian life to praise God. This is taught us in the text, — “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet.” Let not your harps then hang upon the willows, ye mourning children of the Lord. It is your duty to strike them and bring forth their loudest music. It is sinful if you to cease from praising God; you are blessed in order that you may bless him; and if you do not praise God you are not bringing forth the fruit, which he as the divine husbandman, may well expect at your hands. Go forth then, ye sons of God, and chant his praise. With every morning’s dawn lift up your notes of thanksgiving, and every evening let the setting sun be followed with your song. Girdle the earth with your praises; surround it with an atmosphere of melody, so shall God himself look down from heaven and accept your praises as like in kind, though not equal in degree, to the praises of cherubim and seraphim.**

**It seems, however, that the apostle Paul in this instance exercised praise not for himself but for others, for the church at Thessalonica. If any of you should in ignorance ask the question why it was that Paul should take so deep an interest in the salvation of these saints, and in their growth in faith, I would remind you, that this is a secret known only to the men who have brought forth and nourished children, and therefore love them. The apostle Paul had founded the church at Thessalonica, most of these people were his spiritual offspring, by the words of his mouth, attended by the power of the Spirit, they had been brought out of darkness into marvellous light; and they who have had spiritual children who have brought many sons unto God, can tell you that there is an interest felt by a spiritual father, that is not to be equalled even by the tender affection of a mother towards her babe. “Ay,” said the apostle, “I have been tender over you as a nursing father,” and in another place he says he had “travailed in birth,” for their souls. This is a secret not known to the hireling minister. Only he whom God hath himself ordained and thrust forth into the work, only he who has had his tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar, can tell you what it is to agonize for men’s souls before they are converted, and what it is to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when the travail of their souls is seen in the salvation of God’s elect.**

**And now, beloved, having thus given you two thoughts which seemed to me to arise naturally from the text, I shall repair at once to the object of this morning’s discourse. The apostle thanks God that the faith of the Thessalonians had grown exceedingly. Leaving out the rest of the text, I shall direct your attention this morning to the subject of growth in faith. Faith hath degrees.**

**In the first place, I shall endeavor to notice *the inconveniences of little faith;* secondly, *the means of promoting its growth*; and thirdly, *a certain high attainment, unto which faith will assuredly grow, if we diligently water and cultivate it*.**

I. In the first place, THE INCONVENIENCES OF LITTLE FAITH. When faith

**first commences in the soul, it is like a grain of mustard seed of which the Savior said it was the least of all seeds, but as God the Holy Spirit is pleased to bedew it with the sacred moisture of his grace, it germinates and grows and begins to spread, until at last it becomes a great tree. To use another figure: when faith commences in the soul it is simply *looking* unto Jesus, and perhaps even then there are so many clouds of doubts and so much dimness of the eye, that we have need for the light of the Spirit to shine upon the cross before we are able even so much as to see it. When faith grows a little, it rises from looking to Christ to *coming* to Christ. He who stood afar off and looked to the cross by-and-bye plucks up courage, and getting heart to himself, he runneth up to the cross. or perhaps he doth not run. but hath to be drawn before he can so much as creep thither, and even then it is with a limping gait that he draweth nigh to Christ the Savior. But that done, faith goeth a little farther: it *layeth hold* on Christ; it begins to see him in his excellency, and appropriates him in some degree, conceives him to be a real Christ and a real Savior, and is convinced of his suitability. And when it hath done as much as that, it goeth further; it leaneth on Christ. it leaneth on its Beloved; casteth all the burden of its cares, sorrows, and griefs upon that blessed shoulder, and permitteth all its sins to he swallowed up in the great red sea of the Saviour’s blood. And faith can then go further still; for having seen and ran towards him and laid hold upon him, and having leaned upon him, faith in the next place puts in a humble, but a sure and *certain claim* to all that Christ is and all that he has wrought; and then, trusting alone in this, appropriating all this to itself, faith mounteth to full assurance; and out of heaven there is no state more rapturous and blessed. But, as I have observed at the beginning, faith is but very small, and there are some Christians who never get out of little faith all the while they are here. You notice in John Bunyan’s “*Pilgrim’s Progress*,” how many Little-faith’s he mentions There is our old friend Ready-to-halt, who went all the way to the celestial city on crutches but left them when he went into the river Jordan. Then there is little Feeblemind, who carried his feeble mind with him all the way to the banks of the river and then left it, and ordered it to be buried in a dunghill that none might inherit it. Then there is Mr. Fearing, too, who used to stumble over a straw, and was always frightened if he saw a drop of rain, because he thought the floods of heaven were let loose upon him. And you remember Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-afraid, who were so long locked up in the dungeon of Giant Despair, that they were almost starved to death, and there was little left of them but skin and bone; and poor Mr. Feeble-mind, who had been taken into the cave of Giant Slay-good who was about to eat him, when Great-heart came to his deliverance. John Bunyan was a very wise man He has put a great many of those characters in his book, because there are a great many of them. He has not left us with one Mr. Ready-to-halt, but he has given us seven or eight graphic characters because he himself in his own time has been one of them, and he had known many others who had walked in the same path. I doubt not I have a very large congregation this morning of this very class of persons. Now let me notice the inconveniences of little faith.**

**The first inconvenience of little faith is that *while it is always sure of heaven it very seldom thinks so*. Little-faith is quite as sure of heaven as Great-faith. When Jesus Christ counts up his jewels at the last day he will take to himself the little pearls as well as the great ones. If a diamond be never so small yet it is precious because it is a diamond. So will faith, be it never so little, if it be true faith, Christ will never lose even the smallest jewel of his crown. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, because the name of Little-faith is in the book of eternal life. Little-faith was chosen of God before the foundation of the world. Little-faith was bought with the blood of Christ; ay, and he cost as much as Great-faith. “For every man a shekel” was of redemption. Every man, whether great or small, prince or peasant, had to redeem himself with a shekel. Christ has bought all, both little and great, with the same most precious blood. Little-faith is always sure of heaven, for God has begun the good work in him and he will carry it on. God loves him and he will love him unto the end. God has provided a crown for him, and he will not allow the crown to hang there without a head; he has erected for him a mansion in heaven, and he will not allow the mansion to stand untenanted for ever. Little-faith is always safe, but he very seldom knows it. If you meet him he is sometimes afraid of hell; very often afraid that the wrath of God abideth on him. He will tell you that the country on the other side the flood can never belong to a worm so base as he. Sometimes it is because he feels himself so unworthy, another time it is because the things of God are too good to be true, he says, or he cannot think they can be true to such an one as he is. Sometimes he is afraid he is not elect; another time he fears that he has not been called aright. that he has not come to Christ aright. Another time his fears are that he will not hold on to the end, that he shall not be able to persevere, and if you kill a thousand of his fears he is sure to have another host by to-morrow; for unbelief is one of those things that you cannot destroy. “It hath,” saith Bunyan, “as many lives as a cat;” you may kill it over and over again, but still it lives. It is one of those ill weeds that sleep in the soil even after it has been burned, and it only needs a little encouragement to grow again. Now Great-faith is sure of heaven, and he knows it. He climbs Pisgah’s top, and views the landscape o’er; he drinks in the mysteries of paradise even before he enters within the pearly gates. He sees the streets that are paved with gold; he beholds the walls of the city, the foundations whereof are of precious stones; he hears the mystic music of the glorified, and begins to smell on earth the perfumes of heaven. But poor Little-faith can scarcely look at the sun; he very seldom sees the light. he gropes in the valley, and while all is safe he always thinks himself unsafe. That is one of the disadvantages of Little-faith.**

**Another disadvantage is that *Little- faith, while always having grace enough* (for that is Little-faith’s promise, “My grace shall be sufficient for thee”) *yet never thinks he has grace enough.* He will have quite enough grace to carry him to heaven; and Great-heart won’t have any more. The greatest saint, when he entered heaven, found that he went in with an empty wallet: he had eaten his last crust of bread when he got there. The manna ceased when the children of Israel entered into Canaan. they had none to carry with them there: they began to eat the corn of the land when the manna of the wilderness had ceased But Little-faith is always afraid that he has not grace enough. You see him in trouble. “Oh!” says he, “I shall never be able to hold my head above water.” Blessed be God he never can sink. If you see him in prosperity, he is afraid he shall be intoxicated with pride; that he shall turn aside like Balaam. If you meet him attacked by an enemy, he is scarcely able to say three words for himself; and he lets the enemy exact upon him. If you find him fighting the battle of the Lord Jesus Christ he holds his sword tight enough, good man, but he has not much strength in his arm to bring his sword down with might. He can do but little, for he is afraid that God’s grace will not be sufficient for him. Greatfaith, on the other hand, can shake the world. What cares he about trouble, trial, or duty?  
He would face an army single-handed, if God commanded him; and “with the jaw-bone of an ass, he would slay heaps upon heaps, and thousands of men.” There is no fear of his lacking strength. He can do all things, or can bear all sufferings, for his Lord is there. Come what may, his arm is always sufficient for him; he treads down his enemy, and his cry every day is like the shout of Deborah, “Oh my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.” Little-faith treads down strength too, but he does not know it. He kills his enemies, but has not eye-sight enough to see the slain. He often hits so hard that his foemen retreat, but he thinks they are there still. He conjures up a thousand phantoms, and when he has routed his real enemies he makes others, and trembles at the phantoms which he has himself made. Little-faith will assuredly find that his garments will not wax old, that his shoes shall be iron and brass, and that as his day is so shall his strength be; but all the way he will be murmuring, because he thinks his garments will grow old, that his feet will be blistered and sore; and he is terrified lest the day should be too heavy for him and that the evil of the day shall more than counterbalance his grace. Ay, it is an inconvenient thing to have little faith, for little faith perverts everything into sorrow and grief.**

*He that helped him bears him through, And makes him more than conqueror too.”*

**Again, there is a sad inconvenience about Little-faith, namely, that if Littlefaith be sorely tempted to sin, *he is apt to fall*. Strong-faith can well contest with the enemy. Satan comes along, and says, “All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” “Nay,” we say, “thou canst not give us all these things, for they are ours already.” “Nay,” says he, “but ye are poor, naked and miserable.” “Ay,” say we to him, “but still these things are ours, and it is good for us to be poor, good for us to be without earthly goods, or else our Father would give them to us.” “Oh,” says Satan, “you deceive yourselves; you have no portion in these things; but if you will serve me, then I will make you rich and happy here.” Strong-faith says, “Serve thee, thou fiend! Avaunt! Dost thou offer me silver? — behold God giveth me gold. Dost thou say to me, “I will give thee this if thou disobey? — fool that thou art! I have a thousand times as great wages for my obedience as thou canst offer for my disobedience.” But when Satan meets Little-faith, he says to him, “If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down;” and poor Little faith is so afraid that he is not a son of God that he is very apt to cast himself down upon the supposition. “There,” says Satan, “I will give thee all this if thou wilt disobey.” Littlefaith says, “I am not quite sure that I am a child of God, that I have a portion among them that are sanctified;” and he is very apt to fall into sin by reason of the littleness of his faith. Yet at the same time I must observe that I have seen some Little-faiths who are far less apt to fall into sin than others. They have been so cautious that they dared not put one foot before the other, because they were afraid they should put it awry: they scarcely even dared to open their lips, but they prayed, “O Lord, open thou my lips;” afraid that they should let a wrong word out, if they were to speak; always alarmed lest they should be falling into sin unconsciously, having a very tender conscience. Well, I like people of this sort. I have sometimes thought that Little-faith holds tighter by Christ than any other. For a man who is very near drowning is sure to clutch the plank all the tighter with the grasp of a drowning man, which tightens and becomes more clenched the more his hope is decreased. Well, beloved, Little-faith may be kept from falling, but this is the fruit of tender conscience and not of little faith. Careful walking is not the result of little faith; it may go with it, and so may keep Little-faith from perishing, but little faith is in itself a dangerous thing, laying us open to innumerable temptations, and taking away very much of our strength to resist them. “The joy of the Lord is your strength;” and if that joy ceases you become weak and very apt to turn aside. Beloved, you who are Little-faiths, I tell you it is inconvenient for you always to remain so; for you have many nights and few days. Your years are like Norwegian years — very long winters and very short summers. You have many howlings, but very little of shouting; you are often playing upon the pipe of mourning, but very seldom sounding the trump of exultation. I would to God you could change your notes a little. Why should the children of a King go mourning all their days? It is not the Lord’s will that you should be always sorrowful. “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.” Oh, ye that have been fasting, anoint your heads and wash your faces, that ye appear not unto men to fast. Oh, ye that are sad in heart, “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Therefore rejoice for ye shall praise him. Say unto yourselves, “Why art thou cast down, Oh, soul and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the light of my countenance and my God.”**

II. Having thus noticed the inconveniences and disadvantages of little

**faith, let me give you A F EW RULES WITH REGARD TO THE WAY OF STRENGTHENING IT. If you would have your little faith grow into great faith, you must *feed*** it well. Faith is a feeding grace. It does not ask you to give it the things that are seen, but it does ask you to give it the promise of the things that are not seen, which are eternal. Thou tellest me thou hast little faith. I ask thee whether thou art given to the meditation of God’s Word, whether thou hast studied the promises whether thou art wont to carry one of those sacred things about with thee every day? Dost thou reply, “No?” Then, I tell thee, I do not wonder at thine unbelief He who deals largely with the promises, will, under grace, very soon find that there is great room for believing them. Get a promise, beloved, every day, and take it with you wherever you go; mark it, learn it, and inwardly digest it. Don’t do as some men do — who think it a Christian duty to read a chapter every morning, and they read one as long as your arm without understanding it at all; but take out some choice text and pray the Lord during the day to break it up to your mind.

Do as Luther says: “When I get hold of a promise,” says he, “I look upon it as I would a fruit tree. I think — there hang the fruits above my head, and if I would get them I must shake the tree to and fro.” So I take a promise and meditate upon it; I shake it to and fro, and sometimes the mellow fruit fans into my hand, at other times the fruit is less ready to fall, but I never leave off till I get it. I shake, shake all the day long; I turn the text over and over again, and at last the pomegranate droppeth down, and my soul is comforted with apples, for it was sick of love. Do that, Christian. Deal much with the promises; have much commerce with these powders of the merchant: there is a rich perfume in every promise of God; taken; it is an alabaster box, break it by meditation, and the sweet scent of faith shall be shed abroad in your house.

Again, *prove the promise*, and in that way you will get your faith strengthened. When you are at any time placed in distress, take a promise and see whether it is true. Suppose you are very near lacking bread; take this promise, “Thy bread shall be given thee, thy water shall be sure.” Rise up in the morning when nothing is in the cupboard, and say, “I will see whether God will keep this promise;” and if he does, do not forget it; set it down in your book; make a mark in your Bible against it. Do as the old woman did, who put T and P against the promise, and told her minister that it means “tried and proved;” so that when she was again in distress, she could not help believing. Have you been exercised by Satan? There is a promise that says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Take that and prove it, and when you have proved it, make a mark against it, and say, “This I know is true, for I have proved it to be so.” There is nothing in the world that can confirm faith like proof. “What I want,” said one, “is facts.” And so it is with the Christian. What he wants is a fact to make him believe. The older you grow the stronger your faith ought to become, for you have so many more facts with which to buttress your faith, and compel you to believe in God. Only think of a man who has come to be seventy years of age what a pile of evidence could he accumulate if he kept a note of all God’s providential goodness and all his lovingkindness. You do not wonder when you hear a man, the hairs of whose head are white with the sunlight of heaven, get up and say, “These fifty years have I served God, and he has never forsaken me I can bear willing testimony to his faithfulness, not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord hath promised, all hath come to pass.” Now we, who are young beginners, must not expect that our faith will be so strong as it will be in years to come. Every instance of God’s love should make us believe him more; and as each promise passes by, and we can see the fulfillment of it at the heels thereof, we must be compelled and constrained to say, that God has kept so many of these promises and will keep them unto the end. But the worst of it is that we forget them all, and so we begin to have grey hairs sprinkled on our heads, and we have no more faith than when we began, because we have forgotten God’s repeated answers, and though he has fulfilled the promise we have suffered it to lie buried in forgetfulness.

Another plan I would recommend for the strengthening of your faith, though not so excellent as the last, is to *associate yourselves with Godly and much tried men*. It is astonishing how young believers will get their faith refreshed by talking with old and advanced Christians. Perhaps you are in great doubt and distress. you run off to an old brother, and you say, “Oh my dear friend, I am afraid I am not a child of God at all, I am in such deep distress, I have had blasphemous thoughts cast into my heart; if I were a child of God I should never feel like that.” The old man smiles, and says, “Ah! you have not gone very far on the road to heaven, or else you would know better. Why I am the subject of these thoughts very often. Old as I am, and though I hope I have enjoyed the full assurance for a long time, yet there are seasons when if I could have heaven for a grain of faith, I could not think heaven was mine, for I could not find so much as a grain in me, though it is there.” And he will tell you what dangers he has passed, and of the sovereign love that kept him; of the temptations that threatened to ensnare him, and of the wisdom that guided his feet; and he will tell you of his own weakness and God’s omnipotence; of his own emptiness, and God’s fullness; of his own changeableness, and God’s immutability, and if after talking with such a man you don’t believe surely you are sinful indeed; for “out of the mouth of two witnesses, the whole shall be established,” but when there are many such who can bear testimony to God, it would be foul sin indeed if we were to doubt him.

Another way whereby you may obtain increase of faith is to *labor to get as much as possible free from self*. I have striven with all my might to attain the position of perfect indifference of all men. I have found at times, if I have been much praised in company, and if my heart has given way a little, and I have taken notice of it, and felt pleased, that the very next time I was censured and abused. I felt the censure and abuse very keenly, for the very fact that I took the praise rendered me liable to lay hold upon the censure. So that I have always tried, especially of late, to take no more notice of man’s praise than of his censure, but to fix my heart simply upon this — I know that I have a right motive in what I attempt to do, I am conscious that I endeavor to serve God with a single eye to his glory, and therefore it is not for me to take praise from man nor censure, but to stand independently upon the one rock of right doing. Now the same thing will apply to you. Perhaps you find yourself full of virtue and grace one day, and the devil flatters you: “Ah! you are a bright Christian; you might join the church now, you would be quite an honor to it; see how well you are prospering.” And unconsciously to yourself you believe the sound of that syren music, and you half believe that really you are growing rich in grace. Well, the next day you find yourself very low indeed in godly matters. Perhaps you fall into some sin, and now the devil says, “Ah! now you are no child of God; look at your sins.” Beloved, the only way in which you can maintain your faith is to live above the praise of self and the censure of self; to live simply upon the blood and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who can say in the midst of all his virtues, “These are but dross and dung; my hope is fixed on nothing less than Jesus Christ’s finished sacrifice” — such a man, when sins prevail, will find his faith remain constant, for he will say “I once was full of virtue and then I did not trust in myself, and now I have none still do I trust in my Savior, for change as I may, he changeth not. If I had to depend on myself in the least degree then it would be up and down, up and down, but since I rely on what Christ has done, since he is the unbuttressed pillar of my hope, then come what may my soul doth rest secure, confident in faith. Faith will never be weak if self be weak, but when self is strong, faith cannot be strong, for self is very much like what the gardener calls the sucker at the bottom of the tree, which never bears fruit but only sucks away the nourishment from the tree itself. Now, self is that sucker which sucks away the nourishment from faith, and you must cut it up or else your faith will always be little faith, and you will have difficulty in maintaining any comfort in your soul.

But, perhaps, the only way in which most men get their faith increased is by *great trouble*. We don’t grow strong in faith on sunshiny days. It is only in strong weather that a man gets faith. Faith is not an attainment that droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven; it generally comes in the whirlwind and the storm. Look at the old oaks: how is it that they have become so deeply rooted in the earth? Ask the March winds and they will tell you. It was not the April shower that did it, or the sweet May sunshine, but it was March’s rough wind, the blustering month of old Boreas shaking the tree to and fro and causing its roots to bind themselves around the rocks. So must it be with us. We don’t make great soldiers in the barracks at home; they must be made amidst flying shot and thundering cannon. We cannot expect to make good sailors on the Serpentine; they must be made far away on the deep sea, where the wild winds howl, and the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies. Storms and tempests are the things that make men tough and hardy mariners. They see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. So with Christians. Great-faith must have great trials. Mr. Great-heart would never have been Mr. Great-heart if he had not once been Mr. Great-trouble. Valiant-for-truth would never have put to fight those foes, and have been so valiant, if the foes had not first attacked him. So with us: we must expect great troubles before we shall attain to much faith.

Then he who would have great faith, must *exercise what he has*. I should not like to-morrow to go and shoe horses, or to make horse shoes on an anvil. I am sure my arm would ache in the first hour with lifting the heavy hammer and banging it down so many times. Whatever the time might be, I should not be able to keep time. The reason why the blacksmith’s arm does not tire is, because he is used to it. He has kept at it all day long these many years, till there’s an arm for you! He turns up his sleeve and shows you the strong sinew that never tires, so strong has it become by use. Do you want to get your faith strong? Use it. You lazy lie-a-bed Christians, that go up to your churches and chapels, and take your seats, and hear our sermons, and talk about getting good, but never think about doing good; ye that are letting hell fill beneath you, and yet are too idle to stretch out your hands to pluck brands from the eternal burning; ye that see sin running down your streets, yet can never put so much as your foot to turn or stem the current, I wonder not that you have to complain of the littleness of your faith. It ought to be little; you do but little. and why should God give you more strength than you mean to use. Strong faith must always be an exercised faith, and he that dares not exercise the faith he has shall not have more “Take away from him the one talent and give it to him that hath, because he did not put it out to usury.” In Mr. Whitfield’s life, you do not often find him complaining of want of faith, or if he did, it was when he only preached nine times a week; he never complained when he preached sixteen times. Read Grimshaw’s life: you do not often find him troubled with despondency when he preached twenty-four times in seven days; it was only when he was growing a little idle and only preached twelve times. Keep always at it, and all at it, and there is not much fear of your faith becoming weak. It is with our faith as with boys in the winter time There they go round the fire, rubbing and chafing their hands to keep the blood in circulation, and almost fighting each other to see which shall sit on the fire and get warm. At last the father comes, and says, “Boys, this won’t do, you will never get warm by these artificial means run out and do some work.” Then they all go out, and they come in again with a ruddy hue in their cheeks their hands no longer tingles and they say, “Well, father, we didn’t think it half so warm as it is.” So must it be with you: you must set to work if you would have your faith grow strong and warm. True, your works won’t save you; but faith without works is dead, frozen to death; but faith with works groweth to a red heat of fervency and to the strength of stability. Go and teach in the Sunday school, or go and catch seven or eight poor ragged children; go and visit the poor old woman in her hovel; go and see some poor dying creatures in the back streets of our great city, and you will say, “Dear me, how wonderfully my faith is refreshed just by doing something.” You have been watering yourself whilst you were watering others.

Now my last advice shall be this — the best way to get your faith strengthened is to have *communion with Christ*. If you commune with Christ, you cannot be unbelieving. When his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me, I cannot doubt. When my Beloved sits at his table, and he brings me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is his love, then indeed I do believe. When I feast with him, my unbelief is abashed and hides its head. Speak, ye that have been led in the green pastures, and have been made to lie down by the still waters; ye who have seen his rod and his stay, and hope to see them even when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death; speak, ye that have sat at his feet with Mary, or laid your head upon his bosom with the well-beloved John; have you not found when you have been near to Christ your faith has grown strong, and when you have been far away, then your faith has become weak? It is impossible to look Christ in the face and then doubt him. When you cannot see him then you doubt him; but if you live in fellowship with him, you are like the ewe lambs of Nathan’s parable, for you lie in his bosom, and eat from his table, and drink from his cup. You must believe when your Beloved speaks unto you, and says, “Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away.” There is no hesitation then; you must arise from the lowlands of your doubt up to the hills of assurance.

III. And now, in conclusion, there is A CERTAIN HIGH ATTAINMENT TO

W HICH FAITH MAY, IF DILIGENTLY CULTIVATED, CERTAINLY ATTAIN. Can a man’s faith grow so strong that he will never afterwards doubt at all? I reply, no. He who has the strongest faith will have sorrowful intervals of despondency. I suppose there has scarcely ever been a Christian who has not, at some time or other, had the most painful doubts concerning his acceptance in the Beloved. All God’s children will have paroxysms of doubt even though they be usually strong in faith. Again, may a man so cultivate his faith that he may be infallibly sure that he is a child of God — so sure that he has made no mistake — so sure that all the doubts and fears which may be thrust upon him may not be able at that time to get an advantage over him? I answer, yes, decidedly he may. A man may, in this life, be as sure of his acceptance in the Beloved as he is of his own existence. Nay, he not only may, but there are some of us who have enjoyed this precious state and privilege for years; we do not mean for years together — our peace has been interrupted, we have now and then been subjected to doubts; but I have known some — I knew one especially, who said that for thirty years he had enjoyed almost invariably a full sense of his acceptance in Christ. “I have had,” he said “very often a sense of sin, but I have had with that a sense of the power of the blood of Christ; I have now and then for a little time had great despondency ,but still I may say, taking it as a general rule, that for thirty years I have enjoyed the fullest assurance of my acceptance in the Beloved.” I trust a large portion of God’s people can say that for months and years they have not had to sing,

*“Tis a point I long to know.”*

But they can say, “I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him.” I will try to depict the state of the Christian, he may be as poor as poverty can make him, but he is rich; he has no thought with regard to the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. He casts himself upon the providence of God; he believes that he who clothes the lilies, and feeds the ravens, will not allow his children to go starving or barefooted. He has but little concern as to his temporal estate; he folds his arms and floats down the stream of providence singing all the way whether he float by mud bank, dark, dreary, and noxious, or by palace fair and valley pleasant, he alters not his position; he neither moves not struggles; he has no will nor wish which way to swim, his only desire being to “lie passive in God’s hand, and know no will but his.” When the storm flies over his head he finds Christ to be a shelter from the tempest; when the heat is hot he finds Christ to be the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He just casts his anchor down deep into the sea, and when the wind blows, he sleeps; hurricanes may come about his ears, the masts creak, and every timber seems to be strained and every nail to start from its place, but there he sleeps. Christ is at the helm. he says, “My anchor is within the vail, I know it will keep its hold.” The earth shakes beneath his feet; but he says, “Though the earth be removed and mountains be cast into the sea, yet will not we fear, for God is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in time of trouble.” Ask him about his eternal interests, and he tells you that his only confidence is in Christ, and that die when he may, he knows he shall stand boldly at the last great day clothed in his Saviour’s righteousness. He speaks very confidently though never boastingly; though he has no time to dance the giddy dance of presumption, he stands firmly on the rock of confidence. Perhaps you think he is proud — ah! he is a humble man; he lies low before the cross, but not before you, he can look you boldly in the face, and tell you that Christ is able to keep that which he has committed to him. He knows that —

*“His honor is engaged to save  
The meanest of his sheep  
All that his heavenly Father gave,  
His hands securely keep.”*

And die when he may he can lay his head upon the pillow of the promise, and breathe his life out on the Saviour’s breast without a struggle or a murmur, crying — “Victory,” in the arms of death; challenging Death to produce his sting, and demanding of the grave its victory. Such is the effect of strong faith; I repeat, the weakest in the world, by diligent cultivation may attain to it. Only seek the refreshing influence of the Divine Spirit, and walk in Christ’s commandments, and live near to him; and ye that are dwarfs, like Zaccheus, shall become as giants; the hyssop on the wall shall start up into the dignity of the cedar in Lebanon, and ye that fly before your enemies shall yet be able to chase a thousand, and two of you shall put ten thousand to flight. May the Lord enable his poor little ones so to grow!

As for those of you who have no faith in Christ, let me remind you of one sad thing — namely, that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” If thou hast not put thy trust in Christ, then God is angry with thee every day. “If thou turn not he will whet his sword, for he hath bent his bow and made it ready.” I beseech thee, cast thyself on Christ; he is worthy of thy trust; there is none other to trust to, he is willing to receive thee; he invites thee; he shed his blood for thee; he intercedes for thee. Believe on him, for thus his promise runs, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Do both of these things. Believe on him, and then profess thy faith in baptism; and the Lord bless thee, and hold thee to the end, and make thee to increase exceedingly in faith, to the glory of God. May the Lord add his blessing!

THE GROWTH OF FAITH  
NO. 3250

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 24, 1864.

**“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly.”***2Th 1:3***.**

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on the same verse are #205, Volume 4— A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH and #1857, Volume 31—  
THE NECESSITY OF GROWING FAITH—read/download both sermons free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

BEWARE of imagining that you have reached finality in religion. Just as some politicians have said, “We have gone as far in reform as we ever mean to go, so here we shall stop,” certain religious professors say, “We have gone as far in religion as there is any need to go. We are converted, we are saved, so here we shall remain.” Beware, I say, of such a spirit as that, but rather imitate the example of the Apostle Paul who wrote, “Forgetting these things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” We are not content with merely being alive! We wish to be in health as well as in life, and we ought not to be satisfied with being saved—we should desire to have our faith in full strength and to have all our graces at the highest degree of development! The men of this world are not usually content with just bread to eat and raiment to put on, they are like those daughters of the horseleech that cry, “Give, give!” But when spiritual things are concerned, these insatiable cravings are not so manifest. Many are content to be wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked when they might buy of Christ all spiritual blessings without money and without price! Even those who have fled for refuge to, lay hold upon the hope set before them are often quite content to lie down just inside the City of Refuge as if they had been sent into this world simply with the selfish end of being saved! They act as if there were nothing for them to do in the way of serving God and reflecting before other men that Glory of God which, in His Grace, has been made to shine upon them! So again I say, beware of that spirit of finality which would permit you to rest content with your present attainments, for if you are, I shall not be able to thank God that your faith grows exceedingly, and you will miss the joy that comes to the Believer who is growing in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I am going to speak to you, first, upon how Christians grow in faith. Secondly, upon the signs of that growth. And then, thirdly, I hope to give you some reasons why we should not be satisfied without this growth in faith.

I. First, then, let us consider HOW CHRISTIANS GROW IN FAITH. There are many ways in which the Lord causes faith to grow. One is from the force of life, itself. It is natural for life to grow until it has reached its maturity. Here is a living seed. If it is put into the earth under proper circumstances, nothing can prevent it from bursting its shell. In due time the green bade must be seen. You may command that green blade to remain at the same length as at present, but if you pass that way in another month, you will find that it has disobeyed your command—because it lives, it must grow! And if you should continue to visit it until it bends its head in the ripeness of autumn, you would see that it, must, by the very law of its nature, still keep on growing. It is the same with us—the anatomist will tell you that every part of the infant’s body is so prepared that it can grow—there is provision for the growth of every organ and every limb so that, slowly and without difficulty, the whole shall be developed into a full grown man. It is life that grows. Put a bar of iron into the best soil that you can find—water it, and fertilize it, and let the genial sun shine upon it—but never a leaf or a rootlet will you find upon it, for it is dead! It is not so with the Christian. Because of the life that is in him, he must grow. You who are the living branches in the living Vine prove it by your growth. You who are the children of God should increase in wisdom and stature, and go on from strength to strength until you appear in Zion before God. If your faith is as feeble, now, as it was 20 years ago. If you have not made any spiritual advance during the last 10 years, you ought very gravely to question whether you have any spiritual life at all! You may not be able to see the growth, but there must be growth if there is life. There are some plants in which the unseen growth is more valuable than that which is visible—the gardener prizes the potatoes that are underground more than the tops that everyone can see. But with the Christian, there must be both the visible growth in zeal and good works—the hidden growth is in his deep humility and communion with his Lord in secret. So the force of life within produces growth.  
There are certain circumstances under which Believers especially grow, and they grow in faith by the exercise of faith. See the blacksmith’s boy when he first tries to swing his father’s big hammer—how soon he gets tired! But ask the smith whether his arms ache—“Oh, no!” he says, “I have made too many horseshoes for that.” Exercise has developed his muscles and strengthened his sinews to such an extent that the bringing down of that big hammer with a merry ring is but child’s play to him. So the young Christian, when he begins to exercise faith, can perhaps only imitate him who said, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief.” But speak to him some years later, when his faith has been much exercised, and then you will find that he has grown more like Abraham who “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able, also, to perform.” You know that if you let your arm lie unused, in time you will be unable to use it, like the Indian fakir who holds up his hand in the air until he has lost all power of moving it. So a man may keep his faith unused until it can scarcely be called faith at all— therefore mind that your faith is kept in full exercise for so only will it grow!  
Christians also grow in faith by holy walking. Living with Jesus—and to live with Him we must be consistent in holiness—we get to know Him better and to trust Him more. It is said of some men that “the better they are known, the less they are trusted,” but it is not so with the Lord Jesus Christ. Two cannot walk together except they are agreed, but if there is an agreement between our life and the Character of Christ and we are, by Grace, enabled to walk scrupulously in the path of integrity, our faith will grow stronger and stronger as we get to know more of Christ. Sinning is most injurious to faith. I think it is Brookes who said that “either sinning will kill our assurance or our assurance will kill our sinning.” Sin indulged will prevent the full assurance of faith—and even a little sin will do this. Have you ever had a small stone in your boot? If so, and you have tried to walk, you have found it very uncomfortable travelling. If you have a tiny splinter of wood beneath your nail, you know how painful it is—you get it extracted as soon as you can, lest you should lose your finger, or even your hand. Beware of little sins, Beloved, for they will keep all comfort out of your life and effectually hinder the growth of your faith.  
Another way of helping faith to grow is by a diligent use of Gospel ordinances. There are some of you who are very lax in this respect. Some who come to the Tabernacle twice on the Lord’s-Day do not come at all during the week. Your bodies would not grow strong if you only fed them once a week—and it is the same with your souls. Prayer Meetings are most soul-fattening ordinances! Many of us can testify that at such gatherings, we have often been able to say, “This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven!” I do not expect to see you all at the Prayer Meetings, for some of you have home and business duties requiring your attention and these must not be neglected. Still, there are many more of you who might come if you would. And while I am speaking of ordinances, I must not forget that very precious one of the Lord’s Supper, nor its companion, Believers’ Baptism. Both of these are exceedingly helpful to the Christian. All the means of Grace help the growth of faith and every other virtue. Of course I include the private as well as the public means of Grace. Private prayer is like a conservatory in which God’s plants grow very rapidly. Christians need a temperature higher than this world can give them—they are rare exotics, plants of heavenly birth—and they need Divine warmth before they can bloom and bring forth fruit unto perfection. And this can only be obtained by private prayer, secret fellowship with Christ and devout meditation upon the Scriptures!  
I will only further say, upon this point, that a Christian may expect to grow in faith the more troubles he has. If you have ever been at sea in a storm and noticed how unconcerned about it the weather-beaten sailors have been, you must have realized that it was because they had been hardened in many a tempest that they could so calmly go on with their duties while you and other landsmen were in dread of sinking, or longing for the end of the voyage! Storms help to make the sailors sturdy—and trials help to make Christians strong in faith and in every other Divine Grace. Damascus blades have to be annealed and those who are to be like a sharp sword in the Lord’s hand will have to pass through the fire. The more the wind blows, the firmer will the oak’s roots grip the soil— *“March winds and April showers  
Bring forth May flowers”—*  
and you, as Christians, must have your stormy times and your rainy days if you are to bring forth the flowers of Grace and the fruit of the Spirit! You will probably grow more in the cloudy and dark day of adversity than you will while the sun of prosperity is shining brightly upon you. So be of good courage, Beloved, under the most adverse circumstances, for they are working for your lasting good!  
II. I will not say more about how Christians grow in faith. But, in the second place, I will try to point out SOME OF THE MARKS AND EVIDENCES OF THAT GROWTH.  
First, however, let me say that swelling is not necessarily growing. We know some people who seem to fancy that they have grown in Grace because they have such big notions as to their own attainments. They evidently imagine that they are the people and that wisdom will die with them. We never like to see a child with too big a head, for we fear it is only an indication of disease, and not a sign of health. And we fear that many professors of religion are suffering in a similar fashion. They know too much, for they are wise above what is written and are not content to be teachable and sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, the Great Teacher.  
But there is such a thing as true growing and this can be seen in various ways. First, if you are growing in faith, Christ becomes increasingly precious to you. Perhaps you walked by a park one day and you said to yourself, “That is a very pretty place.” Possibly the next time you went that way, somebody said to you, “I should not wonder if that estate should belong to you, some day,” and that made you take a much more personal interest in it. By-and-by, the owner died and you learned that he had left the estate to you! How greatly your interest in it increased, then, and how much more you valued the mansion, the park, the gardens and everything belonging to the estate! In like manner, Christ was precious to me when I first began to hope that He might one day be mine. He was more precious to me when I first realized that He really was mine—and the more fully I am assured of my interest in Him—the more precious does He become to me! This is the best test I can give you, Beloved—the most accurate thermometer by which you can ascertain the rise or fall of your spiritual temperature—Is Christ Jesus more precious to you than He ever was before? If so, then I am bound to thank God always for you, Brothers and Sisters, because your faith grows exceedingly!  
Further, if you are growing in faith, you desire to be more like Christ and you are more and more dissatisfied with yourself because you are so little like He. You are longing to be so completely conformed to His image that all the virtues of His Character shall be reflected and reproduced in you. It is a sure proof of genuine faith in Christ that it produces likeness to Him—and growth in faith is good evidence of growth in likeness to Him. Are you more like Christ than you were years ago, or do you desire above everything else to be more and more like He? If so, my Brother or Sister, I feel confident that you are growing in faith, and I thank God that it is so—  
*“Lord, if You, Your Grace impart,  
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,  
I shall as my Master be,  
Rooted in humility!”*  
Another evidence of growing in faith is that the promises become more consolatory to us and our heart and mind are kept more restful under their gracious influence. On board ship, though the vessel may rock and reel and turn whichever way the helmsman may guide, the faithful needle always points to the pole! And it is the same with the true Christian—  
*“Let cares like a wild deluge come,  
And storms of sorrow fall”—*  
His faith still points to Heaven! His trust is fixed on Jesus! Whatever else may move, he remains firm and steadfast, and he cries as David did when he was hunted by Saul as a partridge upon the

mountains, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed! I will sing and give praise.” I do not know whether your experience is similar to mine, but I find myself, on the whole, more equable in spiritual things than I used to be. When one has known the Lord for 14 years, one can look back over a considerable period and, taking such a survey as that, I can discover certain times when I had great bursts of exhilaration, great heights of holy joy, followed by deep sinking of spirit and utter prostration of soul! I still have both those experiences at times, but not often, either of them, now. On the whole, I find my soul calmly and quietly resting upon the promises of God—neither unduly delighted at the prospect of the joys of Heaven nor too much depressed by the cares of the world, the responsibilities of my ministry, or the sin that still troubles me—simply resting upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, having few doubts and fears, and comforting assurance of salvation, but not so much of the ecstatic rapture that was one of the characteristics of my early faith. I suppose that this is the condition of many Christians and I am inclined to regard it as one of the evidences of growth in Grace when we become more equable in our spiritual temperament. Children are very much excited over matters which a full-grown man scarcely notices. And the spiritual child is swayed here and there by many winds which have little or no effect upon one who has come to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus.  
Love to the saints is another choice and clear proof of the growth of faith. In the verse from which our text is taken, Paul thanks God, “as it is meet,” for the two Graces which he perceives in the Church of the Thessalonians—“because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity (or love) of every one of you all toward each other abounds.” So love to the saints is thus linked with the growth of faith. We need far more true Christian love toward one another, though probably we have less cause for complaint in that respect than most other communities have, for we have learned the blessedness of dwelling together in unity. In some of our churches there is still far too much caste feeling, too much bowing down before rank and fashion. I met the other day with a pretty story concerning Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, the commentator. He wanted to marry the daughter of a gentleman who was one of his hearers. The father of the young lady said to her, “I have no personal objection to Mr. Henry. He is a good man, a Christian gentleman, but I do not know where he came from, so I cannot consent to your marriage with him.” “Well, Father,” said the young lady, “though we don’t know where he came from, we do know where he is going, and I would like to go there with him.” When I meet a genuine Christian, I may not know where he came from. He may have sprung, as men say, from the dunghill. His parents may have been the poorest of the poor, but what does that matter? I know where he is going and that is a much more important consideration! He is going to the upper house where there are many mansions! He is going to the palace of the great King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, where the princes of the blood royal are forever to bask in the sunshine of the Presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords! And I would like to go with him that I may form one of the blessed company. Never mind the corduroy or the fustian that the man may wear, or the cotton or calico of the poor woman—I love them as Brothers and Sisters in Christ and I want to go to the Heaven where they are bound! The real test of a man’s nobility is not, “From where did he come?” but, “where is he going?” If he is going where the people of God are going. If God is his Father and Jesus Christ is his Savior—and the Holy Spirit is his Guide and Counselor—if Heaven is the haven where he is bound, it will be one of the proofs that your faith is growing if you feel an intense love for him and wish to share with him all the blessings of the Covenant of Grace in time and throughout eternity!  
Another sign of the growth of faith is the growth of zeal. I cannot see a man’s faith, but I can see the evidences that it is growing when I perceive how zealous he is in all good works for his Lord. When a train travels at a very rapid rate, the axles grow hot—and the greater the speed, the greater is the heat that is generated by the friction. And in like manner, the more rapidly a man travels in the path of a Divine Life by faith, the greater is the earnestness which he displays in the service of Christ. Do you care but little for the souls of those around you? Are you not doing all that you can to bring glory to God by the extension of the Kingdom of Christ among the sons of men? Then we cannot thank God that your faith is growing exceedingly! Indeed, there is grave cause to fear whether you possess the faith of God’s elect if this evidence is lacking! Remember that question of the Apostle James, “What does it profit, my brethren, though a man says he has faith, and has not works?” And his very emphatic answer—“Faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone.” I find it well to often adopt those lines of Dr. Watts, and would advise you to do the same—  
*“Awake my zeal, awake my love,  
To serve my Savior here below!  
In works which perfect saints above,  
And holy angels cannot do!  
Awake my charity, to feed  
The hungry soul, and clothe the poor—  
In Heaven are found no sons of need,  
There all these duties are no more.”*  
And the more faith you have, the more liberality will you display. I do not wonder that some people give so little to the cause of God—they give only as much or as little as they believe! It is said that Dean Swift, preaching from that text, “He that has pity upon the poor lends unto You, Lord, and that which he has given will He pay him again,” made this characteristic commencement to his sermon—“If you like the security, down with the dust!” It seems as if there are many people, nowadays, who do not like the security, for they keep their “sordid dust” to themselves, hoarding it up for those who come after them to scatter as they please! But the more a man believes in the security of godliness, the more will he give to the poor, to the cause of Christ, and to every worthy cause that he can help. After all, the great stimulant to Christian liberality is that which Paul used when he wrote to the Corinthians, “You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that you, through His poverty, might be rich.” Or that which the Master, Himself, used with His disciples, “Freely you have received, freely give.”  
If I were to try to tell you all the good which growth in faith will do to us, I would need to keep you here all night. I was much struck with a remark that I read the other day, to the effect that faith may be compared to the gastric juices in the stomach. When that solvent is in a healthy state, all the food that is eaten is properly dissolved and digested—and then the entire man becomes healthy from head to foot. But if anything should be amiss with this necessary fluid, then everything will go wrong. So, a growing faith is essential to a healthy spiritual life. Let faith be in increasingly vigorous exercise, then the whole life will benefit. But let faith become feeble and inactive, then the whole of your spiritual being will be weakened and injured! I will even dare to say that faith affects Heaven, earth and Hell. If you have but little faith, you cannot tread the world beneath your feet, nor laugh at its troubles, nor smile at its cares. If you have but little faith, you cannot open the windows of Heaven, you cannot bring down a blessing from God. Even Hell itself feels the influence of your faith! Satan trembles when he knows that your faith is firm and strong. But if it is tottering and trembling, then he sounds the note of triumph and seeks to lead his hosts on to make a full end of you because you are beginning to relax your grip of your shield! It was not without good reason that Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” And to the Hebrews, “Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” The Lord grant that we may always have cause to thank Him because your faith grows exceedingly!  
III. I intended, before closing my discourse, to give you SOME REASONS WHY WE SHOULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITHOUT THIS GROWTH IN FAITH, but my time has almost gone and I hope I have already said enough to prove to you the urgent need of an ever-growing faith. For your own soul’s sake, for your own happiness and usefulness, for Christ’s sake, for sinners’ sake, for the Church’s sake, if you would adorn the Doctrine of God your Savior in all things, if you would be a blessing to your day and generation, if you would bring into the fold of the Good Shepherd the lost sheep and lambs that are wandering away from Him, cry continually to Him, “Lord, increase our faith!”  
I have only time for just a word or two with you who have no faith at all. Sad must be the reflections of those of you here who are not Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. What can you mean by such sinful folly? The Son of God has come from Heaven to earth seeking the lost—and yet you do not believe in Him though you are among the lost! A proclamation of liberty is made to you who are slaves to sin and Satan—yet you will not accept the emancipation which would be so great a blessing to you! Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and you have been told, over and over again, that if you will but trust Him, you shall be saved even though you are among the chief of sinners! Yet you will not believe in Him! O Soul, why will you not trust in Jesus? Is He not worthy of your confidence? Where will you find anyone else in all the world who so richly deserves to be trusted? No happy or miserable feelings are needed to fit you for believing in Him—no meritorious deeds, no gifts of alms are required as a preparation for faith in Him! Jesus Christ can save you just as you are if you will but trust Him—so trust Him now with your whole heart and you shall be saved! Trust to Him as completely as the drowning man trusts to the lifeboat or the life buoy—if he tried to swim to land, he would be lost—his only hope of being saved is in trusting to a power greater than his own.  
It is just so with you, Sinner! You are powerless to save yourself, but all power in Heaven and in earth has been committed to Christ—He is mighty to save! Therefore trust Him to save you! Rest wholly upon what He is as the Christ of God, the anointed and appointed Savior—and upon what He has done upon Calvary’s Cross to save all who believe in Him— and you shall be saved this very hour! Trust Jesus here and now and you shall be saved here and now—and to God shall be all the Glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
[Gen 22:1-19](tw://bible.*?id=1.22.1-1.22.19|_AUTODETECT_|)*.*Verse 1. *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt—*[See Sermon #2223, Volume 37—ABRAHAM’S TRIAL—A LES  
SON FOR BELIEVERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] That is, “God did test or try”—

1, 2. *Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And He said, Take now your son.* “But, Lord, I have two sons, Ishmael and Isaac.”   
2. *Your only son.* “But, Lord, both Ishmael and Isaac are my sons and each of them is the only son of his mother.”   
2. *Isaac, whom you love.* See how definitely God points out to Abraham the son who is to be the means of the great trial of his father’s faith—“Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love.”—   
2. *And get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one ofthe mountains which I will tell you.* It was usually the way, in God’s commands to Abraham, to make him sail under sealed orders. When he was first bidden to leave his country and his kindred, and his father’s house, he had to go to a land that God would show him. They have true faith who can go forth at God’s command, not knowing where they are going! So Abraham did, and now the Lord says to him, “Take Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you.”   
3. *And Abraham rose up early in the morning—*Obedience should be prompt. We should show our willingness to obey the Lord’s command by not delaying. “Abraham rose up early in the morning”—   
3. *And saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him,and Isaac his son, and split the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.* All the details are mentioned, for true obedience is very careful of detail. They who would serve God aright must serve Him faithfully in little things as well as in great ones. There must be a saddling of the donkey, a calling of the two young men as well as Isaac, and a splitting of the wood for the burnt offering. We must do everything that is included in the bounds of the Divine command—and do it all with scrupulous exactness and care. Indifferent obedience to God’s command is practically disobedience! Careless obedience is dead obedience, the heart is gone out of it. Let us learn from Abraham how to obey.   
4. *Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.* His was deliberate obedience! He could bear suspense, thinking over the whole matter for three days, and setting his face like a flint to obey his Lord’s command.   
5. *And Abraham said unto his young men,Abide you here with the donkey; and Iand the lad will go yonder and worship,and comeagain to you.* Abraham did not deceive the young men. He believed that he and Isaac would come to them again. He believed that though he might be compelled to slay his son, “God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.” Abraham bade the young men stay where they were. They must not see all that he was to do before the Lord. Oftentimes, our highest obedience must be a solitary one—friends cannot help us in such emergencies—and it is better for them and better for us that they should not be with us.   
6. *And Abraham took the wood of theburnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and hetook the fire inhis hand, and a knife.*That knife was cutting into his own heart all the while, yet he took it. Unbelief would have left the knife at home, but genuine faith takes it.   
6-8. *And theywent both of them together. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, My Father: and he said, Here am I, my Son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My Son,God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both ofthemtogether.*Abraham here spoke like a Prophet. In fact, throughout this whole incident, he never opened his mouth without a prophetic utterance! And I believe that when men walk with God, and live near to God, they will possibly even without being aware of it, speak very weighty words which will have much more in them than they, themselves, apprehend. Is it not written, concerning the man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord, “his leaf also shall not wither”? Not only shall his fruit be abundant, but his casual word, “his leaf also shall not wither.” So was it with it Abraham. He spoke like a Prophet of God when he was really speaking to his son in the anguish of his spirit—and in his prophetic utterance we find the sum and substance of the Gospel—“My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” He is the great Provider and He provides the offering, not only for us, but for Himself, for the sacrifice was necessary to God as well as to man. And it is a burnt offering, not only a sin offering but an offering of a sweet savor unto Himself. “So they went both of them together.” Twice we are told this, for this incident is a type of the Father going with the Son and the Son going with the Father up to the great Sacrifice on Calvary. It was not Christ alone who willingly died, or the Father alone who gave His Son, but they went both of them together”—even as Abraham and Isaac did here.   
9. *And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there.* See him pulling out the large, rough, unhewn stones that lay round about the place, and then fling them up into an altar!   
9, 10. *And laidthe wood inorder,and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.* So that, in intent and purpose, he had consummated the sacrifice and, therefore, we read in [Heb 11:17](tw://bible.*?id=58.11.17|_AUTODETECT_|), “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son.” He had virtually done so in the esteem of God though no trace of a wound could be found upon Isaac! How often God takes the will for the deed with His people! When He finds them willing to make the sacrifice that He demands, He often does not require it at their hands. If you are willing to suffer for Christ’s sake, it may be that you shall not be caused to suffer—and if you are willing to be a martyr for the Truth of God, you may be permitted to wear the martyr’s crown even though you are never called to stand at the stake, the scaffold or the block!   
11. *And the Angel of the LORD called unto him out of Heaven, and said Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.* Abraham always gives the same answer to the Lord’s call, “Here am I.”   
12. *And He said, Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything unto him: for now I know that you fear God seeing you have not withheld your son, youronly son from Me.* The necessary test had been applied and Abraham’s faith had endured the trial! God knows all things by His Divine Omniscience, but now He knew by this severe test and trial which He had applied, that Abraham really loved Him best of all.   
Notice that the Angel says, “Now I know that you fear God.” I do not think that the gracious use of godly fear has ever been sufficiently estimated by the most of us. Here, the stress is not laid upon the faith, but upon the filial fear of Abraham. That holy awe, that sacred reverence of God is the very essence of our acceptance with Him. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him.” This is a very different thing from slavish fear—it is a right sort of fear, the kind of fear that love does not cast out, but which love lives within happy fellowship!   
13. *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up fora burnt offering inthe place of his son.* Here is another type of our Savior ’s great Sacrifice on Calvary—the ram offered in the place of Jesus. How often do you and I have our great Substitute very near to us, yet we do not see Him because we do not lift up our eyes and look. “Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.” So, if you lift up your eyes, and look the right way, you will see the great Sacrifice close by you, held fast for you, even as this ram was caught to die instead of Isaac. Oh, that you may have Grace to turn your head in the right direction and look to Christ and live!   
14. *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.* [See Sermon #1803, Volume 30—JEHOVAH-JIREH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God will foresee. “God will—as we usually say—“provide,” which is being interpreted, “foresee.” He will have everything ready against the time when it will be needed. He who provided the ram for a burnt offering in the place of Isaac will provide everything else that is required! And you may depend upon it that He who, in the greatest emergency that could ever happen, provided His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die as the Substitute for sinners, will have foreseen every other emergency that can occur and will have fore-provided all that is necessary to meet it. Blessed be the name of Jehovah-Jireh!

15, 16. *And the Angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of Heaven the second time, and said, By Myself have I sworn, says the LORD.* “Because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.”   
16-18. *Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you, and inmultiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the Heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in yourseed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice.* There stands the old Covenant, the Covenant of Grace made with Abraham concerning his seed. Paul writes to the Galatians, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ.” It is in Christ that all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. If there is a nation that has not yet heard the Gospel, it must hear it, for so the promise stands, “In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” We may look for a glorious future from the preaching of Christ throughout every land, for so the Covenant was made with Abraham because he had obeyed God’s voice! God had been good to Abraham before that time, for he was His beloved friend, but now He lifts him up to a higher platform altogether and makes him a greater blessing than ever! It may be that God is about to test and try some of you in order that He may afterwards make you to be greater and more useful than you have ever been before.  
19. *So Abraham returned unto his young men.* As he said that he would!   
19. *And theyrose up and went together toBeer-Sheba;and Abraham dwelt at Beer-Sheba.* So the Lord bore His servant through this great trial, and blessed him more than He had ever blessed him before.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection***, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3251 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1**

**÷2Th 1.10**

JESUS ADMIRED IN THEM THAT BELIEVE  
NO. 1477

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1879, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”***2Th 1:10***.**

WHAT a difference between the first and second comings of our Lord! When He shall come a second time it will be to be glorified and admired, but when He came the first time it was to be despised and rejected of men. He comes a second time to reign with unexampled splendor, but the first time He came to die in circumstances of shame and sorrow. Lift up your eyes, you sons of Light, and anticipate the change which will be as great for you as for your Lord—for now you are hidden even as He was hidden and misunderstood even as He was misunderstood when He walked among the sons of men! “We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is.” His manifestation will be our manifestation and in the day in which He is revealed in Glory, then shall His saints be glorified with Him.

Observe that our Lord is spoken of as coming in His Glory and as, at the same time, taking vengeance in flaming fire on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel. This is a note of great terror to all those who are ignorant of God and wickedly unbelieving concerning His Christ. Let them take heed, for the Lord will gain Glory by the overthrow of His enemies and those who would not bow before Him cheerfully shall be compelled to bow before Him abjectly. They shall crouch at His feet! They will lick the dust in terror and at the glance of His eyes they shall utterly wither away! As it is written, they “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His power.”

But this is not the main objective for which Christ will come, nor is this the matter in which He finds His chief Glory, for, observe, He does this, as it were, by the way when He comes for another purpose. To destroy the wicked is a matter of necessity in which His spirit takes no delight, for He does this, according to the text, not so much when He comes to do it as when He shall come with another objective, namely, “To be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in them that believe.” The crowning honor of Christ will be seen in His people and this is the design with which He will return to this earth in the latter days—that He may be illustrious in His saints and exceedingly magnified in them.

Even now His saints glorify Him. When they walk in holiness they do, as it were, reflect His light. Their holy deeds are beams from Him who is the Sun of Righteousness. When they believe in Him they also glorify Him, for there is no Grace which pays lowlier homage at the Throne of Jesus than the Grace of faith whereby we trust Him and so confess Him to be our All in All. We glorify our gracious Lord, but, beloved Brethren, we must all confess that we do not do this as we could desire, for, alas, too

often we dishonor Him and grieve His Holy Spirit. By our lack of zeal and by our many sins we are guilty of discrediting His Gospel and dishonoring His name.

Happy, happy, happy day when this shall no more be possible—when we shall be rid of the inward corruption which now works itself into outward sin! Happy day when we shall never dishonor Christ again but shall shine with a clear, pure radiance like the moon on the Passover night when it looks the sun full in the face and then shines upon the earth at her best. Today we are like vessels on the wheel half fashioned, yet even now, somewhat of His Divine skill is seen in us as His handiwork. Still the unformed clay is only in part seen and much remains to be done. How much more of the great Potter’s creating wisdom and sanctifying power will be displayed when we shall be the perfect products of His hand! In the bud and germ our new nature brings honor to its Author, but it will do far more when its perfection manifests the Finisher.

Then shall Jesus be glorified and admired in every one of us when the days of the new creation are ended and God shall usher in the eternal Sabbath by pronouncing His Grace-work to be very good. This morning, as God shall help me, I shall speak, first, of the special glorification of Christ here intended. And, secondly, I shall conclude the sermon by calling your attention to the special considerations which this grand Truth of God suggests.

I. Let us consider carefully THE SPECIAL GLORIFICATION HERE INTENDED. And the first point to note is the time. The text says, “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints.” The full glorification of Christ in His saints will be when He shall come a second time according to the sure word of prophecy. He is glorified in them now, for He says, “All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.” But as yet that Glory is perceptible to Himself rather than to the outer world. The lamps are being trimmed—they will shine before long. These are the days of preparation before that Sabbath which is, in an infinite sense, a high day.

As it was said of Esther, that for so many months she prepared herself with myrrh and sweet odors before she entered the king’s palace to be espoused of him, even so are we now being purified and made ready for that august day when the perfected Church shall be presented unto Christ as a bride unto her husband! John says of her that she shall be “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” This is our night wherein we must watch, but behold, the morning comes—a morning without clouds—and then shall we walk in a seven-fold light because our Well-Beloved has come! That second advent of His will be His revelation—he was under a cloud here and men perceived Him not, save only a few who beheld His Glory—but when He comes a second time, all veils will be removed and every eye shall see the Glory of His Countenance. For this He waits and His Church waits with Him. We know not when the set time shall arrive, but every hour is bringing it nearer to us and, therefore, let us stand with loins girt, awaiting it.

Note, secondly, in whom this glorification of Christ is to be found. The text does not say He will be glorified “by” His saints, but “in His saints.” There is a shade of difference, yes, more than a shade, between the two terms! We endeavor to glorify Him, now, by our actions, but then He will be glorified in our own persons, character and condition. He is glorified by what we do, but He is, at the last, to be glorified in what we are. Who are these in whom Jesus is to be glorified and admired? They are spoken of under two descriptions—“in His saints,” and, “in all them that believe.” In, “His saints” first. All those in whom Christ will be glorified are described as holy ones, or saints—men and women who have been sanctified, made pure and whose gracious lives show that they have been under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Their obedient actions prove that they are disciples of a Holy Master, even of Him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.”

But, inasmuch as these saints are also said to be Believers, I gather that the holiness which will honor Christ at the last is a holiness based on faith in Him. It is a holiness of which this was the root—that they first trusted in Christ and then, being saved, they loved their Lord and obeyed Him. Their faith worked by love and purified their souls and so cleansed their lives. It is an inner as well as an outer purity arising out of the living and operative principle of faith. If any think that they can attain to holiness apart from faith in Christ they are as much mistaken as he who should hope to reap a harvest without casting seed into the furrows! Faith is the bulb and saintship is the delightfully fragrant flower which comes of it when planted in the soil of a renewed heart.

Beware, I pray you, of any pretense to a holiness arising out of yourselves and maintained by the energy of your own unaided wills—as well look to gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles! True saintship must spring from confidence in the Savior of sinners and, if it does not, it is lacking in the first elements of truth. How can that be a perfect character which finds its basis in self-esteem? How could Christ be glorified by saints who refuse to trust in Him? I would call your attention, once again, to the second description, “All them that believe.” This is enlarged by the hint that they are believers in a certain testimony according to the bracketed sentence—“because our testimony among you was believed.”

Now, the testimony of the Apostles was concerning Christ. They saw Him in the body and they bore witness that He was “God manifest in the flesh.” They saw His holy life and they bore witness to it. They saw His death of grief and they witnessed that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” They saw Him risen from the dead and they said, “We are witnesses of His Resurrection.” They saw Him rise into Heaven and they bore witness that God had taken Him up to His right hand. Now, all that believe this witness are saved. “If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.” All who, with a simple faith, come and cast themselves upon the Incarnate God, living and dying for men and always sitting at the right hand of God to make intercession for them—these are the people in whom Christ will be glorified and admired at the Last Great Day.

But inasmuch as they are first said to be saints, be it never forgotten that this faith must be a living faith—a faith which produces a hatred of sin, a faith which renews the character and shapes the life after the noble model of Christ—thus turning sinners into saints. The two descriptions must not be violently rent asunder. You must not say that the favored

people are sanctified without remembering that they are justified by faith! Nor may you say that they are justified by faith without remembering that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! So at the last, the people in whom Christ will be admired will be those holy ones who were saved by faith in Him.

So far, then, we see our way, but now a question arises— by whom will Christ be thus glorified and admired? He shines in His people, but who will see the Glory? I answer first, that His people will see it. Every saint will glorify Christ in himself and admire Christ in himself. He will say, “What a wonder that such a poor creature as I am should be thus perfected! How glorious is my Lord who has worked this miracle upon me!” Surely our consciousness of having been cleansed and made holy will cause us to fulfill those words of John Berridge which we sang just now—

*“He cheers them with an eternal smile,  
They sing hosannas all the while.  
Or, overwhelmed with rapture sweet,  
Sink down adoring at His feet.”*

This I know, that when I personally enter Heaven I shall forever admire and adore the everlasting love which brought me there! Yes, we will all glorify and admire our Savior for what He has worked in us by His infinite Grace.

The saints will also admire Christ in one another. As I shall see you and you shall see your Brothers and Sisters in Christ all perfect, you will be filled with wonderment, gratitude and delight! You will be free from all envy and, therefore, you will rejoice in all the beauty of your fellow saints—their Heaven will be a Heaven to you—and what a multitude of Heavens you will have as you will joy in the joy of all the redeemed! We shall as much admire the Lord’s handiwork in others as in ourselves and shall, each one, praise Him for saving all the rest! You will see your Lord in all your Brethren and this will make you praise and adore Him world without end with a perpetual amazement of ever-growing delight.

But that will not be all. Besides the blood-bought and ransomed of Christ, there will be on that great day of His coming all the holy angels to stand by and look on and wonder. They marveled much when first He stooped from Heaven to earth and they desired to look into those things which, then, were a mystery to them. But when they shall see their beloved Prince come back with ten thousand times ten thousand of the ransomed at His feet—all of them made perfect by having washed their robes and made them white in His blood—how the principalities and powers will admire Him in every one of His redeemed! How they will praise that conquering arm which has brought home all these spoils from the war! How will the hosts of Heaven shout His praises as they see Him lead all these captives captive with a new captivity in chains of love, joyfully gracing His triumph and showing forth the completeness of His victory!

We do not know what other races of innocent creatures there may be, but I think it is no stretch of the imagination to believe that as this world is only one speck in the creation of God, there may be millions of other races in the countless worlds around us—and all these may be invited to behold the wonders of redeeming love as manifested in the saints in the day of the Lord! I seem to see these unfallen intelligences encompassing the saints as a cloud of witnesses and in rapt vision beholding in them the love and Grace of the redeeming Lord.

What songs! What shouts shall rise from all these to the praise of the ever-blessed God! What an orchestra of praise will the universe become! From star to star the holy hymn shall roll till all space shall ring out the hosannas of wondering spirits. “The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” shall have brought home all that men wondered at and they, with Himself, shall be the wonder of eternity! Then shall Satan and his defeated legions and the lost spirits of ungodly men bite their lips with envy and rage and tremble at the majesty of Jesus in that day! By their confessed defeat and manifest despair, they shall glorify Him in His people in whom they have been utterly overthrown!

They shall see that there is not one lost whom He redeemed by blood; not one snatched away of all the sheep His Father gave Him; not one warrior enlisted beneath His banner fallen in the day of battle, but all more than conquerors through Him that loved them! What despair shall seize upon diabolic spirits as they discover their total defeat! Defeated in men who were once their slaves! Poor dupes whom they could so easily beguile by their craftiness—defeated even in these! Jesus, triumphant by taking the lambs from between the lion’s jaws and rescuing His feeble sheep from their power, will utterly put them to shame in His redeemed! With what anguish will they sink into the Hell prepared for them because now they hear with anger all earth and Heaven and every star ringing with the shout—Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns and the Lamb has conquered by His blood!

You see, then, that there are enough spectators to magnify Christ in His saints and so, fourthly, let us inquire in what degree will the Lord Jesus be glorified? Our answer is it will be to the very highest degree. He shall come to be glorified in His saints to the utmost, for this is clear from the words, “to be admired.” When our translation was made, the word, “admired,” had, to ordinary Englishmen, a stronger flavor of wonder than it has to us now. We often speak of admiring a thing in the softer sense of loving it, but the real meaning of the English word and of the Greek, also, is wonder—our Lord will be wondered at in all them that believe!

Those who look upon the saints will feel a sudden wonderment of sacred delight. They will be startled with the surprising Glory of the Lord’s work in them. “We thought He would do great things, but this! This surpasses conception!” Every saint will be a wonder to himself. “I thought my bliss would be great, but not like this!” All His Brothers and Sisters will be a wonder to the perfected Believer. He will say, “I thought the saints would be perfect, but I never imagined such a transfiguration of excessive glory would be put upon each of them! I could not have imagined my Lord to be so good and gracious.”

The angels in Heaven will say that they never anticipated such deeds of Grace—they knew that He had undertaken a great work—but they did not know that He would do so much for His people and in His people. The first-born sons of light, used to great marvels from of old, will be entranced with a new wonder as they see the handiwork of Immanuel’s free

Grace and dying love! The men who once despised the saints, who called them canting hypocrites and trampled on them and perhaps slew them— the kings and princes of the earth who sold the righteous for a pair of shoes—what will they say when they see the least of the Savior’s followers become a prince of more illustrious rank than the great ones of the earth and Christ shining out in every one of these favored beings? For their uplifting Jesus will be wondered at by those who once despised both Him and them!

My next point leads us into the very heart of the subject— in what respects will Christ be glorified and wondered at? I cannot expect to tell you one tenth part of it! I am only going to give you a little sample of what this must mean—exhaustive exposition were quite impossible to me. I think with regard to His saints that Jesus will be glorified and wondered at on account of their number—“a number that no man can number.” John was a great arithmetician and he managed to count up to 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel. But that was only a representative number for the Jewish Church. As for the Church of God, comprehending the Gentile nations, he gave up all idea of computation and confessed that it is “a number which no man can number.” When he heard them sing, he says, “I heard a voice like the voice of many waters and like great thunder.”

There were so many of them that their song was like the Mediterranean sea lashed to fury by a tempest—no, not one great sea in uproar, but ocean upon ocean, the Atlantic and the Pacific piled upon each other, and the Arctic upon these, and other oceans upon these, layers of oceans—all thundering out their mightiest roar! And such will be the song of the redeemed, for the crowds which swell the matchless hymn will be beyond all reckoning! Behold, you who laughed at His kingdom! Look how the little one has become a thousand! Now look, you foes of Christ who saw the handful of corn on the top of the mountains—see how the fruit shakes like Lebanon and they of the city do flourish like grass of the earth!

Who can reckon the drops of the dew or the sands on the seashore? When they have counted these, then shall they not have guessed at the multitude of the redeemed that Christ shall bring to Glory! And all this harvest from one grain of wheat, which, unless it had fallen into the ground and died, would have remained alone! What said the Word? “If it dies, it shall bring forth much fruit.” Is not the prophecy fulfilled? Oh Beloved, what a harvest from the lone Man of Nazareth! What fruit from that glorious Man—the Branch! Men esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted—and they made nothing of Him—and yet there sprang of Him (and He as good as dead) these multitudes which are as many as the stars of Heaven! Is He not glorified and wondered at in them? The day shall declare it without fail.

But there is quality as well as quantity. He is admired in His saints because they are, every one of them, proofs of His power to save from evil. My eyes can hardly bear, even though it is but in imagination, to gaze upon the glittering ranks of the white-robed ones where each one outshines the sun—and they are all as if a seven-fold midday had clothed them! Yet all these, as I look at them, tell me, “We have washed our robes—for they were once defiled. We have made them white—but this whiteness is caused by the blood of the Lamb.” These were heirs of wrath even as others! These were dead in trespasses and sins! All these, like sheep, had gone astray and turned, everyone to his own ways! But look at them and see how He has saved them, washed them, cleansed them, perfected them! His power and Grace are seen in all of them.

If your eyes will pause here and there, you will discover some that were supremely stubborn—whose neck was as an iron sinew—and yet He conquered them by love! Some were densely ignorant, but He opened their blind eyes! Some grossly infected with the leprosy of lust, but He healed them! Some under Satan’s most terrible power, but He cast the devil out of them! Oh, how He will be glorified in special cases! In you drunks made into saints! In you blasphemers turned into loving disciples! In you persecutors who breathed out threats, taught to sing everlastingly hymns of praise! He will be exceedingly glorified in such!

Brothers and Sisters, beloved in the Lord, in each one of us there was some special difficulty as to our salvation—some impossibility which was possible with God though it would have been forever impossible with us. Remember, also, that all those saints made perfect would have been in Hell had it not been for the Son’s atoning Sacrifice. This they will remember more vividly because they will see other men condemned for the sins with which they, also, were once polluted! The crash of vengeance upon the ungodly will make the saints magnify the Lord the more as they see themselves delivered! They will each feel—

*“Oh were it not for Grace Divine,*

*That fate so dreadful had been mine.”*  
In each one, the memory of the horrible pit where they were drawn and the miry clay out of which they were lifted shall make their Savior more glorified and wondered at.

Perhaps the chief point in which Christ will be glorified will be the absolute perfection of all the saints. They shall then be “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” We have not experienced what perfection is and, therefore, we can hardly conceive it. Our thoughts are too sinful for us to get a full idea of what absolute perfection must be, but, dear Brethren, we shall have no sin left in us, for they are, “without fault before the Throne of God” and we shall have no remaining propensity to sin. There shall be no bias in the will towards that which is evil—it shall be fixed forever upon that which is good. The affections will never be wanton again—they will be chaste for Christ. The understanding will never make mistakes. You shall never put bitter for sweet, nor sweet for bitter. You shall be “perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

And truly, Brothers and Sisters, He who works this in us will be a wonder! Christ will be admired and adored because of this grand result. O mighty Master, with what strange moral alchemy did You work to turn that morose dispositioned man into a mass of love! How did You work to lift that selfish Mammonite up from his hoarded gains to make him find his gain in You? How did You overcome that proud spirit, that fickle spirit, that lazy spirit, that lustful spirit—how did You contrive to take all these away? How did You extirpate the very roots of sin and every little rootlet of sin out of your redeemed so that not a tiny fiber can be found? “The sins of Jacob shall be sought for and they shall not be found, yes, they shall not be, says the Lord.” Neither the guilt of sin nor the propensity to sin—

both shall be gone—and Christ shall have done it and He will be “glorified in His saints, and admired in them that believe.”

This is but the beginning, however. There will be seen in every saint, in that last wondrous day, the wisdom and power and love of Christ in having brought them through all the trials of the way. He kept their faith alive when otherwise it would have died out. He sustained them under trials when they would have fainted. He held them fast in their integrity when temptation solicited them and they had almost slipped with their feet. Yes, He sustained some of them in prison, on the rack, at the stake and still kept them faithful! One might hardly wish to be a martyr, but I reckon that the martyrs will be the admiration of us all, or rather Christ will be admired in them. However they could bear such pain as some of them did for Christ’s sake, none of us can guess, except that we know that Christ was in them suffering in His members. Eternally will Jesus be wondered at in them as all intelligent spirits shall see how He upheld them so that neither tribulation, nor distress, nor nakedness, nor famine, nor sword could separate them from His love!

These are the men that wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy—but now they stand arrayed as kings and priests in surpassing glory forever! Verily, their Lord shall be admired in them! Don’t you agree? Recollect, dear Friends, that we shall see, in that day, how the blessed Christ, as “Head over all things to His Church,” has ruled every Providence to the sanctification of His people. We then will understand how the dark days begat showers which made the plants of the Lord to grow; how the fierce sun which threatened to scorch them to the root filled them with warmth of Divine love and ripened their choice fruit.

What a tale the saints will have to tell of how that which threatened to dampen the fire of Grace made it burn more mightily; how the stones which threatened to kill their faith was turned into bread for them; how the rod and staff of the Good Shepherd was always with them to bring them safely home! I have sometimes thought that if I get into Heaven by the skin of my teeth I will sit down on the Glory Shore and bless Him forever who, on a board, or on a broken piece of the ship, brought my soul safely to land! And surely they who obtain an abundant entrance, coming into the fair havens, like a ship in full sail without danger of shipwreck, will have to praise the Lord that they thus came into the blessed Port of Peace! In each case the Lord will be specially glorified and admired.

I cannot stop over this, but I must beg you to notice that as a king is glorious in his regalia, so will Christ put on His saints as His personal splendor in that day when He shall make up His jewels. It is with Christ as it was with that noble Roman matron who, when she called at her friends’ houses and saw their trinkets, asked them to come next day to her house and she would exhibit her jewels. They expected to see rubies, pearls and diamonds, but she called in her two boys and said, “These are my jewels.” Even so will Jesus, instead of emeralds, amethyst, onyx and topaz, exhibit His saints! “These are My choice treasures,” He says, “in whom I will be glorified.”

Solomon surely was never more full of glory than when he had finished the temple—when all the tribes came together to see the noble structure and confessed it to be “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” But what will be the Glory of Christ when all the living stones shall be put into their places and His Church shall have her windows of agates and her gates of carbuncle and all her borders of precious stones? Then, indeed, will He be glorified, when the 12 foundations of His new Jerusalem shall be courses of stones most precious, the likes of which was never seen!

Now, inasmuch as my text lays special stress upon believing, I invite you, just for a minute, to consider how as Believers as well as saints, the saved ones will glorify their Lord. First, it will be wonderful that there should be so many brought to faith in Him—men with no God and men with many gods; men steeped in ignorance and men puffed up with carnal wisdom; great men and poor men—all brought to believe in the one Redeemer and praise Him for His great salvation! Will He not be glorified in their common faith? It will magnify Him that these will all be saved by faith and not by their own merits. Not one among them will boast that he was saved by his own good works, but all of them will rejoice to have been saved by that blessedly simple way of “Believe and live.”

They will all praise God they were saved by Sovereign Grace through the atoning blood—looked to by the tearful eye of simple faith! This, too, shall make Jesus glorious, that all of them, weak as they were, were made strong by faith; all of them personally unfit for battle were yet made triumphant in conflict because by faith they overcame through the blood of the Lamb! All of them shall be there to show that their faith was honored, that Christ was faithful to His promise and never allowed them to believe in vain. All of them standing in heavenly places, saved by faith, will ascribe every particle of the Glory to the Lord Jesus only—

“ *I ask them where their victory came?  
They, with united breath,  
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,  
Their triumph to His death.”*

They believed and were saved, but faith takes no credit to itself—it is a self-denying Divine Grace—and puts the crown upon the head of Christ and, therefore, is it written that He will be glorified in His saints and He will also be admired in all them that believe.

I have scarcely skirted the subject, even now, and time is falling me. I want you to reflect that Jesus will be glorified in the risen bodies of all His saints. Now, in Heaven they are pure spirits, but when He shall come, they shall be clothed again. Poor body, you must sleep awhile, but what you shall be at your awaking does not yet appear. You are now the shriveled seed, but there is a flower to come of you which shall be lovely beyond all thought! Though sown in weakness, this body shall be raised in power! Though sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption! Weakness, weariness, pain and death will be banished forever! Infirmity and deformity will be all unknown! The Lord will raise up our bodies to be like unto His glorious body! Oh, what a prospect lies before us!

Let us remember that this blessed resurrection will come to us because He rose, for there must be a resurrection to the members because the

Head has risen. Oh, the charm of being a risen man, perfect in body, soul and spirit! All that charm will be due to Christ and, therefore, He will be admired in us. Then let us think of the absolute perfection of the Church as to numbers—all who have believed in Him will be with Him in Glory. The text says He will be “admired in all them that believe.” Now, if some of those who believe perished, He would not be admired in them— but they will all be there, the little ones as well as the great ones.

You will be there, you poor feeble folk who, when you say, “Lord, I believe,” are obliged to add, “help You my unbelief.” He shall be admired in all Believers without a single exception and, perhaps, there shall be more wonder at the going to Heaven of the weak Believers than at the stronger ones. Mr. Greatheart, when he comes there, will owe his victories to his Master and lay his laurels at His feet. But fainting Feeblemind and limping Ready-to-Halt with his crutches, and trembling Little-Faith—when they enter into rest, will make Heaven ring with notes of even greater admiration that such poor creeping worms of the earth should win the day by mighty Grace! Suppose that one of them should be missing at the last? Stop the harps! Silence the songs! No beginning to be merry while one child is shut out! I am quite certain if, as a family, we were going to sing our evening hymn of joy and thankfulness, if mother said, “Where is the little mite? Where is the last one of the family?” There would be a pause. If we had to say—she is lost—there would be no singing and no resting till she was found!

It is the Glory of Jesus that as a Shepherd He has lost none of His flock! As the Captain of salvation, He has brought many sons to Glory and has lost none—and hence He is admired, not in some that believe, nor yet in all but one—but He is “admired in all them that believe.” Does not this delight you, you who are weak and trembling, that He will be admired in you? There is little to admire in you at present, as you penitently confess, but since Christ is in you now and will be more fully manifested in you, there will be, before long, much to admire! May you partake in the excellence of our Divine Lord and be conformed to His likeness that He may be seen in you and glorified in you.

Another point of admiration will be the eternal safety of all His believing people. There they are safe from fear of harm. You dogs of Hell, you howled at their heels and hoped to devour them but, lo, they are clean escaped from you! What must it be to be lifted above gunshot of the enemy where no more watch shall need to be kept, for even the roar of the Satanic artillery cannot be heard? Oh glorious Christ, to bring them all to such a state of safety, You are, indeed, to be wondered at forever! Moreover, all the saints will be so honored, so happy and so like their Lord that everything about them will be themes for never-ending admiration!

You may have seen a room hung round with mirrors and when you stood in the midst you were reflected from every point—you were seen here and seen there and there again and there again—and so every part of you was reflected. Just such is Heaven! Jesus is the Center and all His saints, like mirrors, reflect His Glory. Is He human? So are they! Is He the Son of God? So are they sons of God! Is He perfect? So are they! Is He exalted? So are they! Is He a Prophet? So are they, making known unto principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God! Is He a Priest? So are they! Is He a King? So are they, for He has made us priests and kings unto God and we shall reign forever and ever! Look where you will along the ranks of the redeemed, this one thing shall be seen—the Glory of Christ Jesus, even to surprise and wonder!

II. I have no time to make those SUGGESTIONS with which I intended to have finished and so I will just tell you what they would have been. First, the text suggests that the principal subject for self-examination with us all should be—Am I a saint? Am I holy? Am I a believer in Christ? Yes or no?—for on that yes or no must hang your glorification by Christ, or your banishment from His Presence. The next thing is—observe the small value of human opinion. When Christ was here the world reckoned Him to be a nobody and while His people are here they must expect to be judged in the same way!

What do worldlings know about it? How soon will their judgment be reversed? When our Lord shall appear, even those who sneered will be compelled to admire. When they shall see the Glory of Christ in every one of His people, awe-stricken, they will have nothing to say against us—no, not even the false tongue of malicious slander shall dare to hiss out a serpent word in that day! Never mind them, then. Put up with reproach which shall so soon be silenced. The next suggestion is a great encouragement to enquirers who are seeking Christ, for I put it to you, you great sinners—if Jesus is to be glorified in saved sinners, would He not be glorified, indeed, if He saved you? If He were ever to save such a rebel as you have been, would it not be the astonishment of eternity?

I mean you who are known in the village as Wicked Jack, or known as a common swearer—what if my Master were to make a saint of you! Bad raw material? Yet suppose He transformed you into a precious jewel and made you to be as holy as God is holy—what would you say of Him? “Say of Him,” you say, “I would praise Him world without end!” Yes, and you shall do so if you will come and trust Him! Put your trust in Him! The Lord help you to do so at once and He shall be admired even in you forever and ever!

Our text also gives an exhortation to Believers. Will Jesus Christ be honored and glorified in all the saints? Then let us think well of them all and love them all. Some dear children of God have uncomely bodies, or they are blind or deformed, or maimed. And many of these have scanty purses and it may be the Church knows most of them as coming for alms. Moreover, they have little knowledge, little power to please. And they are uncouth in manners and belong to what are called the lowest ranks of society—do not, therefore, despise them—for one day our Lord will be glorified in them! How He will be admired in yonder poor bedridden woman when she rises from the workhouse to sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb among the brightest of the shining ones! Why, I think the pain, the poverty, the weakness and the sorrow of saints below will greatly glorify the Captain of their salvation as they tell how Divine Grace helped them to bear their burdens and to rejoice under their afflictions!

Lastly, Brothers and Sisters, this text ought to encourage all of you who love Jesus to go on talking about Him to others and bearing your testimony for His name. You see how the Apostle Paul has inserted a few words by way of parenthesis? Draw the words out of the brackets and take them home, “Because our testimony among you was believed.” Do

you see those crowds of idolatrous heathens and do you see those hosts of saved ones before the Throne of God? What is the medium which linked the two characters? By what visible means did the sinners become saints? Do you see that insignificant looking man with weak eyes? That man whose bodily presence is weak and whose speech is contemptible? Do you not see his bodkin and needle case? He has been making and mending tents, for he is only a tent-maker.

Now, those bright spirits which shine like suns, flashing forth Christ’s Glory, were made thus bright through the addresses and prayers of that tent-maker! The Thessalonians were heathens plunged in sin and this poor tent-maker came in among them and told them of Jesus Christ and His Gospel! His testimony was believed, by God’s Grace, and that belief changed the lives of his hearers and made them holy—and they, being renewed, came at last to be perfectly holy and there they are—and Jesus Christ is glorified in them!

Beloved, will it not be a delightful thing throughout eternity to contemplate that you went into your Sunday school class this afternoon and you were afraid you could not say much, but you talked about Jesus Christ with a tear in your eyes and you brought a dear girl to believe in His saving name through your testimony? In years to come that girl will be among those that shine out to the Glory of Christ forever! Or you will get away this evening, perhaps, to talk in a lodging house to some of those poor, despised tramps. You will go and tell one of those poor vagrants, or one of the fallen women, the story of your Lord’s love and blood—and the poor broken heart will catch at the gracious Words of God and come to Jesus—and then a heavenly character will be begun and another jewel secured for the Redeemer’s diadem!

I think you will admire His crown all the more because, as you see certain stones sparkling in it, you will say, “Blessed be His name forever! He helped me to dive into the sea and find that pearl for Him and now it adorns His sacred brow!” Now, get at it, all of you! You that are doing nothing for Jesus, be ashamed of yourselves and ask Him to work in you that you may begin to work for Him! And unto God shall be the Glory, forever and ever. Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—***2Th 1:11***.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—92, 873, 861.  
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÷2Th 2.13

TITLES OF HONOR  
NO. 3300

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“Brethren beloved of the Lord.”***2Th 2:13***.**

THE verse from which my text is taken begins thus, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord,” so I will commence my discourse by saying that we might often find comfort and relief from gloomy apprehensions by associating with those who are “beloved of the Lord.” If you read the Chapter through, you will perceive that Paul’s mind was greatly exercised concerning the perilous times which were to come to the Church of Christ. He wrote to warn the Thessalonians concerning the coming of antichrist, and then said that there were some to whom God would send “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteous.” The Apostle ’s heart was so heavily burdened with that sorrowful theme that he was glad to turn his pen to quite a different subject and, therefore, he wrote, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord.” Just now, there is a general opinion that the growth of Popery in this land is most alarming and that the declension of vital godliness is very serious. And while we do not fully agree with the alarmists, we are obliged to admit that these are times of peculiar peril. The tendency of those who look only at the black side of the question is to fret and worry—and to feel that God’s Church is in danger. Brethren, I would not have you shut your eyes to the dangers by which we are surrounded, but I would not have you dispirited by them, either! There are still many saints left in the world. There are still they who, like those in Sardis, have not defiled their garments. There are still some who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. There are still many earnest and faithful testifiers to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. So, although you may mourn over the evils of the times, you are bound to always give thanks to God that there are some “brethren beloved of the Lord” still left upon the face of the earth! David spoke of the saints that were on the earth in his day as “the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” And David’s Lord, our blessed Master, no doubt found no small solace, as a Man, in associating with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, for He seems to have withdrawn from the multitude who mocked and scoffed and to have retired into the privacy of domestic piety—and there to have found joy and comfort in the midst of the happy family that was so closely attached to Him. There are still in the world many of the precious sons of Zion who are comparable to fine gold and concerning whom the Lord says, “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.” Be wise, my Brothers and Sisters, and let it be said of you as it was said of them of old, “They that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another,” for there is comfort to be found in the society of God’s saints—let the times be ever so perilous and dark.

But I would advance a step beyond this preliminary observation and remark that when things are outwardly not as the children of God would like them to be, and when there is much within them that is not as it should be, they may often derive much solace by reflecting upon their true condition in the sight of God in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I know that many of you have grievous trials to endure. And I am well aware that if you look within, you will see much that will distress you. You will perceive that the old Adam still lurks within you and that notwithstanding all the force that has been brought against him by Divine Grace, he is still far too vigorous! It is true that some of you have also to suffer from poverty and that your lot is a very difficult one—yet we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, and you are, yourselves, bound to give thanks on your own behalf because notwithstanding your poverty, and notwithstanding your infirmity, and notwithstanding even the sin of which you have such cause to mourn, you are still “beloved of the Lord”—and in the Person of Jesus Christ you are “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”! When faith recognizes the vital union which exists between Christ and the soul and realizes the consequent blessedness and security of the saint, then it cries, “I am bound to give thanks always unto God, for I am still beloved of the Lord notwithstanding all that causes me often to weep and mourn.”

It is my purpose, this evening, to invite all of you who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to contemplate your true standing in the sight of God—that you may be uplifted from the dunghills of your complaints, shake off the ashes of your doubts, unwind the sackcloth of your fears, put on your beautiful garments of holy rejoicing and sing aloud unto Him through whose Grace you are made worthy to be called “brethren beloved of the Lord.” There are two topics on which I have to speak. First, the titles mentioned in the text. And, secondly, the wearers of those titles.

I. First, then, let us think for a while of THE TITLES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT—“brethren” and, “beloved of the Lord.”  
“Brethren” is a very special word—the utterance of it awakens an echo in every Believer’s heart. It is naturally a silver word, but spiritually God has transmuted it into gold. I do not wonder that a certain sect has appropriated this title, yet we equally claim the name of, “brethren,” as our own, and we share it with all who are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. The title, “brethren,” is very hallowed and very precious to us—let us try to find out what it implies.  
First, it indicates a common nature. Whatever opinions any may hold concerning the unity of the human race, there can be no difference of opinion about the unity of nature in those who are born of the same parents. Where should I expect to find a person more in sympathy with myself than my own brother? Where should I expect to find, beneath the cope of Heaven, another soul that should be more akin to mine than the soul of my brother? If there are not peace and love between us, where can they be found? However much we may differ from one another in some respects, there must be certain lineaments of feature or traits of character in which we are alike. But even if this is not so naturally, it certainly is so spiritually! All Believers are alike partakers of the Divine Nature—we are all equally begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! The inner life of all true Christians is the same—there is not a Baptist life and a Methodist life, or a Nonconformist life and a Church of England life. The Divine Life is one wherever it is bestowed. The life of my hand and the life of my foot are one and the same, pulsating from the same central source and maintained by the same power. And the life of God is the same in all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. This is something more than brotherhood—that idea does not cover the whole truth although it includes much of it. There is a distinct unity of nature in all the saints of the living God! Hence, Brothers and Sisters, I can never tolerate any attempts to limit communion between those who are really one in Christ. It always seems to me that it would be an infraction of the Divine Law if I were to say to a Brother in Christ that I could not commune with him because of certain minor matters in which we do not quite agree. Besides, whether I am willing to do so or not, I cannot help communing with him for he is a part of Christ’s Mystical Body of which I also am a part! So that unless I could myself get out of that body, or he could get out of it, which is impossible for either of us, I must remain in spiritual communion with him whatever I may do concerning the outward and visible symbols of that communion. No, more than that, if I could go to Heaven and that Brother still tarried here upon the earth, our communion would not be broken, for Dr. Watts was right when he sang— *“The saints on earth, and all the dead,  
But one communion make!  
All join in Christ, their living Head,  
And of His Grace partake.”*  
The term, “brethren,” also implies a common experience. The brethren in an earthly family have the same parents, they live in the same house, they partake of the some food, they share all the privileges and varied experiences of the same household. So is it with those who are of the household of faith, the family of God. Their experiences may vary even as one child in the home differs from another, but there is much more similarity than there is diversity in the experiences of the living children of the living God. We have all been broken in pieces. We have all been bound up. We have all been emptied. We have all been brought to the Cross. We have all been led by one Spirit to drink of the same precious Truth! We have not all subscribed to the same creed, yet in substance and in effect, the Doctrine of all the children of God is, to a large extent, identical. They rely for salvation upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, and therein they are all one. Their pilgrim path is through the same wilderness, they eat the same manna, they drink of the same Rock, they are led by the same cloudy-fiery pillar, and they come at last to the same heavenly Canaan and go no more out forever! They are and they must be one, not only because they are one in nature, but because the various processes through which that nature has to pass are so largely the same.  
More than this, the title, “brethren,” implies that we love one another. It is said that there is a lack of love in certain churches that profess to be Christian. Well, perhaps there is. I am not going to be an accuser of the brethren in that respect, but I believe there is a great deal more love existing among Christians than many persons imagine. Possibly, those who say there is a lack of love in our midst judge by the state of their own hearts, while those who really love the saints find that the saints also love them. Do not suppose, dear Friends, because the preacher has sometimes to proclaim very unpalatable Truths of God and because he sometimes delivers his message in stern tones, that therefore he has not a tender heart! Fidelity to the Truth of God requires that it should be spoken in such a fashion as to secure public attention, and this involves the use of great plainness of speech and a manner of delivery which some may resent. And the man who honestly and fearlessly acts thus is more acceptable to God and has far greater and truer love in his heart than the one who says, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace! As I hate Satan and all his works, so my soul hates every false doctrine in this Church and in every Church! But as I love God and all that God loves, so am I desirous to love every child of the loving God. And I will further say that not only do I desire to love every child of God, but I think I really do. Do you not feel, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, whenever you meet a Believer in Jesus, and begin to talk of the things that belong to His Kingdom, you have fellowship with him in heart and spirit even though you had never seen him before? When we talk of Jesus, our love to one another soon begins to flow! The true basis of our communion with one another is that we are there in Christ Jesus—and that union manifests itself in love to all who are, as our text puts it, “brethren beloved of the Lord.”  
This word, “brethren,” is a far-reaching word, for it further implies that all Christians have a common Father. Let all Believers rejoice that they can unite in saying, “Our Father, who are in Heaven.” There is a straight line from my heart to the heart of God—and so there is from your heart, my Brother or my Sister in Christ—so our Father’s heart is our common meeting place! We were there in purpose before this world was created. We are there by faith at this moment and we shall be there by blessed experience when this world has passed away and time shall be no more! Having the same Father, we share equally in that Father’s love. We may not always feel the same love to all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, but God’s love to us and His love to them knows no variation. I trust you all realize that our Father is quite impartial in His love to all His children and that all who are truly members of His family through their union to Christ shall have an equal share of it. Hence the tie of Christian brotherhood become a very solemn and a very precious thing, for it not only binds us fast to our Father in Heaven, but it also binds us closely to one another! I pray that the members of this Church may always act toward each other as Brothers and Sisters in Christ. I wish that among all the saints there might be a sort of spiritual Freemasonry so that whenever we might meet, we should recognize one another by the holy grip of Christian love. There are certain sacred passwords that are common to all the saints and I will defy the hypocrite or the worldling to pronounce them aright—but if he should be able to utter them with his lips—he can never really know their meaning in his heart. There are certain experiences that cannot be learned without the teaching of the Holy Spirit. There is a certain way of speaking about Christ that can never be acquired as a parrot learns to talk. There is a certain ring which God gives to His gold which is never bestowed upon baser metal—and there is a certain something about a true child of God which enables him to recognize others of the same family and which also enables them to recognize him so that when they come together, their hearts leap up at the thought that they are “brethren beloved of the Lord.”  
Perhaps I have lingered too long over that first title, so now I must turn to the second one, “beloved of the Lord.” You do need my explanations here, for the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle to give the Divine explanation of this title of honor. Turn to the verse from which our text is taken and you will see that the first thought concerning the Lord’s love to you is that of its antiquity—“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you.” You always were “beloved of the Lord”! He did not begin to love you when you first repented and turned to Him. He saw you in the glass of His eternal purpose and he loved you then! That love He proved many centuries before you knew anything about it, for His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior, had redeemed you 1800 years before you were born—He gave the fullest proof of His affection for you in laying down His life for you. There was nothing in you to merit this wondrous Self-Sacrifice on the part of Christ—on the contrary, you were His enemies, you profaned His holy name, and despised His Sacrifice after you learned what He had done! But He gave Himself for you because from eternity He had loved you with a love that would not be turned from its purpose by anything that He foresaw would be done by you!  
In addition to the antiquity of the Lord’s love to you, think also of its richness. The Apostle says, “God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” Have you grasped the full meaning of that word, salvation, Beloved? It does not merely mean salvation from Hell, though that is included in it, but it means salvation from sin, salvation from the guilt and power of sin, salvation from your doubts, your fears, your troubles— salvation from that besetting infirmity of yours, salvation from the devil’s dominion over you, salvation in all its fullness from first to last! To all this “God has from the beginning chosen you” who are “brethren beloved of the Lord”! This is no mean inheritance, no slender portion, no slight gift—indeed, it is not easy to find words in which adequately to describe all that God has done for you in choosing you “to salvation.” It will need all eternity to fully explain the meaning of that great word! You are, indeed, “beloved of the Lord” in having such a priceless portion as this bestowed upon you!  
Notice, next, the wisdom, of the Lord’s love to you. “God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Had it been possible for you to have had salvation without sanctification, it would have been a curse to you instead of a blessing. If such a thing were

possible, I cannot conceive of a more lamentable condition than for a man to have the happiness of salvation without the holiness of it! Happily, it is not possible. If you could be saved from the consequences of sin, but not from the sin, itself, and its power and pollution, it would be no blessing to you. But the salvation to which God has from the beginning chosen you is inseparably linked with the cleansing and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit who operates within you through the instrumentality of faith! Your belief of the Truth of God has a purifying influence upon your whole life and makes you desire to follow in the footprints of your dear Lord and Savior. Thus God shows His wisdom in the choice of the means which He blesses to your salvation—blessing you as much by the means as by the salvation, itself— blessing you as much in the road as in the end to which it leads! You are, indeed, “beloved of the Lord” in having the Spirit of God thus dwelling in you and bestowing upon you that precious gift of faith by which you are enabled to believe the Truths of God!  
Observe, too, in order to increase your joy in the Lord, the signs of this love. In the next verse, the Apostle goes on to say, “whereunto He called you by our Gospel.” Do you not remember, you who are “beloved of the Lord,” when you were called by the Gospel? Then was the eternal purpose of God fulfilled in your experience. Go back in thought to the time of your espousal to Christ. Recall the sound of the silver trumpet that then brought you into Gospel liberty. You had been to the House of God hundreds of times before when that same trumpet was ringing out the glad refrain—  
*“The year of jubilee is come!  
Return, you ransomed sinners, home”—*  
but your ears and heart had been sealed to the message! But that day the Lord opened your heart and unstopped your ears, so that you were numbered among the happy people who heard the joyful sound! Your calling proved your election, and it stands to you still as gracious evidence of God’s eternal love to you. Happy are we, too, if we can say with the Apostle, “whereunto He called you by our Gospel.” I know that however many may preach the Gospel better than I do, there is no one who can preach a better Gospel than the one I preach, for it is that Gospel which “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” “Our Gospel” is the best of gospels, the richest of gospels, it cannot be excelled, it cannot be equaled! In fact, it is the only Gospel that is worthy of the name! You remember how Paul wrote to the Galatians, “I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the Grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another.” That is to say, it is not another gospel and it brings only a curse both upon him who preaches it and those who receive it! But blessed are you who have been called unto salvation by “our Gospel.”  
There is yet one more sign of God’s eternal love which is to be seen by us in the future—“to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We who believe in Jesus are so “beloved of the Lord” that He will never be satisfied until we share His Glory! So be glad in the Lord and rejoice in the glorious prospect that He has set before you! God was not content to choose you to happiness here, but He has also chosen you to happiness hereafter! He was not satisfied with making a little Heaven for you here below, but He has made a great Heaven for you up above! He has not appointed an earthly paradise where He might sometimes come to you as He came to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, but He has prepared a place for you in His own Home in Glory that you may dwell forever in your Father’s House where there are many abiding places. Rejoice, then, “beloved of the Lord,” that He has “called you by our Gospel to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”!  
Of course it is not in my power to enable every Christian here to suck all the sweet out of this title, but it is in the power of the Holy Spirit to enable you to—and by the exercise of faith you may draw much of it out. I claim this title for myself—“beloved of the Lord”—and each Brother or Sister in Christ may claim it for himself or herself. “O man greatly beloved” was the title given to Daniel, and that is the title that is given to every Believer in Jesus. “That disciple whom Jesus loved” was the distinguishing title of one of His followers when Christ was here in the flesh. And now that after the flesh we know Christ no more, we are His in such a special sense that every child of God is “that disciple whom Jesus loves.” May you get a firm grip of that Truth of God, Beloved, and realize that Jesus loves you! You cannot obtain this assurance except by faith, but when you have believed, joy and peace will quickly follow upon the heels of faith. No, they come hand in hand, for we have joy and peace in believing!  
II. I have taken so long in speaking of these titles of honor that I have very little time left for speaking of THE WEARERS OF THESE TITLES.  
Suppose, dear Friends, you had all heard the Gospel preached and that you understood the dignity and happiness of a Christian—what sort of a person would you suppose him to be? If I try to picture him for you, you will see how far your ideas and mine agree. I should think you would so imagine that a man who is “beloved of the Lord” would be the happiest man in the world. You naturally suppose that if the eternal God has loved him, if the infinite heart of the Most High has been set upon him from all eternity, he must experience the greatest imaginable delight in such a belief and he must feel that whatever else he may or may not possess, he is rich to the fairest possible extent in having the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit who is given unto him! I know that a sorrowful friend over yonder is saying, “If I really could say that Jesus is mine, I would be quite content to be poor. If I were ‘beloved of the Lord,’ I would not mind if I had to lie in a dungeon or even to be burned to death for His sake.” So I conceive that those who are “beloved of the Lord” must be the most happy and joyful people to be found anywhere upon the face of the earth!  
I suppose, too, that the influence of this love upon them would make them very careful not to offend their loving Lord. Naturally, the love of Christ would exercise such a constraining influence upon them that they would feel that men so highly favored as they are ought not to live as other men do—but that, being distinguished by such peculiar privileges, they should be “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Without violating the proprieties of conjecture, I can conceive that the “beloved of the Lord” would be most heavenly-minded people. Having such treasure in Heaven, they would naturally not care about the things of earth, but would set their affection on things above so that where their treasure is there would their heart be also. I think the Believer would be longing and panting to get a peep through the pearly gates and that until he could be there with his loving Lord, he would often be singing—  
*“My heart is with Him on His Throne,  
And ill can brook delay!  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
‘Rise up, and come away!’”*  
Further, I can suppose that the “beloved of the Lord” are so grateful for their Lord’s love that they are constantly telling others the story of that love. And that when they meet their fellow Christians, their constant theme of conversation is the riches of Divine Grace. I can suppose that these people are so different from others that wherever they go, they are looked upon with astonishment! Difficulties I suppose they have, but being “beloved of the Lord” they take their difficulties to Him and He enables them to overcome them by His Grace. Trials I suppose they have, but they are sure to go to God about them and He either removes them or gives the necessary strength to endure them. I suppose they are people who compass sea and land, not to make proselytes to their particular sect, but by holy self-denial and consecrated service to glorify God and extend the Redeemer’s Kingdom on earth.  
Is not this what you are longing to do, Beloved? Well, it is a good thing to have high aspirations, but it is an even better thing to turn those aspirations to practical account. Is there not something that we can do for Christ tonight? The Israelites found the manna in the wilderness, not by looking up to Heaven, but by looking down on the ground. And instead of looking up to Heaven for means of glorifying God, we may find opportunities of doing so all around our daily path! Let us, each one, ask ourselves these questions and answer them as in the sight of God—What can I do for God in my own family circle? What can I say about Jesus to my friends? How can I bring most Glory to God in my own spiritual life? What choice gift can I bring to my Savior as Mary brought the costly ointment of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus? What tears of penitence can I weep before His marred visage? What holy faith can I now exercise in His risen and glorified Person? Let me, as the “beloved of the Lord,” with my largest ideas concerning His Glory and the coming of His Kingdom, see what I can practically do to show that I truly love Him by whom I am so greatly beloved!  
I wish, Brothers and Sisters, that the portrait of the happiest man in the world that I tried to draw a few minutes ago might prove to be your own likeness. Some of you are sad and despondent, yet you are the “beloved of the Lord.” Then why are you so dispirited? You are heavy of heart tonight, but since you are the “beloved of the Lord,” you should rejoice in Him whatever there may be to cause you present heaviness of spirit! You have been struggling with inbred sin and the fight has been so fierce that you have feared that you would be defeated—but as you are the “beloved of the Lord,” you must be more than conquerors through Him who has loved you!  
Some of you have come here tonight from the workshop where you have been laughed at and mocked—you have most painful recollections of the scorn with which you were assailed this very afternoon—but since you are the “beloved of the Lord,” the day will come when these things will be reckoned among your highest honors. “Take that, John Bunyan,” said one to a certain Christian as he pushed him into the gutter. “Oh,” said the other, “you may push me into the gutter again if you can only prove my right to bear that noble name!” So may you say to those who persecute you for Christ’s sake, “You may do it again if it pleases you, for it would be an honor to me to be spit upon because I belong to Christ.” Cultivate that spirit, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and let the thought that that you are the “beloved of the Lord” make amends for every cruel act or word on the part of His enemies. When the last trumpet sounds, and the innumerable hosts of the redeemed are gathered together unto Christ—and you whom God has from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, you whom He has called by our Gospel—when you obtain, I say, the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, you will forget the little suffering that you have ever borne on His account and rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of Glory that you are forever to be numbered among the “beloved of the Lord”!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *Rom 8:1-14***.**

This wonderful Chapter is the very cream of the cream of Holy Scripture! What a grand keynote the Apostle strikes in the first verse!  
Verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. [See Sermon

#1917, Volume 32—IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of

charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] “No condemnation”—that is the first note of the Chapter. In the last verse it is “no separation.” What glorious music there is here—no condemnation to those who are in Christ, no separation of them from Christ! Happy are the people who have a share in this double blessing—but unhappy are the men and women who know nothing of it! We will read it again—“There is therefore now no condemnation.” There is a great deal of accusation, and a great deal more of tribulation, but there is no condemnation—not the least hint of it! Some condemnation we might have expected, but “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

2. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death. I have broken away from its thralldom! The new Law, the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the Law of Grace has set me free from the domination of the Law of sin and death! Happy is the free man who is thus liberated by the Grace of God.

3. For what the Law could not do—God has done by His Grace. “What the Law could not do”—  
3. In that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin—Or, as the marginal reading renders it, “by a sacrifice for sin”—  
3-5. Condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh. Unregenerate men, the men who remain in the state in which they were born. The men who allow their lower nature to have the predominance. “They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh.” That is all that they care about, all that they think about, all that they toil for, all that they really “mind.”  
5. But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Those in whom there is a new life begotten by the Holy Spirit—these mind the things of the Spirit. Each nature seeks its own things—the flesh seeks the things of the flesh, the spirit seeks the things of the Spirit. Judge you, my Hearers, to which case you belong by this test—for what are you living for? That which you live for is the true index of your nature. Do you mind spiritual things or the things of the flesh?  
6, 7. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. [See Sermons #20, Volume 1—

THE CARNAL MIND ENMITY AGAINST GOD and #1878, Volume 32—A TRAITOR SUSPECTED AND CONVICTED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The

old nature never will obey the Law of God—it can never do so. What, then, is to be done with it? Improve it? No, my Hearers, the only thing to be done with it is to let it die and then to bury it. In Baptism you have a most significant symbol of what is to be done with the flesh—you are to treat it as a dead thing and, therefore, to bury it. Let the old life be crucified and put to death with Christ and let the new life take its place!

8. So then they that are in the flesh*—*Those who are still in the old nature, living for it, living to it—  
8. Cannot please God. Men may wash this old nature, they may clothe it, they may decorate it, they may educate it, but there is no evolution which can produce Grace out of Nature. The child of Nature may be finely dressed, but it is a dead child however gaudily it is attired. There is a vital eternal difference between the old nature and the new.  
9. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. You saints of Rome to whom Paul was writing, and you who believe in Christ now—“You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you.”  
9. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. If Christ’s Spirit has not quickened you, you do not belong to Christ. Some ministers preach a very general sort of gospel in which everybody has a share, but the Bible knows nothing of that sort of gospel! “If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Do you know what it is to have the Spirit of Christ? If not, my Hearer, do not deceive yourself—you are none of His. “If any man”—be he prince or magistrate, a member of Parliament or a doctor of divinity—“if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”  
10. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Hence the body suffers, the body is sick, the body decays, the body is under the dominion of death because of sin—but the Spirit is full of life because of righteousness.  
11. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you. You Believers may have a good hope concerning your bodies! “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies.” Wait a while, therefore—what God has done for your souls He will, in due time, also do for your bodies! This should make you long for the day of Christ’s appearing, as Paul says in the 23rd verse of this Chapter, “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,” when Christ shall appear, and we shall be raised—  
**“From beds of dust and silent clay”—**  
the body itself born a second time, regenerate like the soul!  
12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the

flesh. [See Sermon #96, Volume 2—THE CHRISTIAN—A DEBTOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] We owe the flesh nothing! I mean

the law of sin in our members—we owe nothing to that. It has been a curse and a plague to us. We are not debtors to the flesh, so we must not “live after the flesh.”

13. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die. If you live simply to gratify your ambition. If you live for avarice. If you live to please yourself—if you live for any earthly object which can be comprised under the term “after the flesh”—you will certainly be disappointed, for you will die and your hope will die with you!

13. But if you, through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. If you seek, by the Holy Spirit’s power, to kill sin. If you try to crush all sinful desires. If you keep evil with a rope about its neck—if you mortify it—put it to death, then you shall live! Holiness is the mode of the Christian’s life—sin is the way of the sinner’s death.

14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of  
God. [See Sermon #1220, Volume 21—THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT, THE SECRET TOKEN OF THE SONS OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]  
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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermons #41, 42 New Park Street Pulpit 1

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION  
NOS. 41, 42

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1855, BY THE REV. C H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** *2Th 2:13-14***.**

IF there were no other text in the Sacred Word except this one, I think we would all be bound to receive and acknowledge the truthfulness of the great and glorious Doctrine of God’s ancient choice of His family. But there seems to be an inveterate prejudice in the human mind against this Doctrine—and although most other Doctrines will be received by professing Christians, some with caution, others with pleasure—this one seems to be most frequently disregarded and discarded! In many of our pulpits it would be reckoned a high sin and treason to preach a sermon upon Election because they could not make it what they call a, “practical” discourse! I believe they have erred from the Truth of God. Whatever God has revealed, He has revealed for a purpose. There is nothing in Scripture which may not, under the influence of God’s Spirit, be turned into a practical discourse—“for all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable” for some purpose of spiritual usefulness. It is true, it may not be turned into a free will discourse—that we know right well— but it can be turned into a practical Free Grace discourse. And Free Grace practice is the best practice when the true Doctrines of God’s Immutable Love are brought to bear upon the hearts of saints and sinners! Now I trust, this morning, some of you who are startled at the very sound of this word will say, “I will give it a fair hearing. I will lay aside my prejudices. I will hear what this man has to say.” Do not shut your ears and say at once, “It is high Doctrine.” Who has authorized you to call it high or low? Why should you oppose yourself to God’s Doctrine? Remember what became of the children who found fault with God’s Prophet and exclaimed, “Go up, you bald-head! Go up, you bald-head!” Say nothing against God’s Doctrines, lest haply some evil beast should come out of the forest and devour you, also! There are other woes beside the open judgment of Heaven—take heed that these fall not on your head. Lay aside your prejudices—listen calmly, listen dispassionately— hear what Scripture says! And when you receive the Truth, if God should be pleased to reveal and manifest it to your souls, do not be ashamed to confess it! To confess you were wrong, yesterday, is only to acknowledge that you are a little wiser today. Instead of being a reflection on yourself, it is an honor to your judgment and shows that you are improving in the knowledge of the Truth of God! Do not be ashamed to learn and to cast aside your old doctrines and views. But take up that which you may more plainly see to be in the Word of God. And if you do not see it to be here in the Bible—whatever I may say, or whatever authorities I may plead—I beseech you, as you love your souls, reject it! And if from this pulpit you ever hear things contrary to this Sacred Word, remember that the Bible must be first—and God’s minister must lie underneath it!

We must not stand on the Bible to preach—we must preach with the Bible above our heads. After all we have preached, we are well aware that the mountain of Truth is higher than our eyes can discern—clouds and darkness are round about its summit and we cannot discern its topmost pinnacle. Yet we will try to preach it as well as we can. But since we are mortal and liable to err, exercise your judgment—“Try the spirits, whether they are of God”—and if on mature reflection on your bended knees, you are led to disregard Election—a thing which I consider to be utterly impossible—then forsake it! Do not hear it preached, but believe and confess whatever you see to be God’s Word. I can say no more than that by way of introduction.

Now, first. I shall speak a little concerning the truthfulness of this Doctrine—“God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” Secondly, I shall try to prove that this Election is absolute—“He has from the beginning chosen you to salvation,” not for sanctification, but, “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Thirdly, this Election is eternal because the text says, “God has from the beginning chosen you.” Fourthly, it is personal—“He has chosen you.” Then we will look at the effects of the Doctrine—see what it does. And lastly, as God may enable us, we will try and look at its tendencies and see whether it is, indeed, a terrible and licentious Doctrine. We will take the flower and, like true bees, see whether there is any honey whatever in it—whether any good can come of it—or whether it is an unmixed, undiluted evil.

I. First, I must try and prove that the Doctrine is TRUE. And let me begin with an argumentum ad hominen—I will speak to you according to your different positions and stations. There are some of you who belong to the Church of England and I am happy to see so many of you here. Though now and then I certainly say some very hard things about Church and State, yet I love the old Church, for she has in her communion many godly ministers and eminent saints. Now I know you are great Believers in what the Articles declare to be sound Doctrine. I will give you a specimen of what they utter concerning Election, so that if you believe them, you cannot avoid receiving Election. I will read a portion of the 17th Article upon Predestination and Election—

“Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) He has continually decreed by His counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He has chosen in Christ out of mankind and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Therefore, they which are endued with so excellent a benefit of God, are called according to God’s purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they, through Divine Grace, obey the calling: they are justified freely: they are made sons of God by adoption: they are made like the image of His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.”

Now, I think any Churchman, if he is a sincere and honest believer in Mother Church, must be a thorough believer in Election. True, if he turns to certain other portions of the Prayer Book, he will find things contrary to the Doctrines of Free Grace and altogether apart from Scriptural teaching. But if he looks at the Articles, he must see that God has chosen His people unto eternal life! I am not so desperately enamored, however, of that book as you may be—and I have only used this Article to show you that if you belong to the Establishment of England, you should at least offer no objection to this Doctrine of Predestination.

Another human authority whereby I would confirm the Doctrine of Election is the old Waldensian Creed. If you read the creed of the old Waldenses—emanating from them in the midst of the burning heat of persecution—you will see that these renowned professors and confessors of the Christian faith did most firmly receive and embrace this Doctrine as being a portion of the Truth of God. I have copied from an old book, one of the Articles of their faith—“That God saves from corruption and damnation those whom He has chosen from the foundations of the world, not for any disposition, faith, or holiness that He before saw in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ Jesus, His Son, passing by all the rest according to the irreprehensible reason of His own free will and justice.”

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching no new Doctrine! I love to proclaim these strong old Doctrines which are called by nickname, Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed Truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus! By this Truth of God, I make a pilgrimage into the past and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me! Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the Doctrine of free will, I would have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic of no very honorable character might rise up and call me, Brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my Brothers and Sisters—I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do and acknowledge that this is the religion of God’s own Church!

I also give you an extract from the old Baptist Confession. We are Baptists in this congregation—the greater part of us, at any rate—and we like to see what our own forefathers wrote. Some 200 years ago the Baptists assembled together and published their articles of faith to put an end to certain reports against their orthodoxy which had gone forth to the world. I turn to this old book—which I have just published—Baptist Confession of Faith—and I find the following as the 3rd Article—“By the decree of God for the manifestation of His Glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ to the praise of His glorious Grace. Others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation to the praise of His glorious Justice. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind who are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and Immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory out of His mere Free Grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as condition or cause moving Him hereunto.”

As for these human authorities, I care not one rush for all three of them! I care not what they say, pro or con, as to this Doctrine. I have only used them as a kind of confirmation to your faith, to show you that while I may be railed upon as a heretic and as a hyper-Calvinist, after all I am backed up by antiquity! All the past stands by me. I do not care for the present. Give me the past and I will hope for the future. Let the present rise up in my teeth, I will not care. What though a host of the Churches of London may have forsaken the great cardinal Doctrines of God, it matters not. If a handful of us stand alone in an unflinching maintenance of the Sovereignty of our God. If we are beset by enemies, yes, and even by our own Brothers and Sisters who ought to be our friends and helpers, it matters not—if we can but count upon the past— the noble army of martyrs, the glorious host of confessors! They are our friends. They are the witnesses of the Truth of God and they stand by us! With these for us, we will not say that we stand alone, but we may exclaim, “Lo, God has reserved unto Himself seven thousand that have not bowed the knee unto Baal.” But the best of all is—God is with us!

The great Truth of God is always the Bible and the Bible, alone. My Hearers, you do not believe in any other book than the Bible, do you? If I could prove this from all the books in Christendom—if I could fetch back the Alexandrian library and prove it, there—you would not believe it any more! But you surely will believe what is in God’s Word!

I have selected a few texts to read to you. I love to give you a whole volley of texts when I am afraid you will distrust a Truth of God so that you may be too astonished to doubt, if you do not, in reality, believe! Just let me run through a catalog of passages where the people of God are called elect. Of course if the people are called elect, there must be Election. If Jesus Christ and His Apostles were accustomed to call Believers by the title of, elect, we must certainly believe that they were so, otherwise the term does not mean anything! Jesus Christ says, “Except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He has chosen, He has shortened the days.” “False Christs and false Prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.” “Then shall He send His angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost part of Heaven.”—Mar 13:20; Mar 13:22; Mar 13:27. “Shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?”—Luk 18:7. Together with many other passages which might be selected, wherein either the word, “elect,” or, “chosen,” or, “foreordained,” or “appointed,” is mentioned—or the phrase, “My sheep,” or some similar designation, showing that Christ’s people are distinguished from the rest of mankind!

But you have concordances and I will not trouble you with texts. Throughout the Epistles the saints are constantly called, “the elect.” In Colossians we find Paul saying, “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercies.” When he writes to Titus, he calls himself, “Paul, a servant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect.” Peter says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” Then if you turn to John, you will find he is very fond of the word! He says, “The elder to the elect lady.” And he speaks of our “elect sister.” And we know where it is written, “The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you.” They were not ashamed of the word in those days. They were not afraid to talk about it. Nowadays the word has been dressed up with diversities of meaning and persons have mutilated and marred the Doctrine so that they have made it a very Doctrine of devils! I do confess that many who call themselves Believers have gone to rank Antinomianism! But not withstanding this, why should I be ashamed of it, if men wrest it? We love God’s Truth on the rack as well as when it is walking upright. If there were a martyr whom we loved before he went on the rack, we would love him still more when he was stretched there! When God’s Truth is stretched on the rack, we do not call it a lie! We love not to see it racked, but we love it even when racked because we can discern what its proper proportions ought to have been if it had not been racked and tortured by the cruelty and inventions of men! If you will read many of the Epistles of the ancient fathers, you will find them always writing to the people of God as the, “elect.” Indeed, the common conversational term used among many of the Churches by the primitive Christians to one another was that of the, “elect.” They would often use the term to one another, showing that it was generally believed that all God’s people were manifestly “elect.”

But now for the verses that will positively prove the Doctrine. Open your Bibles and turn to Joh 15:16, and there you will see that Jesus Christ has chosen His people, for He says, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain: that whatever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you.” Then in the 19th verse, “If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” Then in the 17th Chapter and the 8th and 9th verses, “For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from You and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me for they are Yours.” Turn to Act 13:48—“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.” They may try to split that passage into hairs if they like— but it says, “ordained to eternal life” in the original as plainly as it possibly can! And we do not care about all the different commentaries thereupon. You scarcely need to be reminded of Romans 8, because I trust you are all well-acquainted with that Chapter and understand it by this time. In the 29th and following verses, it says, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many Brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It would also be unnecessary to repeat the whole of the 9th Chapter of Romans. As long as that remains in the Bible, no man shall be able to prove Arminianism! So long as that is written there, not the most violent contortions of the passage will ever be able to exterminate the Doctrine of Election from the Scriptures! Let us read such verses as these—“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to Election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” Then read the 22nd verse, “What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?”

Then go on to Rom 11:7—“What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for, but the Election has obtained it and the rest were blinded.” In the 6th verse of the same Chapter, we read—“Even so, then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the Election of Grace.” You, no doubt, all remember the passage in 1Co 1:26-29—“For you see your calling, Brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes and things which are not, to bring to nothing things which are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.” Again, remember the passage in 1Th 5:9—“God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,” and then you have my text, which I think would be quite enough. But if you need any more, you can find them at your leisure if we have not quite removed your suspicions as to the Doctrine not being true.

I think, my Friends, that this overwhelming mass of Scripture testimony must stagger those who dare to laugh at this Doctrine! What shall we say of those who have so often despised it and denied its Divinity? What shall we say to those who have railed at its justice and dared to defy God and call Him an Almighty tyrant, when they have heard of His having elected so many to eternal life? Can you, O Rejecter, cast it out of the Bible? Can you take the penknife of Jehudi and cut it out of the Word of God? Would you be like the women at the feet of Solomon and have the child cut in halves that you might have your half? Is it not here in Scripture? And is it not your duty to bow before it and meekly acknowledge what you understand not—to receive it as the Truth even though you could not understand its meaning? I will not attempt to prove the justice of God in having thus elected some and left others. It is not for me to vindicate my Master! He will speak for Himself and He does so—“But, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?” Who is he that shall say unto his father, “What have you begotten?...or unto his mother, “What have you brought forth?” “I am the Lord—I form the light and create darkness. I, the Lord, do all these things. Who are you that replies against God? Tremble and kiss His rod; bow down and submit to His scepter; impugn not His justice and arraign not His acts before your bar, O man!”

But there are some who say, “It is hard for God to choose some and leave others.” Now, I will ask you one question. Is there any of you here, this morning, who wishes to be holy, who wishes to be regenerate, to leave off sin and walk in holiness? “Yes, there is,” someone says, “I do.” Then God has elected you! But another says, “No. I don’t want to be holy. I don’t want to give up my lusts and my vices.” Why should you grumble, then, that God has not elected you? For if you were elected, you would not like it, according to your own confession! If God, this morning, had chosen you to holiness, you say you would not care for it. Do you not acknowledge that you prefer drunkenness to sobriety, dishonesty to honesty? You love this world’s pleasures better than religion—then why should you grumble that God has not chosen you to religion? If you love religion, He has chosen you to it! If you desire it, He has chosen you to it! If you do not, what right have you to say that God ought to have given you what you do not wish for? Supposing I had in my hand something which you do not value, and I said I shall give it to such-and-such a person—you would have no right to grumble that I did not give it to you! You could not be so foolish as to grumble that the other has got what you do not care about! According to your own confession, many of you do not want religion—do not want a new heart and a right spirit—do not want the forgiveness of sins! You do not want sanctification. You do not want to be elected to these things—then why should you grumble? You count these things but as husks, so why should you complain of God who has given them to those whom He has chosen? If you believe them to be good and desire them, they are there for you! God gives liberally to all those who desire—but first of all, He makes them desire—otherwise they never would. If you love these things, He has elected you to them and you may have them. But if you do not, who are you that you should find fault with God when it is your own desperate will that keeps you from loving these things? Suppose a man in the street should say, “What a shame it is I cannot have a seat in the Chapel to hear what this man has to say.” And suppose he says, “I hate the preacher—I can’t bear his Doctrine—but still, it’s a shame I have not a seat”? Would you expect a man to say so? No—you would at once say, “That man does not care for it. Why should he trouble himself about other people having what they value and he despises?” You do not like holiness, you do not like righteousness. If God has elected me to these things, has He hurt you by it? “Ah, but,” some say, “I thought it meant that God elected some to Heaven and some to Hell.” That is a very different matter from the Gospel Doctrine! He has elected men to holiness and to righteousness—and through that to Heaven. You must not say that He has elected these simply to Heaven and others only to Hell. He has elected you to holiness if you love holiness. If any of you love to be saved by Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ elected you to be saved! If any of you desire to have salvation, you are elected to have it—if you desire it sincerely and earnestly! But, if you don’t desire it, why on earth would you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives that which you do not like, to other people?

II. Thus I have tried to say something with regard to the Truth of the Doctrine of Election. And now, briefly, let me say that Election is absolute, that is, it does not depend upon what we are. The text says, “God has from the beginning chosen us unto salvation.” But our opponents say that God chooses people because they are good—that He chooses them on account of sundry works which they have done. Now, we ask in reply to this, what works are those on account of which God elects His people? Are they what we commonly call, “works of Law”?— works of obedience which the creature can render? If so, we reply to you—If men cannot be justified by the works of the Law, it seems to us pretty clear that they cannot be elected by the works of the Law! If they cannot be justified by their good deeds, they cannot be saved by them. Then the decree of Election could not have been formed upon good works. “But,” say others, “God elected them on the foresight of their faith.” Now God gives faith, therefore He could not have elected them on account of faith which He foresaw. There shall be 20 beggars in the street and I determine to give one of them a shilling. Will anyone say that I determined to give that one a shilling—that I elected him to have the shilling—because I foresaw that he would have it? That would be talking nonsense! In like manner, to say that God elected men because He foresaw they would have faith—which is salvation in the germ—would be too absurd for us to listen to for a moment! Faith is the gift of God. Every virtue comes from Him. Therefore it cannot have caused Him to elect men, because it is His gift! Election, we are sure, is absolute and altogether apart from the virtues which the saints have afterwards. What if a saint should be as holy and devout as Paul? What if he should be as bold as Peter, or as loving as John? Still, he could claim nothing but what he received from his Maker! I never knew a saint, yet, of any denomination who thought that God saved him because He foresaw that he would have these virtues and merits. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, the best jewels that the saint ever wears, if they are jewels of our own fashioning, are not of the first water! There is something of earth mixed with them. The highest Grace we ever possess has something of earthliness about it. We feel this when we are most refined, when we are most sanctified and our language must always be—

*“I the chief of sinners am;*

*Jesus died for me.”*  
Our only hope, our only plea, still hangs on Grace as exhibited in the Person of Jesus Christ. And I am sure we must utterly reject and disregard all thought that our Graces, which are gifts of our Lord, which are His right-hand planting, could have ever caused His love. And we always must sing—

*“What was there in us that could merit esteem Or give the Creator delight?  
It was even so, Father, we always must sing, Because it seemed good in Your sight”*

“He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.” He saves because He will save. And if you ask me why He saves me, I can only say because He would do it. Is there anything in me that should recommend me to God? No. I lay aside everything. I had nothing to recommend me. When God saved me, I was the most abject, lost and ruined of the race. I lay before Him as an infant in my blood. Verily, I had no power to help myself. O how wretched did I feel and know myself to be! It you had something to recommend you to God, I never had. I will be content to be saved by Grace, unalloyed, pure Grace. I can boast of no merits. If you can do so, still I cannot. I must sing—

*“Free Grace alone from the first to the last Has won my affection and held my soul fast.”*

III. Then, thirdly, this Election is ETERNAL. “God has from the beginning chosen you unto eternal life.” Can any man tell me when the beginning was? Years ago we thought the beginning of this world was when Adam came upon it. But we have discovered that thousands of years before that, God was preparing chaotic matter to make it a fit abode for man, putting races of creatures upon it who might die and leave behind the marks of His handiwork and marvelous skill before He tried His hand on man. But that was not the beginning, for Revelation points us to a period long before this world was fashioned—to the days when the morning stars were begotten—when, like drops of dew from the fingers of the morning, stars and constellations fell trickling from the hand of God. When, by His own lips, He launched forth ponderous orbs. When with His own hands He sent comets, like thunderbolts, wandering through the sky to find, one day, their proper sphere. We go back to years gone by, when worlds were made and systems fashioned, but we have not even approached the beginning! Until we go to the time when all the universe slept in the mind of God as yet unborn—until we enter the eternity where God the Creator lived alone, everything sleeping within Him, all creation resting in His mighty gigantic thought—we have not guessed the beginning. We may go back, back, back, ages upon ages. We may go back, if we might use such strange words, whole eternities and yet never arrive at the beginning! Our wings might be tired, our imagination would die away. Could it outstrip the lightnings flashing in majesty, power and rapidity, it would soon weary itself before it could get to the beginning! But God from the beginning chose His people. When the unnavigated ether was yet unfanned by the wing of a single angel. When space was shoreless, or else unborn. When universal silence reigned and not a voice or whisper shocked the solemnity of silence. When there was no being and no motion, no time and nothing but God, Himself, alone in His eternity— when without the song of an angel, without the attendance of even the cherubim—long before the living creatures were born, or the wheels of the chariot of Jehovah were fashioned—even then, “in the beginning was the Word,” and in the beginning God’s people were one with the Word and “in the beginning He chose them unto eternal life.” Our Election, then, is eternal. I will not stop to prove it. I only just run over these thoughts for the benefit of young beginners, that they may understand what we mean by eternal, absolute Election.

IV. And, next, the Election is PERSONAL. Here again, our opponents have tried to overthrow Election by telling us that it is an Election of *nations*—and not of people. But here the Apostle says, “God has from the beginning chosen *you*” It is the most miserable shift on earth to make out that God has not chosen persons, but nations, because the very same objection that lies against the choice of persons, lies against the choice of a nation! If it were not just to choose a *person*it would be far more unjust to choose a nation, since nations are but the union of multitudes of persons! To choose a nation seems to be a more gigantic crime—if Election is a crime—than to choose one person. Surely to choose ten thousand would be reckoned to be worse than choosing one—to distinguish a whole nation from the rest of mankind seems to be a greater extravaganza in the acts of Divine Sovereignty than the Election of one poor mortal and leaving out another. But what are nations but men? What are whole peoples but combinations of different units? A nation is made up of that individual, and that, and that. And if you tell me that God chose the Jews, I say, then, He chose that Jew and that Jew and that Jew. And if you say He chooses Britain, then I say He chooses that British person and that British person and that British person. So that it is the same thing, after all. Election, then, is personal—it must be so! Everyone who reads this text and others like it, will see that Scripture continually speaks of God’s people one by one and speaks of them as having been the special subjects of Election—

***“*** *Sons we are through God s Election,   
Who in Jesus Christ believe;   
By eternal destination   
Sovereign Grace we here receive.*

We know it is personal Election

V. The other thought is —for my time flies too swiftly to enable me to dwell at length upon these points—that Election produces GOOD RESULTS. “He has from the beginning chosen you unto sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.” How many men mistake the Doctrine of Election altogether! And how my soul burns and boils at the recollection of the terrible evils that have accrued from the spoiling and the wresting of that glorious portion of God’s glorious Truth! How many are there who have said to themselves, “I am elect,” and have sat down in sloth and worse than that! They have said, “I am the elect of God,” and with both hands they have done wickedness. They have swiftly run to every unclean thing because they have said, “I am the chosen child of God, irrespective of my works—therefore I may live as I like and do what I like.” O, Beloved! Let me solemnly warn everyone of you not to carry the Truth of God too far— or, rather not to turn the Truth of God into error, for we cannot carry it too far! We may overstep the Truth—we can make that which was meant to be sweet for our comfort a terrible mixture for our destruction. I tell you there have been thousands of men who have been ruined by misunderstanding Election—who have said, “God has elected me to Heaven and to eternal life”—but they have forgotten that it is written, God has elected them, “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.” This is God’s Election—Election to *sanctification*and to *faith*. God chooses His people to be holy and to be Believers! How many of you here, then, are Believers? How many of my congregation can put their hands upon their hearts and say, “I trust in God that I am sanctified”? Is there one of you who says, “I am elect”?

One of you says, “I trust I am elect”—but I jog your memory about some vicious act that you committed during the last six days. Another of you says, “I am elect”—but I would look you in the face and say, “ *Elect*? You are a most cursed hypocrite and that is all you are!” Others would say, “I am elect”—but I would remind them that they neglect the Mercy Seat and do not pray. Oh, Beloved, never think you are elect unless you are *holy*. You may come to Christ as a sinner but you may not come to Christ as an elect person until you can see your holiness! Do not misconstrue what I say—do not say, “I am elect,” and yet think you can be living in sin! That is impossible. The elect of God are holy. They are not pure, they are not perfect, they are not spotless—but taking their life as a whole, they are holy persons. They are marked and distinct from others—and no man has a right to conclude himself elect except in his holiness. He may be elect and yet lying in darkness, but he has no right to believe it. No one can say it, if there is no evidence of it. The man may live one day, but he is dead at present. If you are walking in the fear of God, trying to please Him and to obey His Commandments, doubt not that your name has been written in the Lamb’s Book of Life from before the foundation of the world!

And, lest this should be too high for you, note the other mark of Election, which is faith —belief of the Truth of God. Whoever believes God’s Truth and believes on Jesus Christ, is elect. I frequently meet with poor souls who are fretting and worrying themselves about this thought—“What if I should not be elect!” “Oh, Sir,” they say, “I know I put my trust in Jesus. I know I believe in His name and trust in His blood. But what if I should not be elect?” Poor dear creature! You do not know much about the Gospel or you would never talk so, for *he that believes is elect*. Those who are elect, are elect unto sanctification and unto faith. If you have faith, you are one of God’s elect! You may know it and ought to know it, for it is an absolute certainty! If you, as a sinner, look to Jesus Christ this morning and say—

***“*** *Nothing in my hands I bring,*

*Simply to Your Cross I cling,*you are elect! I am not afraid of Election frightening poor saints or sinners. There are many Divines who tell the enquirer, “Election has nothing to do with you.” That is very bad, because the poor soul is not to be silenced like that. If you could silence him so, it might be well—but he will think of it, he can’t help it. Say to him, then, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are elect. If you will cast yourself on Jesus, you are elect. I tell you—the chief of sinners—this morning—I tell you in His name—if you will come to God without any works of your own, cast yourself on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—if you will come, now,. and trust in Him, you are elect—you were loved of God from before the foundation of the world, for you could not do that unless God had given you the power and had chosen you to do it! Now you are safe and secure if you do but come and cast yourself on Jesus Christ and wish to be saved and to be loved by Him. But think not that any man will be saved without faith and without holiness. Do not conceive, my Hearers, that some decree, passed in the dark ages of eternity, will save your souls, unless you believe in Christ! Do not sit down and fancy that you are to be saved without faith and holiness! That is a most abominable and accursed heresy and has ruined thousands.

Lay not Election as a pillow for you to sleep on, or you may be ruined. God forbid that I should be sewing pillows under armholes that you may rest comfortably in your sins. Sinner, there is nothing in the Bible to lighten your sins! But if you are condemned, O Man! If you are lost, O Woman! You will not find in this Bible one drop to cool your tongue, or one Doctrine to lessen your guilt. Your damnation will be entirely your own fault and your sin will richly merit it— because you believe you are not condemned. “You believe not because you are not of My sheep. You will not come to Me that you might have life.” Do not fancy that Election excuses sin—do not dream of it—do not rock yourself in sweet complacency in the thought of your irresponsibility! You are responsible. We must give you both things. We must have Divine Sovereignty and we must have man’s responsibility. We must have Election, but we must ply your hearts—we must send God’s Truth at you. We must speak to you and remind you of this, that while it is written, “In Me is your help,” yet it is also written, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself.”

VI. Now, lastly, what are the true and legitimate tendencies of right conceptions concerning the Doctrine of Election? First, I will tell you what the Doctrine of Election will make saints do under the blessing of God. And, secondly what it will do for sinners if God blesses it to them.

First, I think Election, to a saint, is one of the most *stripping D*octrines in all the world—to take away all trust in the flesh or all reliance upon anything except Jesus Christ. How often do we wrap ourselves up in our own righteousness and array ourselves with the false pearls and gems of our own works and doings? We begin to say, “Now I shall be saved, because I have this and that evidence.” Instead of that, it is naked faith that saves—that faith and that, alone, unites to the Lamb—irrespective of works, although it is productive of them. How often do we lean on some work other than that of our own Beloved Jesus and trust in some might, other than that which comes from on High? Now if we would have this might taken from us, we must consider Election. Pause, my Soul, and consider this. God loved you before you had a being! He loved you when you were dead in trespasses and sins and sent His Son to die for you! He purchased you with His precious blood before you could say His name! Can you, then, be *proud*

I know nothing, nothing again, that is more *humbling* for us than this Doctrine of Election. I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it when endeavoring to understand it. I have stretched my wings and, eagle-like, I have soared towards the sun. Steady has been my eye and true my wing for a season. But, when I came near it and the one thought possessed me—“God has from the beginning chosen you unto salvation,” I was lost in its luster! I was staggered with the mighty thought—and from the dizzy elevation down came my soul, prostrate and broken, saying, “Lord, I am nothing, I am less than nothing! Why me? Why me?”

Friends, if you want to be humbled, study Election, for it will make you humble under the influence of God ’s Spirit. He who is proud of his election is not elect—and he who is humbled under a sense of it may believe that he is. He has every reason to believe that he is, for it is one of the most blessed effects of Election—that it helps us to humble ourselves before God.

Once again —Election in the Christian should make him very *fearless* and very *bold.* No man will be so bold as he who believes that he is elect of God. What cares he for man if he is chosen of his Maker? What will he care for the pitiful chirpings of some tiny sparrows when he knows that he is an eagle of a royal race? Will he care when the beggar points at him, when the blood royal of heaven runs in his veins? Will he fear if all the world stand against him? If earth is all in arms abroad, he dwells in perfect peace—for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great pavilion of the Almighty! “I am God’s,” he says, “I am distinct from other men. They are of an inferior race. Am I not noble? Am I not one of the aristocrats of Heaven? Is not my name written in God’s Book?” Does he care for the world? No—like the lion that cares not for the barking of the dog, he smiles at all his enemies—and when they come too near him, he moves himself and dashes them to pieces. What cares he for them? He walks about them like a colossus—while little men walk under him and understand him not. His brow is made of iron, his heart is of flint—what does he care for man? No—if one universal hiss came up from the wide world, he would smile at it, for he would say—

***“*** *He that has made his refuge God,*

*Shall find a most secure abode.*I am one of His elect. I am chosen of God and precious—and though the world cast me out, I fear not. Ah, you timeserving professors, some of you will bend like the willows! There are few oaken-Christians, nowadays, that can stand the storm—and I will tell you the reason. It is because you do not believe yourselves to be elect! The man who knows he is elect will be too proud to sin—he will not humble himself to commit the acts of common people. The believer in God’s Truth will say, “ *I* compromise my principles? *I* change my Doctrines? *I* lay aside my views? *I* hide what I believe to be true? No! Since I know I am one of God’s elect, in the very teeth of all men I shall speak God’s Truth, whatever man may say.” Nothing makes a man so truly bold as to feel that he is God’s elect! He shall not quiver, he shall not shake—who knows that God has chosen him!

Moreover, Election will make us *holy*. Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen! “Shall I sin,” he says, “after God has chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much loving kindness and tender mercy? No, my God, since You have chosen me, I will love You. I will live to You—

***“*** *Since You, the everlasting God,*

*My Father have become.*I will give myself to You to be Yours forever, by Election and by Redemption, casting myself on You and solemnly consecrating myself to Your service.

And now, lastly, to the ungodly. What says Election to you? First, you ungodly ones, I will excuse you for a moment. There are many of you who do not like Election and I cannot blame you for it, for I have heard those preach Election who have sat down and said, “I have not one word to say to the sinner.” Now, I say you *ought* to dislike such preaching as that, and I do not blame you for it! But I say, take courage, take hope, O you Sinner, that there is Election! So far from dispiriting and discouraging you, it is a very hopeful and joyous thing that there is an Election. What if I told you, perhaps, none can be saved, none are ordained to eternal life? Would you not tremble and fold your hands in hopelessness and say, “Then how can I be saved, since none are elect?” But, I say there is a multitude of elect, beyond all counting—a host that no mortal can number! Therefore, take heart, poor Sinner! Cast away your despondency—may you not be elect as well as any other?—for there is chosen an innumerable host! There is joy and comfort for you! Then, not only take heart, but go and try the Master! Remember, if you were not elect, you would lose nothing by it. What did the four lepers say? “Let us fall unto the host of the Syrians, for if we stay here, we must die, and if we go to them, we can but die.” O Sinner! Come to the Throne of electing mercy! You may die where you are. Go to God—and, even supposing He should spurn you, suppose His uplifted hand should drive you away—a thing impossible—yet you will not lose anything! You will not be more damned for that. Besides, supposing you are damned, you would at lease have the satisfaction of being able to lift up your eyes in Hell and say, “God, I asked mercy of You and You would not grant it. I sought it, but You did refuse it.” That you shall never say, O Sinner! If you go to Him and ask Him, you shall receive— for He never has spurned one yet! Is not that hope for you? Though there is an allotted number, yet it is true that all who seek belong to that number! Go and seek—and if you should be the first one to go to Hell, tell the devils that you did perish thus—tell the demons that you are a castaway after having come as a guilty sinner to Jesus. I tell you it would disgrace the Eternal—with reverence to His name—and He would not allow such a thing! He is jealous of His honor and He could not allow a sinner to say that!

But ah, poor Soul! Do not think thus, that you can lose anything by coming! There is yet one more thought —do you love the thought of Election this morning? Are you willing to admit its justice? Do you say, “I feel that I am lost. I deserve it and if my brother is saved, I cannot murmur. If God destroys me, I deserve it, but if He saves the person sitting beside me, He has a right to do what He will with His own and I have lost nothing by it.” Can you say that honestly from your heart? If so, then the Doctrine of Election has had its right effect on your spirit and you are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven! You are brought where you ought to be, where the Spirit wants you to be—and being so this morning, depart in peace! God has forgiven your sins! You would not feel that if you were not pardoned—you would not feel that if the Spirit of God were not working in you! Rejoice, then, in this! Let your hope rest on the Cross of Christ. Think not on Election, but on Christ Jesus. Rest on Jesus—Jesus first, last and without end!

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.   
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #43 New Park Street Pulpit 1

**÷2Th 2.16**

DIVINE LOVE AND ITS GIFTS  
NO. 1096

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 16, 1873, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.”** *2Th 2:16-17***.**

THE Thessalonians had been much disturbed by the predictions of different persons that the day of Christ was at hand. There always have been pretenders to prophetic knowledge who have fixed dates for the end of the world and, by their fanaticism, have driven many into lunatic asylums and disturbed the peace of others. Some of this band had worried the saints at Thessalonica. The Apostle, after beseeching them not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled by such follies, went on to beg them not to be deceived by forged letters or pretended prophets and then prayed for them that they might possess abiding consolation which would keep them calmly persevering in holiness.

His prayer is singularly emphatic. He cries to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and to God, even our Father, to comfort their hearts, that by such consolations they may be so confirmed that nothing may cause them to decline from any holy enterprise or testimony. Perhaps, during their fright, some of them had ceased from service, reckoning it vain to go on with anything when the world was so near its end. Therefore Paul would have them calmed in spirit that they might diligently persevere in their Christian course. That which frightens us from duty cannot be a good thing—true comfort establishes us in every good word and work.

It is an ill wind which blows no one any good. We owe to the needless alarms of the Thessalonians this prayer, which, while it was useful for them, is also instructive for us. And I pray that while we look into it we may be led into deep thoughts of the love of God and not into thoughts only, but into a personal enjoyment of that love, so that this morning the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. To hear of the love of God is sweet—to believe it most precious—but to enjoy it is Paradise below the skies! May God grant us a taste this morning.

I shall first call your earnest attention to the blessed fact recorded in our text, that “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, loved us.” Then we will dwell upon the past manifestations of that love— “He has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.”

And then we shall dwell for a while upon the prayer which Paul based upon this love and its manifestation, “that God would comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.”

I. First, then, dear Brethren, let me ask your hearts, as well as your minds, to consider THIS GLORIOUS FACT—“Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us.” I cannot help repeating my frequent remark that the love of God is a theme more fit for the solitary contemplation of each person than for public utterance or explanation. It is to be felt, but it never can be uttered. Who can speak of love? In what language shall we sing its sweetness? No other word, nor set of words, can utter its meaning. You may go round about and make a long definitions, but you have not defined it—and he who never felt his heart glow with it will remain an utter stranger to it—depict it as you may.

Love must be felt in the heart. It cannot be learned from a dictionary. “God has loved us.” I want you not so much to follow what I shall have to say upon that wonderful fact as to try and think over this thought for yourselves. God has loved us! Drink into that Truth of God! Take the Word, lay it under your tongue and let it dissolve like a wafer made with honey till it sweetens all your soul. God has loved us! Let me remark that it does not say, “He pitied us.” That would be true, for, “like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” Pity is one degree below love and often leads to it, but it is not love—you may pity a person whom, apart from his sufferings, you would heartily dislike. You cannot endure the man, yet you are sorrowful that he should be so pained.

Nor does the text declare that God has had mercy upon us. I could comprehend that, yes, and bless God forever, because His mercy endures forever. It is, to my mind, quite understandable that the good and gracious God should be merciful towards His creatures—but it is a far greater thing that He should love them. Love is a feeling vastly more to be valued than mere mercy. Merciful is a man to his beast, but he does not love it. Merciful has many a man been to his enemies for whom he has had no degree of affection. But God does not merely pity us and have mercy upon us, He loves us! Neither can this word be bartered for that of benevolence. There is an aspect under which God is love to all His creatures because He is benevolent and wishes well towards all things that He has made, but Paul was not thinking of that when he said, “God has loved us, and given us everlasting consolation.”

A mother is not said to be benevolent towards her child, nor a husband coldly benevolent towards his bride—benevolence would be a poor, poor, substitute for love. Love is as infinitely beyond benevolence as the gold of kings in value exceeds the stone of the quarry. We have frequently heard theologians declare that the love of God towards His elect is the love of complacency and the statement, though perhaps true, is most frosty. One would not like to strike out the word, “love,” and put in its place the word, “complacency.” It would be like setting up a globe of ice in the place of the sun. Love glows with sunlight—complacency has, at best, but cold moonlike beams.

No, we must hold to the words, “has loved us.” Truly, the Lord has a complacency in His people as He sees them in Christ, but He has much more than that. He is benevolent towards His people and towards all creatures, but He is much more than that towards us. He is merciful, He is pitiful, He is everything that is good, but He is more than that—He “has loved us.” You know, Mother, how you look upon that dear child of yours as you hold it in your arms. Why, it seems a part of yourself! You love it as you love yourself and your thoughts of it do not differ from your thoughts about your own welfare—the child is intertwisted with your very being.

Now God also has united us to Himself by cords of love and bonds of affection. And He thinks of us as He thinks of Himself. I can express this, but I cannot explain it. Even now I feel much more inclined to sit down and weep for joy of heart that God could ever love me than to try and speak to you. He made the heavens and I am less than the smallest speck—yet He loves me! It is His eternal arm that has held up the universe in all ages and I am as a leaf of the forest, green awhile, but soon to grow yellow and to be buried with my fellows, yet the Eternal loves me and always will love me! With His great Infinite heart He loves me! As a God He loves me! Eternal loves me! It is a conquering thought, it utterly overcomes us and crushes us with its weight of joy. It bows us to the ground and casts us into a swoon of ecstasy when it is realized by the mind, “God, even our Father, has loved us.”

Now, permit the other side of the thought to shine upon your minds. The marvel is not merely that God has loved, but that he has loved us! And we are so insignificant, so frail, so foolish, let us add—for this increases the marvel—so sinful and therefore so uncomely, so ungrateful. We are so provoking, so willfully obstinate in returning to old sins again and so deserve to be abhorred and rejected! I can imagine the Lord’s love to the Apostles. We can sometimes think of His love to the early saints without any great wonder, and of His love to the Patriarchs and to the confessors and the martyrs, and to some eminently holy men whose biographies have charmed us—but that our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself God, even our Father, should have loved us is a world of wonders! And if I put it into the singular number and say, “Who loved me and gave Himself for me,” it shall ever stand first of all miracles to my soul’s apprehension that I should be the object of Divine affection! Dear Brothers and Sisters, I leave this meditation with you. I cannot speak of it anymore. I beseech you to baptize your souls into it and to let this one thought overwhelm you this day—“God, even our Father, has loved us.”

Let me carry your minds onward a little further. Remember that the eternal love of God is the great Fountain and Source from which proceed all the spiritual blessings which we enjoy. If you stand at the source of a

great river like the Thames you see nothing there but a tiny rivulet—the fact being that we do but by courtesy speak of that little brook as the source of the river—it is only a very partial source. A great river derives its volume of water from a thousand streams and is sustained by the whole of the watershed along which it flows. The imaginary fountainhead of a river is therefore but a small affair. But suppose the Thames had never borrowed from a single stream in all its course, but welled up at once a full-grown river from some one fountainhead—what a sight it would be!

Now the mercy of God to us in Christ Jesus owes nothing to any other stream. It leaps in all its fullness from the infinite depths of the love of God to us and if in contemplation you can travel to that great deep, profound and unfathomable, and see welling up all the floods of Covenant Grace which afterwards flow on forever to all the chosen seed, you have before you that which angels wonder at! If it would be marvelous to see one river leap up from the earth full-grown, what would it be to gaze upon a vast spring from which all the rivers of the earth should at once come bubbling up, a thousand of them born at a birth? What a vision it would be! Who can conceive it? And yet the love of God is that Fountain from which all the rivers of mercy which have ever gladdened our race—all the rivers of Grace in time and of glory hereafter—take their rise! My Soul, stand at that sacred Fountainhead and adore and magnify forever and ever, “God, even our Father, who has loved us.”

Now please notice the words of the text, for they are full of instruction. When speaking of this love, the Apostle joins our Lord Jesus Christ Himself with, “God, even our Father.” He honored the Deity of Jesus by speaking of Him side by side, and on terms of equality, with God the Father. But there is more here than this, for the words remind us that our Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, act in holy concert in the matters which concern our welfare. Jesus Christ is the Gift of the Father’s love to us, but Jesus Himself loved His own and laid down His life for His flock. It is true that the Son loves us, but the Father Himself loves us, too. The love of God does not come to us from one Person of the blessed Trinity alone, but from all.

We ought to make no distinctions by way of preference in the love of either Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. One love dwells in the breast of the one undivided Three. We must adore and bless our Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, with equal gratitude. Still notice that Jesus Christ is here put first and if the reason is requested, we find it in His mediatorial office. He is first to us in our experience. We began our dealings with Heaven, not by going to the Father, but to His Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord has truly said, “No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” All attempts to get to commune with the Father, unless through the Son, will be futile. Election by the Father is not first to us, though it stands forth in order of time—redemption by the Son is our starting point.

Not at the Throne of Sovereignty, but at the Cross of dying Love our spiritual life must date its birth. Look to Jesus first, even our Lord Jesus Christ, and then follow after the Father. I am sure every converted soul here knows that this is the truth and I would exhort everyone who is seeking salvation to take care to observe God’s order. You must remember that the love of the Father will never be perceived by us, nor felt in our hearts, till first of all we go to Jesus Christ, who is the one Mediator between God and man.

Note the words of the text again—The love of God to us gives to us the Lord Jesus to be our own Savior, Friend, Husband and Lord. By Grace we obtain possession of Jesus Christ—Christ is ours. Observe the Lord, “Our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Apostle might have written, “The Lord Jesus Christ,” but when he was testifying of the great love of God, the article would not have sufficed—he must use a word of possession. Faith looks to Jesus and finds salvation in that look. Then she grows into Assurance and having used her eyes to look with, she next employs her hands to grasp with. She takes hold of Jesus and says: “He is all my salvation, He is all my desire, He is my Christ.” And from then on Assurance speaks not of the Lord Jesus Christ, but of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I want you to drink into the love of God this morning from the silver pipe of this thought—Jesus Christ the Son of the eternal God, who is also a Man like yourself, is yours, altogether yours. If you are believers in Him He is from head to foot entirely yours! In all His offices, in all His attributes, in all that He is, in all that He has done, in all that He is doing, in all that He shall do, He is your Savior! Though you cannot take Him up in your arms as Simeon did, yet your faith can embrace Him with the same ecstasy and feel that you have seen God’s salvation! Behold what manner of love is revealed in this, that God should give His only Son to us. God commends His love to us by this unspeakable Gift. Here love has reached its climax. Blessed be the love of God this morning and forevermore!

Observe that this love displays itself in another shape, for the text goes on to say, “And God, even our Father.” He might have said, “God, even the Father.” I have no doubt the text does refer to the Father as one Person of the blessed Trinity, but it runs thus—“even our Father.” A father! There is music in that word but not to a fatherless child—to him it is full of sorrowful memories. Those who have never lost a father can scarcely know how precious a relation a father is. A father, who is a father, indeed, is very dear! Do we not remember how we climbed his knee? Do we not remember the kisses we imprinted on his cheeks? Do we not recall, today, with gratitude the chidings of his wisdom and the gentle encouragements of his affection? We owe, ah, who shall tell how much we owe to our fathers according to the flesh—and when they are taken from us we lament their loss—and feel that a great gap is made in our family circle.

Listen, then, to these words, “Our Father, who is in Heaven.” Consider the Grace contained in the Lord’s deigning to take us into the relationship of children and giving us, with the relationship, the nature and the spirit

of children, so that we say, “Abba, Father.” Did you ever lie in bed with your limbs vexed with sore pains and cry, “Father, pity Your child?” Did you ever look into the face of death and as you thought you were about to depart, cry, “My Father, help me! Uphold me with Your gracious hand and bear me through the stream of death”? It is at such times that we realize the glory of the Fatherhood of God and in our feebleness learn to cling to the Divine strength and catch at the Divine love. It is most precious to think that God is our own Father!

There, now, I cannot talk about it. Upon some themes it would be hard to be silent, but here it is hard to speak. I can but exclaim, “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God!” And, having said that, what more remains? Before I turn from this gracious and fruitful topic of the love of God, I beg you to notice that it is no new thing, no affair of yesterday. “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, has loved us.” He does not tell us when this began and he could not have done so had he tried! He has loved us. Loved us when first we came to Him repenting. Loved us when we were spending our living with harlots. Loved us when we were at the swine trough. Loved us when from head to foot we were one mass of defilement.

O God, did You love me when I played the rebel? Did You love me when I could blaspheme Your name? What manner of love is this? Yes, and He loved us before we had a being! Loved us and redeemed us long before we existed! Loved us before this world had sprung out of nothingness! Loved us before the daystar first proclaimed the morning! Loved us before any of the angels had begun to cover their faces with their wings in reverent adoration! From everlasting, the Lord loved His people!

Now, again I say, drink into this Truth of God—feed on it. Expect us not to speak at length about it, but contemplate the fact—“Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us.”

II. Now we shall turn to the second point which is THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS LOVE. They divide under two heads—“everlasting consolation” and, “good hope through Grace.” First, God’s love has given us everlasting consolation. The Lord found us wretched. When the arrows of conviction were sticking in our hearts we were bleeding to death and what we needed, first of all, was to have these wounds staunched. Therefore the Lord came to us with consolations. Do you remember the time when the blood of Jesus Christ flowed warm over your wounds and made them cease to bleed? Have you forgotten the hour when you heard the voice of the Lord saying in the Word, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned,” and you were enabled to see Jesus Christ as your Substitute suffering in your place—and you knew that your sins were forgiven for His name’s sake? You have not forgotten that, have you?

Well, that was one of the everlasting consolations which He gave you in the time of your distress. Since that day you have had your sorrows— perhaps you have seldom been long without them—but consolation has always followed on the heels of tribulation and your main consolation has continued to be where it was at the first—you still find the sweetest joy on earth to be looking unto Jesus! When sin rebels you put it down by the same Grace which overthrew it at the first. Conscience starts and accuses you and you answer its accusations with that sweet word, “Jesus died for our transgressions, and rose again for our justification.”

The greatest delight of all is that this consolation is an everlasting one—other sources of comfort dry up—friends have called to visit you in times of distress and have suggested pleasant thoughts that have whiled away a mournful hour. But your griefs have returned again and the passing comfort has been of no further service to you. When a man sees that Jesus Christ took all his sins and was punished for them so that the man, himself, can never be punished again—when he understands that wondrous mystery of Substitution—then he gets a consolation which serves him at all times and in all weathers! Whatever may occur to him he flies to this Refuge—and even though he may have fallen into great sin, he knows that the Atonement was not made for sham sin, but for real sin—and he resorts again to that same Fountain filled with blood where he was once washed, resting fully assured that it will be equal to the washing of him as long as he shall be capable of sin. “Everlasting consolation!”

There are some here present who have tried this consolation for 40 or 50 years—dear Brothers and Sisters, I am sure you do not find it is any the weaker, but, on the contrary, you understand more of its strength! You are more happy today in falling back upon the love of God than you were. And at this moment you feel that in the absence of all other comforts it would suffice you to know that everlasting consolation which is given you in Christ Jesus. Let us run over, for a moment, some of our consolations. The first one is, as I have already said, that God has forgiven us all our transgressions because Jesus died in our place. The next consolation is that God loves us and can never change in His love—“Whom once He loves He never leaves, but loves them to the end.”

Then we have the grand consolation that the promises of God do not depend upon our faithfulness for their fulfillment, but are all established and made yes and amen in Christ Jesus. We have this consolation—that our salvation does not depend upon ourselves! As we fell and were lost by the first Adam’s unrighteousness, so we have risen and are saved through the second Adam’s righteousness, beyond all risk and fear of perishing. We stand upon a firm Foundation, not on the shifting sand of creature obedience and faithfulness, but upon the eternal Rock of a world which Christ has completed and over which He sang that joyous paean—“It is finished”—before He entered into His rest.

We have, also, this consolation, that all things work together for good for us who love God and are the called according to His purpose. And again, this other consolation, that as long as Christ exists we are as safe, for He has said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” We also have this consolation, that even though we shall sleep in the dust for awhile, yet He has said it, “I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am that they may behold My Glory.” In fact, to tell you all the consolations which God has given us would need many an hour! And fully to enjoy them will occupy your entire lives, for everlasting consolation is not to be spread out before you and done with in the short space of a discourse. Thus much upon one of the first manifestations of Divine love.

The next is, He has given us “good hope.” Consolation for the present, hope for the future. “Good hope,” the hope when days and years are past we all shall meet in Heaven. The hope that whatever the future may be, it is full of bliss for us. The hope of immortality for our souls and of resurrection for our bodies, for when Christ shall come, we, also, that sleep in Jesus, shall come with Him. The hope of reigning with Jesus Christ on earth in the days of His triumph and reigning with Him forever and ever in endless felicity. This is our hope, a good hope, for it is based and founded on a good foundation. A fanatic’s hope will pass away with the vapors which produced it, but the hope of the true Believer is good because it is founded in Truth and in Divine Grace.

“A good hope in Grace,” is the Greek. If I believed in my own merit and based my hopes on them, I should be only self-deceived and blinded, for what merit have I? But if my hope is fixed, alone, in Grace and that is the sphere in which my consolation and hope are found, then, since God is assuredly gracious, since He has made a Covenant of Grace with all Believers. Since He has ratified the Covenant by the gift of His own Son and since He has sworn by His holiness, ours is a good hope. Since God will be as good as His Word, our hope in Grace is good. Here stands the fact— it is written, “he that believes in the Lord Jesus has everlasting life.” God has covenanted with that man that He shall be saved eternally, and since God cannot lie, the believing man must and shall be saved.

Why is it, do you think, that some Believer’s hopes flicker? Because they get away from a hope in Grace and look towards themselves and their own merits. “Oh,” they say, “I have not prayed as I did. I do not feel as I did, therefore, my hope declines.” Friend, was your hope founded on your prayers? Was your hope grounded in part upon your feelings? If so, it may well quiver and tremble! One of these days it will go down altogether, for the foundation is not able to bear its weight. But if my hope is fixed on this—that God has promised and cannot change His promise—I have a good foundation to build on. He will not alter the thing that has gone forth out of His lips. He has said, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” and He cannot change His own Word! Therefore every Believer has the promise of eternal life.

“But,” says one, “it surprises me to hear you talk so,” Does it? It much more surprises me that I may so speak! It is marvelous to the last degree that God, even our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ should have given us such a hope as this! I never feel at all astonished at some people’s hope when I find that it is this—the hope that if they behave themselves they will get to Heaven—the hope that if they are faithful, God will be faithful. Why! Any simpleton might have imagined such a hope as that! But a Divine Revelation was needed to set before us the great hope of the Gospel and it needs Grace-given faith to believe that God will not change nor lie and, therefore, must save all those who have believed in His Son Jesus Christ. He cannot suffer one of the sheep of Christ to perish, or His promise will be of no effect.

“If I believed that,” says one, “it would cause me to lead a careless life.” Perhaps it would, but it does not lead true Believers to do so. On the contrary, we feel that if God loves us so and deals so generously with us, and takes us right away from the whips of Sinai and the Covenant of the Law, and places us entirely under Grace, we love Him as we never loved before! And because of that love, sin is hateful to us and we shun it as a deadly thing! The Law which you think would drive men to holiness has never done it, while the Grace which you imagine would lead us to licentiousness binds us with solemn bonds of consecration to serve our God 10 times more than before!

Suppose some one were to tell my children that the continuance of my love to them will depend entirely upon their good behavior. My children would repel the suggestion with indignation. They would answer, “we know better! You speak falsely! Our father will always love us.” Even so, the Lord’s children know that their Father’s love is Immutable. For our transgressions, our heavenly Father will visit us with the rod, but never with the sword. He will be angry with us and chide us, but He will love us just as much when He is angry as He did before. And as long as ever we are His sons—and that we always must be, for sonship is not a relationship which will ever change—so long will He love us.

Do you think that children become disobedient because their relationship is unchangeable? I never heard of such a thing! They have many reasons for being disobedient within their own little wayward hearts, but no child disobeys his father because he always must be his father’s child, or because his father loves him! I have heard of one child who said to another, “Come with me, John, and rob such an orchard. Your father is so kind he will not beat you if you are found out.” The little lad drew himself up and said, “Do you think because my father is kind to me that, therefore, I will go and vex him?” This is the holy reasoning of love—it draws no license from Grace, but rather feels the strong constraints of gratitude leading it to holiness.

It may be that in unregenerate hearts the love of God, if it could come there, would be turned into an excuse for sin, but it is not so to us, my

Brothers and Sisters. Since the Grace of God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus, the love of God constrains us not to sin but to walk in holiness all our days. Blessed be His name, then! We are not ashamed to rejoice that God, even our Father, has loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope in Grace.

III. The last thing is THE PRAYER flowing out of all this. The Apostle prays, and we pray this morning, that God would comfort your hearts. This is not spoken of everybody, but of such as believe in the Lord Jesus. It is of the utmost importance that your hearts should be comforted. Cheerfulness, habitual calm, peace of mind, content of spirit—these ought to be the very atmosphere you breathe—and Paul thinks it so important that he prays that God Himself, and Christ Himself, may comfort your hearts.

I know you have many troubles—how very few are altogether without them! Some of you are very poor, others suffer heavy losses in business and exercises of soul, with much trial in the world and in the Church. I pray the good Lord comfort your hearts, speaking not to your ears only, but to your innermost nature. “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Why, surely, if you believe that God loves you, it ought to make your heart glad! And if He gives you everlasting consolation you cannot be otherwise than happy!

I remember well when I was under a sense of sin looking at a dog and wishing I were such as he, that I might die without fear of judgment hereafter, for it seemed so awful a thing to live on forever as a sinner. But now, on the other hand, I have sometimes looked at the happiest animals and I have said to myself, “Ah, but yonder poor creature does not know the love of God and how thankful I am to God that He has given me the capacity to know Him. Why, if I could hear of an angel in Heaven who did not know the love of God I should pity him! There are kings and mighty emperors who know not the Lord’s love and what poor, pitiable creatures they are! But as for you who rejoice in Divine love, I would have you go into the darkest alley, if you are forced to live there, and undergo the most wearisome toil if that is your lot—yes, and go home to a persecuting husband, or a churlish father and yet hear melodious music ringing in your hearts for—“God, even our Father, which has loved us, has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” This is enough to make the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The next part of the prayer is that the “Lord would establish us in every good word and work.” I see that the most approved editions of the original have it, “in every good work and word,” putting the best first, and the thought is this, that God would make His people so happy that they would never have an inclination to leave off any good work or word. Depression of spirit often leads to slackness of hand. No doubt many, through sad hearts, have ceased to labor for Christ. A lack of gladness has restrained their activity.

Now, the Apostle would not have any one of us cease from serving God in good works or in good words through a lack of consolation. Does God love you? Do you know it? How, then, can you cease from any good work? Did enemies abuse you for speaking the Truth of God? Did you say it because you felt you loved God? Say it again, Man! Say it again! Did you work in your class without success? Did you do it because God loved you and you wanted to show that you loved Him? Go on, Brother! Go on, Sister! Success or no success! God loves you and He has given you everlasting consolation, therefore be established in your good work.

Have you been accustomed to sing His praises and has the devil said, “Leave off! Leave off!” Have you been accustomed to rebuke sin and to tell others about the Savior in your own poor way, and are you getting low in spirit? Do you doubt your own interest in Christ? Have you lost the comfort you once enjoyed? O, dear Brother, come back to the old original source of happiness—“Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” After refreshing yourself with this blessed Truth of God, you will return with renewed energy to good words and works and continue in them steadfast, unmovable—till life’s allotted service shall come to a close.

Now and then we become greatly disheartened about the condition of the Church. I know I do, I see everywhere Popery spreading, or else rationalism—these rival evils are devouring our country. There is far too little prayerfulness and too little Gospel preaching. And at times one is apt to cry out, like Elijah, that no one is left who is faithful to Jehovah—all knees are bowed to Baal! We must not give way to this feeling, dear Friends, for, “God, even the Father, has loved us.” When the disciples were too much elated with their success and came back to Jesus and said, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us,” Jesus said, “Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.”

And today, when we are depressed with great anxieties and come back to our Master, and say, “Lord, the devil is getting the upper hand over us,” He repeats to us the same admonition, “Nevertheless do not be depressed about this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven and your Father has given you everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” Establish your hearts, then, beloved Brothers and Sisters! Be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Things are not what they seem. Dark nights are but the prelude to bright days. The rain shall be followed by the clear shining. When the Truth of God retreats, she only retires to leap to a greater victory! Though each wave, as it comes up upon the shore, may die and you may think that there is no progress, yet the tide is coming in—even Jehovah’s tide of everlasting Truth which shall cover all the earth!

Be not discouraged! Go to your God. Get away, every man, from your circumstances and from your selves and get to your Savior and your Shepherd! And there, like sheep in the pasture, lie down to feed. And then, like sheep obedient to the Shepherd, rise up and follow Him where ever He goes. God bless you in this. Perhaps while I have been preaching, some unconverted person here has been saying—“There is nothing for me.” Do you remember, dear Friend, what the Syro-Phoenician woman said? She was called a dog by the Savior and that is what you think you are, but she said, “The dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the Master’s table.”

Now, if I called myself a dog, would there be anything in this subject that I might dare to lay hold upon, because, like a crumb, it fell from the table? Yes. It seems to me there is. Evidently God deals with His own people in a way of Grace, for it is said, He has “given” us—it is altogether of His free love and it is added—“through Grace,” or absolute favor. The consolations of the Lord are the gifts of mercy and love. Well, then, if He is gracious to one, why should He not be gracious to another? And if those who sit at His table were once unclean, filthy and depraved, and yet the Sovereign Grace of God called them and brought them into the banquet of love, why should it not light on me also?

If it is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy—why should He not show mercy to me, whoever I may be? Why not to me? But is there a door through which I can come to the gracious Lord? Yes, there is, and it is the other crumb in the text, for it begins with, “our Lord Jesus Christ.” My Soul, that is where you must begin this morning! There is the Lord Jesus Christ! I see Him hanging on the Cross bleeding for the sins of others, with hands stretched wide that He may receive sinners to His heart. And that heart has a channel made down to it by the spear, that prayers and tears may find an easy way into His sympathies.

Come, my Soul, come now and tell your case to Jesus. Fellow Sinner, come and confess your sins to Jesus and then throw yourself at His feet with this upon your heart and lips—“If I must perish, I will perish clinging to the Cross, declaring to all men that my hope is stayed on Him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for the sins of man.” You will never perish there, Sinner! Go there at once and be safe! God help you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Thessalonians 2, 3. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #1542 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

FREE GRACE A MOTIVE FOR FREE GIVING  
NO. 1542

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

ON BEHALF OF THE FREE HOSPITALS OF LONDON.

**“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace,  
comfort your hearts and establish you in  
every good word and work.”***2Th 2:16-17***.**

THE Thessalonian saints had been much persecuted and afflicted and they had exhibited great faith, so much so that Paul says, “We ourselves glory in you in the Church of God for your patience and faith.” As if they had not enough trouble coming from the outside, there sprang up in their midst certain hot-headed teachers who declared that the Day of Christ was immediately at hand. The coming of the Lord is the most grand hope of the Church and it is an evidence of the extreme power of error to poison and pervert the Truth of God that a hope which is our brightest consolation can be so twisted as to cause the saints to be “shaken in mind” and troubled.

But so it appears to have been with the Thessalonians. They were perplexed with mysterious rumors which the zealots probably supported by a misinterpretation of the Apostle’s own language in his former letter to them. It would appear that they were tempted to leave their regular habits of life—some of them even neglected their business upon the theory that there was no need to attend to it because the world was so speedily to be at an end. This gave an occasion for “busybodies” to cease from working and create great disquietude among the more sober members and, therefore, Paul wrote them this second letter with the earnest intent that they might be established in the Truth of God, kept from evil and that disorderly walking might be repressed and that the Church might be at peace. Paul felt that it was of the utmost importance that this honorable Church should be at rest and should not lack consolation either as to its bitter persecutions or its internal difficulties.

My subject, this morning, leads me to make this the first point to be dwelt upon—it is most important that Believers should enjoy consolation. When I have, for a while, spoken upon that, I would with delight expatiate upon the fact that this consolation is most freely provided and bestowed in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—and it is from this subject that I purpose to draw a practical inference which may help the collection for the hospitals, namely, that the freeness with which these consolations are given to us should lead us to a holy benevolence towards others who need consolation.

I. First, then, IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT BELIEVERS SHOULD ENJOY CONSOLATION. We must not say that it does not matter whether we are doubting or believing, whether we are sighing or rejoicing—it does matter a great deal. Every commander knows that if he has not his soldiers in good heart, there may be a great many of them and they may be well trained for war, but the battle is not likely to be won. Courage is essential to valor. Much depends upon the case in which a man finds himself upon the eve of conflict. If the soldier has no stomach for the fight, as our forefathers were known to say, he will make a sorry display when the tug of war comes on.

The Lord delights not to see His people with their heads hanging down like bulrushes, depressed and dismayed. His Word to them is, “Be strong; fear not.” He is “the blessed God” and He would have those who know His glorious Gospel to live a life of blessedness, that they may the better serve Him. Does not His Spirit say, “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice”? Has He not given the Comforter, that He may continually console us? Believers will far better answer the Lord’s purpose and bring more glory to His name if they are filled with peace and joy in believing, than they will if they yield to despondency, for the Scripture says, “the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

I am sure that the Lord would have us be of good courage, for its importance is implied in the very existence of our text. It is the prayer of an Inspired man. Paul wrote not only at the dictate of brotherly love, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit when he penned this prayer, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” The Holy Spirit moved the man of God to breathe this desire and to put it on record that it might be the desire of all good men as long as ever the Epistle should be read and that all Christian men should value consolation, even as it was valued by one who was a tender lover of the flock of Christ.

It would be great presumption on our part to lightly esteem that which was a prime matter of concern with so instructed and experienced a teacher as the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul puts this prayer into a very remarkable shape. To my mind it is expressed in a deeply solemn form, for he writes, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” Was there need for that word, “Himself”? Does it not make it very emphatic that he seems to call upon the Lord Jesus to give them comfort, not by any intermediate agency, but in His own Person and by His own power? It is so essential that we should be comforted that Jesus, even our own Lord Jesus Christ, is entreated, Himself, to become the Consolation of His people. Is not that a weighty matter which leads the reverent heart of Paul thus to plead?

Nor is this all, for he goes on to say, “and God, even our Father,” as if God the Father, Himself, must undertake the work of cheering His people, so necessary was it that they should be at rest. No one else could give them such comfort as they required. But God could do it and, therefore, “God, even our Father,” must be specially invoked. The prayer is that the Lord Jesus and the Father who are One may join in the most necessary work of comforting the hearts of the tried Thessalonian saints. It reminds me of Paul’s solemn benediction in the opening of the Epistle, “Grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This prayer of Inspiration, couched in such solemn terms and directed so earnestly to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and to God, even our Father, proves the importance and necessity of saints being filled with comfort. Nor is this the only instance in the Epistle where this desire is expressed, for a little farther on, in the third chapter, at the 16th verse, we have it in other words but with equal forcefulness—“Now the Lord of Peace, Himself, give you peace always by all means.” I do not know that in one single sentence there could be compressed a more intense desire that they may be at peace. “The Lord” is invoked and He is styled, “the Lord of Peace,” that all His Divine Majesty may be seen and His peace-making power may be displayed.

“The Lord of Peace” is entreated to give peace, not by His angels nor by His ministers, nor by His Providence, but, “Himself,” to give peace—and this is asked for “always”—“give you peace always.” Peace in the cool of the evening is not enough—it is needed at all parts of the day, in all the days of the year, in every period of life, in every place and under all circumstances! The wish is expressed with great breadth in the words, “Give you peace always by all means”—if it cannot be brought by one means, let it be by another, but somehow or other may you enjoy the peace which the Lord, alone, can create!

I cannot imagine that such a prayer as this would have been placed among the Scriptures of Truth, which are to be our guide till the Lord comes, unless it had been of the utmost importance that we should enjoy peace of mind. The Apostle almost hints at one reason for this strong necessity, for in one word he lets us see that it is a vital blessing because it affects the Christian’s heart. His expression is, “Comfort your hearts.” It is well to have strong hands—how else shall we labor? It is well to have a firm feet, how else shall we stand? Yet these are secondary matters as compared with a healthy heart. A disease of the heart is an injury to the whole man. If anything goes amiss at the fountain, the streams of life soon feel it. The entire manhood depends upon the heart—hence the need of comfort for the heart and the value of the promise, “He shall strengthen your heart.”

It is a calamity when the springs of action are weakened and the spirit is made to sink. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Touch the flesh where you will, but spare the brain and the heart, for these are the man so nearly that he is wounded to the quick when these are hurt. When the spirits begin to sink, then the waters have come in, even into the soul. Hence our Lord said to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled.” However your house may be troubled, however your bodily frame may be troubled, “let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” Faith upholds the heart and enables the man to bear up under pressure—faith, I say and nothing else.

I am sure, dear Friends, you will clearly see the need that we should be comforted, because the lack of comfort will grievously affect the action of the heart and mar the entire life force of our being. See you to it, then, that you lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees by saying to them that are of a feeble heart, “Be strong, fear not.” Ask that the heart may rejoice in God, for then the roughness of the way and the stress of the weather will be matters of small concern. Beloved Brethren, this confidence is necessary to prevent impatience and other evils. Possibly it was the lack of comfort which led certain of the Thessalonians to preach the immediate coming of the Lord—their impatience excited the wish and the wish led on to the assertion.

When men lose the present comfort of plain Gospel Doctrines they are very apt to begin speculating and in carnal heat foretelling the coming of the Lord. They left that patient waiting which is our duty, for a fevered prophesying which is nowhere encouraged in the Word of God. Hence the Apostle said to them in the fifth verse of the third chapter, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.” A man does not wait patiently when he is low in spirit and weary at heart. Let a man feel his own heart right with God and be at peace and he can quietly wait until Christ comes, even though the Lord shall delay His coming for many a day. But when everything is tossed about and our hope grows dim and our fellowship is broken and our zeal is burning low, we jump at anything which will end the struggle and enable us to avoid further effort.

Laziness and despondency lead many to cry, “Why are His chariots so long in coming?” just as idle workmen long for Saturday night. You think time too long and life too long, for you are not happy where your Lord has placed you and you are eager to rush out of the field of service into the chamber of rest. This will not do, my Brothers and Sisters, either for you or for me. We must be braced up to further labor. We must receive comfort in our spirit that we may be able, patiently, to toil on, however long life may be and however long our Lord may delay. For if not—if we grow impatient—we may resort to rash fanatical action as I have already shown you that certain Thessalonians did. Under the idea that the Lord was coming, they neglected their daily calling and became busybodies, gadding about from house to house and loafing upon others who did not pretend to be quite so spiritual.

They were mere star-gazers, looking for the Advent with their mouths open and their eyes turned up, being evermore in grievous danger of falling into a ditch! Paul bade them get to work and eat their own bread, quoting himself as an example, for he had worked with labor and travail night and day that he might not be chargeable to them. My Friend, if you are growing impatient for the Day of the Lord, I pray that comfort of heart may cool you. Tomorrow morning take down the shop shutters and sell your goods as if Christ were not coming at all, for should He come, you will be all the more fit to meet Him for being engaged in your calling.

If I knew that the Lord would come tomorrow I should attend to my regular Monday duties and on no account leave one of them to go and stand at the window, looking for wonders! Whether the Master comes tomorrow or in a thousand years, your wisest course is to follow your calling in His fear and for His sake. We ought to do our work better under the impression that perhaps He may come and find us at it! We may not neglect our duty under pretense of His appearing. Of this, however, be sure, you will not patiently wait if you are not happy. You will not go on conscientiously plodding, doing the same work, walking in the same regular way unless your heart is stayed upon God! You will run after this novelty or that if your mind is not resting in Jesus. Hence the devout prayer of our text that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, may comfort our hearts and establish us in every good word and work.

Once more, I am sure this comfort is eminently desirable because it promotes fruitfulness. The Apostle more than hints at this—“Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” When we are not happy in the Lord we do not give ourselves heartily to His service. We grow impatient and then we need the exhortation of the 13th verse of the third chapter, “But you, Brethren, be not weary in well doing.” If we feel that Jesus is ours, that all things are working for our good and that eternal Glory is secured to us by a sure Covenant, we are moved by gratitude to complete consecration, for the love of Christ constrains us. Doubts and disquietudes take us off from our Master’s work, but when He gives us rest, we take His yoke upon us cheerfully and find in it yet further rest unto our souls.

When our hearts sing, our hands toil and we cannot do enough for our Redeeming Lord! Right gladly do we present ourselves as living sacrifices to Him who “loved us and gave Himself for us.” Thus, too, we are established in our work and bound with fresh bonds to it, so that we delight to labor on till He shall come who shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant: enter you into the joy of your Lord.” So it all comes to this—we who are constitutionally despondent must not give way to depression—we must cry to God to help us by the Divine Comforter. We must aim at being cheerful Christians. We have abundant reasons for being cheerful, for the Father Himself loves us and has given us everlasting consolation in Christ Jesus. Do not let us be so unwise and so ungrateful as to neglect these consolations of the Spirit.

If the table is sumptuously spread, why should we be hungry? It the fountain flows so freely, why should we be thirsty? Moreover, if we wear of a dark countenance, we may distress the weak ones in the family of God. It may be that we shall spread the infection of depression among our fellow Believers and this must not be. Let us wear our sackcloth on our loins if we must wear it, but let us not wave it in everybody’s face lest we offend against the generation of the Lord’s people! Is it not clear from the Word, Brethren, that we shall be damaged if we give way to apprehension and dismay? Is it not apparent that we are invigorated, equipped and prepared for our Lord’s use when we are strong in the Lord and the power of His might? Therefore let us breathe earnestly to God the desire that His everlasting consolation may be laid home to our spirits and that our hearts may be comforted at this moment.

II. We shall now turn to the second point of our meditation which is this—GOSPEL CONSOLATION IS MOST FREELY BESTOWED. I want, in the chief place, to call your attention to the manner in which all the way through, the freeness of Divine Consolation is set before us by the Apostle. First, observe that the consolations bestowed upon Believers are most free because they are described as a gift. “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation.” The old proverb has it, “Nothing is freer than a gift.” Every blessing that we receive from God comes as a gift.

We have purchased nothing—what have we to purchase it with? We have earned nothing—what work did we ever do that could deserve everlasting consolation from the hand of the great Lord? Comfort in Christ is an absolutely free, spontaneous gift of Sovereign Grace, given not on account of anything we have done, or ever shall do, but because the Lord has a right to do as He wills with His own—therefore does He select unto Himself a people to whom the free gift of His consolation shall be given! If you have any comfort at this time, my Brothers and Sisters, it is God’s gift to you. If you triumph in God, it is God who has given you your holy joy, therefore bless and praise Him from whom such a gift has come.

The freeness of this gift is seen in every part of it. The consolation given us of God is very complete, but it is as manifestly free as it is evidently perfect. Notice its completeness, I pray you. It covers the past with these golden words, “which has loved us.” As for the present, it is enriched with this Truth of God, “has given us everlasting consolation.” And as for the future, it is glorified with this blessing, “and good hope through Grace.” Here is a triple comfort, a consolation in three worlds and under each aspect it is a free favor! He “has loved us”—why is this? Come, you wise men, pry into the ancient past and tell me why God loved His chosen!

Stand and gaze as long as you will into the eternal mind and say to yourself, why did God make this choice of love? The sole reply out of the excellent Glory falls from Jesus’ lips—“Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” Shall not the bridegroom elect his own bride? Shall not the King of kings dispense His favors as He wills? He has loved us “from before the foundation of the world”—a love so ancient cannot have been born of any human cause. Eternal love is a flame enfolding itself—it borrows no fuel from without, but lives upon itself! He says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” But why that everlasting love, we cannot tell. Beloved, by Divine Love the mysterious past is made to glow with the Glory of God—its light is like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Once, when we looked back into the past, we saw the blackness of our guilt and the hole of the pit from which we were lifted. But now we behold a silver stream of mercy flowing from the Throne of God and of the Lamb and we track it to the eternal purpose of love and the Covenant of Grace. Gaze as you can into light ineffable, but even with the eye of faith all that you can discern in the ages which are past is this word which has a splendor about it beyond compare—the word, “LOVE.” In eternity the Lord loved us! Oh, how free is this! How much we owe for it! The past is bright with love, with love most free!

As for the present, “He has given us everlasting consolation.” We have it now. Christ is His people’s Christ today—the consolation of Israel even now. The pardon of sin is ours; the perfect righteousness of Christ is ours; life in Christ is ours; union to Christ is ours; marriage to Christ is ours. Glory with Christ shall be ours by-and-by, but even now we have the earnest of it in the Spirit which dwells within us and shall be with us forever. All this is assuredly a gift—how could it be otherwise? We could never have enjoyed this everlasting consolation today if Free Grace and dying love had not brought it to us. Bless, then, the Giver!

As for the future, what of that? Darkness lowers the clouds and the storm mutters from afar and we tremble lest in the end of life, when physical force decays, we may be overtaken with a storm in the article of death—but this covers all—we have “good hope through Grace.” The Scriptures of Truth have assured us that the great Shepherd will be with us in the valley of death shade and that after death there is a resurrection and with our risen body we shall behold the King in His beauty when He shall stand, in the latter days, upon the earth and we shall, in our perfect manhood, dwell forever in His Glory. This is so good a hope that it fills all the future with music. This, too, is a gift. There is not a trace of legal claim in it—it comes not by way of reward, but of Divine favor.

Thus the past, the present, the future are all rich with the Lord’s own generous gifts and in nothing can we trace a single consolation to anything but Free Grace. Lest we should make any mistake about these consolations coming to us most freely, the Apostle mentions One from whose hand they come, from whom nothing has ever come in other manner but that of manifest Grace. He mentions, “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” Oh it charms me to think that He should comfort me! When Jesus Christ begins to draw near a man’s soul, his joy begins. But when the Lord sets Himself down steadily to console His Brethren, I guarantee you it is done in heavenly style, for He will not fail nor be discouraged! He will wash our feet if the weariness is there. He will give His bosom for a pillow for our head if the pain is there.

He has said, “I will make all his bed in his sickness,” so that if the woe comes from disease, He will cheer us there. He will anoint our eyes with salve if the eyes are failing and bind up the broken heart if that is bleeding. Lest we fall, He will put underneath us the everlasting arms and lest we are wounded, He will spread over us the shadow of His wings. He will be all to us that He is in Himself—judge you what that is. His whole being—His Godhead in its grandeur, His Humanity in its tenderness He has given to us. He lays Himself out for us and be sure of this—He will not leave us comfortless! He will come to us. He is such a blessed Sympathizer in all grief, such a mighty Helper in all distress that if He comes to our rescue, we may be sure that our deliverance will be accomplished.

But, Brothers and Sisters, at the sight of our loving Lord we feel that it would be treason to impute His benefits to any motive but that of Grace. Is He not full of Grace and Truth? The Law came by Moses, not by Jesus. His coming was not to judge and to censure—“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world,” much less did He send His Son to condemn His people! There will come a Day of Judgment, but just now the Son of God sits upon His Throne to grant pardons and to give Grace to help in times of need. His Throne is a Throne of Grace and His scepter is that of love. We know that the comforts of the Gospel must be graciously free since they are brought to us by Jesus Christ Himself.

Then the Apostle solemnly adds, “and God our Father.” There seems to me to be a peculiar touch of sweetness about this. It is not, “God the Father”—which notes His relation to Jesus, but our Father, which sets forth His relation to us. We love God the Father! Unto the Father be Glory forever and ever! But as “our Father” He comes nearer to us and gladdens our hearts. Now, a father does not pay wages to his children. His gifts to them are freely bestowed out of the love of his fatherly heart. What father expects to be paid for what he does for his sons and daughters?

Thus we see that the everlasting consolations of the Gospel—coming to us because we are the children of God—are quite free from anything which makes them a hire or a debt. And they come to us in the freest possible manner as spontaneous donations of our great Father, whose delight it is to give good gifts to them that ask Him. Cannot you look up, you desponding ones, at this moment and cry, “Our Father”? Our first hymn greatly refreshed my spirit just now, for I felt very heavy till the Holy Spirit comforted me with it—

*“If in my Father’s love I share a filial part, Send down Your Spirit, like a dove,  
To rest upon my heart.”*

And I felt that I could urge that argument and in my inmost heart I pleaded it before the Lord—Oh, if I am, indeed, Your child and You are a Father to me, then deal with me as with a son and let me feel Your Spirit resting within my bosom, that I may know myself to be Yours beyond a doubt! O how sweet to feel the Spirit’s witness and to cry, “Abba, Father”!

Now, Beloved, the spirit of adoption is never a spirit of bondage or legality. It never boasts of human merit, but its one song is, “Free Grace and dying love.” May our Father’s free favor make your hearts sing concerning this and I know that this will be your tune*—*

*“Behold what wondrous Grace  
The Father has bestowed  
On sinners of a mortal race  
To call them sons of God!”*

Look at the text again and you will see how explicit Paul is upon one point. To make us see the freeness of those consolations which come to God’s troubled people, he writes it, “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which has loved us.” Divine Love is the foundation of our consolation! No everlasting consolation could have visited our hearts if the Father and the Son had not loved us! I always feel inclined to sit down when my ministry causes me to come across the great Truth of God’s love to His people because it is not so much a Truth of God to speak upon with the tongue as to enjoy in silence in the heart.

I can fully understand that God should pity my misery. I can comprehend God’s caring for my weakness. But I am filled with sacred amazement when I am told that He loves me! Loves me? What can there be in me for the Holy Spirit to love! Brothers and Sisters, what can there be in you that Jesus should set His heart on you? He has made us and not we ourselves—does the potter fall in love with his own clay? Will he die to save a broken vessel? There were other creatures far fairer. Why were angels passed by? Wonder of wonders that the Lord should love us poor nobodies, defiled with sin, with such evil tempers and such strange natures! Ah me, with such estranged natures, which is far worse!

That the Lord our God should love us. That Christ should love us so as actually to have died for us! Jesus so loved us that He espoused our nature, occupied our dwelling place, the world! He took our burden of sin, carried our cross and laid in our grave! They say that love is blind—I will not say that our Redeemer’s love is of that sort—far rather will I say that it must have been wonderfully quick-sighted love to have been able to perceive anything lovable in us! Yet is His love the source and fountain of all our mercies. He has loved us! There can be no question that this is free, for love is unpurchaseable!

If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly despised. Love goes not in the market, it knows nothing of price, or barter—it must go forth unbribed, unhired, or not at all—in all cases but far more in the instance of the Eternal Love of the great Father and His only-begotten Son! Price and purchase for Divine Love? Wherein would such an insinuation fall short of blackest blasphemy? Yet again, observe that as if the Apostle feared that we should get away from this Doctrine of Grace, he added, “He has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.”

Some people do not like the sound of that word, “Grace.” It is too Calvinistic. We do not care what you call it, but it is the very best word in the Bible next to the name of God our Savior! It is from the Grace of God that all our hope begins. Man as a rebel can never earn anything but damnation through his own merits—Grace must reign or man must die. Every blessing that can ever come to condemned sinners such as we are must come because God’s great love wills it to come because, “He is gracious and full of compassion.” All other roads are broken up! Grace alone bridges the chasm and makes a way for traffic between Heaven and earth! Grace reigns in our spiritual comfort and only Grace! Let us glorify God for it.

Everlasting consolation is not a blessing given to us as the result of our own works. This is most clear from the last part of our text, for there it is asked that the Lord may comfort our hearts, not because we are established in every good word and work, but that we may be so. All the good works which adorn the Christian character are the result of God’s Grace and not the cause of it. Grace is given us in order that we may serve God, not because we do serve God. To make us holy is the object of Divine Grace, but Grace did not wait until it found us holy, or it would never have visited us. To close this part of the subject I would remark that this is the reason why the consolations which God gives us are everlasting. Dwell on that word, “everlasting.” Do not suffer anyone to fritter away its meaning. You may safely forget that there are certain folks alive who declare that everlasting has not the meaning of endless duration, for it means that or nothing! We have too much personal interest involved in this word to allow it to be toned down into age-lasting or any other miserable sense.

We should as soon think that the Bible meant the opposite of what it seems to do as believe that everlasting means something temporary. He has given us everlasting consolation and the reason why it is everlasting is because it is founded on the Grace of God! If it were built upon our merits it would stand upon a foundation of ice or mist—it would rest on a shadow buttressed by a dream. But if God loved us out of pure Grace and if Jesus Christ has given us consolation out of pure love and if our whole comfort rests upon the Sovereign Grace of God in Christ Jesus, then there is no reason why it should ever pass away unless God’s Grace can evaporate, which cannot be, since God changes not, but must be forevermore the same! Our Lord Jesus changes not, for He is the “same yesterday, today and forever.”

Ah, you high-fliers who derive a lofty comfort from your feelings, your happy sensations, your holy works and your belief that sin is dead in you, fly away as much as you can—you will be brought down one of these days! Like Icarus in the Grecian fable who flew so high that he melted the wax of his wings and fell, so will it be with all who venture aloft on wings of self-confidence. He who lies humbly at God’s feet, conscious of his sin and mourning over it and resting for everything upon Sovereign Grace and free mercy in Christ Jesus, he may stay where he is with safety, for his hope shall never fail him. Let the Lord be magnified for this! He is our Rock and there is no unfaithfulness in Him and he that rests in Him shall not be ashamed or confused world without end.

III. So far have we come—now for our closing point which is a practical one. SINCE THESE CONSOLATIONS OF GOD’S LOVE HAVE BEEN SO FREELY BESTOWED UPON US, THEY SHOULD LEAD US TO A LIFE OF HOLY BENEVOLENCE. We ought to be free in our giving to others since God has been so free in His giving to us. As He has abounded toward us in infinite liberality, we ought to abound towards all with whom we come in contact up to the full measure of our ability in all love and kindness and mercy. In every benevolent enterprise Christian men should take a hearty interest. Read that 17th verse—“Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”

I am a man and being a man everything that concerns men concerns me. I am a Christian man and as a follower of Christ, the Son of Man, everything that can do good to my fellow men is a matter in which I delight to take my share. This should be done in direct actions as well as in words. Read—“Establish you in every good word and work.” Certain of the oldest manuscripts run, “In every good work and word” and I suppose in our new translation we shall have it so and very properly, too. In this case work is probably first and word next.

Some Christian people think that “word” should be everything and work nothing, but the Scriptures are not of their mind. These professors speak a great deal about what they will do; talk a great deal about what other people ought to do and a great deal more about what others fail to do—and so they go on with word, word, word and nothing else but word. They do not get as far as “work”—but the Apostle put work first in this case, as much as to say, “whether you talk about it or not, do it. Be established in every good work even if you do not get so far as being capable of a multiplicity of words.”

Brethren, let us yoke word and work together—every good thing should command our advocacy and secure our aid to the fullest of our ability. Direct practical assistance should be rendered by us all, since our Lord loves not in word, only, but in deed and in truth. This should be done without pressure. No one could lay constraint upon God to bless His people. No pressure was put upon Christ to redeem us! Everything, as we have shown, was spontaneous, sovereign, free. Even so should men give to God out of an overflowing heart. Give to Him as a king gives to a king! How does a king give? Why, as he likes and that is the way to give—to give because you are delighted to give—not because you feel obliged to do it by being observed by others, but out of a royal heart which delights in liberal giving!

Shall you not do as you will with your own? How can a gracious heart better please itself than by doing good? Give as you would give to a king, for we never give our meaner possessions to royal personages—we give the best we have if we give them anything. Let it be so in all the services that we render to God! Let Him have our best, our noblest, our dearest possessions. The particular case before us this morning is, to my mind, a very important one and one which should greatly move all generous spirits. In this great city of near upon four millions inhabitants, the provision of hospital accommodation is, to a painful degree, small.

In those hospitals which will be helped by the collections of today, I think there are only 5,531 beds, or about one for every 723 persons. Considering the liability of working men to disease and accident and the great number of the poorer classes, this is a fearfully small preparation for possible necessity. But this is not the worst, for out of these 5,000 beds, as I gather from an admirable paper in The Lancet, there are never more than 3,232 in daily use, thus diminishing the supply to an appalling extent!

These empty beds are very largely made so by the lamentable fact that the hospitals have not the means of using them. The depression in trade has been felt by our free hospitals to such an extent that they live from hand to mouth in a manner which is not honorable to one of the wealthiest cities in the world.

The Hospital Sunday Collection has not yet come up to the proper mark and it is time for ministers to say so and instruct their people, who, if they knew the need, would promptly supply it. The Lancet wisely says that if the sermons of today could be preached in the hospitals, themselves, the collections would be doubled. There are many objections to carrying out the suggestion, but I have no doubt the result would be as anticipated. Suppose me, then, to be preaching in one of the great wards and yourselves to be standing among the beds. I know those poor creatures lying near you writhing in pain and those others grateful for the relief they have received would plead much more forcibly than I can! The sight of suffering is the best argument with benevolence.

Look at the rows of sick folk and let your heart be touched. As the service could not well be held in the hospital, The Lancet suggests that the ministers should spend Saturday in visiting a hospital. I could not very well do that, but I have tried in my mind, vividly, to realize the scene and I think most of you are quite as able to draw the picture as I am, for you have been there to see for yourselves—and some of you have been there as patients to partake, for yourselves, in hospital benefits. Picture the wards of mercy and let every sick person there entreat you to help the funds of these admirable institutions.

An exceedingly powerful plea to my mind arises from those empty beds. There they are, 2,000 of them! Waiting to be couches of hope to the suffering! Alas, they cannot be filled because there is not the means for providing the people with food and nourishment while they are there. Sorrowful necessity! I cannot endure to think of it. A bed for a sick man rendered useless by some one’s meanness! Where is the tightwad? Surely he is not here! It would be even more painful to go to the homes where those persons who ought to occupy those empty beds are pining for the need of hospital help, waiting the next turn—which turn may find them in the grave—but which turn would come tomorrow morning if funds were forthcoming. Must they lie there till they are beyond the reach of surgical help because the wealthy of this so-called Christian city cannot spare a little from their luxuries to furnish poor sick humans with nutriment?

O that one with a trumpet tongue could speak to our nobles, our merchants, our traders, our gentlemen of leisure and bid them consider the sick poor! O that they all knew the exquisite luxury of doing good! I would say to employers, will you let these people lie and pine away for lack of medical help, many of them your workmen whose strength has been spent in your trades and handicrafts? Pain is crushing them and provision is made for their help and cure, as far as it can be made, but it is rendered useless by the need of money to bear the expenses of the patients! Is this to be always so? Is this to remain so for another year? Surely it shall not be!

I ask you, dear Friends, according as God has entrusted you with this world’s wealth, to help the hospitals! I do this with all the greater confidence because you are Believers in the Doctrines of Free Grace. Give freely, for you have received freely! Remember that yesterday and today Jews, Catholics, Protestants, people of all sects have heartily joined in this common effort for suffering humanity and if those who believe in the Free Grace of God are behind-hand—no—if they are not among the foremost in the race, it will be to the dishonor of the glorious Gospel which they profess! The Lord accept your offerings as you now present them!

I hear the sound of your gold and silver already, for you are eager in the work of mercy. The collectors are a little too rapid in their work, but I will not restrain them, for it is a fit ending to my discourse that you should hasten to pass from word to work. In so doing may God bless you. Amen.

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COMFORT AND CONSTANCY  
NO. 2363

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY JUNE 3, 1894. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts**

**and establish you in every good Word and work.”** *2Th 2:16-17***.**

THE Thessalonians had been a good deal confused by certain persons who had said that the coming of the Lord was immediately at hand. Paul, therefore, bade them to be steadfast and not be worried and perplexed by any such teaching. And then he presented this prayer to God for them, that they might have these two things, comfort and constancy—that God would comfort their hearts and establish them—“in every good Word and work.” It is a very blessed and comprehensive prayer and, while we are thinking of it, let us be praying it for ourselves and for one another, that the Lord may comfort our hearts and establish us “in every good Word and work.”

I. The first enquiry to be answered is this, WHY IS THERE THE CONJUNCTION OF THESE TWO THINGS IN THIS REMARKABLE PRAYER? Why is it put thus, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work”?

I answer, first, the two things, comfort and constancy, are put together because comfort by itself is not enough. We do not desire, first and above all things, that Christians should have comfort. It is a very great privilege to be comforted, especially by the Comforter, for such comfort is sound, safe and holy, but, at the same time, they err who think that the first and chief reason for knowing God is that you may feel comforted and happy! I fear that there are many who are under that notion. They expect every sermon to comfort them—otherwise they think it is a wasted opportunity. Even when they are alone in prayer, their chief thought is that they need to be comforted by their own devotion. But, sometimes, rebuke is better than comfort, and spiritual quickening and especially true sanctification, are more greatly to be valued than any measure of comfort whatever! If we were to confine ourselves to prayer for the Lord only to comfort His people, we would have a very imperfect form of intercession. No, it needs that we should not only be comforted by our religion, but that we should be led by it into holy activity so as to abound in every good Word and work, and be established therein.

I give another answer to the question, Why is there this conjunction between comfort and constancy? Because establishment in every good Word and work is not enough if it is alone. We need to be comforted as well as to serve the Lord. Our God is not like Pharaoh who would not give to the children of Israel even a day in which they might have rest and worship God. Pharaoh said, “Why do you, Moses and Aaron, let (or hinder) the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens.” But God does not speak so to us. The service which His children render to Him is quite compatible with rest. We are like certain birds that are said to rest on the wing—we never have a better rest than when every faculty is occupied in the service of our Lord!

But work by itself, establishment in every good Word and work, alone, might tend to weariness. We might be jaded if God did not minister Divine consolation to us while we served Him. Moreover, I am sure that we would never do the work well if God did not comfort us, for unhappy workers, those who do not love their work and are not at home in it, those who feel no comfort of religion, themselves, are generally very poor and unsuccessful workers. The second blessing mentioned in our text is certainly a very necessary one, this establishing in every good Word and work, but you also need the first one, that God may, “comfort your hearts.” When you get the two together—when you are up to your necks in holy service and up to your hearts in Divine comfort—then these two things cause you not to be barren or unfruitful and, at the same time, they help you not to be weary in well-doing. You are made to be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” because you are comforted with the belief that, “your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” I see those two reasons for the conjunction of comfort and constancy in the text. First, because comfort, alone, is not sufficient and, secondly, because constancy without comfort will not suffice us.

And next, dear Friends, it is because the comfort of the heart aids in the establishment of the soul in service. They are put together because the one helps the other. May the Lord “comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work!” He that is happy in the Lord will persevere in the service of the Lord. He that derives real support and comfort from his religion is the man who will not backslide from it. I notice that it is usually thus with those who decline—they first of all lose the comfort and joy of religion—they have not the brightness and delight that they once had in the things of God. And then, of course, they drop, first, this particular service, and then the other—they begin to absent themselves from the means of Grace, Prayer Meetings and so forth, because they miss what is so material a stay to the establishment of their minds, that is, the comfort, joy and peace that true religion used to bring them.

Whenever you are not happy in the Lord, I urge you not to rest until you become so. It is no small evil to get out of the sunlight of God’s Countenance. A dear child will not say, “If my father is angry with me, it does not matter; he will not kill me; I shall always be his child.” No, just in proportion as he enjoys his father’s love, it will be painful to him to come in the least degree under his father’s displeasure and he will cry out to be fully restored and to have, again, from those dear lips the kiss of forgiveness that will put away all his offenses. So, dear Friends, believe that your lack of comfort is an evil thing which may lead to your loss of industry and perseverance in the cause of your Lord. If your heart is not comforted by God, you are not likely to be “established in every good Word and work.”

Now let me turn the text around the other way. I think that these two things are put together because establishment in Word and work is so necessary for our comfort. I said we must be comforted that we might be constant in the service of God. Now I put it that we must be constant in the service of God that we may be comforted! God does not give His dainties to idlers. He has choice secrets into which He does not admit everybody, nor even all of His own family. When we are diligent in His service and all our powers are fully consecrated to Him, then He gives us gracious rewards—not of debt, but according to the discipline of His own house, wherein He honors the faithful and chastises those who are negligent.

Now, Beloved, you will miss your comfort when you begin to neglect your work. I know how it used to be with the boys at home. In cold weather they huddled round the fire—almost sat on the fire! It was so cold that they could not tell how they would live through the bitter winter. But when Father came in, he said, “Now, you boys, set to work and clear away that snow. Don’t sit here idle, go and do something!” And they came in with ruddy cheeks and, somehow or other, the temperature seemed to have altered considerably, for they were quite warm from their exercise. I think the best thing that could happen to some men would be that they might have something to do. I do not find much about depression of spirit in the journals of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield and men of that sort who spent themselves in the Lord’s service.

The fact is, the Lord seemed to carry them on from one work to another and from strength to strength in their service—and they were comforted as to their hearts because they were established in every good Word and work. These things act and react, one upon another—the comfort makes us work—the work brings to us a fresh measure of comfort! See how even the Savior puts it. He says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” That is the first rest, pardon of sin. What next? “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” That is another rest over and above what Jesus gives. “Through bearing My yoke, you shall find in My service rest unto your souls.” God grant us Grace to seek that rest which we are to find, now that we have received the rest which Jesus gives to those who come to Him!

I have not yet fully answered this question—Why is there the conjunction of these two things, comfort and constancy? I think it is because the two blended together serve a very useful purpose. We are in this world to bear witness and by our bearing witness we are to bring others to faith in Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Now, there are some people who are only to be won for Christ by the holy confidence and comfort of Believers. I am sure that if a Christian woman, in the time of affliction at home, is calm, patient, resigned and happy, she is more likely to see her husband converted by the comfort that religion brings to her own heart than by taking him to hear a sermon. By her Christian character she will preach to him and supply him with evidence of the power of Grace which he will not be able to deny.

I have known persons, in a storm at sea, exercise great influence over all in the vessel by the way in which they have been able to live above the storm, resting patiently in God. And in times of personal sickness, what a wonderful influence there is about holy patience! Some members of the family, who never have been moved by the external services of religion, have been deeply impressed by the patience of great sufferers—and especially by the serenity of dying saints. They have said to themselves, “There is something in this religion, after all. There is no mistake about it—the Grace which could support and calm the heart at such a time as this must be the gift of God.” Now, if this were accompanied by idleness, it would lose much or all of its force, but when this holy calm comes over one who, in days of health, was full of active service for the Master, then the two things, together, become powerful arguments which gainsayers are not able to resist! Seek to have this blessed blending, this comfort, like a light that burns within the lamp, and then this establishment in Word and work, like the rays of light that stream from the lantern at the head of the lighthouse, that all may see, both far and near.

And I should like to give one other answer to this query, which is this. Paul in his prayer puts the two things together, because there is great need for both. There is great need to pray that our Father would comfort the hearts of His people, for there is trouble enough in the land! There is trouble enough in every house—there is trouble enough for each one of us—we need you to often pray for us, that God would comfort our hearts. It may be that we have to play the man in public and yet, when we get away by ourselves, our heart is very heavy and we have to cry mightily to God for supporting Grace. Some of the strongest of God’s servants, those who carry a smiling countenance, who, if they fast, anoint their head and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, yet have need to pray very earnestly to the Comforter that He would come and sustain their spirit.

And there is equal need that we should have Grace given us to be constant and instant in every good Word and work, for there is a tendency in us to think that we have done enough. The feeling creeps over men of a certain age that it is time for the young people to do the Lord’s work. One says, “I am now at such an age that as much cannot be expected of me as used to be.” Oh, yes, if you have much serving, Martha is not the only woman that gets cumbered with it, and being cumbered is not confined to women! Oh, how many there are who are not women, who are cumbered as much as Martha was! We need to have the Mary-spirit to keep the heart bright and cheerful, or else we shall quarrel with our work, or with our sister, or possibly with our Master, as we say to Him, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?” We need both comfort and constancy and, therefore, I commend to you this piece of heavenly plaiting—let the two things be twisted together in your life! May the Lord “comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work”!

II. As I look at my text, a second question comes to my mind. WHY DOES THE APOSTLE SO SPECIALLY ADDRESS THIS PRAYER? Notice to whom he addresses it—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work.” Why is this?

It seems to me that in the first place, in this prayer the whole Trinity is supplicated. When the Apostle is desiring comfort to be given, he does not mention the Comforter, for that is needless. It would occur to every Christian mind that the Holy Spirit was necessary, since in comforting and quickening He is only exercising His special office. But the Apostle does mention, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father,” so that, to the mind of the thoughtful reader, the prayer for comfort and establishment is directed to the ever-blessed Three-in-One. Oh, that we more often remembered the distinction of the Divine Persons without dividing the Divine Substance! It becomes instructed Believers to remember that one blessing comes from the Father, another blessing from the Son and a third blessing through the Holy Spirit. There are times when it would seem as if the one blessing must come through the three Divine Persons, that there must be a manifestation of the whole Trinity to produce the result. I cannot help noticing that Truth of God and reminding you how the Savior is especially placed, here, side by side with, “God, even our Father,” that we may see that equal reverence is to be paid to Him with the Father, and equal prayer to be offered to Him with that presented to the great Father of spirits.

But then, I think next, that mention is here made of, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself” because, as the prayer is for consolation, He is “the Consolation of Israel.” The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, but Christ, Himself, is the Comfort—the Holy Spirit gives the consolation, but Jesus Christ is the Consolation. Beloved, we are never so comforted as when we turn to our blessed Lord, Himself! His Humanity, His sympathy with us, His griefs, His bearing our infirmities, His putting away of our sins, His pleading for us at the right hand of God, His everlasting union with His people—all this makes us turn our eyes to Him! He is the Sun that makes our day. From Him flows that “river of the Water of Life” which quenches our thirst. So you see why the “Lord Jesus Christ, Himself,” is mentioned in this prayer for comfort, since He is the every essence of the Believer’s consolation!

But then we are reminded of “God, even our Father,” and is not this expression brought to our mind that we may derive comfort from the relation which God bears to His people? O you children of God, does not the recollection that He is your Father comfort you? Children of the heavenly King, is not the fact of your relationship to Him a well of unceasing consolation? What more do you require to lift your spirits out of the dust than to know that this manner of love has been bestowed upon you, that you should be called the children of God! “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”? I believe that if the Holy Spirit only lays home to the heart the fact of our new birth and our adoption into the family of God, we have enough comfort to make us swim through seas of trouble without fear! And also enough motive for the most constant, diligent service, when we know that it is for our Father who is in Heaven that we are spending the strength that He, Himself, gives us! Do you not see, therefore, why the Apostle thus addresses His prayer to “God, even our Father,” and to “our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself”?

And is not this another reason why Paul thus prayed, because he would remind us that it requires the direct action of the Godhead upon our hearts to produce comfort and constancy? This is especially evident at certain times. Very frequently, when I have to comfort mourners—cases where, perhaps, a young husband has been taken away, leaving a large family of little children unprovided for—or, perhaps, where two persons who have been together for many years, till their lives have grown into one and, all of a sudden, the wife or the husband has been taken away, I have said and I cannot help saying it often, “My dear Friend, I cannot comfort you as I should like to. I have never been exactly in your circumstances and, therefore, I cannot enter into your peculiar grief. But I would remind you that one Person of the Divine Trinity has undertaken the office of Comforter and He can do what nobody else can.”

You must, sometimes, have felt the power of a single text of Scripture laid upon a wound in your heart—it will staunch the bleeding and heal by a sort of heavenly magic! Have you not, at times, felt in a flutter of distress so that you could not rest? Christian friends have spoken kindly to you, but they only seemed to mock you. Then, in a moment, a soft, calming influence has stolen over your spirit and you have felt that you could bear 10 times the weight which had almost crushed you an hour before! God can comfort to purpose—therefore the Apostle did not say—“I hope you will enjoy the comfort I have given you, or that, perhaps, your minister, next Lord’s-Day may give you.” No, this was his prayer at this particular juncture—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work.” It is grand in your prayers to fall back upon your God and upon a God whom you know as your Lord Jesus Christ, and your Father, and to feel, “The case is beyond me, but it is not beyond my God! The trial overwhelms me even in my sympathy with the tried one, how much more does it overwhelm the actual bearer of it? But I put you and your sorrow into hands quite equal to the emergency and leave you there.”

There is much more to be learned than I can tell you, because time fails me, as to how it was that the Apostle presented this remarkable prayer in this remarkable manner.

III. The third point, with which I close, is this. WHAT DOES PAUL MENTION IN HIS PRAYER AS PLEAS? He mentioned several facts for the strengthening of the faith of those for whom he prayed and gave arguments which they should use while pleading with God for others. Let us speak of these arguments very briefly. There are six of them.

First, Paul says that Jesus is ours. He is asking for comfort and establishment and he begins his prayer, “Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself.” Do, if you can, get the sweetness of this expression, “Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Why did not Paul say, “The Lord Jesus Christ”? Why did he not say, “My Lord Jesus Christ”? No, here is a plural possessive pronoun—“Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Is it so, then, that God has given us the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, to be ours? Can we not only call His blood ours, and His Resurrection ours, and His Kingdom ours, but is He, Himself, ours? Oh, can we get a grip of Him as, “My Beloved”? Is He my Husband, my Covenant Head, my Jesus and my All? Come, then, Beloved—I was going to say that you hardly need pray for comfort because you have it, already—you have it in Jesus!

Here is a solid mass of the pure gold of comfort in the fact that Jesus Christ, Himself, is yours. You are Christ’s, but Christ is also yours! As the husband belongs to the wife, and the wife belongs to the husband, so there is a mutual possession between Christ and you who are believers in Him. Are you poor? What? And yet Christ is yours? Do you say that you are helpless and friendless? How is that when you can say, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself”? No, here is a well opened in the desert for you—come and say to it—“Spring up, O well!” Sing unto it, drink of its Living Water and fill your earthen vessels to the fullest! There is comfort enough for all saints in “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself.”

The second plea in Paul’s prayer is that God is our Father—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father.” I have already shown you what a mine and mountain of delightful consolation lies in the fact that the God who made the heavens and the earth, the Omnipotent and Unchangeable Jehovah is “our Father.” Do not think that this is a mere metaphor—that God is only set forth to us under the image of a father. There is no doubt that He is our Father—it is a matter of fact if we are trusting His Son. “Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not: You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting.” We have been begotten again by God—our new birth is from His power and His Divine energy! We belong to His family and shall never be cast out of it. Dear Friends, what a plea this is in prayer! “My Father, will You not comfort my heart? My Father, will You let Your child despond? My Father, will You not relieve me in the hour of my distress? Jesus Christ, my Lord Jesus Christ, do this for me, and great God, my Father, fail not to cheer my heart!”

Then the Apostle goes on to remind us that God has loved us. Kindly look at the text and remember it—“God, even our Father, which has loved us.” You do not expect me to preach from those words, do you? “Which has loved us.” I cannot comprehend this Truth! I can very well understand God pitying us, as we pity a beggar in the streets—but God’s loving us always deprives me of the power to explain it! There was nothing in us to love! There was everything in us loathsome and nothing lovable, yet the Lord loved us before the world began! He has loved us without bound, so as to give His only-begotten Son to die for us! Is not that a powerful plea in prayer? “Lord, comfort my heart, establish me in every good Word and work, for You have loved me, therefore continue to love me. If You have given me Your love, surely You will not deny me the comforts of Your face and the consolations of Your Word.”

Then Paul adds, “Who has loved us, and has given us.” God has given us much and all His past gifts are pleas for more gifts. Men do not plead so. The beggar in the street cannot say, “Give me a penny, today, because you gave me one yesterday,” else we might reply, “That is the reason why I will not give you anymore!” But when dealing with God, this is a good plea. “O flowing Fountain, You have long been flowing, Flow on still! O blessed Sun, You did shine yesterday, shine today!” God loves us to make His past mercies arguments for obtaining future blessings, so the Apostle says, “God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us.”

But what has God given us? God has given us “everlasting consolation.” Catch at that expression, for it reminds us of everlasting love, the Everlasting Covenant, the everlasting promises, everlasting redemption and the everlasting Heaven. Men, nowadays, clip this word, “everlasting,” round the edges. We do not—we take it as we find it. That which is everlasting lasts forever—you can be assured of that! And God has given us consolation which will last us in life and last us in death—and last us throughout eternity! Well, if He has given us “everlasting consolation,” we may well plead that He would graciously enable us to lay hold upon it, that our hearts may be comforted and cheered and that we may be established in every good Word and work!

There is only one more expression upon which I will say a sentence or so. God has given us “good hope through Grace.” It is of Grace and, therefore, it is a gift! And He has given it to us through the operation of His Grace upon our hearts. It is a hope, a good hope, a “good hope through Grace.” We have a good hope that God’s love will never fail us and that, when life dies out on earth, we shall enter into His rest forever and behold His face with joy. We have a good hope that when days and years are past, we shall meet in Heaven! We have a good hope of dwelling throughout eternity with our God—“forever with the Lord.” O Father, after You have done so much for us and given so much to us, it is but little we ask of You, now, when we pray You to comfort our hearts and to establish us in every good Word and work!

I cannot understand what those do who have no God. I cannot comprehend the condition of those who have no “good hope through Grace.” What can they do? They have to work very hard from Monday morning to Saturday night. On Sunday they have no day of rest, no thought of a world to come, no rising to a purer atmosphere. They lie in bed, perhaps, in the morning, and then get up and lounge about in their shirtsleeves. There is nothing for them to get but what is found beneath the moon and very little of that. It is better to be a dog than a man if there is no hope of a hereafter! It is better not to live at all than to live such a dead, good-fornothing life as that man lives who lives without God and without hope!

Surely, you who are without God and without Christ, have your sinking, your mourning, your dull times, have you not? What do you do, then? Perhaps you try to drug yourself with strong drink. Alas, some do that and this is mischievous, indeed—to try to poison conscience and silence the best friend you have within you! Do not so, but think about God, and about “our Lord Jesus Christ.” This way lies hope, where stands that Cross, and He pleads, who received, there, those five wounds for sinners! This way lies your only hope! Oh, that you would think of it and consider it! If God Himself comes down from Heaven to save men, it must be worthwhile for man to look and understand what God did for him in that wondrous Sacrifice. Look, for—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One”—*look now, for—  
*“There is life at this moment for you.”*  
Especially is there life for you who came in here troubled, downcast, almost wishing you were not alive at all, but fearing that when life came to an end, it might be worse for you than ever, for you have “the dread of something after death.” Oh, that you were reconciled to God through the death of Jesus Christ! That being done, He would comfort your hearts and you would be led into every good Word and work through gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, and His Grace would save you and preserve you to the end! May this be the very moment when you shall seek and find the Lord!” “If you seek Him, He will be found of you.” God grant it, for His dear son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **2 Thessalonians 2;** *2Th 3:1-5***.**

**2Th 2:1-2**. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand. Paul believed in the Second Coming of Christ, for he beseeches the Brothers and Sisters, “by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He felt the power of this great Truth. He often exhorts us to be watchful because of the uncertainty of the time of that coming as far as we are concerned. But there were some who sprang up in his day, as in ours, who professed that they knew a great deal about the Second Advent—when it was to happen, and so on—and they began to foretell and to prophesy beyond what was really revealed of God. By this means, some persons were terrified and others driven to a very foolish course of action. It would seem, from this Epistle, that some people forsook their daily calling and, on pretence of the near return of Christ, endeavored to live upon the alms of Christian people instead of themselves working. Many, however, were shaken in mind, so Paul wrote to reassure and strengthen them—“That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand.”

3, 4. Let no man deceive you, by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. It has been usually thought that this passage alludes to the great apostasy of the Church of Rome and, certainly, if there were a hue and cry raised for the culprit here described, one might well arrest that apostasy upon suspicion! It may not, however, be the man of sin, or the son of perdition—it may be that general spirit which springs up again and again, one of the many antiChrists that were already in the world even in John’s day. There are many such spirits that are constantly rising up, not outside the Church—there, we could deal with them—but inside the Church, using the Words of Truth, and the signs of Truth to signify something far other than the Truth of God! This is the great rook that threatens destruction! Oh, that God’s Church might always be kept from striking upon it! But there is this rook which would, if it were possible, wreck the very elect ship of Christ, itself!

5-7. Remember you not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only He who now lets will let, until He is taken out of the way. There was something that hindered the full development of anti-Christ in Paul’s day. When that is taken out of the way, then will there be a fuller revelation of this sinful system.

8-12. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish, because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. We will not attempt to explain all this in detail. It would be too much of a task for a mere exposition, but the Church has always to be on her guard against that which comes as an angel of light, but is really a spirit of darkness.

13. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth. How the saints praise one another! How sweet is Christian fellowship! How we rejoice in the blessed love of God to His people when we are assailed by those who battle against His Truth! Then is the love of the Brethren stronger than ever and our faithfulness to God is largely increased. The Apostle falls back upon the doctrine of electing love—“God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation.” And he admires the methods by which that love effects its purpose—“Salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.” Men are made holy by the Spirit of God—the holiness is that of life and of the understanding. They attain to a belief of the Truth of God, as well as to a practice of the Divine Commands. Oh, happy people who are ordained, from the beginning, unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth!

14. To which He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. How the Apostle loved the Gospel! It was Christ’s Gospel, but Paul calls it, “Our Gospel.” He and his Brethren had made it so completely their own and it had become so much their own in contradistinction to “another gospel, which is not another,” that he speaks of it with unction and joy! “He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle. “The things which we have handed out to you, which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle.” They had heard Paul preach. He had not only written to them, but he had also spoken to them. And he bade them treasure up what he had said and what he had written, and hold it fast as for dear life. The Apostle did not preach that which he, afterwards, left, as the ostrich leaves its eggs, but he watched over it and he watched over the people who had heard it, anxious that the Truth of God to which they had listened should prove in them to be the message of everlasting life! Oh, my dear Hearers, are there not still some of you who have heard our Gospel, to whom we have often and long spoken and yet, notwithstanding, it has not yet been the message of eternal life to you though it has been to many others? God have mercy upon you and yet bring you to the feet of Jesus! As for others who come to listen to the Word for the first time—may it be the power of God unto salvation on the very first occasion of their hearing it, to the praise of God and the Glory of His Son!

16, 17. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work. I believe in an established Church—not established by acts of Parliament—but established by the purpose and by the Presence of God in the midst of it. Oh, to be a member of a Church established in every good Word and work! Do you know God’s Word? Seek to know it better, still! Try to strike your roots down deeply into this fruitful soil! Suck out the Divine nutriment of it, that you may grow so strong that none shall be able to tear you away from it!

Have you begun to work for Jesus? May you be established in that good work! Go on working more and more, with both your hands and all your heart, that somehow you may glorify His blessed name! Let me read these sweet verses again—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work.”

**2Th 3:1**. Finally, brethren, pray for us. “Pray for us,” says the Apostle. “Pray for myself and the Brothers who are with me. Pray for all the Apostles and preachers of the Word.” “Finally, Brethren.” If this were the last word we had to say to you, we would make just this request, “Finally, Brothers and Sisters, pray for us.” You cannot tell how much God’s servants are helped by the prayers of His people! The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the prayers of the weakest saint in Zion! If you can do nothing else, you can pray for us—therefore, day and night, be at the Mercy Seat on our behalf. “Finally, Brethren, pray for us.”

1. That the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you. “You Thessalonians enjoy the power of the Word. Pray that it may be so everywhere else.” Paul is said to have written this Epistle from Corinth or Athens, and he longed that, there, the Word of God might prevail as it had done at Thessalonica. Pray just now that in every part of the world, God’s Word may have free course! There are many who stand in the way of it. Pray God that they may be swept out of the way, that the Word of the Lord may have free course. We need the Gospel to run and spread till the whole earth shall know its blessed message!

2. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. All men are not candid, or true. “All men have not faith.”

3. But the Lord is faithful. What a wonderful contrast this is and how suggestive of comfort! “All men have not faith. But the Lord is full of faith, faith-ful.” True, He keeps all His promises. “The Lord is faithful.”

3-5. Who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts. You see, Paul does not command the Thessalonians to do anything but what he can pray God to work in them. The command of a man, by itself, is nothing, but when he only asks that to be done which he can pray God to do, then there is power about his message! “We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts.”

5. Into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. May the Lord hear that prayer for all of us, for Christ Jesus’ sake! Amen. HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 691, 692.  
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WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE  
NO. 2991

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1876.

**“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish**

**you in every good word and work.”***2Th 2:16-17***.**

EVERY man who is engaged in a good work desires that it may be lasting. “Establish You the work of our hands upon us; yes, the work of our hands establish You it,” was not only a very appropriate prayer from the mouth of Moses, who had led the children of Israel through the wilderness, but it is also a very appropriate prayer to be presented by every minister of Jesus Christ. We desire to build that which will endure the fire of the great testing day—not wood, hay and stubble, but gold, silver and precious stones.

The Apostle Paul, like all true servants of Christ, was very anxious about those who had been converted and formed into churches by him. He desired that all the professed converts should be real converts and that the members of the churches in the various countries where the Gospel had been preached might be well trained and instructed—and might know the Truth of God and be firmly rooted in it. It somewhat saddened him that the Christians at Thessalonica had been disturbed by a rumor about the speedy coming of Christ. He was grieved that they had been troubled concerning this matter and he was still more sorry that they had not men among them able to guide them at such a crisis, for they were like children carried away by novelties. The Apostle wanted them to be firmly established in the faith, to know the Truth of God and to have it abiding in their hearts so that they would be able to stand fast in the evil day, whatever error might be raging round about them.

I think, Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer of the Apostle is very suitable for this present period. We have rejoiced to see a large number of persons coming out as professed followers of Christ, but what is needed is that they should be so enlisted in the army of Christ that they will remain faithful even unto death. We do not want our work to be shallow and superficial—we want it to be like that “city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” It is heart-breaking service to sow the good Seed of the Kingdom upon the rocky ground, for it springs up so rapidly simply because it has no depth of earth and then, when the burning heat of the sun shines upon it, it withers away because it has neither moisture nor root. It would be far better to have half a dozen souls really brought to Jesus Christ and enduring to the end, than to have half a dozen thousand blazing away with a false profession for a time—and then returning like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Our Lord’s own declaration is, “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” It is that endurance, that holding out to the end, which is the point to which we would direct all our endeavors on behalf of our hearers and our converts—and the point about which we would most earnestly pray to our God.

Because these Thessalonians had been somewhat fluttered and disturbed, the Apostle was distressed concerning them and he, therefore, exhorted them to steadfastness. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle.” But after exhorting them to stand fast, he did not feel that this was sufficient. So he stopped writing, laid down his pen, fell on his knees and prayed to God to make them stand fast. And when we realize how feeble our utmost exertions are, we may well join fervent prayer to them! And when we remember that the flesh is so weak and that even when men resolve to stand fast, their feet are very soon caused to slip, we may well cry to the great Holder-Up of His saints to keep them from falling, or even from stumbling. The preacher’s work is only half done when he has exhorted his hearers to stand fast—he must then fall upon his knees and pray for them. And you who teach others in the Sunday school and elsewhere, must remember that whatever you exhort your scholars to do, you should always pray to God to lead them to do it. This is a blessed compound of preaching and praying—it makes a rich amalgam of Christian ministry when there is, first, the testimony of the Truth of God to men and next, the pleading with God on the behalf of men. Regard, then, our text as the Apostle’s prayer for the Thessalonians, and for all of us who believe in Jesus, that we may stand tall, in this evil day, and that, having done all, we may still stand steadfast whoever and whatever may oppose.

Paul’s prayer is instructive, for it directs our attention to two things. First, to what we have already—“Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” And then it tells us what we are to have, what is the natural result of what we already have—“Comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, we are to consider WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE.  
The Apostle mentions, first, the source of all our blessings and then the streams. “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father.” There is the source of all our blessings and, to my mind, it is exceedingly suggestive to notice that word, “our,” put in twice in the early part of the text. Paul does not write, “Now the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father.” But it is, “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father.”  
The source of our present comfort and of our future perseverance is the fact that Jesus Christ is ours. Look at Him now with the adoring eyes of your reverent contemplation, in His glorious Deity and His perfect Manhood. Look at Him in the manger. Behold Him on the Cross. Regard His perfect life and His redeeming death. Behold Him in His Resurrection, His triumphant Ascension and His perpetual intercession. And look forward to His promised return from Heaven. Beloved Believer, He is yours—all yours. In all those positions and conditions He has given Himself to you and to me, and we may together say, “Our Lord Jesus Christ!” Oh, how precious is this Truth of God to our soul! Being Divine, He is Omnipotent and that almighty power He wields for us! Being Divine, He is Omniscient and those sleepless eyes of His are always on the watch for us! Being Divine, He is Immutable and that eternal love of His which knows no shadow of a change, is fixed upon us! All His attributes and Himself, also, He places at our disposal—so let each one of us gratefully respond, “You are my portion, says my soul.” Enlarge your thoughts concerning the Lord Jesus! Think most highly of Him! Extol Him with your heart and with your tongue! But remember that when you have reached the utmost heights that you can attain in your estimation of Him, He is yours, altogether yours, and you can say with Paul, “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself”—  
*“Our Lord is risen from the dead  
Our Jesus is gone up on high!  
The powers of Hell are captives led—  
Dragged to the portals of the sky.  
There His triumphal chariot waits  
And angels chant the solemn lay—  
Lift up your heads, you heavenly gates!  
You everlasting dove, give way!’”*  
And then the Apostle adds, “And God, our Father.” We sometimes tremble at the thought of God our Father, as well we may. How could we ever approach Him were it not for God in human flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ? But when we have once really trusted in Christ, it is an easy matter for us to look by faith to God and to rejoice in Him! And, with the deepest reverence of soul, let us know that God—the ever-blessed God— the terrible God—the Omnipotent God who shakes both Heaven and earth with His voice, who touches the hills and they smoke—this God is our God! And all His attributes of power, as well as those which we usually consider to be more full of Grace, are exerted on our behalf! I do not know anything that is more comforting in times of trouble than this great Truth. I met, yesterday, a gentleman who told me that he was converted some 30 years ago, through the instrumentality of a greatuncle of mine with whom he lived as an apprentice. He said, “There was a terrible thunderstorms and the old gentleman was sitting by the fireside and we youngsters were afraid. The flashes of lightning were so vivid and the thunder pealed out so terribly, but,” he added, “the old gentleman rose from the fireside, went to the window, and as he looked out, he began to sing—  
*‘The God that rules on high  
And thunders when He pleases,  
That rides upon the stormy sky,  
And manages the seas—  
This awful God is ours,  
Our Father and our love!  
He shall send down His heavenly powers  
To carry us above.’”*  
The gentleman said to me, “I never forgot the impression I then received of that good man’s quietude of mind, and of the evident delight which he took in that display of the Divine Omnipotence. There seemed to him a sweetness in the eloquence of his Father’s voice, though it made every timber in the old house shake.”  
Yes, Brothers and Sisters, the Apostle brings these things to our minds so that we may realize that in having “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father,” we have on our side those who will be true to us forever and, therefore, we ought to continue to be comforted in heart and established in every good word and work. If you had trusted only to a dead Savior, you might well go and weep over His tomb—if you had such gods as the heathen have, then might all consolation be withheld from you. But with an almighty Savior who always lives to make intercession for you and with an Omnipotent and Omniscient Father who always lives to watch over you as His dear children, you must not so much as think of being disquieted in spirit, nor even dream of being moved from the firm foundation of your faith and hope, and love!  
While still thinking of this source of our consolation, it will help us if we notice, next, that the Apostle specially mentions the Person of Christ. “Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” Why did he put in that word, “Himself,” just there? It would have sounded all right if he had written, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ, and God, our Father, who has loved us.” Ah, but he wanted to call our very particular attention to the real Personality of our Lord Jesus Christ and to make us feel that, in Him—not merely in what He does and what He bestows, but in “Himself” is the source of our comfort! “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” O Brothers and Sisters, is there any surer source of joy to a Christian than Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God? John writes, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.” And from the inspired Word I know that God has taken Humanity into union with Divinity, and that He who stands at the right hand of God, even the Father, is the Son of Mary, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! Why, there is comfort in the knowledge that He is there as the Representative Man who has taken redeemed human nature right up to the Throne of God—picked up human nature as it lay, all bruised and mangled, outside the gate of the earthly Paradise—and taken it up into the heavenly Paradise from which it can never be expelled!  
There must be thoughts of love to man in the heart of God since His only-begotten and well-beloved Son is a Man! When you think of your Savior, you are not to think exclusively of Him as God, but also to think of Him as Man, for He was born into this world and lived in it. He ate and drank, and slept and walked as we do—and He also died as we do! And in His Humanity, as well as in His Divinity, He has gone into Glory. Leaving out, for the moment, what He has done for us, we may well rejoice in what He is, Himself, as Immanuel, God With Us! Here is music in the very sound of that sweet name—and there is the very essence of music in “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.”  
But look at His Person, not merely as Man, but as the God-Man who has offered a complete Atonement for His people’s guilt. Up yonder, enthroned in Glory, is your Savior, not merely as Man, but as the Mediator between God and men, who has completed His great Sacrifice, accomplished all His Father’s purposes and fulfilled His Father’s will so that He could truly say, “It is finished.” Look at Him, by faith, as the glorified Man—glorified because, having descended into the grave bearing His people’s sin, He came up out of the grave without sin. He “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” And His Resurrection was the proof that He had—  
*“To the utmost farthing paid  
Whatever His people owed.”*  
Surely it should bring the sweetest consolation to you to think of Jesus Christ as the Representative of His people, gone up into Glory and soon to come to this earth again to reign “before His ancients gloriously,” when the bodies of all His saints shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, and so shall be “forever with the Lord.” Brothers and Sisters, may “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself” manifest Himself unto you with those dear upraised hands of His, with the scars still visible! And as you gaze upon Him, may you realize that He is giving to you “everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace” and, therefore, may your hearts be comforted and may you be established in every good word and work! How can you be moved from your steadfastness so long as you can see Him? How can you ever depart from Him who has won your affection and holds your soul fast with cords of a man, and bands of love? Surely you must cling to Him forever and ever! I feel that I must say with the poet— *“A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,  
Had I no love for Thee—  
Rather than not my Savior love,  
Oh, may I cease to be!”*  
The Apostle, however, does not let us forget that in union with our dear Redeemer, at one with Him in every purpose of Divine Grace, is “God, our Father, who has loved us.” And he bids us think not so much of His Person which we cannot comprehend, as of His love. So, Beloved, let us try to view God our Father in the attitude of loving us. Truly, this is a boundless and unfathomable sea! We can neither fly across it, nor dive into its depths. Remember, Believer, that the Lord loved you long before the foundation of the world. You are so insignificant in the scale of being that if He had quite forgotten you, you might not have wondered. And yet, before the mountains were created, or He had kindled the morning star, in the glass of His decrees He beheld you and even then He loved you! Recollect how Jeremiah was inspired to write, “The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” Dwell on that wondrous Truth of God, that God has loved you with an everlasting love. Suck the honey of consolation out of that glorious fact! Surely if your faith is at all in exercise, you will find much sacred sweetness there.  
God loved us, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “even when we were dead in sins.” God loved you when you resisted His Spirit. He loved you when you despised His Son. He loved you out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. He loved you into a state of Grace and so loved you into loving Him. And He has loved you ever since with a constant love though He has sometimes chastened you for your profit—for His love is wise and discriminating. He has never deserted you and His love for you has been constant and true. He has often been grieved with you when you have sinned against Him, for His love is a holy love which cannot endure iniquity—yet He has forgiven you, for His love is a gracious love! He has always loved you and is loving you at this moment. Surely this fact ought both to comfort the Believer’s heart and to hold it fast! And this is what the Apostle was aiming at when he wrote our text. What can bind a Christian to his God so well as a sense of Divine Love? If it is but shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, you will not be tempted away from your Heavenly Father’s house, neither will you be weary of your Heavenly Father’s work, nor tired of your Heavenly Father’s words. That which comes to us perfumed with love is always sweet and precious, so let us rejoice to remember “God, our Father, who has loved us.”  
And, Beloved, do not forget that having once loved you, He will always love you. When this great world has passed away and, like a dream, has vanished into nothingness, you will still live because Jesus will still live— and you will still be loved by “God, our Father,” because Jesus will still be loved by Him. As you are in Him, you shall be forever in Him and forever be the object of the Father’s love. These are simple matters to speak of, but they are sublime Truths of God to live upon. Bread is a common thing, but a hungry man thinks it very precious. O you hungry children of God, cut large slices from the loaf that is set before you, now, and gratefully feed upon it! Here is “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself,” in His complex Person as God and Man, as a fountain of comfort to His people and He is “God, our Father,” in His everlasting love to us, as the same fountain under another aspect.  
Then the Apostle, having pointed out to us the Divine Source of all our blessings, bids us survey the streams which flow from that Source—“who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” Beloved, the consolation which God gives to us is not temporary, but eternal! Such consolation is worth having and when we get it, we may well rejoice over it.  
What are the consolations which God gives to His people? I need not mention all the forms of consolation, for, to meet each separate case of distress, there is a special message of comfort—and every promise that God gives you is part of the everlasting consolation with which He has enriched all His chosen people. The potent “shalls” and “wills” of Jehovah stand fast like His Throne and can never be changed. Has He given you a promise and shall He not fulfill it? Yes, and fulfill it again, and again, and again, as long as you shall need to have it fulfilled, for His promises are inexhaustible and full of manifold riches of blessedness to the believing soul! God’s promise of consolation is based upon the “Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” God has entered into a Covenant with Christ on the behalf of all His people. And from the provisions of that Covenant He will never depart, for He has “confirmed it by an oath: that by two Immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”—  
*“His oath, His Covenant, and His blood,  
Support me in the sinking flood.  
When all around my soul gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay—  
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.”*  
Pardoned sin is, to my mind, one phase of the “everlasting consolation” which God has given us, for, be it known unto you that God does not forgive your sin today and then lay it to your charge again tomorrow. Little children give presents and them want to have them back again—and fickle men often play fast and loose with one another. But when God forgives, He forgives forever, “for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” That is to say, He never changes His mind and takes back the gift which He has bestowed. Have you received absolution from the lips of your God? Then your sins shall never again rise up against you in judgment, for they have been cast into the depths of the sea! “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found, for I will pardon them, whom I reserve.”  
What “everlasting consolation” there is, also, in the great Doctrine of Adoption! We become the children of God when we are born-again. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” A man’s child is always his child and God’s child is always His child. A man cannot “unchild” his own son or daughter! And if you are a child of God, you shall be a child of God throughout eternity! The life that God has put into you is not transient! As Jesus said concerning His sheep, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” What rich consolation there is for you in this blessed Truth of God

The very life which becomes yours by your adoption into the family of God is an everlasting life—it must, therefore, yield you “everlasting consolation.”  
Time would fail me to remind you of all the various forms of consolation which the Spirit of God applies to the heart of the Believer— and every phase of it is everlasting! Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, let us not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. Let us not cast away our confidence, “which has great recompense of reward.” Let us not be disturbed or disquieted—let not our hearts be troubled. If we have everlasting consolation, let our joy also be perpetual.  
And then the Apostle, still further to comfort our hearts and establish us in every good word and work, tells us that God has given us “good hope through Grace.” You know what that good hope is—the hope that He will preserve us unto the end—the hope that we shall be raised from the dead in God’s good time—the hope that we shall be accepted in the day of Christ’s appearing—the hope that we shall be with Him where He is and shall behold His Glory and share it with Him forever and ever! This is a good hope because it has a good basis to rest upon. God has given this hope to all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. And as God is true, the hope is a good hope. A hope that is founded upon a lie is a vain hope, but a hope that is founded upon a promise of God is a good hope. It is a good hope because it is a hope of good things—so good, my dear Friend, that you cannot find anything to match them in the whole world. It may well be called a good hope, for it is the hope of perfection, the hope of being transformed into the image of Christ, the hope of everlasting delight. It is the best of all hopes and we cannot say more of it than that. It is a good hope because of its operation on the heart. “Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as Christ is pure.” For the man who has a good hope through Divine Grace longs to be purged from sin, to be waiting and watching for his Lord’s appearing and to have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God!  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, since so much of what God has given to you is at present the subject of hope, do you not see how bound you are to remain in the posture of waiting and hoping—and to be neither discouraged, nor yet to turn deserters? May the Lord “comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work,” because you are saved by hope and the realization of that hope is not visible at present, for, if you saw it, you would not continue to hope for it. You are expecting greater things than you have ever realized! It is better than before, for your faces are toward the rising sun. We were told, some time ago, by a philosopher, that our nation had been shooting Niagara and taking a leap in the dark. Well, that may be, or may not be, but this I know, Believers in Christ are not descending Niagara, for they are ascending! And their leap, whenever they leap, is not into the dark, but into the Light of God—a Light that is brighter, and brighter still! Our progress is away from evil up to good, from good to better, and from the better to the best of all—an infinite progression, by the Divine impulse of the Grace of God—for it is by Grace! “Good hope through Grace.” We do not get this good hope through nature, or through our own free will—we get it through Divine Grace. Grace has given us what we have already received and Grace also gives us the hope of what we have not yet received. Grace lets us see the things that are ours at present and Grace enables us to realize the things that shall be ours in the future!  
I hope you understand what the Apostle meant in setting all this before you. If I had the tongues of men and of angels, I could not tell you the heights, deaths, lengths and breadths of these gracious words. Let me read them to you again—“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” That is what we already have!  
II. Now I want to clinch the nail by speaking of WHAT WE ARE TO HAVE as the result of what we already have.  
Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, first, that the Lord would comfort their hearts and, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may the Lord comfort your hearts! God does not wish you to be sad. A certain Persian king would allow no one to wait upon him if he had a sad countenance. It is not so with our Lord, for He looks with a tender eye upon those who are heavy of heart and He does not forbid them to come into His Presence. At the same time—  
*“Why should the children of a king  
Go mourning all their days?”*  
If you have everlasting consolation, my dear Sister, what reason have you for such constant fretting? If you have a good hope through Grace, my dear Brother, why did you say, the other day, that you were tempted almost to give up all hope? May the Lord comfort your hearts! Perhaps you think it is a small thing for the Lord’s people to be comforted, but God does not think so. He said to His servants, the Prophets, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” It was not one alone whom He told to do this, but He said, “Comfort you My people,” as though He summoned all His servants and said to them, “Whatever you do in denouncing sinners and in stirring up My people to work for Me, never forget this part of your duty—‘Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.’” Our Lord Jesus Christ did not think that it was a small thing for His people to be happy, for, on the very night in which He went forth to His passion, among the last words that He uttered were those blessed ones which have cheered millions of mourners—“Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.”  
The normal condition of a child of God—I mean, his healthy condition—is one of repose, rest, comfort and delight. Certainly, the Lord has given special promises to those who reach this state of mind—such as this, “Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” He means, then, to give great things to those who honor Him by trusting Him so that they cease to be troubled and are comforted, whatever happens. What ails you, daughter of sorrow? Are you poor? So was your Lord! Yet I never read that He complained at what His Father willed. Why should you complain of the dispensations of Providence? Are you sick, my dear Brother or Sister? You will not be the first child of God who has pined away into Heaven if that should be your lot. Perhaps the Lord means thus gradually and gently to take down your earthly tabernacle, but, if so, remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” “Ah,” you say, “but it is one who is very dear to me who is dying.” Yes, but when the Lord lent you your husband, or your wife, or your child, He did not tell you that any of them would live forever! Be thankful that you have had these loans so long. After all, they are not really yours and if the Lord takes back what He lent to you for a while, why should you be so cast down? “I have lost all,” cries one. Have you lost your God? “No.” Then you have not lost your all. May the Lord comfort your heart, my dear Friends, because if you are unhappy, you dishonor your God by your doubts and fears, and you often hinder those who would enter into the Kingdom. They see your sad face and they say, “Christ’s yoke must be a heavy one, and His burden must be intolerable! Look at the face of that Christian man or woman.” I would rather that they should say to you, “we would gladly go with you, for there is a brightness about your face that we would like to have. We perceive that your Master is a good Master and that He cheers and comforts your hearts.”  
I believe that thoroughly happy Christians—those who really enjoy the things of God—are also among the most stable Christians. I think that is why Paul was guided to put the truth as it is in our text. You cannot get a man to give up that which is his daily delight. I never wonder when I hear of some professors giving up Christianity, for they have never experienced the joy of it—it was only a burden to them. When a poor fellow has a load on his back that does not belong to him and does not yield him any comfort, but only galls his shoulders, you are not surprised if he gets to one of those rests for porters in the city, he lays down his load and walks away and forgets it—and is very glad to forget it! But if it were his own property, his own treasure—you would not find him forgetting it, or going away and leaving it behind! The thing out of which you get the most joy will, in the long run, be the dearest thing to you! And if you continually rejoice in the Lord, your joy will greatly help you in resisting the many temptations to skepticism and superstition to which others will yield. You will stand fast in the Lord because you will be held there by the golden rivets of joy which God has given you in communion with Himself!  
Then the Apostle adds, “and establish you in every good word and work.” He wants God’s people to be established in every good word. I suppose he mean that he would have us firmly fixed in our belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel and, Beloved, you may very well say that you will keep to them till somebody shows you something better, just as I have read that when the people of the State of Massachusetts wanted a set of laws, and they had not time to make them just then, they passed a resolution that they would be governed by the Laws of God until they had time to make better ones. We may believe the Doctrines revealed in the Word of God until we find better ones—and that we shall never do! Have those Doctrines converted you? Then, be established in them! Does your experience confirm the truth of them? Then, cling to them! It is one of the characteristics of the Doctrines of the Gospel that the older a man gets, the more he loves them. I always find that the older saints become more Calvinistic as they ripen in age—that is to say, they get to believe more and more that salvation is all of Grace. And whereas at first they might have had some rather loose idea concerning free will and the power of the creature, the lapse of years and fuller experiences gradually blow all that kind of chaff away. Old saints get what is called “a sweet tooth.” They love the sweet things of the Covenant. They like their meat to have a rich savor. I am not old yet, but I confess that I get more and more fond of the sweet things of the Gospel of Grace and cannot endure the novelties that are so current and so exceedingly popular nowadays. Oh, no! Tell me of my Father’s eternal love, tell me of my Savior’s precious blood, tell me of the Spirit’s sacred indwelling and my heart is glad! But tell me anything short of this and my soul is not fed. I pray that you, Brothers and Sisters, who are members of this Christian Church, may know what you know and hold fast to it. May you drive your roots down into the rich soil of the Infallible Truths of God! May you not be as leaves of the forest, driven here and there by the winds because there is no life in you, but may you be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season,” whose “leaf also shall not wither.” God make you to be thus “established in every good word.”  
The Apostle would also have those to whom He wrote established in every good work. Sometimes an attack of this kind is made upon us—“It is no use trying to teach the Gospel to children. We cannot suppose that they can understand its deep mysteries.” I heard that said only the other day. Well, I can say that we have tried it and we have found that whether you choose to call them great mysteries or not, children do understand the Gospel and seem, sometimes, to comprehend it better than their fathers do just because they are so childlike! This qualification for entering the Kingdom of Heaven is not fully-developed manhood, but rather that we should become as little children. And unless we do become childlike, we cannot enter the Kingdom. Dear Friend, do not be turned aside from your work by anything that is said concerning it. If people say that it is no use to go down to the lodging houses and talk to the poorest of the poor, be established in doing it because your Master did it and because the everlasting consolation which comes to you through the Grace of God makes you feel that to the most unworthy are the fittest objects for the Gospel of Jesus. Since you received consolation from God’s mercy, you may well be established in the belief that there is consolation in the mercy of God for the vilest of the vile!  
Do not be turned aside from any part of your work, and especially from the blessed work of prayer. Some people tell us that prayer is useless, but what do they know about it? They have never tried it! But those of us who have tried and proved it, and who still practice it from day to day, know that prayer is heard. We may send a telegraphic message, yet it may never get where we want it to go. We may mail a letter, yet it may never reach its proper destination. But when we pray, we are sure that we are heard, for we have distinct answers to our petitions and our heart is filled with delight as we recollect the hundreds and thousands of times in which the right hand of the Lord has been stretched out to help us when we have cried unto Him in our time of need! Be established in every form of good work, you who are part of the Lord’s great army, meeting here for drill and for battle with the forces of evil. I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, let not your hearts grow faint, and do not so much as think of retreating in the day of conflict. Lo, our victorious Leader, “our Lord Jesus Christ Himself,” is coming! Therefore let everyone of us play the man for our coming King. The fight will not be long and woe be to the man who turns his back in the day of battle—but blessed shall he be who is found faithful even unto death. I speak thus to you, Beloved, though I am fully persuaded that He who has begun the good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.  
I wish that my sermon had a great deal more to do with some of you than it has, for I fear that there are many here to whom I have not been speaking. Therefore, my closing message shall be to the unsaved. My dear Friend, I cannot bid you be steadfast, and I cannot talk to you of everlasting consolation, for you have not yet believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of your soul. There is an awful text of Scripture which at present applies to you. The Apostle Paul, a cool-headed and warmhearted man who loved sinners, once wrote this—“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” That is, accursed at the coming of Christ! O my dear Friend, that is what you will be if you love not our Lord Jesus Christ! And that is what you ought to be and what the warm-hearted lover of his race, who also loves his God, feels must be and ought to be your doom if you love not the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of that and I pray that the Holy Spirit may lead you first to trust in Jesus, and then to love Him, and so you shall be saved and shall bless Him forever!—  
*“You sinners, seek His Grace, Whose wrath you cannot bear! Fly to the shelter of His Cross And find salvation there.”*

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A SERMON  
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**“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting  
consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.***2Th 2:16-17***.**

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, are Sermons, #1542, Volume 26—FREE GRACE A MOTIVE FOR FREE GIVING; #2363, Volume 40—COMFORT AND CONSTANCY and #2991, Volume 52—WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE—— Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

ALL through his Epistles, Paul is continually expressing his best wishes for the friends to whom he writes. The Christian should be a wellwisher to all men. No cursing should ever come out of his mouth, but his lips should always distil blessings even upon his enemies—and much more upon his friends. Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, it should be a part of our religion to be desiring the best of blessings for our fellow men. As the high priest of old blessed the people, so should those whom God has made to be priests and kings unto Himself—a privilege that pertains to all saints—exercise the function of blessing the people by desiring good things for them!

The blessing invoked in the text is very comprehensive, but although there is much to crave, there is much more to acknowledge with gratitude. Blessings already secured in the Covenant are the foundation of a rich expectancy for the supply of all our present needs. We may reasonably hope that God will do in the future what He has done in the past. Hence the Apostle speaks very plainly of what God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ have already bestowed—and then he couples therewith the kindest wishes as to the future of his friends at Thessalonica.

With as much brevity as possible, I shall first speak on that part of the text which contains two positive facts. And then upon that part of it which expresses two holy desires.

I. The 16th verse contains A VERY CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE TWO POSITIVE FACTS.  
Paul, writing concerning believers in Christ at Thessalonica and everywhere else, says, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” From this we gather that every true Believer—everyone who rests upon Christ and is saved through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit—is, at the present moment, first of all, the object of the love of God—“who has loved us.” So, my Friends, Paul does not speak of God as though we were strangers to Him and He is a stranger to us, but he says, “who has loved us.” Concerning this matter, he does not speak as one who was in doubt—with mingled hope and fear— but he says positively, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us.” He is quite sure of it! He is certain that these people to whom he is writing, and all believers in Jesus, are the objects of Divine Love!  
Will you turn that Truth of God over in your minds, dear Friends, making a personal application of it at this moment? If you are now trusting in Jesus Christ, God loves you! That He should think of you is something! That He should pity you is more. That He should bear with you and have patience with you is no small thing—but think of God loving you! That Infinite Being whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, whose years are eternal, whose existence knows no limit nor shadow of a change—He loves you and yet you are, compared with Him, nothing—yes, less than nothing and vanity! Could you conceive of an angel loving an ant? Could you imagine one of the seraphs being in love with the gnat which dances in the sunbeam? It would be wonderful condescension for the august spirits to love such insignificant creatures, yet it would be only one creature loving another creature! And between one creature and another, the distance cannot be as great as between the Creator and the created one! That God, the Eternal, Infinite, Almighty I AM, should actually condescend to love us, who are but as worms compared with Him and who are but as things of yesterday, soon gone, oh, ‘tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis amazing! Yet though it exceeds marvel, it does not, thank God, exceed belief! But were it not that God has, Himself, revealed it, we might have cause enough to suppose it to be impossible that the Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, should have loved us!  
Being spoken of in the past tense, I infer that the love which God has for Believers is no novelty. He did not commence to love them yesterday. Brothers and Sisters, we believe that as many as have been called by Grace have been the objects of a love that never knew a beginning! Long before the stars were lit, or the sun’s refulgent ray had pierced through primeval shade, the heart of Deity had fixed itself upon the chosen! The prescient eyes of God had seen them when as yet they were not—and in His book all their names were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them! They were not merely foreknown, but they were foreloved! They were the favorites of His heart, the dear ones of His choice. He “has loved us.” Fly back as far as you will—till time has not begun, the work of Creation is not accomplished and God dwells alone—it was still true of all Believers, even then, that “God, even our Father, has loved us.”  
Is it not marvelous that we should have been the objects of a love that has been so constant? For, as there never was any beginning to it, so there never has been a period in which that love has grown dim towards those who were the objects of it! The river of God’s Love has gone flowing on in one undiminished stream even until now! He “has loved us.” He loved us when our father Adam plunged us into the ruins of the Fall. He loved us when He spoke the first promise in the Garden of Eden, that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head. He loved us all through the prophetic days when He was writing the Book of Love upon which our delighted eyes were afterwards to gaze. He loved us when He sent His Son, His only Son, to live our life and to die our death! He loved us when He exalted that Son of His to His own right hand—and in His Person exalted us there, too, and made us to sit in heavenly places together with Him. He loved us when we were little children, in the weakness of infancy hanging upon our mother’s breasts. He loved us when, in the follies of our youth, we seemed determined to destroy ourselves while He was determined that we should be saved. He loved us when we loved not Him. He drew us with the cords of a man and with the bands of love—and now, even at this day—we can, each one of us, look up to Him and say, “Abba! Father! You are mine and I am Yours by the Spirit of adoption.” Yes, we can say this! We can look back all along our past lives and right beyond our birth into eternity past, and we can thank Him that we can truly say, “God, even our Father, has loved us.”  
Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you must not be satisfied unless you can speak about God’s love to you in the same positive terms as those which were used by the Apostle Paul. Never rest contented if you do not know that God loves you! Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids until, by a living faith, you have been able to read your title clear to this love of God! It may be that you have lost the sensible presence of that love—then ask for Divine Grace to search until you find it again. You may be saved and yet you may not be happy, but you ought never be content unless you are certain that you are saved— and then such certainty will infallibly bring you peace and joy. If now your full assurance has departed and your faith is under a cloud, come and knock again at Mercy’s door and cling to the posts thereof, looking up at the Crucified One. Turn your tearful eyes to Calvary, trusting afresh to Him whose wounds will give you healing and in the crimson lines of whose agonies you must read your acceptance. Go there, I say, and be not content till you can say with Paul, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us.” This is the first positive fact which is here mentioned.  
There is another fact which is equally positive—“and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” It is absolutely certain that God has given His people this double blessing. What a delightful blessing this is, “everlasting consolation”! There is music in the word, “consolation.” Barnabas was called “the son of consolation.” No, more than that, it is the name of One who is far greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is called “the Consolation of Israel.” But God is here said to have given this blessing to His people in a very special form— “everlasting consolation.” A man goes to work to make money and, after toiling hard for it, he gets it and it is a consolation to him. But it is not an everlasting consolation, for he may spend or he may lose all his money. He may invest it in some company (limited or unlimited), and very soon find it vanish! Or he may be compelled by death to leave it. It cannot be, at the best, more than a temporary consolation. A man toils hard for knowledge. He acquires it. He becomes eminent, his name is famous. This is a consolation to him for all his toil, but it cannot last long, for when he comes to feel the headache or the heartache, his degrees and his fame cannot cheer him. Or when his soul becomes a prey to despondency, he may turn over many a learned tome before he will find a cure for melancholy. His consolation is but frail and fickle—it will only serve to cheer him at intermittent seasons—it is not “everlasting consolation.” But I venture to say that through the consolation which God gives to His people, they are unsurpassed for their endurance! They can stand all tests—the shock of trial, the bursting out of passion, the lapse of years— no, more—they can even endure the passage to eternity, for God has given to His people “everlasting consolation.”  
What is this “everlasting consolation”? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian, when his heart is right, knows that God has pardoned his sins, that He has cast them behind His back, and that they will never be mentioned against him again. He has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit that God has blotted out, as a thick cloud, his transgressions and, as a cloud, his sins. Well, if sin is pardoned, is not that a consolation? Yes, and an everlasting consolation, too—one that will do to live with and that will do to die with—and that will do to rise again with! Oh, joy! My sins are pardoned! Now do what You will with me, my God! As my sins are put away, You have given me “everlasting consolation.”  
This “everlasting consolation” also gives an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as he is in Christ and, inasmuch as God put Christ into his place, and punished Christ for his sin, He now puts the Believer into Christ’s place and rewards that Believer with His love just as if he had been obedient unto death, as Christ was! It is a blessed thing to know that God accepts us and to be able to sing, with Hart—  
*“With my Savior’s garments on,  
Holy as the Holy One”—*  
and this is a consolation which is abiding. It is, in fact, everlasting! Now let sickness come—the consolation still abides. Have we not seen hundreds of Believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and vigorous health? Let death come— the consolation still remains. Have not these ears often heard the songs of dying saints as they have rejoiced because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an “everlasting consolation.”  
Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security in Christ. God has promised to save all those who trust in Jesus. The Christian does trust in Him and he believes that God will be as good as His word and will save him. He feels, therefore, that whatever may occur in Providence, whatever onslaughts there may be of inward corruption, or of outward temptation, he is safe by virtue of his union to Christ—is not this a source of consolation? Why, some of you might freely give your eyes to know that you are saved! It would be a good bargain for men even to be lame or maimed if they did but enter into life. The Christian knows that he is secure—beneath the shield of the Divine Omnipotence he laughs at the rage of Hell, feeling that no fiery dart can ever pierce that sacred protection! Are you rejoicing in this everlasting consolation? If not, you should seriously question whether you know what true religion means. Do you find that your losses make you wretched? Do bereavements in your family make you murmur and complain? Are you never happy? Does not joy ever come into your spirit? Do you always hang your head like a bulrush? Have you no peace of mind, no sacred mirth? Do the bells of your heart never ring? Do the heart-strings of your soul never sound out the music of grateful praise? Then gravely question whether you can be a child of God, for concerning the children of God it is written, “God, even our Father, has given us everlasting consolation.”  
I am sure there are many here who, if they were to speak from experience, would say, “Well, we are very poor, but we are rich in faith, and faith makes us rich toward God. We have not anything to spare, yet surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life. We are sick in body, yet our afflictions are so sanctified that we rejoice in deep distress. We are ridiculed and slandered by the ungodly, but we rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer anything for Christ’s sake. Yes, God has given us everlasting consolation!” John Bunyan said that the man who wears the flower, “heart’s ease,” in his bosom need not envy a king! And that is a flower which the Christian always wears in his buttonhole—or if he does not always wear it there, it is his own fault, for God has given it to him—He has given unto us everlasting, unchanging, unfading, inexhaustible fountains of consolation!  
Another thing which God has given us is “good hope through Grace”—a hope, a good hope—a “good hope through Grace.” What is the Christian’s hope? It is a hope that he shall be preserved in this life by God’s love and kindness. A hope that when he comes to die—for die he must unless the Lord shall come first—he shall have all-sufficient Grace to be able to play the man in the last solemn article. He has the hope that, after death, his soul, out-soaring sun, moon and stars, shall enter into the realm of spirits and be with Christ! He believes that the day shall come when his very body, though it has become food for worms, shall be quickened and called by the voice of the archangel from its bed of dust and its silent sleeping place. He believes that those bones of his shall live again and that his soul and body shall be re-united and that, when the Lord Jesus shall stand at the Last Day upon the earth, in his flesh he shall see God! So he sings with Toplady—  
*“These eyes shall see Him in that Day,  
The God that died for me!  
And all my rising bones shall say,  
Lord, who is like unto Thee?”*  
This is the Christian’s hope, that he shall then live, world without end, in the perfection of enjoyment! That he shall have all spiritual joys in communion with Christ—and all joys that shall be suitable to his new and spiritual body as he shall walk the golden streets and forever praise the love which brought him into an existence of perfect bliss! This is the Christian’s hope and, consequently, the thought of death does not alarm him—rather, he looks forward to it with joy! As the toil-worn laborer does not dread the eventide when he shall put off his dusty robes, but longs for the night that he may rest in his bed, so the Christian, when he is in his right mind—  
*“Longs for evening, to undress,  
That he may rest with God.”*  
He is willing to put off the cumbrous clay of his body and commit it to the purifying earth, that he may, as a disembodied spirit, depart to be “with Christ, which is far better,” expecting that, afterwards, body and soul together shall be forever gratified with Christ!  
This is the Christian’s hope and it is a good hope. It is good for what it brings us, but it is especially good for that upon which it is grounded. The reason why the Christian expects this eternal happiness is because God has promised it to him and has given him an earnest of it. He has Heaven in his heart even now. That is to say, he has within him the beginning of that life which shall, in due time, become the heavenly life. In olden times, when men bought an estate, it was customary for the seller to give to the purchaser a tuft of grass and a leaf from one of the trees on the land, signifying that the purchaser then had what was called seizin of the property, and they were proofs that it belonged to him. And when God gives true faith in Christ and enables a soul to have peace with God through the precious blood, this is the earnest of Heaven, a foretaste of its bliss and sure evidence that Heaven is, indeed, ours. I trust that there are many of us who have this earnest and feel comforted by it. We have a good hope because it is founded upon God’s promise in His Word and upon the witness of the Spirit within our heart that we are born of God!  
And it is said to be a good hope through Grace.” Ah, Friends, there is no good hope except “through Grace.” You cannot have a good hope through merit. If anybody expects to have a good hope through baptism, he is very much mistaken! Baptism is simply the testimony of a good conscience toward God—it cannot give any hope of Heaven. If we were to build upon such a foundation as baptism, confirmation, the Lord’s Supper, or anything of the kind, we should be sad losers, for there is nothing in all these things put together to make a Christian’s hope! Nor must we build our hopes on our prayers or our tears, or on anything that we can do, for if so, it will be a sandy foundation and when the time of trial comes, it will give way under us. But to have a good hope through Divine Grace—such a hope as this—that I, a poor unworthy sinner, have been invited by God to put my trust in His dear Son, and that He has promised that if I do, I shall be saved! I do trust in Jesus and, therefore, if God has promised truly, I shall be saved—this is indeed a foundation on which I may build without fear! Is not this, my Brothers and Sisters, the top and bottom of the Christian’s hope, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life? You do believe in Him and, therefore, you can say that you do possess eternal life! I do solemnly declare that if I have ever at any time begun to say in my own mind, “I shall be saved, for I have preached the Gospel, I have experienced such-and-such enjoyments, I have drawn near to God in secret prayer”—if ever I have talked to myself like that, I have soon been led to see that if I had not something infinitely better than all that to trust to, I would be resting on a broken reed. But, oh, to come to Jesus just as one came, at the first, saying— *“Nothing in my hands I bring—  
Simply to Your Cross I cling.  
Naked, come to You for dress.  
Helpless, look to You for Grace.  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—  
Wash me, Savior, or I die!”*  
This is, indeed, to have a “good hope through Grace.”  
Now let us take these two statements, look at them again, and then lay them up among our choicest treasures. The one statement is that God has loved us. O Christian Friends, do try to drink in that great Truth of God! Do not be satisfied simply to hear the words repeated, but get them right into your very spirits—“Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us.” O you angels, you have not even in Heaven a greater joy than this—to know that God has loved us! The other statement is that God “has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace.” So we cannot be without consolation. Whatever your trouble may be, my dear Christian Friend, though you may have lost your dearest one, though your property may have melted as the snowflake melts into the sea, yet God has given you eternal consolation— and whatever you may have to fear concerning the future, you have a hope that is broader than your fears!—

*“This is the hope, the blissful hope,  
The hope by Jesus given!  
The hope when days and years are past, We all shall meet in Heaven!”*

As I turned this text over, I could not help pitying those who have no hope, no good hope through Divine Grace. When I opened my letters this afternoon, on coming back from Liverpool, the first one I opened was to tell me of the death of one with whom I spent a very happy day about a fortnight ago. He seemed to me to be in perfect health when I spoke to him, then, but now he is gone to his eternal rest. The next letter I opened came from the deacon of a Church in Devonshire, to say that one of our students, who was settled there as a minister, had been suddenly taken ill and had just died. I did not care to open any more letters, just then, for fear that I would read of somebody else being gone. But I thought, “Well, both of these dear Brothers have served their generation by the will of God, and they have fallen asleep, and it is well.” I could only look forward with hope to the day when somebody would read just such a letter about me—and could only trust that they would be there to say of me what I could say of these Brothers—“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

But what a sad thing it is to live in this world and to have no hope! It would have been better not to have lived at all than to live without a “good hope through Grace.” I do not really know how some of you manage to live. I know you have your troubles—troubles at home and troubles in business—and I cannot make out how you manage to put up with this poor existence without the hope of a better one! Knowing what we do about a future state, if we had not a good hope concerning it, we really might wish that we had never been born. And we sometimes wonder how some of you can be so easy and so careless about the unknown state when you, perhaps, know that you will soon be in that state and also know that if it is not a better state than this one, it will be a very sad thing for you to have had an existence at all! Oh, “seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near.” A good hope can be had through Divine Grace and that Grace is free even to the chief of sinners! If we come to God on the footing of Divine Grace, He will never cast us out. Oh, that we might all have this infinite treasure of a “good hope through Grace”!

II. Now I can spend only a few minutes upon the second part of the subject in which we have TWO GOOD WISHES, TWO HOLY DESIRES. The first part of the text has told us what God has given us. The second part tells us what we ought to desire God to give us—“Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.”

I pray God for those who are about to be baptized and also for you who have long made a profession of your faith, that you may get the first blessing, namely, Divine comfort. May God comfort you! It is a bad case when a Christian is not happy, when he is not full of comfort. I know it is treated by some people as though it were a very insignificant matter whether a Christian is happy or not, but I am sure it is an exceedingly important matter that he should have comfort. A wretched, miserable Christian is, to a great extent, an injury to the Church, and a dishonor to the Cross of Christ, for worldly people will pick out such an one and say, “That is what your religion does for a man!” Now, genuine godliness gives peace and joy. In its first beginning, when a man is under a sense of sin, it does make him wretched to feel his sin, but when the soul is obedient to the command of Christ and trusts in Him, it gives him joy and peace. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace”—and for a Christian not to have this fruit of the Spirit is to libel Christianity!

When one’s heart is sad, it is not always best to show it. “When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast.” Even if you have some sorrow of heart, tell it not at once to your neighbor, who may have quite enough trouble of his own to bear without having yours added to it! Do, Christian, seek to get the comfort of which the Apostle here speaks. Is there ever a position into which you and I can be cast where there is no comfort for us in the Divine promises? There is, in God’s Word, a key to open all the locks of trouble in Doubting Castle! If we will but turn over the sacred pages, we shall find there a promise exactly suited to our case. Do you lack comfort, Christian? How can you while there is a Mercy Seat to go to and One there whose ears are always open to hear your petition and to relieve your trouble? Do you lack comfort while you can pray? Surely it must be neglect of prayer that makes your burdens so heavy. How can you be without comfort while your Savior lives? If Jesus Christ still bears your name upon His heart, that should be enough for you! Is it not really a comfort to think that the Father, Himself, loves you? My Father, who is in Heaven, knows my needs—ought not that to cheer me? Midst darkest shades, if I feel that He is with me—yes, even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death—if His rod and His staff comfort me, what have I to fear? Yes, Christian Friends, you have abundant ground for comfort, so be not content unless you enjoy that comfort! May God, even your Father, put you and keep you in a comfortable frame of mind!

I would say especially to young Christians—Do not imagine that as soon as you become believers in Christ, you are to cast away those cheerful looks and those bright eyes of yours. God forbid! If you were happy, before, be far happier now! You need not have levity—that is to be avoided—and the pleasure which consists in sin should be no pleasure to you, but now your joy should be deeper as it is purer, more lively as it is more sound!

“ And establish you in every good word and work.” These are the two forms of establishment in good Doctrine and in good practice. When a Christian receives good words, the devil would like to drive them from him and to drive him from them. It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to try to spoil our faith. If he can lead us to believe falsely, he will the more easily lead us to act falsely. So may God “establish you in every good word.” You cannot help noticing, if you look upon the spiritual firmament just now, how like it is to what the natural firmament was the other night. It is said that there were thousands of shooting stars visible within an hour! And I might almost say that if you look out into the Christian world, you can see thousands of shooting stars within a minute! I do not know what new error we shall have within the next 24 hours. There are some people who are so fond of novelties that they have advanced pretty nearly every form of error that our poor imagination can conceive of, yet they seem to be studious to make fresh ones! We have new “isms” and “ites” of all sorts, but old-fashioned Truths of God, which we thought would never have been doubted, are, nowadays, contested! An age of great religious activity is pretty sure to be also an age in which error is active and, therefore, it is the more necessary that we should pray for Believers that they may be established in every good word!

I should like you who are members of this Church not only to believe the Truth, but to know why you believe it and to be so sure and certain of it that you cannot be shaken from it! I would have you be not like the dry leaves in autumn, which are carried away by the first wind because they have lost their vitality, but like the green leaves in spring which will bear the March winds and cannot be torn off because their sap is flowing in them and they are fresh and vigorous. I would that you were always able to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. The faith which we have has been handed down to us by martyrs’ hands all along the ages—not through the corrupt Church of Rome—but down along the line of martyrs and confessors who have sealed their testimony with their blood! And that testimony is still with us this day! Search God’s Word and if we teach you anything that is inconsistent with it, then reject us as we would have you reject all false teachers! If we set before you anything which is of our making, and not of God’s making, cast it to the dogs and have none of it! But if it is God’s Truth, be established in it. Garner it in your soul. Hold it fast as for dear life and never let it go! Believe that the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, is worth the blood which martyrs have shed in its defense—and will be worth all that it can possibly cost you in holding it! May you be established in every good word— not merely in some good words—but in every good word! Believe all the Truths of God. Many Christians, alas, believe only one Truth or so. One man gets a hold of the Doctrine of Predestination and he is like a child with a doll—it is all the world to him! Another man gets a hold of the Doctrine of Human Responsibility and he looks at it, as Luther says, “like a cow at a new gate.” He stands staring at that and can see nothing beyond it! But I would have you see all the Truth and be always ready to receive anything that God has revealed! Be you steadfast “in every good word.”

But the blessing invoked by the Apostle is that you may be established in every good work as well as in every good word. Alas, there are some Christians who like the Word of God very well, though they do not like the work—but unless our godliness extends to our daily work, it is not godliness at all! May you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, be established in every good work! May there be the good work of holiness in all the relationships of life! May you be the best of sons, the best of daughters, the best of parents, the best of husbands, the best of wives, the best of employers, the best of employees! Wherever your lot may be cast, may you be established in every good work in all the relationships of life!

Then, in this Christian Church, may you work in prayer, may you work in teaching, may you work according to the ability which God has given you—and may you be established in it! If there is any good work which you have not yet attempted, but to which you are called of God, may you have Grace to enter upon it and, once engaged in it, may you never take your hands from the plow till you have finished the task that God has sent you! O Beloved, I can pray this prayer from my heart for everyone of you! May you who have served the Master for years, still be kept serving Him! Oh, may none of you turn your backs in the day of battle! May you be faithful unto death and so obtain the great reward! May the Grace which has helped you forward up to now, impel you forward till your hairs are gray and until you throw yourselves back upon the couch of death to sleep with God! So may you be established in every good word and work! Every Christian ought to be a member of the established Church—I do not mean the church which is established by the English law—but the Church which is established by God! Oh, to be established by Divine Grace—to be established by knowing what we believe, by practicing it—and by being established in that practice! These Apostolic good wishes I leave with you—may you inherit them!

But remember that we must first come to Christ, or these good wishes will be only wishes. We must first trust the Savior, or else these blessings can never be ours! May Divine Grace bring us to Jesus and keep us at His feet—and Divine Grace shall have the praise forever and ever!

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

Verses 1, 2. Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. In the Church of Christ, the teaching has always been that Christ is coming quickly and that teaching must never be withdrawn, for He is coming quickly, as He said to John in the Revelation. At the same time, this teaching has given an opportunity to certain presumptuous people to prophesy that at suchand-such a time, Christ will come. They know nothing about it and their prophecies are not worth the breath they spend in uttering them! And we have, today, what the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians—

3. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. I believe that to a large extent this has already happened and that the “man of sin” has been revealed. This “son of perdition” has had a long, dark and terrible reign over myriads of men, and he still sits on the seven hills of Rome, and rules over multitudes of his fellow sinners. Paul held that it was consistent to expect the Lord to come quickly and yet to know that certain events must occur before He did come. That is just the condition, I think, to which a man’s mind will come if he diligently and impartially reads the Scriptures—especially the prophetic parts of them. The Lord will come in such an hour as we think not, yet there are clear indications of certain things which are to happen before He does come.

4. Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. It has been said that the Pope of Rome is infallible, that his interpretation of Scripture, whatever it may be, is as valid as the Scripture, itself, and that whatever he chooses to decree must be obeyed by the faithful. Such are some of the pretensions, even at this day, of the “man of sin.”

5-7. Do you not remember that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work. There were certain reasons why that gigantic iniquity should begin to be developed, even while the Roman Empire was in power to keep it in check. And when that passed away, there was the opportunity for “the mystery of iniquity” to become the despot of the world!

7-10. Only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. This is the last sin of all—that ungodly men do not receive “the love of the truth.” If they were, themselves, true, they would love the Truth of God. If the Grace of God was in them, His own precious Truth would be prized by them above everything else! But when men finally reject the Truth by which they might be saved, God visits them with terrible judgments!

11-17. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasured in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work. So may it be, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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÷2Th 3.5

THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE PATIENCE OF CHRIST  
NO. 2028

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JUNE 17, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”***2Th 3:5***.**

FOR the moment, Paul in spirit is coasting the purple shores of the celestial country. With his Thessalonian friends he is making a joyful voyage within hail of Immanuel’s land. The sail is bright with the sunlight and the keel is marking a silver track behind it. The Apostle’s happy soul has left far in the stern the deceivableness of unrighteousness and the rocks of error. It comes into his heart that he would gladly steer his friends into certain of those lovely creeks which run up far into the inner recesses of the sacred fatherland. Shall he turn the helm that way? He pauses, for the navigation is difficult. One must be greatly expert to thread the streams which descend from the sunny fountains.

It is not given to all saints to follow safely all the windings of the rivers of delight. Paul had been with his Brethren at sea in the place where the Lord sank all their transgressions in the depths and he had been with them in sore affliction when neither sun nor moon appeared—and in all such seafaring he was in his element. But, brave pilot as he was, he could not pretend to penetrate all the richer and rarer experiences which bring elect souls nearest to the heart of the great Father. Therefore, instead of offering to be their pilot, he bowed his head and prayed, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

The special entrance into the goodly land, which the Apostle desired for his friends, was one which mere insight, wit, knowledge, or instruction could never give them. If so, he would have directed their minds that way at once. But the perception of the heavenlies is only given to heavenly faculties. The attainments which Paul desired for his friends were not beliefs of the head but indwelling of the heart. To return to our figure of sailing up the creeks and rivers into the center of the glorious country—that delicious voyage was only possible to the more refined and spiritual powers of the soul. Those sweet waters could only be navigated by the heart and the heart itself would need Divine direction before it could find the entrance to them.

There is a path which the vulture’s eye has not seen and the lion’s whelp has not trod—only God sees and knows it. The Beulah country of spiritual wisdom, especially in its higher reaches, is a matter for personal Revelation from God to each one of His own. We are here hopelessly in the dark if we have no light from above. And even with that light we do but

see the difficult nature of our way and fail to enter upon it until the light becomes a force and He whom we desire to know directs our hearts into communion with Himself. Yes, yonder are the radiant coasts and the rivers of life up which our boat might sail into the center of “the island of the innocent.” Yet our great Apostle does not rush into the office of pilot but humbly acts as intercessor, crying, “The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.”

All this whets our desires! Who would not wish to go where only choice spirits can enter and where these can only come as the Lord directs their hearts? Paul could give his converts external directions, he could guide his more advanced Brethren in the work, walk and warfare of life. And he did so with all simplicity and earnestness. He urged them to abound in this grace and to avoid that folly. But he felt that his exhortation would be inefficient unless their hearts were touched. Here he felt his own powerlessness and so he cast the grand matter of heart-work upon the Lord Himself. As the heart naturally baffles all physicians so spiritually it is far beyond our knowledge. Who among ministers can guide you? Therefore, may “the Lord direct your hearts.”

God alone knows the heart and God alone can rule it—for this ruling Paul makes request. “The Lord direct your hearts.” Let us borrow his prayer and turn it to our own personal use—“Domine dirige nos.” The place for God in reference to the heart is that of supreme director. When the Lord lays His hand on the heart, which is the helm of the ship, then the whole vessel is rightly directed—this, therefore, is what we beseech Him to do. When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart and takes supreme control of the affections, the whole life and conversation are after a godly sort, Oh, that He may prove this fact to each one of us! Some think much of liberty—I long far more to be in perfect subjection to the Lord my God. Oh, how I wish for a Master, a Dictator, a Director! Oh, that my Lord would take the reins and bring my every thought into captivity to His own will, henceforth and forever!

What a heavenly content I feel in yielding myself to the sacred Trinity! The God who made us may most fitly be called upon to govern us. When we recognize the glory of the whole Godhead we perceive the perfect suitability of such direction as will come from the Three in One God. Albeit that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this verse by name, He is mentioned by His operations, for it is the Spirit of God that deals with the hearts of Believers. I take rare pleasure in our text, because we have the blessed Trinity in unity in these few words, “The Lord”—that is, the Holy Spirit who dwells within Believers—“direct your hearts into the love of God (by whom I understand the Father) and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

May the Trinity in Unity work with us and fulfill in each of us this prayer of the Apostle that our hearts may be directed into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ! Paul would have his Thessalonian friends advance in a straight line. Our heart is to be as a vessel that is not left to beat about, nor to come into harbor by a circuitous route, but is steered directly into the fair haven. May the Spirit of God take us and give us a straight tendency towards the holiest things and then at once bring us into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.

But here we must do a little translating or interpreting. Observe in the Revised Version a difference of translation. There we read “into the patience of Christ.” This is a great improvement upon our former translation. But, although it is accurate, it is not complete—it does not take up the whole of the meaning. In our Authorized Version we have “the patient waiting for Christ,” but in its margin we find “into the patience of Christ”—showing that the earlier translators felt that “the patience of Christ” would be a good translation. And yet, after considering it in all its bearings, they thought that Paul did not quite mean the patience of Christ, but that he meant a patience which we exert towards Christ.

Is there not weight in this? Does not the context support it? As the love into which we are to be directed is love to God, so the patience into which we are to be directed must be a patience towards Christ. Our grand old translators expressed this Truth by language which may be inaccurate as mere wordings, but it is deeply correct as to its sense. Surely Paul did mean “the patience towards Christ which manifests itself in the patient waiting for Christ.” If you consider all this you will see that we have no infant-class lesson in the text before us! Here are nuts for young men who have cut their wisdom-teeth. May the good Spirit help us to reach the kernels.

Having turned the text over many times, I thought that we might be able to gather up a considerable amount of its real meaning if we thought of it thus—first, here are two precious things for us to enter into—the love of God and the patience of Christ. And, secondly, here are two eminent virtues to be acquired by us—the love of God, that is, love to God and the patience of Christ—the patient waiting for Christ.

I. To begin, then, here are TWO PRECIOUS THINGS FOR US TO ENTER INTO. We cannot enter into them except as the Lord directs our hearts. There is a straight entrance into them but we do not readily find it. It needs the Holy Spirit to direct our feet along the narrow way which leads to this great blessedness.

The first precious thing which we are to enter is the love of God. Beloved, we know the love of God in various ways. Many know it by having heard of it, even as a blind man may thus know the charms of an Alpine landscape. Poor knowledge this! Others of us have tasted of the love of God, have talked about the love of God, have prayed and have sung concerning the love of God. All very well, but Paul meant a dove of a brighter feather. To be directed into the love of God is quite another thing from all that we can be told of it. A fair garden is before us. We look over the wall and are even allowed to stand at the door while one hands out to us baskets of golden apples. This is very delightful. Who would not be glad to come so near as this to the garden of heavenly delights?

Yet it is something more to be shown the door, to have the latch lifted, to see the gateway opened and to be gently directed into the Paradise of God. This is what is wanted—that we may be directed into the love of God. Oh, that we may feel something of it while we meditate upon it! Beloved, we come, when we are taught of the Spirit of God, to enter into the love of God by seeing its central importance. We see that the love of God is the source and center, fountain and foundation of all our salvation, and of all else that we receive from God.

At first we are much taken up with pardoning Grace. We are largely engrossed with those royal robes of righteousness with which our nakedness is covered. We are delighted with the viands of the marriage banquet—we eat the fat and we drink the sweet. What else would you expect from starving souls admitted to the abundant supplies of heavenly Grace? Afterwards we begin more distinctly to think of the love that spread the feast, the love that provided the raiment, the love that invited us to the banquet and gently led us to take our place in it. This does not always come at first.

But I pray that none of us may be long receiving the gifts of love without kissing the hand of love. That none of us may be content to have had much forgiven without coming and washing the feet of our forgiving Lord with our tears and declaring our deep and true love to Him. O saved soul, may the Lord fill you with personal love to that personal Savior through whom all blessings come to you! Remember, you have all good things because God loves you! Remember that every cake of the heavenly manna, every cup of the living water comes to you because of His great love wherewith He loved you. This will put a sweetness into what you receive even greater than that which is there intrinsically, sweet though God’s mercies are in their own nature and quality. Oh, to enter into God’s love by perceiving it to be the wellhead of every stream of mercy by which we are refreshed!

If we further enter into the love of God, we see its immeasurable greatness. There is a little word which you have often heard, which I beg to bring before you again—that little word “so.” “God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Come, you surveyors, bring your chains and try to make a survey of this word “so.” No, that is not enough. Come here, you that make our national surveys and lay down charts for all nations. Come, you who map the sea and land and make a chart of this word “so.”

No, I must go further. Come here, you astronomers, that with your optic glasses spy out spaces before which imagination staggers, come here and encounter calculations worthy of all your powers! When you have measured between the horns of space, here is a task that will defy you— “God so loved the world.” If you enter into that you will know that all this love is to you—that while Jehovah loves the world, yet He loves you as much as if there were nobody else in all the world to love. God can pour the infinite love of His heart upon one object and yet, for all that, can love ten thousand times ten thousand of His creatures just as much. O Heir of God, your store of love is not diminished because the innumerable company of your Brethren share it with you! Your Father loves each child as if He had no other. Peer into this abyss of love. Plunge into this sea. Dive into this depth unsearchable. Oh, that God might direct you into the immeasurable greatness of this love!

Neither be you afraid to enter into this love by remembering its antiquity. Some fight the great Truth of the eternal electing love of God. But to me it is as wafers made with honey. What music lies in that sentence— “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love”! When this great world, the sun, and moon and stars, had not yet flashed the morning of their little day, the Lord Jehovah loved His people with an everlasting love. In the Divine purposes, which were not of yesterday, nor even of that date of which Scripture speaks as “In the beginning”—when the Lord created the heavens and the earth—God loved His own people.

He had chosen you, thought of you, provided for you and made ten thousand forecasts of loving kindness towards you before the earth was. Beloved Believer, you were engraved on the hands of Christ even then. Oh that the Lord would direct you into the antiquity of His love. It shall make you greatly prize that love to think that it had no beginning and shall never, never have an end.

Again—I pray that we may be directed into the love of God as to its infallible constancy. The unchangeable Jehovah never ceases to love His people. It would be a wretched business to be directed into the love of God only to find it a thing of the past. O believing Soul, you have not to deal with things which once were gems of the mine but now are dreams of the night. Oh, no! The love of God abides forever the same. When you are in darkness the Lord still sees you with an eye of love—

*“He saw you ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved you notwithstanding all.”*

When you were without strength, “in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Since you have known Him He has never varied in His love. When you have grown cold He has loved you. When you have grown cruel He has loved you. You have grievously provoked Him till He has taken down His rod and made you smart. But He has loved you in the smiting. With God there is as much love in chastening as in caressing. He never abates in fervor towards His ancient friends. Has He not said, “I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? I pray the Lord to direct us into the immutability of His Divine love, for this is a great medicine in the day of soul-trouble.

When conscious of imperfection, when darkened by the shadow of a great fault, when trembling under apprehension of wrath it draws you back again if you can feel, “Still my Father is my Father, still will He receive His wandering child and press His prodigal to His bosom and rejoice over me and say, ‘This My son was dead and is alive again.’ ” O Child of God, your questionings of Divine love are grievous to your God. But if you can learn this Truth and be led into it—that He loves you evermore the

same—it will help you right graciously.

This love we ought to know and if the Lord will lead us into it we shall know that it is omnipresent. I mean by this, that whatever condition we may be in, the Lord is still active in love towards us. You are going across the sea to a far country but your Father’s love will be as near you on the blue wave as on the greensward of Old England. You have come out tonight alone—time was when you did come to the House of God in company. But it may be that graves and desertions furnish sad reasons for your present solitude. Still, you are not alone, your Father’s love is with you.

You are tonight, perhaps, in a very strange part of your spiritual experience—you have not gone this way before. But the road is not new to eternal love. Go where you may, the air is still about you—go where you may, your Father’s love is all around you. Higher than your soaring, deeper than your sinking is all-surrounding love. You are going home, perhaps, to a bed from which you shall not rise for months. You have no apprehension just now of what lies before you in the immediate future. It is as well you should not know. I should be slow to lift the curtain of merciful concealment even if it were in my power to do so. There is no necessity to know details when one or two grand facts provide for all contingencies.

Trouble not yourself about the morrow. If you are to be sick or if you are to die, your Father’s love will be with you still. Therefore go on and fear not. He cannot, will not, turn away from you. An omnipresent God means omnipresent love and omnipotence goes hand-in-hand with omnipresence. The Lord will show Himself strong on the behalf of them that trust Him. His love, which never fails, is attended by a power that faints not, nor is weary. Oh, may the Lord lead you into such love as this! May the Holy Spirit lead you into the innermost secret of this joy of joys, this bliss unspeakable.

And I would also wish that you may be directed into the love of God as to its entire agreement with His justice, His holiness, His spotless purity. I firmly believe that God loves sinners but I am equally sure that He hates sin. I do believe that He delights in mercy but I am equally clear that He never dishonors His justice, nor frustrates the sternest threat of His Law. It is our joy that a holy God loves us and does not find it needful to stain His holiness to save the unclean. We are loved by one so just, so righteous that He could not pardon us without atonement. Even today He will never spare our sins but He will drive the love of them out of us by chastisement, even as He has washed the guilt of them away by the precious blood of His dear Son.

O Beloved, we have a holy God who is determined to make us holy. He would have us love our wives. And he sets before us a holy model—“Even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.” All true love goes towards purification. And the true love of God goes that way with an invincible current that can never be turned aside. O Believer, your God loves you so well that He will not let a darling sin stay in your heart. He loves you so strongly that He will not spare any iniquity in you. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.” Out of His pure love He will chasten and refine till He has made us pure and able to abide in fellowship with His perfect nature.

I have thus spoken a little upon a vast theme. I fear it will seem to you mere surface-work. And yet I pray that it may lead you to deep knowledge of Divine things so that you may apprehend God’s love as yours. And that you may feel the power, the unction, the savor which come out of His love. I pray this knowledge, by His Grace, will make your heart as sweet and aromatic as a chamber in which a box of precious ointment has been broken. Oh, that you might be led into the innermost secret of the Lord’s love till it shall saturate you, influence you, take possession of you, carry you away! The Lord direct you into the love of God.

The second part of the prayer upon which we shall have to dwell is, “The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ.” Now, Beloved, I have another great sea before me, and who am I that I should act as your convoy over this main ocean? Here I am lost. I cannot take my bearings. I am a lone speck upon the infinite. I will imitate the wise Apostle and pray, “The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ.”

What a patience that was which Jesus exhibited for us in our redemption! To come from Heaven to earth, to dwell in poverty and neglect and find no room even in the inn! Admire the patience of Bethlehem. To hold His tongue for thirty years—who shall estimate the wonderful patience of Nazareth and the carpenter’s shop! When He spoke, to be despised and rejected of men. What patience for Him whom Cherubim obey! Oh, the patience of the Christ to be tempted of the devil! One can hardly tell what patience Christ must have had to let the devil come within ten thousand miles of him, for He was able to keep him far down in the abyss below His feet.

There is not much in a patience which cannot help itself. But you well know that all the while Christ could have conquered all foes, chased away all suffering and kept off all temptation. But for our sakes, as Captain of our salvation, that He might be made perfect through suffering, His patience had its perfect work, right on to Gethsemane. Do you need that I tell you this? Golgotha, with all its woes, its “lama Sabachthani,” its abysmal griefs—do I need remind you of the patience of Christ for us when the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all? Patient as a lamb, He opened not His mouth but stood in omnipotence of patience, all-sufficient to endure. You have heard of the patience of Job but you have need to enter into the patience of Jesus.

Oh, the patience within Christ Himself! God never seems so like a God as when He divinely rules Himself. I can understand His shaking earth and Heaven with His Word. But that He should possess His own soul in patience is far more incomprehensible. Marvel that omnipotent love should restrain omnipotence itself. In the life and death of our Lord Jesus

we see almighty patience. He was very sensitive—very sensitive of sin, very sensitive of unkindness, and yet, with all that sensitiveness He showed no petulance but bore Himself in all the calm grandeur of Godhead. He was not quick to resent an ill but He was patient to the uttermost. As I have said before, there went with His sensitiveness the power at any time to avenge Himself and deliver Himself but He would not use it.

Legions of angels would have been glad to come to His rescue but He bowed alone in the garden and gave Himself up to the betrayer without a word. And all the while He was most tender and graciously considerate of everybody but Himself. He spoke burning words sometimes—His mouth could be like the red lips of a volcano as He poured out the burning lava of denunciation upon “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.” But the resentment was never aroused by any injury done to Himself. When He looked that way it was always gentleness—He cried, “Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do.” Oh, the wondrous patience of Heaven’s own Christ!

Enter into His patience with us as well as for us. How He put up with each one of us when we would not come to Him! How He wept over us when we neglected Him! How He drew us with constancy of love when we tugged against the cords! And when we came to Him and since we have been with Him, what patience He has had with our ill manners! If I had been Christ, I would have discharged such a servant as I have been long ago. Often have I gone to His feet and cried, “Dismiss me not Your service, Lord.” I know how justly He might have stripped His livery from my back. But He has not done so. Have you not often wondered that He should still love you? He is affianced to you and He hates divorce.

But is it not marvelous that He keeps His betrothal with you and will do so, though you have often defiled yourself and forgotten Him? Blessed fact, the ring is on His finger rather than on yours and the marriage is as sure as His love. He will present you unto Himself, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,” one of these days. But oh, His patience with each one of us! How He has put up with our unbelief, our mistrust, our hard hearts, our indifference, our strange ways! Never lover so kind as He! On our part never return so unworthy. Blessed be the patience of our Best Beloved!

Now, Beloved, what is wanted is that we be directed into this patience of Christ. The choicest saints in different ages of the world have studied most the passion of our Lord. And although nowadays we hear from the wise men that it is sensuous to talk about the Cross and the five wounds and so forth, for my part I feel that no contemplation ever does me so much real benefit as that which brings me very near my bleeding Lord. The Cross for me! The Cross for me! Here is doctrine humbling, softening, melting, elevating, sanctifying. Here is Truth that is of Heaven and yet comes down to earth—love that lifts me away from earth even to the seventh Heaven.

Have you ever read the words of holy Bernard, when his soul was all on fire with love of that dear name of which he so sweetly sang— *“Jesus the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast”?*

Why, Bernard is poet, philosopher and Divine, and yet a child in love. Have you studied Rutherford’s letters and the wondrous things which he says about his own dear Lord? For an hour at Glory’s gate commend me to heavenly Master Rutherford. Have you ever held fellowship with George Herbert, that saintly songster? Hear him as he cries—

*“How sweetly does my Master sound! My Master! As ambergris leaves a rich scent  
Unto the taster,  
So do these words a sweet content,  
An oriental fragrance, my Master!”*

O Friends, I can wish you no greater blessing than to be directed into these two things—the love of God and the patience of your Savior. Enter both at the same time. You cannot divide them—why should you? The love of God shines best in the patience of the Savior. And what is the patience of Christ but the love of the Father? “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” May the Lord lead us into both of them at this hour and continue upon us the heavenly process all the rest of our lives, in all experiences of sorrow and of rapture and in all moods and growths of our spirit!

II. But now I must ask your attention for the few minutes that remain to me to what is, perhaps, still the real gist of the text—HERE ARE TWO EMINENT VIRTUES TO BE ACQUIRED.

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God.” Beloved, let the love of God to you flow into your hearts and abide there till it settles down and bears on its surface the cream of love to God, yielded by your own heart. The only way to love God is to let God’s love to you dwell in your soul till it transforms your soul into itself. Love to God grows out of the love of God.

Well, now, concerning love to God—if you receive it fully into your souls it will nourish the contemplative life. You will want to be alone. You will prefer to sit silently at Jesus’ feet while others wrangle over the little politics of the house. You will give up being busy-bodies, talking in six peoples’ houses in an hour—quietude will charm you. You will love no company so much as the society of Him who is the Best and the Most. To be with God in quiet will be your highest enjoyment. You will not say, as some do, “I must have recreation.”

Contemplation of God is recreation to the child of God. It creates the soul anew. And is not this the truest recreation? Whenever God’s creation in us seems to have grown a little dim, love to God will gender and nourish the contemplative life and so make us come forth as new creatures, fresh from our Maker’s holy hand.

It will also animate the active life if you love God. You will feel that you must yield fruit unto your Lord. Your soul, when full of the love of God, will cry, “I must go after the wanderer. I must care for the poor. I must teach the ignorant.” You cannot love God and be lazy. Love to God will stir you up. Contemplation teaches you to sit still and this is no trifling lesson. But after sitting still, you rise with greater energy to go about the one thing needful, namely, the service of your Lord’s love.

Love to God will also arouse enthusiasm. We want more persons in the Church who will be a little daring—rash men and women who will do things which nobody else would think of doing, such as will make their prudent friends hold up their hands and say, “How could you? If you had consulted with me, I could have given you many a wise hint as to how it ought to have been done.” This has been my lot of late. I have been surfeited with notions as to how I should have acted. Yes, my Friend, I know you of old. You have wisdom at your fingers’ ends. But let me quietly whisper that you would have done nothing at all. You would have been too anxious to save yourself from trouble.

It is an easy thing to tell a man how he ought to have done it. And yet that man, perhaps, may be suffering intensely for having done bravely a well-meant deed. Instead of your showing sympathy with him, you treat him to the remark, “It might have been done better in another way.” There was never a child that was near drowning but what the man that plunged in and drew him out of the river ought to have done it in a better way. He wetted himself too much. He waited too long. Or he handled the drowning one too roughly. Alas, for silly criticisms of gracious deeds!

If you come to love God with all consuming zeal you will not be hindered by criticisms. You will testify for Jesus freely, because you cannot help yourself. It has to be done—somebody has to sacrifice himself to do it and you say to yourself, “Here am I, Lord, send me. At every risk or hazard, send me. For Your dear love’s sake I count it joy to suffer shame or loss. I count it life to suffer death that I may honor You.” Love to God will arouse enthusiasm.

It will also stimulate holy desire. They that love God can never have enough of Him—certainly never too much. Sometimes they are found pining after Him. When we love the Lord, we chide the laggard hours which keep us from His coming. Time has not wings enough—

*“My heart is with Him on His Throne,  
And ill can brook delay,  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
‘Rise up and come away.’ ”*

A heavenly love-sickness sometimes makes God’s handmaids swoon. For they long to see the Beloved face to face and to be like Him and to be with Him where He is. The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God in some such fashion as this. For it will make you sit loose by all things here below.

Do you ever feel that your wings are growing? Do you ever sigh, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest”? And this love, better still, will transform the character. It is wonderful what a difference love makes in the person that is possessed with it. A poor timid hen that will fly away from every passerby loves its offspring and when it has its chicks about it, it will fight like a very lion for its young. And when the love of Christ comes into a timid Believer, how it changes him! It takes the love of sin away and implants a sublime nature.

Only God knows what a mortal man can yet become. Of women sunken in sin, what saints the Lord has made when He has filled them with His love! When the sun shines on a bit of glass bottle far away it flashes like a diamond. A little fleecy vapor in the sky rivals an angel’s wing when the sun pours itself upon it. Our Lord can put so much of Himself, by means of His love, into the hearts of His people that they may be mistaken for Himself. John made a blunder in Heaven and fell at the feet of one of his Brethren, the Prophets—for he had come to be so much like His Lord that John could hardly tell the one from the other. Had he forgotten that word, “We shall be like He. For we shall see Him as He is”? It does not yet appear what we shall be but love is the transfiguring power in the hand of the Holy Spirit. If the heart is directed into the love of Christ, it is on the highway to holiness.

Lastly—I am sorry that time will fly so fast just now—we want our hearts to be directed into patience towards Christ. What a subject is this! Beloved, if our heart is directed into patience towards Christ we shall suffer in patience for our Lord’s sake and we shall not complain. Those about us will say, “It is wonderful how resigned he seems.” Or, “How gladly she bears grief for love of Christ!” And if it is the suffering of reproach and scorn for Jesus’ sake, if we are directed into the patience of Christ, it will not seem to be any trouble at all. We shall bear it calmly and in our hearts we shall laugh at those who laugh at us for Jesus’ sake.

Yet it is not all patience of suffering that we want. We want the patience of forbearing. We must learn not to answer those who blaspheme. “Bear and forbear and be silent.” Chew the cud in peace. Put up with much. When reviled, revile not again. The Lord direct your hearts into the patience of Christ.

We shall also want the patience of working—working on when nothing comes of it—pleading on with souls that are not converted. Preaching when preaching seems to have no effect—teaching when the children do not care to learn. We need the patience of Christ who set His face like a flint and would accomplish His work, cost what it may. He never turned aside from it for a moment. The Lord direct our hearts into patient working.

Then there is the patience of watching in prayer—not giving it up because you have not received an answer. What? Did a friend say she had prayed for seventeen years for a certain mercy and now meant to ask it no more? Sister, make it eighteen years and when you have got to the end of eighteen make it nineteen. May the Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ in prayer! We long kept Him waiting—we need not complain if He makes us tarry at His leisure. Still believe. Still hope. Still wrestle, until the break of day.

Pray for the patience of waiting His will, saying, “Let Him do what seems Him good.” Though it be for months, for years, wait on. Christ is glorified by our patience. Depend on it, the best way in which certain of us can extol Him is by letting Him have His way with us. Even though He

plunge me into seven boiling caldrons one after the other, I will say—Let Him do what He wills with His own and I am His own. I am sure that He does not make the furnace one degree too hot. If He means to give His servant ten troubles, let His heavy hand fall even to the tenth, if so He pleases.

We want to be directed into patience towards Christ and especially in patience in waiting for His coming. That, no doubt, is very justly inferred and so it is put in our translation very prominently—“Patient waiting for Christ.” He will come, Brothers. He will come, Sisters. It is true the interpreters of the Book of Revelation told us that He was to come three hundred years ago and there are thousands upon thousands of books in the British Museum which were very dogmatic upon this point and yet they have all been disproved by the lapse of time.

Men were as sure as sure could be that Christ would come just then. And He did not, for He is bound by His Word—not by their interpretation of it. He will come at the appointed hour. To the jots and tittles, God’s Word will stand. He will come to the tick of the clock. We know not when. We need not ask. But let us wait.

Just now some of you may be, as I am, troubled because the Lord does not yet appear to vindicate His cause. And there is noise and triumph among the priests of Baal. The Lord direct our hearts into the patience of Christ. It is all right. Clouds gather. The darkness becomes more dense. The thunder rolls, friends flee in confusion. What next? Well, perhaps before we have hardly time for dread, silver drops of gracious rain may fall and the sun may break through the clouds and we may say to ourselves, “Who would have thought it?”—

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

May the Lord direct each one of us into the patient waiting for Christ! I am sorry, very sorry, that there are persons here to whom all this must seem a strange lot of talk. They know nothing about it. Dear Souls, you cannot at present know anything about it. You must first be born again. A total change of heart must come over you before you can enter into the love of God or the patience of Christ. May that change take place tonight, before you go to sleep!

If the Lord shall lead you to seek His face, this is the way to seek it— trust His dear Son. Lifted on the Cross is Jesus Christ, the great Propitiation for sin. Look to Him and looking alone to Him, you shall be saved. He will give you the new heart and the right spirit with which you shall be enabled to enter into the love of God and the patience of Christ. The Lord direct you at this very hour, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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÷2Th 3.13

FACING THE WIND  
NO. 2918

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 28, 1876.

**“But you, brethren, be not weary in doing good,”***2Th 3:13*

THE Christian church ought to be an assembly of holy men. Its members should, all of them, be eminently peaceable, honest, upright, gracious and Christlike. In the main and in spite of all our failures I trust these characteristics may be seen in the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, still, from the beginning there has been a mixture. Judas in the sacred college of the 12 Apostles seemed to be a prophecy to us that there would always be troubles in Israel. It was so in the Church at Thessalonica to which Paul wrote two Epistles, part of the last of which we have just now been reading. There was evidently, then, a class of people who because the charity of the church was very large, imposed upon it and, under pretense of great spirituality, refused to work, busying themselves instead in doing mischief according to the old adage that—

*“Satan finds some mischief still*

*For idle hands to do.”*  
We sometimes complain of our churches now. I very greatly question whether an average church of Christ in modern times is not considerably superior to any church that we have read of in the New Testament— certainly very superior to some of them. In the Church at Corinth they tolerated a brother who lived in incest. I trust there is no Christian church, at least in our own denomination, that would endure such a thing for an hour! And when this man had been put out by Paul’s command and proved penitent, then the Church at Corinth, which was a church that did not believe in ministry, you know, (there is a class of Christians of that sort, now, which resembles greatly these Corinthians), because they had once put him out, refused to receive him again though he was penitent and wanted to return.

I scarcely know a Christian church that would refuse to receive into its membership again, a brother who had erred if he showed signs of true repentance. The churches of today, compared with the early churches of Christ, can say that the Grace of God has been extended to us, even as unto them—and we now have no right to be continually crying down the operations of the Holy Spirit in the churches by making unfair comparisons between them and the churches of old. They had their faults, as we have ours. They came short in many respects, even as we do. Instead of bringing a railing accusation against churches as they are, the best thing is for everyone of us to do his best in the sight of God to make them what they should be, by seeking our own personal sanctification and endeavoring that the influence of a holy life shall, in our case, help to leaven the rest of the mass.

Paul turns from the consideration of those who had grieved him in the church to speak to the rest of the brethren and says to them, “But you, brethren, be not weary in doing good.” In expounding these words we shall, first, notice that our text contains a summary of Christian life—it is called, “doing good.” Secondly, we shall see it gives out a very distinct warning against weariness and it hints at some of the causes of weariness in the Christian life. In the third place, I shall close the discourse by giving some arguments to meet the reasoning of our soul when, at times, it seems to plead its own weariness as an excuse.

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, our text contains A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE. It is “doing good.” This is all you have to do—you that have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and renewed in the spirit of your minds. You have to spend your lives in doing good!

Now this is a very comprehensive term and we are certain that it includes the common acts of daily life. You perceive the Apostle had been speaking of some who would not work—“working not at all,” he says, and he commands them that they should labor and should eat their own bread. It is clear, then, from the connection, that the work by which a man earns his daily bread is a part of the doing good to which he is called. It is not only preaching and praying and going to meetings that are to be commended. These are useful in their place. But doing good consists in taking down the shutters and selling your goods, tucking up your shirt sleeves and doing a good day’s work—sweeping the carpets and dusting the chairs if you happen to be a domestic servant. Doing good is attending to the duties that arise out of our relationships in life— attending carefully to them and seeing that in nothing we are eye-servers and men-pleasers—but in everything are seeking to serve God. I know it is difficult to make people feel that such simple and ordinary things as these are doing good. Sometimes stopping at home and mending the children’s clothes does not seem to a mother quite so much “doing good” as going to a Prayer Meeting. And yet it may be that the going to a Prayer Meeting would be doing ill if the other duty had to be neglected. It is still a sort of superstition among men that the cobbler’s lap stone and the carpenter’s adze are not sacred things and that you cannot serve God with them—you must get a Bible and break its back at a revival meeting, or give out a hymn and sing it lustily in order to serve God.

Now, far am I from speaking even half a word against all the zeal and earnestness that can be expended in religious engagements. These things you ought to have done, but the other things are not to be left undone, or to be depreciated in any way whatever. When Peter saw the sheet come down from Heaven, you remember it contained all manner of beasts and creeping things. God said even of the creeping things that He had cleansed them and they were not to be counted common—from which I gather, among a great many other things, that even the most menial of the forms of service—even the most common actions of life—if they are done as unto the Lord, are cleansed and become holy things and are by no means to be despised. Do not cry down your church, but make your house also your church! Find fault as you like with vestments, but make your ordinary smock-frock your vestment and be a priest in it to the living God! Away with superstition! Kill it by counting every place to be holy, every day to be holy and every action that you perform to be a part of the high priesthood to which the Lord Jesus Christ has called every soul that He has washed in His precious blood!

That these common things are doing good is very evident if you will only think of the result of their being left undone. There is a father and he thinks that to go to his work—such common work as his—cannot be especially pleasing in God’s sight. He means to serve God and so he stays home! He is upstairs in prayer when the factory bell is ringing and he ought to be there. He hears that there is a conference in the morning, so he attends that—and then he has another period of prayer—he spends all the week like that and then on Saturday night there is nothing for his wife. Now, you see, directly, that he has been doing ill because it was his duty to provide for his own household. And if a man, being a husband and a father, neglects to find daily food for his wife and little children, all the world cries shame on him! Does not Nature, itself, say, “This man cannot be engaged in doing good”? It cannot possibly be so. Though at first sight the ordinary toil for daily bread looks to be a very commonplace thing, yet if you only suppose it to be neglected, the leaving of it out is no commonplace thing, but brings all manner of mischief.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the Christian woman were to become so very devout—so ashamed to be like Martha—so certain not to be cumbered with much serving that she would not serve at all in Martha’s direction, but always sat still and read and prayed, and meditated leaving the children unwashed and nothing done for the household? The husband—perhaps a worldly man—may be driven away from the house by the lack of comfort in it and sent into ill company. He may, indeed, he ruined. You can all see that whatever pretence there might be of doing good about the wife’s conduct, it would not, it could not really be doing good, for the first business of the Christian woman placed in that position is to see to it that her household is ordered aright, even as Jesus Christ would have it. Oh, dear Friends, it is an art to balance duties so as never to sacrifice to God one duty stained red with the blood of another duty that you have destroyed in getting this one ready for the sacrifice! Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s. Give to husband and child and to the household the share that is due and then—I will not say give God the rest—but give God that service and all besides! He would not have you bring robbery for burnt offering and He will accept that as done to Him which you have, as a matter of duty, done to others. So then, common life is included in the term, “doing good.”

I think, also, from the connection, that anyone would conclude that attending to the poor and doing good to all that are in need is included in the term, “doing good.” The connection seems to say that there were certain persons in the Thessalonian Church who had abused Christian charity—living upon it instead of working and eating their own bread. The Apostle says, “But you, brethren be not weary in doing good.” Do not say, as some do, “There are really so many imposters that I shall give nothing at all. I have been deceived so many times and have given to persons who have only put my gift to bad use, that I do not intend to open my wallet any more, but shall keep what I have or lay it out in some other way.” “No,” says the Apostle, “you must not do that—be not weary in doing good.” It is the part of a Christian to seek as much as lies in him to do good unto all men—and especially to those of the household of faith. It is one of Christ’s precepts to “Give to him that asks of you and turn him not away who would borrow from you.” A general spirit of generosity to those in need is synonymous with the Gospel—the reverse may be suitable to the Law with its rigor—but not to the Gospel with its noble-hearted love! Christian Brothers and Sisters, you must remember those who are in need as being, as yourself, a part of the body of Christ! As much as lies in you, “comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men.”

So we see that within the range of “doing good” is included a kind and tender consideration of all those who are in need.  
But, Brothers and Sisters, the circle of “doing good” which is to be the Christian’s life, though it makes a wide sweep, includes the things that are nearer the center. “Doing good” means that I love the Lord, my God, with all my heart—that I commune with Him—that I dedicate myself to Him and give all that I have to the extension of His Kingdom and to the honoring of His glorious name!  
If you want to know what doing good is, I will give you a few hints and tests. Everything is doing good that is done in obedience to a Divine command. If you have God’s Word for it, it is doing good. Some may call you imprudent, but it is doing good if you do what God bids—and it is prudent, too. In the long run you shall find it so. When God says, “Do this,” let it be done at once—that is doing good. And if He says, “You shall not,” the doing good is fleeing from the accursed thing! Let not your own wisdom and prudence ever fly in the teeth of a positive command of God! When you are doing what God bids you, you are doing well—and you need have no difficulty in defending yourself. God will not allow that man ever to be confounded who makes the will of God to be the law of his life. So may it always be with us.  
Taking the first condition for granted, in the next place everything is doing good that is done in faith. “Whatever is not of faith is sin.” That is to say, even though the thing you do is right, if you do not believe it to be right it is not right for you. There are many things that I may do that you must not do because you do not think it would be right to do them. Therefore you must refrain. Even, I say again, if the thing is not in itself a wrong thing, yet if it seem wrong to you, it will be wrong to you— therefore do it not. Paul could eat the meat that had been offered to idols without being troubled in his conscience, but there were some who thought that if they ate it, they would be partakers with the idol. Paul did not think so and, moreover, he said, “An idol is nothing in the world. Whatever is sold in the shambles, I eat asking no question for conscience sake.” Still, “he that doubts is condemned if he eats.” If he has his doubts about it and thinks he should not do it, he must not do it. He will not be practicing the art of doing good if he does that concerning which his conscience raises any scruple. If you can say with Scripture warrant, “God permits this and I can do it, feeling that He permits it,” you are doing well in so doing.  
Again, everything that is done out of love to God is doing good. Ah, this is a motive that sways no man till he is born-again. But when God, who is Love, has begotten us into His own likeness, then we love God and love becomes the motive of all our actions. I hope, Beloved, this is the mainspring of our doings and goings—that you would be God’s servants or God’s ministers because you love God—that you seek to bear up under poverty or to use with discretion and liberality the riches with which you are entrusted because you love God. If a man loves not God, how little there can be of doing good about him! Yes, he lacks the very root of it all if he has not love to God.  
Doing good includes doing what we do in the name of the Lord Jesus. How this should stop some professors in a great many actions. Have we not the exhortation, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”? If there is anything you cannot do in the name of the Lord Jesus, do it not, for to do it will not be doing good! In the name of the Lord Jesus you may go to your daily labor, for He went to His for 30 years and worked in the carpenter’s shop. In the name of the Lord Jesus you may undertake all the duties of your calling if that calling is a right one. But if it is not, you have no right to be in it at all, but should get out of it at once! You may do in the name of the Lord Jesus all that men would do if you are a saved soul and your heart is right towards Him.  
Still further, doing good includes that which we do in Divine strength. There is no doing good except we get power to do it from the Holy One of Israel. The Spirit of God is the Author of all true fruit in the Christian life. Except we abide in Christ and receive the sap of the Sacred Spirit from Him, we cannot bring forth fruit, for, “without Me,” He says, “you can do nothing.” But to work in the Divine strength is doing good. Poor and feeble though it is, if I do it out of love to Christ and with the little strength I have, acknowledging that I would not even have that but for His Grace, my act is an act of doing good. Even though I have to mourn my failures and mistakes, nevertheless I may feel that with a true heart I am striving to glorify God and that I am surrendering myself to the Divine impulses so as to be ready to do everything as unto my Master. Then am I living as a Christian should live in doing good.  
Brothers and Sisters, we are very great at wishing well and “if wishes were horses, beggars might ride.” If wishing well meant anything, there would be some very great saints about! But the practice of a Christian should be to do what he knows should be done—doing good. Resolving well is a very common habit. Suggesting well and criticizing well are tempers of mind familiar to most of us. Some of you could take a high degree in admirably criticizing everybody else that does anything—and putting your own hands into your pockets and keeping them there! Talking well is also a great deal more common than doing good. But the Christian life lies in none of these things. If God has given you the life of the Spirit, you will not bring forth only buds and blossoms and flowers, but there will be fruit—the fruit of doing good!  
So much concerning the first point.  
II. Now let us turn to the second point which is this—there is A WARNING AGAINST WEARINESS IN DOING GOOD. Is it possible, you say, “that a child of God can ever grow weary of doing good?” I suppose so, for I remember another text which says, “Let us not be weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.” And the marginal reading of this text, itself, is, “Faint not.” I suppose that blessed as it is to be doing good and to be living unto God, yet while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak and there is a danger of our getting weary in the most happy exercise.  
The first danger is mentioned in the context. There is a tendency to cease from doing good because of the unworthy receivers of our good deeds. As I have already said, there were those in the Thessalonian Church who received the gifts of the faithful and who sat still and did nothing that was of any good. They became a pest and nuisance to their neighbors. Now, the natural tendency of others in the Church would be to say, “Well, I do not know what others think about it, but I shall give no more.” “No,” says the Apostle, “be not weary in doing good.” It is bad that that man should make a bad use of your gifts, but it will be worse, still, if he should induce you to harden your heart! It is a loss, perhaps, to give to a man who wastes, but it will be a greater loss not to give at all! I remember one who spoke on the missionary question one day saying, “The great question is not, ‘Will not the heathen be saved if we do not send them the Gospel?’ but, ‘Are we saved, ourselves, if we do not send them the Gospel?’” And so it is with regard to Christian gifts. It is not so much a question how far this or that man is benefitted or hurt by what we give, but what about ourselves if we have no heart of compassion for a Brother or Sister who is in need? What about the hardening influence on our own soul if we get, at last, into a condition that we say, “I am weary in having done what I have done because I see to what an ill use it is turned”? I believe that to be a common temptation of the present age and I see that all the political economists and the newspaper men almost as good as tell us that it is one of the most wicked things we can ever do, to help the poor at all—it is indeed a dreadful thing unless we do it through that blessed machinery of the poor Law which seems to be the next thing to the Kingdom of Heaven in their estimation! There seems to me to be, however, a very long distance between them and I trust that Christians will continually, by their actions, bear their protest against the steeling of the believing Christian’s renewed heart against their fellow men because they seem to pervert the doing good into evil.  
We have need of warning because idle examples tempt others to idleness. If there were in the Church at Thessalonica some who did not work, there would no doubt be others who would say, “We will do the same. Since that fellow never does a hand’s-turn, but only goes about and talks and makes a good thing of it, why should not I do likewise?” “No,” says the Apostle, “be not weary in doing good. Do not give up your daily work. Do not give up any form of service because others have done so, for you can see, if you look at them, that they turn out to be busybodies. You do not need to become mischief-makers such as they are! Therefore shun their conduct—avoid it with all your might—and do not weary in doing good even if you see others who apparently prosper by doing nothing at all.”  
Again, I think the Apostle would say to us, “Be not weary in doing good because of unreasonable and wicked men.” We read about them just now and I made a remark about them. [In the Exposition printed at the end of the sermon.] Whenever anybody gets very earnest for Christ and lays himself out for God’s Glory, there is sure to be a little lot of unreasonable and wicked men who get round him. The birds go flying through the orchard and they do not say a word to one another till they come to a cherry tree where the cherries are very sweet and ripe. Then they all fall at once and begin to peck away with all their might! So of an ordinary Christian who is doing little for his Master—nobody says much, except, perhaps, “He is a very good respectable man. Never bothers anybody with his religion.” But let him become earnest—let his fruit be ripe and sweet before the Lord and, believe me, more birds than you ever thought were about will come—and they will peck at the ripe fruit. That which God approves most will be just that which they most violently condemn! If you get into such a case as that, my Brothers and Sisters, be not weary of doing good because of your critics. Does it matter, after all, what men think of us? Are we their servants? Do we live on the breath of their nostrils? Do they think that their praises inflate and exalt us? Do they dream that their censures can make us sleep a wink less or even ruffle our spirits? I trust, if we know the Lord aright, we are of the mind of Ann Askew, who, after she had been racked, sat up with every bone out of joint and, as full of pain as she could live, said to her tormentors— *“I am not she that lists  
My anchor to let fall  
For every drizzling mist.  
My ship’s substantial.”*

And she bore out the storm and did not intend to cast anchor because of her persecutors! Glory be to God when He shall have delivered you altogether from the bleating of the sheep and from the howling of the wolves, too, and make you willing to let your enemies say their say—and say it over again as long as it pleases them—but as for you, your heart is fixed to go on in what you know to be doing good till your Master, Himself, shall say to you, “Well done!”

Once more. There is a temptation to cease from doing good not only because of unreasonable and wicked men outside the church, but, according to the context—and I am keeping to that—because of busybodies inside the church. Some of these are men—some of them are not. There are busybodies about everywhere. They do not speak out very distinctly—they whisper and they do it with a sigh! Perhaps nothing is said, but there is a shrug of the shoulders. “So-and-So is an excellent woman.” “What a wonderful work she is doing for Christ!” “Well—yes, but—such-and-such a man! How greatly God honors him in the winning of souls.” “Yes—ah, yes—I suppose it is so.” That is the style. And then straightway there are ambiguous voices sounding abroad and depreciating things said! I have known some of tender heart that have suffered—I dare not think how much—from the insinuations of idle people who, I hope, did not know the suffering they were causing or they would have run to give help instead. But there is so much of this thoughtless babbling of innuendos even among those who, we trust, are God’s people, that if any such are here I would earnestly entreat them to give up that bad business! And if any Brother or Sister here has suffered from such people, do not suffer more than you can help it, for this idle chatter is not worth a thought!

Do not let it prey upon your mind because, well, there is nothing in it! All the dirt that people can fling will brush off when it is dry. You do not expect, do you, to go to Heaven on a grassy path that is mowed and rolled for you every morning with all the dew swept off? If you expect that, you will be mistaken. You may even learn something from what these busybodies say about you. It is not true, of course, but, Brother, if they had known you better, they might have said something worse that was true! They picked a fault where there was none. Well, but you know there are some faults that they do not know and had not you better amend them lest they should pick those next time? The eagle eyes of envy and malice should even be sanctified to our good to keep us the more watchful—and to make us more earnestly seek to be diligent in doing good. Courage, faint heart—it will all be over, by-and-by, and we shall be before that Judgment Seat where the talk of friends and the threat of foes will go for nothing! We are being examined here by this and that, but what matters the result of the examination? The Lord weighs the spirits and if in those great scales we shall, at last by Divine Grace, escape from having the sentence pronounced, “You are weighed in the balance and found wanting,” it will be a theme for everlasting joy! Let us look to that verdict and not care for the praise or blame of men.

III. Now I am going to close by bringing up A FEW ARGUMENTS TO KEEP MY DEAR BRETHREN WITH THEIR FACES TO THE WIND. I want you that are going uphill for Christ and find the wind blowing very sharp, to set a hard face against a strong wind and to go right straight on all the same. If you have to fight your way to Heaven through every inch of your life, I would encourage you to keep on. May God’s Spirit give you strength to do so!

And first, you say, “Oh, but this service—keeping your garments always white—is hard work. Doing good needs so much effort. I am afraid I shall be weary.” Now, I would ask you to remember that when you had just begun business and you needed to make a little money, how early you rose in the morning, how many hours you worked in the day! Why, you that are getting gray now knew that in those days everybody wondered at you because you threw such strength into everything—you did the work of two or three men! What was all that effort for? For yourself, was it not? My dear Brother, can you put all those exertions forth for yourself and cannot you put out as much effort for Christ? That was only for the worldly things—shall there not be something like that in the spiritual things? It is enough to shame some people—the way they toil to get on in business and then the little energy they show in the things of Christ!

I used to tell a story of a Brother I once knew who, at the Prayer Meeting, was accustomed to pray in such a way that I was always sorry when he got up, for nobody could hear him. And I always thought that he had a very feeble voice. I had indistinctly heard the Brother mutter something to God and I felt that we had better not ask him again, for his voice was so thin. But I stepped into his shop one day—he did not know that I was there and I heard him say, “John, bring that half-hundred weight.” “Oh,” I thought, “there is a very different tone in the business from what there is in the Prayer Meeting!” It is symbolical of a great many people. They have one voice for the world and another voice for Christ. What weight they throw into the ordinary engagements, but what little force and weight there is when they come to the things of God! If that should touch any Brother here, I hope he will carefully take it to himself. I am afraid it has to do with a great many of us and I put it thus—if for the poor things of this world we have often manifested so much vigor, what ought to be expected of us—of us who are under such obligations to Divine Grace—in the service of such a Master in reference to eternal things?

“But,” says one, “such doing good requires so much self-denial. I trust I am a Christian, but I sometimes hesitate because to deny one’s self again and again and again and to lead a life of constant self-denial is, I am afraid, too much for me.” Yes, but, dear Brother, recollect what Paul bids you remember. He was thinking of the men that went to the boxing matches and the men that went to the races among the Greeks—how they had to contend for a crown that was only of parsley or laurel. Weeks and months before they ran, they kept under their body, brought it into subjection and denied themselves all sorts of things they would have rejoiced in, till they got the muscles well out and by degrees pulled the flesh off their bones to get them into condition to enter into the arena. Now, says the Apostle, they do it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible! I am sure the hardships to which some of those champions in the public games put themselves were enough to make the cheek of professors mantle with crimson when they think that the little selfdenials of their life are often too severe for them! May God in Infinite Mercy help us not to be weary in doing good since these stand before us as examples!

“Yes,” says one, “but I grow weary because, though I could deny myself, continued doing good brings such persecution. I am surrounded by people who have no sympathy with me. On the contrary, if they could stamp out the little spark of spiritual religion that I have in me, they would be glad to do it.” Now, my dear Brother, be not weary in doing good because of this, but look up yonder! I can see in vision a whiterobed throng. Each one bears a palm branch and together they sing an exultant song of triumph. Who are these that thus wear a ruby crown?—

*“These are they who bore the cross,  
Faithful to their Master died,  
Suffered in His righteous cause,  
Followers of the Crucified!”*

Take down Master Fox’s Book of Martyrs and read a dozen pages—and after that see whether you are able to put yourselves on a par with the saints of old. “You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Your persecution is only a silly joke or two against you, a bit of frivolous jesting—that is all. These things break no bones! O Sirs, ask Divine Grace to enable you to rejoice and to be exceedingly glad when they say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ’s sake! For so they prosecuted the Prophets that were before you—therefore be not dismayed.

But another says, “No, Sir, I could bear anything for Christ, but do you know I have been trying to do good to my neighbors, to the children of my class, and to the others—and I really think that the more I try to do good to people, the worse they are—doing good is followed by so little result. I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing and, you know, Sir, that hope deferred makes the heart sick. They seem to refuse and reject my message though I put it very kindly.” Now listen to me, if ever you listened in your life! You must not—you dare not complain of this because—and I know you well, there once came to your door one who loved you better than you love these people—He knocked with a hand that had been pierced for you and you refused Him admission! He knocked and knocked again, and said, “Open to Me, for My head is filled with the dew and My locks with the drops of the night.” But you would not open to Him. Then He went His way and you were much worse than before. Sometimes you said you would open, but you did not. And by the month together—ah, perhaps I do not exaggerate when I say, by the year together—“that Man of Love, the Crucified,” came to you again and again and again and pleaded His wounds and blood with you and yet you refused Him! You have now admitted Him, but no thanks to you—you would never have done it if He had not put in His hand by the hole of the door and then your heart was moved for Him. Then He came into your soul and He is still supping with you. Now, after that, you must never say a word when they shut the door against you! You must, say, “This is how I treated my Master. It has come back to me and in good measure, but not pressed down or running over. And so I am well content to bear rebuffs for His sake since He bore them from me, even from me.”

“Still,” says one, “I have gone on and on, trying to do good in my sphere. I have given much and I still desire to do the same, but I do not appear to get much return—doing good does not earn much gratitude. If I had some thanks I would not so much mind. Indeed, I do not seem to be doing any good, either. If I saw some results I would not be weary.” Once more I speak and then I am done. Do you not know that there is One who thus every day bade the showers descend upon the earth? And when they fell, He did not say to the raindrops, “Fall on the crops of the grateful farmers and let the Christian men have all the benefit of the shower.” No, He sent the clouds and they poured out the rain that fell on the churl’s land and watered his property! Tomorrow morning when the sun rises, it will light the blasphemer’s bed as well as the chamber of the saint. And tonight God lends His moon to those that break His Laws with a high hand and defile themselves as well as to those who go forth on ministries of mercy. He stops neither rain nor sun nor moon, nor makes a star the to shine less, nor sends less oxygen into the atmosphere, or less health in the winds because man sins!

And there are whole nations where, when God gives His bounties, idols and images are thanked and not the gracious Giver! There are other nations where, when God makes the vine to produce its fruit, the people turn it into drunkenness. And when He bids the corn be multiplied, they turn it into gluttony and surfeit and pride. Yet He does not restrain His gifts. Therefore you keep on even as the great God continues to work unweariedly. He has done good to you and to thousands like you. If you were to skip doing good to men, what would you be saying to God? “Lord, this race does not deserve that You should do it any good. Do not do any more good.” Your conduct in saying that your fellow creatures do not deserve that you should do them any good says, in the most emphatic manner, that you do not think God ought to do them any good, either, for if God should do them good, much more should you who are so much less than He. And if you stop your hand and say, “It is no use doing any more good,” you, in effect, pray God never to do any more good to your fellow men! That is an inhuman prayer and tempts God. I pray you let not the action which incarnates such a prayer ever spring from us again!

Come, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ has blotted out our sins. He has bought us with His blood! We belong to Him and whatever service He gives us to do, He will give us the strength to do it! So let us go back to our work with joy. If we have been grumbling—if we have complained at all—let us ask His forgiveness and buckle our harness on anew, saying, “Master, You shall not find me skulking, but as long as the day lasts and You give me strength, I will reap in Your fields, or work in Your vineyards according to Your bidding, thankful for the great honor of being permitted to do anything for You and even for having to put up with inconvenience for Your sake. Seeing that You did endure so much for me, why should I not bear something for You?”

You may have to face a gale of wind, but you may face it gaily in the strength of your Lord! Keep on and keep on keeping on! You shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you, over all the oppositions of men. Why, be comforted, beloved fellow laborers, and let no Brother’s heart fail him because of anything that has happened to him. Let no Sister’s hands hang down, but, “be you steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” I pray God to lead many others to enlist in this service, but they must first believe in Jesus Christ. When they have done so, then they may also come and share in the blessed warfare—and they shall have their reward! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1343 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷2Th 3.16

THE JEWEL OF PEACE  
NO. 1343

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 18, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Now the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”***2Th 3:16***.**

WHEN the heart is full of love it finds the hand too feeble for its desires. Therefore it seeks relief in intercession and benediction—wishing, praying and blessing where it cannot actually effect its loving purpose. The Apostle would have done for the Thessalonians all the good that was conceivable had it been in his power, but his wishes far outstripped his abilities and, therefore, he betook himself to interceding for them and to invoking upon them the blessing of the Lord and Master whom he served. Here is a lesson for us in the art of doing good—as we lengthen the eyesight with the telescope, as we send our words afar by the telegraph—so let us extend our ability to do good by the constant use of intercessory prayer.

Parents, when you have done all you can for your children, be thankful that you may introduce them to a further and greater blessing by commending them to the care of the great Father in Heaven! Friends, do your friends the best possible deed of friendship by asking for them the friendship of God. You who love the souls of men, when you have poured out all your strength on their behalf, bless God that there is still something more which you can do, for by entreaties and supplications you may bring down from on high the earnest and the effectual energy of the Holy Spirit who can work in their hearts that which it is not in your power to accomplish!

The Apostle saw that the Thessalonians were much troubled and he wrote the most encouraging words to cheer them. But he knew that he could not take the burden from off their hearts and, therefore, he turned to the God of all consolation and prayed Him to give them peace always by all means. The slenderness of our power to bless others will be no detriment to them if it leads us to lay hold upon the eternal strength, for that will bring into the field a superior power to bless—and our infirmity will only make space for the display of Divine Grace. Let us look, first, at the many-sided blessing which the Apostle invokes—peace. And then let us note the special desirableness of it. Thirdly, let us observe from whom, alone, it comes. And fourthly, note the wide sweep of the Apostolic prayer.

I. First, then, let us look at THE MANY-SIDED BLESSING—“The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace.” Some have thought to restrict the expression to peace within the Church since disorderly members were evidently increasing among the Thessalonians. But that is a very straitened and cowardly interpretation and it is never wise to narrow the meaning of God’s Word. Indeed, such a contracted explanation cannot be borne, for it does not appear that the disorderly persons mentioned in the chapter

had, as yet, created any special disturbance—they had been quietly fattening at the expense of their generous Brethren and would not be very eager to quarrel with the rack from which they fed.

Although, no doubt, Church quiet is included as one variety of peace, yet it would be a sad dwarfing of the meaning of the Spirit to consider one phase of the blessing to the neglect of the rest. No, the peace here meant is “the deep tranquility of a soul resting on God”—the quiet restfulness of spirit which is the peculiar gift of God and the choice privilege of the Believer. “Great peace have all they that love Your Law, and nothing shall offend them.” The peace of the text is a gem with many facets, but in considering its many-sidedness we must remember that its main bearing is toward God. The deepest, best, and most worthy peace of the soul is its rest towards the Lord God, Himself.

I trust we know this and are enjoying it at this moment. We are no longer afraid of God—the sin which divided us from Him is blotted out and the distance which it created has ceased to be. The Atonement has worked perfect reconciliation and established everlasting peace. The terrors of God’s Law are effectually removed from us and, instead thereof, we feel the drawings of His love. We are brought near by the atoning Sacrifice and have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We know that all His thoughts to us are thoughts of love and we bless His name that our thoughts toward Him are no longer those of the slave towards a taskmaster, or of a criminal towards a judge, but those of a beloved child towards a kind and tender father.

Fervent love reigns in our hearts, casting out all fear and causing us to joy in God by our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a great blessing! It is surely a choice delight for a man to know that whether he prospers or is afflicted, whether he lives or dies, there is nothing between God and him but perfect amity, for all that offends has been effectually put away. Beloved, when the Apostle wishes us peace in the words of our text, he no doubt means that our hearts should be at perfect peace by being placed fully in accord with the will of God. But, alas, we have known some who we hope are forgiven and are God’s children, who, nevertheless, quarrel with God.

They are not pleased with what He does and even complain that He deals harshly with them—they are naughty children and carry on a sort of sullen contention with their heavenly Father because He does not indulge them in all their whims and fancies. Now, may the Lord of Peace put an end to all such grievous warfare of heart in His people! May you love the Lord so well and trust Him so fully that you could not pick a quarrel with Him even if He smote you and bruised you and broke your bones! Whatever He does is not only to be accepted with submission, but to be rejoiced in. That which pleases Him should please us. We have perfect peace when we can magnify and praise the Lord even for the sharp cuts of His rod and the fierce fires of His furnace! May the Lord bring us into this state, for there is no joy like it—perfect peace with God is Heaven below!

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we reach a little further than reconciliation and submission, for we come into the enjoyment of conscious complacency. There are men who are at peace with God as to the forgiveness of sin and, in a measure, are in accord with His will, but they are not walking carefully in the path of obedience and so they are missing the sense of Divine Love. God is their Father and He loves them—but He hides His face from them. They walk contrary to Him and so He walks contrary to them. We cannot consider such a condition to be one of fullest peace. The truly restful state of mind is enjoyed when the heart and life are daily cleansed by Grace so that there is nothing to grieve the Spirit of God and, therefore, the Lord feels it right to favor His child with the light of His Countenance in full meridian splendor!

O how blessed to bask in the sunlight of Jehovah’s love, free from all doubt and being no more conscious of sin! In that sense of conscious favor lies the rest of Heaven. May the Lord of Peace Himself give us this peace! This peace, because sin is forgiven, is the sweet fruit of justification—“therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This peace, because the heart is renewed and made to agree with the will of God, is the blessed result of sanctification, for “to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.” This peace, because the soul is conscious of being the object of Divine Love, is a precious attendant upon the spirit of adoption which is the very essence of peace! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, may this threefold peace with God be with you always!

Now we look further and note that this peace spreads itself abroad and covers all things with its soft light. God is great and fills all things. He who becomes at peace with Him is at peace with all things. Being reconciled to God, the Believer says—“All things are mine, whether things present or things to come. All are mine, for I am Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” Behold, the Lord has made us to be in league with the stones of the field and the beasts of the field are at peace with us! Providence is our pavilion and angels are our attendants. All things work together for our good, now that we love God and are the called according to His purpose. No longer are we afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction which wastes at noonday!

Behold the Lord God covers us with His feathers and under His wings do we trust! His Truth is our shield and buckler. Because we have set our love upon Him, He delivers us and He sets us on high because we have known His name. At peace with the Lord of Hosts we are at peace with all the armies of the universe, in alliance with all the forces which muster at Jehovah’s bidding! Though we must be at war with Satan, yet even he is chained and made as a slave to accomplish purposes of good contrary to his own will. There is neither in Heaven nor earth nor Hell, anything that we need fear when we are once right with God! Settle the center and the circumference is secure—peace with God is universal peace.

This practically shows itself in the Christian’s inward peace with regard to his present circumstances, be they what they may. Being at peace with God, he sees the Lord’s hand in everything around him and is content. Is he poor? The Lord makes him rich in faith and he asks not for gold. Is he sick? The Lord endows him with patience and he glories in his afflictions.

Is he laid aside from the holy service which he so much loves? He feels that the Lord knows best. If he might be actively engaged in doing God’s will, he would be very thankful and run with diligence the race set before him.

But if he must lie in the hospital and suffer rather than serve, he does not wish to put his own wishes before the will of his Master—he leaves himself in the Lord’s hands, saying—“Lord, do as You will with me. I am so at peace with You that if You use me, I will bless You. And if You lay me aside, I will bless You. If You spare my life, I will bless You, and if You bring me down to the grave I will bless You. If You honor me among men, I will bless You, and if You make me to be trod under foot like straw for the dunghill, I will still bless You—for You are everything and I am nothing— You are all goodness and I am sin and emptiness.”

The soul which thus has perfect peace as to all its personal surroundings is, indeed, happy! It is lying down in green pastures beside the still waters. Blessed be God, this peace is mainly to be found in the soul, itself, as to its own thoughts, beliefs, hopes, expectations and desires. We have not only peace towards the outer world, but peace within! After all, happiness and peace lie more within the man than in anything around him. Heaven lies more in the heart than in golden streets—and Hell’s flame consists rather in man’s tortured conscience than in the Tophet fire which the breath of God has kindled. So the peace which Jesus gives is within us—“the good man is satisfied with himself.”

Some minds are strangers to peace. How can they have peace, for they have no faith? They are as a rolling thing before the whirlwind, having no fixed basis, no abiding foundation of belief. These are the darlings of the school of modern thought, whose disciples set themselves as industriously to breed doubt as if salvation came by it. “Doubt and be saved,” is their gospel and who does not see that this is not the Gospel of peace? Indeed, they are receptive and are peering about for fresh light, though long ago the Sun of Righteousness has arisen! Such uncertainty suits me not! I must know something or I cannot live—I must be sure of something or I have no motive from which to act!

God never meant us to live in perpetual questioning. His Revelation is not and cannot be that shapeless cloud which philosophical divines make it out to be! There must be something true and Christ must have come into the world to teach us something saving and reliable! He cannot mean that we should be always rushing through bogs and into morasses after the will-of-the-wisp of intellectual religion. There is assuredly some ascertainable, Infallible, revealed Truth for common people! There must be something sure to rest upon. I know it is so and declare unto you what I have heard and seen! There are great Truths of God which the Lord has engraved upon my very soul, concerning which all the men on earth and all the devils in Hell cannot shake me!

As to these vital doctrines, an immovable and unconquerable dogmatism has laid hold upon my soul and, therefore, my mind has peace! A man’s mind must come to a settlement upon eternal Truths by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or else he cannot know what peace is. I would pray for every one of my Brothers and Sisters that they may find an anchor of mind and heart and never leave it! We have been often spoken of as an old-fashioned Church and your minister is said to be Ultimus Puritanorum, the, “Last of the Puritans,” a man incapable of any thought beyond the limit of the old-fashioned theology. I bless the Lord that it is so! I am, indeed, incapable of forsaking the Gospel for these new-fangled theories! Down went my anchor years ago! It was a great relief to me when I first felt it grip and it is a growing joy to me that I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.

Pretensions to original thought I have never made! I invent nothing! I only tell the old, old story as God enables me. “Ah,” said a certain Divine to me one day, “it must be very easy for you to preach because you know what you are going to say—your views are fixed and stereotyped. As for me,” he said, “I am always seeking after truth and I do not know one week what I may preach the next.” Thus speak the teachers—do you wonder if the disciples wander into skepticism?! Has the Lord taught the man nothing of the sure Truths of God? Then let him wait till he has received His message. Till he knows the Gospel in his own heart, experimentally, as the power of God unto salvation, let him sit on the penitent form and ask to be prayed for, but never enter a pulpit!

What are Churches doing to tolerate these sowers of infidelity? Time was when the fathers in our Israel would have chased from their pulpits those who glory in the unbelief which is their shame! May the Lord of Peace, Himself, give you peace as to your personal beliefs and convictions—and then when you get into deep waters of trial and sorrow you will say, “Ah, I did believe the right doctrine after all! I can feel the grip of my anchor on the things unseen. I have not been deceived. I have not followed cunningly devised fables, for the promise is true and I feel the power of it! It sustains and cheers and comforts me under all my trials and I know that it will do so even to my dying hour.” May every troubled thinker find the peace of faith and never lose it!

Many minds are forever restless as to their fears. It is a great thing to know why you tremble, for when you know what you fear, your fear is half gone! The indefinable shape, the mysterious hand which has no arm but writes upon the wall in strange characters—the cloudiness of all things dreaded makes the mind more restless. But blessed is the man to whom the Lord has taught His fear—so that he knows what he fears and does not permit his hopes to be in perpetual eclipse. Of this many-sided peace we must say something more. The Thessalonian Church had been troubled three ways. They had been persecuted from without. That is not a pleasant thing, but the Apostle says, “You that are troubled rest with us.”

Now, when the Lord Jesus Christ says to a persecuted saint, “I am with you: all the evil which is done unto you is done unto Me, and you are bearing it for My name’s sake,” then, Beloved, no persecution can break the peace of the soul! But rather, the sufferer rejoices and is exceedingly glad that he is counted worthy, not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for His sake!  
Next, the Thessalonian Church was annoyed by certain false teachers.

They did not absolutely teach novel doctrine, but upon a basis of the Truth of God they erected an edifice of error. They exaggerated one special Truth and carried its teaching to extravagance. They said, “Christ is coming, therefore the day of the Lord is immediately at hand.” They belonged to that order of fanatics who are always raving about “the signs of the times” and pretending to know what will happen within the next 20 years. There were impostors of that sort in Paul’s day and there are such impostors now. Believe them not! They can see no more of the future than blind horses! I put them all together as impostors, whether they are preachers or literary hacks, for no man knows the future and no man can tell his fellows about it.

I care no more for their explanations of prophecy than for the pretended winking of the eyes of the Madonna—yet they will continue the scam and will be saying one thing this time and another that—that this and that wonder shall happen—and that terrible judgments shall overwhelm our nation. The Apostle would not have the Thessalonians disturbed in their minds by fears about the future. Brethren in Christ, the most terrible fact of the future can be no just cause of alarm to a true Believer! The Lord comforts His people and there is nothing in His plans or purposes which is intended to disquiet them. You may rest assured that if any doctrine in the Bible prevents a godly man from enjoying peace it must be because he has not yet understood it fully, or else has mistaken its bearing towards himself.

The Truths of God must minister peace to true men. All Truths of God, whether doctrinal or prophetic, are on the side of the children of God! How can it be otherwise? The Apostle tells the Thessalonians not to be disturbed about the coming of Christ. “The Lord be with you all,” he says, and if the Lord is with us, what does it matter to us whether He personally comes at once or chooses to delay? We should be looking for His coming, but not with alarm, for the fact that He has come, already, is a wellspring of delight! We glory in His first advent and do not dread the second. Since we are already raised up into the heavenly places to sit with Him by faith, what does it matter to us whether He is up there or down here—or whether we are in Heaven or on earth—so long as we abide in Him?

There may arise, possibly there will arise, wild fanatics who will again spread alarming news about wars and rumors of wars and select some fatal year as the end of all things. Well, if such things should be, if crowds should go into the wilderness or into the city to look for the coming of Christ, believe them not, but sit still in peace and tranquility of spirit and say, “My soul loves Him and He loves me. He cannot mean ill to me whether He destroys the earth or spares it. Though the heavens pass away and the earth, itself, melts with fervent heat, my heart is resting in her Lord and knows herself to be secure.” Thus the Lord saves His people from the disturbance caused by false teaching.

There were, also, in the Church, disorderly characters—people that went about spreading idle tales and gossiping. They would not do anything for a living and so they set people by the ears. But when the Lord gives a Christian deep spiritual peace within, he soon puts aside the small nuisances of idle tongues and disorderly deeds. He refuses to be worried. Mosquitoes buzz around every Christian Church and blessed is the man who does not feel their bite or heed their buzzing! His soul shall dwell at ease.

Peace from Church troublers is a great blessing and we ought to praise God for it when we are in the enjoyment of it, for strife within the Church, like civil war, is the worst of warfare. O to live in holy love and unbroken concord in reference to all our fellow Christians! May the Lord of Peace grant us this! Thus, you see, the peace which is here spoken of has many sides to it. May you possess it in all its forms, modes, and phases—and may your spirit enter into the peace of God which passes all understanding!

II. Now, secondly, let us note THE SPECIAL DESIRABLENESS OF PEACE. It is a very great thing for a soul to realize perfect peace, for if it does not do so, it must miss the joy, comfort and blessedness of the Christian life. God never meant His children to be like thistledown, blown about with every breath, nor as a football, hurled to and fro by every foot. He meant us to be a happy, restful, established people. The cattle eat the grass, but they are not fattened till they lie down and ruminate in peace— the Lord makes His people to feed and to lie down in quietness.

You do not know the Gospel, dear Friends, if you have not obtained peace through it! Peace is the juice, the essence, the soul of the Gospel! Doctrines are clusters, but you have never trod them in the winepress— you have never quaffed the flowing juice of their grapes if you have not peacefully considered Divine Truth in the quiet of your heart. Without peace you cannot grow! A shepherd may find good pasture for his flock, but if his sheep are hunted about by wild dogs, so that they cannot rest, they will become mere skin and bones. The Lord’s lambs cannot grow if they are worried and harried—they must enjoy the rest wherewith the Lord makes the weary to rest.

If your soul is always sighing, moaning and questioning its interest in Christ. If you are always in suspense as to what doctrine is true and what is false. If there is nothing established and settled about you, you will never come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. Neither without peace can you bear much fruit, if any. If a tree is frequently transplanted you cannot reasonably look for many golden apples upon its boughs. The man who has no root-hold—who neither believes, nor grasps, nor enjoys the Gospel—can never know what it is to be steadfast and unmovable. And neither will he be always abounding in the work of the Lord.

We know, too, some who, because they have no conscious peace with God, lack all stability and are the prey of error. That doctrine can soon be driven out of a man’s head which affords no light and comfort to his heart. If you derive no sweetness from what you believe, I should not marvel if you soon begin to doubt it. The power of the Gospel is its best evidence to the soul—a man always believes in that which he enjoys. Only make a Truth of God to be a man’s spiritual food—let it be marrow and fatness to him—and I guarantee you he will believe it. When the Truth of God becomes to a proud carnal mind what the manna became to murmuring Israel, namely, light bread that his soul abhors, then the puffed up intellect cries after something more pleasing to the flesh!

But to the mind which hungers and thirsts after righteousness, the Gospel is so soul-satisfying that it never wearies of it. Brothers and Sisters, you must have peace for your soul’s health! What a difference there is between a soul at peace and a soul continually tossed about! I have seen one man’s heart like a country whose hedges are broken down, whose walls are laid level with the ground, where irrigation is neglected, where tilling has ceased, where the vines are untrimmed, where the fields are unplowed—and all because there is a perpetual sound of war in the soul—the song of peace is never heard! Such a soul may be likened to the Holy Land beneath Turkish rule where no man has rest and, consequently, the highways lie waste and the gardens are a desert.

But I have seen another man’s life which has grown up under the influence of holy peace, from whom God has kept back the wandering Arabs of doubt and fear—and to whom He has given a settled government of Grace and an establishment in steadfastness and quiet assurance and, lo, that man has been as the land which flows with milk and honey! As war spends and peace gathers the riches of nations, so does inward strife devour us, while spiritual peace makes the soul fat. Even as Palestine, when it abounded in corn and wine and oil, could nourish Tyre and Sidon, which it borders, even so does the man who is rich towards God, through internal peace, become a feeder of other souls till even they who are but borderers upon Immanuel’s land obtain a blessing!

Beloved, I would that every Christian knew this soul-enriching peace to the fullest! I am sorry to meet with so many who “hope” they are Believers, and “trust” they are saved, but they are not sure. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, in these matters we must get beyond mere hopes! We must reach to certainties. “Ifs” and “buts” are terrible in the things which concern the soul and eternity! We must have plain and unquestionable security here— Divine security applied to the soul, itself, by the Holy Spirit. Friend, you are either saved this morning or you are not saved! Either you are in the love of God, or you are not! Either you are secure of Heaven, or you are not—one of the two! I beseech you, do not let these things be in jeopardy—chance anything rather than your soul! Cry mightily to God that you may have these things fixed, certain, positive, beyond all dispute—for then shall your soul enjoy peace with God—and so shall you become strong, useful and happy.

III. Now, thirdly, we shall get into the very heart of our text while we consider for a minute or two THE ONLY PERSON FROM WHOM THIS PEACE MUST COME—“Now the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace.” Who is this “Lord of Peace” but the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace, born into the world when there was peace all over the world? It was but a little interval in which the gates of the temple of war were closed, and lo, Jesus came to Bethlehem and angels sang, “Peace on earth.” He came to establish an empire of peace which shall be universal and under whose influence they shall hang the useless helmet high and study war no more.

“The Prince of Peace!” How blessed is the title! So was it written of old by Isaiah, and Paul, the true successor of Isaiah, changing but a word, now speaks of, “the Lord of Peace.” This is He who, being in Himself essential peace, undertook to be the Father’s great Ambassador. And having made peace by the blood of His Cross, ended the strife between man and his offended Maker. This is He who is our Peace—who has made Jew and Gentile one—and has broken down the middle wall of partition which stood between us. This is the Lord who, when He stood in the midst of His disciples, gave them peace by saying, “Peace be unto you.” And this is He, who, in His departure, made His last will and testament and wrote therein this grand legacy—“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives give I unto you.” This is that Lord of Peace to whom it is part of His Nature and office to give peace!

I want to call particular attention to the Apostle’s words in this place. He does not say, “May the Lord of Peace send His angel to give you peace.” It were a great mercy if He did and we might be as glad as Jacob was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him. He does not even say, “May the Lord of Peace send His minister to give you peace.” If He did we might be as happy as Abraham when Melchizedek refreshed him with bread and wine. He does not even say, “May the Lord of Peace at the communion table, or in reading the Word, or in prayer, or in some other sacred exercise give you peace.” In all these we might well be as refreshed as Israel was at Elim where wells and palm trees gladdened the tribes. But, no, he says, “the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace,” as if He, alone, in His own Person, could give peace, and as if His Presence were the sole means of such a Divine Peace as he desires. “The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace.”

The words are inexpressibly sweet to me. If you will think, for a minute, you will see that we never obtain peace except from the Lord, Himself. What, after all, in your worst times will bring you peace? I will tell you. “This Man shall be the peace.” To me it has often afforded great peace to think of His mysterious Person. He is a Man tempted in all points like as I am, a Man who knows every grief of the soul and every pain of the body— therefore His tender sympathy and power to succor. Have you not often derived peace from that sweet reflection? You know you have! His Person, then, is a source of peace.

And have you not been rested in your soul by meditating upon His death? You have viewed Him wounded, bleeding, dying on the tree—and, insensibly to yourself—a wondrous calm has stolen over your heart and you have felt pacified concerning all things. Yes, Jesus is, Himself, that bundle of myrrh and spice from which peace flows like a sweet perfume! When He comes very near your heart and lays bare His wounds, and speaks His love home to you, making you feel its Divine fervency. When He assures you that you are one with Him, united to Him in an everlasting wedlock which knows of no divorce—then it is that your soul is steeped in peace! This is an experimental business and no mere words can express it. “The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace”—this, I say, He does mainly by manifesting Himself to the heart of His servants.

Then notice that the text says, “give you peace,” not merely offer it to you, or argue with you that you ought to have peace, or show you the grounds of peace, but, “give you peace.” He has the power to breathe peace into the heart, to create peace in the soul and lull the spirit into that sweet sleep of the beloved which is the peculiar gift of Heaven. “I will give you rest,” He said, and He can and will do it. “The Lord be with you all”—as much as to say, “That is what I mean.” I pray that Jesus may be with you, for if He is present, you must enjoy peace! Let the sea rage and let every timber of the ship be strained—yes, let her leak till between each timber there yawns a hungry mouth to swallow you up—yet when Jesus arises He will rebuke the winds and the waves, and there will be a great calm! “It is I, be not afraid,” is enough to create peace at once. May you always know this peace which Jesus, alone, can give.

IV. Now I must conclude with the fourth head which is a consideration of THE SWEEP OF THE PRAYER—“The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always.” What? Always at peace? Yes, that is what the Apostle desires for you. May you have peace given you always. “Well, Sir, I feel very happy on the Sabbath. I have such peace that I wish I could have a week of Sundays.” May the Lord Himself give you peace always, on all the weekdays as well as on Sundays. “Truly, I have been very happy of late,” says one, “God has prospered us and everyone has been very loving in the family. But I do not know how I should be if I had an awkward husband and unruly children.”

Sister, I will tell you what I want you to be—I would have you restful under all circumstances—“The Lord of Peace give you peace always.” “I enjoy such peace in the Prayer Meeting,” says one. I want you to have peace in the workshop, also. “I have peace when I get alone with my Bible,” cries another. We pray that you may have equal peace when you are troubled with the ledger, tired with those unpaid bills, dull trade and all the crosscurrents of business. You need peace always. Our Friends who are commonly called Quakers have, as a rule, set us a fine example of calm, dignified quietness and peace. How undisturbed they generally appear! Whatever they fail in, they certainly excel in a certain peacefulness of manner which I hope is the index of calm enjoyed within.

Numbers of professors are very fretful, excitable, agitated, hasty and fickle. It should not be so, Brothers and Sisters—you ought to have more weight about you, more Grace, more solidity. Your soul’s affairs are all right, are they not? All is right forever—everything is signed, sealed, and delivered—the Covenant is ordered in all things and sure, and everything is in Divine hands for our good. Well, then, why not let us be as happy as the angels are? Why are we troubled? Is there anything worth shedding a tear for, now that all is well for eternity? Our lack of peace arises from the fact that we have not realized the fullness of our text. “The Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always.” He can always give you peace, for He never changes! There is always the same reason for peace. You may always go to Him for peace and He is always ready to bestow it. Oh that we might always possess it!

Notice, again, it is written—“May the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace always by all means.” Can He give us peace by all means? I know He can give us peace by some means, but can all means be made subservient to this end? Some agencies evidently work towards peace, but can He give us peace by opposing forces? Yes, certainly! He can give peace by the bitter as well as by the sweet! He can give peace by the storm as well as by the calm! He can give peace by loss as well as by gain, by death as well as by life!

Notice there are two grand ways of giving us peace—one is by taking away all that disquiets us. Here is a man who frets because he does not make money, or because he has lost much of his wealth. Suppose the Lord takes away from him all covetousness, all greed of gain, all love of the world—is he not, at once, filled with peace? He is at peace not because he has more money, but because he has less of grasping desires. Another man is very ambitious. He wants to be somebody. He must be great and yet he never will be and, therefore, he is restless. Suppose the Grace of God should humble him and take away his lofty aspirations so that he only wishes to be and to do what the Lord wills? Do you not see how readily he rests?

Another man has an angry temper and is soon put out—the Lord does not alter the people that are round about him, but He changes the man, himself—makes him quiet, ready to forgive and of a gentle spirit. What peace the man now feels! Another person has had an envious eye—he did not like to see others prosper—and if others were better off than he, he always thought badly of them. The Lord wrings that bitter drop of envy out of his heart and now see how peaceful he is—he is glad to see others advanced and if he is tried, himself, it helps to make him happy to think that others are more favored. It is a great blessing when the Lord removes the disturbing elements from the heart!

Even curiosity may be a source of unrest. Many are a great deal worried by curiosity. I have sometimes wanted to know why the Lord does this and that with me. Blessed be His name, I am resolved not to question Him any more in that fashion! Somebody prayed the other day that I might see the reason why the Lord has lately afflicted me. I hope the Brother will not pray that any more, for I do not want to know the Lord’s reasons—why should I? I know He has done right and I will not dishonor Him by catechizing Him and wanting Him to explain Himself to a poor worm. This is where the mischief has been with most of us—that we have needed to see how this and that can be right. Why should we? If God conceals a thing, let us be anxious to keep it concealed.

A servant was passing through a street with a dish that was curiously covered. There met him a fellow who said, “I am most anxious to know what your lord has put in that dish, for he has so carefully covered it.” But the servant said, “Therefore should you not desire to know, for seeing my lord has so carefully covered it, it is clear that it is no business of yours.” So whenever a Providence puzzles you, take it as a sign that the Lord does not mean you to understand it—and be content to take it upon faith. When curiosity and other restless things are gone, peace is enjoyed. Then the Lord has ways of giving us peace by making discoveries of

Himself. Some of you do not know, as yet, the things which would give you peace. For instance, if you did but know that He loved you from before the foundation of the world and that whom once He loves, He never leaves, you who are now afraid that you have fallen from Grace would obtain strong consolation! Yes, and if you understood the grand doctrine of the Divine Predestination and saw that the Lord will not fail nor be discouraged, nor turn aside from one jot or tittle of His purpose, then you would see how you, poor insignificant Believers though you are, are one stitch in the great fabric that must not be suffered to drop or else the whole fabric would be marred! You would understand how the eternal purpose ordered in wisdom and backed up with Sovereign power guarantees your salvation as much as it does the Glory of God—and so you would have peace.

Many a soul has not the peace it might have because it does not fully understand the atoning blood. The great doctrine of Substitution is not seen in all its length and breadth by some minds. But when they come to see Christ standing in the place of His chosen, made sin for them and the chosen standing in Christ’s place, “the righteousness of God in Him,” then will their peace be like a river! The grand Truth of the union of the saints with Christ, if it is once understood, what a means of peace it is! He that believes in Christ is one with Him, a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones! He is one with Christ by eternal and indissoluble union, even as the Father is One with the Son! If this is known, together with the doctrine of the Covenant, the attribute of immutability, the eternal purpose and the marriage union between Christ and His elect, deep peace must be enjoyed, like the calm of Heaven, like the bliss of immortality!

But there are some to whom this peace cannot come, some concerning whom the Lord says “What have you to do with peace?” “There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked.” Your works, your prayers, your repentances—none of these can bring you peace! As for the world and the pleasures thereof, they are destructive to all hope of peace. Come this day and believe in the great Sacrifice which God, Himself, has prepared in the Person of His crucified Son! Come look into Emanuel’s face and read where peace is to be found! Come to the great gash in Jesus’ side and see the cleft of the rock where God’s elect abide in peace! Trust in Jesus and you shall begin a peace which shall widen and deepen into the peace of God which passes all understanding, which shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Amen.

÷1Ti 1.11

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD

NO. 758

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 30, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT CAMDEN ROAD CHAPEL.

**“According to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”***1Ti 1:11***.**

THIS verse occurs just after a long list of sins which the Apostle declares to be contrary to sound doctrine, from which we gather that one test of sound doctrine is its opposition to every form of sin. That doctrine which in any way palliates sin may be popular, but is not sound doctrine. Those who talk much of their soundness but yet, by their lives, betray the rottenness of their hearts, need far rather to be ashamed of their hypocrisy than to be proud of their orthodoxy.

The Apostle offers, in the verse before us, another standard by which to test the doctrines which we hear. He tells us that sound doctrine is always evangelical—“sound doctrine according to the glorious Gospel.” Any doctrine which sets up the will or the merit of man, any doctrine which exalts priest-craft and ceremonies, any doctrine, in fact, which does not put salvation upon the sole footing of free Grace, is unsound.

These two points are absolutely necessary in every teaching which professes to come from God. It must commend and foster holiness of life and, at the same time, it must, beyond all question, be a declaration of Divine Grace and mercy through the Mediator. Our Apostle was, by the drift of his letter, led incidentally to make mention of the Gospel. And then, in a moment, taking to himself wings of fire, he mounts into a transport of praise, and calls it “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” Such is his mode of writing generally, that if he comes across a favorite thought, he is away at a tangent from the subject that he was aiming, and does not return until his ardent spirit cools again!

In this case, before he was aware, his soul made him like the chariots of Amminadab! His glowing heart poured forth the warmest eulogy upon that hidden treasure, that pearl of immense price which he prized beyond all price and guarded with a sacred jealousy of care. I think I see the radiant countenance of the Apostle of the Lord, as with flashing eyes he dictates the words, “The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”

Our subject affords us a fine ocean but our time is short, our boat is small, and the atmosphere is so hot and heavy that scarcely a breath of air is to be had, and therefore I will keep to one straightforward track and not distract you with many topics. To open up the text in all its length and breadth would be fit exercise for the loftiest intellect, but we must be content with a few experimental and practical remarks, and may the Lord enable us to weave them into a heart-searching discourse.

I. In the first place, then, Paul praises the Gospel to the utmost by calling it “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” HAVE WE EXPERIENCED ITS EXCELLENCE? It is necessary to ask the question even in this congregation, for even to great multitudes who attend our Houses of Prayer, the Gospel is a dry, uninteresting subject. They hear the Word because it is their duty. They sit in the pew because custom requires an outward respect to religion—but they never dream of the Gospel having anything glorious in it—anything that can stir the heart or make the pulse beat at a faster rate. The sermon is slow, the service is dull, the whole affair is a weariness to which nothing but propriety makes men submit.

Some people do their religion as a matter of necessity—as a horse drags a wagon—but if that necessity of respectability did not exist they would be as glad to escape from it as the horse is to leave the shafts and to miss the rumbling of the wheels. It is necessary, then, to ask the question, and I shall put it before you in three or four ways. Paul calls the sacred message of mercy the Gospel. Has it been the Gospel to us?

The word is plain and I hardly need remind you that it means—“good news.” Now, has the Gospel been “good news” to us? Has it ever been “news” to you? “We have heard it so often,” says one, “that we cannot expect it to be news to us. We were trained by godly parents. We were taken to Sunday school. We have learned the Gospel from our youth up—it cannot be news to us.” Let me say to you, then, that you do not know the Word of Reconciliation unless it has been, and still is, news to you.

To every man who is ever saved by the Gospel, it comes as a piece of news as novel, fresh, and startling as if he had never heard it before. The letter may be old, but the inward meaning is as new as though the ink were not yet dry in the pen of Revelation. I confess to have been tutored in piety, put into my cradle by prayerful hands, and lulled to sleep by songs concerning Jesus.

But after having heard the Gospel continually, precept upon precept, here much and there much, yet when the Word of the Lord came to me with power, it was as new as if I had lived among the unvisited tribes of central Africa, and had never heard the tidings of the cleansing fountain filled with blood from the Savior’s veins! The Gospel in its spirit and power always wears the dew of its youth—it glitters with morning’s freshness— its strength and its glory abide forever!

Ah, my dear Hearer, if you have ever felt your guilt, if you have been burdened under a sense of it, if you have looked into your own heart to find some good thing and been bitterly disappointed. If you have gone up and down through the world to try this and that scheme of getting relief and found them all fail you like dry wells in the desert which mock the traveler—the Gospel will be a sweet piece of news to your heart that there is here present salvation in the Savior! It is a most refreshing novelty to hear the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto Me and rest.”

Though you have heard the invitation outwardly thousands of times, yet Jesus’ own voice, when He speaks to your heart, will be as surprisingly fresh to you as if these dumb walls should suddenly find a tongue and reveal the mysteries which have been hidden from the foundation of the world. To every Believer the Gospel comes as news from the land beyond the river—God’s mind revealed by God’s Spirit to His chosen. It is good news, too.

Now, has the Gospel ever been experimentally good to you, my Hearer? Good in the best sense? Good emphatically? Good without any mixture of evil? The Gospel is just that to those who know it—is it so to you? Have you ever been deeply sensible of your overwhelming debt to the justice of God and then gladly received the gracious information that your debts are all discharged? Have you trembled beneath the thunder-charged cloud of Jehovah’s wrath which was ready to pour forth its tempest upon you, and have you heard the gentle voice of Mercy saying, “I have blotted out, as a cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins”?

Have you ever known what it is to be fully absolved, to stand before God without fear, accepted in the Beloved, received as a dear child, covered with the righteousness of Christ? If so, the Gospel has been “good,” indeed, to you. Grasping it by the hand of faith and feeling the power of it in your soul, you count it to be the best tidings that ever came from God to man! I shall now ask you earnestly to answer my question as in the sight of God. Let no man escape from this most vital enquiry! Has that which Paul calls the Gospel, proved itself to be Gospel to you?

Did it ever make your heart leap, just as some highly gratifying information excites and charms you? Has it ever seemed to you an allimportant thing? If not, you know not what the Gospel means. O let my anxious questions tenderly quicken you to be concerned about your soul’s affairs and to seek unto the Lord Jesus for eternal life! Paul, having called the message of mercy “the Gospel,” then adds an adjective—“the glorious Gospel”—and a glorious Gospel it is for a thousand reasons! It is glorious in its antiquity, for before the beams of the first morning drove away primeval shades, this Gospel of our salvation was ordained in the mind of the Eternal!

It is glorious because it is everlasting—when all things shall have passed away as the hoarfrost of the morning dissolves before the rising sun, this Gospel shall still exist in all its power and Grace! It is glorious because it reveals the glory of God more fully than all the universe beside. Not all the innumerable worlds that God has ever fashioned, though they speak to us in loftiest eloquence from their celestial spheres, can proclaim to us the Character of our heavenly Father as the Gospel does. “The heavens are telling the glory of God!”

But the Gospel which tells of Jesus has a sweeter and a clearer speech! The poet talks of the great and wide sea where the almighty form mirrors itself in tempest. So, indeed, the finger of God may mirror itself, but a thousand oceans could not mirror the Infinite Himself—the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only molten lookingglass in which Jehovah can be seen! In Jesus we see not only God’s train, such as Moses saw when he beheld the skirts of Jehovah’s robe in the cleft of the rock, but the whole of God is revealed in the Gospel of Jesus so that our Lord could say, “He that has seen Me, has seen the Father.”

If the Lord is glorious in holiness, the Gospel reveals Him. Is His right hand glorious in power? So the Gospel speaks of Him. Is the Lord the God of love? Is not this the genius of the Gospel? The Gospel is glorious because every attribute of Deity is manifested in it with unrivalled splendor. But I desire to come home to your consciences by asking, Is the Gospel to you a glorious Gospel? Beloved Friends, we may know our state very much by what answer we shall give to that question.

The Gospel, seen with these eyes and heard with these external ears, will be like the Lord Himself, “A root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness.” But the Gospel understood by the renewed heart, will be quite a different thing. Oh, it will be a glorious Gospel, indeed, if you are raised up in newness of life to enjoy the blessings which it brings to you!

So, I beseech you, answer the question! And to help you, let me remind the people of God how glorious the Gospel has been to them. Do you remember the day when the Gospel carried your heart by storm? Can you ever forget when the great battering ram of the Truth of God began to beat against the gates of Mansoul? Do you remember how you strengthened the posts and bars, and stood out against the Gospel, resolving not to yield? You were at times compelled to weep under impressions, but you wiped away your transient tears—your emotion was “as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.”

But eternal Love would not relinquish its gracious assaults, for it was determined to save. Providence and Grace together besieged the city of your soul and brought Divine artillery to bear upon it. You were straightaway shut up till—as it was with Samaria, so it was with you—there was a great famine in your soul. Do you remember how, Sunday after Sunday every sermon was a fresh assault from the hosts of Heaven—a new blow from the celestial battering ram?

How often, when the gates of your prejudice were dashed to shivers, did you set up fresh barricades! Your heart trembled beneath the terrible strokes of justice, but, by the help of Satan, your depraved heart managed to secure the gates a little longer with iron clamps of pride, and bronze bars of insensibility—till at last, one blessed day—do you remember it?— one blessed day the Gospel battering ram gave the effectual blow of Divine Grace, the gates flew wide open, and in rode the Prince of Peace, Immanuel, like a conqueror, riding in the chariots of salvation!

Our will was subdued, our affections were overcome, our whole soul was brought into subjection to the sway of Mercy. Jesus was glorious in our eyes that day, “the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” That day of days we have registered upon the tablets of our heart! It was the true coronation day of Jesus in us, and our birthday for eternity!

When our glorious Lord entered into our souls wearing His vesture dipped in blood, pardoning and blessing in the plenitude of His Grace, then the bells of our heart rang merry peals! The streamers of our joy floated in the fragrant air! The streets of our soul were strewn with roses! The fountains of our love ran with rich red wine, and our soul was as full of bliss as a heart could be this side of Heaven! For salvation had come to our house, and Mercy’s ring had deigned to visit us!

Oh, the sweet perfume of the spikenard, when, for the first time, the King sat at our table to sup with us! How the savor of His Presence filled every chamber of our inner man! That day when Grace redeemed us from our fears, the Gospel was a glorious Gospel, indeed! Ah, dear Hearer, you stood in the crowded aisle to hear the sermon, but you did not grow weary! The lips of the preacher refreshed you, for the Truth of God dropped like sweet smelling myrrh. You could have gone over hedge and ditch to hear the Gospel at that season of first love! No matter how roughly it might have been served up by the preacher, you rolled the bread of Heaven under your tongue as a sweet morsel, for it was the Gospel of your salvation!

Christian, I will refresh your memory further. Do not forget the after conquests of that Gospel. If you have made any advance in the Divine life, it has been by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ applied by the Holy Spirit. We make mistakes sometimes, for, having begun in the Spirit we hope to be made perfect in the flesh. I mean that frequently we try to battle with our inbred sins by smiting them with legal reasoning. No Believer ever conquered sin by being afraid of the punishment of it—this is a weapon fit only for sons of the bondwoman.

It is the blood of Jesus which is the conquering weapon in the holy war against natural corruption. “They overcame by the blood of the Lamb.” Knowing that I am dead to sin and risen with Christ, it is in the power of resurrection life that I wrestle against the old man and overcome him. Beloved, remember that you are always weak when you get away from the Cross. Remember that it is only as a sinner saved by blood that you can hope to make any advance in sanctification. Do not attempt to flog yourself into Divine Grace—the new life must not be touched with the whip of bondage. Go to the Cross for motive and energy as to holiness.

Look to Jesus in the Gospel as you did in the beginning of your new life. Know yourself to be saved in Him and then go forth to battle temptation with the Gospel as the standard of your lifelong warfare. If any of you have tried to make war with sin apart from the Captain of your salvation, you have either been wounded to your hurt already, or you will be. But if Judah’s Lion shall go up before you, and you follow with the Gospel as your war cry, your victory is sure and you shall have another wreath to lay at the feet of Jesus and His glorious Gospel!

Beloved, let me say that all true saints have found it to be a glorious Gospel from its comforting us in our darkest hours. We are not without our troubles, for which we should be grateful—they are flinty rocks which flow with oil. The roots of our soul might take too firm a hold upon this poor clay soil if they were not toughened by affliction. This is not our rest. It is polluted and our sorrows are useful because they remind us of this.

But what has such power to calm the troubled spirit as the Gospel? Go to the Lord Jesus, you daughters of grief! Know and understand once more your union with Him, and your acceptance in Him, and you will repine no more! You will bow your shoulder and cheerfully take up your cross when you have found out in your hour of need that the Gospel has a glorious power to sustain those who are ready to sink.

Did you ever perceive the glory of the Gospel in its power to resist the attacks of the great enemy? The soul has been beleaguered by a thousand temptations. Satan has howled, and all the fiends of Hell have joined in horrible chorus, and your own poor distracted thoughts have said, “I shall perish notwithstanding all my high enjoyments and confidence.” Have you never gathered, as John Bunyan would picture it, all your forces to the top of the wall to sling the great stones against the enemy? Have you not felt that the castle would be taken, till, as a last resort, you ran up the blood-red flag of the Cross, seized the sword of the Spirit, and went to the rampart determined to hold the wall against the enemy?

Then when the scaling ladder touched the wall and the foe leaped on the bulwarks, you dashed him down again, in the name of Jesus by the power of the Cross, and as often as he came up, so often did you hurl him down again, always overcoming in the power of the Gospel! You kept your ground against temptation from without, and corruption from within by the energy which the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone could give you!

One point may help us to see the glory of the Gospel, namely, that it has saved us from tremendous ills. The ills which are to come upon the unbeliever—who shall describe them? If a spirit could cross the bridgeless gulf which parts us from the land of darkness and the shadow of death, if he could tell us what are the pangs unutterable which are endured by guilty souls, then might we say, “Glorious, indeed, is that Gospel which can lift us from the gates of Hell, and preserve us from going down to the pit.”

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of what the joys are for which the Gospel is preparing us! It is by the Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Word, that we are ripening for those joys which “eye has not seen,” and which “ear has not heard.” Meetness for Heaven will not come to us by the Law, but by the Gospel. Not so much as one of the celestials came there by the deeds of the flesh, but altogether by the Sovereign Grace of God revealed to them in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A glorious Gospel it is, for it brings its disciples to Glory!

Let me ask you whether it is glorious to you at this hour? I think I can say it is to me. I wish it were in my power to make it more glorious in my ministry, but it is glorious to my own heart. After some years of experience the Christian comes to know better than he did at first how much the Gospel suits him. He finds that its simplicity suits his bewilderment. Its Grace suits his sinfulness. Its power is suitable to his weakness. Its comfort is suitable to his despondency. And the older he grows the more he loves the Gospel of the Grace of God. Give it up? Ah, never! We will hold Christ the more firmly because men despise Him. To whom or where should we go if we should turn aside from our Lord Jesus?

Now, dear Hearers, before I leave this point, I want to put it to you again with much loving solicitude. Is the Gospel glorious to you? Remember, if it is not, there can be no hope for you. There is no way of salvation except by the good news that, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” And if that news should sound in your ears as a dry, dull thing, rest assured you are not on the way to Heaven, for the Gospel to every saved soul is sweeter than the sound of the best earthly music. Is it so to you?

God is pleased today to put up before your eyes the white flag of mercy, calling you to come to Jesus and live. But remember, if you do not yield to it He will run up the red flag of threatening, and then the black flag of execution will not be far off! Perhaps some of you have been suffering under bodily disease—take that as a warning. When our vessels of war would stop a suspicious vessel, they fire a shot over her bow as a warning. If she does not haul to, perhaps they give another. And if no notice is taken of this, the gunners go to their business in real earnest, and woe to the offender! Your affliction is the Gospel’s warning gun. Pause awhile, I beseech you. Ask the Lord in mercy to look upon you that you may be saved!

As I think upon some of you here who are not saved, I feel something like the boy I read of yesterday in the newspapers. Last week there were two lads on the great rocks of Lundy Island, in the Bristol Channel, looking for seagull eggs. One of them went far down the cliff and lost his footing, and when his brother, hearing a faint voice, looked down, he saw him clinging to a jutting crag and striving in vain to find a place for his feet.

There stood the anxious brother, alarmed and paralyzed with dread, quite unable to help the younger one in so much peril below—who soon relaxed his hold and was dashed to pieces far beneath. I feel somewhat like that alarmed brother. Only there is this happy difference—I can hope for you, and bid you hope for yourselves! You are clinging now, perhaps, to some false hope and striving to find a rest where rest is not to be found. But the strong-winged Angel of the everlasting Gospel is just underneath you this morning, crying, “Drop now! Simply drop into My arms. I will take you and bear you aloft in safety.” That angel is the Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. You must be dashed to pieces forever unless you rest in Him! Cast yourself upon Him, I pray you, and then, as you are carried in safety far off from every fear, you will magnify the Grace of God and extol the glorious Gospel!

I must leave that point and observe that Paul recognized the Gospel as being the Gospel of God. Here arises another enquiry by which we may know whether we are saved or not. Has the Gospel been the Gospel of God to you, my Friends? It is easy to receive the Gospel as the Gospel of “my minister.” I am afraid there is a good deal of that sort of thing among us. We have great faith in our religious teachers, and very properly so, if we have received benefit from them.

But if the Gospel only comes to us as the Gospel of such-and-such a preacher, it will not save us! It must come distinctly and directly as God’s Gospel, and we must receive it as such. It is in solemn silence of the mind our privilege to hear the voice of God speaking to us and to receive the Truth of God in the love of it as coming with Divine authority directly from God. Remember that all religion which is not the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart will have to be unraveled, let it be woven ever so cunningly.

We may build, as our little children do, on the seashore, our sand houses, and we may pile them up very quickly, too. And we may be very pleased with them—but they will all come down as the tide of time advances! Only that which God the Holy Spirit builds upon the foundation of Christ’s finished work will stand the test of time and eternity. How is it with you? If the Spirit of Christ is not in you, you are dead.

If the Gospel, itself, should come to you in a sort of power, but only because of the pathos of the preacher, or the eloquent manner of his speech—it has not brought eternal life to you! If the Gospel is, indeed, the Gospel of God to us, it will exalt God in our estimation. The Father we shall love and adore, having chosen us to eternal life. The Son we shall love with warmest affection, having redeemed us with His precious blood. The Holy Spirit we shall constantly reverence, and we shall cherish Him as dwelling a welcome guest within these bodies of ours.

By this we may tell whether we have received the Truth of God, by its bringing us consciously into connection with God. Does God dwell in you, my Hearer? If not, you will not dwell where God is. You must know the Holy Spirit—not as an influence to be poured out as some pray—but as dwelling within you, resting in your heart. I put that as a very important question, but I will not pause over it, for I have to close our first head by noticing that the Gospel was to Paul the “Gospel of the blessed God.” I believe William Knibb used to read this passage, “The Gospel of the happy God,” and it was not a mistake—it is the very gist of the matter.

“The Gospel of the happy God.” Have you ever considered how happy

God must be? How supremely happy? No care, no sorrow can ever pass across His infinite mind! He is serenely blessed evermore. Now, when a man is miserable, and of a miserable turn of mind, he as naturally makes people miserable as a foul fountain pours out foul water. But when a good man is superlatively happy, he imparts happiness. A happy face attracts many of us, and a happy temperament, a quiet mind, a serene disposition—why, a man who has these—inevitably tries to make others happy!

And it is, I suppose, because God is infinitely happy that He delights in the happiness of His creatures. The fabled gods of the heathen were vexed with all sorts of ambition, longing, and craving which they could not gratify, or which, when gratified, only made them crave more. Consequently they are pictured as revengeful and cruel, delighting in the miseries of men. But our God is so perfectly blessed that He has no motive for causing needless sorrow to His creatures! He has all perfection within Himself, and, consequently He delights to make us happy.

How much satisfaction does God find in the happiness of creatures that are devoid of intellect? You may have seen, sometimes, when the sea is going down, a little fringe at the edge of the wave which looks like mist. But if you were to examine it carefully, you would find that there were countless multitudes of very tiny shrimp, all leaping up and casting themselves into all manner of forms of intense delight! Look again at the gnats, as you walk in your gardens in the summer’s evenings—how they dance up and down—these little mirthful beings are all exhibiting to us the perfect blessedness that God would have to be manifested by all His creatures!

He would have His people supremely blest. He would have every vessel of mercy full to the brim with the oil of joy. And the way to make us so is to give us the Gospel! The Gospel is sent, to use our Savior’s words, “that His joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full.” We enjoy Heaven upon earth as we sit at the feast of fat things on earth. Just imagine what will be our glory when the Gospel of the blessed God shall have turned out all our sin! When we shall swim in the Gospel as the fish swims in the sea! When the Gospel shall become our element in the next world! Oh, the happiness of the creatures that are full of the Gospel spirit before the Throne of God!

Dear Hearer, did the Gospel ever come to you in that shape? I am afraid that to most people the Gospel is a bondage because they do not know it in very deed. I am afraid that to many, Gospel emotion is a sort of spasm—they are satisfied with the Truth of God sometimes, but at other times, when they feel they must have a treat, they go into the world for it. Where you get your treats, there your heart is! Whatever it is that gives you the most happiness, that is the master of your spirit. The Christian feels that he can sing with old Mason*—*

*“I need not go abroad for joys,  
I have a feast at home.  
My sighs are tamed into songs,  
My heart has ceased to roam.  
Down from above the blessed Dove  
Is come into my breast,  
To witness God’s eternal love,  
And give my spirit rest.  
My God, I’ll praise You while I live,  
And praise You when I die;  
And praise You when I rise again,  
And to eternity.”*

The religion of the genuine Christian is calculated to impart perfect delight. The truly regenerated man desires to have more and more of it so that his soul may be baptized in heavenly joy. “The Gospel of the happy God,” also means the Gospel of the God whom we must bless in return. As being happy, He makes us happy. So we, being happy, desire to ascribe to Him all the glory of our happiness.

Now, is the Gospel to you, my dear young Friend over there, the Gospel of a God whom you bless with all your heart because He has sent it to you, and made you willing to receive it? If so, you are saved. But if now no emotions of sincere gratitude stir the depths of your soul, then the Gospel has been to you no more than a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

II. The Apostle says, “The glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which is committed to my trust.” DO YOU RECOGNIZE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY? Paul speaks not here of himself, alone. He might have said, “which is committed to the trust of every Believer in Christ.” The Gospel is a priceless treasure and the Believers are the bankers of it. It is committed to our trust as men commit business to their agents.

First, we are bound to believe it all. Take heed of receiving a divided and maimed Gospel! It has been said that “only half the truth is a lie” and so it is. Most of the ill reports which distress the world have truth at the foundation of them, but they become false through the exaggeration of one part and the omission of the next. It should be the duty of every enlightened Christian to labor to master the whole compass of Truth so far as possible.

I suppose none but the Infinite mind can know all the lengths and breadths of the Truth of God, but still we should not be warped by education, nor be kept from receiving it by prejudice. We should strive against all partiality. And it should be, whenever we open this Book, one of our prayers, “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.” We must pray to have a mind like molten metal, ready to be run into the mold of the Truth. To have a soul like the photographer’s sensitive plate, ready to receive the light-writing of God at once, so that His Truth may be there in its entirety.

We must plead with the Holy Spirit for Grace to be willing to give up the most cherished dogma, the most flesh-pleasing form of teaching when we find it to be contrary to Scripture. To sit at Jesus’ feet and learn of Him is the life-business of the Christian in this house of his pilgrimage. The Gospel is, in this sense, committed to our trust for we are to lay it up in our hearts. But someone demands, “How am I to know which is the Gospel?” You may know it by searching the Scriptures. “But one sect says this, and another sect says the reverse!”

What have you to do with the sects? Read the Book of God for yourself! “But some men do read it and arrive at one opinion, and some maintain the opposite, and thus they contradict themselves, and yet are equally right.” Who told you that? That is impossible! Men cannot be equally right when they contradict each other! There is a Truth of God and there is a falsehood. If yes is true, no is false. It may be true that good men have held different opinions. But are you responsible for what they may have held, or are you to gather that because they were good, personally, therefore everything they believed was true?

No! This Book is plain enough. It is no nose of wax that everybody may shape to what form he likes. There is something taught here plainly and positively, and if a man will but give his mind to it, by God’s Grace he may find it out. I do not believe that this Book is so dark and mysterious as some suppose. And even if it is, the Holy Spirit who wrote it still lives, and the Author always knows His own meaning—you have only to go to Him in prayer, and He will tell you what it means.

You will not become infallible! I trust you will not think yourself to be so, but you will learn doctrines which are infallibly true, and upon which you may put down your foot and say, “Now I know this, and am not to be duped out of it.” It is a grand thing to have the Truth of God burnt into you, as with a hot iron, so that there is no getting it out of you.

The priest, when he took away the Testament from the boy, thought he had done the work. “But,” said the boy, “Sir, what will you do with the 26 chapters which I learned by heart? You cannot take them away.” Yet memory might fail, and, as the lad grew into an old man, he might forget the 26 chapters. But suppose they changed his heart and made him a new creature in Christ—there would be no getting that away—even though Satan himself should attempt the task! Seek to carry out the sacred trust committed to you by believing it, and believing it all. Search the Word to find out what the Gospel is, and endeavor to receive it into your inmost heart that it may be in your heart’s core forever.

Next, as good stewards we must maintain the cause of Truth against all comers. “Never get into religious controversies,” says one. That is to say, being interpreted, be a Christian soldier but let your sword rust in its scabbard and sneak into Heaven like a coward! Such advice I cannot endorse! If God has called you by His Truth, maintain the Truth which has been the means of your salvation. We are not to be pugnacious—always contending for every notion of our own—but where we have learned the Truth of the Holy Spirit, we are not tamely to see that standard torn down which our fathers upheld at peril of their blood.

This is an age in which the Truth of God must be maintained zealously, vehemently, continually. Playing fast and loose as many do, believing this today and that tomorrow, is the sure mark of children of wrath. And having received the Truth, to hold fast to the very form of it, as Paul bids Timothy to do, is one of the duties of heirs of Heaven. Stand fast for Truth, and may God give the victory to the faithful. We must believe the Gospel and maintain it, for it is committed to our trust.

It seems to me, however, that the most of us may best fulfill our responsibility to the Gospel by adorning it in our lives, Men give jewels to those whom they love, and so, if we love the Gospel, let our virtues be the jewels which shall display our love. A servant girl may adorn the Gospel. She goes to a place of worship and perhaps her irreligious mistress may object to her going. I remember Mr. Jay telling a story of such a case, where the master and mistress had forbidden the girl to attend a Dissenting place of worship.

She pleaded very hard, and at last determined to leave the house. The master said to his wife, “Well, you see our servant is a very excellent servant. We never had such an industrious girl as she is. Everything in the house is kept so orderly, and she is so obedient, and so on. Now, she does not interfere with our consciences, it is a pity we should interfere with hers. Wherever she goes, it certainly does her no hurt—why not let her go?” In the next conversation the wife said, “I really think, Husband, that our servant gets so much good where she goes, that we had better go and hear for ourselves.” And they were soon members of the very same Church which they had thought so lightly of at the first!

Now we can each of us, in our station, do that. We are not all called to preach in these boxes called pulpits, but we may preach more conveniently and much more powerfully behind the counter or in the drawing room, or in the parlor, or in the field, or wherever else Providence may have placed us. Let us endeavor to make men mark what kind of Gospel we believe. Only a few weeks ago a missionary in China took his gun to go up one of the rivers of the interior to shoot wild ducks, and, as he went along in the boat he shot at some ducks, and down they fell.

Unfortunately they did not happen to be wild fowl, but tame ducks belonging to some of the neighbors. The owner was miles away but the boat was drawn up to the side of the river and the missionary went about, carefully endeavoring to find out the owner of the ducks, for he could not rest until he had paid for the damage he had ignorantly done. The owner was much surprised. He had been so accustomed to having people shoot his ducks and never saying a word about it that he could not understand the honesty of the man of God.

And he told others until crowds of Chinese gathered round and stared at the missionary as if he had dropped from the moon—a man so extremely honest as not to be willing to take away ducks when he had killed them! They listened to the Gospel with attention and observed that the teaching must be good which made people so conscientious as the missionary had been. I should not wonder but what that little incident did more for the Gospel than the preaching of twenty sermons might have done without it! So let it be with us! Let us so act in every position that we shall adorn the Gospel which is committed to our trust.

Lastly, it is committed to our trust, if we have received it, that we may spread it—spread it personally by telling it abroad. If more could preach the Gospel it would be well. We have in all our congregations young men who are hard at work—at this very moment I do not doubt but what we have a hundred preaching in the street—perhaps more. But I have sometimes regretted that so few of the wealthier men enter into such labor. We could wish to see the men of ten talents preaching—the men of large abilities consecrating themselves to Christ.

Many of our young members are more useful at literary institutions than in the Church. Other useful occupations are all very well in their way, but I wish we could get the strength of our men spent more in the preaching of the Gospel. The first business of a Christian is his Christianity. All the rest, his patriotism even, must be kept subservient to that, for Heaven is more his country than England is, and Jesus Christ is rather his King than any of the kings of earth. “Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

I would ask young men now present, who love the Lord, whether they really are doing for the cause of God what they ought to do. Whether they could not do something more by way of making manifest in every place the savor of Jesus Christ’s name. My Sisters, your voices are exceedingly sweet, but we like to hear them better anywhere than from a pulpit. But still you have your sphere—do you occupy it for Christ? The Christian woman’s first call is to serve Jesus in the family. Next to that to serve Christ in her neighborhood. Are you doing so? The “glorious Gospel of the blessed God” is as much committed to your trust, Christian woman, as if there were not another Christian under Heaven—how would it fare if it were so? If all other Christians died, would you have done by the Gospel what it might demand of you? All the zeal and industry of 10,000 others cannot touch your personal responsibility as a Christian.

I have to ask you, this morning, to help me to spread the glorious Gospel. Some years ago, having done my utmost to preach the Word with my own mouth, I found that running up and down throughout the country preaching 10 or 12 times a week, I was still able to do but very little. I thought if I found other tongues and set them talking, found other brains and set them thinking, I might, perhaps, do more for the cause of my blessed Master. One young man was thrown in my way who was educated for me by an esteemed brother for the Christian ministry. And when he was greatly owned of God as preacher, the desire to assist students grew within my heart,

The Pastor’s College, for which I ask your contributions this morning, has grown to be a power for good. We have had for some successive years between 80 and 90 Brothers in training for the ministry. The whole of the support for them is found by the gifts of God’s people which they voluntarily send, without being waited upon by any collector, or asked for annual subscriptions. I have nothing to depend upon but the Providence of God which directs the generosity of His people. Sometimes my funds run rather short, but never so short that I am really in need, for when the treasury is scantily furnished, we call the young men together and pray about it, and many a time we have had as distinct answers to prayer as though God had stretched his hand out of Heaven to give the needed money!

Some 5,000 pounds a year are spent in this way, which God always sends when it is needed. We have built several places of worship. We have formed and founded several fresh Churches. We have evangelized the darkest districts of London and the country—and our men are now to be found in Australia, on the rock of St. Helena, in Southern Africa, in America—and all quarters of the earth. God has been pleased to bless them and has given them souls for their hire, and we shall be glad if you feel moved to give towards their maintenance.

Before I dismiss you, I would like to press home to each one the question, “Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Has the Gospel become a glorious Gospel to you?” I do not know you as I know my own people, but when I look along my galleries I mourn over those who have been hearing the word 10 years and are the same as if they never heard it. I suppose there are some of you in the same case, and my esteemed brother, Mr. Tucker, must cast his eye around the gallery, and the area, and see many who have grown Gospel-hardened.

It is a horrible thing to think of! The same sun that melts wax hardens clay, and to some hearts the Gospel becomes the savor of death unto death. If nothing comes of this morning’s service but making everyone enquire how it is with his own soul. If it shall only constrain you to go to your solitary chamber and shut the door and pray, “O Lord, let me know this glorious Gospel! I have not understood it up till now, for it has not been glorious to me. Do make it so to me this day, that I may be saved,” my heart will be very glad if such shall be the case.

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I WAS BEFORE  
NO. 1574

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.” ***1Ti 1:13***.

I AM not going to dwell, at this time, upon the special items of the text as to what Paul was before his conversion because none of us have been exactly as he was. We have all gone astray like lost sheep, but each one of us has taken a distinct course from all the rest. You might have to describe your transgressions in very different words from those used by the Apostle because yours have been a different form of guilt from his. Paul said of himself that he, “was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.” Saul of Tarsus was a blasphemer. He does not say that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he uses a very strong word, though not too strong, and says that he was a blasphemer.

He was a down-right, thorough-going blasphemer who also caused others to blaspheme. From blasphemy, which is a sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to persecution, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated His people, too. He was also injurious, which I think Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser. That eminent critic says, “blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the Church and despising was his sin in his own heart.” He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ and, thereby, injured himself. He kicked against the pricks and by doing so injured his own conscience. Having sinned thus grievously, Paul makes a full confession of his guilt in order that he may magnify the Divine Grace which saved, even, the chief of sinners.

Note here, before we come to the special purpose we have in view, that godly men never think or speak lightly of their sins. When they know that they are forgiven, they repent of their iniquities even more heartily than before. They never infer the lightness of sin from the freeness of Grace, but quite the contrary—and you shall find it as one trait in the character of every true penitent that he is rather inclined to blacken himself than to whitewash his transgressions. He sometimes speaks of himself in terms which others think must be exaggerated, though to him and, indeed, to God, they are simply true.

You have probably read biographies of John Bunyan in which the biographer says that Bunyan labored under a morbid conscientiousness and accused himself of a degree of sin of which he was not guilty. Exactly so, in the view of the biographer, but not so in the view of John Bunyan, who, startled into sensitiveness of conscience, could not find words strong enough to express all his reprobation of himself. Job once said, “I abhor myself.” That is a very strong expression but, when he saw his own sin in the Presence of God, the man of whom the Lord said unto Satan, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God and eschews evil,” the man against whom the devil, himself, could not bring an accusation, yet says that when he saw God, the brightness of the Divine Holiness made him so conscious of his sin that he exclaimed, “Now my eye sees You, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Those who have seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin by the light of the Holy Spirit and who have been made truly penitent are the last persons to speak lightly of evil! They dwell upon their own criminality with many terms to set forth how greatly they have felt it. We will consider the case of Paul for just a minute or two because it is a type and pattern of the work of God’s Grace in other Believers. He tells us in the 16th verse of this chapter, “For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” He was a model convert, a typical instance of Divine long-suffering, a pattern and specimen of all who believe on Christ and all conversions are, to a large extent, similar to that which transformed the blaspheming, persecuting, despising Saul of Tarsus into the great Apostle of the Gentiles!

Now, notice when he is describing his own past life how he dwells upon it with painful minuteness. He is not speaking before God in private, as Job was in the words we have quoted, else I can conceive that he would paint his sin in still darker colors. But he is answering for himself before king Agrippa, touching the things of which he had been accused by the Jews and you will see that he puts his offense against Christ and His Church in as strong a light as he very well could. His enemies have no such accusation to bring against him as that which he voluntarily makes against himself! First, he says in the 10th verse of the 26th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which we read just now, “Many of the saints did I shut up in prison.”

Those whom he shut up in prison were saints. To imprison the guilty is no fault, but to maltreat and shut up holy men was, indeed, blameworthy. He confessed that they were saints, saintly persons, but he committed them to prison for that very reason, because they were Christians and, therefore, their saintly lives did not protect them from his malice, but made them so much the more objects of his cruel hatred. He says that he hunted the saints—and not merely a few of them, but, “Many of the saints did I shut up in prison.” He lays stress upon the word, “many”—not halfa-dozen here and there—but scores and hundreds suffered through him and his persecuting band. He crowded the prisons with the followers of Jesus Christ! “He that touches you touches the apple of His eye,” says the Lord of Hosts when addressing captive Zion.

One touch of a saint of God injuriously given will be painful to the Lord—how much more, then, when there are many such touches and when he whose hand has done the evil deed has to confess—“Many of the saints did I shut up in prison”? We may be quite sure that he did this because they were Christians, for the 9th verse puts it thus, “I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” It was Jesus of Nazareth he was aiming at, though his blows were directed against His followers. It was because the name of Jesus was named upon these people that they were put in prison!

Now, this is no small sin—to persecute holy men, to imprison many of them and to do so simply because they believed in Jesus Christ. The Apostle felt that this put exceeding bitterness into the gall of his transgression—that he had lifted up unholy hands against the members of Christ’s body and through them had wounded their ever-glorious Head. More than this, he did not merely put them in prison, but, he says, “Many of the saints did I shut up in prison.” Some persons in prison have had a measure of liberty, as Joseph had, but Saul took care that these Believers should be shut up—that they should have no liberty at all! He put them into the common jails, locked them up and made their feet fast in the stocks, causing them to suffer even as he and his companion, Silas, afterwards did in the prison at Philippi.

Continuing the summary of his evil against the servants of the Lord, he says, “I was not content with their imprisonment, but I was eager for their death. When they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. When the Sanhedrim wanted a vote I, young Saul, was there to give my maiden vote against Stephen or any other saint. If the chief priests wanted a knife to cut the Christians’ throats with, there was I ready to do the deed. If they needed one who would drag them away to prison and to death, there stood I, the eager messenger, only too glad if I might lay hands upon them, believing that I was, thereby, doing God service.”

“No,” he says, “that is not all. I often punished them in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme.” This, indeed, was a very horrible part of Saul’s sinfulness. To destroy their bodies was bad enough, but to destroy their souls if that were possible—to compel them to blaspheme, to speak evil of that name which they confessed to be their joy and their hope—surely that was the worst form that persecution could assume! He forced them under torture to renounce the Christ whom their hearts loved! As it were, he was not content to kill them, but he must damn them, if it were possible, too. “I compelled them to blaspheme.” This was a dreadful sin and Paul mentions it as such. He does not extenuate his crime, nor attempt to find excuses for his conduct.

And then he adds, once more, that he did all this wickedness with the greatest possible enthusiasm—“And being exceedingly mad against them,” like a raging madman in his fits, like a violent maniac who cannot be held in—seized with frenzy, tearing right and left, finding no rest unless he could be harrying and worrying the sheep like a bloody wolf, as he was to the sheep of Christ’s flock. “Being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” He scattered them far and wide and then sought to get authority that even when they were in exile they might not be beyond his reach!

Saul seems to have grown proficient in the science of persecution and to have become a very master in the cruel art of crushing the people of God. We do not learn this from James, or John, or any of the other Apostles. Who tells us of all this? Who makes out this long, black catalog of crimes of which the man who committed them might well be ashamed? Why, Paul himself! It is Paul himself that puts it so and I would that, in like manner, the worst character you could have, my Brother, might come from your own lips. “Let another man praise you and not your own mouth; a stranger and not your own lips.” But, when there is an accusation that must be made against you, be you the first to make it with tears of repentance before the living God!

I think I have thus, from the example of Paul before Agrippa, justified the expression with which I started—that true penitents do not seek to extenuate or diminish the sin which has been forgiven them, but they acknowledge how great it is and set it forth in all its enormity as it appears before their enlightened eyes. Now, I want you, dear Friends, who know the Lord, to follow me in a very simple way, rather by your emotions than by anything else. I want the text of my sermon to be, “I was.” The Apostle tells us what he was—what he was before conversion. Now, I want you to think what you were before the Grace of God met with you and changed you.

I do not know that I shall help you much to remember the details of your sin, for pretty near the last time I stood here, I did that when we spoke of Peter from the words—“When he thought thereon, he wept,” [Fountain of Repentant Tears—Sermon #2735, Volume 47—Read July 14, 1901—Preached October 24, 1880.] but I want you to see seven very profitable inferences which will arise out of an impartial retrospect of your life before conversion.

I. The first, I think, will be that IF WE THINK OF WHAT WE WERE, IT WILL EXCITE IN US ADORING GRATITUDE. Paul was full of gratitude, for he thanked Christ Jesus that He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry. He is so glad of the favor of God that when he comes to the 17th verse he must put down his pen while he sings, “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” If, then, you and I look back upon what we were before the Lord saved us, we, too, shall be full of adoring gratitude as we think of even the least of all the favors that He has bestowed upon us!

“I am not worthy,” said the Patriarch, Jacob, when he was returning to his country at the command of God—“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown unto Your servant.” And we can, each one, say the same. Is it not a wonderful thing that you who were—I will not say what—you know what you were and God knows! Isn’t it wonderful, I say, that you should be a teacher of others? That you should be permitted to stand up and speak of pardon bought with blood? That you should be allowed to talk of holiness though your lips used to speak of any other theme but that?

Isn’t it wonderful that you should be allowed to extol the Christ for whom you had no words of praise a little while ago, for whom, indeed, you had only words of contempt and scorn? Paul was astonished to think that he was put into the ministry! And when I look back upon my own life before I knew the Lord, I am amazed that I should ever stand here, seeing that for so long I refused my Lord’s love and put aside His favors and would have none of them! Ah, I did not know what would happen to me one day. Little did I think then that I should ever stand here to—

*“Tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior  
I have found.”*

But it does fill me with gratitude which makes me bow before God in thankful adoration to think that He should have looked on me and to know that, “unto me,” as well as unto Paul, “is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

I ask you, dear Friends, to remember this gratitude in the reception of every blessing. When you enjoy Church privileges; when you come to the Communion Table, think, “Here comes one to sit with the children of God who once was like a dog outside the house.” When you stand up and praise the Lord, think, “And I, too, am permitted to offer the sacrifice of praise—I, who once sang the praises of Bacchus or of Venus—rather than of Christ Jesus!” When you draw near to God in prayer and know that He hears you, too—when you have power in prayer and prevail with the Most High and come back with your hands full of blessings that have been obtained at the Throne of Grace, you may well say, “What shameful things these hands once did when I rendered my members instruments of unrighteousness—and now they are loaded down with the bounties of a gracious God!”

Oh, do bless His name! If you do not, the stones in the street will begin to cry out against some of you! Oh, if your heart does not leap at the very sound of the name of Jesus, surely you cannot possess a heart at all! Such a change, such a wondrous, matchless change has passed upon you that if you do not praise the Lord today and tomorrow and as long as you have any being, what shall be said of your ungrateful silence? “I was”—I was before—all that I ought not to have been, but Grace has changed me and unto the God of Grace be all the glory! Do not all of you who love the Lord unite with me in this utterance of adoring gratitude?

II. A second very blessed inference (we can only speak briefly upon each one) is that A SENSE OF WHAT WE WERE SHOULD SUSTAIN IN US VERY DEEP HUMILITY. It did so in the case of the Apostle Paul and I would refer you to his expression of it in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the 15th chapter and the 9th verse, where he says, “I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the church of God.” When He was compelled to glory in what he was through the Grace given to him, he said that he supposed he was not a whit behind the very chief Apostles, yet he here says of himself that he was not worthy to be called an Apostle because before his conversion he persecuted the saints of God!

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we have been a little while converted and have united with the Church of God and the Lord has given us a little work to do, we may be tempted to think, “Now, I am somebody! Really, I am not now quite the humble dependent that I used to be. I am getting to be of some service to my Lord and Master and I am of some importance in His Church.” Ah, that is the way many Christians get into sad mischief. “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.” You must always strive against that kind of spirit and one way to avoid it is to remember what you were in your unregenerate state. There are some who might say, “I am a minister of the Gospel, but I am not worthy to be called a minister because of the sins that I committed before my conversion. I am a member of the Church of Christ, but I am scarcely worthy to be called a member because I was a blasphemer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or profane, unchaste, or dishonest.”

Remember what you were and let your spiritual advancements never lead you to unspiritual pride and self-conceit for, “everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” I have heard of a good man in Germany who used to rescue poor, destitute boys from the streets and he always had them photographed in their rags and filth just as he found them. And then, years afterwards, when they were clothed and washed and educated and their characters began to develop, if they grew proud he would show them what they were and try to teach them what they would have likely been it had not been for his charity. If you are inclined to lift up your head and boast what a great man you are, now—just look at the likeness of what you were before the Lord made you a new creature in Christ Jesus!

Oh, who can tell what that likeness would have been but for the interpositions of Divine Grace? I think you would say what the Scotsman said to Rowland Hill when he called to see the good man in his study. He sat and looked at him. And Rowland Hill’s face, you know, if you have seen his portrait, is one to be remembered—there is a peculiar comic look about it. So the Scotsman said, in answer to the question, “What are you looking at?” “I have been studying the lines of your face.” “And what do you make out of them?” said Mr. Hill. “Why, that if the Grace of God had not made you a Christian, you would have been one of the worst fellows that ever lived.” “Ah!” said Mr. Hill, “you have hit the mark this time!”

I should not wonder, too, if some of us, when we look in the mirror, were to see somebody there that would have been a very deep-dyed sinner if it had not been for the change of heart which Sovereign Grace has worked. This ought to keep us very humble and very lowly before God. I invite you, Friends, to think this over and when you feel yourselves beginning to swell a little, let the bladder of your foolish and wicked pride be pricked with the needle of conscience as you remember what you used to be and you will be all the better for letting some of the gas escape! Come back as speedily as you can to your fine shape, for what are you, after all? If you are anything that is good, or right, or pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, you must still say, “By the Grace of God I am what I am.”—

*“All that I was, my sin, my guilt,  
My death, was all my own.  
All that I am, I owe to You,  
My gracious God, alone.  
The evil of my former state  
Was mine and only mine.  
The good in which I now rejoice*

***Is Thine and only Thine.”***  
Well, those are two of the inferences which result from looking back at what you were—the retrospect excites gratitude and sustains humility.

III. The next is this—THE REMEMBRANCE OF OUR FORMER CONDITION SHOULD RENEW IN US GENUINE REPENTANCE. When we look back upon what we used to be before the Lord met with us, it should breed in us a perpetual repentance. There are some who seem to think that we only repent of sin when we are first converted. Do not be deluded by any such false notion! When you leave off repenting, you have left off living! You are not living for God as you ought to do unless you daily repent. Remember that we are not saved by a single act of faith which terminates the moment we receive the assurance of the Divine forgiveness, but by a faith which continues as long as we live and, therefore, as long as we have any faith we must have repentance, too, for these are twin Graces—faith with a bright eye, like Rachel, who was beautiful and wellfavored—and repentance, tender-eyed, like Leah, but with a lovely eye for all that.

“Repentance,” says one, “why, I thought that was a bitter thing that was taken away when we believed!” No, it is a sweet thing—I could wish to repent in Heaven, though I suppose I shall not. We cannot carry the tear of penitence in our eyes into Heaven—it will be the only thing we might regret to leave behind. Surely we shall be sorry, even there, for having grieved our God. Even there, I think, we shall repent, but certainly as long as we are here we must daily repent of sin! Yes, and repent of the sin that is forgiven—repent more because it is forgiven than we did when we had any doubts about its being pardoned—

*“My sins, my sins, my Savior!  
How sad on You they fall,  
Seen through Your gentle patience,  
I tenfold feel them all.  
I know they are forgiven,  
But still their pain to me*

***Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”***

Smite on your breasts while you think that it was necessary that Christ should die that you might be delivered from sin and its penalty and power—and as your love increases, let your sorrow abound that such a Lord should have needed to be crucified for you.

Oh, Sin, as Christ becomes more lovely, you become more hateful and as our soul learns more of the beauty of holiness, it perceives more of your ugliness and so continually loathes you more and more! If you want to draw up the sluices of repentance, sit down and remember what you were by nature and would have remained if Grace had not intervened! So, then, it shall be good for you to say, “I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious,” or to use any other expression that shall accurately describe you, if it leads you, like Peter, to go out and weep bitterly true tears of repentance.

IV. And now, fourthly, (we have but a word on each inference, you see)—THE RETROSPECT OF OUR PAST LIVES SHOULD KINDLE IN US FERVENT LOVE to the Lord who has redeemed us. You remember Christ went into the house of one of the Pharisees who had a measure of respect for Him—this was Simon who desired Him to eat with him. But when He entered in, Simon treated Him as a common guest and offered Him none of the delicate attentions which men give to choice friends or to superiors. Christ took no note of this, nor had He need to do so, for there was another who stole into that room who did for Him all that Simon ought to have done and more than Simon could have done!

“A woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet behind Him weeping.” She stood behind the couch upon which He was reclining and let her tears fall down upon His blessed flesh till she had washed His feet with them and then, unbraiding the luxurious tresses of her hair, she wiped those holy feet with them! Her love, her humility, her adoration and her penitence were all mingling as she kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment which she had brought. Our Lord explained why this woman had performed this extraordinary action. He said it was because she had been forgiven much.

Now, rest assured that there is no exception to this rule—that those who are conscious of having had much forgiven are those who will love Christ much! I do not say—I almost wish I could—that love is always in proportion to the amount of sin forgiven, but I do say that it is in proportion to the consciousness of sin forgiven. A man may be a less sinner than another, but he may be more conscious of his sin and he will be the man who will love Christ more. Oh, do not forget what you were, lest you should become unmindful of your obligation to Jesus! You are saints, now, but you were not always so. You can talk to others of Christ, now, but you could not once have done it. You can wrestle with the Angel of God in prayer and prevail, now, but once you were more familiar with the devil than you were with the Angel!

At this moment your heart bears witness to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—it is not long ago that the Prince of the power of the air worked within you and the Holy Spirit was not there at all! I beseech you, therefore, forget not this, lest you forget to love Him who has worked this wondrous change in you! I think there is nothing better than to retain a vivid sense of conversion in order to retain a vivid sense of love. Do not be afraid of loving Christ too much. I see the cold carping criticism of this age objects to any expressions of love to Christ which we use in our hymns because it says that they are sensuous. My only answer to such talk is— God give us more of such blessed sensuousness!

I think that instead of diminishing these utterances it will be a token of growth in Grace when they are more abundant—not if they become so common as to be hypocritical. Then they would be sickening, but as long as they are true and honest, I, for one, would say to you who love the Lord, go on and sing*—*

*“Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on His gentle breast.”*

Go on and sing—  
Hesitate not to say*—  
“You, dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,  
We love to hear of You”*

*“Jesus, I love Your charming name, ‘Tis music to my ear.”*

and if it shall please you and the Spirit shall move you, even say, like the spouse in the song, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine.” The starveling religion of the present day, not content with tearing away the doctrinal flesh from the spiritual body, is now seeking to drag out the very heart of religion and to reduce Christian experience to nothing but a chilly doubting of everything! Let this be far from you! Believe something and love something, for to believe is to live, and to love is to be in health.

Oh for more love arising out of a deep, intense sense of what we once were and of the change which Christ has worked in us! “But,” says one, “I do not know that any great change has been worked in me.” No and there are some who tell us that we do not need any. There are certain Paedobaptists preaching, nowadays, that most children of pious parents do not need conversion. We have long had the Church of England teaching us baptismal regeneration—now we have some Nonconformists trying to persuade us that no regeneration at all is needed! This a new kind of doctrine that I know nothing of and that the Word of God knows nothing of and it will not do for us! It will eat out the very life of Christianity if it is believed.

Pious ancestors could not save one of you—even if your fathers and mothers and grandfathers and grandmothers and great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers and great-great-great-great-grandfathers and greatgreat-great-great-grandmothers—as far back as ever you like—had been all saints, nevertheless, their faith could not be of any use to you! You must be born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” “You must be born again” is as true of one child as of another—as true of you as it was of me and as true of me as of the thief confined in prison today.

But some of us have been changed—we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. It has been a real work of Divine Grace—the turning of us upside down, the reversing of the course of Nature, a turning of night into day, a turning of the powers of our spirit from the dominion of Satan to the dominion of Christ—and we must and will, therefore, love Him who has worked in us such a wondrous transformation!

V. Well now, fifthly, REMEMBERING WHAT WE WERE, ARDENT ZEAL SHOULD BE AWAKENED IN US. Look at Paul. He says, “I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious.” What then? Why, now that he has become a follower of Christ, he cannot do too much! He put many saints in prison—now he goes into many prisons, himself. He hunted them even to strange cities—and now he goes into all manner of strange cities, himself. He dragged them before tribunals and now he, himself goes and stands before Roman proconsuls and before the Roman emperor, himself! Paul can never do too much for Christ because he had done so much for Satan!  
I remember one who lived four or five miles away from a place of worship who used to say, “You old legs, it is no use being tired, for you have got to carry me. You used to take me to the place of amusement when I served the devil and you shall carry me, now, to the House of God that I may worship and serve Him.” When sometimes he had an uneasy seat, he used to say, “It is no use grumbling, old bones, you will have to sit here, or else you will have to stand. Years ago you put up with all kinds of inconveniences when I went to the theater, or some other evil place when I served Satan—and you must now be content to do the same now for a better Master and a nobler service.”

I think some of us might take a lesson from that old man and say to ourselves, “Come, Covetousness, you are not going to hinder me from serving the Lord. I used to be liberal to the devil and I do not intend, now, to be stingy with God.” If ever I am tempted in that fashion, I will give twice as much as I had thought of doing, so as to spite the devil, for he shall not have his way with me! Some, when they serve Satan, go as if they rode a racehorse and whip and spur to get in first. How they will destroy body and soul in the service of the Evil One! But if a Christian gets a little lively they say, “Oh, dear me, dear me, he is excited! He is fanatical! He has grown enthusiastic!”

Why should he not be in earnest? The devil’s servants are enthusiastic and why should not the servants of Christ be the same? Black Prince, Black Prince, are you served by heroes and shall Christ be served by dolts? Oh, let it not be so, my Brothers and Sisters! Surely if anything can wake up all the powers of our nature; if anything can make a lame man leap as a hart; if anything can make a palpitating, trembling heart to be bold and brave for Christ, it should be the love which Christ has shown in looking upon such as we were and changing us by His Grace! “Ah, but you must not do too much,” says one. Did you ever know anybody who did?

If anybody ever does too much for Christ, let us rail off a piece in the cemetery that we may bury him in it. That grave will never be needed—it will be empty till Christ comes! “Ah, but you may have too many irons in the fire.” It depends upon the size of the fire! Get your fire well hot—I mean get your heart well hot and your nature in a blaze—then put all the irons you can ever get, into it! Keep them all at a white heat if possible. Blow away and let the flames be very vehement. Oh, to live for God a life of ecstatic zeal even if it were only for a short space of time! It were better than to have a hundred years of bare existence in which one went crawling along like a snail, leaving slime behind and nothing else. It were better far than driveling out, as oftentimes we do—

*“Our souls can neither fly nor go  
To reach eternal joys.”*

The love of Christ to us, then, suggests great zeal in His service. VI. Now, sixthly, I am sure that another inference that should be drawn from it is this—If we remember what we were and how Divine Grace has changed us, IT OUGHT TO MAKE US VERY HOPEFUL ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE. Paul was, for he says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.” Well, Friend, are you saved? Then anybody can be! You never ought to despair of the salvation of anyone, for you know yourself and feel yourself to have been the most undeserving of men—and yet God’s Grace has made you love Him. Well, then, that Grace can light on anybody. Already it has fallen on the most unlikely spot possible!

Now, from this moment on, never indulge the idea that it is useless to attempt to benefit any of your fellow men. I remember—indeed, I have often met with persons who tell me of being asked, “Why did you not ask So-and-So to attend a place of worship?” “Ask him? Oh, I never thought of him.” “Why not?” “I did not think it was any use.” It is a very amazing thing that those are the kind of people who, if you get them to hear the Word of God, are generally converted—the people you think it is no use to bring! Men who have been accustomed to speak very disrespectfully of religious things, when once brought under the sound of the Truth of God, are often the first to receive a blessing! Those are the kind of fellows to seek, for there is some hope of reaching men who are in such need of the Gospel we have to proclaim. You know there is virgin soil there, so it is the very place to sow the good Seed of the kingdom.

There is good fishing in a pond that never was fished before and here is a man who, at any rate, is not Gospel-hardened—he has not got used to the sound of the Word so as to take no notice of anything that is said. Bring him in! He is the very man we want—bring him in! “But he is a swearer.” Well, but if you were a swearer before your conversion, you ought never to say anything about that. “Oh, but he is a very hardened man.” Yes, but if you were converted, notwithstanding what you were, you ought never to make that objection against anyone. “Oh, but he is such a low-bred man.” Well, there are plenty of us who cannot boast much about our aristocratic descent! “Oh, but,” says one, “he is such a proud man, such a haughty man.” Or, “He is a rich man. He is a purse-proud man.” Yes, but there are others like he who have been brought in and while that man has sinned in one way, you have sinned in another—and if the Grace of God met your six, it can meet his half-dozen!

Depend upon it, God meant us to be hopeful about other people when He saved us. See that man coming out of the hospital? He has had pretty nearly all the diseases you ever heard of and yet he has been cured. He is not the man to say, “It is no use going in there. You will get no good by putting yourself under the treatment of that doctor.” On the contrary, whenever he meets with anybody who is suffering, he says, “You go and try the physician that healed me. If you can get a bed under his care; if you can come under his notice, you are almost certain to get cured—your maladies cannot be worse than mine and he met my case exactly and he can meet yours.” He is the man who will advertise Christ and will proclaim His fame the whole world over—who has tasted that He is gracious and has proven, in his own case, the converting power of the Holy Spirit!

Oh, I pray you, dear Friend, despair of nobody! You who go with your tracts, go into the worst houses! You who talk in the workhouses to those who are, perhaps, as gladly gone as any—who find them dying in the infirmary and rejecting the Word of God as you speak it, yet keep on! Keep on! “Never say die” concerning anyone! Since the Lord has saved you, the Grace of God can save anybody, however far he may have sunk in sin! It can reach even to the very vilest of the sons of men.

VII. The last inference is that WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US SHOULD CONFIRM OUR CONFIDENCE FOR OURSELVES—our confidence, not in ourselves, but in God who will perfect that which He has begun in us. There is not half as much Grace necessary to bring you to Heaven if you are a Believer as you have had, already, to bring you where you are! You have got to be perfected, but remember that it was the very first step that had the difficulty in it. It always reminds me of the legend of St. Denis who picked up his head after it was cut off and walked, I think, 40 leagues with it. But a wit said that there was no trouble about walking 40 leagues—the difficulty all lay in the first step!

So it did and so all the difficulty of the walk of faith lies in the first step—that first coming of a dead heart to life! That first bringing of a reprobate soul—a carnal mind that is enmity against God—into friendship with God. Well, that has been done! That first great work has been worked in you by God the Holy Spirit and now you can say with the Apostle, “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Do you think the Lord ever converts a man with a view of showing him His Light that he may go back, again, into the thick darkness, forever? Does He drop a spark of heavenly light into our souls that it may go out, never to be rekindled? Does He come and teach us to eat heavenly bread and drink the Water of Life and then leave us to starve or die of thirst? Does He make us members of Christ’s body and then allow us to rot and decay? Has He brought us thus far to put us to shame? Has He given me a heart that cries after Him and pines for Him! Has He given me a sighing after perfection, an inward hunger after everything that is holy and true and does He mean, after all, to desert me? It cannot be—

*“His love in time past forbids me to think  
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink.  
That gracious conversion I have in review, Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”*

So let us go on our way rejoicing that it shall be even so with each one of us. Amen.  
**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON —Acts 26;** *1Ti 1:11-17***.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—30, 233, 235.

END OF VOLUME 26

Adapted from**The C. H. Spurgeon Collection**, Ages Software, 1.800.297.430  
Sermon #1345 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Ti 1.15

FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT?  
NO. 1345

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 25, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”** *Mar 2:17***.**

**“Christ died for the ungodly.”***Rom 5:6***.**

**“God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”***Rom 5:8***.**

**“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”** *1Ti 1:15***.**

LAST Thursday evening, with considerable difficulty, I stood here to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I handled one of the simplest imaginable texts, full of nothing but the very plainest elements of the Gospel. Within a very few minutes I had a harvest for the sermon. The congregation was slender, for you know how ill a night it was, and how little you expected that your pastor would be able to preach, but three souls came forward uninvited to acknowledge that they had found peace with God. How many more there were I do not know, but these three sought out the Brethren and bore a good and hearty confession to the blessed fact that, for the first time in their lives they, had understood the plan of salvation.

Now, it seemed to me that if a plain Gospel theme was so promptly profitable, I had better keep to the same subject. If a farmer finds that a certain seed has paid him so well that he never had a better crop, then he will keep to that seed and sow more of it. Those processes of farming which have been successful should be persevered in and even used upon a larger scale. So this morning I shall just preach the A B C of the Gospel, the first rudiments of the art of salvation. And I thank God this will be no new thing to me. May God the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, grant us a reward this morning after the same proportion as last Thursday and, if so, our heart will be exceedingly glad.

Out of a very great number I have selected the four texts which I have just read to set forth the Truth of God that the mission of our Lord related to sinners. What did Christ come into the world for? For whom did He come? These are questions of the greatest importance and they are clearly answered in Scripture. When the children of Israel first found manna outside the camp, they said to one another, “Manna?” or, “what is it?” for they knew not what it was. There it lay, a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost upon the ground. No doubt they looked at it and rubbed it in their hands and smelled it. And how glad they were when Moses said,

“This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.” It was not long before they put the good news to the test, for each man gathered his arms full and took it home and prepared it according to his liking.

Now, concerning the Gospel, there are many who might call out, “Manna?” for they know not what it is. Very frequently, too, they make a mistake as to its bearings and its objectives, dreaming that it is a kind of improved Law, or an easier system of salvation by works and, therefore they err, also, in their idea of the persons for whom it is designed. They imagine that surely the blessings of salvation must be meant for deserving persons and Christ must be the Redeemer of the meritorious! On the principle of, “good for the good,” they infer that Grace is for the excellent and Christ for the virtuous. Therefore it is a most useful thing for us continually to be reminding men what the Gospel is and for whom it is sent into the world, for, though the great mass of you know full well and do not need to be told, yet there are multitudes around us who persist in grave mistakes and need to be instructed over and over again in the very simplest of the Doctrines of Grace.

There is less need for laborious explanations of profound mysteries than for simple explanations of plain Truths of God. Many men need only a simple latchkey to lift the latch and open the door of faith—and such a key, I hope God’s infinite mercy may put into their hands this morning! Our business is to show that the Gospel is intended for sinners—that it has an eye to guilty persons—that it is not sent into the world as a reward for the good and for the excellent or for those who think they have any measure of fitness or preparation for the Divine favor. We need to show that it is intended for law breakers, for the undeserving, for the ungodly, for those who have gone astray like lost sheep, or left their father’s house like the prodigal.

Christ died to save SINNERS and He justifies the ungodly. This Truth of God is plain enough in the Word, but since the human heart kicks against it, we will the more earnestly insist upon it.

I. First, EVEN A SUPERFICIAL GLANCE AT OUR LORD’S MISSION SUFFICES TO SHOW THAT HIS WORK WAS FOR THE SINFUL. For, dear Brothers and Sisters, the descent of the Son of God into this world as a Savior implied that men needed to be delivered from a great evil by a Divine hand! The coming of a Savior who would, by His death, provide pardon for human sin, supposed men to be greatly guilty and to be incapable of procuring pardon by any works of their own. You would never have seen a Savior if there had not been the Fall. Eden’s withering was a necessary preface to Gethsemane’s groaning.

You would never have heard of a Cross and a bleeding Savior on it if you had not first heard of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and of a disobedient hand which plucked the forbidden fruit. If the mission of our Lord did not refer to the guilty, it was an altogether unnecessary errand as far as we can see. What justifies the Incarnation except man’s ruin? What explains our Lord’s suffering life but man’s guilt? Above all, what explains His death and the cloud under which He died but human sin? “All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”—that is the answer to an otherwise unanswerable riddle. If we give a glance at the Covenant under which our Lord came, we soon perceive that its bearing is towards guilty men.

The blessing of the Covenant of Works has to do with men who are innocent. And to them it promises great blessings. If there had been salvation by works, it would have been by the Law, for the Law is upright and just and good. But the new Covenant evidently deals with sinners, for it does not speak of the reward of merit, but it freely promises, “ I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” If there had been no sins and iniquities, and no unrighteousness, then there had been no need of the Covenant of Grace of which Christ is the Messenger and the Ambassador.

The slightest glimpse at our Lord’s official Character as the Adam of a new Covenant should suffice to convince us that His errand is to guilty men. Moses comes to show how the holy should behave, but Jesus comes to reveal how the unholy may be cleansed! Whenever we hear the mission of Christ spoken of, it is described as one of mercy and of Grace. In the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, it is always the mercy of God that is extolled—according to His mercy He saved us. He, for Christ’s sake, according to His abundant mercy, forgives us our trespasses. “The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ.” “The Grace of God, and the gift by Grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, has abounded unto many.”

The Apostle Paul, who most fully expounds the Gospel, makes Grace to be the one word upon which he rings the changes—“Where sin abounded Grace did much more abound.” “By Grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.” But, Brothers and Sisters, mercy implies sinfulness—there can be no mercy extended to the just, for Justice, itself, secures every good thing to them. Grace, too, can only be for offenders. What Grace is needed by those who have kept the Law and deserved well at Jehovah’s hands? To them eternal life would be a matter of debt, a fairly earned reward! But when you talk of Grace, you at once shut out merit and introduce another principle. Mercy can only be exercised where there is sin and Grace cannot be manifested except to the undeserving.

This is plain enough, and yet the whole tenor of some men’s religion is based on another theory. The fact is, when we begin to study the Gospel of the Grace of God we see that it turns its face always towards sin, even as a physician looks towards disease, or as charity looks towards distress. The Gospel issues its invitations, but what are the invitations? Are they not addressed to those who are burdened with a load of sin and laboring to escape from its consequences? It invites every creature because every creature has its needs, but it especially says, “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” It invites the man who has no money, or, in other words, no merit. It calls to those who are needy, thirsty, poor, naked—and all these are but used as figures of states produced by sin!

The very gifts of the Gospel imply sin—life is for the dead, sight is for the blind, liberty is for the captives, cleansing is for the filthy, absolution is for the sinful. No Gospel blessing is proposed as a reward and no invitation is issued to those who claim the blessings of Grace as a matter of right—men are invited to come and receive them freely according to the Grace of God. And what are the commands of the Gospel? Repent. But who repents unless a sinner? Believe. But believing is not according to the Law—the Law speaks only of doing. Believing has to do with sinners and with the method of salvation by Grace. The Gospel representations of itself usually look sinner-ward. The great king who makes a feast finds not a guest to sit at the table among those who were naturally expected to come—so from the highways and hedges men are compelled to come in.

If the Gospel describes itself as a feast it is a great feast for the blind, the crippled and the lame. If it describes itself as a fountain, it is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Everywhere, in all that it does and says and provides to men, the Gospel proves itself to be the sinner’s friend. The motto of its Founder and Lord still is, “this Man receives sinners.” The Gospel is an hospital for the sick—none but the guilty will ever accept its benefits. It is medicine for the diseased—the whole and the selfrighteous will never relish its saving draughts. Those who imagine that they have some excellence before God will never care to be saved by Sovereign Grace. The Gospel, I say, looks sinner-ward. That way, and that way only, does it cast its blessings.

And Brothers and Sisters, you know that the Gospel has always found its greatest trophies among the most sinful. It enlists its best soldiers not only from among the guilty but from among the most guilty. “Simon,” said our Lord, “I have something to say unto you—A certain man had two debtors, the one owed him 500 pence and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” The Gospel goes upon the principle that he who has had much forgiven loves much. And so its gracious Lord delights to seek out the most guilty and to manifest Himself to them with abundant and overflowing love, saying “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions.”

Among great transgressors it finds its warmest lovers. When once it has saved them, it receives from them the heartiest welcome and in them it obtains the most enthusiastic adherents. Great sinners, when saved, crown free Grace with its most illustrious diadems. Well may we be sure that it has its eye towards sinners since it is among the chief of sinners that it finds its highest glory. There is one other reflection which, also, lies very near the surface, namely, that if the Gospel does not look towards sinners, to whom else could it look? There seems to have been a revival, lately, of the old quibbling spirit, so that proud Pharisees constantly tell us that the preaching of justification by faith is overdone and that we are leading people to think less of morality by preaching up the Grace of God.

This often refuted objection is coming forth again because Protestantism is losing its sap and soul. The very force and backbone of the Reformers’ teaching was that great Doctrine of Grace, that salvation is not of works but of the Grace of God, alone! And because men are getting away from the Reformation and drifting into Romanism, they are casting into the background this grand Truth of God of Justification by Faith, alone, and pretending to be afraid of it. Most men are knaves and fools upon this matter! I put to all such, this one question—To whom, Sirs, would the Gospel look, if not towards sinners, for what are you but sinners? You who talk about morality being injured, about holiness being ignored— what have you to do with either?

The people who usually urge these objections, as a rule, had better be quiet on such topics. In general these fierce defenders of morality and holiness are exceedingly lax, while believers in the Grace of God are frequently charged with Puritanism and rigidity. He who stands out most to speak against the Doctrines of Grace is frequently the man or woman who needs Grace most, while the very man who cries down good works as a ground of trust is just the person whose life is carefully directed by the statutes of the Lord! Know you, O men, that there lives not on the face of the earth a man upon whom God can look with pleasure if He considers that man on the ground of His Law. “They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one.”

Not one heart is sound and right before God by nature! Not one life is pure and clean when the Lord comes to examine it with His all-searching eyes! We are all shut up in the same prison as the guilty—if not alike guilty, yet guilty according to the proportion of our light and knowledge— and each one justly condemned! We have all erred in heart and have not loved the Lord! To whom, then, could the Gospel look if it did not cast its eyes sinner-ward? For whom else could the Savior have died? Who is there in the world for whom the benefits of Grace could be designed?

II. Secondly, THE MORE CLOSELY WE LOOK, THE MORE CLEAR THIS FACT BECOMES, for, Brothers and Sisters, the work of salvation was certainly not performed for any of us, who are saved, on account of any goodness in us! If there is any goodness in us, it was put there by the Grace of God and it certainly was not there when first the heart of Jehovah’s love began to move towards us.

If you take the first sign of salvation that was actually visible on earth, namely, the coming of Christ, we are told, concerning it, that, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” So that our redemption, my Brothers and Sisters, was effected before we were born! This was the fruit of the Father’s great love, “wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

There was nothing in us going before which could have merited that redemption, indeed the very idea of meriting the death of Jesus is absurd and blasphemous! Yes, and when we were living in sin and loving it, there were preparations made for our salvation—Divine love was busy on our behalf when we were busy in rebellion. The Gospel was brought near to us. Earnest hearts were set praying for us. The text was written which would convert us and, as I have already said, the blood was spilt which cleanses us and the Spirit of God was given who should renew us. All this

was done while as yet we had no breathings of soul after God!

Is not that a wonderful passage in Ezekiel where the Lord passed by and saw the helpless infant cast out in the open field while it was yet unswaddled and unwashed and was foul and polluted in its own blood? He says that it was a time of love and yet it was a time of pollution and loathing. He did not love the chosen baby because it was well-washed and fitly clad—He loved it when it was foul and naked. Let every believing heart admire the freeness and compassion of Divine love—

*“He saw me ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved me, notwithstanding all.  
He saved me from my lost estate,  
His loving kindness, oh, how great!”*

When your heart was hard. When your neck was obstinate. When you would not repent nor yield to Him but rebelled yet more and more, He loved you—even you—with supreme affection!

Why such Grace? Why, indeed, but because His Nature is full of goodness and He delights in mercy? Is not mercy seen to be evidently extended towards the sinful and not exerted because of some goodness moving thereto? Look a little closer, still. What did our Lord come into the world to do? Here is the answer. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” He came that He might be a Sin-Bearer—and do you think He came to bear only the little, trifling sins of the best sort of men, if such sins there are? Do you suppose that He is a little Savior who came to save us from little offenses?

Beloved, it is Jehovah’s darling Son that comes to earth and bears the load of sin, a load which, when He bears it, He finds to be no fictitious burden, for it forces from Him bloody sweat! So heavy is that load that He bows His head to the grave and even unto death beneath it. That stupendous load which lay on Christ was the heap of our sins—and, therefore, as we look into the subject, we perceive that the Gospel must have to do with sinners. No sin? Then the Cross is a mistake! No sin? Then the “Lama Sabachthani” was a just complaint against unnecessary cruelty!

No sin? Then, O Redeemer, what are those glories which we have so eagerly ascribed to You? How can You put away sin which does not exist? The existence of great sin is implied in the coming of Christ and that coming was occasioned and rendered necessary by SIN, against which Jesus comes as our Deliverer! He declares that He has opened a fountain, filled with the blood of His own veins. But what for? A cleansing fountain implies filth. It must be, Sinner, that somewhere or other there are filthy people, or else there had not been such an amazing fountain as this, filled from the heart of Christ! If you are guilty, you are one who needs the fountain, and it is opened for you! Come with all your sin and foulness about you and wash this morning, and be clean!—

*“‘Twas for sinners that He suffered  
Agonies unspeakable!  
Can you doubt you are a sinner?  
If you can—then hope farewell.  
But, believing what is written—  
‘All are guilty’—‘dead in sin,’  
Looking to the Crucified One  
Hope shall rise your soul within.”*

Brothers and Sisters, all the gifts which Jesus Christ came to give, or at least most of them, imply that there is sin! What is His first gift but pardon? How can He pardon a man who has not transgressed? With all reverence do I speak—there can be no such thing as pardon where there is no offense committed. Propitiation for sin and blotting out of iniquity both require that there must be sin to be blotted out, or what is there real about them? Christ comes to bring justification and this shows that there must be a lack of natural holiness in men, for if not, they would be justified by themselves and by their own works. And why all this outcry about justification by the righteousness of the Son of God if men are already justified by a righteousness of their own? Those two blessings, and others of the same kind, are clearly applicable only to sinful men. To no other men can they be of any use.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came girded, also, with Divine power. He says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.” To what end was He girded with Divine power unless it was because sin had taken all power and strength from man, and man was in a condition out of which he could not be lifted except by the energy of the eternal Spirit? And what does this imply but that Christ’s errand bears upon those who, through sin, are without strength and without merit before God? The Holy Spirit is given because man’s spirit has failed—because sin has taken the life out of man and made him dead in trespasses and sins—therefore the Holy Spirit comes to quicken him into newness of life, and that Spirit comes by Jesus Christ. Therefore the errand of Jesus Christ is manifestly to the guilty.

I will not omit to say that the great deeds of our Lord, if you look at them carefully, all bear upon sinners. Jesus lives—it is that He may seek and save that which is lost. Jesus dies—it is that He may make a propitiation for the sins of guilty men. Jesus rises—He rises again for our justification and, as I have shown, we would not need justification unless we had been naturally guilty. Jesus ascends on high and He receives gifts for men—but note that special word—“Yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God may dwell among them.” Jesus lives in Heaven, but He lives there to intercede. “Therefore He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

So take whatever part of His glorious achievements you please and you will find that there is a distinct bearing towards those who are immersed in guilt. And Beloved, all the gifts and blessings that Jesus Christ has brought to us derive much of their radiance from their bearing upon sinners. It is in Christ Jesus that we are elect and, to my mind, the glory of electing love lies in this—that it pitched upon such undeserving objects. How had there been any election had it been according to merit? Then men would have taken rank by right according to their own deeds! But election’s glories are brilliant with Grace and Grace always has for its foil and background the unworthiness of the objects towards whom it is manifested. The election of God is not according to our works, but it is a gracious election of sinners! Adore and wonder!

Turn to effectual calling and see how delightful it is to view that calling as a calling from among the dead, as a calling of the things that are not as though they were, as a calling of condemned ones into forgiveness and favor! Turn next to adoption. What is the glory of adoption, but that God has adopted those who were strangers and rebels to make them His children? What is the peculiar beauty of regeneration but that He has been able to raise up children, from these stones, unto Abraham? What is the beauty of sanctification, but that He has taken such unholy creatures as we are to make us kings and priests unto God and to sanctify us wholly— spirit, soul, and body?

To my mind it is the glory of Heaven to think that yonder white-robed choristers were once foully deified—those happy worshippers were once rebels against God! It is a happy sight to see the unfallen angels who have kept their first estate perfectly pure and forever praising God. But the vision of fallen men divinely restored is more full of the Glory of God! Lift, as they may, their joyful voices in perpetual chorales, the angels can never reach the special sweetness of that song—“We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” They cannot experimentally enter into that Truth of God which is of Jehovah’s name its crowning glory—“You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.”

Thus I have abundantly shown that the further we look, the more clear it is that the Gospel is aimed at sinners and especially intended for their benefit.

III. Now, thirdly, it is evident that IT IS OUR WISDOM TO ACCEPT THE SITUATION. I know that, to many, this is a very unpalatable doctrine. Well, Friend, you had better have your palate altered, for you will never be able to alter the doctrine! It is the Truth of the everlasting God and cannot be changed. The very best thing you can do, since the Gospel looks towards sinners, is to get where the Gospel looks—and I can recommend this to you, not merely on the ground of policy, but on the ground of honesty—because you will be only in your right place when you get there.

I think I hear you raising objections. “I do not admire this system. Am I to be saved in the same way as the dying thief?” Precisely so, Sir, unless there should happen to be even more Grace shown towards you than to him. “But you do not mean to assert that in the matter of salvation I am to be put on a level with the woman that was a sinner? I have been pure and chaste and am I to owe my salvation just as much to the absolute mercy of God as she did?” Yes, Sir, I do say that, exactly as it stands. There is but one principle upon which the Lord saves men and it is that of pure Grace. I want you to understand this.

Even if it grinds like grit between your teeth and makes you angry, I shall not regret it so long as you know what I mean, for the Truth of God may yet find entrance into your soul and you may yet bow before its power. Oh, you children of godly parents, you young people of excellent morals and delicate consciences, to you I speak, even to you! Rejoice in your privileges, but do not boast in them, for you, too, have sinned! You have sinned against light and knowledge. You know you have! If you have not plunged into the grosser sins in act and deed, yet in desire and in imagination you have gone far enough astray—and in many things you have offended grievously against God. If, with these considerations before you, you take your place as a sinner, you will not be disgraced but be merely standing where you certainly are!

And then, remember, if you get the blessing this way, you will have obtained it in the safest possible way. Suppose there are a number of guest chambers and I have my seat in one of the best of them. I may have no right to be there. I am eating and drinking of what is provided for superior guests, but my ticket does not mark me out as one of these and, therefore, I am ill at ease. Every mouthful that I eat I think to myself, “I do not know whether I shall be allowed to remain here. Perhaps the Lord of the feast will come in and say to me, ‘Friend, how came you in here?’ and I must begin, with shame, to take the lowest room.” Brothers and Sisters, when we begin at the bottom and sit in the lowest room, we feel safe. We are satisfied that what we do get is meant for us and will not be taken away from us.

Perhaps, also, when the king comes, he may take us up to a higher room. There is nothing like beginning in the lowest place. When I lay hold of the promise as a saint, I have my doubts about it. But when I grasp it as a sinner, I can have no question! If the Lord bids me feed on His mercy as His child, I do it! The devil may whisper that I am presuming, that I never was really adopted by Grace—but when I come to Jesus as a guilty, undeserving sinner, and take what the Lord freely presents to me upon believing—the devil himself cannot tell me that I am not a sinner, or if he does, the lie is too transparent and causes me no distress! There is nothing like having an indefeasible title—and if the description given to you in the title is that you are a sinner, it is an indisputable one—for depend upon it, you are a sinner! So the sinner’s place is your true place and your safest place.

Another blessing is it is a place into which you can get directly, even at this very moment. If the Gospel looks towards men in a certain state of heart in which there are commendable virtues, then how long will it take me to raise my heart to that state? If Jesus Christ comes into the world to save men who have a certain measure of excellence, then how long will it take me to obtain that excellence? I may be taken sick and die within the next 30 minutes and hear the sentence of eternal judgment—it would be poor Gospel to tell me that I might possibly obtain salvation if I attained a state which would take me several months to reach! At this hour I, a dying man, know that I may be gone out of this world and beyond the reach of mercy within an hour—what a comfort it is that the Gospel comes to me and gives itself to me just now, even as it finds me! I am already in that position in which Grace begins with men, for I am a sinner, and I have only to admit that I am so.

Now then, poor Soul, just sit down before the Lord and say, “Lord, does Your Son come to save the guilty? I am such and I trust Him to save me. Did He die for the ungodly? I am such, Lord, I trust in His blood to cleanse me. Was His death for sinners? Lord, I take up the position! I plead guilty! I accept the sentence of Your Law as being just, but save me, Lord, for Jesus died.” It is done! You are saved! Go in peace, my Son. Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you! Go, my Daughter, go your way and rejoice! The Lord has put away your sin—you shall not die, for he

that believes is justified from all sin. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile! Get, then, into your true position—accept the situation in which Grace considers you to be. Do not talk of justice and merit, but appeal to pity and love.

A certain man had, several times, plotted against the first Napoleon and eventually, being entirely in the emperor’s hands, the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. His daughter earnestly pleaded for his life and at last, having obtained an audience with the Emperor, she fell upon her knees before him. “My girl,” said the Emperor, “it is of no use to plead for your father, for I have the clearest evidence of his repeated crimes, and it is but justice that he should die.” The girl replied, “Sire, I do not ask for justice, I beg for mercy. It is upon the mercifulness of your heart and not upon the justice of the case that I rely.” She was heard patiently and her father’s life was spared at her request.

Imitate this appeal, and cry, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness.” Justice owes you nothing but death—mercy alone can spare you. Have done with every idea of making out a good case— admit it to be a bad one and plead guilty! Cast yourself upon the mercy of the court and ask for mercy, free mercy, undeserved mercy, gratuitous favor! This is what you must ask for and as in law they have a form of suing called in forma pauperis, that is, in the form of a pauper, adopt the method and as a man full of necessities beg for favor at the hands of God, in forma pauperis, and it shall be bestowed upon you.

IV. Now I close this discourse with the next point, which is, THIS DOCTRINE HAS A GREAT SANCTIFYING INFLUENCE. “There,” says one, “I do not believe that. Surely you have been holding out a premium to sin by saying that Christ came to save nobody but sinners and does not call anybody to repentance but the sinful.” My dear Sirs, I have heard all that sort of talk so many times that I know it by heart—the same objections were raised against this doctrine in Luther’s day by the Papists and, since then, by workmongers of all classes! There is nothing substantial in their notion that free Grace is opposed to morality—it is only their fancy.

They dream that the doctrine of justification by faith will lead to sin, but it can be proved by history that whenever this doctrine has been best preached, men have become most holy! And whenever this Truth of God has been darkened, all manner of corruption has abounded. Gracious doctrine and gracious living fitly go together—and legal teaching and unlawful living are generally found associated. Let us show you the sanctifying power of this Gospel. Its first operation in that direction is this— when the Holy Spirit brings the truth of free pardon home to a man, it completely changes his thoughts concerning God.

“What?” he asks, “Has God freely forgiven me all my offenses for Christ’s sake? And does He love me notwithstanding all my sin? I did not know He was such an One as this, so gracious and kind! I thought He was hard! I called Him a tyrant, gathering where He had not strewed—but does He feel towards me like this? Then,” says the soul, “I love Him in return.” There is a complete reversal of feeling—the man is turned right round as soon as he understands redeeming Grace and dying love. Conversion follows on a sight of Grace. Moreover, this grand Truth of God does more than turn a man, it inspires, melts, enlivens and inflames him. This is a Truth which stirs the deeps of the heart and fills the man with lively emotions.

Before, you talked to him about doing good, about right, justice, reward and punishment—he heard it all and it may have had a measure of influence over him—but he did not deeply feel it. Such teaching is too cold to warm the heart. Then the Truth comes home to the man and appears to him to be new and exciting. It runs like this—God, out of His free mercy, forgives the guilty and He has forgiven me! Why, this awakens him, stirs him up, touches the fountain of his tears and moves his whole being! Perhaps at the first hearing of the Gospel, he does not care for it, and even hates it. But when it comes with power, it obtains a wonderful mastery over him! When he really receives its message as his own, then his cold heart of stone is turned to flesh! Warm emotion, tender love, humble desire and a sacred longing after the Lord are all excited in his bosom.

The quickening power of this Divine Truth, as well as the converting power of it, can never be too much admired. Besides, this Truth, when it enters the heart, deals a deadly blow at the man’s self-conceit. Many a man would have become wise, only he thought he was already! And many a man would have been virtuous, only he concluded that he had already attained that, too! Behold, this doctrine smites upon the skull all confidence in your own goodness and makes you feel your guilt! And in so doing, it removes the great evil of pride. A sense of sin is the very threshold of mercy! A consciousness of shortcoming, a grief because of past offenses are necessary preparations for a higher and a nobler life. The Gospel digs out the foundation, makes a great vacuum and so makes room to lay in their places the glorious stones of a noble spiritual character.

Moreover, where this Truth of God is received, there is sure to spring up in the soul a sense of gratitude. The man who has had much forgiven will be sure to love much in return. Gratitude to God is a grand mainspring for holy action. Those who do right in order to be rewarded for it are acting selfishly. Selfishness is at the bottom of their character—they abstain from sin only lest self should suffer—and they obey only that self may be safe and happy. The man who does right, not because of Heaven or Hell, but because God has saved him and he loves the God who saved him, is the truly right-loving man. He who loves right because God loves right, has risen out of the fog of selfishness and is capable of the loftiest virtue, yes, he has in him a living spring which will well up and flow forth in holy living so long as he exists.

And, dear Brothers and Sisters, I think you will all see that free forgiveness to sinners is very conducive towards one part of a true character, namely, readiness to forgive others, for he who has been forgiven much himself is the very man who finds it easy to pass by the transgressions of others. If he does not, he may well doubt whether he has been forgiven! If the Lord has blotted out his debt of a thousand talents, he will, readily enough, forgive the hundred pence which his brother owes him.

Last of all, some of us know and we wish that all knew by personal experience, that a sense of undeserved favor and free forgiveness is the very soul of enthusiasm—and enthusiasm is to Christianity what the lifeblood

is to the body! Were you ever made enthusiastic by a cold discourse upon the excellence of morality? Did you ever feel your soul stirred within you by listening to a sermon upon the rewards of virtue? Were you ever made enthusiastic by being told of the punishments of the Law? No, Sirs—but preach up the Doctrines of Grace—let the free favor of God be extolled and mark the consequences! There are people who will walk for many miles and stand without weariness by the hour together to hear this! I have known them labor many a weary mile to listen to this doctrine!

Why? Because the preacher was eloquent, or because he put it well? Not so! It has sometimes been badly spoken and in uncouth language— and yet this doctrine has always awakened the people. There is something in the soul of man that is looking out for the Gospel of Grace! And when it comes, there is a hungering to hear about it! Look at the Reformation times, when death was the penalty of listening to a sermon—how the people crowded at midnight! How they journeyed into the deserts and the caves to listen to the teaching of these grand old Truths of God! There is sweetness about mercy, Divine Mercy freely given, which holds the ear of man and stirs his heart!

When this Truth of God enters the soul, it breeds zealots, martyrs, confessors, missionaries, saints. If any Christians are in earnest and full of love to God and man, they are those who know what Grace has done for them. If any remain faithful under reproaches, joyful under losses and crosses—they are those who are conscious of their indebtedness to Divine Love. If any delight in God while they live and rest in Him as they die— they are the men who know that they are justified by faith in Jesus Christ who justifies the ungodly.

All glory be to the Lord who lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes, even the princes of His people! He takes the very castoffs of the world and adopts them into His family and makes them heirs of God by Jesus Christ! The Lord grant us all to know the power of the Gospel upon our sinful selves! The Lord endear to us the name, work and Person of the Sinner’s Friend! May we never forget the hole of the pit from where we were drawn, nor the hand which rescued us, nor the undeserved kindness which moved that hand! From now on let us have more and more to say of Infinite Grace. “Free Grace and dying love.” Well does the old song say, “Ring those charming bells.” Free Grace and dying love— the sinner’s windows of hope! Our hearts exult in the very words! Glory be unto You, O Lord Jesus, ever full of compassion. Amen.

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THE FAITHFUL SAYING  
NO. 1416

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 26, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”** *1Ti 1:15***.**

IT is worthy of notice that Paul, in the passage before us, as, indeed, in all his writings, exhibits great sensitiveness with regard to sin. The sin which he had, himself, committed against the Lord Jesus, looked at from some points of view, might have been greatly extenuated on account of the honest, although mistaken, motive which lay at the bottom of it. But Paul, after allowing for his ignorance, declares that of sinners he had been chief and that he obtained mercy that in him, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. He describes himself as having been “a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious” and, he is evidently lost in grateful astonishment that he should have been saved.

This godly sensitiveness with regard to sin was associated in the Apostle’s mind with an equally vivid sense of the freeness and richness of Divine Grace. That Christ died, not for the righteous, but for the guilty, is the great thought which is upon his mind and he has no hesitancy whatever in declaring it—and in speaking most boldly concerning the exceedingly abundant Grace of God in forgiving sin. The union of these two feelings in Paul is, by no means, an unusual occurrence among human minds, for you will generally find that the preacher who is most clear in his witness that salvation is by Grace, is also the man to whom sin is exceedingly sinful! Indeed, all those who prize Grace most are men who feel most sorrow concerning their transgressions.

All systems of theology, except that which is founded upon Free Grace, in some way or other take off the edge of guilt. If they try to compromise the business and make salvation to be partly a matter of human effort and human merit—and partly a work of Divine Grace—they are sure, in the process, to conceal the exceeding iniquity of sin. Man is made out to be a poor, weak creature victimized by a Law too rigid for his frailty. It is represented that he has a right to mercy and a great uproar is made if we deny him any such right! And much anger is felt if we declare that mercy is the Sovereign prerogative of God which may be exercised at His own absolute discretion.

Rebellion against Divine Election is often founded on the idea that the sinner has a sort of right to be saved and this is to deny the full guilt of sin. You will find that he who sets forth Free Grace as the only fountain and source of human salvation—and declares that sin is pardoned and put away freely by the mercy of God in Christ Jesus—is most plain and severe in denouncing sin with all his might and most tender in sorrowing over his own personal iniquities. I shall preach Grace to the chief of sinners at this time without reserve and without guarding my words in any respect whatever! I shall fling the big net of the Gospel right into the sea, let it go where it may! But do not, therefore, conclude that we think little of sin. Far from it! It is to us the sum of all abominations and the fire of Hell! And this, I trust, shall be apparent all along, though for the present we shall confine our thoughts to the greatness of the Grace of God, since to that subject our text summons us.

The Apostle Paul had been describing himself and his sin. He confessed that he was, before, a blasphemer and a persecutor, “But,” he says, “I obtained mercy.” His was an instance of a sinner saved and he now declares that his case was a type of all others, for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners! The tendency is to set up the Apostle as an exceptional convert, but he corrects the idea by asserting the grand doctrine that the Savior’s errand was to those who are guilty and undeserving—among whom he counted himself to be the chief. This coming of Christ to save sinners as sinners he regards as a Truth of God so well known in the Christian Church that it had come to be a saying, “familiar in their mouths as household words.” It had become a sort of proverb with Christians that Christ Jesus came to save sinners and Paul says that it might justly be received as a proverb among all nations, for it was worthy of universal acceptance from the weight of its meaning, the importance of its subject and the Divine authority with which it was sealed.

Moreover, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is so true that it is not merely a saying, but a faithful saying, worthy of all confidence, being as sure as the Truth of God, Himself! Pass it round, you Christians! Repeat it among yourselves without the slightest hesitancy or question! Let it be a proverb among you, an undoubted fact, an unquestionable Truth of God— Jesus came into the world for the salvation of sinners! He contemplated the saving of no other sort of persons but those who are sinful.

I. Our first observation from this statement will be THAT SINNERS ARE IN AN AWFUL CONDITION. A man who needs saving is evidently in a very undesirable state. Now, every man and woman among you this day who has not been saved by Christ Jesus needs saving. You have kept the Law, you say, from your youth up, so what do you lack? My answer is that you need saving, notwithstanding your fine ideas about yourselves. But you have also been religious from your earliest recollection and you do not know that you have ever committed anything very wrong, you say!

Dear Friend, despite your morality and outward religiousness, we are compelled to tell you that you need saving just as surely as the unchaste or the profane! Despite all that you say in your own favor, you have broken the Law of God and you are a sinner. And as a sinner you are in a terrible position from which nothing can save you but the hand of God. For, first, it is a grave peril to be a sinner. You have broken your Maker’s commandments—is not that a calamity? You have neglected His will, which is holy and just and good—is not that a crying evil? To have a heart which does not choose the right, but which leans to evil—is not that ruinous? To have a mind which does not love God, but cares for itself more than for its Maker and Lord—is not that to be in a diseased state of soul? The polluting influence of sin upon the soul is the direst of all mischief, the worst of all destructions—it is spiritual death! From the defiling presence of sin every man needs to be saved.

Moreover, the thrice holy God hates sin with a hatred scarcely to be conceived by any of us since we have lost the sensitiveness of perfect purity. Whatever things are impure, unchaste, untrue, unloving, unrighteous, God loathes with all the infinity of His perfect Nature. Doubtless, sin is a grief to godly men, but it is far more obnoxious to the Lord our God. “The wicked and him that loves violence, His soul hates.” “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord.” The Lord has fierce indignation against everything that is evil—this is no arbitrary trait of His Character—He does not choose to be angry with this or angry with that without a cause! No, from the very necessity of His Divine Nature He must delight in everything that is good and He must abhor everything that is evil.

O Sinner, what a plight you are in since there is in you and upon you the sin which God cannot endure! What must your position be, for it is written concerning the Lord, “You hate all workers of iniquity,” and such are you! Can you bear the thought? Furthermore, you are condemned and before long this will be made evident to all intelligent beings. There comes upon the swift wings of time a Day in which the Judge of all the earth will lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet—and every transgression and iniquity shall receive its just recompense of reward. It is not possible that it should be otherwise, for there must come a reaping to every sowing! Idle thoughts, idle words and evil deeds must bear their fruit and, therefore, every sinner is in danger of eternal fire! As surely as the righteous through Christ shall go into everlasting happiness, so shall the ungodly depart into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

And this may happen to any unpardoned sinner before he has heard the next word which I am about to utter! He may find himself shut out from all hope, eternally shut out from God before yonder clock shall strike! This is a perilous condition for an immortal soul! Yet every sinner not saved by Christ is in this condition! To this may be added the further reflection that the sinner is quite unable, of himself, to escape either from sin itself, or from the wrath which he has awakened, or from the punishment which is appointed for his transgressions. What can you do, O Ethiopian, to change your skin? O leopard, how can you remove your spots? And if, being evil, you could learn to do good, how could you put away the sin of the past? By what process could you take out the stains of former years? Do not the sins of your youth lie in your bones even to this day? And they must be there forever unless the strong hand of Christ shall take them away.

One of old cried, “O generation of vipers, how shall you escape the damnation of Hell?” And the question may well be asked of the most cunning and crafty of sinners. If you neglect the great salvation, which it shall be our joy to preach to you today, how shall you escape from the wrath to come? Chained up, then, as within a wall of fire, with that fire already burning within his soul in the form of evil lusts and drawing nearer to

him from without every day he lives, the sinner is in a terrible position, indeed! O unforgiven Sinner, what do you think of this? Perhaps that position may be all the better defined if I remind you of the way by which a sinner has to be rescued from it. There is no hope for any sinner unless the Son of God, Himself, saves Him!

You may safely measure the depth of the danger by the Glory of the Person who undertook to deliver us from it. It is the Son of God whom angels worship who has come to save sinners! It must be a deep destruction from which only God Himself can rescue man. And though He were the Son of God, yet when He came, observe how He had to be equipped. And from His equipment learn the sternness of the task. He must be Jesus—a Savior and then He must also be Christ—anointed for the work! He must come with a commission from God with Divine authority—and the Spirit of God must rest upon Him to qualify Him for the great undertaking. For the text says not that Jesus came into the world, but Christ Jesus, the anointed Savior, came that He might save. If this equipment was needed, then surely the state of man was a grievous one.

Note also that even Christ Jesus could not save men had He stayed in Heaven. He came into the world to save sinners. The Fall was so grievous that He must come right down into the place of our ruin! He must come to the dunghill that He might lift us out of it! God sat in Heaven and said, “Let there be light,” and the darkness fled before Him. But He could not sit in Heaven and save sinners—He must needs come into the world to do so—down into this polluted creation the eternal Creator must, Himself, descend! Look, there in Bethlehem’s manger He sleeps and on a woman’s breast He hangs! He cannot save sinners, so great is their ruin, unless He becomes Incarnate and takes upon Himself our nature! And being here, think how dreadful must be the ruin when we see that He cannot return, saying, “It is finished,” until, first of all, He dies!

That sacred head must be crowned with thorns! Those eyes must be closed in the darkness of the tomb! That body must be pierced even to its heart and then must lie a chill, cold corpse in the grave before man can be redeemed! And all that shame, suffering and death were but the outer shell of what the Savior suffered, for He passed under Divine wrath and bore a load such as would have crushed the whole race of men had they been left to bear it! O Sinner, you are awfully lost, you are infinitely lost, since it needs an infinite Savior to present the Atonement of His own body in order to save sinners from their sin! This is the first Truth of God, then, which is included in this faithful saying—may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts.

II. The second observation which clearly contains the very heart of the text is THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME TO SAVE MEN AS SINNERS. His salvation is meant for men who are sinners and for none else. Somebody says, “But is not that a plain matter of fact?” It is, but it is a fact scarcely realized—indeed, its real meaning is not known until God the Holy Spirit reveals it! A great many persons have a notion that Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable people who, if they have done any wrong, have repented of it and have made things square. He came, according to them, to save persons who do their very best by attendance at worship, taking the sacrament, giving to the poor, paying their way and saying their prayers.

These are doing all they can to get right and keep right—and surely they will be saved—so men talk. Their theory of salvation is very mixed, but it comes to this—the Gospel is for good people. They do not quite do without Jesus Christ—He comes in somewhere or other. But their religion is a kind of mingle-mangle—partly they save themselves and partly Christ saves them—and between the two they are not saved at all! Their vain fancy is that though they cannot do quite as much as they ought, Jesus comes in as an excellent make-weight and turns the scale in their favor. That is the notion of the bulk of mankind and in many places of worship you may hear something very much like it. Too much of the preaching of the present day mingles the Old Covenant with the New—you do not know whether, after all, you are going to be saved by merit or mercy, whether Christ came to save sinners or the righteous.

The trumpet gives an uncertain sound. It is far too generally supposed that there must be something to recommend the sinner to God and that God could not send His Son to save men whom He views in the base and horrible character of sinners. “Surely,” say the enemies of Free Grace, “He must have regard to their repentance or to something which He either sees or foresees in them.” That He should see man to be evil and only evil and yet visit Him in mercy for mercy’s sake seems hard for the carnal heart to believe! Therefore, lest we should be misunderstood, we lay down this straight line that Christ did not come into the world to save anybody but SINNERS—and He viewed those sinners as sinners and nothing more! He did not view them as repenting sinners, nor as believing sinners, nor as humble sinners, nor as sanctified sinners, nor anything else but sinners—and under that character He contemplated their salvation!

The text says nothing more and nothing less than this, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” There is not a qualifying word. It is clear that only sinners are the objects of salvation, for none but sinners need saving! And if there had been no sinners there would certainly have been no saving and no Savior. Who needs saving but a lost man? Who needs a Savior but a man who, through his sin, has ruined himself? The very term, “Savior,” and the very name, “Jesus,” imply that salvation work is for sinners. We have some sinecure offices in our Government—I have heard of a Master of the Buckhounds who never mastered a buckhound in his life—but my Lord Jesus holds no sinecure in His office of Savior, for there are plenty of sinners and He is always saving them!

If sinners are not contemplated by the plan of Grace, then the office of Savior is obsolete! But this can never be, since He is Jesus Christ, the anointed Savior, the same yesterday, today and forever! Nor would the Gospel be required for any but sinners, since none but the guilty need glad tidings of pardon and Grace. If man can be secure under the Law, let him stay under the Law. If the Law can justify, let the Law justify. What need of a second system to take away the first unless through the weakness of man the first system shall be found to be of no effect? No, verily the Law is glorious! Mount Sinai shines resplendently and verily perfection would have been by the Law if it could have been kept by mankind!

No need for another glory or excellence, for the first would have sufficed if men had not been sinners—for the Law is holy, just and good!

The very sound of that word, “Gospel,” is lost and its sweetness dissipated in the midnight air unless there are sinners, for they, above all men, need glad tidings of a Savior born among men! Salvation must be for sinners, for to them, only, can mercy ever come. If I am brought before a court of justice and I plead, “Not guilty,” and the magistrate replies that he will have mercy upon me, I repel his observation with indignation—I need no mercy of him—I am innocent. Let him give me justice—that is all I ask! It is an insult to the innocent to offer him mercy and, therefore, unless man is guilty God cannot show him mercy! Mercy has no room to bestow her blessings of amnesty and pardon till, first of all, guilt is admitted. To the sinner, forgiveness can come, but to none else!

Moreover, the characters whom Jesus came to save are always so described that they must be sinners. Sometimes we read of them as being, “dead in trespasses and sins.” And it is written, “And you has He quickened.” Sometimes they are represented as enemies—“If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” They are called aliens, strangers, wandering sheep, prodigal sons and so forth—and all these imply distance from God by sin. Sometimes they are represented as debtors—and when they have nothing to pay, He freely forgives them all their debt. All the descriptions of persons for whom the mercy of God is intended bear upon their forefront the notion of their being sinners and our Lord, Himself, says, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

The coming of Christ has no bearing towards the 99 that went not astray, except that they are left where they were. The Good Shepherd comes after the lost sheep and only after the lost sheep and if you can prove that you are not a lost sheep, then you have proved that Christ never came to save you. The whole of His errand looks this way—He came to save sinners and only sinners. Look now at what He did when He was here. I will only ask you to consider the crowning act of His work when He hung upon the Cross. What do those bruises from the scourge mean? What do those deep furrows on His blessed back mean? What do those pierced hands and feet mean? They mean this, that He is suffering on account of human sin! “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed.” “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

Self-righteous men and women, what has the Cross to do with you? You carry it on your bosoms and make an ornament and a plaything of it, but that is all it is to you! None but the guilty can know the true meaning of the Cross and derive benefit from it. For them the dreadful tree bears the precious fruit of substitutionary Sacrifice and peace and pardon through the atoning blood! But to those who are not sinners the Cross is a barren tree! O Christ of God, only a sinner can know Your worth! A saint may admire You in Your Glory, but a sinner trusts You in Your shameful death, for You are meant for sinners! “He gave Himself for our sins”—for what else could He give Himself and yield Himself unto death?

Besides that, where is Jesus gone, now, but to Heaven? And what is He doing? When He went to Heaven He received gifts for men and, listen to this Word of God—“Yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” He pleads today, but for whom is He an Advocate? He makes intercession for the transgressors! Prove that you are not rebellious nor transgressors and there are neither gifts nor pleadings for you, for the whole drift of what He is now doing is towards the sinful! Look, Sirs, at the legacy which our Lord has left us! He has left us the Holy Spirit and what for? The Holy Spirit is here to convict of sin! Of what use would He be to those who have no sin? He is here to regenerate, but of what use would He be to those who are so good by nature that they do not need a change of heart? He is here that He may work in us repentance and faith, but of what use would those be to persons who have no sin to repent of and no need to believe in a Savior?

The whole plan and scheme of redemption contains in it marks and evidences clear and palpable that it is meant for sinners, for guilty men, for such and such alone! All else that there is in man beside his sinnership is not truly his. If I were to preach, today, to sinners with some qualification, I should not be preaching the Gospel in its fullest reach. If, for instance, I were to say that Christ Jesus came into the world to save humble sinners, that would be a clipping of the truth—for if any sinner is humble, that humility is not natural to him, but already the work of salvation commenced in his being has made him humble! Jesus Christ died to give humility to sinners as well as to save them when they are humble. But surely we must believe in Christ? Yes, and there is salvation for believing sinners—but no man believes in Christ until that faith is given to Him from above—and Christ came not to save sinners who make themselves believe, but to save sinners by giving them faith.

He not only saves sinners when they repent but He goes lower down, for He is exalted on high to give repentance as well as remission of sins. But did He not die for penitent sinners? Assuredly! But He died for them when they were impenitent and, therefore, that is why they come to repentance! He who would come to Jesus must come as a sinner and never think of pleading any sort of goodness or qualification, for, “this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” SINNERS—write that in capitals and set it by itself, for it is the whole of the description and no one may dare to add to it! Away with your human addition of sensible sinners and so on—the text is not cumbered and spoiled by any such qualifying words!

III. This leads me, in the third place, to say THAT UPON THIS POINT SPECIAL CLEARNESS IS REQUIRED. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners as sinners must always be kept clearly before the human mind because, as I have said, man does not like the notion and if you put it baldly and boldly he cavils at it and waxes wrathful. Hear him mutter about immoral doctrine and encouraging sin! Hear it and marvel at the audacity which makes a guilty rebel express anxiety about the morals of his God! A set of criminals are shut up in a condemned cell to be hanged and a message comes that the king freely forgives them—and

they exclaim that they will not accept mercy because it might encourage immorality!

Morality! What have these lawbreakers to do with that? Surely they are repeating the devil’s hypocrisy when he rebuked sin! They are living in sin and yet pretend to be the guardians of universal justice! Vile hypocrisy! When I have known the pens which have written against the Gospel under the pretense of advancing morality, I have pitied the paper which they defiled with their black words. Pleaders for morality! Why, men known to be debauched and drunken are often the very loudest talkers against Free Grace and the greatest sticklers for morality! Let them go and wash in Jordan seven times and be clean, themselves, before coming out in that fashion. It is for you and me, being guilty, to get mercy, first, and then talk of what we will do in the matter of morality!

Know you not that the man who believes not in Christ is condemned already? Shall a condemned man cavil at mercy’s freeness? On your knees, Sir, and plead guilty before the Most High, for only so shall you find Grace! How often are we told in sermons that we are in a state of probation—as if we had to do something by which we should prove our worthiness and were still in a position in which we might or might not be condemned? My Hearers, you are NOT in a state of probation! No, not one of you! If you are saved, you are saved—and if you are not saved you are lost! You are forgiven, or else you are “condemned already!” And, unless Jesus Christ saves you, you will abide in condemnation forever and ever! The die is cast and cast against you! You are condemned and in the Book of God so it stands. Christ Jesus came to save the condemned—and blessed shall you be if you are willing to take up the condemned position at this moment and accept the Grace which He has brought for sinners.

I say, then, let the Truth of God be made clear, because man will muddle it if he can. Mark you, if this doctrine is not made clear, you will not lead sinners to look to Christ. If I preach that Jesus Christ died to save men of tender heart, what will be the result of the sermon? Every thoughtful hearer will look to see whether he has a tender heart. Is that a desirable result?—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,”*but there is no life by looking into our own hearts! Suppose I preach certain marks and evidences as tokens of the men whom Christ came to save? Then each man will look to see whether he has those tokens within himself—and that is precisely the thing which we do not want men to do, for we desire them to look right away from themselves to Christ alone! If they should imagine that they find some good thing within themselves, they will make it the basis of their hope and that will be an error of the gravest kind. Sinner, all the hope you can ever have lies in Him who died upon the tree! As for yourself, settle it in your mind that you are as bad as bad can be. Give over all hope from your own doings, willings, feelings and resolves!

Do not expect to obtain comfort from your own nature any more than to find fire in the midst of a rock of ice! Look right away from self to Christ, and Christ alone, for this is the way of salvation! When a man comes to Christ as a sinner, he has taken the safest way. If I say to myself, “Jesus came to save me because I am a believing sinner, or a repenting sinner, or a humbled sinner,” then I have to ask the question, “How about my repentance, my humility—are they genuine?” My foundation shakes and my trust fails me because it rests on myself! But when I trust in Jesus because He is the sinner’s Savior and because I am a sinner, then I am beyond doubtful questions. This, also, is a constant ground to go upon. Imagine a man who is deeply in debt saying to his creditors, “I am in a terrible fix, but I can promise you 10 shillings in the pound.” Very well. They accept it.

Is he not at ease? Let me whisper in your ear—he is not worth two pence in all the world! Is he clear? Oh no. He tries a little trading and puts off the hour of payment, but again he has to call his creditors together and confess—“I am sorry. I cannot manage the 10 shillings, but I will try to scrape together two-and-sixpence—will you take that?” Yes, they will take the half-crown. Is he out of his difficulties, now? No, he is not one inch nearer, for he is not worth a penny! Again he summons his creditors and tells them that he has made another mistake, but he could arrange to pay sixpence. Is he at rest now? Not a bit, because he has not a penny and he can no more pay sixpence in the pound than the whole 20 shillings! He is absolutely a pauper.

What is the best thing for him to do? Why, to admit the truth and say, “Here I am. I have no assets whatever. I am in debt over head and ears and I have not a single penny to pay with. Do whatever you like with me. Put me in prison if you like. Sell these bones and the rags which cover them, but there is the truth, you cannot get anything out of me because I have nothing.” Now, if the creditors give him a clear discharge, he is safe and at rest—which he never was while he had even a sixpence to pay! Now, you needy sinners, be wise and go to the Lord in that penniless style and you shall have your debt forgiven. Remember the parable of the two debtors and the Truth of God which it teaches—

*“But let our debts be what they may,  
However great or small,  
As soon as we have nothing to pay,  
Our Lord forgives us all.”*

Assuredly, there is nothing like going to the bottom of a thing and knowing the worst of your case.

I have a friend who had a bad knee. Something ailed it, he could not tell what. The doctors blistered, applied poultices and did a great deal to it—and showed their skill by making bad, worse, but they assured him that the knee was not out of joint but would come all right by outward applications. Under such professional treatment the patient became quite lame. At last he went to a renowned bone-setter and as soon as he saw the joint, he said, “I tell you, Sir, your bone is out.” “Impossible,” he said, “the doctors have never hinted at that.” “Yes, it is, or if it is not so, we will make it so, and then set it right.” With a terrible pull the operator seemed to drag the bone out of its place and then it flew back, again, into its socket and my friend felt that all was right.

“Now,” said the bone-setter, “walk across the room.” And he did so at once. There is nothing like knowing that the bone is out, for then it can be set. But while we understate the mischief, we shall not find an effectual cure. Reckon on the worst and you will not be deceived! If there is something good about you and you begin trusting in it, that something good will grow less and less, like the 20 shillings which came down to sixpence and ended with nothing! But if you throw up all legal hope and say, “I am a sinner. If I am saved it must be entirely through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. I accept Christ to save me as a sinner”—that is a sure and constant foundation to rest upon! Beware of the slippery belief that Christ died for you as long as you are humble, or as long as you are this or that, for, if you talk in that fashion, instead of trusting in Christ you are trusting in your own humility, your own feelings—and there is no soundness in your faith.

Often, Beloved, I feel that this way of coming to Christ, as a sinner, is the only available one for me. I have preached the Gospel, not without zeal for the Truth of God and have tried to consecrate my whole being to my Lord’s service, but times out of mind I would not give a brass farthing for all that I have done or felt or been! I am glad to sink the whole in oblivion and come to Christ and say, “Save me, for I have sinned.” What I rejoice to do, I feel sure that my Brethren have to do, also, and it will be your safety to be so doing continually. Why, Brothers and Sisters, this doctrine must be true because it glorifies Christ! If Christ comes to save men who meet Him half way with their prayers and tears and beliefs and doings—and He only saves them because of these things—then salvation is half of man and half of Christ! But if it is that Jesus comes to save sinners and begins a work in them when they are in their nakedness and filthiness and spiritual death, oh, then, Free Grace does the more abound and the crown sits securely on the royal head of Him who is anointed to be both a Prince and a Savior—to give repentance as well as remission of sins!

I need to say, also, that the recognition of the Truth that Christ came into the world to save men as sinners is essential to salvation. You ask me, “How so?” I reply, “When a man comes before God simply as a sinner, he is then upon the line of truth.” All the while he was claiming to be this and that, which was good, he was on a false tack. But when he says, “Lord, I have broken Your Law. I have done the things I ought not to have done and have left undone the things that I ought to have done. And if I am saved it must be by your Grace alone”—he is now speaking according to truth. It is something to bring a sinner round to the truth. When he has come to that, he will go further in the right direction. Do you not see that line is doing homage to the Law of God, for he confesses that he has broken it and deserves punishment? Thus the man is already honoring the Law of God in his heart—his salvation has begun!

Now he does honor to God, Himself, for he bows before the Most High and begs for mercy. He is already saved from presumption! God must be King and the man is willing that He should be, even though he, himself, should be condemned! And now he reads that God’s salvation “comes to the guilty,” and he cries, “I am guilty! I accept Your mercy.” That done, he loves the Lord God for mercy received. Why, the man is being saved before our eyes! He was the enemy of God, before, but now a sense of free mercy causes him to love and fear the Lord! The next thing he says is, “Have I been so freely forgiven all my transgressions, not because of anything I was or felt or did, but out of free mercy? Then, Lord, I will strive to avoid every sin if You will help me.”

See, his mind is becoming pure and by the operation of the same blessed Truth of God upon him, he will ultimately be perfected and stand complete before the Truth of God—and what do you think will be his song? He will join with all the saints and sing, “We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” There is nothing like Free Grace to change the human heart! You may tell a man what he is and what he ought to be, and he will remain unmoved. But tell him that God meets him as a lost, guilty and condemned sinner and that simply because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, He blots out all His sins and transgressions and accepts Him through Christ Jesus—why, that makes the man’s heart leap within him for joy! And then he begins to say, “Cleanse me, O God, from this hateful sin, for I love You because of Your wondrous love to me.”

Thus Jesus Christ’s coming to save sinners makes the point of our being sinners a very essential one in the matter of our being saved from the power of sin.

IV. I close by saying, let us, dear Friends, feel THAT IT WILL BE WISE TO ACCEPT AT ONCE THE TEACHING OF THE TEXT. Let us, on the spot, confess we are sinners! Whether you have been saved or not, come over, again, to Jesus. Take with you words and say unto Him, “We have sinned.” Confess your sinnership! Does it trouble you to do so? Have not you abundant evidence of it? Do not confess it with your mouth, only, but with your heart. Let me say sinners are very rare things—you cannot find them dead or alive. If you go into a cemetery with an intelligent child, the first question it will ask will be, “Papa, where do they bury the sinners? These are all good people who are buried here.”

Living sinners are equally scarce. We are all surprisingly good and though we say we are sinners, that is a part of our goodness, for it shows how very humble we are. If we come to details and are questioned as to our sins, how many turn out to be no more sinners than the beggars in the street are really lame, or blind, or sick, or sore? Many who say, “Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners,” do but sham their sinnership before God! Now, mark, there is nothing but sham salvation for sham sinners! But you real sinners, you who have broken God’s Law and know it! You who are ready to stand upon the drop of confession beneath the fatal tree of Justice feeling that you could not say a word against Divine Justice if you were now executed—come and welcome, for Jesus Christ came to save such as you are! Confess your sins and when you have done so, rest on the salvation provided in Christ Jesus!

At this moment I think I speak the language of every child of God when I say the top and bottom, the beginning and the ending of all my hope lies in this—that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I trust myself as a sinner with Him. The devil often tells me, “You are not this, and you are not that,” and I feel bound to acknowledge that the accuser of the Brethren makes terrible work with my spiritual finery so that I have to abandon one ground of glorying after another. But I never knew the devil, himself, dare to say, “You are not a sinner.” He knows I am and I know it, too! And as in due time Christ died for the ungodly, I rest in Him and I

am saved! If I can perish resting in Christ I must do so. But I will tell it throughout the realms of Hell that I did trust in Christ and was lost. I will publish it in the infernal dens that I trusted in Jesus with all my soul and was confounded.

Will it ever be? No, never! For He has said, “Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out.” Poor Sinner, whoever you may be, surely this is a very simple matter! But do not reject it because it is so simple. It is your life! You shall find it your life at this very instant if you will trust my Lord. Have you any doubt about your being a sinner? Then bid farewell to hope, for Christ did not come to save you! But if you know you are a sinner, cast yourself on Jesus right now, even now, just as you are! “Will He save me?” Try it, Brother! Try it, Sister! Sink or swim, fling yourself upon Christ! Are you still holding to your prayers or your tears, or somewhat of your own? You will perish if you do! You must be disconnected with all grounds of self-hope and self-trust or they will prove your ruin!

Now cut the cable! Let every rope go! Break the last thread and commit yourself to the tide of Free Grace. You will never be a wreck if you do so. Well does Dr. Watts put it—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall!  
Be You my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my All.”*

“You have taken away from us, Sir, every hope we ever had, and you make us out to be nothing but sinners.” Yes, that is what I want to do! I long to make all things rock and reel under you till you feel that you have no place for the sole of your feet—and so fall before my Master’s Cross! This old house of yours which you have been patching up so often will fall upon you before long. Its walls bulge, its roof drops, its timbers are rotten! However much you try to prop it up, it will come down and destroy you!

I, as an architect, advise you to tear it all down! Clear every wall away, stick and stone. Yes, and take out the very foundations, for every stone is ruinous! Clear the ground of the whole concern. You complain that there is a deep and ugly trench where the foundations used to be and I am glad of it, for, behold, the Lord lays in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, elect, precious, even Christ Jesus! And he that believes in Him shall never be confounded. You must remove all the wood, hay and stubble, and build with precious stones! None but Jesus, none but Jesus! Neither beam, nor stone, nor pin, nor nail must be our own. We may not take from a thread to a shoelace of self, but Christ must be first, last, midst and everywhere!

What do you say, fellow Sinners? Will you and I have Christ? I will, whether you will or not! Come along. Do not draw back. Take what God freely presents to you and from this day trust Jesus to be your Savior and we will meet in Heaven! Amen.

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THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL  
NO. 184

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 21, 1858, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”** *1Ti 1:15***.**

I SUPPOSE that the message delivered by God’s servants to the people must always be called “the burden of the Lord.” When the old Prophets came forth from their Master they had such dooms and threats and lamentations and woe to preach that their countenances were sorrowful and their hearts heavy within them. They usually commenced their discourses by announcing, “The burden of the Lord, the burden of the Lord.” But now, our message is no heavy one. No threat and no thunders compose the theme of the Gospel minister. All is mercy! Love is the sum and substance of our Gospel—love undeserved—love to the very chief of sinners.

But it is still a burden to us. So far as the matter of our preaching is concerned it is our joy and our delight to preach it. But if others feel as I feel now they will all acknowledge it to be a hard matter to preach the Gospel. For now I am sore vexed and my heart is troubled, not concerning what I have to preach, but how I shall preach it. What if so good a message should fail because of so ill an ambassador? What if my hearers should reject this saying which is worthy of all acceptation because I may announce it with lack of earnestness? Surely—surely such a supposition is enough to draw the tears to the eyes of any man! But may God in His mercy prevent a consummation so fearfully to be dreaded. And, however I may now preach, may this Word of God commend itself to every man’s conscience. And may many of you now gathered together who have never as yet found Jesus for refuge, by the simple preaching of the Word now be persuaded to come in, that you may taste and see that the Lord is good.

Our text is one that pride would never prompt a man to select. It is quite impossible to flourish about it, it is so simple. Human nature is apt to cry, “Well I cannot preach upon that text—it is too plain. There is no mystery in it. I cannot show my learning—it is just a plain, common-sense announcement—I scarcely would wish to take it, for it lowers the man, however much it may exalt the Master.” So, expect nothing but the text from me this morning and the simplest possible explanation of it.

We shall have two heads—first there is the text. Then there is a double commendation appended to the text—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.”

I. First, there is THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TEXT—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” In that there are three things very prominent. There is the Savior, there is the sinner and there is the salvation.

1. There is first of all, the Savior. And in explaining the Christian religion, this is where we must begin. The Person of the Savior is the foundation-stone of our hope. Upon that Person depends the usefulness of our Gospel. Should someone arise and preach a Savior who was man, he would be unworthy of our hopes and the salvation preached would be inadequate to what we need. Should another preach salvation by an angel, our sins are so heavy that an angelic atonement would have been insufficient. And therefore his Gospel totters to the ground. I repeat it—upon the Person of the Savior rests the whole of the salvation. If he is not able, if he is not commissioned to perform the work, then indeed, the work itself is worthless to us and falls short of its design.

But, Brothers and Sisters, when we preach the Gospel, we need not stop and stammer. We have to show you this day such a Savior that earth and Heaven could not show his fellow. He is one so loving, so great, so mighty and so well adapted to all our needs that it is evident enough that He was prepared of old to meet our deepest wants. We know that Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners was God. And that long before His descent to this lower world He was adored by angels as the Son of the Highest. When we preach the Savior to you, we tell you that although Jesus Christ was the Son of Man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, yet was He eternally the Son of God and has in Himself all the attributes which constitute perfect Godhead.

What more of a Savior can any man want than God? Is not He who made the heavens able to purge the soul? If He of old stretched the curtains of the skies and made the earth that man should dwell upon it, is He not able to rescue a sinner from the destruction that is to come? When we tell you He is God, we have at once declared His omnipotence and His infinity. And when these two things work together, what can be impossible? Let God undertake a work, it cannot meet with failure. Let Him enter into an enterprise and it is sure of its accomplishment. Because Christ Jesus the Man was also Christ Jesus the God, in announcing the Savior we have the fullest confidence that we are offering you something that is worthy of all acceptation.

The name given to Christ suggests something concerning His Person. He is called in our text, “Christ Jesus.” The two words mean, the “Anointed Savior.” The Anointed Savior “came into the world to save sinners.”

Pause here, my Soul and read this over again—He is the anointed Savior. God the Father from before all worlds anointed Christ to the office of a Savior of men. And, therefore, when I behold my Redeemer coming from Heaven to redeem man from sin, I note that He does not come unsent, or not commissioned. He has His Father’s authority to back Him in His work. Hence, there are two immutable things whereon our soul may rest—there is the Person of Christ, Divine in itself. There is the anointing from on high, giving to Him the stamp of a commission received from Jehovah, His Father. O Sinner, what greater Savior do you want than He whom God anointed? What more can you require than the eternal Son of God to be your Ransom and the anointing of the Father to be the ratification of the treaty?

Yet we have not fully described the Person of the Redeemer until we have noted that He was man. We read that He came into the world—by which coming into the world we do not understand His usual coming for He often came into the world before. We read in Scripture, “I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me. And if not, I will know.” In fact, He is always here. The goings of God are to be seen in the sanctuary—both in Providence and in nature they are to be seen most visibly. Does not God visit the earth when He makes the tempest His chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind?

But this visitation was different from all these. Christ came into the world in the sense of the fullest and most complete union with human nature. Oh, Sinner, when we preach a Divine Savior, perhaps the name of God is so terrible to you that you can scarcely think the Savior is adapted to you. But hear you again the old story. Although Christ was the Son of God He left His highest Throne in Glory and stooped to the manger. There He is, an infant of a span long. See, He grows from boyhood up to manhood and He comes forth into the world to preach and suffer! See Him as He groans under the yoke of oppression. He is mocked and despised. His visage is more marred than that of any other man and His form more than the sons of men! See Him in the garden as He sweats drops of blood! See Him in Pilate’s chamber in which He is scourged and His shoulders run with gore!

On the bloody tree behold Him! See Him dying with agony too exquisite to be imagined, much less to be described! Behold Him in the silent tomb! See Him at last bursting the bonds of death and rising the third day and afterwards ascending up on high, “leading captivity captive”! Sinner, you have now the Savior before you, plainly manifested. He who was called Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the Cross, who had His superscription written, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews”—this man was the Son of God, the brightness of His Father’s glory and the express image of His Father, “begotten by His Father before all worlds, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father.” He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.”

Oh, could I bring Him before you, could I now bring Him here to show you His hands and His side! If you could now, like Thomas, put your fingers in the holes of the nails and thrust your hand into His side, me

thinks you would not be faithless, but believing. This much I know, if there is anything that can make men believe under the hand of God’s most Holy Spirit, it is a true picture of the Person of Christ. Seeing is believing in His case. A true view of Christ, a right-looking at Him will most assuredly beget faith in the soul. Oh, I doubt not if you knew our Master, some of you who are now doubting and fearing and trembling, would say, “Oh, I can trust Him. A Person so Divine and yet so human, ordained and anointed of God must be worthy of my faith. I can trust Him. No, more—if I had a hundred souls I could trust Him with them all. Or, if I stood accountable for all the sins of all mankind and were myself the very reservoir and sink of this world’s infamy, I could trust Him even then—for such a Savior must be able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” This, then, is the Person of the Savior.

2. Now, the second point is the sinner. If we had never heard this passage before, or any of similar import, I can suppose that the most breathless silence would reign over this place, if, for the first time, I should commence to read them in your hearing, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save .” I know how you would thrust forward your heads. I know how you would put your hand against your ear and look as if you would hear with the eye as well as with the ear to know for whom the Savior died. Every heart would say, “whom did He come to save?” And if we had never heard the message before, how would our hearts palpitate with fear lest the character described should be one unto which it would be impossible for us to attain!

Oh, how pleasant it is to hear again that one word which describes the character of those Christ came to save—“He came into the world to save sinners.” Monarch, there is here no distinction. Princes, He has not singled you out to be the objects of His love—but beggars and the poor shall taste His Grace. You learned men, you masters of Israel, Christ does not say He came specially to save you. The unlearned and illiterate peasant is equally welcome to His Grace. Jew, with all your pedigree of honor, you are not justified more than the Gentile. Men of Britain, with all your civilization and your freedom, Christ does not say He came to save you—He names not you as the distinguishing class who are the objects of His love—no, and you that have good works and reckon yourselves saints among men, He does not distinguish you, either.

The one simple title, large and broad as humanity itself, is simply this—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save SINNERS.” Now, mark, we are to understand this in a general sense when we read it—that all whom Jesus came to save are sinners. But if any man asks, may I infer from this that I am saved—we must then put another question to him. To begin then, with the general sense—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” The men whom Christ came to save were by nature sinners, nothing less and nothing more than sinners. I have often said that Christ came into the world to save awakened sinners. It is quite true—so He did. But those sinners were not awakened sinners when He came to save them—they were nothing but “sinners dead in trespasses and sins” when He came to them.

It is a common notion that we are to preach that Christ died to save what are called sensible sinners. Now that is true—but they were not sensible sinners when Christ died to save them. He makes them sensible or feeling sinners as the effect of His death. Those He died for are described without any adjective to diminish the breadth of it, as being sinners and simply sinners, without any badge of merit or mark of goodness which could distinguish them above their fellows. SINNERS! Now, the term includes some of all kinds of sinners. There are some men whose sins appear but little. Trained up religiously and educated in a moral way, they do not dash into the deeps of sin. They are content to coast along the shores of vice—they do not launch out into the depths. Now, Christ has died for such as these, for many of these have been brought to know and love Him. Let no man think, because he is a less sinner than others, that therefore there is less hope for him.

Strange it is that some have often thought that! “If I had been a blasphemer,” says one, “or injurious, I could have had more hope. Though I know I have sinned greatly in my own eyes yet so little have I erred in the eye of the world that I can scarcely think myself included.” Oh, say not so! It says, “Sinners.” If you can put yourself in that catalog, whether it is at the top or at the bottom, you are still within it. And the truth still holds good that those Jesus came to save were originally sinners and you being such, you have no reason to believe that you are shut out.

Again—Christ died to save sinners of an opposite sort. We have some men whom we dare not describe. It would be a shame to speak of the things which are done by them in private. There have been men who have invented vices of which the devil himself was ignorant until they invented them. There have been men so bestial that the very dog was a more honorable creature than they. We have heard of beings whose crimes have been more diabolical, more detestable than any action ascribed even to the devil himself. Yet my text does not shut out these. Have we not met with blasphemers so profane that they could not speak without an oath? Blasphemy, which at first was something terrible to them, has now become so common that they would curse themselves before they said their prayers and swear when they were singing God’s praises.

It has come to be part of their meat and drink, a thing so natural to them that the very sinfulness of it does not shock them, they so continually do it. As for God’s Laws, they delight to know them for the mere sake of breaking them. Tell them of a new vice and you will please them. They have become like that Roman emperor whose parasites could never please him better than by inventing some new crime—men who have gone head over heels in the Stygian gulf of hellish sin—men who not content with fouling their feet while walking through the mire have lifted up the trapdoor with which we seal down depravity and have dived into the very kennel—rebelling in the very filth of human iniquity. But there is nothing in my text which can exclude even these. Many of these shall yet be washed in the Savior’s blood and be made partakers of the Savior’s love.

Nor does this text make a distinction as to the age of sinners. I see many among you here whose hairs if they were the color of your character would be the very reverse of what they are. You have become white without, but you are blackened all within with sin. You have added layer to layer of crime. And now, if one were to dig down through the various deposits of numerous years he would discover stony relics of youthful sins hidden down in the depths of your rocky hearts. Where once all was tender, everything has become dry and hardened. You have gone far into sin. If you were to be converted now, would it not, indeed, be a wonder of Grace? For the old oak to be bent, oh, how difficult! Now that it has grown so rugged and tough, can it be bent? Can the Great Husbandman train it? Can He graft on so old and so rough a stem something that shall bring forth heavenly fruit?

Ah, He can, for age is not mentioned in the text and many of the most ancient of men have proved the love of Jesus in their latest years. “But,” says one, “my sin has had peculiar aggravations connected with it. I have sinned against light and against knowledge. I have trampled on a mother’s prayers. I have despised a father’s tears. Warnings given to me have been neglected. On my sick bed God Himself has rebuked me. My resolves have been frequent and as frequently forgotten. As for my guilt, it is not to be measured by any ordinary standard. My little crimes are greater than other men’s deepest iniquities, for I have sinned against the light, against the pricks of conscience and against everything that should have taught me better.” Well, my Friend, I do not see that you are shut out here. My text makes no distinction but just this—“SINNERS”!

And as far as my text is concerned there is no limit whatever—I must deal with the text as it stands. And even for you I cannot consent to limit it. It says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” There have been men of your sort saved—why then, should you not be? There have been the grossest blackguards and the vilest thieves and the most debauched harlots saved. Then, why not you, even if you are such as they? Sinners a hundred years old have been saved. We have instance on record of such cases—then why not you? If from one of God’s instances we may generally infer a rule and, moreover, we have His own Word to back us— where lives the man who is so wickedly arrogant as to shut himself out— and close the door of mercy in his own face? No, Beloved, the text says “SINNERS.” And why should it not include you and me within its list? “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

But I said, and I must return to it, if anyone wishes to make a particular application of the text to his own case—it is necessary he should read this text in another way. Every man in this place must not infer that Christ came to save him. Those whom Christ came to save were sinners. But Christ will not save all sinners. There are some sinners who undoubtedly will be lost because they reject Christ. They despise Him. They will not repent. They choose their own self-righteousness. They do not turn to Christ, they will have none of His ways and none of His love. For such sinners, there is no promise of mercy, for there remains no other way of salvation. Despise Christ and you despise your own mercy. Turn away from Him and you have proved that in His blood there is no efficacy for you. Despise Him and die doing so, die without giving your soul into His hands and you have given a most awful proof that though the blood of Christ was mighty, yet never was it applied to you, never was it sprinkled on your heart to the taking away of your sins.

If, then, I want to know did Christ so die for me that I may now believe in Him and feel myself to be a saved man, I must answer this question— do I feel today that I am a sinner? Not, do I say so, as a compliment, but do I feel it? In my inmost soul is that a Truth of God printed in great capitals of burning fire—I am a sinner? Then, if it is so, Christ died for me. I am included in His special purpose. The Covenant of Grace includes my name in the ancient roll of eternal election. There my person is recorded and I shall, without a doubt, be saved if now, feeling myself to be a sinner, I cast myself upon that simple Truth of God, believing it and trusting in it to be my sheet anchor in every time of trouble. Come, Brother and Sister, are you not prepared to trust in Him? Are not many of you able to say that you feel yourself sinners? Oh, I beseech you, whoever you are, believe this great Truth of God which is worthy of all acceptation—Christ Jesus came to save you. I know your doubts. I know your fears—for I have suffered them myself. And the only way whereby I can keep my hopes alive is just this—I am brought every day to the Cross. I believe that to my dying hour I shall never have any hope but this—

*“Nothing in my hands I bring;  
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”*

And my only reason at this hour for believing Jesus Christ is my Redeemer is just this—I know that I am a sinner. This I feel and over this I mourn. And though I mourn it much, when Satan tells me that I cannot be the Lord’s, I draw from my very mourning the comfortable inference that inasmuch as He has made me feel I am lost, He would not have done this if He had not intended to save me. And inasmuch as He has given me to see that I belong to that great class of characters whom He came to save, I infer from that, beyond a doubt, that He will save me. Oh, can you do the same, you sin-stricken, weary, sad and disappointed souls to whom the world has become an empty thing? You weary spirits who have gone your round of pleasure, now exhausted with satiety, or even with disease, are longing to be rid of it—oh, you spirits that are looking for something better than this mad world can ever give you here, I preach to you the blessed Gospel of the blessed God—Jesus Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified— dead and buried and raised again the third day to save you—even you, for He came into the world to save sinners!

**3.** And, now, very briefly, the third point: What is meant by *saving* sinners? “Christ came to save sinners.” Brethren, if you want a picture to show you what is meant by being saved, let me give it to you here. There is a poor wretch who has lived many a year in the grossest sin; so inured to sin has he become, that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin than he could learn to do well. Drunkenness, and vice, and folly have cast their iron net about him, and he has become loathsome and unable to escape from his loathsomeness. Do you see him? He is tottering onwards to his ruin. From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, he has sinned right on, and now he is going towards his last days. The pit of hell is flaring across his path, flinging its frightful rays immediately before his face, and yet he sees it not: he still goes on in his wickedness, despising God and hating his own salvation. Leave him there. A few years have and now hear another story. Do you see that spirit yonder — foremost among the ranks most sweetly singing the praises of God? Do you mark it robed in white, an emblem of its purity? Do you see it as it casts its crown before the feet of Jesus, and acknowledges him the Lord of all? Hark! do you hear it as it sings the sweetest song that ever charmed Paradise itself? Listen to it, its song is this: —

***“I, the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me.”***

“Unto him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his blood, unto him be glory and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, world without end.” And who is that whose song thus emulates the seraph’s strains The same person who a little while ago was so frightfully depraved, the selfsame man! But he has been washed, he has been sanctified, he has been justified. If you ask me, then, what is meant by salvation, I tell you that it reaches all the way from that poor, desperately fallen piece of humanity, to that high-soaring spirit up yonder, praising God. That is to be saved — to have our old thoughts made into new ones, to have our old habits broken off, and to have new habits given; to have our old sins pardoned, and to have righteousness imputed; to have peace in the conscience, peace to man, and peace with God; to have the spotless robe of imputed righteousness cast about our loins, and ourselves healed and cleansed. To be saved is to be rescued from the gulf of perdition; to be raised to the throne of heaven; to be delivered from the wrath and curse! and the thunders of an angry God, and brought to feel and taste the love, the approval, and applause of Jehovah, our Father and our Friend. And all this Christ gives to sinners. When I preach this simple gospel, I have nothing to do with those who will not call themselves sinners. If you must be canonized, if you claim a saintly perfection of your own, I have nothing to do with you. My gospel is to sinners, and sinners alone; and the whole of this salvation, so broad and brilliant, and unspeakably precious, and everlastingly secure, is addressed this day to the outcast, to the offscouring — in one word, it is addressed to sinners.

Now, I think I have announced the truth of the text. Certainly, no man can misunderstand me unless he does so intentionally: — “Christ Jesus came to save sinners.”

**II. And, now, I have but little to do, but yet I have the hardest work —**

T HE DOUBLE COMMENDATION of the text. First, “it is a faithful saying; that is a commendation to the *doubter*: secondly, it is worthy of all acceptation; “that is a commendation to the *careless* — nay, to the *anxious*, too.

**1.** First, “it is a faithful saying;” that is a commendation to the *doubter*. Oh, the devil, as soon as he finds men under the sound of the word of God, slips along through the crowd, and he whispers in one heart, “Don’t believe it!” and in another, “Laugh at it!” and in another, “Away with it!” And when he finds a person for whom the message was intended — one who feels himself a sinner, he is generally doubly in earnest, that he may not believe it at all. I know what Satan said to you, poor friend, over there. He said, “Don’t believe it — it’s too good to be true.” Let me answer the devil by God’s own words: “This is a faithful saying.” It is good, and it is as true as it is good. *It is* too good to be true if God had not himself said it; but, inasmuch as he said it, it is not too good to be true. I will tell thee why thou thickest it to too good to be true, it is because thou measurest God’s corn by thine own bushel. Please to remember, that his ways are not as thy ways, nor his thoughts as thy thoughts; for as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways high above thy ways, and his thoughts above thy thoughts. Why, thou thinkest that if any man had offended thee, thou couldst not have forgiven him. Ay, but God is not a man: he can forgive where thou canst not; and where thou wouldst take thy brother by the throat, God would forgive him seventy times seven. Thou dost not know Jesus, or else thou wouldest believe him. We think that we are honoring God when we think great thoughts of our sin. Let us recollect, that while we ought to think very greatly of our own sin, we dishonor God if we think our sin greater than his grace. God’s grace is infinitely greater than the greatest of our crimes. There is but one exception that he has ever made, and a penitent cannot be included in that. I beseech you, therefore, get better thoughts of him. Think how good he is, and how great he is; and when you know this to be a true saying, I hope you will thrust Satan away from you, and not think it too good to be true I know what he will say to you next; — “Well, if it is true, it is not true to you: it is true to all the world, but not to you. Christ died to save sinners; it is true you are a sinner, but you are not included in it.” Tell the devil he is a liar to his face. There is no way of answering him except by straightforward language. We do not believe in the individuality of the existence of the devil, as Martin Luther did. When the devil came to him, he served him as he did other impostors; he turned him out of doors, with a good hard saying. Tell him on the authority of Christ himself, that he is a liar. Christ says, he came to save sinners; the devil says he did not. He says, virtually, he did not, for he declares that he did not come to save you, and you feel that you are a sinner. Tell him he is a liar, and send him about his business. At any rate, never put his testimony in comparison with that of Christ. He looks today on thee from Calvary’s cross with those same dear tearful eyes that once wept over Jerusalem. He looks on thee my brother, my sister, and says through these lips of mine, “I came into the world to save sinners.” Sinner! wilt thou not believe on him, and trust thy soul in his hands? Wilt thou not say, — “Sweet Lord Jesus, thou shalt be our confidence henceforth! ‘For thee all other hopes I resign, thou art, thou ever shalt be mine.’ “ Come, poor timid one, I must endeavor to re-assure you, by repeating again this text: — “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” It is a true saying, I cannot have you reject it You say you cannot believe it. Let me ask you, “Do you not believe the Bible ?” “Yes,” you say, “every word of it.” Then, this is one word of it — “Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I charge thee by thy honesty — as thou sayest, “I believe the Bible,” believe this. There it stands. Dost thou believe Jesus Christ? Come, answer me Dost thou think he lieth? Would a God of Truth stoop to deceit? “No,” thou sayest, “whatever God says, I believe.” It is God that says it to thee, then, in his own book. He died to save sinners. - Come, once again. Dost thou not believe facts? Did not Jesus Christ rise from the dead? Does not that prove his gospel to be authentic? If, then, the gospel be authentic, the whole of what Christ declares to be the gospel must be true. I charge thee, as thou believest his resurrection, believe that he died for sinners, and cast thyself upon this truth. Once again. Wilt thou deny the testimony of all the saints in heaven and of all the saints on earth? Ask every one of them, and they will tell you this is true — he died to save *sinners*. I, as one of the least of his servants, must bear my testimony. When Jesus came to save me, I protest he found nothing good in me. I know of a surety, that there was nothing in me to recommend me to Christ; and if he loved me, he loved me because he would do so; for there was nothing loveable, nothing that he could desire in me. What I am, I am by his grace; he made me what I am. But a sinner he found me at first, and his own sovereign love was the only reason for his choice. Ask all the people of God, and they will all say the same.

But you say you are too great a sinner. Why. you are not greater than some in heaven already. You say that you are the greatest sinner that ever lived. I say you are mistaken. The greatest sinner died some years ago and went to heaven. My text says so: — “Of whom I am chief” So, you see, the chief one has been saved before you; and if the chief one has been saved, why should you not be? There are the sinners standing in a line, and I see one starting out from the ranks, and he says, “Make way, make way; I stand at the head of you, I am the chief of sinners. give me the lowest place; let me take the lowest room.” “No,” cries another, “not you; I am a greater sinner than you.” Then the apostle Paul comes, and says: “I challenge you all, Manasseh and Magdalene, I challenge you. I will have the lowest place. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but I have obtained mercy, that in me first God might show his long-suffering.” Now, if Christ has saved the greatest sinner that ever lived, oh, sinner, great as you may be, you cannot be greater than the greatest, and he is able to save you. Oh, I beseech you by the myriads of witnesses around the throne, and by the thousands of witnesses on earth, by Jesus Christ, the witness on Calvary, by the blood of sprinkling that is a witness even now, by God himself, and by his Word which is faithful, I beseech you believe this faithful saying, that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

**2.** And, now, to close. The second commendation of the text is to the *careless* and to the *anxious* too To the careless one this text is worthy of all acceptation. Oh, man, thou scornest it. I saw thee curl thy lip in derision. The story was badly told, and therefore thou didst scorn it. Thou saidst in thine heart, “What is that to me? If this be what the man preaches, I care not to hear it: if this be the gospel it is nothing.” Ah, sir, it is something, though thou knowest it not. It is worthy of thy acceptation: the thing I have preached, however poor the way in which it is preached, is well worthy of thy attention I care not what orator may lecture to you, he can never have a subject greater than mine. Damosthenes himself, might stand here, or Cicero, his later compeer, they could never have a weightier subject. Though a child should tell you of it, the subject might well excuse him, for it is so important. Man it is not your house that is in danger, it is not your body only, it is your soul I beseech you, by eternity, by its dreadful terrors, by the horrors of hell, by that fearful word, “Eternity — Eternity,” I beseech thee as a man, thy brother, one who loves thee, and who would fain snatch thee from the burning, I beseech thee do not despise thine own mercies; for this is worthy of thee, man, worthy of all thy attention, and worthy of thy heartiest acceptation. Art thou wise? This is more worthy than thy wisdom. Art thou rich? This is worthier than all thy wealth. Art thou famous? This is worthier than all thy honor. Art thou princely? This is worthier than thine ancestry, or than all thy goodly heritage. The thing I preach is the worthiest thing under heaven, because it will last thee when an things else fade away. It will stand by thee when thou hast to stand alone. In the hour of death it will plead for thee when thou hast to answer the summons of justice at God’s bar. And it shall be thine eternal consolation through never ending ages. It is worthy of thy acceptation.

And, now, dost thou feel anxious? Is thy heart sad? Dost thou say, “I desire to be saved. Can I trust to this gospel? Is it strong enough to bear me? I am an elephantine sinner; will not its pillars crumble like leaves beneath my weight of sin ?” “I the chief of sinners am ;” will its portals be wide enough to receive me? My spirit is diseased with sin; can this medicine cure it? Yes, it is worthy of you: it is equal to your disease, it is equal to your wants, it is all-sufficient for your demands. If I had a halfgospel to preach, or a defective one, I would not preach it earnestly; but I have one that is worthy of all acceptation. “But, sir I have been a thief, a whoremonger, a drunkard.” It is worthy of thee, for he came to save sinners, and thou art one. “But, sir, I have been a blasphemer.” It does not exclude even thee; it is worthy of thy acceptation. But, mark, it is worthy of all the acceptation you can give it. You may not only accept it in your head but in your heart; you may press it to your soul and call it all in an, you may feed on it, and live on it. And if you live for it, and suffer for it, and die for it, it is worthy of all.

I must let you go now; but my spirit feels as if it would linger here. Strange it should be that many men should not care for their own souls, when your minister this day cares for you. What matters it to me whether men be lost or saved? Shall I be any the better for your salvation? Assuredly there is little gain there. And yet I feel more for you, many of you, than you feel for yourselves. Oh, strange hardening of the heart, that a man should not care for his men salvation, that he should, without a thought, reject the most precious truth. Stay, sinner stay, ere thou turnest from thine own mercy — stay, once more — perhaps this shall be thy last warning, or worse, it may be the last warning thou shalt ever feel. Thou feelest it now. Oh I beseech thee quench not the Spirit. Go not forth from this place to talk with idle gossip on thy way home. Go not forth to forget what manner of man thou art. But hasten to thy home; seek thy chamber; shut to the door; fall on thy face by thy bedside; confess thy sin; cry unto Jesus, tell him thou art a wretch undone without his sovereign grace, tell him thou has heard this morning that he came to save sinners, and that the thought of such a love as that hath made thee lay down the weapons of thy rebellion, and that thou art desirous to be his. There on thy face plead with him, and say unto him, “Lord save me, or I perish.”

The Lord bless you all for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE  
NO. 2300

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 19, 1893. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 28, 1889.

**“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”** *1Ti 1:15***.**

I SPOKE, yesterday, with a brother minister who had been a pastor in America, and I asked him why he was so anxious to go back again where the climate had so greatly tried him. He answered, “I love the people to whom I preach.” “What sort of people are they?” I enquired. “Well,” he replied, “they are a people who come together anxious to get good. They do not try to find fault with me, but they seek to get all the good they can out of the Gospel I preach.” “Well,” I said, “it is worth while crossing the ocean to go to a congregation of that sort of people.” You know, dear Friends, how it is with some people, as it was with one friend to whom I spoke last Tuesday. God had blessed the Word to his soul and he was converted, but he had been hearing me some time before and I said to him, “How was it, do you think, that during those other years that you came here, you did not find the Savior?” “Oh, Sir!” he answered, “I am afraid it was because I came to hear you, and when I had been here and heard you, I was quite satisfied. But when God taught me to come here to look for Christ, and to seek eternal life, then I obtained the blessing.” Now, will you who are here, tonight, especially you who are not saved, try to hear me in that fashion, not noticing how I preach, because I do not care much about that, myself—and you need to care about it far less—but only to think what good can be got out of it? Let each hearer ask himself, “Is there anything of saving benefit to my soul in what the preacher will say tonight?”

Now, this text contains the Gospel in brief, and yet I may say that it contains the Gospel in full. If you get condensed notes of a sermon or a speech, you often miss the very soul and marrow of it, but here you get all the condensation possible, as if the great Truths of the Gospel were pressed together by a hydraulic ram, and yet there is not a particle of it left out. It is one of the “little Bibles,” as Luther used to call them—the Gospel in a verse. The essence of the whole Bible is here— “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

I. Now I am going to be short upon each point and, therefore, I shall at once speak upon this first head. Here is OUR NAME, OR A BROAD WORD OF DESCRIPTION—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” One of the most important questions that can be asked by any man is this, For whom is salvation meant? The answer we have is given by the Holy Spirit in the Inspired Word of God—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Jesus Christ came to save sinners of all sorts. So long as you can come under the general description, “sinners,” it matters not what shape your sin has taken. All men have, alike, sinned, and yet all have not sinned in the same way. They have all wandered the downward road and yet each one has gone a different way from all the rest. Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable sinners and disreputable sinners! He came into the world to save proud sinners and despairing sinners! He came into the world to save drunks, thieves, liars, whoremongers, adulterers, murderers and such! Whatever sort of sin there is, this Word of God is wonderfully comprehensive and sweeping—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

A black lot, a horrible crew, they are, and Hell is their due reward, but these are the people Jesus came to save. If there are any people in the world who are not sinners, Jesus did not come to save them because such people do not want a Savior. If there are any of you who venture to say that you have never sinned, well then, you need not listen to me, for I have nothing to say to you, nor has this Book of God, except to tell you that you are under a grievous error and a great delusion! There can be no mercy to a man who has committed no fault. Some time ago there was a man incarcerated for life for an offense he never committed and, when it was found out that he was not guilty, Her Majesty insulted him, I think, by giving him “a free pardon.” Why, he had never committed the crime for which he had suffered, poor Soul, and he had been a year, at least, in confinement as a felon, though he was innocent! I think Her Majesty should have begged his pardon and given him large compensation. Pardon and mercy are not for innocent people—they are for the guilty! And the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, came into the world, not to save the innocent, the righteous and the good—but to save sinners!

Notice, next, that Jesus came to save sinners without any other qualification. There is a habit which some have of qualifying the word, sinner, as we have it in the hymn—

“Come, **humble** sinner, in whose breast**,**”  
and so on. I think the writer of that hymn put it—  
“Come, **trembling** sinner, in whose breast  
A thousand thoughts revolve.”  
But when Jesus Christ invites sinners, He does it after this fashion, “Come, sinners.” “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” There is no adjective before the noun! There is no sort of qualification except that they are sinners.  
Christ Jesus came to save hardened sinners, for He softens the heart. He came to save aggravated sinners, for He breaks the iron sinew of the neck and subdues the stubborn will. He came to save sinners who have no good thing in them. “If you have any merit,” said one to another, “if you have any good thing about you, it is like a drop of rose water in a sea of filth.” But, truly, there is not even that one drop of rose water in our nature—nor need there be in order that Christ may save us! He came to save sinners—that is all Paul says. I dare not limit what is left unlimited. I dare not qualify what is left unqualified. “Sinners”—that is all the Apostle says. What? If they have no trace of goodness, no mark of anything excellent? Yes. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”  
This means, also, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners in their pollution. Remember that sin is a very offensive thing. When conscience is really awakened to discover the pollution of sin, it is seen to be exceedingly sinful, a thing that is truly horrible. We are taught, in the Scriptures, even to hate the garments spotted by the flesh—and there is such a thing as a righteous indignation against sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to save the polluted, to save those against whom virtue gives her vote, to save those whom society expels! What a wonderful thing “society” is, itself rotten to the core very often and yet, if there happens to be a poor woman who has gone astray, “society” cries, “Put her out! Drive the wretched creature away from us.” I have known one such turned out of hotel after hotel. They could not bear their righteous selves to come anywhere near to one who had in the least degree broken the laws of society!  
But it was not so with Christ. Notwithstanding all His sense of the horror of sin—and it is much greater than our sense of it, for His mind is sensitive because of its supreme purity—yet, notwithstanding that, He came into the world to save sinners! And with sinners He mixed, even with publicans and harlots! With sinners He sat at meat. With sinners He lived. With sinners He died! He made His grave with the wicked. He entered Paradise with a thief! And today, those who sing the new song in Heaven confess that they were sinners, for they say, “You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Yes, notwithstanding the pollution of sin, Christ came to save sinners!  
He came, also, to save sinners under the curse. Sin is a cursed thing. God has never blessed sin and He never will do so. Though sin may seem to flourish, for a time, the blight of the Almighty is upon it—the breath of the great Judge of All will wither up everything that grows of evil. He cannot bear it—His fire shall burn, even to the lowest Hell, against all iniquity! And yet, though you are under the curse, Jesus Christ came into the world to save the accursed sinner by taking the curse upon Himself, and Himself hanging on the tree of the curse, and bearing the curse for us, that we might be saved! Do you feel the curse of God in your spirit, tonight? Does it seem to dry up all the springs of your life? Then remember, notwithstanding that, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Once more, Christ came to save sinners without strength. Sin brings death. Wherever sin reigns, the power to do good dies out. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you, also, do good that are accustomed to do evil.” But when you are without strength, ah, even without strength to believe on Him—without strength to feel your sin, without strength to feel even a desire to be better—even then it is true that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I know He did, for the first good desires are His gift. The first prayers are His own breath. The first sigh under the burden of sin is His own work. Jesus does it all! He came into the world to save us. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly,” those in whom there could not be any trace of goodness—“the ungodly”—those who were without God and without hope in the world. It is for such that Jesus Christ came into the world. I do not know how to set this gate open wider. I will take it right off its hinges and I will pull up post and bar and all and defy the very devils of Hell to come and shut this City of Refuge against any soul, here, that is a sinner! If you have sinned, behold, the voice of Everlasting Love speaks aloud to you, tonight, these words, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”  
II. I must not dwell long on any one word in our text, so I pass to another. In the second place, here is OUR NEED, OR A WIDE WORD OF SALVATION. We poor sinners need saving and, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”  
Jesus came to save. He did not come to condemn us. When God came down upon earth, it might have been thought that He must have come to condemn, for when He came down to look at the tower of Babel, and saw the sin of the world, He scattered the sinners upon the face of all the earth. Now, it might be thought that if He came on earth, He would be shocked and horrified by a personal investigation of sin and then would say, “I will destroy the world.” But Jesus said, “The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world, through Him, might be saved.” If you get condemnation out of the Gospel, you put the condemnation into it yourselves! It is not the Gospel, but your rejection of it, that will condemn you. Therefore, I pray God that you may never put from you the Word of God and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, as they did to whom Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch.  
But, next, Christ did NOT come into the world to help us to save ourselves. He came to save us—not to set us on our legs and say, “Now you do so much, and I will do the rest.” No, He came to save us! From top to bottom salvation is all of Grace, and all the gift of God by Jesus Christ. He did not come into the world, I say, to make us salvable, but to save us— nor to put us in the way of somehow or other meriting salvation! He came, Himself, to be the Savior and to save sinners. Cannot you see that you, who have been trying to spin a robe of righteousness, got all that you did in the day unraveled before night? You who have been knitting part of a garment to cover your nakedness, put your knitting needles down, and take what Christ has finished! Come, you who have been working hard, like prisoners on a treadmill, trying to get to Heaven that way, you will never do it! See another ladder, like that which Jacob saw of old, that reaches from Heaven to earth, and from earth to Heaven, and may God enable you to climb to Him that way, but not by a way of your own! Jesus did not come to help us to save ourselves.  
And He did not come to save us in part, that we might do the rest. It takes a long time to make some men know this. I know numbers of Christian people who still have one foot on the rock, and the other foot on the sand. There is a certain, or rather, uncertain doctrine that always makes people feel unsafe. It is that you must not say that you are saved, but that if you hold on your way, and keep on the right road, then, perhaps, when you come to die, you may begin to hope that you are saved. I would not give two pence for such a Gospel as that! We need salvation given to us outright and given to us forever—and this is what Christ does give us when we come and trust in Him. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” He is saved, then and there, by the act of God. “He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He did not come to save us in part.  
And the Lord Jesus Christ has not come to make us content to be unsaved. I have sometimes heard people talk to the unconverted like this, “Now, you must wait. You must wait. You cannot do anything, therefore, sit still and wait until something happens to you.” That is not the Gospel! The Gospel is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Read the Bible through and learn what God has revealed there. Lay aside your own system and notion. You will not find that the Lord Jesus Christ said to the man at Bethesda, “Now, lie at the pool till the angel comes and stirs it.” That is old Judaism that does that! But Jesus said, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” When Jesus speaks to sinners like that, they will rise and take up their beds and walk!  
Somebody says, “But you, poor minister that you are, cannot tell men to take up their beds and walk—and make them do it.” Yes, we can, when our Master speaks through us, and when we deliver the Lord’s message in faith, resting on the power of the Holy Spirit! We can still be used by the Lord to work miracles. The dry bones are made to hear the voice of the Lord’s servant when the Holy Spirit goes with the voice and they are quickened by Divine power—  
*“The Gospel bids the dead revive,  
Sinners obey the voice and live!  
Dry bones are raised, and clothed afresh,  
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh!”*  
Again, I say, Jesus did not come to make sinners contented to be lost, or to sit down and wait as if salvation did not concern them. No, He came to save sinners.  
Well, what does it mean, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners? It means that He came to save them from the punishment of their sin. Their sin shall not be laid to their charge so that they shall be condemned for it. That is one thing. He came, also, to save them from the pollution of their sin, so that, though their mind has been debased, and their taste degraded, and their conscience deadened by sin, He came to take that evil away and give them a tender heart, a hatred of sin, a love for holiness and a desire for purity. But Jesus came to do more than that. He came to take away our tendencies to sin, tendencies which are born in us and grow with us. He came, by His Spirit, to eradicate them, to pluck them up by the roots, to put within us another principle which shall fight with the old principle of sin and overcome it—till Christ, alone, shall reign, and every thought shall be brought into captivity to Him. He came to save His people from apostasy. He came into the world to save sinners by keeping them faithful to the end so that they shall not go back unto perdition—  
*“Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given.  
More happy, but not more secure,  
The glorified spirits in Heaven.”*  
A very important part of the work of Grace is this. To start a man right is but little, but to keep that man holding on, even to the end—this is a triumph of Almighty Grace, and this is what Christ has come to do! Jesus came into the world, not to half save you, not to save you in this direction or that, and in this light or that, but to save you from your sin, to save you from an angry temper, to save you from pride, to save you from strong drink, to save you from covetousness, to save you from every evil thing— and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy! This is a grand word, “Christ Jesus came into the word to save sinners.” Oh, that you might believe it! I pray God that out of this congregation, which is wonderfully large for such a night, and yet small compared with our usual number on a Thursday evening, there may be very many who will say, “Yes, I believe that Jesus came to save sinners and I trust Him to save me.” You will be saved the moment that you do that, for faith is the mark of His salvation, the proof that He has saved you! III. But now, thirdly, there is a name here. We have had our own name, sinners. Now here is HIS NAME, OR A GLORIOUS WORD OF HONOR— “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Christ Jesus! Not an angel, not the best of men, but Christ Jesus!  
“Christ” means, as you know, Anointed, that is, God sent Him, anointed by His own Spirit, prepared, fitted, qualified and endowed for the work of saving. Jesus comes not without an anointing from God! He is not an amateur Savior, come on His own account, without any commission or authority, but God has anointed Him in order that He may save sinners. When He went into the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath, He applied to Himself the words

of the Prophet Elijah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”  
The other part of His name is “Jesus,” that is, Savior. He has come, therefore, to be the Anointed Savior, commissioned to be a Savior, and if He is not a Savior, (I say it with all reverence), He is nothing! He came into the world to save and if He does not save, He has missed His mark! He laid His heavenly Glories down to take this still higher Glory, that He might be the Savior of sinners. The angels sang concerning Him, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” And the angel of the Lord said to Joseph—“You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” Beloved, notice this—the Savior of sinners is not the Virgin Mary—saints are not saviors, but, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, “very God of very God,” the Creator of all things, sustaining all things by the word of His power. He came into the world, to Bethlehem’s manger and afterwards to Calvary’s Cross, with this as His one business—that He might save sinners! Is He not able to save? Is He not just the Savior that we need? God and yet Man in one Person! He is able to sympathize because He is Man, and He is able to save because He is God! Blessed God-Man, Jesus Christ, only You are able to save me! I cannot dwell longer on that part of my theme, but I wish that you who are seeking salvation would let your thoughts dwell upon it until you have truly trusted Him as your Savior.  
IV. The fourth thing in the text is HIS DEED, OR A SURE WORD OF FACT. “Christ Jesus came into the world.” We have not to look to what He will do to save sinners, for He has done it!  
He came into the world. He existed long before He came out of Heaven into this world. He was in the beginning with God and He came here. You and I began our existence here, but He existed from the beginning! In the Glory of the Father and in the fullness of time He came into the world. He came willingly. It is put so in our text—“Christ Jesus came into the world.” There is a kind of voluntariness evident in the words. He was sent, for He is the Christ, the Messiah, but He came of His own free will—  
*“Down from the shining seats above,  
With joyful haste He fled.”*  
He came into the world. I say, again, the salvation of sinners is not a thing to be accomplished in the future. If God had promised it, we might trust as Abraham did, when He saw Christ’s day afar off and was glad, but Jesus has come—He has been here—God Almighty has been here in human form, dwelling among men! He came into the world to save sinners. He came into the world so far that He knew the world’s griefs and bore them, the world’s penalty, the world’s shame and reproach, the world’s sickness and the world’s death. He came into the world, into the very center and heart of this ungodly world, and there He dwelt, “holy, harmless, and undefiled.”  
Christ Jesus came into the world and when He came here, it was such a wonderful coming that He stayed here. Some 33 years He was here and all that while He was still seeking to save sinners. During the last three years He went about doing good, always hunting up sinners—and at the end of His service for sinners He stretched out His hands and feet, and yielded up Himself to die for sinners. He breathed out His very soul for sinners. “Who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” I do not feel that I have any need to find any words of mine to try to garnish this Gospel of the Glory of the Blessed God. It is the greatest theme on which a man ever spoke! It needs no oratory to set it forth! The story, itself, is marvelous, “the old, old story of Jesus and His love.” God could not in justice pass over human sin without an atonement, but He made the Atonement, Himself! Jesus, who is One with the Father, came here and offered Himself as a Sacrifice that He might save sinners. Now, if He does not save sinners, His coming here is a failure. Do you believe, can you imagine, that Christ’s coming into the world could be a failure? In my very soul I believe that all He meant to accomplish by His coming here He will accomplish—that no man shall ever be able to point to any failure in this grandest of Divine enterprises! There is no failure in Creation—there will be no failure in Providence! And when the whole story is ended, there will be no failure in this great work of Redemption! “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” and sinners shall be saved. Will you be among them, my dear Hearer? Why should you not be among them?  
V. Once more. We have here, in the fifth place, OUR ACCEPTANCE, OR A WORD OF PERSONALITY. The Apostle says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” I am not going to dispute with the Apostle and yet, if he were here, I should be a little dubious as to his right to the title of, “chief of sinners,” and I would ask him whether, if he were chief, I was not the next. I suppose that there are many here who would say, “Paul sinned no more grievously than we did before our conversion.” I remember, in preaching once, I said that if I ever got to Heaven, those lines would be true of me—  
*“Then loudest of the crowd I’ll sing,  
While Heaven’s resounding mansions ring,  
With shouts of Sovereign Grace.”*  
When I had done preaching, a lady met me in the aisle and she said, “You made one mistake in your sermon.” “Oh, dear Heart!” I replied, “I daresay I made twenty.” She said, “But the one you made was this. You said that you would sing the loudest when you got to Heaven—but you will not. When I get there, I shall owe more to the Grace of God than you will—you have not been such a sinner as I have been.” Well, I found all the other saints around us were of a mind to contest about which should praise God most because of the great things He had done for them in saving their souls! Ralph Erskine wrote a hymn about the contention among the birds of paradise as to which should praise God best, and he describes the different kinds of people in Heaven all vying with each other in magnifying the name of the Lord who had redeemed them! But that is not my theme just now.  
When we come and appropriate this sinner’s Savior, we do it, first, by a confession. “Lord, I am a sinner. I know it. I mourn over it. I confess to You that I have broken Your righteous Law.” Then there follows, on that confession, a sense of humiliation. Did Jesus come into the world to save me? Then I am a greater sinner than I thought I was, first, that I should need the Son of God to save me and, next, that I should sin against love so amazing, so surprising, as to rebel against One who would come into the world to save me! The more we appreciate Christ’s saving sinners, the more we depreciate ourselves. He who has a great Savior will feel himself to be a great sinner. And he who has the best and clearest view of Christ is the man who will say, “Of whom—namely, of the saved sinners—I am chief.”  
Now, this appropriation of Christ, which began with confession and went on to deep self-humiliation, flowers into faith, because, notice, the Apostle says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Though he says that he is chief of them, yet he means, also, “I am one of those He came to save.” “Of whom I am chief.” “Oh, yes, I am one of those he came to save!” Faith enables the soul to say that. My dear Friends, I do trust that, by the Grace of God, many of you will say that, tonight. “Lord Jesus, I trust in You. Of the multitude that You did come to save, who are described as sinners, I am one.”  
This appropriation of Christ by faith will go on to open confession of Him. The Apostle confesses that, while he was the chief of sinners, yet Christ died for him, and you will be led to make that confession. I hope that you will do it as our friends are going to do it tonight—by obedience to Christ’s Law in Baptism, as He bids you, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.”  
One thing I notice about my text which greatly delights me. Paul says, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” No, no, Paul, that expression will not do! Why, my dear Man, you are a scholar, and yet you have made a mistake in the tense of the verb! It is not sum, “I am,” but fui, “I was.” “No, no,” says Paul, “never bring your Latin in here. My Greek expression is, ‘I am chief.’” “What? After being saved, after being forgiven, still are you chief of sinners?” “Yes,” he says, “it is so.” And it is possible for a man to be not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles and yet to feel that, in putting his whole life together, he has to take his place among the sinners, yes, at the head of them, as the chief of sinners!  
I think I told you that I once tried the plan, which some of our Brothers and Sisters try, of praying to God as a saint. Why, I have seen some of our Brethren, when they have had a Sunday out, with their best go-to-meeting clothes on, talk about their being perfect, and they looked exactly like the peacock I saw with his tail spread out, strutting along so grandly! Well, I rather liked the look of that fine show—there was something very beautiful in it—so I tried it, myself, once. I went to God in prayer boasting about my virtues, my attainments, my growth in His Grace and my service for Him. I think that I have as good a right to do that as anybody else has. I have served God with all my might and I have laid everything at His feet. But when I tried to pray that way, I knocked at the gate and nobody came! I knocked again, but nobody came. There is a little wicket, you know, that they open, just to look out to see who is there. So they asked, “Who is that knocking?” I answered, “Oh, it is a saint! It is one who has grown in Grace until he is perfectly sanctified, one who has preached the Gospel for many years.”  
They just shut the gate at once—they did not know anything about me in that capacity! So I stood there and got nothing. At last, broken-hearted and full of grief, I knocked again with all my might, and when they asked, “Who is there?” I said, “Here is a poor sinner who has often come to Christ in that capacity, and has taken Him to be his whole righteousness and salvation, and he has come, again, just as he used to come.” “Ah!” they said, “it is you, is it? We have known you for many years! You are always welcome.” I found that I had access to my God when I said, “I am the chief of sinners. I am still a sinner.”  
Well, now, putting myself in that position where I always must be and always hope to be, I would say to any sinner here, whoever yon may be, come, Friend, come along with me to the Cross! One says, “But I cannot go with you. You have been a minister of the Gospel these 30 years and more.” My dear Friend, I am still a poor sinner and I have to look to Christ every day as I did at the very first. Come along with me! Come along with me! It is many, many years since, on a snowy morning, I looked to Him and was lightened. I wish that, this snowy night, some soul here would look to Him and live!  
I had much more to say, but the time has gone, so I just leave you with my text, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” It is a blessed proverb, an Apostolic proverbial saying—but it is a true saying—“It is a faithful saying.” Everybody who has tried it has found it true! It is worthy of the acceptation of you all, and it is worthy of all the acceptation that any one of you can give to it. You may come and trust your soul on it for time and for eternity! You may come with all your burden of sin upon your shoulders. You may come with all your need of feeling, with all your hardness of heart and just take as your Savior this Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners! Only trust Him and when you have trusted Him, you have done much more than you dream. Some people think that there is nothing in faith, but God is pleased with it and, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” If God is pleased with it, there is a great deal more in it than some imagine! That faith contains within itself a future life of holiness! It is the one acorn out of which countless forests will yet grow! Believe! May the Lord help you to believe in Jesus immediately! Ere you leave this place, trust Him! Trust Him wholly. He came to save sinners. Let Him save you! It is His business—it is not yours. Leave yourself in His hands and He will save you, to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON. *1Ti 1:1-17***.**

Verse 1. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope. Christ is our hope. We have not a shadow of a hope apart from Him. I remember, when on the Continent, seeing on a cross the words, “Spes unica,” the unique, the only hope of man—and that is true of the Cross of Christ, and of Christ who suffered on it. He is our hope!

2. Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. Notice the Apostle’s triple salutation, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” Whenever Paul writes to a Church, he wishes “Grace and peace.” But to a minister he wishes, “grace, mercy, and peace.” Ah, we need mercy more than the average of Christians! We have greater responsibilities and, consequently, might more readily fall into greater sin—so to a minister Paul’s salutation is, “Grace, mercy, and peace.”

3, 4. As I besought you to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that you might charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. You see, the Apostle, in his day, had to contend against those who ran away from the simplicity of the Gospel into all manner of fables and inventions. Such, in our day, are the doctrine of evolution, the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, the doctrine of post-mortem salvation, the doctrine of the final restitution of all men, and all sorts of fables and falsehoods which men have invented!

5-7. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from, which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the Law; understanding neither what they say, nor of which they affirm. There were some who put the Law of God into its wrong place. They made it a way of salvation—which it never was meant to be, and never can be. It is a way of conviction! It is an instrument of humbling! It shows us the evil of sin, but it never takes sin away.

8. But we know that the Law is good, if a man uses it lawfully. In its own place it has its own uses, and these are most important.  
9-13. Knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer. Paul must have written this verse with many tears. What a wonder of Divine Grace it was that he should be put into the sacred ministry, to bear testimony for Christ, when he had been, before, a blasphemer!  
13. And a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. He almost thought that if he had done all this willfully, he might not have been forgiven, but he felt that, here, God spied out the only extenuating circumstance, namely, that he was mistaken—“I did it ignorantly, in unbelief.”  
14, 15. And the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am, chief. He spoke from his heart, from deep experience. This, indeed, was, to him, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God that had saved him, the very chief of sinners! He could, therefore, with confidence commend it to others as worthy of all acceptation.  
16. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting. The case of Paul is not a singular one—it is the pattern one. If there are any here who feel that they have sinned like Saul of Tarsus, they may be forgiven like Paul the Apostle! He is a pattern to all who should thereafter believe in Christ to life everlasting! Just as we often see things cut out in brown paper and sold as patterns, so is the Apostle Paul the pattern convert! What God did for him, He can do for thousands of others.  
17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Paul could not help this outburst of praise! He must put in a doxology. When he remembered his own conversion and pardon, and his being entrusted with the ministry of the Gospel, he was obliged to put down his pen and lift up his voice in grateful thanksgiving to God. So may it be with us as we remember what great things the Lord has done for us!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3089 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

A SERMON ON A GRAND OLD TEXT  
NO. 3089

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1908.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”** *1Ti 1:15***.**

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, are as follows—Sermon #184, Volume 4—THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL; #1345, Volume 23—FOR WHOM IS

THE GOSPEL MEANT?; #1416, Volume 24—THE FAITHFUL SAYING; #1837, Volume 31—A GREAT GOSPEL FOR GREAT SINNERS and #2300, Volume 39—THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE—  
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

YOU will observe that Paul wrote this verse immediately after he had given a little outline of his own personal history. He had, he said, been “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.” And then he added this priceless Gospel verse, as if he inferred it from God’s Grace to him, as well as received it by Inspiration, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” It was an experimental text, then, one which the Apostle fetched out of the deeps of his own soul, as divers bring pearls from the ocean bed. He dipped his pen into his own heart when he wrote these words. No preaching or teaching can equal that which is experimental. If we would impress the Gospel upon others, we must have first received it ourselves. Vainly do you attempt to guide a child in the pathway which you have never trodden, or to speak to adults of benefits of Divine Grace which you have never enjoyed. Happy is that preacher who can truly say he speaks what he does know and testifies what he has seen.

The testimony of Paul is peculiarly forcible because he was a very straightforward man. Before his conversion, he was second to none in opposing the Gospel. He was a downright man who never did anything by halves. As the old Saxon proverb puts it, “It was neck or nothing with him.” He threw his whole nature into anything which he espoused and it must have been indeed a mighty inward force which led him to speed forward so eagerly in the directly opposite way to that which he had pursued with enthusiasm throughout the early part of his life! He was an honest man, a man to whom it was impossible either to lie or to be neutral. He was truthful, sincere, outspoken, wearing his heart upon his sleeve and carrying his soul in his open hand. When we hear him say, at the outcome of his own personal experience, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, we may be sure that he believed it with his whole being—and we may receive his testimony as one which he lived to prove and died to seal with his blood! Never had a fact a better witness— he lost all for its sake and counted that loss his greatest gain! Hear his words, for he speaks to you from the ground which received his blood— his blood speaks better things than that of Abel, and it cries with a voice no less loud and clear!

The text, as we find it, is like a picture surrounded with a goodly border. We sometimes see paintings of the old masters in which the bordering is as full of art as the picture itself. We might safely say as much of our text. We will look at its framework first. Here it is—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.” When we have carefully considered that, we will study the great masterpiece itself, meditating upon the matchless saying, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” When we have noticed the preface and the saying, you will then allow me to preach a short sermon upon it.

I. First, then, THE FRAMEWORK. Paul says, “it is a saying.” When we declare a sentence to be a saying, we mean that it is commonly spoken and usually said, so that everybody knows it—it is town talk—“familiar in our mouths as household words.” Those who like harder words, explain that this is an axiom, a Christian axiom—a selfevident Truth of God, a thing which nobody who is a Christian doubts at all. But I will keep to our own version and add that I greatly wish that our text were more truly a saying among all Christian people at this day. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is a Truth of God which we all believe, but do we all talk about it so frequently as to make it, in very deed, a saying? Do you think that our servants, who have lived for months in our houses, would in their gossips say, “It was one of my master’s sayings, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”? I will even ask—Do you think that if a person attended our places of worship for years, he would be able to say conscientiously, “Why, it was our minister’s ordinary saying! It was quite a proverb with him—he was always repeating that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”? Yet a sentence cannot he called “a saying” until it is often said. It does not get into the category of sayings and is not called by that name unless it is a matter of ordinary common talk!  
I gather, then, from this, that Christian people ought to talk more about the Gospel than they do, and a great deal more about that primary and elementary Truth of the Gospel, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world to save the guilty. Believers ought so often to speak of it that it should be currently reported, among even ungodly people, as one of our common phrases and stock speeches. I would like them to be able to taunt us with it as a main part of our conversation. It would even be a good sign if they complained that we wearied them with it! Let them say, Why, they are always harping on that string! Even their children lisp it! Their young men boast of it, and their matrons and their sires affirm it and add their solemn seal thereunto, as if it were the sheet-anchor of their lives!” O you who know the wondrous story, talk of the Gospel by the way! Talk of it when you sit in your houses! Speak of it at your work! Tell it to those who pass you in the street or in the fields! Make the world hear it! Make society ring with it! If there is a new saying, though it is but a jest, men report it and every newspaper finds a corner for it. Are we to be silent about this oldest and yet newest saying? Men rejoice in bon mots, and yet this is the best of words! We have the really good news—let us publish it, let us popularize the Gospel and compel men to know what it is! If before some men we are less communicative upon the more mysterious Truths of God because we fear to cast pearls before swine, yet let this simple Truth, since Scripture calls it “a saying,” be spoken again and again and again till it shall be confessed to be a common word among us!  
Now Paul did not merely write “it is a saying,” but, “it is a faithful saying,” a saying worthy of faith, a saying full of the Truth of God, a saying about which no doubts may be entertained, a sure and certain saying, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Many sayings in the world had been much better left unsaid. There are proverbs which pass current among us as gold, which are spurious metal and no man can tell the mischief which an untruthful proverb may work. But this is a saying fraught with unmingled benefit—it is pure Truth of God, a leaf of the Tree of Life sent for the healing of the nations! Some matters which were important years ago are now worn out. Times have changed and circumstances have altered—and things are not now what they were to our forefathers. But this is a faithful saying because it is as practically true today as when, 1800 years ago the Apostle wrote it to the beloved Timothy. This is still a saying full of blessing to the nations, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Like the sun, it shines with the same golden light as in the ages past and, blessed be God, it will still shine when you and I have gone to our rest! And if this crazy world holds out another thousand years, or even fifty thousand, the Light of the Gospel will not have grown dim! This coin of Heaven will not have lost its image or its superscription when time shall be no more—it is of God’s minting and will outlast the world—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Ah, you heard it when you were a boy and you did not think much of it. Your years are now many and your life has almost run its course and you are still unsaved! But thank God that now, in your old age, we have the same Truth of God to tell to you, though you rejected it in your boyhood, and it is quite as certain now as then that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” To the eleventh hour this precious sentence abides sure. May none of you despise it or doubt it, but each one of you prove it to be God’s own word of salvation!  
Our Apostle, however, adds yet another word—this saying “is worthy of all acceptation.” I think he meant two things. It is worthy of all the acceptation anyone can give it and it is worthy of the acceptation of all men. Some sayings are not worth accepting—the sooner you have done with them and forgotten them, the better for you. But this saying you may receive as the Word of God and, having received it as Truth to other men, it will be a happy circumstance if you receive it as Truth to yourself, for it will be a blessed day to you when you appropriate it as your own! “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” If I, feeling myself a sinner, infer that Jesus came to save me, I may without any fear rest assured that I am accepting a Truth of God, for, believing in Jesus, I may safely rejoice that He came to save me. You may receive this Truth not only into your ear—it is worthy of that acceptation, or into the memory—it is worthy of that acceptation, but you may receive it into your inmost heart—it is worthiest of all of that acceptation! And receiving it, you may lay upon it all the stress of your soul’s interests for the past, the present and the future, for time and for eternity! You may accept it as being the mainstay, the prop and pillar of your confidence, for it is worthy of all the acceptation that you or any other man can possibly give to it!  
It is worthy, we have said, of the acceptation of all mankind. The richest, the greatest, the most learned, the most innocent, the most pure—speaking after the manner of men—these may accept it—it is worthy of their acceptation. In the sight of God they are still guilty and need that Christ should save them. And, on the other hand, the lowest, the most ignorant, the most groveling, depraved, debauched, abandoned, helpless, hopeless, lost castaways may receive it, for it is true to them— emphatically to them—for Jesus Christ came into the world to save just such offenders as they are! If I stood in Cheapside tomorrow and any man out of the crowd should come to me and ask, “Is that sentence, ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,’ worth my believing and accepting?” I would not hesitate, but, without knowing who spoke to me, I would reply, “Yes.” If he stopped his carriage and came to me, or if he took his hand off the costermonger’s barrow, or left his shoe-blacking box, or came with his rags about him, or if he had escaped from the prison omnibus—it would not matter who he was—I might safely assure him that this saying is worthy of his acceptation! It is not a stoop for a king or a saint to receive it, and yet it meets the level of the poorest and the worst of characters. It is worthy of everybody’s acceptance!  
Beloved Friends, no one can ever rightly accuse us of making too much of the Gospel. However earnest we may be, we can never be too earnest—and however diligent to spread it, we can never be too diligent— for it is a Gospel worthy of every man’s acceptance and, therefore, worthy of every Christian’s publication! Spread it! Let the winds bear it, let every wave proclaim it! Write it everywhere, that every eye may see it! Sound it in all places, that every ear may hear it! Simple are the words and to some men their meaning is despised as almost childish, but it is the great Power of God! “A mere platitude,” they say, yet it is a platitude which has made Heaven ring with sacred mirth, a platitude which will make earth’s deserts blossom like a rose, a platitude which has turned many a man’s Hell into Heaven and his densest darkness into the brightness of Glory! Ring out that note again, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”! It is worthy of angelic trumpets, it is worthy of the orator’s loftiest speech and of the philosopher’s most profound thought! It is worthy of every Christian’s publication, as surely as it is of the acceptance of every human being. God help us never to undervalue it, but to prize it beyond all price! There is the frame of the picture—the basket of silver which holds the apples of gold!  
II. Our meditation now turns to THE SAYING ITSELF—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Very briefly and simply I will open up this passage as if none of us had, up to now, understood it. May the Holy Spirit instruct us!  
Here is, first, a Person coming—a Divine Person—Christ Jesus the anointed Savior. The Son of God, the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, became the Savior of sinners. “Very God of very God” was He. He created the earth and upon His shoulders the pillars thereof still lean. Yes, He who was personally offended by human sin—He, Himself, deigned to become the Savior of men. Weigh this and marvel and adore!  
Next, you have the deed He did—He “came into the world.” He was born a Baby in Bethlehem. It was thus He came into the world. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Thirty years and more He lived in the world, sharing to the full its poverty and toil. He was a working Man, He wore the common garb of labor. He worked, He hungered, He thirsted, He was sick, He was weary. He, in all these senses, came into the world and became Man among men—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. As it was a sinful world, He was vexed with the transgressions of those about Him. As it was a suffering world, He bore our sickness. As it was a dying world, He died—and as it was a guilty world, He died the death of the guilty, suffering in their place the wrath of God!  
Mark well the objective for which He came—He came “to save.” He came into this world because men were lost, that He might find them and save them. They were guilty and He saved them by putting Himself into their place, and bearing the consequences of their guilt. They were foul and He saved them by coming into the world and giving His Holy Spirit, through whose agency they might be made new creatures and so might have pure and holy desires, and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust. He came to sinners to take them just where they are at Hell’s dark door, to cleanse them in His precious blood and fit them to dwell with Himself in eternal Glory, as saved souls forever!  
This is all wonderful. Angels marvel at it, so may we! But the most wonderful fact of all is that He came into the world to save sinners—not the righteous, but the ungodly! Remember His own words, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The physician comes to heal the sick—the Savior comes to save the lost! The attempt to save those who are not lost would be a ridiculous superfluity. To die to pardon those who are not guilty would be a gross absurdity. It is a work of supererogation to set free those who are not in bonds. Christ came not to perform an unnecessary deed. If you are not guilty, the Savior will not save you! If you are not a sinner, you have no part in Christ. If you can say, “I have kept the Law from my youth up and am not a transgressor,”

hen we have no Gospel blessings to set before you. If you were blind, the Lord Jesus would open your eyes, but as you say, “We see,” your sin remains. If you are guilty, the text is full of comfort for you—it drops with honey like a honeycomb—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”  
Lest there should be any mistake, Paul added these words, “of whom I am chief,” or, “of whom I am first.” And Calvin warns us against supposing that the Apostle labored under a mistake or uttered an exaggeration. Paul was an Inspired man writing Inspired Scripture and he spoke the Truth of God. He was, in some respects, the chief of sinners. He went very, very far into sin. It is true that he did it ignorantly in unbelief, but then, unbelief is, in itself, the greatest of all sins. It is an atrocious thing for a man to be an unbeliever—it is a damning sin, what if I say the damning sin? We have heard of a man who had committed a violent assault, who, before the magistrate, pleaded that he was drunk. Now, it is sometimes the case that magistrates admit this as an extenuating circumstance, but the magistrate on that occasion was a sensible man and, therefore, he said, “Very well, then, I give you a month for the assault, and I fine you forty shillings for being drunk. That is another offense and it cannot diminish your guilt.” So is it with unbelief. Though, from one point of view, it might be looked upon as a mitigating circumstance yet, from another, it is really an increase of sin and Paul regarded it as such. And, therefore, he believed himself to be the chief of sinners. Yet he declares that Christ Jesus came to save him! Now, if a great creature can pass through a certain door, a smaller creature can. If a bridge is strong enough to bear an elephant, it will certainly bear a mouse. If the greatest sinner who ever lived has entered into Heaven by the bridge of the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, no man who has ever lived may say, “My sin is beyond forgiveness.” Today no mortal has a just pretence to perish in despair. Some of you continue to despair, but you have no grounds for such a feeling, for this is the good news which is preached to you, that Jesus Christ has come to call the guilty, the lost and the ruined to Himself—and to save the vilest of them with a great salvation!  
III. Thus we have looked at the setting of the text and at the text itself. Now for A BRIEF SERMON upon it.  
Our short homily shall begin with the doctrine of the text—and we will handle it negatively. Notice that our text does not say that Jesus Christ has come to compliment, to encourage or to foster the independent spirit of righteous men. It is not written that He has come to tell us that human nature is not so bad as some think it to be, or that He has come to commend those who are self-reliant and intend to fight their own way to Heaven. There is not a word of the kind and, what is more, there is not a word like it in the entire Book of God! There is no encouragement in Holy Scripture to the man who depends upon himself for salvation, or who imagines or conceives that eternal life can spring out of his own loins, or can be worked out by anything that he can do—and yet our human nature loves to do something to save itself.  
I do not know that I ever felt my blood boil so with indignation, nor my heart melt so much with pity, as when I went to see the Santa Scala, at Rome—the holy staircase up which our Lord is said to have been brought by Pilate. On those very stairs, Martin Luther was crawling on his knees, trying to find pardon for his sins, when the text came to him, “The just shall live by faith.” I stood at the foot of those marble stairs. They are very high and they are covered with wood, lest the knees of the faithful should wear them out—and this wood has been worn away three different times by the kneelers. I saw men, women and children—little children, too, and aged women—going up from step to step upon their knees to find their way to Heaven. On the first step there is a little hole in the wood so that the worshippers may kiss the marble—and they all kissed it and touched it with their foreheads. The middle and top step are favored in the same manner. It was an awful reflection to me to think that those poor creatures really believed that every step their knees knelt on there were so many days less of “purgatory” for them—that every time they went up the stairs there were so many hundreds of days of deliverance from the punishment of their sins! Oh, if they could but have understood this text, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—that men are not saved by crawling on their hands and knees, or by penances and self-inflicted misery—what a blessing it would have been to them! And how they would have turned with scorn from these infamous impostures with which priests seek to mislead and destroy the souls of men! No, the Scripture does not say that Jesus came to encourage the righteous and to help those who are their own saviors.  
Note, again, that it does not say in the text that Jesus Christ came to help sinners to save themselves. There is a Gospel preached which is very much like that—but it is not the Gospel of Christ. The poor man who was wounded on the road to Jericho was found by the Samaritan half-dead. Now the Samaritan did not say to him, “I want you to come part of the way to me in this business.” But he went where he was lying wounded and half-dead and poured the oil and wine into his wounds, bound up the gashes, took him and set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn and did not even ask him to pay the reckoning, but said to the host, “If there is anything more, I will pay you.” If there were anything more to be done for sinners, Jesus would do it, for He would never let them have a share of the work of salvation! The sinner’s business is to take the finished work of Christ, to give up all his own doings and let Him who came from Heaven to save, do the saving which He came to do! It is not ours to interfere, but to let Jesus do His own work!  
Another thought demands expression. The text does not say that Christ came to half-save sinners, intending, when He had completed half the work, to leave them to themselves. There is a motion abroad that men may be saved and yet may fall from Grace—that they may have eternal life, but it is eternal life of an odd kind, for it may die out! They may be pardoned and yet punished! They may be children of God and yet become children of the devil! Members of Christ’s body and yet be cut off and joined to Satan! Blessed be God, it is not so written in this precious Book! Jesus does not begin the saving work and leave it unfinished! When He once puts His hand to it, He will go through with it! His wonderful salvation shall be completed—none shall say that He began, but was not able to finish. Glory be to His name, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners from top to bottom! He will be the Alpha and the Omega, He will be the beginning and the end to all who trust Him!  
One other reflection here. Christ, the real Savior, came into the world to save real sinners. When Luther was under a bitter sense of sin, he said, “Oh, but my guilt is so great I cannot believe that Christ can save me!” But one who was helping him much said to him, “If you were only the semblance of a sinner, then Christ would only be the semblance of a Savior. But if you are a real sinner, then you should rejoice that a real Savior has come to save you.” If we meet with a man who says, “Yes, I am a sinner, I know I am a sinner, but I do not know that I ever did much amiss. I have always been honest and correct,” such a person has a name to be a sinner and no more. He is a sham sinner and a sham savior would suit him well. But for another who confesses that he has been a grievous transgressor, there is a real Savior. Rejoice, O you guilty ones, that the Christ of God, Himself, really came, with real blood and presented a real Atonement to take away real sins, such as theft, drunkenness, swearing, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, lying, murder and things I need not mention lest the cheek of modesty should blush! Even these can be blotted out by the real Savior who has come to save the chief of sinners from suffering what is due to their sins! Oh, that we could ring this great Gospel bell till the hills and valleys were filled with its music! May the Lord open men’s ears and hearts that those who hear the glad tidings may accept the Savior who has come to save them!  
My little sermon has dealt with the doctrine of the text, now it must treat of the differences from the text which are these. First, it is a great and a difficult thing to save a sinner, for the Son of God must come into the world to do it. It could not have been accomplished by any other except Jesus Christ—He Himself must leave the Throne of Heaven for the manger of earth and lay aside His Glories to suffer, bleed and die. If soulsaving is so great and difficult a work, let the Lord Jesus have all the Glory of it now that it is accomplished! Let us never put the crown on the wrong head, or neglect to honor the Lord who bought us so dearly. Unto the Lamb of God be honor and Glory, forever and ever! Amen.  
And next, it must be a good thing to save a sinner, since Jesus would not have come from Heaven to earth on an ill errand. It must be a great blessing to a sinner to be saved. Dear Brothers and Sisters, this ought to lead all of us to consecrate ourselves to be willing instruments in the hand of Christ in endeavoring to rescue the fallen. That work which filled the Savior’s heart and hands is noble work for us. It were worth living for and worth dying for to be the instruments in the Spirit’s hands of bringing souls into a state of Grace! Think much of the blessed service which Jesus allots you, though it is but to teach an infant class in the Sunday school, or a few poor men and women whom you visit from house to house, or a group of sorry idlers at a local lodging house—mind not the degradation of the people, for to save them from sin is a work which God, Himself, did not disdain to undertake.  
Another inference I draw is that if Jesus came from Heaven to earth to save sinners, depend upon it, He can do it. If He has come into the world and bled and died to be a Savior, He can do it. The price He paid is enough to redeem us—the blood He shed suffices to cleanse us. If there is any man here who feels himself very foul and filthy, let him look up to Christ at the right hand of the Father and dare to say in his soul, “He can save even me. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. He must be able to save me.” O Soul, if you can say that, and venture your soul on it, there is no risk in it. Your faith shall save you and you may go in peace, for he who can rely upon Christ shall not find the Savior fail the faith which He, Himself, has worked in the soul!  
These are the inferences, then, which I gather from the text. And I shall close by an enquiry, which my text very naturally raises in my mind, and suggests to you. If Jesus came to save sinners, has He saved me? Has He saved you?  
Has He saved me? I dare not speak with any hesitation here—I know He has! Many years ago, I understood by faith the plan of salvation. Hearing it simply preached, I looked to Jesus and lived, and I am looking to Him now. I know His Word is true and I am saved! My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this—that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, He came to save me, I am saved. I live habitually in the enjoyment of this blessed fact and it is long since I have doubted the truth of it, for I have His own Word to sustain my faith.  
Now, Beloved, can you say, if not positively, yet with some measure of confidence, “Yes”—  
*“All my trust on Him is stayed,  
All my help from Him I bring”?*

Ah, then, you are favored, you are very favored. Be happy, for God has highly blessed you. You ought to be as merry as the days are long in June! A man who can say, “Christ has saved me,” has bells enough inside his heart to ring marriage peals forever! Oh, be glad, be very glad, for you have the best inheritance in the world and if temporal matters are not quite as you would wish them to be, do not become discontented, but solace yourself with the fact that the Lord has saved you with a great salvation!

But are you compelled to answer, “No, I do not think that Christ has saved me”? Then I will ask you another question—May it not be, before this day is finished, that you shall be able to say, “He has saved me”? Look at the matter. It is written that He came to save sinners. Is that your name or not? Spell it over. Are you a sinner? I have distinguished between a sham sinner and a real sinner. Do you confess that you are guilty? Then Jesus came to save such as you are. There is a passage of Scripture which says, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” You know what to believe is—it is to trust, to rely upon. Now Soul, if you rely upon Christ Jesus, sinner as you are, you are a saved sinner. If you do lean on Him, you are this moment saved, at this instant forgiven!

“Oh, but I, I ” ah, you want to crawl up that Roman staircase, do you? That is what you want, you are anxious to go up and down those steps. “No,” you say, “I am not quite as foolish as that.” But, indeed, if you are trying to be saved by your own works, you are quite as foolish! You make a Pilate’s staircase for yourself and toil up and down its steps. “Oh but, Sir,” you say, “I must be something, I must feel something.” Yes, yes, it is that staircase again, always that staircase! Now the Gospel is not that staircase, nor yet your feelings, nor yet your works—its voice is, “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!” You smile at the folly of Romanists and yet Popery, in some form or other, is the natural religion of every unconverted man! We all want to do the crawling and penance in some shape or another. We are so proud that we will not accept Heaven for nothing. We want to pay, or do something or other, forgetting that, “if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.” The one only plan of salvation is “Believe and live”— trust, rest, depend upon, rely upon Jesus!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
*2Ch 33:1-19***.**

Verses 1, 2. Manasseh [Manasseh is the subject of the following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon—#105, Volume 2—MANASSEH; #2378, Volume 40—PARDON FOR THE GREATEST GUILT and #2385, Volume 40—ANOTHER LESSON FROM MANASSEH’S LIFE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] was twelve years old when he

began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: but did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Yet who could have had a better father than Manasseh had? He was given to Hezekiah during those 15 years which God graciously added to that good king’s life. Manasseh was, therefore, doubtless carefully trained and looked upon as being one who would maintain God’s worship and the honor of his father’s name. But Grace does not run in the blood—and the best of parents may have the worst of children. Thus Manasseh, though he was the son of Hezekiah, “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.”

2. Like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. It often happens that when the sons of good men become bad, they are among the worst of men. They who pervert a good example generally run headlong to destruction.

3. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven, and served them. One form of idolatry was not enough for him—he must have all forms of it, even rearing altars to Baal and making the stars also to be his gods!

4. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be forever. Manasseh was worse than an ordinary idolater, for he polluted the very place which was dedicated to the service of the only living and true God!

5, 6. And he built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. Perhaps he gave some of them actually to be burned in honor of his false gods. But if not, some of his children were made to pass through the fire and were thus dedicated to the idol deities.

6. Also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he worked much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. You cannot imagine, I think, a worse character than this Manasseh was! He seems to have raked the foulest kennels of superstition to find all manner of abominations. Like false-hearted Saul, he had dealings with a familiar spirit. He had entered into a covenant with Satan himself, and made a league with Hell, and yet, marvel of Grace, this very Manasseh was saved and is now singing the new song before the Throne of God in Glory!

7-9. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever: neither will I anymore remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole Law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. You see, dear Friends, that he was not only a monster in iniquity, himself, but he led a whole nation astray! Some people who, under the gracious rule of his father, Hezekiah, had kept the Passover in so joyous a manner, now, under this false son of so good a father, turned aside.

10. And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. This was all that was necessary to fill up the measure of his guilt. He and his people were warned of God, but they would not listen.

11. Therefore—Since words were not sufficient, and God intended to save him, he came to blows! “Therefore”—  
11. The LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. They very likely chastened him with thorns, for the kings of Babylon were very cruel. And it may be that when his back was lacerated by thorny scourges, he was put in prison with heavy fetters upon him.  
12, 13. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God. There surely can be no person in this assembly who can say that he has sinned worse than Manasseh did. He seems to have gone as far as any human being could go and yet, you see, when he humbled himself before the Lord and lifted up his heart in supplication, God forgave his sin, and restored him to his former position in Jerusalem.  
14. Now after this he built a wall outside the city of David, on the west side of Gihon in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. This is not of very much importance, but what else did he do?

16. And he took away the strange gods. When Divine Grace comes into any man’s heart, there is sure to be a change in his actions. Manasseh “took away the strange gods.”

16. And the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. Sins which were before so pleasing to him, are now abominations in his sight—and he flings them over the city wall like unclean things! In the very valley of the Son of Hinnom where he had dedicated his sons to idols, he now consumes his idol gods as foul and offensive things, to be cast away with all the refuse of the city!

16. And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. It was not possible for him to undo all the evil which he had worked, as he soon found out.

17. Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the lord their God only. The work of reformation is slow—you can lead men to sin as rapidly as you like, that is downhill work—but to get them to toil with you uphill toward the right is not so easy.

18, 19. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God and the words of the Seers that spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and engraved images before he was humbled; behold, they are written among the sayings of the Seers. So we must remember that all the deeds that we have done, both good and evil, are written in God’s Book of Remembrance.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE CHIEF OF SINNERS  
NO. 530

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

**“Sinners; of whom I am chief.”***1Ti 1:15***.**

**WHO among all the Scriptural writers can compare with Paul in the fullness of his testimony to the Grace of God? Upon the Doctrines of Grace, upon the experience of Divine Grace, upon everything that has to do with the exceeding abundant Grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul is the mighty master and the great teacher. If it were right to look at him from an exclusively human point of view and speak of his genius rather than his inspiration, I might say of him that so mighty, so clear, so eloquent a teacher of the Truth of God has never existed since the days of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Though Augustine was a particularly bright star and Calvin in after generations rivaled, if he did not even excel Augustine, Paul far excels both in the brilliance with which he exhibits every quality of Grace and Grace in everything that has a good quality. Or, to use another figure, Paul towers aloft above them all in the great mountain range, lofty though full many of their summits are. One reason for his clearness about Divine Grace was that he was himself a very pattern and model of its power. In him God had expressly, as much as in any other man, and perhaps more, shown forth the super-abundant power of His love in passing by transgression, iniquity and sin—and in making the very man who had been a ringleader of mischief, to become the leader of the hosts of the Lord.**

**Paul calls himself in our text the chief of sinners. It is possible that he literally exceeded every other sinner, dared more and sunk deeper in crime than any of his fellows among the sons of men. If so, let no man that lives despair of mercy. If the gate of Heaven is wide enough for the chief of sinners to go through, then there must in that respect be room enough for those who must be less than the chief, who, though very great, yet cannot be quite so great as he. I say, though I hardly think so, that it is just possible that, taking certain circumstances into consideration, Paul really *was* in such sense the very chief of sinners. And yet I hardly think so, because he himself, in another place, calls himself less than the least of all saints, which was the modest apprehension of one who in another place affirmed that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles.**

**Might it not, then, rather have been that his deep view of his own sinfulness and his clear sense of his guilt made him consider himself to be the chief of sinners, though, probably, there have been tens of thousands even greater than he? Tonight my business is *to find out the chiefs of sinners and endeavor to describe them*. And then, *to enquire how it is that so often the very chiefs of sinners are saved*.**

I. **First, dear Friends, as Saul hunted out Believers, I have, tonight, TO TRY AND HUNT OUT THE CHIEFS OF SINNERS. Now who are they? They come under various characters and may be classified in different lists. We will begin with *those who directly oppose themselves to God and to His Christ*. These are chiefs among sinners. Paul did join their ranks. He set himself determinately against the name of Christ and thought with himself that he ought to do very much against that name.**

**Now those who directly attack the Person of God come, first, under the head of *blasphemers*. Paul says he was such. He had, no doubt, used expressions quite as strong as those sometimes used by unbelieving Jews when they are much irritated by Christians. He had said some foul things about the *Impostor crucified* upon Mount Calvary—things, perhaps, more vile than he ever cared to remember—much less to repeat. He had been exceedingly mad, and when men are mad they say exceedingly mad things. He had been a blasphemer, and a blasphemer challenges the vengeance of the Almighty with no common effrontery.**

**Have I one here whose mouth is foul with oaths? Has there strayed into this House of Prayer tonight one who has cursed God and dared in his angry moments to lift his puny hand of rebellion and curse the Most High God? Have I the misfortune—no, I will not call it so—have I the hopeful *privilege* of talking to one who has spoken against Jesus of Nazareth and who is determined to quench His religion, or to oppose it to the utmost of his power? Is it so?**

**Then indeed, Friend, you are one of the chief of sinners, and I am glad that you are here, that I may tell you that there is mercy even for such as you are. For “all manner of sin *and blasphemy* shall be forgiven unto men.” No matter how often or how foully you have cursed the Most High and damned yourself, He will not damn you if you will turn from the error of your ways and seek mercy through the blood of Him whom you have despised.**

**Others come under the same class. For instance, we must here put the *infidel*, for although his words may not take the form of blasphemy, yet the very thought that there is no God is blasphemy. And he that dares to vent that thought is not only a fool, but one of the chief of sinners. And so you have tried to stultify your conscience and to silence its monitions by pretending to believe that there is no God! You have tried to rake up the stale arguments of Tom Paine and of Voltaire and you have chuckled when one who called himself a bishop of God’s heritage dared to vent some strong things against the Book of His Divine inspiration.**

**You know in your heart that there is a God! Your conscience tells you that He is a just God. You expect to be punished for your sins. That start the other night when you were alone, that cold shiver when someone spoke of death—all these prove that your infidelity is not so stout and brave a thing as you have dreamed it was. A poor, craven, cowardly thing it is, that turns pale at a sickbed and flies, with coward paleness on its cheek, when once it thinks of judgment to come.**

**Oh, if you are here, you Atheist, you Deist, you disbeliever in Christ Jesus, you are one of the chief of sinners and I am glad you are here!—That I may tell you that a God of Love waits to embrace you and that He still declares this to be true—that He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him! Fling down your weapons, Man! You cannot fight the Most High! End this unequal quarrel. Have neither truce nor parley, but consider how you may be at peace with Him. The hand of His love is stretched out to accept the hand of your submission. Oh, be you reconciled to God through the death of His Son!**

**And here I ought to include *those who hold views derogatory of the Deity and the Person of Chris*t. Faithfulness to you, my Hearers, compels me to put down the *Socinia*n. I will not call him Unitarian, for we all hold the unity of the Godhead. Trinitarians, but Unitarians are we still. Far otherwise the Socinian and the Arian—I put them down here—the men who say that Christ is not God, that the Redeemer of the world was but the son of Mary, that He who walked the waters of the deep, chained the winds, cast out evil spirits and made even Hades startle with His voice when the soul of Lazarus came back—that He was but a Prophet, a creature, a mere man!**

**Surely, Sir, you are one of the chief of sinners to have talked thus of Him who is “very God of very God,” the express image of His Father’s Person! But even to you is Jesus gracious, and He bids you still believe in Him. You shall bow the knee to Him one day and worship Him, for, “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Bow your knee, NOW, and kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little. He bids you come to Him, then will He blot out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities. The chiefs of sinners, we are sure, are found among those who directly attack the Person of Jehovah’s Christ, yet even to these is the Gospel of salvation sent.**

**Another group of princes and peers in the realm of evil may be described as *those who attack Christ’s people and who seek to pervert them from the right way.* This sin pressed heavily upon the conscience of Paul. He had not only put them in prison, which was bad enough, but he had taken the saints into the synagogue and probably they had been beaten before the assembly and compelled to blaspheme. You, perhaps, know what that means—compel them to blaspheme. The Roman way of doing it was to say, “Curse Christ.” Often did the Roman Emperor command the martyrs to curse Christ.**

**And you remember Polycarp’s answer?—“How can I curse Him? Sixty years have I known Him. He never did me a displeasure and I cannot and I will not curse Him.” Then the whip was applied, or the hand was held over burning coals, or the flesh was pinched with hot irons. And then the question was put again—“Will you curse Christ now?” Paul says that he, though probably using milder means, compelled the professors of Christ’s faith to blaspheme. And there may be some such here—the husband who persecutes his wife for Christ’s sake. The father who charges his child, upon his obedience, never to go to the sanctuary of the Lord again.**

**The master who plagues his servant, mocks and jeers and can never be content except when he is saying hard things against him. Have I not many here who still practice the device of cruel mocking? You abhor Christ and His people. You fight against God in His little ones. Beware! Beware! For this is a high sin! Nothing puts a man on his mettle like meddling with his children, “Touch me, if you will,” the father says, “if you are a man, smite me if you dare.” But touch his children, and the blood is in his cheeks and the mettle is up and there is no knowing what a man will do when he sees the offspring of his own heart ill-treated.**

**So God will avenge His own elect that cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them. To you who thus rank with the chiefs of sinners, I say that Paul the persecutor “obtained mercy,” and so may you! “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom” *persecutors* rank among the chief.**

**There is another group whom you will all allow to be of the chiefs of sinners— *those who have sinned foully in the world’s esteem—*violating the instincts of nature and outraging the common sense of morality and decency. It scarcely needs that I should mention the harlot that infests the streets and pollutes society. Or that worse wretch, the whoremonger, who first leads her astray. I speak plain words, such as I find in Scripture. Such God shall judge when He comes at the last day, for this temptation is a deep ditch and the abhorred of the Lord shall fall into it. This crying sin of our land needs to be sternly rebuked. Other sins are without the body, but this pollutes both body and soul and often sends down to generations yet unborn a horrid curse—at the very thought of which the soul is sick!**

**Of all sins, young man, young woman, take care that you stand aloof from this! Pass not by the house of the strange woman if you love your life, for her gates lead down to death, even to the chambers of the damned! Yet, glory be to Divine Grace! There is mercy, mercy for such—and multitudes of these chiefs of sinners have become as the very brightest stars in Heaven—snatched by the strong arm of Jesus from the miry clay and out of that horrible pit. They are now clothed and in their right mind, they have gone to sit at the feet of Jesus, to sing of redeeming love.**

**There was that Mary, that Mary whom Jesus had forgiven. Well might she love much! And many a loving spirit do I know, and there are some very dear to God’s Church here, who love their Lord, and often shame some of us who stand more prominent than they who once drank deep of that bitter cup and once went to the very depths of that sin. Publish it in your streets! Tell it wherever you meet with the most loathsome and most defiled! Jesus is able to save to the uttermost! He was the friend of publicans and sinners. “This man receives sinners,” is Jesus Christ’s motto. Other men reject the sinner. They turn aside from her—woe unto her if she come between the wind and their nobility. But “*this Man* receives sinners”—receives them to His heart and to His bosom—to His Kingdom and to His Throne. You chiefs of sinners, rejoice that if you believe in Jesus there is mercy for you!**

**And surely I may find another class of the chiefs of sinners among *those who have become not only adepts themselves, but the tutors to others in the school of evil*. Satan has a university and there are many who have fairly won their diplomas as first-class professors there. They have learned to sin with a high hand and with an outstretched arm—until they not only sin themselves—but delight in the sins of others. Have we not seen the old drunkard and how he gloats when he sees another man won to the army of the bestial! Have you not seen the eyes of some base old demon in a country village twinkle when he sees that fair-haired boy for the first time pander to the infamous customs in which he has long reveled?**

**Have we not known some of those foul-mouthed masters of all baseness whose very talk is enough to make a whole parish sick with the pestilence of vice—men that you had better go over hedge and ditch seventy miles than meet! There are such. You have seen them, I dare say. And, mark you, *when that being is a* woman, if anything, it is then worse! The softer sex, usually by far more apt to teach, instills the secret vice of evil and wraps it up in insidious enchantments, by reason of which many a strong man has fallen when Delilah has been his charmed tutor in sin! I may not, oh, I hope I may not have one such being within earshot now.**

**Yet , it is possible, amidst the thousands that this house now contains, but what there must be some of you who roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel and talk of it with a gusto till you tickle the fancies of others—and lead them into defilements which otherwise they never might have touched. You artfully conceal the book while putting the bait in the young man’s way and thrusting the knowledge of new vices upon those who should have shunned them! Oh, you are the chief of sinners with a vengeance, and you shall be hung up like Haman upon the lofty gallows forever if you repent not!**

**Yet, O Sovereign Grace! How can I tell Your heights? O sea of Love, how can I ever fathom Your depths! There is even mercy proclaimed for such. Turn, turn, why will you die, O house of Israel? Why will you perish?—** *“While the lamp holds out to burn*

*The vilest sinner may return.”***I find no exception in the offer of mercy. All are included in the invitation of welcome, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” “Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow.” Here is a full, a free, a perfect and a complete pardon for all your past offenses.**

**Though I have not yet finished the list, I would rather change the note for a minute. I have another class of the chiefs of sinners to find out. I, myself, belong to them, and I therefore speak with feeling. In this section we include *those who have had much light and yet have sinned against it. They who have been taught better, who have had a knowledge of the way of the Truth of God and yet have turned aside to crooked paths*. To have been nursed upon the lap of piety and dandled upon the knee of Christian affection is no small privilege. To be lighted to one’s cradle by the lamps of the sanctuary, and to be hushed to sleep with a lullaby in which the name of Jesus comes as a sweet refrain—this involves an awful responsibility.**

**No man can go to Hell over a mother’s tears without accumulated vengeance. No son can rebel against a father’s affectionate and tearful admonitions without perishing ten times more frightfully than as if he had never been thus privileged. Ah, my Hearers, alas, alas, for the hardness of your hearts—there are many such here now. I would charitably suppose that very few of you belong to the other classes I have been speaking of, but the great mass of you who are unconverted belong to this class. Do you remember young Man, how your mother put her arms around your neck and wooed you to turn to Christ?**

**Do you remember that little Bible when you first went to school and that verse she inscribed as a motto—she watered it with her tears as she wrote it. Do you recollect those letters she addressed to you? She is now in Heaven, is she? Then let them be the more sacred to your recollection. And do you remember that Sunday school teacher? Was he not a father to you? Was not that excellent woman who used to entreat you to turn from the error of your ways a very mother to you in Israel? Do you not remember, young Woman, some of you, the earnest exhortations that my beloved Sister, Mrs. Bartlett, has addressed to you?**

**If ever there was a woman that could, under God, move the heart and soul, she is that woman. And yet, there are some of you that listen to her voice and yet you are unconverted! You have the light shining upon your eyes and yet they are sightless still! You live in the land of mercy, where its bell summons you to come to its assembly of Divine Grace, but you will still not come! You have the light, but you shut your eyes against it! Remember, young Man, young Woman, when you sin you sin with seven-fold atrocity, because you know better! No—seventy sins are rolled into one in your sin of daring deliberate willfulness.**

**Within that egg of sin there sleeps the seed of your greater damnation because you know the right and yet you choose the evil. Have I not now the privilege of speaking to some whose old familiar associations are awakened up by these feeble glances at your life story? Do you not feel just now as if you were kneeling down again in that little room and heard the native accents of your mother’s prayer, while your lips hardly refrain from repeating afresh the words of your own prayer which she taught your lips to frame before she put you to your rest? Do you not remember it? And do you not remember sometimes when your conscience was awakened and your heart was almost broken, and your soul said, “I could almost be a Christian,” but you excused yourself with a frivolous delay—“Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you”?**

**But, alas, that *convenient season* has never yet come. And your conscience grows seared. Drugged with the opiates of sin, you grow less and less tender of the affectionate appeal. Woe will be the day of your visitation, for it shall be cloudy indeed, unless you turn at the voice of reproof. But even to you, O chief of sinners, is the word of this salvation sent.**

***There are those, too, who sit under an earnest ministry and yet go on in sin—*** they surely belong to the class of chief sinners. O, my Hearers, how I would to God that I could be as earnest with you as I want to be! The Lord knows there are times when I am not in the pulpit, when I feel that I could weep you to a Savior. But sometimes when standing here, the influence of this mighty throng seems rather to distract me than to bring my whole soul into play. And yet, the Lord knows how earnestly I long for you in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God as far as I have known it. I know I have failed in knowledge, but never in honesty.

Yet I know there are some of you who come here and yet you live in sin. The world says, “So-and-So goes to Spurgeon’s Tabernacle,” and they expect you to be better for going there. And yet they say, “Ah, how they drink!” or, “Hear how they will swear!” Where are you? You used to have your shop open on the Sunday morning, but it is shut now. I am glad you have got as far as that. Still, let me tell you, you only compound your sin and make a covenant with Hell, if you outwardly pay respect to the Sabbath and secretly indulge in other profanities. Drunkenness may destroy you without Sabbath-breaking. It is not giving up *one* sin, it is giving up the *whole*.

It is not the barter of one sin for another to quiet your conscience, which will satisfy justice or rescue you from destruction. Man, there must be a divorce between you and your sins! Not a mere separation for a season, but a clear divorce. Cut off the right arm! Pluck out the right eye and cast them from you, or else you cannot enter into eternal life. Are there not some of you who have for years listened to my ministry and yet you are none the better? And some of you are rather the worse, I fear. You are getting Gospel-hardened by it all.

Well, by God’s Grace, there is mercy for you, too! You are the chief of sinners, but the red flag is not run up yet— the white flag still floats mast-high—the flag of invitation—the flag of love—the flag of mercy. Come to it! Come to Jesus now. You may never have another invitation. Soon may this tongue be cold in death, or your ears may be deaf forever, like clay-cold marble. Turn you, at this rebuke, for if after being often reproved, you harden your necks, you shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. To you, even to the chief of sinners, is the word of this salvation sent!

Drawing the bow at a venture, there is another class I would single out— *those who are gifted from their childhood with a tender conscience*. There are men who seem to be born without a conscience. So hard and dull of impression are they that if they have any faculty of distinguishing between good and evil, it is as though they had eyes and saw not, and ears but they hear not. And does it ever speak, the voice is so weak, you can never hear it. But there are those, on the other hand, who have naturally a quick understanding, a delicate sensitiveness, a ready perception of right and wrong, a strong and vigorous conscience. They never do sin without being aware of what they are doing and they are troubled and pestered, as they say, about it.

They cannot sleep at night after they have been committing any serious breach of propriety. Even when they are walking the streets, or when they are busy, they are quickly startled at the recoil of their own transgressions. Oftentimes there is a certain uneasiness and fretfulness which comes over them because they are conscious that they are not pursuing the right course. Now, if you are gifted with this tender conscience and yet you constantly violate it and directly act in the face of your own convictions, you are the chief of sinners. But still, still Paul, the chief of sinners, found mercy—and so may you!

And again—if you have had warning in sickness and especially if on your sick bed you have vowed unto the Lord that you would turn to Him, then you are covenant-breakers, *you that violate vows made to the Most High—*you must also be put among the first and foremost of transgressors. When the cholera was here some nine years ago, you vowed that if God would spare you, things should be different. He did spare you, but things are no better now than they were before. When the fever prostrated you, what promises you made and where are they now? You have lied unto the Eternal God! Is it little for you that you should have promised and not have paid—have vowed unto Him and not performed? Now, Sinner, you are a liar, as well as anything besides. You are a rogue, a dishonest one against God, with Whom the compact was made. But the invitation is still freely tendered unto you—come unto the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Him—and you shall be made whole.

The chiefs of sinners comprises so numerous a body. I believe everyone of us must be included in the list in some shape or other. I know this—if ever you and I are saved—if God shall give us very great mercy, we shall feel that we were the greatest sinners. When Paul saw how kindly his Master treated him, it seemed to break his heart—“What? Did I ever curse that Christ who has blessed me? He that is so rich in loving kindness, did I ever spurn Him?” Verily, now, I think I have had the blackest sight of sin when I have had the brightest sight of mercy. When my dear Lord and Master has privileged me, by allowing me to come near Him in prayer, and I have felt His love shed abroad in my heart—then it is that I have felt as if I could bring imprecations upon myself for ever having been a traitor to Him.

What? Could I spit in Your face, my Redeemer and my Lord? Could I ever crown Your head with thorns, which now it shall be my life’s task to crown with jewels? What? Did You love me so? Did You forgive me so and could I ever speak against You? It is great mercy that sets forth our great sin, for we only come to reckon ourselves the chief of sinners when we see the great love of God. So then, without amplifying any longer, I will put the invitation thus—whoever among you have sinned against the Most High, you are all on a level, and the invitation of mercy is put to you, each and all, and this is the Gospel—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned.” May you be led to believe and to profess your faith according to God’s way.

II. Well, now, but a few minutes remain to me and I will endeavor to be brief while I try to answer the question, WHY ARE THESE WHO ARE PROVERBIALLY THE CHIEF OF SINNERS ARE VERY FREQUENTLY SAVED?   
One reason is *to illustrate Divine Sovereignty*. There is no jewel of His crown of which God is more jealous than His Sovereignty. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” Now, when He saves the harlot, when He calls the persecutor by Sovereign Grace, then all men see that this is the finger of God and that He dispenses His love and kindness according to the purposes of His own absolute and uncontrollable will. He chooses the chief of sinners that He may show to all men that He will take the base things of the world and the things which are not, and things which are despised, to bring to nothing the things that are—that no flesh may glory in His Presence.  
Another reason is *that He may show His great power*. Oh, how Hell is made angry when some great champion falls! When their Goliaths are brought down, how the Philistines take to their heels! How Heaven rings with songs when some chief of sinners becomes a trophy of the Divine power! And how men talk, with glib tongues, of the great and mighty deeds of God, when the drunkard and the swearer and the prostitute are washed and made saints! What a noise it made at Elstow, when they said at the public-house on the green—“You know John Bunyan?” “Oh, yes, we know him! You mean the fellow that was always first at a game of tip-cat—he that could always drink the longest! Oh, yes, we know *him*.”   
“Well, do you know, he was preaching over at Bedford yesterday.” “What?” says one, “preaching at Bedford? I would as soon have thought of the devil preaching as John Bunyan! What a wonderful thing the Gospel must be, to change such a man as that!” And yet it was true! John Bunyan, who frequented the ale-house, who knew more about the county jail and more about the Celestial City that is on the other side the flood than most men of his times. It shows the power and the Sovereignty of God when such men are saved.   
And next, *how it shows His Grace!* When I have sometimes sat to see enquirers I have seen a number come in one after the other that have been born and brought up in the midst of piety and I have blessed God for them. But, by-and-by there has come in one whose tale has been terrible to tell and it was not easily told—except with many sighs and sobs and tears. But when it was disclosed, there have sat *two* weeping together—I scarcely know which wept more—he who wept because of Divine Grace illustrated *in* him or the other because he saw in another the Divine Grace which he had tasted for *himself*.   
Oh, when great sinners tell out their tales, they are so straightforward, so explicit! There is no muddle about it, no questions about when they were converted, or how, but there they are. They say—“Ah, Sir, it must be Divine! Such a change has been worked in me that nothing could have thus turned the lion to a lamb, the raven to a dove, but the Grace of God.” In great sinners, then, the Grace of God is made conspicuous.   
Again—great sinners are very frequently called by God *for the purpose of attracting others*. You know that when some great transgressor finds mercy, straightway many hearts say—“Ah, then there is mercy for *me*.” I am glad, I am very glad that there was a Manasseh, that there was David, that there was a Saul of Tarsus, and I am glad they are in the Bible. The wicked cut the stories out and they laugh at us and say, “*These* are your saints?” Ah, we can bear that, while we can say—“No, this is what they were by nature, but they were saved, for all that, by the distinguishing Grace of God, who saves men through faith and not by their works.”   
Now, I believe that that case of David has been a solace to thousands, if not to millions. The hurt he did in his lifetime was certainly very great—but the incalculable benefit which has flown to the universal Church from the penitential Psalms—puts altogether into the shade the damage which the fall of David did to the Church in his own time. Not that there is less shame to the sinner, but that there is more glory to the Savior where sin abounded in the first instance and Divine Grace did much more abound in the sequel. We can well bear this spot, for the sake of the light which comes from the sun.   
Sinners! All of you! If you would put yourselves among the little ones, if your lives have never been grossly vile (I am glad if they have not)—let the fact that the great sinner enters and is washed, attract you. I have heard it said of the elephant, that sometimes before he crosses a bridge he puts his trunk and perhaps one foot, upon it. He wants to know if it is quite safe, for he is not going to trust his bulky body to things that were built only for horses and men. Well, after he has tried it, if he finds it strong enough, away he goes and his great carcass is carried right across the stream.   
Now, suppose you and I sat on the other side and said we were afraid the bridge would not bear us! Why, how absurd our unbelief would be! So when you see a great elephantine sinner, like the Apostle Paul, go lumbering over the bridge of mercy and not a timber creaks and the bridge does not even strain under the load—why then, methinks you may come rushing in a crowd and say—“It will bear us, if it will bear *him*—it will carry us across, if it can take the chief of sinners to Heaven!”   
And then, dear Friends, the saving of the chiefs of sinners is useful, *because, when they are saved they generally make the most fiery zealots against sin*. Have we not a proverb that, “The burnt child dreads the fire”? I noticed my host, on one preaching excursion, particularly anxious about my candle. Now, as everybody ought to know how careful I am, I was a little surprised and I put the question to him why he should be so wonderfully particular. “I had my house burned down once, Sir,” said he. That explained it all. No man is so much afraid of fire as he, and they who have been in sin and know the mischief of it, protest against it the most loudly.   
They can speak experimentally. They talk of what they have tasted and handled to their own smart and ruin! Oh, what revenge there seems to be in the Apostle’s heart against his sin! He seems to bring out the great battle-axes and weapons of war against it—and wherever he can see sin he smites right and left—anywhere. Persecution, death, martyrdom—all these are nothing to him if he can but get a blow at sin. He always seems to have the gun charged to the muzzle and no devil comes in his way but what he has a shot at him. There are no ramparts or hellish bulwarks but what Paul thinks he must take them, whether they are in Asia, or Italy, or Spain. This great knight-errant of the Cross is everywhere the great antagonist of sin, and so must those always be who are saved out of great iniquity.   
And then, again, *they always make the most zealous saints*. I have said and it will come true, though I am no prophet nor the son of a prophet—I have said that the Lord will deliver this city and deliver this age, not by ministers from colleges—not by the sons of gentlemen or the inheritors of titles. But He will yet shake London and bring about a religious revival with the men who will come from St. Giles’s and from White Chapel—from the slums, and from the dens and kens of infamy. God will take such men by-and-by, and He is beginning to work it already.   
There are one or two names that will come to your recollection—illustrious names in connection with the preaching in theatres—God will raise up more such and you shall see that when human wisdom and creature devices have done their utmost to make the Church of God the dull lethargic thing it now is, God, in the plenitude of His might will raise up some who have tasted that He is gracious and have drunk deeply of the cup of His love that will turn the world upside down. It is all an idle and a wicked tale that our places of worship in the City of London cannot be supported. I see them building new places in the suburbs and leaving the City itself destitute of the means of Divine Grace.   
Were the right men found, the Churches in the City of London might be as crowded as those in the suburbs. Only put into their pulpits men who know the guilt of sin and who know that Gospel in which is revealed the righteousness of God—men who know and preach Christ—then the effect would be palpable. Give us the men who do not talk as botanists might do upon botany, when they had not seen a flower, or as some might speak of various lands who have never traveled a league. But give us men who know experimentally those things that they labor to teach and let their tongues be set on fire of the Holy Spirit, and you shall then see London as full of the glory of the Lord as was Jerusalem of old.   
May this come to pass! May it begin to come to pass *tonight*! May the Lord find out, as He moves among this mass, some stray, strange being that has given himself up to desperation, to work mischief with both his hands—and may He say to him tonight, “I have need of you and I will have you.” Oh, mighty Grace, do it tonight! He will have you, Man! Your will must be subdued. Your pride must come down. That proud temper of yours shall yield. “I am your Master. I made you. I bought you with My blood, and do you think I will lose you? I am mighty to save, do you think that you can overcome Me? I came forth on purpose to redeem you! Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” O that the Lord would speak thus personally to some individual now!   
And now I have done when I have just put this before you. My Hearers, here is life and death. If you despise Christ, there is death for you. If you turn aside from the love and mercy which streams from the wounds of Jesus, the angry God shall find you in your sin and cut you in pieces and there is none that can deliver you. If you go on in your sin, you will soon meet with death. But a few Sundays ago we had to mark how sudden death thinned our ranks. Sometimes it is a working man. There was one, you know, some weeks ago, who lost his life in building the great bridge at Blackfriars, who was often a hearer here.   
There is scarcely a day passes but we hear of someone gone out of this great assembly. We are going one after another. The pastor may go soon, but perhaps before he goes he may see many of you carried to your graves—he cannot tell. But, oh, why will you remain without God and without Christ? If you had a lease of your lives you might go on in sin until the lease was out. But even then you would be foolish to be enemies to God and enemies to yourselves so long. But as you may die today, God help you to repent tonight.   
On the other hand, I set mercy before you—no man can say he has not been invited—no soul can say that I did not set the gate open wide enough! You are without excuse in the Day of Judgment. When the trumpet peals through Heaven and earth and awakes the slumbering dead—when Christ shall come in the clouds to judge the earth, I must give an account of the Gospel I have preached to you tonight. I would to God I could preach it better, but I cannot. You know what it is. You are without excuse. You have been invited. You have been entreated.   
You have been bid to come to the marriage supper. All things are ready. The oxen and the fatlings are killed—come to the supper. You that are in the highways and hedges, we would compel you to come in, that God’s House may be filled. Come. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”   
But if you come not, I must be a swift witness against you at the last. I am clear of your blood. I am clear of the blood of you all. God save you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

A GREAT GOSPEL FOR GREAT SINNERS  
NO. 1837

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 3, 1885, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON JUNE 2, 1884.

**“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”** *1Ti 1:15-17***.**

WHEN Paul wrote this ever-memorable text, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” he placed it in connection with himself. I would have you carefully notice the context. Twelfth verse—“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” You see, the Apostle had spoken of himself and then it was that the Holy Spirit put it into his mind to write of the glorious salvation of which he was so notable a subject! Truly it was a seasonable and suggestive connection in which to place this glorious Gospel text. What he preached to others was to be seen in himself.

When I read to you the story of Saul’s conversion, suppose I had finished it by making the remark, “This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”? You would all have said, “That is true and it is a natural inference from the narrative.” Such a remark would have served as the moral of the whole story! It is an easy and a simple inference, from such a conversion, that Christ Jesus must have come into the world to save sinners. See, then, why Paul uttered it in this particular place. He could not help bringing his own case forward, but when he did bring it forward, it was to add emphasis to this declaration that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It is my conviction that our Lord, in infinite wisdom, intends that His ministers should, themselves, be proofs of the doctrines which they teach. If a young man, a very young man, stands up to tell you of the experience of an aged Christian, you say at once, “That may be very true, but you cannot prove it, for you are not an aged person yourself.”

If one who has been privileged, in the Providence of God, to enjoy the comforts of life, stands up to preach upon the consolations of the Spirit in poverty, you say, “Yes, that is very true, but you cannot speak from experience yourself.” Hence the Lord likes His servants to have such an experience that their testimony shall have a man at the back of it. He would have their lives sustain and explain their testimonies. When Paul said that Christ came into the world to save sinners, his own conversion and his own joy in the Lord were proof positive of it! He was a witness who had tasted and handled the good Word of Life to which he witnessed.

Paul went to Heaven years ago, but his evidence is not lessened by that fact, for a truthful statement is not affected by the lapse of time. If a statement was made yesterday, it is just as truthful as if you were hearing it today. And if it were made, as this was, 1,800 years ago, yet, if true, then, (and nobody disputed it in Paul’s day), it is true now! The facts recorded in the gospels are as much facts now, as ever, and they ought to have the same influence upon our minds as they had upon the minds of the Apostles. At this moment, the statement that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners has Paul still at the back of it. “He being dead yet speaks.” Oh, you who are burdened with your sins, I want you to see Saul of Tarsus before you, at this moment, and to hear him say, with penitent voice, in your presence, “The Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Doubt not the statement, for the man is the evidence of it! He who saved Paul can save you! Yes, He is willing, now, to display His power upon you! Be not disobedient to the heavenly message!

But, Beloved, if we have not Paul in our midst to bear his personal witness, we have still many living proofs—we have indisputable evidence in those that are still about us, that it “is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” I could summon to this pulpit scores who were literally the blackest of transgressors, but they are washed, sanctified—and so they are living arguments of the Lord’s power to save! Many, also, are now present who could not be numbered by their fellow men among the chief of sinners in certain aspects of the case, yet they most willingly put themselves down as the chief of sinners under some other way of viewing it—and they bear their testimony, as I do, tonight—that Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost! I, who now stand before you, am a living witness that Christ Jesus can save sinners and does still save them!

The Lord has forgiven and justified me and I have found Grace in His sight. In my case, also, it is proven that it “is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Oh, how I wish that my Hearers would believe me! Many of you would accept any statement which I should make—why do you not accept this? You do not think of me as a liar—why, then, do you not believe my testimony concerning Jesus? He is as ready to save, today, as He was of old! He is ready to save you if you will trust Him!

The run of thought at this time will be, first, concerning those who are the chief of sinners. Secondly, we will enquire why God has saved them. And thirdly, what they say when they are saved.

I. First, then, WHO ARE THE CHIEF OF SINNERS? Paul says that he was the chief. I think, however, that he was only one of a regiment! There are different classes of sinners and some are greater and some less. All men are truly sinners, but all men are not equally sinners. They are all in the mire, but they have not all sunk to an equal depth in it. It is true they have all fallen deep enough to perish in sin unless the Grace of God prevents it, yet there are differences in the degrees of guilt and there will doubtless be differences in the degrees of punishment.

Some are the chief of sinners in the same way as the Apostle Paul, for they have persecuted the Church of God. Paul, who was then called Saul, had given his vote against Stephen. And when Stephen was stoned, he held the clothes of them that murdered him. He felt that blood lying upon his soul long afterward and he bemoaned it. Would not you, if you had been a helper at the murder of some child of God, feel that you were among the chief of sinners? If you had been willingly and willfully, maliciously and eagerly, a helper in putting a man of God like Stephen to death, you would write yourself down as a sinner of crimson dye! Why, I think that I would say, “God may forgive me, but I will never forgive myself.” It would seem such a horrid crime to lie upon one’s soul.

Yet this was merely the beginning. Saul was like a leopard who, having once tasted blood, must always have his tongue in it. His very breath was threatening and his delight was slaughter. He harassed the people of God. He made great havoc of the saints. He compelled them, he says, to blaspheme. He had them beaten in the synagogues, driven from city to city and even put to death. This must have remained upon his heart as a dark memory, even after the Lord Jesus Christ had fully forgiven him. Though he knew, as Paul did know, that he was a justified man through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, yet he must always have felt a smiting at his heart to think that these innocent lambs had been worried by him—that for no other reason but that they were lovers of the Crucified—he had panted for their blood. This matter of deadly persecution placed Saul head and shoulders above other sinners. This was the top stone of the pyramid of his sin, “because I persecuted the Church of Christ.”

I thank God that there is no man here who has that particular form of sin upon his conscience in having actually put to death or joined in the slaughter of any child of God. The laws of our country have happily prevented your being stained with that foul offense and I bless the Lord that it is so. Yet if there should be such among those who are hearing these words, or among those who shall, one day, read them, I must confess that they are, indeed, numbered among the chief of sinners and I pray God to grant that they may obtain mercy as Saul did.

But you can go very near to this—in all probability certain of you have done so. That husband who has threatened his wife so bitterly if she obeys her conscience; that man who has discharged his servant for no other reason but his fidelity to Christ; that landlord who has turned out his cottager from his home because he held a religious service beneath his roof; that man who has willfully and maliciously slandered a servant of God, not because he did him any harm, but because he cannot bear to hear of any truly following after Christ—these are the people who must be reckoned among the chief of sinners. They have done no murder, but they have gone as far as they dare to go and their heart is full of venom against the people of God—this is a grievous crime! Though it may seem a very small thing to grieve a pious child, or to vex a poor godly woman, God does not think so. He remembers jests and scoffs leveled at His little ones and He bids those who indulge in them to take heed! You had better offend a king, than one of the Lord’s little ones! That poor man in the workshop who has so hard a time of it with your jests and chaff, has a Friend in the heavens. That other man who, seeking the Lord, has found the cold shoulder in society, has an Advocate on high who will not see him despised without espousing his cause.

It may appear a trifle to make a saint the target of ridicule, but his Father in Heaven does not think so. I know this, that many patient men will bear a great deal, but if you strike their children, their blood is up and they will not have it. A father will not stand by to see his child abused— and the Great Father above is as tender and fond of His children as any other father! You have seen, among birds and beasts, that they will put forth all their strength for their young. A hen, naturally very timid, will fight for her little chicks with all the courage of a lion. Some of the smallest of animals and the least powerful, nevertheless become perfectly terrible when they are taking care of their offspring! And do you think that the Everlasting God will bear to see His children maligned, slandered and abused for their following of Him? Is the God of Nature without natural affection? I know not! You shall rue the day, Sir, in which you took up arms against the people of God! Humble yourself before God on account of it, otherwise you will be numbered among the chief of sinners, and the chief of punishments shall be meted out to you.

I have no doubt that there may be some of that kind here and, if there are, I can only pray that the story of Saul of Tarsus may be repeated in them by boundless Grace. May they even yet come to preach the Gospel which now they despise! It is no new thing for the priest to be converted to Christ. It is no new thing for the opposer to become the advocate and to be all the better and more powerful a pleader because of the mischief which he formerly did. Oh that the Lord would turn His foes into friends! God send it! For Christ’s sake may He send it now!

Further, among the chief of sinners we must, of course, include those who are guilty of the coarser and grosser sins. I will not occupy a moment in mentioning what they are, for it is a shame even to speak of them. God keep us from unchastity and dishonesty—from any one of those sins which are censurable, even, under the head of common morality, for, if not—if we indulge in these—we shall certainly come, by them, to be numbered among the chief of sinners! I must, however, mention blasphemy and lewd speaking, because these are unhappily far too common. Does a man think that he can go on damning his own body and soul in so many words and never provoke the Lord to anger? Does he dream that he can use foul and filthy words, and wicked oaths without incurring sin? I believe that these things bring the blackest guilt on the conscience, for God has expressly said that He will, by no means, hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain!

It is true of every sin that God will not hold a man guiltless who does it, but it is especially said about this sin because men are apt to fancy that words are of no great importance, or that God takes no notice of them. Even the thoughtless, or trifling repetition of the name of the Lord involves great sin, for thus a man takes the sacred name in vain. Yet men trifle with that name in common conversation—and that with fearful frequency. There is no excuse for this wanton wickedness because it brings neither profit nor pleasure to the person who so offends! What practical end can it serve? As George Herbert said long ago—

*“Lust and wine plead a pleasure, avarice gain, But the cheap swearer through his open sluice Lets his soul run for nothing, fearing little. Were I a gourmet, I could lessen swearing.”*

I am unable to frame an excuse for profane language—it is needless, willful wickedness! Men talk so as to horrify us. They chill our blood with fear lest God should take them at their word—and all for nothing at all. I would to God that every blasphemer here, (if such there are, and I have no doubt that there are), would abandon that vile, inexcusable, useless habit which lowers men in society, defiles them before God and ensures their condemnation!

Filthy speech puts those who are guilty of it among the chief of sinners and to them will certainly be meted out a terrible vengeance in that day when God shall solemnly curse those who have so glibly cursed themselves! It will be an awful thing for the man who used profane imprecations to find out, at last, that his prayers were heard and that they will be answered! O Swearer, beware lest the Lord God hear your prayers at once to your everlasting confusion! Sit down at this moment in deep contrition and weep to think of the many times in which you have defied the God of Heaven and uttered words of provocation against the God in whose hand your breath is! Not yet has He cut you down. Oh, wonder of mercy! Take heed to yourself! Above all, marvel that there should be mention of mercy for such a one as you are!

Now, dear Friends, there are other chiefs among sinners who do not go in for these grosser sins at all. Let me mention them, for in this line I shall have to place myself and many of you. Those are among the chief of sinners who have sinned against great light and against the influences of holy instruction and gracious example. Children of godly parents, who have been brought up and instructed in the fear of God from their youth, are among the chief of sinners if they turn aside from the Way of Life. When they transgress, there is a heavy weight about their fault which is not to be found in the common sin of the children of the slums, or the Arabs of the gutter. The offspring of the degraded know no better, poor souls, and hence their transgressions are sins of ignorance. But those who know better, when they transgress, transgress with an emphasis. Their sin is as a talent of lead and it shall hang about their necks like a millstone!

I remember how this came home to my heart when I was convinced of my sin. I had not engaged in any of the grosser vices, but then I had not been tempted to do so, but had been carefully guarded from vicious influences. But I lamented that I had been disobedient to my parents, proud in spirit, forgetful of God’s commands—I knew better—knew better from the very first and this put me, in my own estimation, among the chief of sinners! It had cost me much to do evil, for I had sinned against the clearest Light of God. Especially is this the case when the possession of knowledge is accompanied by much tenderness of conscience.

There are some of you unconverted people, who, when you do wrong, feel that you have done wrong and feel it keenly, too, even though no one rebukes you for it. You cannot be unjust, or hasty in temper, or faulty in speech, or break the Sabbath, or do anything that is forbidden, without your conscience troubling you! You know what it is to go to bed and lie awake in misery after some questionable amusement, or after having spoken too frivolously. Yours is a tender conscience—do not violate it, or you will be doubly guilty! When God puts the bit into your mouth, if you try to get it between your teeth and it does not check you at all, you must mind what you are doing, for you may be left to dash onward to destruction. “He that being often reproved hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” It puts men among the chief of sinners when, against the Light of God and against conscience, they deliberately choose the way of evil and leave the Commandments of the Lord.

Especially is it a grievous offense to sin against the gentle checking of the Holy Spirit. Have you not been sad offenders upon this point? You felt, the other Sunday night, that if you could once get out of the Chapel and get home, you would bow the knee in prayer—but you did not. You have felt like that many times and you have shaken off the feeling—and now a sermon scarcely moves you—it had need be full of thunder and lightning to make you turn a hair! Truths which used to make you shake from head to foot scarcely affect you now! Take care, I pray you, for he that sins against the Holy Spirit may find himself waterlogged by sin, so as to be no longer able to move his vessel towards the shores of salvation! Nothing hardens like the Gospel when it is long trifled with. To lie soaking in the Truth of God without receiving it into the heart is sure destruction! To die on holy ground is to die, indeed! God grant that it may not be so with any here!

Yet if you are, this day, the chief of sinners, do not despair! Do not turn away in sullen anger, for we are going to say to you, at this hour, in the name of the merciful God, that His Son, Jesus Christ, has come into the world to save sinners, even the very chief!

I think that I must put down those among the chief of sinners who have led others into sin. Ah, this is a sad, sad, sad, sad subject! If you have led others astray—if you, yourself, seek the Lord, and are saved—yet you cannot save them. If it is young persons whom you have polluted with evil, you cannot take the wretched stain out of their minds. You can leave off sowing the devil’s seed, but you cannot gather up what you have sown, nor prevent its growing and ripening! Fire is easily kindled, but not so soon extinguished when it has taken hold upon the fuel. It is an awful fact that there may be souls in Hell whom you have sent there! It was a wise penitential prayer of a converted man who had exercised influence for evil—“Lord, forgive me my other men’s sins.”

When you lead others to sin, their sins are, to a large extent, your sins. They do not cease to be the sins of those who commit them, but they are also the sins of those who promoted or suggested them by precept or example. A bad example, a lewd expression, an unholy life may be the means of drawing others down to Hell—and those that destroy others and so are soul-murderers, are among the chief of sinners. He who uses dagger or pistol to the body is abhorred. What shall we say of those who poison human minds and stab at the heart of piety? These are guiltiest of the guilty! Woe unto them!

Especially must I rank him among the chief of sinners who has preached falsehood—who has denied the Deity of Christ—who has undermined the Inspiration of Scripture—who has struggled against the faith, fought against the Atonement and done evil, even as he could, in the scattering of skepticism. He must take his place among the ringleaders in diabolical mischief—he is a master destroyer, a chosen apostle of the Prince of Darkness! Oh, that he might be brought, by Sovereign Grace, to be among the foremost teachers of that faith which, before, he has destroyed! I think that we should do well as Christian people if we prayed more for any who make themselves notorious by their infidelity. If we talked less bitterly against them and prayed more sweetly for them, good would come of it. Of political argument against atheists we have had enough—let us carry the case into a higher court and plead with God about them. If we use the grand artillery of Heaven by importunate prayer, we would be using much better weapons than are commonly employed. God help us to pray for all false teachers, that they may be converted to God and so display the Omnipotence of His love.

I shall not say more upon this mournful matter, for, indeed, I have only mentioned these examples in the hope that some here present may confess, “I am sorry to say that the preacher means me. Under some aspect or other I must take my place among the chief of sinners.”

II. Now, secondly, WHY ARE THE CHIEF OF SINNERS SO OFTEN SAVED? The Lord Jesus Christ, when He went into Heaven, took with Him one of the chief of sinners as a companion—the dying thief entered Paradise the same day as our Lord! After our Lord Jesus had gone to Heaven, so far as I know, He never saved more than one person by His own immediate instrumentality—and that one person was this very Apostle Paul who has given us our text! To him our Lord spoke personally from Heaven, saying, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” To him He revealed Himself by the way and called Him to be His Apostle, even to this man who truthfully called himself the chief of sinners! It is wonderful to think that it should be so, but Grace delights in dealing with great and glaring sin and putting away the crying crimes of great offenders!

The Lord Jesus not only saved the chief of sinners, but He was related to some of them by blood. Look through the long line of our Lord’s genealogy. You know that doctrine, the last invention of Rome, concerning the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary? I am going to tell you a doctrine which is about as far apart from that as the east is from the west! In the genealogy of our blessed Lord, we find the names of certain of the chief of sinners. Three women, especially, hold a position in it, who were each notorious for sin. Not many women are mentioned, but among the first is Tamar, guilty of incest. The next is Rahab the harlot, and a third is Bathsheba the adulteress. This is a crooked pedigree, an ancestral tree whose branches are more than a little gnarled and twisted!

Admire the condescension of our Lord in coming of such a stock! He came of sinners because He came for sinners. According to the flesh He comes of sinners that sinners may come to Him! There was mixed, in the veins through which flowed His ancestry, the blood of Ruth the Moabitess, a heathen, brought in on purpose that we Gentiles might see how truly He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. I say not that there was any defilement in His humanity, God forbid, for He was not born after the manner of men, so as to be polluted in that fashion! But still, I say that His genealogy includes many great sinners in order that we may see how closely He allied Himself with them, how thoroughly He undertook their cause.

Read the roll of His ancestry and you will see that David is there, who cried, “Against You, You only, have I sinned,” and Solomon, who loved strange women, and Rehoboam, his foolish son. And Manasseh, “who shed innocent blood very much,” and worse men than they, if worse could be! Such sinners as these are in the genealogy of the Savior of sinners. “He was numbered with the transgressors.” He was called “The friend of publicans and sinners.” It was said of Him, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” He still delights to save great sinners! O my Hearer, it will delight Him to save you!

Why does He do it? The Apostle says, in the 16th verse, “For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering.” What? Is that His reason for saving a sinner? It is that He may show, in that sinner, His long-suffering, revealing His patience and forgiveness! In a great sinner like Paul, He shows all His long-suffering, not little grains of it, nor portions of it, but all His long-suffering. Is Jesus Christ willing to show forth all His long-suffering? Does He delight to unveil all His love? Yes, for remember that He calls His mercy, His riches— “He is rich in mercy.” I do not find that He calls His power His riches, but He calls His Grace His riches, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace.”

Oh, dear Friends, the Lord, who is rich in mercy, seeks a treasury in which to put His riches! He wants a case for the sacred jewelery of His love and these atrocious criminals, these great offenders, these who think themselves black as Hell—these are the very men in whom there is space for His rare jewels of goodness! Where sin has abounded, there is elbowroom for the infinite mercy of the living God! Ought you not to be encouraged, if you feel yourself greatly guilty, that God delights to show forth all His patience by saving great sinners? Will you not, at once, seek Him, that all long-suffering may be shown in your case? Believe on the Lord Jesus and it shall be so!

And what does Paul say next? He says that the Lord saved him for a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him to life everlasting. For a pattern. It means for a type or specimen. Paul was a “proof before letters.” The first prints of an engraving are sharp and clear and, therefore, they are very valuable—they exhibit the productive power of the plate at its highest point, before the surface is worn down in the least degree. Paul was one of the proof-engravings taken off the plate in the earliest days and under the most favorable circumstances for bringing out every line of Grace. All God’s long-suffering was seen in him for a pattern. I would to God that we could put some of you under that same engraved plate and issue more impressions at this very hour, for the plate is not worn out— the type that God uses is as new as ever!

When a printer sets his type, he sends the author a sheet to let him see what the type is and he calls it his proof. So also Paul was God’s proof— one of the first taken off by the glorious machinery of Grace to let us all see what God has to say to us concerning long-suffering love! That printing machine is at work at this very moment—it is making impressions at this hour—most clear, sharp and readable! I would to God that some great sinner here would be like the paper laid under the type to take the impression of almighty Grace! But a grand edition of the Work of Love was issued before Paul was printed off and published. I refer to the time when Peter preached at Pentecost. Many large and splendid editions have been issued from that press since! I see before me a whole library that God has printed in this house—the proofs that God has taken, of late, from the old standing type! But Paul stands at the head of the list as a fine first proof of what God can do.

Then God can save me. I came to that conclusion a year ago, and putting it to the test, I found it true. Dear fellow sinners, come to the same conclusion! Who are you? No, I do not ask you to tell me. I do not want to know! God knows. But I want you to come to this conclusion—“If Paul is a specimen of saved ones, then why should not I be saved? If Paul had been unique, a production quite by himself, then we might justly have doubted as to ourselves. But since he is a pattern, we may all hope to see the Lord’s long-suffering repeated in ourselves.” Nowadays, by the Parcels’ Post, people are sending you patterns of all sorts of things and many articles are bought according to sample. When you buy from a pattern, you expect the goods to be like the pattern. So God sends us Paul as a pattern of His great mercy to great sinners! He thus says, in effect—“That is the kind of thing I do. I take this rough, bad material of the chief of sinners, and I renew it, and show forth all My mercy in it. This is what I am prepared to do with you.”

Poor soul, will you not accept the mercy of God? Enter into this salvation business with the Lord, that you, too, like the Apostle, being a sinner, may become like he in obtaining the glorious salvation which is in Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners! I am talking very plainly and simply to you, but if you love your own souls, you will be all the better pleased to listen. I do not want to amuse you, but to see you saved. Do, I pray you, bend your minds to this subject and learn that there is good hope for the worst of you if you will cry unto the Lord. That is why Jesus saves those who have most grievously erred, that He may display them as specimens of what His Grace can do.

“But I belong to such a wicked family,” cries one. Oh, yes, and many have been saved who belonged to the most depraved and degraded of families. They have entered into relationship with Christ and their own base condition has been swallowed up in His Glory! The children of criminals, when converted, belong to the family of God. “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” “Oh, but I have indulged in such horrible vices.” This is a sad confession, but it does not doom you to despair, for the blood of Jesus washes away the worst of filth! Blasphemers, adulterers, drunkards, thieves—“such,” O you saints—“such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified!” And why should not others of like character be washed and sanctified, too?

III. I must close by dwelling a moment on the third head, which is this—WHAT THE CHIEF OF SINNERS SAY WHEN THEY ARE SAVED. What they say is recorded in the text. It reads like a hymn—“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” Look, the first word is, “Now.” As soon as ever they are saved, they begin praising the Lord! They cannot endure to put off glorifying God! Someone might whisper to them, “You will praise God when you get to Heaven.” “No,” replies the gracious soul, “I am going to praise Him now. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, be glory forever and ever!” Grateful love cannot be restrained—it is like fire in the bones! Our heart would break for love if it could not find a means of expressing itself at once.

Does another person whisper, “When you praise God, do not be too long about it. Leave off as soon as you have moderately praised and adored. Do not be forever engaged in the work of praise.” “No,” says the saved man, “I cannot stop as long as I am alive—‘To Him be honor and glory forever and ever!’” Not only forever—that might seem to be long enough—but, “forever and ever.” It is a redundant expression, such as enthusiasm delights to use. It indicates a sort of double eternity. The saved sinner can never have enough of glorifying the Lord! He will praise Him throughout eternity! As soon as a man is cleansed from sin, he is clothed with praise. A new song is put into his mouth and he must sing it—he cannot help it! There is no stopping him.

Notice what titles Paul, here, heaps together. First, he calls the Lord Jesus Christ a King. “Now unto the King eternal.” Or apply it to God the Ever-Blessed, in His sacred Unity, if you will. He calls the Lord, King, for he would give Him the loftiest name and pay Him the lowliest homage. He calls Him a King, for he had found Him so, for it is a king that distributes life and death, a king that pardons rebels, a king that reigns and rules over men. Jesus was all this to Paul and much more—and so he must give Him the royal title—he cannot speak of Him as less than majestic! If Jesus is not King to all the world, at least He is King to the man whose sins have been forgiven him. “Now,” he says, “unto the King eternal be honor and glory forever and ever.”

See how he puts it, “the King eternal.” Not a king who will lose his kingdom; not a king who will cease to reign, or abdicate, or die. Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, the King that pardoned Paul is a King, today, equally mighty to save! Eighteen hundred years after His great deed of Grace to the chief of sinners He is still a King!—

*“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill:*

*He can save poor sinners still.”*  
He sits upon the Throne of Mercy in the sovereignty of His Grace, in the splendor of His love, in the majesty of His power, passing by iniquity, transgression and sin! Will you not bow before Him? Here, at this moment, I pause to do Him reverence—Glory be to the Lord Jesus, for He is the King eternal!

Then he calls Him the King immortal. He is the King that always lives by His own power and is, therefore, able to give life to dead souls! Blessed be the name of the Savior that He died for sinners, but equally blessed be His name that He always lives to make intercession for sinners and is, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. The quickened, raised-up spirit cries aloud, “Glory be unto the King immortal, for He has made me immortal by the touch of His life-giving hand!” Because He lives, we shall live, also. Our life is hidden in Him and, throughout eternity, we shall reign with Him!

Then Paul styles Him the King invisible, for, as yet, we see not all things put under Him and His reign is perceived rather by faith than by sight. The Lord Jesus is, to mortal eyes, invisible and, therefore, our service must be rendered by the spirit rather than through the senses. He must be trusted if we are to draw near to Him and we must say of Him, “whom having not seen, we love.” An unseen Lord, who can only be known to our faith, has saved us, and will save us, world without end! We have not a King that we have seen or touched, or whose voice we have audibly heard, but ours is a King who is invisible and yet moves to and fro among us, mighty to save! Thanks be unto the Holy Spirit for giving us eyes of faith to see Him that is invisible, and hearts to trust and to rest upon an invisible Lord!

“Now, now, now, now, now, now, now,” that is the word for every saved soul! NOW unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, be endless glory! Do you not respond to the call by immediate praise? Do you not say, “Awake my glory! Awake, psaltery and harp”? Oh, for a seraph’s coal to touch these stammering lips! As a sinner saved by my Lord and King, I would gladly pour out my life in a continual stream of praise to my redeeming Lord!

Furthermore, our Apostle speaks of the only wise God. He is so wise that He saves great sinners to make them patterns of His mercy! He is so wise that He takes bigots and persecutors to make them into Apostles! He is so wise that He makes the wrath of man to praise Him and the very wickedness of man, He uses as a foil to set forth the brightness of the Glory of His Grace! Unto the only wise God, wise enough to turn a lion into a lamb, wise enough to make a sinner a saint, a persecutor a preacher, an enemy a friend—to Him be GLORY! Oh, the wisdom of God in the plan of redemption! It is a deep unfathomable! Compared with it, there is no wisdom anywhere and only God is seen to be, “only wise.”

To Him be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. Unto Him be glory on earth and glory in Heaven, honor from all of us poor imperfect beings— and glory from us when He shall have made us perfectly meet to behold His face! Come, lift up your hearts, you saved ones! Begin, at once, the songs which shall never cease! The saints shall never have done singing, for they remember that they were sinners. Come, poor Sinner, out of the depths extol Him who descended into the depths for you! Chief of sinners, adore Him who is to you the Chief among 10,000 and the Altogether Lovely! You black sinners who have gone to the very brink of damnation by your abominable sins, rise to the utmost heights of enthusiastic joy in Jesus your Lord! Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven you—and at the receipt of such a pardon—you shall burst out into new-made doxologies to God your Savior!

“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” O you guiltiest of the guilty, the Apostle Paul speaks to you and stands before you as the bearer of God’s white flag of mercy! Surrender to the King eternal and there is pardon for you, and deliverance from the wrath to come! Thirty-five years Paul lived in sin. Twenty years after that, when he was older than I am, he wrote these words, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Is there not some 35 years old fellow here, tonight, who had better turn over a new leaf? Is there not some woman here of that age who has had more than enough of sin? Is it not time that you turned unto the Lord and found a new and better life?

Turn them! Lord—turn them, and they shall be turned! Make them live and they shall live unto You, world without end. Amen and Amen! **PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—***Act 9:1-31***.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—546, 588, 551.  
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÷1Ti 1.16

PAUL AS A PATTERN CONVERT  
NO. 3367

A SERMON  
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**“However for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”** *1Ti 1:16***.**

IT is a vulgar error that the conversion of the Apostle Paul was an uncommon and exceptional event and that we cannot expect men to be saved now-a-days after the same fashion. It is said that the incident was an exception to all rules, a wonder altogether by itself. Now, my text is a flat contradiction to that notion, for it assures us that, instead of the Apostle as a receiver of the long-suffering and mercy of God being at all an exception to the rule, he was a model convert, and is to be regarded as a type and pattern of God’s Grace in other Believers. The Apostle’s language in the text, “for a pattern,” may mean that he was what printers call a first proof, an early impression from the engraving, a specimen of those to follow. He was the typical instance of Divine long-suffering, the model after which others are fashioned. To use a metaphor from the artist’s studio, Paul was the ideal sketch of a convert, an outline of the work of Jesus on mankind, a picture of Divine long-suffering. Just as artists make sketches in charcoal as the basis of their work—which outlines they paint out as the picture proceeds—so did the Lord, in the Apostle’s case, make, as it were, a picture or outline sketch of His usual work of Grace. That outline, in the case of each future Believer, He works out with infinite variety of skill and produces the individual Christian, but the guiding lines are really there. All conversions are, in a high degree, similar to this pattern conversion. The transformation of persecuting Saul of Tarsus into the Apostle Paul is a typical instance of the work of Grace in the heart.

We will have no other preface, but proceed at once to two or three considerations. The first is that—  
I. IN THE CONVERSION OF PAUL, THE LORD HAD AN EYE TO OTHERS, AND IN THIS PAUL IS A PATTERN.  
In every case the individual is saved, not for himself, alone, but with a view to the good of others. Those who think the Doctrine of Election to be harsh should not deny it, for it is Scriptural—but they may to their own minds soften some of its hardness by remembering that elect men bear a marked connection with the race. The Jews, as an elect people, were chosen in order to preserve the oracles of God for all nations and for all times. Men personally elected unto eternal life by Divine Grace are also elected that they may become chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus unto others. While our Lord is said to be the Savior especially of them that believe, He is also called the Savior of all men—and while He has a special eye to the good of the one person whom He has chosen—yet through that person He has designs of love to others—perhaps even to thousands yet unborn!  
The Apostle Paul says, “I obtained mercy, that in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Now, I think I see very clearly that Paul’s conversion had an immediate relation to the conversion of many others. It had a tendency, had it not, to excite an interest in the minds of his brother Pharisees? Men of his class, men of culture, who were equally at home with the Greek philosophers and with the Jewish rabbis, men of influence, men of rank, would be sure to enquire, “What is this new religion which has fascinated Saul of Tarsus? That zealot for Judaism has now become a zealot for Christianity—what can there be in it?” I say that the natural tendency of his conversion was to awaken inquiry and thought and so to lead others of his rank to become Believers. And, my dear Friend, if you have been saved, you ought to regard it as a token of God’s mercy to your class. If you are a working man, let your salvation be a blessing to the men with whom you labor. If you are a person of rank and station, consider that God intends to bless you to some with whom you are on familiar terms. If you are young, hope that God will bless the youth around you. And if you have come to older years, hope that your conversion, even at the eleventh hour, may be the means of encouraging other aged pilgrims to seek and find rest unto their souls. The Lord, by calling one out of any society of men, finds for Himself a recruiting officer who will enlist his fellows beneath the banner of the Cross! May not this fact encourage some seeking soul to hope that the Lord may save him, though he is the only thoughtful person in all his family—and then make him to be the means of salvation to all his kindred?  
We notice that Paul often used the narrative of his conversion as an encouragement to others. He was not ashamed to tell his own life story. Eminent soul-winners, such as Whitefield and Bunyan, frequently pleaded God’s mercy to themselves as an argument with their fellow men. Though great preachers of another school, such as Robert Hall and Chalmers, do not mention themselves at all, and I can admire their abstinence, yet I am persuaded that if some of us were to follow their example, we would be throwing away one of the most powerful weapons of our warfare! What can be more affecting, more convincing, more overwhelming, than the story of Divine Grace told by the very man who has experienced it? It is better than a dozen tales of converted Africans and infinitely more likely to win men’s hearts than the most elaborate essays upon moral excellence! Again and again, Paul gave a long narrative of his conversion, for he felt it to be one of the most telling things that he could relate.  
Whether he stood before Felix or Agrippa, this was his plea for the Gospel. All through his Epistles there are continual mentions of the Grace of God towards himself—and we may be sure that the Apostle did right to argue thus from his own case—it is fair and forcible reasoning and ought by no means to be left unused because of a selfish dread of being called egotistical! God intends that we should use our conversion as an encouragement to others and say to them, “Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul.” We point to our own forgiveness and say, “Do but trust in the living Redeemer and you shall find, as we have done, that Jesus blots out the transgressions of Believers.”  
Paul’s conversion was an encouragement to him all his life long to have hope for others. Have you ever read the first Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? Well, the man who penned those terrible verses might very naturally have written at the end of them, “Can these monsters be reclaimed? It can be of no use whatever to preach the Gospel to people so sunken in vice.” That one Chapter gives as daring an outline as delicacy would permit of the nameless, shameful vices into which the heathen world had plunged! And yet, after all, Paul went forth to declare the Gospel to that filthy and corrupt generation, believing that God meant to save a people out of it! Surely one element of his hope for humanity must have been found in the fact of his own salvation—he considered himself to be, in some respects, as bad as the heathen, and in other respects even worse! He calls himself the foremost of sinners (that is the word) and he speaks of God having saved him foremost, that in him He might show forth all long-suffering. Paul never doubted the possibility of the conversion of a person, however infamous, after he had himself been converted! This strengthened him in battling with the fiercest opponents—He who overcame such a wild beast as I was can also tame others and bring them into willing captivity to His love!  
There was yet another relation between Paul’s conversion and the salvation of others, and it was this—It served as an impulse, driving him forward in his lifework of bringing sinners to Christ. “I obtained mercy,” he said, “and that same Voice which spoke peace to me said, “I have made you a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles.” And he did bear it, my Brothers and Sisters! Going into regions beyond that he might not build on another man’s foundation, he became a master bui1der for the Church of God. How indefatigably did he labor! With what vehemence did he pray! With what energy did he preach! Slander and contempt he bore with the utmost patience. Scourging or stoning had no terrors for him. Imprisonment, yes, death itself, he defied—nothing could daunt him! Because the Lord had saved him, he felt that he must, by all means, save some. He could not be quiet. Divine love was in him like a fire and if he had been silent, he would, before long, have had to cry with the Prophet of old, “I am weary with restraining.” He is the man who said, “Necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” Paul, the extraordinary sinner, was saved that he might be full of extraordinary zeal and bring multitudes to eternal life! Well could he say—  
*“The love of Christ does me constrain  
To seek the wandering souls of men!  
With cries, entreaties, tears to save,  
To snatch them from the fiery wave.  
My life, my blood, I here present,  
If for Your Truth they may be spent!  
Fulfill Your Sovereign counsel, Lord!  
Your will be done, Your name adored!”*  
Now, I will pause here a minute to ask a question. You profess to be converted, my dear Friend. What relation has your conversion already had to other people? It ought to have a very apparent one. Has it had such? Mr. Whitefield said that when his heart was renewed, his first desire was that his companions with whom he had previously wasted his time might be brought to Christ. It was natural and commendable that he should begin with them. Remember how one of the Apostles, when he discovered the Savior, went immediately to tell his brother? It is most fitting that young people should spend their first religious enthusiasm upon their brothers and sisters. As to converted parents, their first responsibility is in reference to their sons and daughters. Upon each renewed man, his natural affinities, or the bonds of friendship or the looser ties of neighborhood should begin to operate at once, and each one should feel, “No man lives unto himself.”  
If Divine Grace has kindled a fire in you, it is that your fellow men may burn with the same flame! If the eternal fount has filled you with Living Water, it is that out of the midst of you should flow rivers of Living Water! You are blessed that you may bless—whom have you blessed? Let the question go round. Do not avoid it. This is the best return that you can make to God—that when He saves you, you should seek to be the instruments in His hands of saving others! What have you done? Did you ever speak with the friend who shares your pew? He has been sitting there for a long time and may, perhaps, be an unconverted person—have you pointed him to the Lamb of God? Have you ever spoken to your servants about their souls? Have you broken the ice sufficiently to speak to your own sister, or your own brother? Do begin, dear Friend.  
You cannot tell what mysterious threads connect you with your fellow men and their destiny. There was a cobbler once, as you know, in Northamptonshire. Who could see any connection between him and the millions of India? But the love of God was in his bosom and Carey could not rest till, at Serampore, he had commenced to translate the Word of God and preach to his fellow men! We must not confine our thoughts to the few whom Carey brought to Christ, though to save one soul is worthy of a life of sacrifice—but Carey became the forerunner and leader of a missionary band which will never cease to labor till India bows before Immanuel! That man mysteriously drew, is drawing and will draw India to the Lord Jesus Christ! Brother, you do not know what your power is! Awake and try it!  
Did you never read this passage—“You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him”? Now, the Lord has given to His Son power over all flesh, and with a part of that power Jesus clothes His servants. Through you, He will give eternal life to certain of His chosen—by you and by no other means will they be brought to Himself! Look about you, regenerate man! Your life may be made sublime. Awaken yourself! Begin to think of what God may do by you! Calculate the possibilities which lie before you with the eternal God as your helper! Shake yourself from the dust and put on the beautiful garments of disinterested love to others and it shall yet be seen how grandly gracious God has been to hundreds of men by having converted you!  
So far, then, Paul’s salvation, because it had so clear a reference to others, was a pattern of all conversions. Now, secondly—  
II. PAUL’S FOREMOST POSITION AS A SINNER DID NOT PREVENT HIS BECOMING FOREMOST IN GRACE AND, HEREIN, AGAIN, HE IS A PATTERN TO US.  
Foremost in sin, he became also foremost in service! Saul of Tarsus was a blasphemer and he is to be commended because he has not recorded any of those blasphemies. We can never object to converted burglars and chimney-sweepers of whom we hear so much, telling the story of their conversion. But when they go into dirty details, they had better hold their tongues! Paul tells us that he was a blasphemer, but he never repeats one of the blasphemies. We invent enough evil in our own hearts without being told of other men’s stale profanities. If, however, any of you are so curious as to want to know what kind of blasphemies Paul could utter, you have only to converse with a converted Jew and he will tell you what horrible words some of his nation will speak against our Lord! I have no doubt that Paul, in his evil state, thought as wickedly of Christ as he could—considered Him to be an imposter, called Him so, and added many an opprobrious epithet. He does not say of himself that he was an unbeliever and an objector, but he says that he was a blasphemer, which is a very strong word, but not too strong, for the Apostle never went beyond the truth. He was a downright, thorough-going blasphemer who also caused others to blaspheme. Will these lines meet the eye of a profane person who feels the greatness of his sin? May God grant that he may be encouraged to seek mercy as Saul of Tarsus did, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy” does He forgive unto men!  
From blasphemy, which was the sin of the lips, Saul proceeded to persecution, which is a sin of the hands. Hating Christ, he hated His people, too. He was delighted to give his vote for the death of Stephen—and he took care of the clothes of those who stoned that martyr. He hauled men and women to prison and compelled them to blaspheme. When he had hunted all Judea as closely as he could, he obtained letters to go to Damascus, that he might do the same in that place. His prey had been compelled to quit Jerusalem and flee to more remote places, but “being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them unto strange cities.” He was foremost in blasphemy and persecution! Will a persecutor read or hear these words? If so, may he be led to see that even for him, pardon is possible! Jesus, who said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” is still an intercessor for the most violent of His enemies!  
He adds, next, that he was injurious, which, I think, Bengel considers to mean that he was a despiser. That eminent critic says—blasphemy was his sin towards God, persecution was his sin towards the Church, and despising was his sin in his own heart. He was injurious—that is, he did all he could to damage the cause of Christ and he thereby injured himself. He kicked against the pricks and injured his own conscience. He was so determined against Christ that he counted no cost too great by which he might hinder the spread of the faith! And he did hinder it terribly—he was a ringleader in resisting the Spirit of God which was then working with the Church of Christ. He was foremost in opposition to the Cross of Christ!  
Now, notice that he was saved as a pattern, which is to show you that if you also have been foremost in sin, you also may obtain mercy as Paul did! And to show you yet again that if you have not been foremost, the Grace of God, which is able to save the chief of sinners, can assuredly save those who are of less degree! If the bridge of Grace will carry the elephant, it will certainly carry the mouse! If the mercy of God could bear with the greatest sinners, it can have patience with you! If a gate is wide enough for a giant to pass through, any ordinary-sized mortal will find space enough. Despair’s head is cut off and stuck on a pole by the salvation of “the chief of sinners.” No man can now say that he is too great a sinner to be saved—because the chief of sinners was saved 1,800 years ago! If the ringleader, the chief of the gang, has been washed in the precious blood and is now in Heaven, why not I? Why not you?  
After Paul was saved, he became a foremost saint. The Lord did not allot him a second-class place in the Church. He had been the leading sinner, but his Lord did not, therefore, say, “I save you, but I shall always remember your wickedness to your disadvantage.” Not so! He counted him faithful, putting him into the ministry and into the Apostleship, so that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles! Brother, there is no reason why, if you have gone very far in sin, you should not go equally far in usefulness! On the contrary, there is a reason why you should do so, for it is a rule of Grace that to whom much is forgiven, the same loves much—and much love leads to much service. What man was more clear in his knowledge of Doctrine than Paul?  
What man more earnest in the defense of the Truth of God? What man more self-sacrificing? What man more heroic? The name of Paul in the Christian Church stands, in some respects, very next to the Lord Jesus! Turn to the New Testament and see how large a space is occupied by the Holy Spirit speaking through His

servant Paul! And then look over Christendom and see how greatly the man’s influence is still felt—and must be felt till his Master shall come! Oh, great sinner, if you are even now ready to scoff at Christ, my prayer is that He may strike you down at this very moment and turn you into one of His children—and make you to be just as ardent for the Truth as you are now earnest against it, as desperately set on good as now you are on evil! None make such mighty Christians and such fervent preachers as those who are lifted up from the lowest depths of sin and washed and purified through the blood of Jesus Christ! May Grace do this with you, my dear Friend, whoever you may be.  
Thus we gather from our text that the Lord showed mercy to Paul. That in him, first, it might be seen that prominence in sin is no barrier to eminence in Grace, but the very reverse! Now I come to where the stress of the text lies.  
III. PAUL’S CASE WAS A PATTERN OF OTHER CONVERSIONS AS AN INSTANCE OF LONG-SUFFERING.  
“That in me, first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe.” Thoughtfully observe the great long-suffering of God to Paul. He says, “He showed forth all long-suffering.” Not only all the long-suffering of God that ever was shown to anybody else, but all that could be supposed to exist—all longsuffering—  
*“All Your mercy’s height I prove,  
All its depth is found in me,”*  
as if he had gone to the utmost stretch of his tether in sin—and the Lord had strained His long-suffering to its utmost!  
That long-suffering was seen, first, in sparing his life when he was rushing headlong in sin, breathing out threats, foaming at the mouth with denunciations of the Nazarene and His people. If the Lord had but lifted His finger, Saul would have been crushed like a moth! But Almighty Wrath forbore and the rebel lived on. Nor was this all—after all his sin, the Lord allowed mercy to be possible to him. He blasphemed and persecuted at a red-hot rate—and is it not a marvel that the Lord did not say, “Now, at last, you have gone beyond all bearing, and you shall die like Herod, eaten of worms”? It would not have been at all amazing if God had so sentenced him. But He allowed him to live within the reach of mercy and, better still, He in due time actually sent the Gospel to him and laid it home to his heart. In the very midst of his rebellion the Lord saved him! He had not prayed to be converted, far from it! No doubt he had that very day along the road to Damascus profaned the Savior’s name and yet mighty mercy burst in and saved him purely by its own spontaneous native energy! Oh mighty Grace, Free Grace, victorious Grace ! This was long-suffering indeed!  
When Divine Mercy had called Paul, it swept all his sin away, every particle of it—his blood shedding and his blasphemy, all at once, so that never man was more assured of his own perfect cleansing than was the Apostle! “There is therefore now,” he says, “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” You know how clear he was about that—and he spoke out of his own experience! Long-suffering had washed all his sins away. Then that longsuffering, reaching from the depths of sin, lifted him right up to the Apostleship, so that he began to prove God’s long-suffering in its heights of favor. What a privilege it must have been to him to be permitted to preach the Gospel! I should think sometimes when he was preaching most earnestly, he would half stop himself and say, “Paul, is this you?” Especially when he went down to Tarsus, he must have been surprised at himself and at the mighty mercy of God. He preached the faith which once he had destroyed! He must have said many a time after a sermon, when he went home to his bedchamber, “Marvel of marvels! Wonder of wonders, that I who once could curse have now been made to preach— that I, who was full of threats and even breathed out slaughter, should now be so Inspired by the Spirit of God that I weep at the very sound of Jesus’ name and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord!”  
Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you do not measure long-suffering unless you take it in all its length from one end to the other and see God in mercy not remembering His servant’s sin, but lifting him into eminent service in His Church. Now, this was for a pattern, to show you that He will show forth the same long-suffering to those who believe! If you have been a swearer, He will cleanse your blackened mouth and put His praises into it! Have you had a black, cruel heart, full of enmity to Jesus? He will remove it and give you a new heart and a right spirit! Have you dived into all sorts of sins? Are they so shameful that you dare not think of them? Think of the precious blood which removes every stain! Are your sins so many that you cannot count them? Do you feel as if you were almost damned already in the very memory of your life? I do not wonder at it, but He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! You have not gone farther than Saul had gone and, therefore, all long-suffering can come to you and there are great possibilities of future holiness and usefulness before you! Even though you may have been a street-walker or a thief, yet if the Grace of God cleanses you, it can make something wonderful out of you! Full many a lustrous jewel of Immanuel’s crown has been taken from the dunghill! You are a rough block of stone, but Jesus can fashion and polish you and set you as a pillar in His Temple!  
Brother, do not despair! See what Saul was and what Paul became— and learn what you may be! Though you deserve the depths of Hell, yet Grace can lift you up to the heights of Heaven! Though now you feel as if the fiends of Hell would be fit companions for such a lost spirit as yourself, yet believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall one day walk among the angels as pure and white as they! Paul’s experience of long-suffering Grace was meant to be a pattern of what God will do for you— *“Scripture says, ‘Where sin abounded,  
There did Grace much more abound.’  
Thus has Satan been confounded,  
And his own discomfit found.  
Christ has triumphed!  
Spread the glorious news around!  
Sin is strong, but Grace is stronger!  
Christ than Satan more supreme!  
Yield, oh, yield to sin no longer,  
Turn to Jesus, yield to Him—  
He has triumphed!  
Sinners, henceforth Him esteem.”*  
Again—  
V. THE MODE OF PAUL’S CONVERSION WAS ALSO MEANT TO BE A PATTERN. And with this I shall finish. I do not say that we may expect to receive the miraculous Revelation which was given to Paul, but yet it is a sketch upon which any conversion can be painted. The filling up is not the same in any two cases, but the outline sketch. Paul’s conversion would serve for an outline sketch of the conversion of any one of us. How was that conversion worked? Well, it is clear that there was nothing at all in Paul to contribute to his salvation. You might have sifted him in a sieve without finding anything upon which you could rest a hope that he would be converted to the faith of Jesus! His natural bent, his early training, his whole surroundings and his life’s pursuits all lettered him to Judaism and made it most unlikely that he would ever become a Christian. The first Elder of the Church that ever talked to him about Divine things could hardly believe in his conversion. “Lord,” he said, “I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem.” He could hardly think it possible that the ravening wolf could have changed into a lamb! Nothing favorable to faith in Jesus could have been found in Saul—the soil of his heart was very rocky, the plow could not touch it and the good Seed found no root-hold. Yet the Lord converted Saul and He can do the same by other sinner, but it must be a work of pure Grace and of Divine power, for there is not in any man’s fallen nature a holy spot the size of a pin’s point on which Grace can light! Transforming Grace can find no natural lodging in our hearts— it must create its own soil and, blessed be God, it can do it, for with God all things are possible! Nature contributes nothing to Grace and yet Grace wins the day! Humbled Soul, let this cheer you! Though there is nothing good in you, yet Grace can work wonders and save you by its own might!  
Paul’s conversion was an instance of Divine power and of that alone, and so is every true conversion. If your conversion is an instance of the preacher’s power, you need to be converted again! If your salvation is the result of your own power, it is a miserable deception from which may you be delivered! Every man who is saved must be operated upon by the might of God the Holy Spirit—every jot and tittle of true regeneration is the Spirit’s work! As for our strength, it wars against salvation rather than for it. Blessed is that promise, “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power.” Conversion is as much a work of God’s Omnipotence as the Resurrection—and as the dead do not raise themselves, so neither do men convert themselves!  
But Saul was changed immediately. His conversion was once done and done at once. There was a little interval before he found peace, but even during those three days, he was a changed man, though he was in sadness. He was under the power of Satan at one moment and in the next he was under the reign of Grace! This is also true in every conversion. However gradual the breaking of the day, there is a time when the sun is below the horizon and a moment when it is no longer so. You may not know the exact time in which you passed from death to life, but there was such a time, if you are, indeed, a Believer! A man may not know how old he is, but there was a moment in which he was born. In every conversion there is a distinct change from darkness to light, from death to life, just as certainly as there was in Paul’s. And what a delightful hope does the rapidity of regeneration present to us! It is by no long and laborious process that we escape from sin! We are not compelled to remain in sin for a single moment. Grace brings instantaneous liberty to those who sit in bondage. He who trusts Jesus is saved on the spot! Why, then, abide in death? Why not lift up your eyes to immediate life and light?  
Paul proved his regeneration by his faith. He believed unto eternal life. He tells us over and over again in his Epistles that he was saved by faith, and not by works. So is it with every man! If saved at all, it is by simply believing in the Lord Jesus. Paul esteemed his own works to be less than nothing and called them dross and dung, that he might win Christ, and so every converted man renounces his own works that he may be saved by Grace alone. Whether he has been moral or immoral. Whether he has lived an amiable and excellent life, or whether he has raked in the kennels of sin, every regenerate man has only one hope—and that is centered and fixed in Jesus alone! Faith in Jesus Christ is the mark of salvation, even as the heaving of the lungs or the coming of breath from the nostrils is the test of life. Faith is the Grace which saves the soul and its absence is a fatal sign. How does this fact affect you, dear Friend? Have you faith or no?  
Paul was very positively and evidently saved. You did not need to ask the question, “Is that man a Christian or not?” for the transformation was most apparent! If Saul of Tarsus had appeared as he used to be, and Paul the Apostle could also have come in, and you could have seen the one man as two men, you would have thought them no relation to one another. Paul the Apostle would have said that he was dead to Saul of Tarsus, and Saul of Tarsus would have gnashed his teeth at Paul the Apostle! The change was evident to all who knew him, whether they sympathizes in it or not. They could not mistake the remarkable difference which Grace had made, for it was as great as when midnight brightens into noon. So it is when a man is truly saved—there is a change which those around him must perceive. Do not tell me that you can be a child at home and become a Christian, and yet your father and mother will not perceive a difference in you! They will be sure to see it. Would a leopard in a menagerie lose his spots and no one notice it? Would an Ethiopian be turned white and no one hear of it? You, masters and mistresses, will not go in and out among your servants and children without their perceiving a change in you if you are born-again! At least, dear Brother or Sister, strive with all your might to let the change be very apparent in your language, in your actions and in your whole conduct. Let your conversation be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ, that men may see that you, as well as the Apostle, are decidedly changed by the renewal of your minds!  
May all of us be the subjects of Divine Grace as Paul was—stopped in our mad career, blinded by the glory of the heavenly Light of God, called by a mysterious Voice, conscious of natural blindness, relieved of blinding scales and made to see Jesus as one All-in-All. May we prove in our own persons how speedily conviction may melt into conversion, conversion into confession and confession into consecration!  
I have done when I have enquired how far we are conformed to the pattern which God has set before us. I know we are like Paul as to our sin, for if we have neither blasphemed nor persecuted, yet have we sinned as far as we have had opportunity. We are also conformed to Paul’s pattern in the great long-suffering of God which we have experienced. And I am not sure that we cannot carry the parallel farther—we have had much the same Revelation that Paul received on the way to Damascus, for we, too, have learned that Jesus is the Christ! If any of us sin against Christ, it will not be because we do not know Him to be the Son of God, for we all believe in His Deity because our Bibles tell us so. The pattern goes so far—I would that the Grace of God would operate upon you, unconverted Friend, and complete the picture by giving you like faith with Paul. Then will you be saved as Paul was! Then, also, will you love Christ above all things, as Paul did, and you will say, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.” He rested upon what Christ had done in His death and Resurrection, and he found pardon and eternal life at once and became, therefore, a devoted Christian!  
What do you say, dear Friend? Are you moved to follow Paul’s example? Does the Spirit of God prompt you to trust Paul’s Savior and give up every other ground of trust and rely upon Him? Then do so and live! Does there seem to be a hand holding you back and do you hear an evil whisper saying, “You are too great a sinner”? Turn round and bid the fiend depart, for the text gives him the lie. “In me, first, has Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on His name.” God has saved Paul. Back, then, O devil! The Lord can save any man, woman or child and He can save me! Jesus Christ of Nazareth is mighty to save and I will rely on Him. If any poor heart shall reason thus, its logic will be sound and unanswerable. Mercy to one is an argument for mercy to another, for there is no difference, but the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him!  
Now I have set the case before you and I cannot do more. It remains with each individual to accept or refuse. One man can bring a horse to the trough, but a hundred cannot make him drink. There is the Gospel— if you want it, take it—but if you will not have it, then I must discharge my soul by reminding you that even the gentle Gospel —the Gospel of love and mercy has nothing to say to you but this, “He that believes not shall be damned.”—  
*“How they deserve the deepest Hell,  
That slight the joys above!  
What chains of vengeance must they feel Who break the bonds of love!”*  
God grant that you may yield to Almighty Love and find peace in Christ Jesus!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1516 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Ti 2.3

SALVATION BY KNOWING THE TRUTH  
NO. 1516

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

**“God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”***1Ti 2:3-4***.**

MAY God the Holy Spirit guide our meditations to the best practical result this evening, that sinners may be saved and saints stirred up to diligence. I do not intend to treat my text controversially. It is like the stone which makes the corner of a building and it looks towards a different side of the Gospel from that which is mostly before us. Two sides of the building of the Truth of God meet here. In many a village there is a corner where the idle and the quarrelsome gather together and theology has such corners. It would be very easy, indeed, to set ourselves in battle array and during the next half-hour to carry on a very fierce attack against those who differ from us in opinion upon points which could be raised from this text. I do not see that any good would come of it and, as we have very little time to spare and life is short, we had better spend it upon something that may better tend to our edification. May the good Spirit preserve us from a contentious spirit and help us to really profit by His Word.

It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved it does not mean that He wills it with the force of a decree or a Divine purpose, for, if He did, then all men would be saved! He willed to make the world and the world was made—He does not so will the salvation of all men, for we know that all men will not be saved. Terrible as the Truth of God is, yet is it certain from Holy Writ that there are men who, in consequence of their sin and their rejection of the Savior, will go away into everlasting punishment where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There will, at the last, be goats upon the left hand as well as sheep on the right. There will be tares to be burned as well as wheat to be garnered, chaff to be blown away as well as corn to be preserved. There will be a dreadful Hell as well as a glorious Heaven and there is no decree to the contrary.

What then? Shall we try to put another meaning into the text than that which it fairly bears? I think not. You must, most of you, be acquainted with the general method in which our older Calvinistic friends deal with this text. “All men,” they say—“that is, some men”—as if the Holy Spirit could not have said, “some men,” if He had meant some men! “All men,” they say—“that is, some of all sorts of men”—as if the Lord could not have said, “all sorts of men,” if He had meant that. The Holy Spirit, by the Apostle, has written, “all men” and unquestionably He means ALL men. I know how to get rid of the force of the “alls” according to that critical method which, some time ago, was very current, but I do not see how it can be applied, here, with due regard to the Truth of God.  
I was reading, just now, the exposition of a very able doctor who explains the text so as to explain it away. He applies grammatical gunpowder to it and explodes it by way of expounding it. I thought, when I read his exposition, that it would have been a very capital comment upon the text if it had read, “Who will not have all men to be saved, nor come to a knowledge of the truth.” Had such been the Inspired language, every remark of the learned doctor would have been exactly in keeping, but as it happens to say, “Who will have all men to be saved,” his observations are more than a little out of place. My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture.

I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for Inspiration is far greater. I would sooner a hundred times over appear to be inconsistent with myself than be inconsistent with the Word of God. I never thought it to be any very great crime to seem to be inconsistent with myself, for who am I that I should everlastingly be consistent? But I do think it a great crime to be so inconsistent with the Word of God that I should need to lop away a bough or even a twig from so much as a single tree of the forest of Scripture. God forbid that I should cut or shape, even in the least degree, any Divine expression. So runs the text and so we must read it, “God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

Does not the text mean that it is the wish of God that men should be saved? The word, “wish,” gives as much force to the original as it really requires and the passage should run thus—“Whose wish it is that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” As it is my wish that it should be so; as it is your wish that it might be so, so it is God’s wish that all men should be saved, for, assuredly, He is not less benevolent than we are! Then comes the question, “But if He wishes it to be so, why does He not make it so? “Beloved Friend, have you never heard that a fool may ask a question which a wise man cannot answer and, if that is so, I am sure a wise person like yourself can ask me a great many questions which, fool as I am, I am yet not foolish enough to try to answer.

Your question is only one form of the great debate of all the ages—“If God is infinitely good and powerful, why does not His power carry out to the fullest all His beneficence?” It is God’s wish that the oppressed should go free, yet there are many oppressed who are not free. It is God’s wish that the sick should not suffer. Do you doubt it? Is it not your own wish? And yet the Lord does not work a miracle to heal every sick person. It is God’s wish that His creatures should be happy. Do you deny that? He does not interpose by any miraculous agency to make us all happy and yet it would be wicked to suppose that He does not wish the happiness of all the creatures that He has made. He has an infinite benevolence which, nevertheless, is not in all points worked out by His infinite Omnipotence and if anybody asked me why it is not, I cannot tell.

I have never set up to be an explainer of all difficulties and I have no desire to do so. It is the same old question as that of the American slave who said, “Sir, you say the devil makes sin in the world.” “Yes, the devil makes a deal of sin.” “And you say that God hates sin.” “Yes.” “Then why does not He kill the devil and put an end to it?” Just so. Why doesn’t He? Ah, my black Friend, you will grow white before that question is answered! I cannot tell you why God permits moral evil, neither can the ablest philosopher on earth, nor the highest angel in Heaven! This is one of those things which we do not need to know. Have you never noticed that some people who are ill and are ordered to take pills are foolish enough to chew them? That is a very nauseous thing to do, though I have done it myself. The right way to take medicine of such a kind is to swallow it at once.

In the same way there are some things in the Word of God which are undoubtedly true which must be swallowed at once by an effort of faith and must not be chewed by perpetual questioning. You will soon have I know not what of doubt and difficulty and bitterness upon your soul if you must know the unknowable and have reasons and explanations for the sublime and the mysterious! Let the difficult doctrines go down whole into your very soul by a grand exercise of confidence in God! I thank God for a thousand things I cannot understand. When I cannot get to know the reason why, I say to myself, “Why should I know the reason why? Who am I and what am I, that I should demand explanations of my God?” I am a most unreasonable being when I am most reasonable and when my judgment is most accurate I dare not trust it. I had rather trust my God.

I am a poor silly child at my very best—my Father must know better than I. An old parable maker tells us that he shut himself up in his study because he had to work out a difficult problem. His little child came knocking at the door and he said, “Go away, John—you cannot understand what Father is doing. Let Father alone.” Master Johnny, for that very reason, felt that he must get in and see what Father was doing—a true symbol of our proud intellects! We must pry into forbidden things and uncover that which is concealed. In a little while, there, upon the sill, outside the window, stood Master Johnny looking in through the window at his father! And if his father had not, with most tender care, taken Master Johnny away from that very dangerous position, there would have been no Master Johnny left on the face of the earth to exercise his curiosity in dangerous elevations!

Now, God sometimes shuts the door and says, “My child, it is so. Be content to believe.” “But,” we foolishly cry, “Lord, why is it so?” “It is so, My child,” He says. “But why, Father, is it so?” “It is so, My child. Believe Me.” Then we go speculating, climbing the ladders of reasoning, guessing, to reach the lofty windows of eternal Truth. Once up there we do not know where we are! Our heads reel and we are in all kinds of uncertainty and spiritual peril. If we mind things too high for us we shall run great risks. I do not intend meddling with such lofty matters. There stands the text and I believe that it is my Father’s wish that “all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”

But I know, also, that He does not will it, so that He will not save any of them unless they believe in His dear Son, for He has told us over and over that He will not. He will not save any man unless he forsakes his sins and turns to Him with full purpose of heart—that I also know. And I know, too, that He has a people whom He will save, whom by His eternal love He has chosen and whom, by His eternal power, He will deliver. I do not know how that squares with this—that is another of the things I do not know. If I go on telling you of all that I do not know and of all that I do know, I will guarantee you that the things that I do not know will be a hundred to one of the things that I do know!

And so we will say no more about the matter, but just go on to the more practical part of the text. God’s wish about man’s salvation is this— that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth of God. Men are saved and the same men that are saved come to a knowledge of the Truth. The two things happen together and the two facts very much depend upon each other. God’s way of saving men is not by leaving them in ignorance. It is by a knowledge of the Truth of God that men are saved. This will make up the main body of our discourse and, in closing, we shall see how this Truth gives instruction to those who wish to be saved and also to those who desire to save others. May the Holy Spirit make these closing inferences to be practically useful.

Here is our proposition—IT IS BY A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH THAT MEN ARE SAVED. Observe that stress is laid upon the article—it is the truth (Truth of God) and not every truth. Though it is a good thing to know the truth about anything and we ought not to be satisfied to take up with a falsehood upon any point, yet it is not every truth that will save us. We are not saved by knowing any one theological truth we may choose to think of, for there are some theological truths which are comparatively of inferior value. They are not vital or essential and a man may know them and yet may not be saved. It is the Truth which saves. Jesus Christ is the Truth! The whole testimony of God about Christ is the Truth of God!

The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is to work in us the Truth of God. The knowledge of the Truth is a large knowledge. It is not always so at the first. It may begin with but a little knowledge, but it is a large knowledge when it is further developed and the soul is fully instructed in the whole range of the Truth of God. This knowledge of the grand facts which are here called, the Truth, saves men and we will notice its mode of operation. Very often it begins its work in a man by awakening him and thus it saves him from carelessness. He did not know anything about the Truth which God has revealed and so he lived like a brute beast. If he had enough to eat and to drink, he was satisfied. If he laid by a little money he was delighted. So long as the days passed pretty merrily and he was free from aches and pains, he was satisfied.

He heard about religion, but he thought it did not concern him. He supposed that there were some people who might be the better for thinking about it, but as far as he was concerned, he thought no more about God or godliness than the ox of the stall or the ostrich of the desert. Well, the Truth of God came to him and he received a knowledge of it. He knew only a part and that a very dark and gloomy part of it, but it stirred him out of his carelessness, for he suddenly discovered that he was under the wrath of God. Perhaps he heard a sermon, or read a tract, or had a practical word addressed to him by some Christian friend and he found out enough to know that, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God.”

That startled him. “God is angry with the wicked every day”—that amazed him. He had not thought of it; perhaps had not known it—but when he did know it—he could rest no longer. Then he came to a knowledge of this farther Truth of God, that after death there would be a judgment—that he would rise again and that, being risen, he would have to stand before the Judgment Seat of God to give an account of the things which he had done in his body. This came home very strikingly to him. Perhaps, also, such a text as this flamed forth before him—“For every idle word that man shall speak he must give an account in the Day of Judgment.” His mind began to foresee that last tremendous day when on the clouds of Heaven Christ will come and summon the quick and the dead to answer at His Judgment Seat for the whole of their lives.

He did not know that before, but, knowing it, it startled and awakened him! I have known men, when they have first come to a knowledge of this Truth of God, become unable to sleep. They have started up in the night. They have asked those who were with them to help them to pray. The next day they have been scarcely able to mind their business, for a dreadful sound has been in their ears. They feared lest they should stumble into the grave and into Hell! Thus they were saved from carelessness. They could not go back to be the mere brute beasts they were before. Their eyes had been opened to futurity and eternity. Their spirits had been quickened—at least so much that they could not rest in that dull, dead carelessness in which they had formerly been found. They were shaken out of their deadly lethargy by a knowledge of the Truth of God!

The Truth is useful to a man in another way—it saves him from prejudice. Often when men are awakened to know something about the wrath of God they begin to plunge about to discover methods by which they may escape from that wrath. Consulting, first of all, with themselves, they think that if they can reform—give up their grosser sins—and if they can join with religious people, they will make it all right. And there are some who go and listen to a kind of religious teacher who says, “You must do good works. You must earn a good character. You must add to all this the ceremonies of our church. You must be particular and precise in receiving blessings only through the appointed channel of the Apostolic succession.”

Of the aforesaid mystical succession, this teacher has the effrontery to assure his dupe that he is a legitimate instrument and that sacraments received at his hands are means of Grace. Under such untruthful notions we have known people who were somewhat awakened, sit down, again, in a false peace. They have done all that they judged right and attended to all that they were told. Suddenly, by God’s Grace, they come to a knowledge of another Truth of God and that is that by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God! They discover that salvation is not by works of the Law or by ceremonies and that if any man is under the Law, he is also under the curse. Such a text as the following comes home, “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

And such another text as this, “You must be born again.” And then this at the back of it—“That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” When they also find out that there is a righteousness better than their own which is necessary—a perfect righteousness to justify them before God—and when they discover that they must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus, or else they will utterly perish, then they are saved from false confidences, saved from crying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace! It is a grand thing when a knowledge of the Truth of God stops us from trusting in a lie!

I am addressing some who remember when they were saved in that way. What an opening of the eyes it was to you! You had a great prejudice against the Gospel of Grace and the plan of salvation by faith. But when the Lord took you in hand and made you see your beautiful righteousness to be a moth-eaten mass of rags and when the gold that you had accumulated suddenly turned into so much brass, cankered and good for nothing—when you stood stripped naked before God and the poor cobwebs of ceremonies suddenly dropped off you, oh, then the Lord was working His salvation in your soul and you were being saved from false confidences by a knowledge of the Truth of God!

Moreover, it often happens that a knowledge of the Truth stands a man in good stead for another purpose—it saves him from despair. Unable to be careless and unable to find comfort in false confidences, some poor agitated minds are driven into a wide and stormy sea without rudder or compass, with nothing but wreck before them. “There is no hope for me,” says the man. “I perceive I cannot save myself. I see that I am lost. I am dead in trespasses and sins and cannot stir hand or foot. Surely, I may as well go on in sin and even multiply my transgressions. The gate of Mercy is shut against me—what is the use of fear where there is no room for hope?”

At such a time, if the Lord leads the man to a knowledge of His Truth, he perceives that though his sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool and though they are red like crimson they shall be as white as snow! That precious doctrine of Substitution comes in—that Christ stood in the place of the sinner; that the transgression of His people was laid upon Him and that God, by thus avenging sin in the Person of His dear Son and honoring His Law by the suffering of the Savior, is now able to declare pardon to the penitent and Grace to the believing!

Now, when the soul comes to know that sin is put away by the atoning blood—when the heart discovers that it is not our life that saves us, but the life of God that comes to dwell in us—that we are not to be regenerated by our own actions, but are regenerated by the Holy Spirit who comes to us through the precious death of Jesus, then despair flies away and the soul cries exultingly, “There is hope! There is hope! Christ died for sinners—why should I not have a part in that precious death? He came like a physician to heal the sick—why should He not heal me? Now I perceive that He does not want my goodness, but my badness! He does not need my righteousness, but my unrighteousness, for He came to save the ungodly and to redeem His people from their sins!” I say, when the heart comes to a knowledge of this Truth of God, then it is saved from despair and this is no small part of the salvation of Jesus Christ!

A saving knowledge of the Truth, to take another line of things, works in this way. A knowledge of the Truth shows a man his personal need of being saved. O you that are not saved and who dream you do not need to be, you only require to know the Truth of God and you will perceive that you must be saved or lost forever! A knowledge of the Truth reveals the Atonement by which we are saved! A knowledge of the Truth shows us what that faith is by which the Atonement becomes available for us. A knowledge of the Truth teaches us that faith is the simple act of trusting, that it is not an action of which man may boast—it is not an action of the nature of a work, so as to be a fruit of the Law—but faith is a self-denying Grace which finds all its strength in Him upon whom it lives and lays all its honor upon Him.

Faith is not self in action but self forsaken, self abhorred, self put away that the soul may trust in Christ and trust in Christ alone! There are persons now present who are puzzled about what faith is. We have tried to explain it a great many times to you, but we have explained it so that you did not understand it any the better. And yet the same explanation has savingly instructed others! May God the Holy Spirit open your understandings that you may practically know what faith is and at once exercise it. I suppose that it is a very hard thing to understand because it is so plain. When a man wishes the way of salvation to be difficult, he naturally kicks at it because it is easy. And, when his pride wants it to be hard to be understood, he is pretty sure to say that he does not understand it because it is so plain.

Don’t you know that the unlettered often receive Christ when philosophers refuse Him and that He who has not called many of the great and many of the mighty, has chosen poor, foolish and despised things? That is because poor foolish men, you know, are willing to believe a plain thing, but men wise in their own conceits desire to be, if they can, a little confounded and puzzled that they may please themselves with the idea that their own superior intellect has made a discovery and, because the way of salvation is just so easy that almost an idiot boy may lay hold of it, therefore they pretend that they do not understand it!

Some people cannot see a thing because it is too high up. But there are others who cannot see it because it is too low down. Now, it so happens that the way of salvation by faith is so simple that it seems beneath the dignity of exceedingly clever men. May God bring them to a knowledge of this Truth! May they see that they cannot be saved except by giving up all idea of saving themselves! May they see that they cannot be saved except they step right into Christ, for, until they get to the end of the creature, they will never get to the beginning of the Creator! Till they empty out their pockets of every moldy crust and have not a crumb left, they cannot come and take the rich mercy which is stored up in Christ Jesus for every empty, needy sinner! May the Lord be pleased to give you that knowledge of His Truth!

When a man comes, in very deed, to a knowledge of the Truth of God about faith in Christ, he trusts Christ and he is then and there saved from the guilt of sin and he begins to be saved altogether from sin. God cuts the root of the power of sin that very day, but yet it has such life within itself that at the scent of water it will bud again. Sin in our members struggles to live. It has as many lives as a cat—there is no killing it. Now, when we come to a knowledge of the Truth, we begin to learn how sin is to be killed in us—how the same Christ that justifies, sanctifies and works in us according to His working—works in us mightily that we may be conformed to His image and made meet to dwell with perfect saints above.

Beloved, many of you that are saved from the guilt of sin have a very hard struggle with the power of sin and have much more conflict, perhaps, than you need to have, because you have not come to a knowledge of all the Truth about indwelling sin. I therefore beg you to study much the Word of God upon that point and especially to see the adaptation of Christ to rule over your nature and to conquer all your corrupt desires and learn how, by faith, to bring each sin before Him that, like Agag, it may be hewed in pieces before His eyes. You will never overcome sin except by the blood of the Lamb! There is no sanctification except by faith. The same instrument which destroys sin as to its guilt must slay sin as to its power. “They overcame by the blood of the Lamb,” and so must you. Learn this Truth well, and you shall find salvation worked in you from day to day.

Now, I think I hear somebody say, “I think I know all about this.” Yes, you may think you know it and may not know anything at all about it! “Oh, but,” says one, “I do know it. I learned the ‘Assembly’s Catechism’ when I was a child. I have read the Bible ever since and I am well acquainted with all the commonplaces of orthodoxy.” That may be, dear Friend, and yet you may not know the Truth of God. I have heard of a man who knew how to swim, but, as he had never been in the water, I do not think much of his knowledge of swimming. In fact, he did not really know the art. I have heard of a botanist who understood all about flowers, but as he lived in London and scarcely ever saw above one poor withered thing in a flowerpot, I do not think much of his botany.

I have heard of a man who was a very great astronomer, but he had not a telescope and I never thought much of his astronomy. So there are many persons who think they know and yet do not know because they have never had any personal acquaintance with the thing. A mere notional knowledge or a dry doctrinal knowledge is of no use. We must know the Truth of God in a very different way from that. How are we to know it, then? Well, we are to know it, first, by a believing knowledge. You do not know a thing unless you believe it to be really so. If you doubt it, you do not know it. If you say, “I really am not sure it is true,” then you cannot say that you know it. That which the Lord has revealed in Holy Scripture you must devoutly believe to be true.

In addition to this, your knowledge, if it becomes believing knowledge, must be personal knowledge—a persuasion that it is true in reference to yourself. It is true about your neighbor, about your brother, but you must believe it about yourself, or your knowledge is vain! For instance, you must know that you are lost—that you are in danger of eternal exclusion from the Presence of God. You must know that, for you, there is no hope but in Christ—that for you there is hope if you rest in Christ—that resting in Christ you are saved. Yes, you! You must know that because you have trusted in Christ you are saved and that now you are free from condemnation and that now, in you, the new life has begun which will fight against the old life of sin until it overcomes and you, even you, are safely landed on the golden shore! There must be a personal appropriation of what you believe to be true. That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul.

And this must be a powerful knowledge, by which I mean that it must operate in and upon your mind. A man is told that his house is on fire. I will suppose that standing here, I held up a telegram and said, “My Friend, is your name So-and-So?” “Yes.” “Well, your house is on fire.” He knows the fact, does he not? Yes, but he sits quite still. Now, my impression about that good Brother is that he does not know, for he does not believe it. He cannot believe it! Surely he may believe that somebody’s house is on fire, but not his own. If it is his house which is burning and he knows it, what does he do? Why he gets up and goes off to see what he can do towards saving his goods! That is the kind of knowledge which saves the soul—when a man knows the Truth of God about himself and, therefore, his whole nature is moved and affected by the knowledge!

Do I know that I am in danger of Hell fire? And am I in my senses? Then I shall never rest till I have escaped from that danger! Do I know that there is salvation for me in Christ? Then I never shall be content until I have obtained that salvation by the faith to which that salvation is promised—that is to say, if I really am in my senses and if my sin has not made me beside myself as sin does. For sin works a moral madness upon the mind of man so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter and dances on the jaws of Hell and sits down and scoffs at Almighty mercy. He despises the precious blood of Christ and will have none of it, although then and there, only, is His salvation to be found! This knowledge, when it really comes to save the soul, is what we call experimental knowledge— knowledge acquired, according to the exhortation of the Psalmist, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good”—acquired by tasting.

Now, at this present moment, I, speaking for myself, know that I am originally lost by nature. Do I believe it? Believe it? I am as sure of it as I am of my own existence! I know that I am lost by nature. It would not be possible for anybody to make me doubt that. I have felt it. How many weary days I spent under the pressure of that knowledge! Does a soldier know that there is such a thing as a cat when he has had a hundred lashes? It would take a deal of argument to make him believe there is not such a thing, or that backs do not smart when they feel the lash. Oh, how my soul smarted under the lash of conscience when I suffered under a sense of sin!

Do I know that I couldn’t save myself? Know it? Why, my poor, struggling heart labored this way and that, even as in the very fire with bitter disappointment, for I labored to climb to the stars on a tread wheel and I was trying and trying and trying with all my might but never rose an inch higher! I tried to fill a bottomless tub with leaking buckets and worked on and toiled and slaved but never accomplished even the beginning of my unhappy task! I know, for I have tried it, that salvation is not in man, or in all the feelings and weeping and prayers and Bible reading and Church goings and Chapel goings which zeal could crowd together! Nothing whatever that man does can do any good for him towards his own salvation. This I know by sad trial of it and failure in it.

But I do know that there is real salvation by believing in Christ. Know it? I have never preached to you concerning that subject what I do not know by experience! In a moment, when I believed in Christ, I leaped from despair to fullness of delight! Since I have believed in Jesus I have found myself totally changed altogether from what I was and I find, now, that in proportion as I trust in Jesus, I love God and try to serve Him! But if at any time I begin to trust in myself, I forget my God and I become selfish and sinful. Just as I keep on being nothing and taking Christ to be everything, so am I led in the paths of righteousness!

I am talking of myself because a man cannot bear witness about other people so thoroughly us he can about himself. I am sure that all of you who have tried my Master can bear the same witness. You have been saved and you have come to a knowledge of the Truth of God experimentally. And every soul here that would be saved must, in the same way, believe the Truth, appropriate the Truth, act upon the Truth and experimentally know the Truth which is summed up in few words—“Man lost— Christ His Savior. Man nothing—God All in All. The heart depraved—the Spirit working the new life by faith.” The Lord grant that these Truths of God may come home to your hearts with power! I am now going to draw two inferences which are to be practical.

The first one is this—in regard TO YOU THAT ARE SEEKING SALVATION. Does not the text show you that it is very possible that the reason why you have not found salvation is because you do not know the Truth of God? Therefore, I do most earnestly entreat the many of you young people who cannot get rest to be very diligent searchers of your Bibles. The first thing and the main thing is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but if you say, “I do not understand it,” or, “I cannot believe,” or if there is any such doubt rising in your mind, then it may be because you have not gained complete knowledge of the Truth of God.

It is very possible that somebody will say to you, “Believe, believe, believe.” I would say the same to you, but I should like you to act upon the commonsense principle of knowing what is to be believed and in whom you are to believe. I explained this to one who came to me a few evenings ago. She said that she could not believe. “Well,” I said, “now suppose, as you sit in that chair, I say to you, ‘Young Friend, I cannot believe in you.’ You would say to me, ‘I think you should.’ Suppose I then replied, ‘I wish I could.’ What would you bid me do? Should I sit still and look at you till I said, ‘I think I can believe in you’? That would be ridiculous! No, I should go and inquire, ‘Who is this young person? What kind of character does she bear? What are her connections?’ And when I knew all about you, then I have no doubt that I would say, ‘I have made examination into this young woman’s character and I cannot help believing her.’”

Now, it is just so with Jesus Christ. If you say, “I cannot believe in Him,” read those four blessed testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and especially linger much over those parts where they tell you of His death. Do you know that many, while they have been sitting, as it were, at the foot of the Cross viewing the Son of God dying for men, have cried out, “I cannot help believing! I cannot help believing! When I see my sin, it seems too great, but when I see my Savior, my iniquity vanishes away”?

I think I have put it to you, sometimes, like this—if you take a ride through London, from end to end, it will take you many days to get an idea of its vastness, for probably none of us know the size of London. After your long ride of inspection you will say,” I wonder how those people can all be fed. I cannot make it out. Where does all the bread come from and all the butter and all the cheese and all the meat and everything else? Why, these people will be starved! It is not possible that Lebanon with all its beasts and the vast plains of Europe and America should ever supply sufficient food for all this multitude.”

That is your feeling. And then, tomorrow morning you get up and you go to Covent Garden. You go to the great meat markets and to other sources of supply and when you come home you say, “I feel quite different now, for now I cannot make out where all the people will come from to eat all these provisions—I never saw so much food in all my life! Why, if there were two Londons, surely there is enough, here, to feed them.” Just so— when you think about your sins and your needs, you get to saying, “How can I be saved?” Now, turn your thoughts the other way! Think that Christ is the Son of God! Think of what the merit must be of the Incarnate God’s bearing human guilt! And instead of saying, “My sin is too great,” you will almost think the atoning Sacrifice too great! Therefore I urge you to try and know more of Christ and I am only giving you the advice of Isaiah, “Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live.”

Know, hear, read and believe more about these precious things, always with this wish—“I am not hearing for hearing’s sake and I am not wishing to know for knowing’s sake, but I am wanting to hear and to know that I may be saved.” I want you to be like the woman that lost her piece of silver. She did not light a candle and then say, “Bravo, I have lit a candle, that is enough!” She did not take her broom and then sit down content, crying, “What a splendid broom!” When she raised a dust she did not exclaim, “What a dust I am making! I am surely making progress now!”

Some poor sinners, when they have been seeking, get into a dust of soul-trouble and think it to be a comfortable sign. No, I’ll guarantee you, the woman wanted her coin—she did not mind the broom, or the dust, or the candle—she looked for the silver! So it must be with you. Never content yourself with the reading, the hearing, or the feeling. It is Christ you need! It is the precious piece of money that you must find! And you must sweep until you find it. Why, there it is! There is Jesus! Take Him! Take Him! Believe Him now, even now, and you are saved!

The last inference is for YOU WHO DESIRE TO SAVE SINNERS. You must, dear Friends, bring the Truth before them when you want to bring them to Jesus Christ. I believe that exciting meetings do good to some. Men are so dead and careless that almost anything is to be tolerated that wakes them up. But for real solid soul-work before God, telling men the Truth of God is the main thing. What Truth of God? It is Gospel Truth— Truth about Christ that they need. Tell it in a loving, earnest, affectionate way, for God wills that they should be saved, not in any other way, but in this way—by a knowledge of the Truth of God.

He wills that all men should be saved in this way—not by keeping them in ignorance, but by bringing the Truth of God before them. That is God’s way of saving them. Have your Bible handy when you are reasoning with a soul. Just say, “Let me call your attention to this passage.” It has a wonderful power over a poor staggering soul to point to the Book, itself. Say, “Did you notice this promise, my dear Friend? And have you seen that passage?” Have the Scriptures handy. There is a dear Brother of mine here whom God blesses to many souls and I have seen him talking to some and turning to the texts very handily. I wondered how he did it so quickly, till I looked in his Bible and found that he had the choice texts printed on two leaves and inserted into the Bible so that he could always open to them.

That is a capital plan, to get the cheering words ready to hand, the very ones that you know have comforted you and have comforted others! It sometimes happens that one single verse of God’s Word will make the light to break into a soul when 50 days of reasoning would not do it. I notice that when souls are saved, it is by our texts rather than by our sermons. God the Holy Spirit loves to use His own Sword! It is God’s Word, not man’s comment on God’s Word, that God usually blesses. Therefore, stick to the quotation of the Scripture, itself, and rely upon the Truth of God. If a man could be saved by a lie it would be a lying salvation. Only the Truth of God can work results that are true. Therefore, keep on teaching the Truth! God help you to proclaim His precious Truths about the bleeding, dying, risen, exalted, coming Savior and God will bless it.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON  
DEAR FRIENDS—Accept, again, my heartiest salutations. I hope soon to issue sermons preached at home on the previous Sabbaths, for I purpose, if the Lord wills, to leave this shelter on February 2, or thereabouts. Six weeks of continuous fine weather have, by God’s blessing, delivered me from my pains and enabled me to regain a large measure of strength. And the daily good tidings from home have also helped to quiet my mind and revive my spirit. O that I may be the better for this affliction! As after heavy showers the fountains and brooks run with new force and fullness, so may it be with these sermons, now that, with me, “the rain is over and gone.” If you, dear Readers, are the more refreshed I shall count pain and weakness to be a small cost for so blessed a result.

Yours most heartily, *C. H. SPURGEON* Mentone, January 16, 1880 Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
Sermon #1436 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Ti 3.15

WHAT THE CHURCH SHOULD BE  
NO. 1436

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“That you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and basement of the Truth.”** *1Ti 3:15***.**

PAUL’S design in this Epistle was to instruct young Timothy how he should behave himself in the Church of God, so as to discharge his office as minister, evangelist and pastor with honor to himself and profit to the people. He reminds him that the Church is the house of God and in God’s own house a man ought to be upon his best behavior, for it is no light thing to draw near unto the Lord. A poor man who is called to visit a prince or king will anxiously enquire how he ought to act. We, poor creatures that we are, when we are admitted into the Church which is the house of God, should enquire what conduct will be decorous and comely in those who are admitted into the Presence of the great King and permitted to dwell within His palace gates.

Especially should each of us endeavor to behave himself aright in the house of God if we know that we are looked up to and imitated. All who teach the young, all who are parents, all who are persons of age and experience, all who occupy influential positions and especially all deacons, elders and preachers should pray the Lord that they may know how they may behave themselves in the house of God, lest inadvertently their misbehavior should be injurious to the weaker sort. Such need to learn how they should behave to their brethren, to the Elder Brother and to the great Father of all. We need to learn the ways of the house, the customs of the palace.

Part of the objective of the sermon this morning will be that those of us who are in the house of God may learn how we should behave in it—but special prominence will be given to steadfastness in the faith which makes a man not only a dweller in the Church but a pillar of it. I am not going to trouble you, this morning, with the various interpretations which have been given to the passage before us. It has been a sort of Plain of Esdraelon, where battles have been fought from time immemorial. Many suggestions have been made as to its interpretation, so as to avoid the sense given in our version because that sense has been perverted into a defense of the Romish church. It seems to me, however, looking at it as carefully as I am able to do, that our translation is about the best possible one and I feel sure that it has in it the mind of God.

Probably the sense would never have been disputed if it had not been for the controversies which have arisen in which this verse has been misused and misrepresented. I am rather suspicious of interpretations which arise out of controversies. What have we to do with giving either a Protestant or a Catholic sense to Scripture? Is it not our duty to give the true sense, be it what it may? There can never be any justification for twisting

Scripture in order to wrench it out of an enemy’s hand. Nor is there any need in this case, even if it were allowable! In vain has the Romish church tried to gather from this verse that she is the great source of truth, for the passage can never apply to her, since she has utterly gone aside from the Truth of God and is described by the Apostle in the verses which follow the text as departing from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, forbidding to marry and so forth.

Popery or no popery, let us take the Word of God in its natural and evident meaning, and we shall be instructed thereby. May God the Holy Spirit enable us to understand His own word.

I. First, I shall at some length expound the text, and then try to enforce the lesson from it. In expounding it, I see three things to note, and the first is THE GLORIOUS NAME OF THE CHURCH—“The Church of the living God.” First, it is called the Church. What is a church? It is an assembly—and a Christian Church is an assembly of faithful men—of men who know the Truth of God, believe it, acknowledge it boldly and adhere to it.

The Greek word signifies an assembly summoned out of the whole population to exercise the right of citizenship. An ecclesia, or church, is not a mob, nor a disorderly gathering rushing together without end or purpose, but a regular assembly of persons called out by Grace and gathered together by the Holy Spirit. Those persons make up the assembly of the living God! In order to be a Christian Church, there must be a selection and a calling out—and that calling must come from God who alone can call effectually. Touching all the members of this select assembly there is an eternal purpose which is the original reason of their being called—and to each of them there is an effectual calling whereby they actually gather into the Church.

Then, also, there is a hedging and fencing about of this Church, by which it is maintained as a separate body, distinct from all the rest of mankind. The command which calls them away from the world is very clear—“Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” The Church is not a number of unregenerate people coming together entirely of their own notion to defend such-and-such dogmas. Such persons may form a club, but they cannot make a Church! There must be a coming together of renewed men, in the name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit—and these must meet for purposes which God Himself ordains—and be joined together after His own fashion.

Jesus must be the uniting cornerstone and His Spirit the indwelling power, as it is written, “In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” But the title grows upon us when we read it as “the Church of God.” There is a Synagogue of Satan and there is a Church of God. There are churches so-called which are not of God, though they take upon themselves His name. But what an honor it is to be one of the assembly of God, to be one of those whom God has chosen, whom God has called, whom God has quickened, whom God has sanctified, whom God loves and calls His own! How honored is that assembly in which He resides! The text speaks not of the church of a country, or of a city, nor of the church of king or prelate, but of the Church of God!

Blessed be God, since Jesus Christ ascended up on high there has never ceased to be a Church of God in the earth, generally hidden and concealed, often persecuted and always despised, yet still living! This Church, like its Lord, has been more often found among the poor than among the rich, more frequently confessing at the stake than honored in the palace. Still has she been present bearing witness for the Truth of God even in the darkest times. There has been left to us a remnant, according to the election of Grace, in every age—I speak not, now, of this denomination nor of that—but of the truly spiritual people who have witnessed faithfully in the life and power of God to the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. This is the Church of God!

The title is enhanced in its excellency by the word which is applied to God. It is, “The Church of the living God”—not your congregation, O Diana, though they said of you that you did fall from Heaven, for you are a lifeless image! What was Diana of the Ephesians? What life or power was in that senseless block? Timothy knew that the assembly which gathered in the name of Diana was not called out by a living god. Brethren, it is a glorious fact that our God, the God of the Church, lives and reigns, and that He shows His life all around us! We see Him sustaining Nature, ruling Providence and reigning in the midst of His Church! And while we see Him we adore Him. Jehovah is the living God and the Divine Life is seen in each of the adorable Persons of the Godhead. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not to us a dead Christ—we love and bless Him because He once died upon the Cross—and we adore Him because He always lives to make intercession for us!

We are bold to preach the Gospel because of His living power and we are earnest to observe His commands because we acknowledge His living government in the midst of the Church. The living God proves His life among us by the Holy Spirit, by the conversion of sinners, by comforting and instructing saints and by edifying the faithful into a building fitly framed together. Since, then, the Church belongs to the living God, what is a dead church? Is that the church of the living God? How can it be? Only as you and I possess the Spirit of God quickening us to a life of godliness may we dare to think ourselves a part of the Church of the living God! If you have never been quickened by the Spirit of God; if you are dead in trespasses and sins, what have you to do with the Church of the living God?

O you dead and corrupt, how can you have communion with the living in Zion?! Only when you live unto God may you be built up as living stones into the living Temple of the living God! The thing most to be dreaded in any one Church is the decay of life. We may soon fall into formalism and even hold the Truth in the cold grip of spiritual death! Prayer may be neglected and the other offices of spiritual life may be disregarded and then all will languish. “You have the name that you live and are dead” is the dreadful sentence which must be written across the brow of a merely nominal church! Brethren, if we would be the Church of the living God, we must be thoroughly alive unto God!

What an august body is this Church of the living God! Where do I see it? I say not that I see the whole of it, for as yet this bride of Christ is in the making. As Adam saw not Eve until she was perfected and, therefore, we cannot suppose that she saw herself, so we see no visible embodiment of the entire Church of Christ nor shall we see it until Christ shall come a second time and shall present her unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Today we must walk very much by faith as to the Church of Christ, for her members are yet being fashioned and are best discerned by spiritual men. Happy are we if we are members of that Church, yes, members of Christ Himself by the living faith which unites us to the living God!

Never let us speak disrespectfully of the Church of God, nor think of her with other than love and with intense devotion to her interests, for she belongs to God! Let us pray for her peace and prosperity, since she is the City of the great King. Let us ask the Lord daily to make His own Church more and more visible and powerful in the midst of mankind, that she may come forth “fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners.”

II. Now, secondly we will consider HER DESIGN IN REFERENCE TO GOD. The Apostle speaks of the Church of the living God as the house of God. This is a very beautiful and instructive figure. “The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands,” whether they are called cathedrals, churches, or meeting houses. Today there is no consecrated shrine, no appointed building where we must resort if we would meet with God, for behold the Lord is to be found everywhere by those who worship Him in spirit and in truth! True hearts view the entire universe as a temple wherein everyone speaks of the Glory of God. Yet there is a shrine and a temple, but it is living and spiritual—the called-out assembly—the Church of the living God is the special abode of Deity.

I suppose we are to understand, first, by the Church being God’s house, that it is the place of His worship. As of old the temple was the holy place to which the children of Israel went up in pilgrimage, the point towards which they opened their windows when they prayed and the place of the one altar and the one sacrifice. So now the Church of God is the only place of God’s true worship. He is spiritually worshipped nowhere else. They who were never called and never quickened by Him may pretend to worship Him, but what is dead worship to the living God? They may profess to serve Him with gorgeous ceremonies, smoking incense and harmonious music—but what is this to Him who is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth?

It is only where men are spiritual that there can be spiritual worship! It is only with their love, their trust and joy in the name of Jesus and with their prayers and praises presented by the power of the Holy Spirit that God is to be worshipped at all! Do not dream, you ungodly, that you can worship the living God! The first essential to your acceptance is that you accept His salvation. Be first reconciled to Him by the death of His Son— for how shall His enemies present to Him acceptable praises? You must become a part of the living Church by being born again, or else you cannot worship the Lord at all!

But I like better, still, to get away from the somewhat ceremonious idea of a temple to the more familiar thought of a house or home. The Lord makes the Church the place of His indwelling. The thought, itself, is charming. It is that old prophecy fulfilled, “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” God calls His Church a house in the sense of His residing there! He is everywhere, but His special resort, the place of His feet, the home of His heart, is His called-out congregation, His elect, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified Church! Does not this invest Believers with a wondrous dignity, that God should dwell in them? “Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” God dwells in you! If you are, indeed, quickened of the Spirit, the Spirit abides in you and shall be with you forever!

Of the Church we read, “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.” In his own house, a man not only dwells, for he might do that in any inn—but there he feels himself to be at home and, therefore, it is the place of his manifestation. You do not see the real man on the bench, for there you see a judge—nor on business, for there you see a trader—but at home with the children! As one of them, you see the man, the father, the husband! You see his heart and soul. And God is not seen in all the universe with anything like the degree of clearness that He is beheld in the midst of His people! The Lord God is more gloriously manifested in His people than in all the works of creation.

First, in the Person of His Son He has revealed Himself right gloriously! And then in all those who are united to His Son, He manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Oh, what unbending of Divine majesty have we seen! What unveilings of the incomprehensible! What revelations of the infinite has the Lord caused to pass before His Church! “I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet unto my taste.” “He brought me into the banqueting house and His banner over me was love.” It is in the midst of His Church that we see our Lord and are glad! A man’s house is, also, the place of his paternal rule. In the Church we are under the present rule of our heavenly Father.

In the Church of God you will sometimes see this very remarkably. I believe that when Paul said, concerning certain offenses in the Church, “For this cause some are sickly among you and many sleep,” he gave us a hint of the remarkable discipline which the great Head of the house exerts over Church members. I do not say over members of all churches, but I say that among members of pure churches there is a solemn discipline going on, for the Lord is jealous over His house and He will be sanctified in them that come near unto Him. Therefore “be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.”

If a man is a father, he expects that his word should rule his household. In the blessed household of God our Father, our Lord is the only ruler! In God’s house we know no Law but God’s Law and we acknowledge no legislator but Jesus, who said, “One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren.” Blessed is that rule and blessed are they who submit to it, obeying His commandments, listening to the voice of His Word! God grant us Grace to stand up for the crown rights of King Jesus and the paternal authority of God in His own Church! And never may we idolize any merely human authority in the Church, however long the usurpation

may have continued. If any come among us and speak not according to His Word, let us judge that they have no light in them and let us give no place for subjection to them—no, not for an hour!

Once again, it is for his own house that a man works and spends his strength. It is the object of his choicest purposes. If a man shall compass sea and land to gain gold, it is for his house. If he rises up early and sits up late and eats the bread of carefulness, it is still for his house. And so the great Householder rules all things for His chosen family and the end and the design of all Providence, if we were to trace it to its ultimate objective, is the good of them that love God and are the called according to His purpose! The Lord’s people are His portion and His inheritance. Dwelling in them, He regards them as His palace—He looks upon the Church as the eye of the universe, the joy of the earth, the crown of all His works! Towards her His thoughts of love go forth and for her are His Words of Truth and acts of power!

We will not leave this point without observing how holy, then, should all members of Christian Churches be! “Holiness becomes your house.” An unholy member of a Church of the living God?! What shall I say? Let that black stone be wet with tears of penitence this very day and then may it be washed in the blood of Jesus! O members of the Church, is your conduct inconsistent with your profession? Judge yourself and be zealous and repent! All of us may well humble ourselves in the sight of God and ask Him to cleanse us that we may be fit for Him to dwell in. How obedient, also, should we be—for if we are a part of the house of God, let it be our joy to submit ourselves to the Master.

When we were children in the home of a loving father, his rule was not irksome to us—and with such a Father as our God we admit that His Commandments are not grievous. Let us obey carefully and joyfully, each one of us. How struck with awe ought every Church member to be to think that he is built into God’s house! Truly, as I enter among the people of God, I feel bound to cry with Jacob, “How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God!” Take not lightly upon yourselves a profession of Christianity! And when you have been baptized into the name of Christ and are united with His Church, see that you walk circumspectly and that you adorn the doctrines of God, your Savior, in all things.

At the same time, how full of love ought we to be, for God is Love! A house is no home if love is absent and a Church of the living God is unchurchly if there is division among the Brethren. Is it not written, “The Father Himself loves you”? “Little children, love one another”? “God is love and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in Him”? Thus have we spoken upon the design of the Church in reference to God—the tug of war comes in the third place.

**III.** THE DESIGN OF THE CHURCH IN REFERENCE TO THE TRUTH. Paul compares it to a pillar and its pedestal or *basement*, for that, I think, would be a fair translation. The temple of Diana, at Ephesus, was adorned with more than a hundred columns of stupendous size. They were mostly of Parian marble and were either furnished by the various cities of Asia as offerings to the goddess, or were contributed by wealthy men and princes. These pillars are said to have been immense monoliths—single stones of 60 feet in height—and they were set upon a basement which was elevated ten steps above the surrounding area.   
Diana had her pillar and her basement, but she had no pillar or basement of the Truth of God—hers was all imposture throughout. Now, Paul calls the Church of God the basement and pillar of the Truth. What does He mean? Notice, that she is not the *creator* of the Truth, nor the inventor and fashioner of *doctrine*. You would think from the talk of certain divines, nowadays, that the Church of God must surely be a manufactory of notions, a school of inventions where clever men think out new gospels for new times, or, like spiders, spin out of themselves fresh webs as the old ones are broken!   
Our admiration is solicited for those who are “abreast of the times” and who keep pace with the wonderful advance of the 19th Century. Now, the Church of God is not the inventor of the Truth of God—she is the pillar and basement of it! Let it be remembered, also, that the figure must not be pushed beyond what it was meant to teach. In a certain sense the Church *cannot* be the pillar and basement of the Truth. Truth is true of itself and owes its origin to God Himself and the nature of things. The Church is not here described as the deepest foundation of the Truth, for the basement of the pillar of the Truth of God rests on a Rock and the Church rests on God, the Rock of Ages.   
But the Truth of God, in itself, is one thing, as truth as existing in the world is another thing! You often hear it said at public meetings that truth is mighty and will prevail. I dare say the proverb is true, but if you put a truth away on the shelf and no man mentions it for ages, it will *not* prevail! Truth never prevails till some living mind believes it, vindicates it and proclaims it abroad. The person who thus takes up a grand Truth of God, declares it, fights for it and makes it known, may be very properly called the pillar and the basis of the cause, for the spread of the principle depends upon him. We may say of the Reformation, Luther was its pillar and basement—or of Methodism the same might be said of Wesley.   
Note how, in another place, Paul says that James and Cephas and John seemed to be pillars—that is to say, they held up the good cause. There are men alive at this day of whom we may say, “They are the pillars of the cause,” and in the same sense the Church of God is the pillar and the basement of the Truth of God among mankind. Notice that the text speaks of, “The Church of God,” meaning all the people of God and not the clergy, alone. There is a very grave lesson here. We frequently hear it said, “So-and-So is gone into the church.” Now remember that everybody who has gone into Christ Jesus has gone into the Church, but no one else! The clergy are not the Church! It would be a great pity if they were.   
In all Churches of the living God it is a great fault if the whole of the people are not recognized in the work of the Lord, in the affairs of His house and especially in the maintenance of His Truth. As fish are said to stink first at the head, so will you find that the first people to depart from the Truth are those who ought to be the very last, namely, the professed teachers of it! If the people could but speak so as to be heard, we should not have one-half the heresy which now defiles the house of God! The people are very often put on one side, as if they were not at all to be considered, but were to be managed and catered to by their spiritual lords! Then, alas, these great ones betray the cause and sell Christ as cheaply as Judas did! They mix up the teaching of the Spirit with the conceit of the flesh and become so wise that they refuse to know Christ and Him crucified.   
They will not keep to the Scriptures, but dive down into their own thoughts and imaginations till they stir the mud at the bottom of their subjects and do not, themselves, know where they are, nor can any man tell them! Most of the false doctrine in the world has been suggested by those whose very office it is to preach the Truth! Hence the Truth of God is not trusted to the ministry—it is based and pillared upon the whole Church! The poor old bed-ridden Sister who sings of Jesus’ everlasting love is quite as much a defender of the faith as an archbishop—perhaps more! The unlettered peasant who knows the doctrines of Grace by deep experience and, therefore, will never let them go, is as true a guardian of the Gospel treasure as the most profound scholar! And perhaps far more so. The whole of you who really love God are set for the maintenance of the Truth of God in the world! Under God the Holy Spirit, the cause of Truth depends upon you— you are its pillar and its basement!   
What does the expression mean—the pillar and basement? I think it means, first, that in the Church, the Truth should abide. In the Church of the living God it always *does* abide, even as a pillar stirs not from its place. In the confession of the Church, made by each one of her members; in the teaching of her ministers and in the witness of the whole body, the Truth of God will be found at all times. The Church of God is not the quicksand of the Truth, but the pillar and pedestal of it—she is not the floating island of the Truth, but the eternal column of it. The Church stands steadfast and unmovable as a pillar of Truth fixed on its base. If you find not the Truth of God anywhere else, you will find it in the Church of the living God, which is Truth’s castle and stronghold.   
“In which church?” you ask. I said in the Church of the living God! I did not say in the Church of England, nor in the Church of Scotland, nor in the Wesleyan Church, nor in the Baptist Church, nor even in the assembly of Exclusive Brethren! But I did say that the Truth of God is as a treasure in the Church of the living God and it is never removed from her keeping! Therefore, if the Truth of God is not maintained by any so-called church, it is not the Church of God! When the Truth of God is given up, everything is given up! The very idea of a Church involves the retaining of the Truth with constant steadfastness and if this is neglected, the so-called church has nothing left in it but the name! As a pillar and its base are always in one place, so will the Church be a fixed, permanent and unalterable column of Gospel Truth— and woe to her if she is not!   
Secondly, “the pillar and basement,” means that in the true Church the Truth of God is lifted up as upon a pillar. Truth not only rests there as on a pedestal, but it stands upright as a pillar! It is the duty and the privilege of the Church of God to exalt the Truth into the open view of all mankind. Possibly you may have seen the column of Trajan, or the column in the Place Vendome in Paris—these may serve as illustrations. Around these shafts you see the victories of the conqueror pictured in relief and lifted into the air, that all may see them.   
Now, the Church of God is a pillar which lifts up and publishes, far and wide, the achievements of our conquering Lord! It says to all mankind, “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into Glory.” I may give an illustration of a pillar being said to speak from our own column commemorating the great fire of London which is popularly called the Monument. It used to bear an inscription to the effect that the papists burned the city, a charge which no one now believes. The poet Pope said of it ***— “Where London’s column, pointing to the skies,   
Like a tall bully, lifts its head and lies.”***Now I shall venture to alter the lines, and say ***—   
“See Christ’s own Church, still pointing to the sky,   
Like a tall champion, lifts His Truth on high.”***Our Lord never taught us to hide the Gospel in little rooms down back alleys—He would have us come to the front as much as we can! The Church is not a cellar to conceal the Truth of God, but a pillar to display it! “A city set on a hill cannot be hid.” What is there to be ashamed of? We may, ourselves, remain unknown, but we must make the Truth known at all costs. The Church should be like a lighthouse, which is often built as a tall pillar to bear the light at its summit and, like a memorial column which bears a statue upon the top of it, she should lift up the Truth of God before the gaze of all men!   
Again, a Church is intended by God to set forth the Truth with beauty, for in a temple, pillars and columns are meant for ornaments as well as for service. The fluted and richly carved pillars of Diana’s temple were the admiration of all who saw them and, in later days they were so esteemed that they were carried to other lands to adorn other edifices— the dome of Santa Sophia, in Constantinople, now rises from columns of green jasper originally placed in the temple of Diana! The Church should adorn the doctrine of God her Savior in all things. His Truth should be emblazoned upon her like an inscription upon a column, so stately as to secure attention and command respect. A living Christian is the best ornament of Christianity—God’s service should be performed in the beauty of holiness.   
Once more, it is the Church’s business to maintain the Truth of God with all her might. She is set as a bronze wall and an iron pillar against all error. However men may cringe or bow, there stands the column fast and firm, fixed on its pedestal, set on its base. So should the Church in all ages stand fast to Truth and yield to no error, nor concealment of doctrine, nor change of ordinance! The Church of the Apostles is the model of the Church of today. The pattern of the Church of Christ is not to be found in the popish synagogues of the middle ages, but in the first age when Jesus Christ spoke and said, “Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”   
The business of the Church is to uphold, defend, maintain, and propagate the pure doctrines of Christ and His Apostles—and if she fails in this—if in her midst the Truth is not prized, if it is not adorned, if it is not vindicated and proclaimed, the church, so-called, is no longer the pillar of the Truth, but a bowing wall and a tottering fence! Now, I must occupy your time a little longer while I try to enforce a Truth which lies very near my own heart. And I pray God it may lie near the hearts of all His people at this perilous hour.   
The Truths of God which may be derived from the text are of one order. The first is that the *whole* Church is to maintain the Truth. Dear Brothers and Sisters, be very zealous for the Gospel, the old, old Gospel of the Grace of God! Be very zealous of the doctrine of Justification by Faith and forgiveness by the Atonement. I speak to you who know the Truth, for you, alone, make up the Church of God. Do not, I beseech you, allow in yourselves an ignorance of God’s Word, but study it and seek to know more and more of it. And what you do know, by the teachings of God’s Spirit, bind about yourselves as a belt never to be loosened!   
There are seducing spirits abroad that would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect! Therefore I entreat you to not be beguiled by their exceeding craftiness. Turn not aside from your steadfastness, but abide in the faith! They will tell you that you are bigoted. Never mind them, for in their mouths bigotry is another name for decision of character! The Gospel of salvation is the hope of men, therefore do all you can to make it known! Do not cast in your lot with those who are given to change, but stand in the old paths. It may happen that the wealthier people of the town are in error and it may be for your temporal advantage to join their community—but make no confederacy with false doctrine! Better go to the meanest conventicle and help to maintain the Truth of God than attend the wealthiest congregation where the Gospel is thrown into the background!   
I charge you by the living God, in these evil days, to keep yourselves pure from error! A true Church is appointed of God for the conservation of His Truth—and before the Lord, at the foot of the Cross, in the power of the eternal Spirit—we would pray that even unto *death* we may be faithful to our charge! Next, remember that a church is unchurched which is not faithful to the Truth of God. The church of Rome, when she forbade to marry and commanded to abstain from meats, set up also the “mass” in the place of the Sacrifice of Christ and her priests in the place of the one Great High Priest. Then she taught and encouraged idolatry in the worship of images, relics and the like. By all this she unchurched herself and is now described in Scripture, not as the bride of Christ, but as the harlot of Babylon!   
She is not the pillar of the Truth, but the grave of it! She was moved by error. She fell from her uprightness. She lies prone in utter ruin, never to be restored. Alas, any church may thus perish! The apostasy of Rome should be a warning to all other Churches of the living God, lest they, also, by little and little become defiled and cease to answer to the Divine design and are cast away forever! Next, remember that any Church fails in her design as being the pillar and basement of the Truth of God in proportion as she departs from the Truth of God. I therefore do, with all my soul, condemn what I see around me everywhere of disregard to the Truth of God!   
It is not merely that men change their views, but that they are becoming indifferent to Truth altogether and seem to think they do God a service when they unsettle the youthful minds of our day! First, we deplore all tampering with Inspiration. The Sacred Volume is scarcely admitted to be Inspired at all, or at best it is said to be inspired in some such moderated sense as Milton or Shakespeare may have been inspired! Then this Book is torn away from Scripture and then the other—and some who ought to know better say, “That portion of the Bible is written for the Jews, but not for us.” And so, by degrees, all the precious Volume is torn from us.   
Could the saints in Heaven, who used to feed on the Word of God, return to this lower world, they would be surprised to find that our wise men have questioned almost every Prophet, Evangelist, Psalm and Epistle! Every portion of the Word of God is challenged and the whole of Scripture is assailed—and that by men who continue in what professes to be a Church of the living God! We still hold that the Bible, and the Bible, alone, is the religion of the Christian—and we intend to hold to it all the more because others fall from their steadfastness! Alas, the grand old doctrines of the Gospel are also despoiled! Do you notice, nowadays, how all the great Truths of God are being spirited away? Men use the words, but they mock the ears, for they reject the sense—they hand us nuts—we crack them and we find that the worm of modern thought has eaten out the meat!   
The doctrine of the Atonement has, in some cases, been the chief object of assault. Take that away and what is left?! For what purpose is there a Church at all if the Atonement of Jesus Christ is not to be proclaimed by it? Let her die! Why should she live if she has no testimony to bear! If she has no Divine, Infallible message of pardon for the guilty and rest for the weary, let her perish! Listen to the detestable talk of modern ecclesiastics and you will hear them say, “Brethren, your own thoughts are your best guide! The enlightened consciousness of this age will best instruct you. The Bible is our sacred book, but cut out whatever you like, alter whatever you please.   
“We will yield anything sooner than be in opposition to the philosophers! Our illiterate predecessors, the fishermen, together with Paul and others, were raw hands at teaching and very unwisely thrust themselves into conflict with the best thought and culture of the period—so that their teaching was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness—but we know a great deal better! We adapt ourselves to the times and entertain great sympathy for honest doubt. We also know on which side our bread is buttered and we are ready to alter and amend to please the fashion of the hour!” Where this is the talk, there remains no longer a Church of the living God! It is nothing but the name of a church when the doctrines of God’s Infallible Word are trod in the dust!   
A church ceases to be a Church of Christ in proportion, also, as she alters the ordinances of God. These must be practiced as they were delivered. When a church rejects the ancient ordinances of Believers’ Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, her next step is to make new ones! Thus forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meat are brought in. The first is much vaunted as a means for the production of purity, but how much the priests and monks and nuns have done for purity I leave history to record! Believers’ Baptism was thrown to the winds and then baptismal regeneration must be brought in. The Lord’s Supper was by far too common and so the “unbloody sacrifice of the ‘mass’” was devised! O Church of God, when will you come back to the Law and to the Testimony and follow the mind of Christ and the doings of His Apostles?   
Churches also get wrong when they neglect discipline; when they admit into their membership persons who do not even profess to be converted and, I add, when, because of pleasing men, they tolerate in their midst ministers whose teaching is corrupt and full of infidelity! There are preachers, nowadays, who are studiously undermining the faith once delivered to the saints! The Church should separate itself both from wicked persons and from false teachers. She should no more tolerate evil teachers in her pulpits than you would allow a poisoner in your nursery, or a wolf in your sheepfold. God grant that our Churches may rise to their duty, however painful it may be! Yes, may they keep close to the faith, for otherwise they cannot be the pillar and basement of the Truth of God! An unholy, unregenerated church can never be the pillar of the Truth of God. If there is a failure in vital godliness; if humble walking with God is neglected, the Church cannot long remain a healthy Church of God.   
Now, Brothers and Sisters, you see how each one of you ought to behave in the Church of God. One part of your behavior is that you abide firm as a pillar. Stand fast! Be strong! You ought to be pillars, especially you who have known the Lord 30 or 40 years. You should stand fast to the Truth of God and I pray that you may. May the Church in Scotland, which of old witnessed to the Gospel, be kept steadfast. Her Covenanting fathers loved the Truth of God and shed their blood for it. May the Lord help their sons to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. May the Churches of our own England also be recovered from their declension and then maintained by the Spirit of God in stern fidelity to the Gospel.   
I cannot finish my sermon better than by commending to you the verse which was sung just now by your 5,000 voices—   
***“Should all the forms that men devise Assault my faith with treacherous art, I’ll call them vanity and lies,   
And bind the Gospel to my heart.”***

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THE CHURCH OF GOD AND THE TRUTH OF GOD  
NO. 3093

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 14, 1856.

**“The house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.”***1Ti 3:15***.**

[This sermon was preached during “The Rivulet Controversy,” of which an account is given in Volume II of C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography, in the chapter entitled, “The ‘Down-Grade’ Controversy Foreshadowed.” It was a very long discourse—nearly one-third longer than the twelve pages here

given—and although it was delivered more than half a century ago, its message is as timely, now, as it was then.]

WE live in very singular times just now. The professing Church has been flattering itself that, notwithstanding all our divisions with regard to Doctrine, we are all right in the main. A false and spurious liberality has been growing up which has covered us all, so that we have dreamed that all who bear the name of ministers are, indeed, God’s servants—that all who occupy pulpits, of whatever denomination they might be, are entitled to our respect as being stewards of the mystery of Christ. But, lately, the weeds upon the surface of the stagnant pool have been a little stirred and we have been enabled to look down into the depths. This is a day of strife—a day of division—a time of war and fighting between professing Christians! God be thanked for it! Far better that it should be so than that the false calm shall any longer exert its fatal spell over us! The day is come when we must know who are for the Lord and for His Truth—and who are on the side of error! The time is now come when some men, once distinguished among us for the attractiveness of their preaching, must be ranked among those who are opponents of the Truth of God! We did once imagine, in the blindness of our charity, that we all preached one Gospel, but now the enmity of the carnal mind has appeared. Carnal churches have chosen to themselves cruel teachers who have begun to teach strange doctrines which they mystify by their words, garnish with their eloquence and try to support by deceptive logic apart from simple Scripture.

The time is coming when it shall be openly proved who is on the Lord’s side. At this very hour separations are taking place everywhere. We weep for the cause—we do not weep for the effect. We weep that there should have been such heresies growing up in the midst of the Church, but we do not weep when we see those heresies brought out to the day and slaughtered with what some think remorseless cruelty, but what we believe unflinching justice! We desire that God may spare to us the men who are still faithful and who will never cease, at the risk of being called bigots, to drag out to the light those who lie against God’s Gospel—to bring them publicly before the world as opponents of the faith which is in Christ Jesus, whereby we hope to be saved. May God give us courage to stand up for the right! It is with this view that I have selected my text—to urge upon you, at this time, the great duty of standing fast at your post for the Truth of God and the equally great duty of endeavoring, wherever you are, to maintain them right. Be you not carried about by every wind of doctrine. Give not heed to every schismatic who would lead you aside. Hold fast by the oracles of the Most High! You know what you have been taught and whereunto you have been called—and you know the foundation whereupon you have been built up. “Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Whatever may happen to denominations, whatever divisions we may live to see, let it still be known that for God and His Truth we are prepared to hold our ground at any expense or at any risk!

Now, first, we have two things mentioned in one text. And then, secondly, we have the relationship which exists between them. The two things are “the Church of the living God” and “the Truth.” The relationship that exists between them is that “the Church of the living God” is “the pillar and ground of the Truth.”

I. First, then, we have TWO THINGS MENTIONED IN OUR TEXT. The first is “the Church of the living God.” Note well its unity. It is not said the churches of the living God, but the Church. God has not two churches, He has but one. We may be called by different names and, according to Scripture, we are to be separated, like sheep, into different folds, yet there is still only one flock and one Shepherd. The independence of Scripture is still to be practiced. Each Church is to be separate, having its bishop and its elders governing in the fear of the Lord, without respect of persons and without being disturbed by the opinion of any other Church. But though we are separate churches as to our organization, we are really but one Church, under one Head, the Lord and Bishop of our souls. There are not two churches any more than there are two Gods. There are not two Lords. There, are not two faiths. There are not two baptisms—there is one Lord, there is one faith, there is one Baptism—and there is one Church holding the one Lord, the one faith and the one Baptism. If any hold not the Truth of God, we cannot allow that they belong to “the Church of the living God.” It is not for us to adopt the cant phraseology of the present day and say that men may be of the Church, and yet differ from the Truth of God. No, by no means! They are either initiated by the Holy Spirit into God’s Church, or they are not. If they are not one with Christ, if they are not washed with Jesus’ blood, if they have not received His Spirit, if they have not been humbled to know and believe Him to be King in the midst of His own assemblies, if they have not put their trust under the shadow of His wings—whatever they may profess or believe, or however they may stand before men—if they do not so stand before God, they do not belong to the one Church! And not belonging to that, they cannot belong to Christ! Though our Lord Jesus Christ has only one Church, a part of its members, I believe, may be found in every denomination—but they owe not their standing to the fellowship they hold with denominations. There is one great denomination, “the Church of the living God,” to which every true Believer must belong. Some persons allege that the children of God may act on different principles, may believe different doctrines, may be the recipients of different kinds of Divine Grace and that their apprehensions of God and of Christ may be thoroughly diverse—we hold no such opinion! If there is not the vital principle in a man’s heart, teaching him the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, he does not belong to the one “Church of the living God.” Thus, there is but one Church, however divided it may be.  
You will further observe that the Church is called “the house of God.” Why? Because, first, it had God for its Architect—it is not built after man’s plan. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was framed after the pattern which God gave to Moses in the mount and, verily, Christ’s Church is built after God’s own model—it is not molded according to man’s idea, it is not shaped according to his option—the will of God and His will, alone, has been followed in the construction of His own house, which is the Church. God has ordained every stone and He has marked where each is to be placed. He planned her walls and her pillars, her foundations and her pinnacles. He has not left anything in the Church to the mere impulse of man, but He has comprised every tittle in His own statutes and decrees. He has not given a vague idea for man to develop, but He has made known His mind in His own words. There is no designer of the spiritual temple save the Infinite Jehovah! There is no architect of the house of the living God save the living God Himself.  
And not only is He its Architect, but He is its Builder. He has not left it for us to dig the stones out of the quarry, or to lay them one upon another. He does the whole work Himself. The foundation upon which each living stone is based has been laid of old, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief Cornerstone. In His obedience and His Sacrifice no creature rendered help. Nor less, as “the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple,” is every portion of the structure the work of God and not the work of man. To the Sacred Trinity we look for the gradual construction of the edifice. In Christ we “are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” There is never a child of God brought into the Church by man’s contrivance or man’s persuasions— each precious stone is brought there by God, and by God alone! No child of God is sanctified by man—he is sanctified by the living God. No heir of Heaven is fitted into the Church by man—God alone puts him into his proper position. Men at times try to build with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble upon the one foundation, but God consumes them all, for He will have no building in His Church but His

own— *“The vast materials all He forms,*

***Nor power nor love He spares.  
He guards the building from all harms,  
And all the Glory bears.”***

I have often remarked that when men have been adopting a patent process of building up a church by the revivalist sermons of some crazybrained preachers, after the first excitement has subsided that church has became sickly and fallen into a very sad and grievous state. Those revivalists have often been like locusts in our churches, devouring every green thing! And the revivals they have stimulated have well-near brought us to destruction! God will not have men usurp His prerogative in the building! And though they may with their own hands speedily pile up a mighty structure, yet, like the baseless fabric of a vision, it soon disappears and is gone. In His building, He allows no man to use tool or hammer—He will use men for trowels and hammers, but He will not allow them to make use of themselves or of others. His own hands shall perform it!

Again, it is God’s house because God resides there. Wherever the Church is, there is God. God is pleased, in His mercy and condescension, to stoop from the highest heavens to dwell in this lower Heaven—the Heaven of His Church. It is here, among the household of faith, He deigns—let me say it with sacred reverence—to unbend Himself and hold familiar fellowship with those round about Him whom He has adopted into His family. He may be a consuming fire abroad, but when He comes into His own house, He is all mercy, mildness and love. Abroad He does great works of power, but at home, in His own house, He does great works of Grace. Into this house we have been brought—we trust we live there and He has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. A father will reveal himself to his children as he will not to his servants, or to those with whom he mingles in his business. So, in the Church, God is pleased to manifest all the greatness of His love, all the marvelous depth of His compassion and show Himself to His people as He never did to angels—and as He never will to the unregenerate! It is the house of God because all who live there have access to their Father and because they can always find Him there— a very present help in time of trouble.

Again, the Church is God’s house because He provides for it. The household of the Church would be starved if God did not provide for it. Does the Church need pastors? God gives us pastors after His own heart. Does it need teachers? Then the teachers shall be taught of God. Does it need supplies? He makes for it a feast of fat things, full of marrow. Are comforts and luxuries needed? There are the wines on the lees well refined and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which, He says, “I have laid up for you, O my Beloved.” God always provides for His Church because He is the Husband—the houseband of it! Blessed be God, He never leaves the Church to be provided for by man! We tell you that in dependence upon God we will seek to bring you a portion of meat in due season, but we never undertake to provide the meal. The Lord will provide! We are but His servants, to bring unto His people food for their spiritual sustenance. Beloved, the Church is God’s own house and since His Word has taught us that “if any provide not for his own, and for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,” we can never believe that God will leave His house destitute of supplies! No, while He is Infinite in goodness, while Heaven and earth cannot measure the riches of His estates, while He is the Lord of all flesh and the Monarch of all worlds, we may rely upon it that His house will always be abundantly provided for and His table bountifully spread!

One more remark here. The Church is God’s house because therein God is honored, and therein He rules. Among men it is justly said that “without hearts, there is no home.” In the circle of a man’s household, he expects to find those “eager to please,” and if he has children, surely the affection of the little prattlers shall call forth his fond paternal love. However he may be belied abroad, it is meet that he should be honored at home—that is the place where he deserves and commands obedience! There he is master and lord, and every beck of his should be obeyed. So, the Church is God’s house, the abode of His household and His family. Therefore, though the world may disobey Him, yet His Church always welcomes His Presence, rejoices to do His bidding and listens to His words. In the Church, God must always be honored. Let Him speak and our ears shall at once give attention, and our feet shall run with swift obedience. “As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,” to learn His mind and to do His bidding. May He grant unto you, Beloved, this distinguishing sign that you belong to this Church which is the house of God, because by your profession and your practice He is continually honored!

The second thing mentioned in the text is “the Truth.” What do these words mean, “the Truth”? Depend upon it, they mean nothing more nor less than is wrapped up with the two covers of this Bible! What is the Truth? I might tell you that it is the counsels of Heaven revealed on earth, the mind of God made known to men, all the precepts, statues, and testimonies of the Most High. I might point you to the Person of Christ, His obedience to the Law, His death, His Resurrection and His Ascension, and tell you that the Gospel contained in the writings of the four Evangelists is the Truth of God! Or, once more, I might tell you of the witness of the Holy Spirit, those convictions He brings home to the Believer’s heart and the teaching by which He trains up the heirs of Glory from the moment of conversion till their final gathering into the heavenly garner—and say that all the witness of the Holy Spirit is “the Truth.” But then you might ask me why we should call these the Truth. What difference is there between their being true, and their being “the Truth”? I answer, what God says is necessarily true. It is most certainly true because God has said it. It needs no evidence to establish it, no argument to prove it. Therefore it is so far above evidence and proof that it is really “the Truth.” I have, as your minister, to assert it, illustrate it and preach it as dogmatically as possible, for there can be no appeal against “the Truth.” You have, as disciples, to believe it, search it and explore its depths—but there is no room to doubt or reason how much or how little you ought to receive, seeing it is, prima facie, “the Truth.”

Note its importance. It is called the Truth. There are many other truths in the world beside God’s Truth. There is natural truth, the truth of science, the truth of history and the truth man constantly utters on the evidence of his senses which we unhesitatingly receive. Yet, though these may be important in some degree, they give way to the all-important Truth of God. Now the definite article, “the,” is here put before the word, “Truth,” to teach us that if everything else we believe to be true should prove true, the whole would sink into insignificance when compared with the importance of the Truth of God! See, then, that you do not underrate the importance of God’s Truth. I would have you particularly value it, for some think it a matter of comparative indifference and that although it is right for us to believe all things which God has revealed, yet it is not important that we should do so! They suppose that it is of little consequence what sentiments we hold—we may be half right and half wrong, and yet be quite as well off—it matters little, so long as the heart is right, what the head believes. Alas, Sirs, this is a strange infatuation! The saints of old purified their souls “in obeying the Truth through the Spirit.” I cannot understand how your hearts can be right while you oppose the Truth of God! Were it only that God has revealed it, you might know that it is of Divine importance. What He speaks, it is surely incumbent upon us to believe! What He has set forth, we ought to accept as essential to our well-being, our comfort and our happiness. You may turn a deaf ear to the words of our poets, our philosophers, or our historians. You may even be content to live in ignorance of the laws of your country, “but see that you refuse not Him that speaks” to you from Heaven. This would be perilous, indeed!

Mark then well the importance of the Truth of God, for in these days men are apt to set light by it and, for the sake of peace and quiet, to lead us to suppose that contrary things can also be true.

The Truth is not only important, but substantial in its character. The Gospel which God has revealed is so essentially THE Truth there is nothing false, as there is nothing trifling in it. It is Truth unalloyed. It is Truth which ought to be undoubted. It is a vile sin to imagine that there can be any fallacy in the utterances of an Infallible God! Let everything else we credit be a lie. Let all that man has asserted and proved be swept away—God’s Words are the Truth, substantially and really so!

The Truth, moreover, is a thing of unity. It is not said “truths,” but “THE TRUTH.” God’s Truth is only one. Have you ever noticed, in the great summary of Doctrines, that as surely as you believe one, you must believe the rest! One Doctrine so leans upon the others that if you deny one, you must deny the rest. Some think that they can believe four out of the five points and reject the last. It is impossible! God’s Truths are all joined together like links in a chain. There is but one Truth, and one system of the Truth of God.

“Then,” say some, “tell us how to discern the Truth.” You may judge of it by three things—by God, by Christ and by man. That is, the truth which honors God, the truth which glorifies Christ, and the truth which humbles man. Unless a Doctrine exalts God, unless it acknowledges Him Monarch of Creation and gives Him absolute power over His creatures— He the Potter and ourselves the clay, He molding the vessels as seem good in His sight, we the vessels that are molded after His pleasure, God everything and ourselves nothing—that doctrine is not the Truth of God. And unless a Doctrine magnifies the Atonement—if it asserts that the Atonement may fail, that it was made for many who do not benefit by it, that God’s purpose in redemption is in anywhere frustrated—it is not of God, it is of Satan! If a doctrine teaches that man is possessed of good natural powers, that he is not so fallen as the Bible states, that he can do something to help himself, that his exertions can meet with God’s Grace half way, that he can assist a little in the work of salvation, or, at any rate, that he can preserve himself from falling and hold on his way with steadfastness, it is a man-glorifying, God-dishonoring doctrine! Cast it to the winds, for it never came from above. God never intended it to be preached otherwise than as the very foil of blackness against the brightness of His own Truth!

II. Now I desire to address you very solemnly on THE RELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE TRUTH. “The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.”

There is a sense in which the Truth is the pillar of the Church, for the Church is built on the Truth. It is on the revealed Doctrines of Divine Grace, such as Eternal Predestination, Immutable Affection, Covenant Security, the responsibility of Christ as the Surety of His people—it is on such Doctrines as these that the Church is built—and in this sense the Truth is the pillar and ground of the Church. In another sense, the pillar and ground of the Truth is God. He Himself maintains His own Truth. It is not committed to the hands of mortals to maintain it apart from God. One of the best proofs of this is that the Truth is still preserved in the original purity, after so many hypocritical preachings of it, and so much wresting of it to wrong purposes. While God lives, His Truth can never die! There remains the sense in which the Church is, as it were, delegated by God to maintain and support the Truth. You must understand this, then, instrumentally—while God is the real pillar and ground of His Truth, yet in this world He is pleased to make His children such. Really and effectively it is God who upholds the Truth, but instrumentally it is the ministers and elders and members of the Church who maintain the Truth and hold it firm.

In reading this verse, I was pleased with two thoughts that occurred to me. The Church is both the pillar and the ground of the Truth. Sometimes it is the pillar of the Truth when it preaches the Word, when it administers the ordinances and publicly shows forth the Gospel. But sometimes there have been seasons of persecution, when the disciples have not been able to go forth and testify to the world—and then the Church becomes a kind of underlying foundation, the ground of the Truth. In the days when Paul stood before Nero, he was like the pillar of the Truth. At another time, when he was shut up in a dungeon and could not come forth, he was in his heart like the ground of the Truth. When the Church stands boldly out and preaches the Word, it is the pillar of the Truth! When it is hidden in the Roman catacombs and cannot proclaim the Savior’s name to the world, there still lives the Truth of God deep in the hearts of Believers—and they are then the ground of the Truth. We, Beloved, who are of the house of God and of the Church of God, are the maintainers and supporters, instrumentally, of God’s Truth on the earth. Come, then, let me stir you up to do your duty! Let me beg of you who love God’s Truth not to leave it to itself. Perhaps you imagine that God’s Truth, being mighty, must prevail without your assistance. It is true, it must and will, but then God has said that if you belong to His Church, you are to be the pillar and ground of the Truth. To leave God’s Truth to shift for itself is as bad as to leave your own children to provide for themselves. True, the great decrees of destiny shall be carried out and our Savior’s Kingdom shall be established—but it shall be by means! God has honored you by choosing you to be the maintainers, the testifiers, the pillar and ground of the Truth. I will endeavor to awaken you, then, by one or two exhortations, to be faithful to this, your solemn duty.

In the first place, remember how your fathers, in times gone by, defended God’s Truth—and blush, you cowards, who are afraid to maintain it! Remember that our Bible is a blood-stained book—the blood of martyrs is on the Bible, the blood of translators and confessors. The pool of holy Baptism, in which many of you have been baptized, is a blood-stained pool—full many have had to die for the vindication of that baptism which is “the answer of a good conscience toward God.” The Doctrines which we preach to you are Doctrines that have been baptized in blood—swords have been drawn to slay the confessors of them! And there is not a Truth which has not been sealed by them at the stake, or the block, or far away on the lofty mountains where they have been slain by the hundreds. It is but a little duty we have to discharge compared with theirs. They were called to maintain the Truth when they had to die for it—you only have to maintain the Truth when taunt and jeer, ignominious names and contemptuous epithets are all you have to endure for it! What? Do you expect easy lives? While some have led through seas of blood and have fought to win the prize, are you wearied with a slight skirmish on dry land? What would you do if God should suffer persecuting days to overtake you? O cowardly spirits, you would flee and disown your profession! Be you the pillar and ground of the Truth. Let the blood of martyrs, let the voices of confessors speak to you. Remember how they held fast the Truth of God, how they preserved it and handed it down to us from generation to generation! And by their noble example, I beseech you, be steadfast and faithful, tread valiantly and firmly in their steps, acquit yourselves like men—like men of God, I implore you! Shall we not have some champions in these times who will deal sternly with heresies for the love of the Truth—men who will stand like rocks in the center of the sea so that, when all others shake, they stand invulnerable and invincible? You who are tossed about by every wind of doctrine, farewell! I acknowledge you not till God shall give you Grace to stand firm for His Truth and not to be ashamed of Him nor of His Words in this evil generation!

Think about it again, that you have the greatest reason to be the pillar and ground of the Truth from the fact that this Truth has been of immeasurable service to you. How often has it gladdened your hearts? You were once in darkness, but now are you light in the Lord! Once you had no clear view of that great mystery of godliness, but now God has been pleased to open your eyes, having touched them with spiritual eyesalve, so that in His Light you can see light. You are now brought to see that which is revealed and to believe the Doctrines of Grace. Have you not found these things comforting? How often have they supported you in the hour of peril? How often have they checked you when you would have sinned, and guarded you from despair when you were trodden underfoot by the enemy? How often have they nerved your arm for conflict, or moved your foot for journeying? How well furnished have you been since you believed these things, who were but poor defenseless creatures before! Will you not, then, maintain the Truth and spread it abroad? Will you blush to acknowledge the Word which has brought salvation to your souls, which has rescued you from the thralldom of sin and introduced you into the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free? No! I beseech you by the glorious panoply wherewith Christ has arrayed you, by His perfect love wherewith He has covered you, by the crown which He has promised you, by the Heaven which He has prepared for you—be you faithful to the Church of Christ, whereof you are members! Be you still the pillar and ground of the Truth.

Reflect once more, as another weighty reason, that you should ever have been led to know the Truth at all. Why, you know you did not deserve it! You believe that God has chosen you in His Sovereignty, entirely irrespective of your character. You must regard yourself as being the last man in the world that you could ever have thought God would have chosen. Some of you were sinners against His love and against His Law—great, open and apparent sinners! Others of you were secret transgressors—you sinned against God with a high hand and an outstretched arm, though men knew it not. Many of you were poor sinners involved in the darkness of deceitful doctrine—you had been led astray to believe yourselves saved, whereas you have since found that it was no work of the Spirit, but the mere excitement of your carnal feelings. And now that you, the chief of sinners, rescued by Divine Grace from death and Hell, are brought into His Church, will you not, for gratitude’s sake, considering what you owe your Master, defend and maintain His Truth at all hazards, in the midst of a gainsaying generation?

Then, once more, you are bound to maintain this Truth as you consider the manifold blessings which it will confer upon your fellow creatures when it shall win the day. The Truth of God is always a blessing. Men may hate it, but it is a blessing and it brings a blessing to their door, though they welcome it not. They may think it curses them, but the Truth is no curse unless men make it so to themselves. Nothing can benefit your generation, nothing can ameliorate the morals of mankind, nothing can refine the earth, nothing can wash away its blood, nothing can cleanse its stains, nothing can purge its lusts, nothing can stop its wars and heal its feuds—nothing better, nothing nearly so well as the maintenance of the Truth of God! Therefore, be very bold for it. It is the earth’s one hope—take it away and that world’s brightest star is quenched and her central sun is dim. Maintain the Truth, then, for the world’s sake, I beseech you.

And if encouragement can stir you up to duty, let me remind you that the time is coming when Truth shall be triumphant. Soldier of the Cross, the hour is coming when the note of victory shall be proclaimed throughout the world! The battlements of the enemy must soon succumb. The swords of the mighty must soon be given up to the Lord of lords! What? Soldier of the Cross, in the day of victory would you have it said that you did turn your back in the day of battle? Do you not wish to have a share in the conflict, that you may have a share in the victory? If you are even in the hottest part of the battle, will you flinch and flee? You shall have the brightest part of the victory if you are in the fiercest part of the conflict! Will you turn and lose your laurels? Will you throw away your sword? Shall it be with you as when a standard-bearer faints? No, Man, up to arms again, for the victory is certain! Though the conflict is severe, I beseech you, on to it again! On, on, you lion-hearted men of God, to the battle once more, for you shall yet be crowned with immortal Glory!

May God, then, grant unto us that we may always stand fast in the fight, as we would stand foremost among the conquerors! Mark those who have already overcome—they are pillars in the house of their God and they will “go no more out forever.” As you mark their white garments, their crowns, their palms, do you not pant to join the triumphant host? I know you do! Well then, wrestle hard as they did and, by Divine Grace, you, also, shall overcome and then shall you sit down with Jesus on His Throne, even as He did overcome and is set down forever with His Father upon His Throne!

But some will say, “If we go forth resolved to maintain this Truth, we shall be called bigots and we shall get very much ill feeling from the world.” Well, if you are afraid of that, I have done with you! I call you not kith or kin with me if you are abashed at such trivial rebuffs. If you blush at that, Sir, you will never do much for your Master’s honor! If you do not know how to stand fast against the world, you will find the world will stand fast against you. Did they not call Luther a bigot? Did they not say he was a mere declaimer? Did they not charge him with lack of logic and say he was a man that hurled invectives? But did any of these things move him? No, he persevered and still spread abroad the savor of his Master’s name in every place till he finished his course with joy as a conqueror! What sort of a character was John Knox in his day? Were not all manner of accusations heaped upon his head? But what did he say? “If I am God’s servant and on God’s side, I will not start for anyone of you.” And now he has this for his epitaph, “Here lies a man who in his life never feared the face of man.” Such an epitaph, few of you would merit.

“But,” says another, “how am I to know that it is THE TRUTH?” That question I answer in this way—if you do not know it is the Truth of God, you cannot stand up for it. I am only speaking to men and women who do know that it is the Truth. A true Christian cannot allow that he is in error, for he sees the Truth positively written in God’s Word. But you tell me that I may err. No, but I cannot err when I have God’s Word in my lips. People will controvert and will go into endless arguments to show that we are wrong. We cannot be wrong, Sirs! We cannot allow ourselves to be even supposed to be wrong when we hold fast by the Scriptures only—for that were to suppose that God’s Word could be wrong! Our inferences from Scripture may be wrong, but when we have the genuine Scripture, itself, we cannot admit the possibility of our being in error! And unless you are most solemnly convinced that you have the Infallible testimony of God in your own consciences and of the truthfulness of His Inspired Word, I do not ask you to be defenders of the Truth—such defense would be childish, and I would be more childish to ask for it!

“But,” another says, “I don’t think it necessary to make a noise about Doctrine—it does not concern souls much.” Does it not? I believe souls have been instrumentally damned by the thousands by false doctrine. I believe that the universal redemption scheme is doing immense mischief. As Joseph Irons said, “When men once believe that Jesus Christ died for His elect, they begin questioning, ‘Did He die for me?’ and that stirs them up to seek to know the Truth of God. But when they hear that there is salvation for all, they say at once, ‘Then I may sit still and fold my arms!’ And so they are deluded into Hell.” When men are told that they can do all things, and have power to save themselves, do you not think that is a soul-deluding doctrine? They seek to do what they can and they do a great deal, resting content with a spurious conversion, instead of the conversion which is of God and not of the will of the creature! I do not believe in all the conversions we hear of as brought about by false doctrine. God forbid that I should! Men who preach false doctrine may be sometimes useful in conversion because they preach some true doctrine, but a false doctrine never converted a soul yet, unless it converted it into worse dangers and made it tenfold more the child of Hell than before! It is foolish for you to cry out that Doctrine does not matter! What would you do if it were not for Doctrine? How could your soul be saved? How could you enter Heaven but for the Doctrine of Redemption? Yes, and how could you get to Glory but for the Doctrine of Election—the Doctrine that you were chosen in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world? Say what you like, you will find Doctrines far more essential than you ever dreamed!

Now, how many of my hearers have had any spiritual realization of the preciousness of these things? “Ah!” cries one, “I will defend the Truth.” Stop, young man! Have you felt in your heart the great Doctrine of God’s Sovereignty? Have you been humbled in the dust to know that God has a right to do with you as He pleases? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty! Have you been brought to see the blood of Christ shed especially for you? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Particular Redemption, for you do not understand it. Have you ever felt your own depravity in all its desperate character? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Original Sin. Have you felt that God the Holy Spirit has called you out of darkness into marvelous light? If not, you cannot defend the Doctrine of Effectual Calling. Do you feel in your soul that God has enabled you to persevere up to the moment and have you the solemn conviction that you shall hold on your way? If not, you cannot defend Final Perseverance. I beseech you examine yourselves and see whether you have these Doctrines in your heart. If you have, I shall never be much afraid that you will not maintain them, though I think it right, sometimes, to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And as there are too many who would guide your minds into “THE NONDOCTRINE SCHEME” and feed you with that which is vague and visionary instead of that which is substantial and true, I would the more earnestly exhort you, as for your very lives, to “hold fast the form of sound words which you have received.” Stand fast, Beloved! Be not moved in the evil day and, having done all, stand fast in the Lord! May God grant it for Jesus’ sake!

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THE CHURCH—CONSERVATIVE AND AGGRESSIVE  
NO. 393

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 19, 1861, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.”** *1Ti 3:15***.**

YOU will remember it was announced last Sunday that a collection would be made today in behalf of our institution for training young men for the ministry. It has been thought desirable that I should state a few particulars relative to the institution. Some of them will appear in the course of the sermon. It may suffice for me to say now that some five or six years ago one of the young men of the Church gave promise of being a successful minister if he could but have a good education. With the assistance of a friend in the Church, I undertook to take him under my charge, put him under a suitable tutor and train him for the ministry.

So successful, by God’s grace, was that work that I was induced to take another and another and another. Up to now I have been myself the committee, secretary, treasurer and subscriber. I have not, except in one or two instances, even mentioned the matter to anyone but have been content to provide everything that I could out of my own income, besides that which is necessary for the support of my household in order to educate any young men who might become ministers of the Cross of Christ.

There are now seven settled out, all of whom have been eminently successful. They are not men probably who will become great or brilliant but they have been good and useful preachers. I think there are not another seven in the whole Baptist denomination who have had so many converts during the years that they have been settled. They have been the means, most of them, in the hands of God of adding a very considerable number every year to the churches where they have settled. Those are churches not in provincial towns but in villages.

I have therefore been led still further to increase my number and I think I have now about sixteen young men wholly to support and maintain. Besides these, there is a very considerable number who receive their education in the evening though they still remain in their own callings. With the enlarged sphere we now occupy as a Church, I have proposed so to enlarge my scheme that all the members of this Church and congregation who happen to be deficient in the plain rudiments of knowledge can get an education—a common English education for themselves. Then, if they display any ability for speaking—without giving up their daily avocations—they shall have classes provided for higher branches of instruction.

But should they feel that God has called them to the ministry, I am then prepared after the use of my own judgment and the judgment of my friends, as to whether they are fit persons to give them two years’ special tutorship that they may go forth to the work of the Cross, thoroughly trained so far as we can effect it in so short a time. I know I am called to this work and I have had some most singular interpositions of Providence in providing funds for it. At the day of judgment the world shall know that there has never lived a man upon the face of the earth who has less deserved the slander of seeking to enrich himself than I have.

I shall say no more upon that. Let the world scandalize me if it will. I want the money today, not for myself in any respect. I give my services and my work freely and of my own income all that I can spare. I only want my friends who feel interested in this work to assist me that we may provide men who shall preach the Gospel to multitudes who are longing to hear it fully and faithfully proclaimed. Permit me to say there was held in Westminster Abbey last Thursday a grand choral festival, at which there were singers from the various choirs of London—St. Page, the Abbey, the Temple and the Foundling and some from Windsor.

Several ecclesiastical dignitaries graced the assembly. Anthem and cantatas and I know not what else, were performed on a most classic scale. The sermon was preached by a Provost of some college in which the claims of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts were eloquently advocated and the whole collection amounted to seventy pounds. “A very poor result for so sublime a service,” said the Times report. Last Friday evening there was held a little meeting in one of the rooms here of about forty or fifty of the seat holders in this congregation.

There were no bishops present. There were only a few street preachers and my poor student. They addressed that little meeting and though no collection was called for or even contemplated, those friends spontaneously subscribed one hundred and eighty pounds as an earnest of what they were sure the congregation would give to this work today. I think this just shows that when people have a mind for Christ’s cause, they do not need to have the State to support their religion but can support it out of the generosity of loving hearts without the elaborate parade of gorgeous rituals.

I shall now invite your attention to the subject of this morning’s discourse which has a very strong bearing upon this point. “The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth”—1Ti 3:15. The word “Church” has suffered very much from the hands of men. Strangely but frequently, has it been used to designate a mass of bricks and mortar. Ecclesia, a chosen assembly, has actually by the natural debasement of the tongue of priests come down to mean a building. By no possible construction can it mean any such a thing. A more debasing use of a divine word than that can scarcely be found. The word “Church” has also been used by many to signify the clergy. A young man is to enter the Church— that is, he is to take holy orders, to become a preacher and an authorized dispenser of the sacraments, as they are called.

He is to aspire after an incumbency and is to be recognized as an ordained minister of the Word. Now, the word “Church” in Scripture means nothing like that. Such a use of terms is but confusion. It is taking God’s Words, making and destroying their sense and then using them for our own purpose. The “Church of Christ” according to the Scripture, is an assembly of faithful men. Ecclesia originally signified assembly. Not a mob, but an assembly of persons who were called together on account of their special right to meet for the discussion of certain subjects. They were a called-out assembly.

The “Church of God” itself, in its full sense, is a company of persons called out by the Holy Spirit from among the rest of mankind, banded together for the holy purpose of the defense and the propagation of the Truth. If there are but three or four, yet if they be so banded together in the fear of God, they are to all intents and purposes a Church. And if they should happen to number thousands, they are no more a Church on account of their numbers—a Church being a company of faithful men. To our minds, the Scripture seems very explicit as to how this Church should be ordered. We believe that every Church member should have equal rights and privileges.

We believe that there is no power in Church officers to execute anything unless they have the full authorization of the members of the Church. We believe, however, that the Church should choose its pastor and having chosen him they should love him and respect him for his work’s sake. That with him should be associated the deacons of the Church to take the oversight of pecuniary matters. And the elders of the Church to assist in all the works of the pastorate in the fear of God, being overseers of the flock. Such a Church we believe to be scripturally ordered.

And if it abide in the faith—rooted, grounded and settled—such a Church may expect the benediction of Heaven and so it shall become the pillar and ground of the Truth. But what is intended in our text by saying that the Church of God is the pillar and ground of the Truth? When you go outside this building you may observe the use of a pillar. And that part of it which forms a basement upon which the circular stone rests exactly answers to what the Apostle means by the ground of the Truth. It is the business of the Church, of course, to uphold the Truth in its deep foundations. To conserve and preserve it intact—thus it is the ground.

To lift it up and bear it aloft in beauty and in all its fair proportions, in this the Church, of course, is the pillar of the Truth. Some commentators say that as pillars were used of old to bear inscriptions, as upon pillars even the brazen decrees of the Roman senate were exhibited to the people, so the Church of Christ is intended to be a pillar bearing the inscription of the Truth, so that it not only maintains it and upholds it, but sets it forth. At any rate I think you will perceive in a moment that the simple meaning of my text is just this—it is the business of the Church of God to maintain, to propagate, to uphold, to spread and to defend the Truth as it is in Jesus—wherever that Church may be placed.

I shall use the text, this morning, in four ways. First, to correct certain

mistakes . Secondly, to convince judgments of the excellency of God’s ordinance in this matter. Thirdly, to awake reflections upon the subject. And fourthly, to suggest some ways of making this Church and every Church, the pillar and ground of the Truth.

I. First, then, my Brethren, LET US CORRECT SOME FEW MISTAKES. We are all deeply impressed with the importance of maintaining the doctrines of the Gospel and the Truths of Christ pure and simple as we find them in the New Testament. There are brethren who in their extreme anxiety to accomplish this end suggest methods which are not warranted by the text. For the rule here laid down is that the Church is itself to maintain and to be the guardian of the Truth. But these brethren, in their great anxiety to maintain it, have suggested other ways.

One of the first has been the drawing up of a creed. The articles of the faith shall be written out clearly and unmistakably. At a general synod every word of these articles shall be argued—any discrepancy shall be removed—and the articles shall, as nearly as possible, express the orthodox creed. It is done. The ministers assembled go home and say that creed will be the pillar and ground of the Truth—as long as ever the name of the

Westminster Assembly Confession shall be known—the Truth will be safe. As long as the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England shall stand— that Church must be free from error.

Ah, how signally they have failed! Especially let us take the glaring instance of the Church of England. The articles of the Church of England are Calvinistic. No person who is not deluded or dishonest, can read them without seeing that the pen was dipped in Geneva ink which wrote those articles. And yet how many Church of England clergy are as far from anything like Calvinism, as the wildest Pelagian could be supposed to be? There are, it is true and God be glorified for it, many Brethren who do believe these articles and preach them faithfully, too. We love them and honor them for the Truth’s sake.

But is there one in ten? Nay, is there one in twenty who really receives those articles in their pure and simple meaning? If this were all, it were not so bad. But men have had the impudence to subscribe to those articles of the Church—when they have not believed a single one of them— and have been infidels. You have had of late and it is not necessary for me to allude to the matter, a glaring proof that no articles whatever can conserve and maintain the Truth. For men will sign them when they do not believe a word they set forth.

We have been led to think we have grown a little wiser and we have tried to maintain the Truth by our trust deeds. Our friends have, as they thought, put the Truth in the trust deeds. And it is enacted that if a minister does not preach the doctrines the trustees shall see that he is dismissed. Ah, a very poor pillar and ground of Truth this is! Our strict Baptist Brethren—I am not now about to enter into the question whether they are right or wrong—but supposing they are right for the moment—they have been exceedingly wise in putting the strict Baptist clause into their trust deed.

I am not now about to dispute the verdicts of the judges. But their clauses have been broken and their bands have been like green twigs. I know a chapel now in Norfolk which has on the forefront over the door, these words printed in stone, “For the strict Baptists forever.” Really there is something fine and heroic in that—but equally ridiculous and absurd. The place will not be for the strict Baptists forever. Nor will any trust deed ever be so written but that you may drive a coach and horses through, just as surely as you can through an Act of Parliament. That never was and never will be the way to maintain the Truth. Let it be done if you like, but do not imagine that your trust deed is a pillar and ground of the Truth.

We have fallen into a similar mistake with regard to the diffusion of the Truth. In order to spread the doctrines of the Gospel, we have formed societies. There are missionary societies appended to every denomination. These societies are to be pillars and grounds of the Truth, not so much in the maintenance of the Truth as in the spreading of it. To become a member of a missionary society you have only to subscribe to it. If you were a very infidel and subscribed, you would become a member. Nothing whatever is required of you but that you should simply give a certain amount of money and you become a member of that society.

We have been wondering why our societies have not greater success. I believe the reason is because there is not a single word in the Book of God about anything of the kind. The Church of God is the pillar and ground of the Truth—not a society. The Church of God never ought to have delegated to any society whatever, a work which it behooved her to have done herself. Instead of sending our subscriptions to associations we ought to have picked our own men out of our own midst and found the means to send them forth to preach the Truth as it is in Jesus, ourselves.

We have given up the work of the education of our young men to our colleges. I will not say they have done it ill. But I do dare say they have not done it well. The reason, I think, has been because there is nothing in the Word of God that could warrant their accepting the trust. The Church of God, not a college, is the pillar and ground of the Truth. Every Church should itself see to the education of its own young men. It should look out for its own evangelism—should train its own soldiers and send them forth to the fight. The Church of God will never see things done rightly, if shirking her own responsibility, she tries to cast it upon other men.

Even if those men could be the best of men. If they were angelic, if you could find superhuman beings—yet if God never called them to the work He will not, therefore, honor them in it. The Church, the Church, the Church of God, the assembly of believers is, according to God’s Word, to hold forth His Truth and to be the pillar and ground of the Truth.

Many have thought, however, that the Truth would be quite safe in the hands of ministers. If we could not leave its preaching to the society, at least let the minister, so intimately connected with the Church, become the pillar and ground of the Truth. It is a melancholy fact that heresy never began with the people yet—but with the minister. And I speak what I know—the hearts of the people of our denomination are more sound in the Truth than the hearts of the preachers. There is not a denomination under Heaven which has a more sincere love to all Calvinistic doctrines than our own. Yet how many of our ministers there are who, while they do not preach against them and I hope secretly believe them, are, nevertheless silent upon the subject?

They keep it back, perhaps imagining it would not be profitable to their hearers. But there is scarcely a Church in London in which there are not men and women grumbling, groaning and murmuring, because the full Truth is not preached to them and they do not hear the Word by which alone they live. There are Churches in London where the Truth is fully preached, praised be God and there you will find none who are groaning because they are famished. But there is not a Church of the other sort in which there are not many disaffected persons who are thoroughly ready to come out at any moment and leave their minister if he will not give them the whole Truth, instead of keeping part of it back.

You must not trust the ministry, Brethren. If you rely upon us you will rely upon broken reeds. However honest we may be, yet we have not to deal so much with the world and with its cares and troubles as you. And I think your dealing with the world casts you back very often upon the old, solid realities—because in the hard daily struggle which you have to carry on, you need to have the finest of the wheat to sustain your strength. Let us uplift, this morning, as a great Truth which the Church has too much forgotten, the words of the text, “The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground to maintain the Truth.” Not trust deeds nor Church articles. And the Church of the living God is the pillar to set forth and proclaim the Truth. Not the ministry, not societies, not authors, not any set of men to whom it can be delegated, but the Church of God—and the Church of

God alone.

Now do not misunderstand me. I would not say a single word against any society for the spread of God’s Truth. But I must repeat again that all societies of that sort spring from an irregular and unscriptural position of the Church. THE Church, if she were in her right state, would do the whole of the work herself. The city missionary would be a member of the Church sent out and supported by the Church itself. The missionary to foreign lands would have the Church at his back to whom he would look for support both in prayers and in subscriptions. Every work would be performed—not through this secretary or that—but through the Church itself.

This, I believe, is the principle which will work a radical cure in all the errors that have been made and bring back the state and system of evangelization into a proper and healthy condition. I may be wrong, but this has deeply laid upon my soul. And I shall never be satisfied till I see in this Church an organization so complete that it does not need a supplement—able to do every good work and fulfill every needful office of itself and by itself—welcoming ever the cooperation of others—but never needing to depend upon a society for the accomplishment of any purpose to which the Lord God has been pleased to call it.

II. I shall now pass on to my second point. Let us note THE WISDOM OF GOD IN MAKING THIS MATTER SO—presuming, of course—that we have thus far rightly interpreted the will of God concerning us.

The Church of God in Scripture is called a mother. What is a mother’s business? What is a mother’s duty? A mother’s duty is to feed her own child from her own bosom. She loses a joy herself and inflicts a serious injury upon her offspring when, if having the ability, she lacks the affection which would constrain her to support her own child from the fountains which God Himself has opened. And as the Church of Christ is a mother, she shall lack the greatest joy and lose the sweetest privilege unless she herself train her own children and give them the unadulterated milk of the Word.

She has no right to put her children out to nurse. How shall they love her? What affection shall they bear towards her? No, let her do as she should and keep her children at home and supply them herself. It is a mother’s business, as that child grows up, to train and teach it. Let her teach it the first letters of the alphabet. Let it gather its first knowledge of Christ from a mother’s lips. Who so fit to teach as she that brought it forth? None can teach so sweetly and none so effectually as she. Let her not give up the training of her child to another. And why should we, the Church of Christ, give up our children when we first taught them to speak in Christ’s name, to be trained and to be taught by others?

No, by every motherly feeling that remains within the bosom of Christ’s Church, let us see her children brought up at her own knees, dandled there in her own lap and not give up the work of training her sons and daughters to others. And who so fit as the mother of the family to inspire her son with holy ardor when at last he goes forward to the battle of life? Who shall give him the affectionate advice? Who shall give him the cheering word which shall sustain him in the hour of difficulty so well as a mother whom he loves? And let the Church of God, when her young men go forth to her battles, put her hand upon their shoulders and say, “Be strong, young man, be strong. Dishonor not the mother that bare you. But go forth and like the son of a Spartan mother, return not but in glory. Go forth to conquer or to die. Come back on your shield, or with it—a hero or a martyr.”

Who can speak the words so well and sing at home so powerfully as the mother to her son, or the Church to her child? The Church, then, has no right to delegate to another her own work. Let her bring forth her own children. Let her give them nourishment. Let her train them up. Let her send them forth to do the Master’s work.

But, then, my Brethren, the Church is often compared to a city. Christians are the citizens. Who so fit to fight the battles of a country as the countrymen themselves? Shall we give up to a tribe of mercenaries the defense of this stalwart island? Shall we hire foreigners from afar and say to them, “Dash the invader from our own shores”? No, my Brethren, Britain’s true hearts would wake up and Britain’s strong arms would wield the weapon if invasion should ever take place. The liberties of a country are not safe with an army, but with the citizens themselves. We must be our own defenders if the land is to be preserved. No body of troops more fit than those who fight for their own children, their own wives, their own hearths and the altars of their own land.

Shall we, then, the Church of God, seek out others besides our own citizens? Shall we give the command of our armies to those who belong not to us? Shall we send our sons and daughters out to be enrolled in other armies? No. In the name of the living God let the Church of Christ train her own citizens for the battle of Christ. Let her bring up her own young warriors for the defense and maintenance of the Truth. Besides, who is there who will naturally care for this matter like the Church? My dear Brethren, if I were the minister of a society I should be in a miserable plight. What would the society care for me? What would they care about what I did if there could be but a smart report sent in at the end of the year to be read at the public meeting amid the clapping of hands and so forth?

The secretary would smile upon me, but what would they care for me? What prayers should I have from the subscribers? How should I be likely to be carried on the heart of the secretary? Good man, he has twenty other agents to think of—how should he be thinking of me? But I am a minister of a Church and there is not one member of this Church but what prays for me. I know that as often as you bow your knee at the family altar you mention my name as you mention the name of your son and your daughter. Many a proof have I had from you that I am as much loved by you as if I were your brother according to the flesh.

Your prayers make me strong. Your sympathies make me blest. They cheer my heart and bear me up amidst the waves of calumny. And who shall care for anything when God and the Church are with him? So, then, if it is so with a minister it must be very much more so with a missionary in the foreign land. “Why,” says he, “who will pray for me? The Missionary Society has sent me out. The secretary knows about me. He reads my letters when I send them to him. They are put in the magazine.” But suppose some young man from these galleries was sent out to preach the Word—why we should all notice him. When the letter came from John Soand-So at Canton and we read it at the prayer meeting, how should we pray for him! We should feel he was one of ourselves. And when we made the collection for his support, we should give far more liberally than for

another that we never saw, who had no connection with us and—however good the man might be—was not a personal friend of ours.

The Church of God can naturally care for the state of her own ministers and her own missionaries—and a minister, a missionary, cannot hope to be greatly blest till they are under the Church—and not under a society. Just so with the young men for the ministry. When they go to college they do not, I suppose, expect many people to care about them there. But with regard to those we have in our midst, why there is nothing that any of you would not cheerfully do for them! As soon as there is a new face seen among them, some of the elders of the Church are sure to get him into their houses—are sure to speak kindly with him till I fall into another difficulty.

Sometimes my friends take them away too much, are too kind to them, get them away from their studies in order to be with them—when they ought rather to be sticking fast by their books. I find no lack of sympathy and I know the men are happier. And I believe they have greater motives to be holy because they are more watched, more observed by the members of the Church. Anything which they do ill would reflect discredit upon the whole of us and when they do that which is right and honorable, there is a sort of esprit de corps which makes them long to distinguish themselves—that the whole Church may share in the honor of their connection.

I am persuaded that this is a right principle and I shall not cease to advocate it unless I find arguments by which it can be disproved. And after all, my Brothers and Sisters, who should care for the cause of Christ like the Church? Oh what reason you and I have for loving Christ’s cause! Dear have been the places where we have worshipped, some of us, for there we first found a Savior. Some of you, not long ago, were the servants of sin and Satan—you were at a distance from God—and you loved that distance well. Could we not cast our eyes around and remember how some of you were drunkards and swearers and such like?

But you are washed, you are sanctified. And now you rejoice in Him that loved you, for He has washed you in His own blood. Now you can sing of pardoning grace and dying love. Who, like you, my Brethren, to propagate the Gospel? Who makes such preachers as these Pauls, who preach the faith which they once destroyed? Who will stand so well at the back of every agent for Christ as those who have themselves tasted and felt and handled the good Word of Life? Truly the Word of God is safe in the hands of the Church, when the Church lives near to God.

When you are sensible of your gratitude to Christ, when you are conscious of your obligations to eternal and sovereign mercy, then it is that you will be pillars of the Truth. And you will maintain and uphold it, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, not hesitating to support those who endeavor to do it in your names. Thus the Church is made the salt of the earth and the light of the world—irrespective of any society whatever—“The Church of God is the pillar and ground of the Truth.”

III. Thirdly, this topic AWAKENS REFLECTION.  
“Well,” says one, “I am afraid it would not work.” That is it, my Brethren, that is just the hitch in the whole matter—it would not work. “We have got a machinery,” said a Brother to me once, “we have got a machinery in our Church which will go on just as well, whatever the characters of the members may be.” “Then,” I said to him, “depend upon it, yours is not that which God has ordained.” For it seems to me that the most Scriptural system of Church government is that which requires the most prayer, the most faith and the most piety to keep it going.  
The Church of God was never meant to be an automaton. If it were, the wheels would all act of themselves. The Church was meant to be a living thing—a living person. And as the person cannot be supported if life be absent, or if food be kept back, or if breath be suspended—so should it be with the Church. There should be certain solemn necessities without which she ceases to be a Church—certain things which she must have and without which she cannot do her work.  
I am glad that this difficulty is suggested at all, for it seems to me that if there were not this difficulty, it would not be God’s plan. “Well,” says one, “if you believe the Church is to do all this work, then the Churches cannot yet be what they should.” I am glad you draw that inference, my Brethren, I am glad you do. “Why,” says one, “our Churches could not support a missionary, some of them hardly support their minister.” Just so, Brethren, but that is just because they are in a wrong state. There is hardly a Church anywhere but if the Spirit of God were poured upon it might not do ten times as much for Christ as it is now doing. The fact is there may be some few Churches that are walking in the right road but they are very few indeed. And the objection which you bring ought to be an objection against the state of the Church and not against the plan itself—for it is possible for the Churches to maintain missionaries and minister—if they want to do it.  
“Well,” says one, “but a Church must be very watchful to find out young men for the ministry.” Just so, I am glad you say that, for a Church ought to be very watchful. “But the minister must have a good deal to do,” you say. Just so and he ought to have a great deal to do. What is the use of a lazy minister? He is no good either to the world, to the Church, or to himself. He is a dishonor to the noblest profession that can be bestowed upon the sons of men. Let him have plenty to do. It will keep him out of mischief and it would do him good. Too much to do may be an evil, but too little to do is a curse. Let him have much to do.  
“But,” says another, “the minister ought to be a holy man, because if the young persons who associate with him learn ill manners, what then?” Just so, I am glad you say that. And so he should be a holy man. Amongst the Swiss, the Vaudois and the Waldenses, every minister trains one young man. Those pastors or shepherds always have a younger brother to travel with them wherever they go. He watches the elder pastor, observes his ways, listens to his holy prayers. He is inspired with his spirit, learns to tread the craggy mountains with him, learns to defy the enemy through the courage which he sees in his elder brother. He learns lessons of wisdom which are not to be learnt from books, lessons of practical pastoral training which are not to be gathered from the best professors of the best colleges in the world.  
And thus the Swiss have ever maintained a succession of men, perhaps not brilliant, but always useful—perhaps not popular, but always sound and valiant in their defense of the Truth. And should it not be so with the Church? If to carry it out it need a laborious ministry, so much the better. If it need a holy and wise ministry, so much the better. No other man should be a minister at all. If it need a watchful Church and a prayerful Church and a Church which consecrates liberally of its substance to the Lord, I say so much the better—for so ought every Church be.  
The only question is, are we in the right state now to accomplish all the Lord’s purposes? If we are not, let us make it a matter of prayer that we may be brought into this state—for we are never healthy unless we are prepared to do whatever God calls us to do. We must be losing in our own spiritual enjoyment if we fail to have strength to carry out all the work which the Lord imposes upon us. The Lord never gives us more to do than we can do. We had the work of building this place and many thought we could not do it—at last we thought we could—and by God’s grace we did

it. If we had fifty more such places to build and the Lord laid it to our

heart to build them, we could do it if we were in a right state. Our only want of power is want of grace. Give the Church grace and she does not want a new banker. Give her grace, she does not need then to have new ministers. Give her more grace, she will not want the world’s pitiful gold to endow her and make her rich. Give her grace and you have given her all she wants. In that one word, you shall have successful ministers, you shall have laborious agencies, you shall have benevolence pouring out its floods and piety consecrating all its activities for Christ.

IV. Now I shall come to my last point. The last point is BY WAY OF SUGGESTION.  
What can we do practically to carry out this plan? Brethren, before I answer that question let me say there are some things we must take care of or else we cannot carry it out at all. We must watch lest the Church be adulterated by additions which are not an increase to her strength. We must be very careful that no thought of strife, no symptom of envy, no feeling of jealousy creep in. Up to now you have been as one man— undivided and indivisible. This is absolutely necessary in the Church for the carrying out of any of her purposes. Divided we should utterly fail.  
I remember a somewhat ludicrous incident which occurred to a Church in which there were great quarreling and bickerings. The minister and the deacons and his people, were all at arm’s length and daggers drawn. It was determined at last that the matter should come to a settlement and it was by mutual consent given up to the judgment of a good Christian farmer, who lived in the neighborhood. He was to hear the case and write an answer to be read at the next Church-meeting.  
Our friend, the farmer, sat down to write his Letter—at the same time he had a letter from a steward or tenant asking advice about his farm— and by a mistake, or rather by a blessed Providence as God would have it, he put the wrong letters into the envelopes, so that the letter which was intended for the Church went to the steward and that which was intended for the steward went to the Church.  
At the Church meeting, when they were all assembled, this letter was read to the Church, it ran thus—“Dear friend, mind you see to the hedges well. Keep them up as best you can and take special care of the old black bull.” Now that was a most extraordinary letter to write to a Church. It had been sent by mistake, but the minister thinking it was a bona fide piece of advice, said he could not comprehend it. Some Brother got up and said it was plain enough—it was meant that they must be very watchful as to whom they should receive into the Church. They must keep their hedges up and see there were no gaps.  
“And,” said he, “by the ‘old black bull’ I have no doubt he means that spirit of Satan that would get in and trouble and divide us.” So understanding it in that sense they made up their difference, repaired their hedges and were careful of “the old black bull.” Every Church must do the same, for before we can do anything for Christ, we must first be right at home. We must have peace within our borders. We must be filled with the finest wheat, or else he will not send forth his Word and make it to run very swiftly. This, I hope, will be well seen to.  
What, then, are we to do? If the Church is to do all this, Brethren, what are you and I to do? As for me, I must take heed unto myself. I am to be the leader of this people, constantly ministering to them in the Word of Life. I must take care that my dedication of myself and all I have to my Lord be so perfectly complete that I would not have an objection to them knowing what I do with all I have. I must so live that they can see right through me that I desire to serve my Master and serve Him alone.  
Then one and all of you must say, “What must I do?” Let each man finding his own proper niche, each seaman on board the vessel finding which rope he can best handle, or what part of the tackling he best understands, take his place. Then come rocking tempests, let the ship reel. She is safe, for she is in the hand of God and in the hand of faithful men, who know how to manage her right well.  
The battle is to be fought, Brethren. It is to be fought by Christ’s army, not by hirelings. What are you and I to do? I must stand at the front of the line and wave my sword and say, “Come on, comrades!” And you, with steady step advancing, with firm bold front maintaining every inch of the ground you take and at last—rushing in one tremendous phalanx straightway to the thick of the fight—you must carry everything before you and win the crown for King Jesus. England expects every man to do his duty, but the Church of God expects it more and must and shall have it. By Him who shall judge the quick and the dead. By Him who bought you with His blood, I adjure you, Christian men and women, see to it that you stand each of you in your place. Do, each of you, your own appointed work. And so shall Christ’s kingdom come and His will be done on earth even as it is in Heaven.  
I think I hear a little murmuring going round the gallery and especially stopping at some few of the pews. I will not indicate the Brethren. They are saying, “I do not belong to the Church—what am I to do?” My Brethren, the first thing you ought to do is to join the Church. You say you love the Lord Jesus Christ. Very well. If you neglect one duty, that does not excuse you from another. You are dying in a state of sin, as a Christian man, if you omit the duty of joining yourself with the people of God. May I ask you, when the Church goes to the fight, will you tarry at home? “No,” you say, “I will follow with you. I will do my work. I will go as one of the camp-followers.”  
Yes, but somehow or other, those camp-followers are in a very unsatisfactory state because they are not under the discipline of the officers. And though some of them can fight well a sort of guerilla warfare, yet we should be much stronger if we could have them in the ranks. Brethren, don’t you think sometimes that the world may imagine that you mean to hold hard till you see which will win? Had you not better cast in your lot with us while the battle rages? Besides, what does the Master say?—“He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess.”  
And what does He say to those who do not confess? “He that denies Me before men, him shall be denied of My Father which is in Heaven.” You do not wish for that, surely. Enlist, then. Put on your Lord’s regimentals. True, you can fight His battle without them, but methinks you will be more in the path of obedience and the path of safety, if you put on the garments of Christ and the garments of His salvation. Come! Whosoever is on the Lord’s side, let him join with the Lord’s hosts. If you be not, stand back and do not dare to come. But if you are, the standard is lifted, the trumpets sound. Come, comrades! Who is for Christ? Soldiers, who is for the Lord God Omnipotent? Unfurl the standard afresh today.  
Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord is our banner and who will stand back? Let us enroll ourselves beneath Him and say, “O Lord, go forth with our armies and grant success, for the battle is great and without You we shall utterly fail, but with You we shall surely get the victory.”  
I have preached, as you will perceive, then, to the Church only. I have said nothing to the unconverted. We cannot do twenty things at a time. But I would say this word before I sit down. Remember, my dear Hearers, if you are not numbered with the friends of Christ, you are numbered with His enemies. Will you remember that? I do not mean if you are not numbered with the visible Church—I mean this—if you do not love and serve Christ. He that is not with Him is against Him—he that gathers not with Him scatters abroad.  
You say you take neither side—it is impossible—you must be on one side or the other. Clear the field! There is no room here except for the two armies. Whosoever is not with Christ is with Satan and shall surely be trod down when the enemies of God are trod like straw for the dunghill. Sinner, be you aware of this—that God is against you—and the hosts of God are against you. The Lord give you repentance! The Lord give you faith! And come you to the Captain of salvation and ask Him to have mercy on you! Run down the old flag! Thank God it is not nailed to the mast! Let the black flag come down and let the blood-red flag run up!  
Spirit of God, constrain them to change masters! May they no more serve the black prince, Satan. But may they, by Your grace, serve under His banner whose service is perfect freedom and whose reward is everlasting life!  
May the Lord bless each one of you, for Christ’s sake!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1087 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷1Ti 3.16

THE HEXAPLA OF MYSTERY  
NO. 1087

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

**“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”** *1Ti 3:16***.**

THE Apostle tells us in the preceding verse that the Lord has a double design in maintaining His Church in the world. The first is that it may be the place of His abode, for the Church of the living God is “the house of God,” the home wherein He reveals Himself unto His own children, the resting place of His love which He has of old appointed. Jehovah still inhabits the praises of Israel and still He fulfills His promise to His chosen, “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” (2Co 6:16). Blessed is the Church which has realized this first design of God and so has continued to enjoy the Lord’s Presence and power. May we in this place be a building fitly framed together and grow unto a holy temple in the Lord, for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

God’s next purpose in sustaining a Church in the world is that it may preserve and uphold His Truth among men, for the Church of the living God is “the pillar and ground of the Truth.” The Gospel must be believed, practiced and proclaimed by men of God or it will not have power. God does not trust the conservation of His Truth to books, or to the most accurately written creeds, or to some one person supposed to be infallible— He puts the incorruptible Seed into the hearts of His chosen and in such good soil its vitality and its growth secure its preservation. Even the inspired Word, as a letter, has small power till it gains a lodging place for the Truth in a warm heart—and then it grows and yields fruit till its boughs spread far and wide and its seeds are wafted on the wings of every wind to spring up on the hills and among the valleys where none had looked for them.

As long as one copy of the Holy Scriptures remains in the world we shall have the pure Truth of God among us, but it will be like an unplanted seed. For the propagation of the Gospel, human voices are required—for the establishment and confirmation of it among men, human lives are needed. And God intends that His Gospel shall be set forth and held up, published, defended, maintained and supported in the world by His Church—not alone by His ministers, nor by a hierarchical establishment—but by the entire company of faithful men and women! To the sacramental host of His elect has He committed the banner of the Truth which they are always to unfold and carry on by the power of His Spirit, from victory to victory. In this sense, the Church of the living God is and ever must be, “the pillar and ground of the Truth.” Let us take care, in our measure, to make her so.

While dealing with this question, it was most fitting for the Apostle to tell us what the Truth is and now is the most proper time for each one of us to learn what are the vital and essential Truths which the Church of God is forever to maintain. Our text is, for this reason, deeply interesting. It deals not with questionable and debatable topics, but with things verily and, indeed, received among us. Its testimony is short but weighty. We cannot spare a single word from it and it would be a crime to add anything to it.

The Apostle calls it a “mystery,” and so, indeed, it is for exceeding greatness of meaning, but not for obscurity of language, for it is as plain as it is full. Neither is it a mystery because it speaks of recondite opinions or philosophical theories, for it deals only with facts and is an historical summary of actual occurrences. Observe that the comprehensive summary of the Gospel here given is contained in six little sentences which run with such regularity of measure in the original Greek that some have supposed them to be an ancient hymn. And it is possible that they may have been used as such in the early Church.

There is a poetic form about the six sentences. You are aware, of course, that the Orientals do not consider it essential to sacred Psalms and hymns that they should resound with jingling rhymes—we are the slaves of mere sound in that respect, but they are free. Their fashion of verse-making has more respect to the sense than ours and lies, as a rule, very much in introducing pleasant parallels and contrasts. These you have here, whether the six paragraphs are verses of a hymn or not. Note that “manifest in the flesh” is contrasted with “justified in the spirit.” “Seen of angels,” who are nearest to the Throne of God, is fitly set by the side of “preached unto the Gentiles,” who stand at the opposite pole and are far off. And then the third duplicate is made up of the evident opposites, “believed on in the world,” “received up into glory.” Thus, all through, the lights and shades are set over against each other by evident design.

Moreover, you will perceive an equally plain parallelism if you will read attentively. The first two stanzas deal with the revealing of the Lord Jesus—He is manifest in the flesh and He is yet more fully made manifest by being justified in the Spirit. Then follows a making known of the Lord by sight to angels and by hearing to the Gentiles. And in the third pair of lines there is a twofold reception—the one by Grace among men who believe and the other into His actual glory in Heaven. Add to all this that pairs are also discernable in the first and last, the second and fourth and the two middle lines.

Just for an instant notice that the first clause of the series deals with Christ’s descent and the last with His ascent. The second and the fifth are both intensely spiritual and the third and fourth have to do with the senses only. Thus you find another set of parallels whose existence can hardly be a mere accident. Note this, for it teaches us that our memories need to be helped and strengthened in every way and so it is well to have condensed Truth to carry about with us and exceedingly advantageous to us to have it arranged in such a shape that we are likely to recollect it. The Apostle has been led by the Spirit to give us goodly words helping our infirmities—of this help we should gratefully avail ourselves to the utmost.

If we are somewhat instructed in the Word we have here an example of practical usefulness. We may for ourselves and for others, especially for the young, try to put the Truth of God into forms which will help it to retain its hold upon the memory. I shall call my text a hexapla of essential Truth, a six-fold mystery of godliness. You have six great points clearly set forth before you and these constitute the main, the essential elements of our holy faith which the Church of God is forever to set forth and uphold to the end of time. The Apostle has said, “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.” When he says “without controversy,” I suppose he means that there ought to be no controversy about these facts though controversies have arisen concerning them and always will, since the most self-evident Truth of God will always find self-evident fools to contradict it!

He means that in the Church of God, at any rate, there is no question about these fundamentals. Outside of the Church these statements are denied, but inside the house of God no one ever questions them for a moment—and he who does so is by that very act proven to have no part nor lot in the matter. Without controversy all Christians agree that these are Truths of God and also that they are no trifles, but involve a mystery— a great mystery—that is to say they were things hidden in themselves and so concealed that reason could not have found them out. And even now, though they are revealed, they concern matters so vast and so profound that none of us comprehend them fully—and the best instructed scribe in the kingdom recognizes in them infinite deeps which he cannot hope fully to explore.

The facts are unquestioned by the Church of God and are without dispute among the faithful, regarded as containing in their inner depths a world of weighty meaning, even the great mystery of godliness. Have you ever noticed that there are six New Testament mysteries? There may be more, but these six are the chief. The first is the mystery of the Incarnation, which is now before us—“Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.” The next is the mystery of the union of Christ with His Church, of which we read, in Eph 5:31-32, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Thrice blessed union with Jesus, may our souls find their Heaven in Your holy mystery—

*“Oh teach us, Lord, to know and own  
This wondrous mystery,  
That You with us are truly ONE,  
And we are ONE with You!”*

The third mystery is the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles, to which Paul refers in Eph 3:4-6, where he says, “Whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.” Herein we have a joyful portion for which we can never be too grateful.

The fourth mystery concerns the Jews and deals with the restoration of Israel, whom we ought to remember with abounding sympathy and brotherly love. Of this you will read in Rom 11:25-26 : “For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles is come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

For a fifth mystery I would bid you remember the doctrine of the removal of corruption from the body and of its resurrection as spoken of in the famous passage, “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” And then, alas, to close the list, there is that mystery of iniquity which began to work so soon and works yet more and more of evil.

Our text, then, is one of six mysteries, but it has this preeminence that it is a great mystery. It is called, “the mystery of godliness,” because it most intimately concerns a godly life. Those who receive it in their hearts become thereby godly men and, moreover, it builds up Believers in godliness and is to them a grand motive for the reverent love and holy fear of the Lord their God. Let so much as we have already spoken stand for our preface, and let us now, by the Holy Spirit’s aid, consider one by one the six branches of the mystery which is now before us.

I. The first sentence is, “GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH.” I believe that our version is the correct one, but the most fierce battles have been held over this sentence. It is asserted that the word Theos is a corruption for “Os” so that, instead of reading, “God was manifest in the flesh,” we should read, “who was manifest in the flesh.” There is very little occasion for fighting about this matter, for if the text does not say, “God was manifest in the flesh,” who does it say was manifest in the flesh?

Either a man, or an angel, or a devil. Does it tell us that a man was manifest in the flesh? Assuredly that cannot be its teachings, for every man is manifest in the flesh and there is no sense whatever in making such a statement concerning any mere man and then calling it a mystery! Was it an angel, then? But what angel was ever manifest in the flesh? And if he were, would it be at all a mystery that he should be “seen of angels?” Is it a wonder for an angel to see an angel? Can it be that the devil was manifest in the flesh? If so, he has been “received up into glory,” which, let us hope, is not the case.

Well, if it was neither a man, nor an angel, nor a devil—who was manifest in the flesh? Surely He must have been God! And so, if the word is not there, the sense must be there or else nonsense. We believe that if criticism should grind the text in a mill, it would get out of it no more and no less than the sense expressed by our grand old version. God Himself was manifest in the flesh! What a mystery is this! A mystery of mysteries! God the Invisible was manifest! God the Spiritual dwelt in flesh! God the Infinite, uncontained, boundless, was manifest in the flesh!

What infinite leagues our thought must traverse between Godhead self-existent and, therefore, full of power and self-sufficiency, before we have descended to the far-down level of poor flesh which is as grass at its best and dust in its essence! Where can we find a greater contrast than between God and flesh? And yet the two are blended in the Incarnation of the Savior! God was manifest in the flesh. Truly God, not God humanized, but God as God! He was manifest in real flesh. Not in manhood deified and made superhuman, but in actual flesh—

*“Oh joy! There sits in our death,  
Upon a throne of light,  
One of a human mother born,  
In perfect Godhead bright!  
Forever God, forever Man,  
My Jesus shall endure;  
And fixed on Him,  
My hope remains  
Eternally secure.”*

Matchless Truth of God! Let the Church never fail to set it forth, for it is essential to the world’s salvation that this doctrine of the Incarnation be fully known. O my Brothers and Sisters, since it is, “without controversy,” let us not controvert but sit down and feed upon it! What a miracle of condescension is here, that God should manifest Himself in flesh! It needs not so much to be preached upon as to be pondered in the heart. It needs that you sit down in quiet and consider how He who made you became like you—He who is your God became your brother Man. He who is adored of angels once lay in a manger! He who feeds all living things hungered and was thirsty. He who oversees all worlds as God, was, as a Man, made to sleep, to suffer and to die like yourselves!

This is a statement not easily to be believed. If He had not been beheld by many witnesses, so that men handled Him, looked upon Him and heard Him speak, it were a thing not readily to be accepted that so Divine a Person should be manifest in flesh. It is a wonder of condescension! And it is a marvel, too, of benediction, for God’s manifestation in human flesh conveys a thousand blessings to us. Bethlehem’s star is the morning star of hope to Believers. Now man is nearest to God. Never was God manifest in angel nature, but He is manifest in flesh. Now, between poor puny man that is born of a woman and the infinite God, there is a bond of union of the most wonderful kind. God and Man in one Person is the Lord Jesus Christ!

This brings our manhood near to God and by so doing it ennobles our nature—it lifts us up from the dunghill and sets us among princes—while at the same time it enriches us by endowing our manhood with all the glory of Christ Jesus in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily! Lift up your eyes, you down-trodden sons of man! If you are men you have a brotherhood with Christ, and Christ is God! O you who have begun to despise yourselves and think that you are merely sent to be drudges upon and slaves of sin, lift up your heads and look for redemption in the Son of Man who has broken the captives’ bonds!

If you are Believers in the Christ of God, then you are also the children of God and if children then heirs—heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ! What a fullness of consolation there is in this Truth, as well as of benediction, for if the Son of God is Man, then He understands me and will have a fellow feeling for me. He knows my unfitness to worship sometimes—He knows my tendencies to grow weary and dull—He knows my pains, my trials and my griefs—

*“He knows what fierce temptations mean,*

*For He has felt the same.”*  
Man, truly Man, yet sitting at the right hand of the Father, You, O Savior, are the delight of my soul! Is there not the richest comfort in this for you, the people of God? And, besides, there is instruction, too, for God was manifest in the flesh. And if you desire to see God, you must see Him in Christ Jesus.

It does not say God was veiled in the flesh, though under certain aspects that might be true, but God was “manifest in the flesh.” The brightness of the sun might put out our eyes if we gazed upon it and we must look through dark glasses and then the sun is manifested to us. So the excessive glory of the infinite Godhead cannot be borne by our mind’s eyes till it comes into communication and union with the nature of man and then God is manifest to us. My Soul, never try to gaze upon an absolute God—the brightness will blind your eyes—even our God is a consuming fire! Ask not to see God in fire in the bush, nor God in lightning upon Mount Sinai—be satisfied to see God in the Man Christ Jesus, for there God is manifested!

Not all the glory of the sky and of the sea, nor the wonders of Creation or Providence can set forth the Deity as does the Son of Mary, who from the manger went to the Cross and from the Cross to the tomb—and from the tomb to His Eternal Throne. Behold, now, the Lamb of God, for God is manifest in Him! People of God, look nowhere else for God! I shall leave the point when I have asked a personal question. Have we, each one of us, seen God in Christ Jesus? Remember, this is essential to salvation! We speak not now that which is harsh or severe—we only speak that which is honest and true. If you rebel against it we can still say no less. You cannot be right anywhere unless you are right about the Person of the Lord Jesus!

If you do not accept Him as the Son of God He cannot be a Savior to you. And without Him for a Savior you are as surely lost as you are born, whatever profession you may make. I trust we can say, many of us, “Yes, Jesus Christ is to us Lord, to the glory of God the Father and we worship Him and obey Him, putting all our trust in Him and rendering our adoration to Him.” If you are not now His worshippers, may the blessed Spirit bring you to Jesus and not suffer you to attempt to go to the Father first, for the Lord Jesus has told us, “no man comes unto the Father but by Me.” May you go to the Throne of God by the way of the Cross, for that is the only way—and may you go by that road at once.

II. The second clause concerns our Lord’s vindication by the Spirit. He who was “manifest in the flesh” was also “JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT.” When our Lord came in human flesh and declared to be the Son of God there were many reasons why His statement would be doubted, for He came in such poverty, weakness and disrepute. In any case, the appearance of God in flesh would need great proof, but the circumstances which surrounded our Savior were such as to cast, especially in carnal minds, great doubt upon His pretensions.

Our Lord, however the flesh might seem to cloud His claims, was “justified in the Spirit,” which may mean, and perhaps does, that His spiritual Nature as Man was so elevated by His Godhead that it abundantly justified His claim to be the Son of God. What a spirit was His for purity and dignity! What nobility ever came near to His? What a mind was His! What wisdom dwelt in Him! Even as a Child He baffled Rabbis and as a Man He confounded all who would entrap Him in His speech. Was there ever such teaching as His? Listen to Him and you feel that the spirit which flashes from those eyes and distils from those lips justifies His claim to be the Son of the Highest.

Hearken, also, to His words of command when His Godhead glows through His Humanity and proves Him Divine. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. At His bidding waves sleep and winds rest—pain flees, strength returns, health smiles—and death lives! Has not His spiritual Nature, by deeds so astounding, fully justified Him? And see, dear Friends, how He was justified—not only by His own spirit, which worked beyond the reach and compass of all other spirits—but He was justified by the Holy Spirit which rested upon Him without measure and made His human spirit strong.

It was this anointing which made Him the chief of all Prophets, teachers and revealers of the mind of God. All who heard Him confessed His unrivalled power, even when they resisted it. The Spirit of God bore witness in Him—His words were full of unction. The Spirit of God bore witness with Him—His words went to men’s hearts. The Spirit of God bore witness to Christ and justified all His claims at the time of His Baptism, when out of the excellent Glory there appeared the form of a dove and a voice cried out of Heaven, “This is My beloved Son.” That same Spirit justified Him audibly again in His Transfiguration. But silently and yet more evidently the seal of God was always on Him—the Spirit witnessed to Him everywhere. Only blind eyes, blinded by hate, refused to see the Divine light which hung about His every word and act, as radiance enrobes a star!

Above all, our Lord’s claims were justified by the Spirit in His Resurrection, when He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead.” Nor less so when, after 40 days, He was received up into Glory and the Spirit of God justified all that Christ had said by coming down like a rushing mighty wind and cloven tongues of fire and resting upon His disciples. If Christ had not risen from the dead He would have been a convicted impostor. And after His rising from the dead, if the Spirit of God had not been given, His claim would still have remained under a cloud!

But now it is clear that, “He has ascended on high and received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,” for the scattering of the Spirit of God among men was that promised largess which our mighty Conqueror distributed among His people when He entered upon the possession of His crown. The Holy Spirit has justified Christ! This is a part of the testimony of the Church—that Christ’s claims are to be justified by the spirit of His teaching and also by the Holy Spirit whose supernatural power will accompany the proclamation of the Gospel.

Now, let the Church always stand to this. I am afraid we are on wrong ground when we begin to defend the Gospel by mere reason. The true defense of the Gospel is the Spirit of Christ—Jesus is justified in the Spirit— and needs no other justification. O, Brethren, if we exhibit the Spirit of Christ we shall answer ridiculers and if the Spirit of God rests on the ministry of the Church, ridiculers will cease to ridicule! They will see her glory and they will be ashamed.

The Holy Spirit is our strength, our glory, the abiding witness that our great Leader is Lord and God. Brethren, has the Holy Spirit ever justified Christ in your soul? He has come to save—has the Holy Spirit revealed Him as your Savior? He has come to blot out sin—has the Holy Spirit ever revealed Him in all His power to pardon you? This is the sure vindication of Christ—your own personal experience of His preciousness and His power! If the Holy Spirit has given you that, none can confuse you! But if you have it not you lack the one thing necessary. God grant you may not lack it long!

III. The third clause of our hexapla is, “SEEN OF ANGELS.” This is an important point, for angels had waited to see the Lord, patiently gazing on the Mercy Seat. There had been rumors in Heaven of this mystery of the manifold wisdom of God but they had not understood it. And it is now in Christ that the mystery of Incarnate God has been revealed to them. If I may say so, the brightness of the Godhead had confused even the angels. They were not able to see God, but when God came and manifested Himself in the flesh, then God was seen of angels.

The Godhead was seen in Christ by angels as they had never seen it before. They had beheld the attribute of justice. They had seen the attribute of power. They had marked the attribute of wisdom and seen the prerogative of sovereignty. But never had angels seen love, condescension, tenderness and pity in God as they saw these things resplendent in the Person and the life of Christ! They were astounded to think that God was such a One. They knew Him to be thrice holy, for they had chanted, “Holy, holy, holy,” in their perpetual song. But they did not know Him to be Love—essential Love—as they knew it when they saw that, “He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.”

The angels, seeing God thus manifest in flesh, ministered to Him. They watched around the manger. They were messengers to His foster parent to warn him of intended evil to the Child. And they waited on the Redeemer in the desert of His temptation. One of their number strengthened Him in the garden. Another rolled away the stone from His grave, while others sat at the head and foot of the sepulcher where Jesus had lain. I doubt not it is true as we sang just now—

*“They brought His chariot from above,  
To bear Him to His Throne;  
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried, ‘The glorious work is done.’”*

Jesus was alone seen of angels and this is one reason why they sing so sweetly of Him—why they tune their notes so heartily to the song, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,” for they saw Him live and die—they saw Him labor and suffer and therefore is their song so vivid and so full of adoration. “You were slain,” they sing, though they cannot add, “and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood.”

Now the joy of this truth lies here—it brings the angel host near to us, for they saw Jesus and waited on Him and we see Him and therefore our eyes and the angels’ eyes meet upon the Person of Christ. We have one common love, one common Lord—and now the ministering spirits that waited upon Him are ready to wait upon us. They love the members for the sake of the Head. Beloved, we rejoice this day to know that Christ is Head of angels and principalities and powers, as well as Head of His Church! And so, in Him broken unity is restored and the household of God is one in Him. Angelic eyes beheld and loved—they still love and wonder. Fair spirits, charmed with the beauty of our Bridegroom, you rejoice with us and make it your delight to swell His train!

One question and we leave this point. Have you ever seen Jesus? He was seen of angels. Have your eyes ever seen Him—your inner, spiritual eyes? If not, the Lord help you this morning to look unto Him and be saved! It is nothing that He was seen of angels unless He is seen of me also, even as of one born out of due time. O, to see Him as my Savior, my All and rest in Him! This is the main business. May God grant us that gladness!

IV. Briefly, the fourth part of the great mystery does not look, at first sight, to be at all mysterious. There is much of mystery in the facts that God was “manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, and seen of angels.” But the next appears very commonplace—“PREACHED UNTO THE GENTILES.” Yet it is not without a marvel. Those who reflect will see a great mystery of Grace in it. Until Christ came, nothing was “preached to the Gentiles.” They were accounted dogs, and few were the crumbs that fell to them from the Master’s table! But after our Lord had ascended on high He was proclaimed to the Gentiles.

To a Jew, especially, this would seem a very strange thing. The Jew thought that if the Gentile perished it was but a matter of course—but for the Gentiles to be visited with the Gospel was strange, indeed! That God should work effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision was to them readily a matter of faith. But that the same should be equally mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles was incredible! Well, blessed be God, you and I are partakers in this mystery, for we have heard and believed the love which God has toward us! We are Gentiles, also, but unto us has the Gospel been preached as well as unto the ancient people! Yes, and we have been more highly favored than they, for at this day more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife.

God has multiplied the seed of Abraham after the Spirit among the Gentiles, whereas the seed of Abraham after the flesh have, in these times, rejected the Savior. Rejoice then, in the mystery that Christ is preached among the Gentiles! Mark you, preached! For He is to be set forth in that manner. The Church is ever to maintain this great, incontrovertible mystery that the setting forth of Christ to the Gentiles is to be by preaching and not by any other means of man’s devising. Suppose I could take my pencil, now, and draw the Savior with such matchless skill that a Raffaelle or a Titian could not rival me? God has never ordained that Christ should so be set forth to the Gentiles.

Or, suppose I should perform the ceremony of the “mass” with all the exactness and with all the gorgeousness which the church of Rome would require? Such a setting forth of Christ among the Gentiles would not be according to the Divine mystery. Christ is to be preached among the Gentiles! The appointed way of manifesting the Incarnate God to the sons of men is by preaching—the Church must always maintain this! The strongest castle of the walls of Zion for offense and defense must always be the pulpit. God is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe!

I hate to see, as I do sometimes in certain modern buildings, the pulpit stuck in the corner and the altar in the most conspicuous place. The altar of sacrifice, indeed! The place of defilement and remembrance of sin—how come is that in the holy place at all? God has never ordained it to be there! Where in Holy Scripture have we mention of a material altar in the assemblies of Believers? Our only altar is the spiritual Altar of our Lord’s Person, whereof they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle of outward forms of rites and ceremonies. Altars belong to Jews and heathens and even they never bow before them! None but your Popish idolaters have fallen so low as that!

The most prominent agency in the Church of God is the preaching of Christ—this is the trumpet of Heaven and the battering ram of Hell! By this door salvation comes, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—and how shall they hear without a preacher? God’s way of creating faith in men’s hearts is not by pictures, music, or symbols, but by the hearing of the Word of God! This may seem a strange thing—but strange let it seem, for it is a mystery—and a great mystery, but a fact beyond all controversy! Let the Church forever maintain that Christ is to be preached unto the Gentiles!

A part of the greatness of the mystery lies in the persons who preached the Gospel. It was a strange thing that Jesus should be preached unto the Gentiles by unlearned and ignorant men. One of the Apostles, it is true, was of another class, but he declares that he never preached with excellency of speech. He declared that in all simplicity he laid bare the mystery of God in plain language. It was wonderful that Christ should be preached unto the Gentiles so rapidly. It was but the other day the 120 were in the upper room and within a few years there was no part of the civilized globe which had not heard the name of Jesus! They had penetrated Scythia. They had subdued the barbarians—their only weapon being the Cross!

They had triumphed at Athens, in the stronghold of classic learning. They had passed into Rome and set up the Cross amidst the luxurious vices of the capital. No place was untrodden by the Christian missionary and no place was unaffected by the power of the Gospel which he preached. This is a great mystery—may the Lord repeat the mystery again and again! O that preaching might once again be recognized to be God’s power unto salvation and used everywhere—in the Church, in the lecture hall, in the street—in foreign lands and at home! The voice of the Truth of God in the preaching of Jesus is the great power of God!

One question here, and we leave it—Have you reverently heard the Gospel? For there goes with the declaration that God saves through preaching, the warning, “Take heed how you hear.” If God waits to bless by hearing, woe unto the men who hear inattentively and disrespectfully! Woe unto the hearers who are not doers of the Word! A responsibility goes with hearing and God grant that you may be obedient hearers so that we who preach may give a good account of you at the last—that our ministry may not have been in vain—but may have been to you the voice of God to your salvation.

V. And now the fifth part of the mystery is a very remarkable one. Like that which preceded, it does not appear to be mysterious on the surface, but it is so—“BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD.” This is the most glorious of all the six points, this wonderful fact that Jesus is “believed on in the world.” Why, when the humble preachers first went out to tell of Jesus, their story was so strange you could not imagine that any would believe it! And then the doctrines that they taught were so contrary to all the prejudices of flesh and blood, so humbling to human pride, so insulting to all our self-esteem that it was not probable that men would accept them!

And the world, too, what a world it was! It was steeped up to its throat in cruelty, in vice, in luxury, in sins infamous and unmentionable—and was it likely that a pure Savior with a perfect doctrine like His would find followers? But He did—He was “believed on in the world.” Why, I think the first preachers must have been ready to leap for joy when they found that men believed them! If I had been Peter, I should scarcely have slept for joy for many a night if I had found 3,000 willing to believe my testimony and willing to be baptized into Christ! And Paul—oh, I thinks with all his sorrows, he must have been a very happy man—must have been struck with wonder to see that though he went into idolatrous lands to tell this new, strange and incredible story, yet in every place there were found men or women who received it joyfully!

Hark well that the Church is bound to maintain this mystery—that it is by believing in Christ that the efficacy of His Sacrifice comes to men. The mystery is not that Christ is served in the world, that is not put here—nor that Christ is worshipped in the world, that is not the first point—those things will be sure to follow. But the vital mystery is that Christ is “believed on in the world,” that is to say, trusted as the Savior! Men leave all other trusts and trust in Him! They give up their self-righteousness. They leave their vaunted sacraments. They forsake all ways and modes of selfsalvation and come and trust in Christ—this is the great mystery!

“Well,” says one, “I do not see that there is a mystery in it.” Have you ever believed in Jesus yourself, beloved Friend? If you have, you will say, “this is the finger of God.” Belief in Jesus is as great a work of Divine power as the making of this globe. One of the visitors to this place lately said, “I am willing to be a Believer if the preacher can persuade me.” Very likely, but no preacher can create true faith—it needs a mightier power than the preacher’s, even the power of the Holy Spirit! God gives to His elect the blessing of faith and others willfully remain in unbelief. Faith, simple as it is, is supernatural, Divine and not to be attained by human aid, nor human eloquence. They who have it know that it is a blessed mystery, this believing on Jesus Christ in the world. Have you this faith? Do you believe in Jesus? Everything else in my text leads up to this.

If He is manifest in the flesh, what is that unless I believe in Him? What if He is justified in the Spirit? What is that unless faith in Him justifies me? What if He is seen of angels, how does that help me unless I see Him, too? And even if He is preached among the Gentiles, that does but involve greater guilt upon my soul if, after hearing, I have not believed in Him. O dear Hearers, I may not speak to you much longer and every time that I am kept away from addressing you I feel a deep anxiety that by some means my preaching may be made effectual to your salvation. Many of you have believed in my Lord—this is my comfort—but, on the other hand, how many there are who still hear, and hear, and hear, and that is all? How long will you wait? How long will you cause me to labor for nothing? No one is so worth trusting as the Savior is and nothing is so true as that He came to save sinners!

VI. The last point of the Church’s witness is that Jesus was “RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY.” Only this word about it—He was so received because His work is finished. He would never have gone into His Glory if He had not finished all His toil. He would have accepted no reward had He not fully earned it. My Soul, do you believe that Christ is received up into Glory? That will let you know that you are resting in a finished work, an Atonement which has put away all sin, a satisfaction which has made all Believers accepted in the Beloved. He has gone into Glory, thus He is personally rewarded.

And moreover, He has thus representatively taken possession of all that He has purchased. Is Christ in Glory? Then the Believer is in Glory—not literally but in his Covenant Head. What Christ takes possession of He claims in our name—“I go to prepare a place for you.” O you who sorrow over the present, rejoice also, for even now at this moment Heaven is yours—your Jesus has taken possession in your name! And oh, it is joyous to know that our great Lord is eternally exalted! If He were not exalted what comfort could we have? He is received up into Glory!

Men say He is not God—they cannot hurt Him, for He is received up into Glory! They revile His Gospel—they cannot dim the luster of His crown, He is received up into Glory! They would gladly slay His people if they could, but He is received up into Glory! They struggle and they strive against His cause and would gladly overthrow it—but O, what does it matter? He is everlastingly exalted and He will shortly come—that same Jesus who was received into Glory shall so come, in like manner as He was seen to go up into Heaven!

Here are great wells of comfort! He has gone to His Glory and has taken to Himself His great power! But every hour is bringing nearer the time when He shall lay bare His sword in the midst of His foes and shall unveil His face in the midst of His friends! Let us rejoice in Him this day and go our way to bear with all the Church of the living God the six-fold testimony of our text concerning our precious Savior. Amen.

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Sermon #786 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

NO. 786

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”***1Ti 3:16***.**

THE Apostle had just reminded Timothy that the Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the Truth of God, and he had pressed it upon him to behave himself aright in the midst of those faithful men to whom the Lord had committed the Gospel. And, lest by any means the youthful minister should think that the treasure committed to the Church was of little value, he declares that beyond all controversy it was great and precious. Every heathen religion had its mystery, its secret doctrine revealed only to the initiated which was held to be the essence of the faith. The mystery of some religions was mere froth, foolish if untrue, and if true of no consequence to anyone. But even those who do not believe the facts of our religion can hold no controversy with us about the unspeakable greatness of them, if they are, indeed, true.

Be a man what he may, if he is reasonable he will admit that Christianity does not deal in trifles. Like the eagle, it does not hawk for flies—it aspires to conquer the loftiest themes of thought. Right or wrong, the subjects with which we deal are not secondary, but wear about them an awful interest which none but the frivolous despise. Jesus sits in no second place among teachers. Paul mentions what the mystery of godliness is and declares that it concerns the manifestation of God in human flesh that He might save men from their sin. Now, says he, without controversy this is a great matter. If it is received by us as true, it becomes us to act as those who are put in trust with a priceless deposit with which we dare not be otherwise than faithful.

There is no room for indifference where the Gospel is concerned—it is either the most astounding of shams, or the most amazing of revelations! No man can safely remain undecided about it—it is too weighty, too solemn to be snuffed at as a matter of no concern. Foes and friends alike confess that the mystery of godliness is great. It is no rippling rill of dogma but a broad ocean of thought. It is no molehill of discovery, but an Alp of revelation. It is no single beam of light but a sun shining at its strength.

I shall, this morning, first take up the Apostle’s summary of our religion. Secondly, I shall give a few notes upon it. And, thirdly, draw one or two inferences from it.

I. First let us carefully look at THE SUMMARY OF TRUE RELIGION handed by the Apostle to his son in the faith.

1. The first article in this most authentic Apostle’s creed declares that “God was manifest in the flesh.” This is claimed as an especially valuable part of the great mystery of godliness. My Brothers and Sisters, if you will carefully consider it, this is one of the most extraordinary doctrines that was ever declared in human hearing! And were it not well attested, it would be absolutely incredible that the Infinite God who fills all things, who was and is, and is to come—the Almighty, the Omniscient, and the Omnipresent actually condescended to veil Himself in the garments of our inferior clay!

He made all things, and yet He deigned to take the flesh of a creature into union with Himself! The Infinite was linked with the infant, and the Eternal was blended with mortality. That manger at Bethlehem, tenanted by the express image of the Father’s Glory, was a great sight, indeed, to those who understood it. Well might the angels troop forth in crowds from within the gates of pearl, that they might behold Him whom Heaven could not contain finding accommodation in a stable with a lowly wedded pair. Wonder of wonders! God over all, blessed forever, became One with a newborn Babe which slept in a manger where the horned oxen fed! “God was manifest in the flesh.”

In this Paul testifies not merely to our Lord’s birth, but to the whole of the Divine manifestation in His life of two or three and thirty years. He was abundantly manifest among the multitudes and before His disciples during the latter part of His life. He was God in miracles most plenteous, but He was Man in sufferings most pitiable. He was the Son of the Highest, and nevertheless, “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” He trod the billows of the obedient sea and yet He owned not a foot of land in all Judea. He fed thousands by His power and yet all faint and weary He sat upon a well, and cried, “Give Me to drink.”

He cast out devils, but was Himself tempted of the devil. He healed all manner of diseases and was Himself exceedingly sorrowful even unto death! Winds and waves obeyed Him. Every element acknowledged the august Presence of Deity and yet He was tempted in all points like as we are. Our Lord’s Manhood was no phantasm, no myth, no mere appearance in human shape. Beyond all doubt “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” “Handle Me and see,” says He, “a Spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” “Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.”

Yet with equal certainty God was manifest in Him. As the light streams through the lantern, so the Glory of Godhead flamed through the flesh of Jesus. Those who were His nearest companions bear witness—“We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” That revelation of God in the flesh became yet more extraordinary when, at last, our Lord condescended to be put to death by His own creatures! Arraigned before human tribunals, condemned as guilty of the gravest crimes, He is taken from prison and from judgment with none to declare His generation. He is fastened to the accursed wood and put to a death of deepest shame and bitterest torture.

O you whose loving eyes have looked upon the ensanguined rills which gush from the wounds of your bleeding Lord and have delighted to behold the Lily of the Valleys reddened into the Rose of Sharon with the crimson of His own blood—you can see God in Christ as you behold rocks rending, the sun darkened and the dead arising from their tombs at the moment of His departure from the earth! Behold in the writhing form of the Crucified Man the vengeance and the love of God, nor less behold Divine power sustaining the load of human guilt, and Divine compassion enduring such agonies for rebels so ill deserving. Truly this Son of Man was also the Son of God!

Beloved, this is a mystery surpassing all comprehension. If any man should attempt to explain, or even to define the union of the Divine and Human in the Lord Jesus, he would soon prove his folly. The schoolmen of the dark ages were very fond of asking puzzling questions about what they called the hypostatical union of the Deity and humanity of Christ. They could not cast so much as a ray of light upon the subject. They amused themselves with enigmas and lost themselves in labyrinths. It is enough for us to know that the Incarnation is a glorious fact and it suffices us to hold it in its simplicity. God was manifest in the flesh of Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word.

Beloved, this is a great mystery—great because it treats of God. Any doctrine which relates to the Infinite and the Eternal is of the utmost weight. We should be all ears and all heart when we have to learn concerning God. Reason teaches us that He who made us, who is our Preserver, and at whose Word we are soon to return to the dust, should be the first object of our thoughts. Turn here, you wayward children of Adam, and behold this great mystery for your God is here! A bush burning and unconsumed would attract your curious gaze—what do you think of a Man who was in union with the God who is a consuming fire? The Truth of God manifest in flesh is great if you consider the great honor which is thereby conferred upon manhood!

Man honored in God’s taking the nature of man into union with Himself, for verily He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but He took upon Him the seed of Abraham! Whichever of all the creatures shall come nearest to the Creator will evidently have the preeminence in the ranks of creatureship! Which, then, shall bear the palm? Shall not the seraphs be chosen? Shall not the swift-winged sons of fire be chief among Heaven’s courtiers? Behold, and be astonished—a worm is preferred—a rebellious child of the earth is chosen! Human nature is espoused into oneness with the Divine! There is no gulf between God and redeemed man at this hour. God is first, over all, blessed forever, but next comes man in the Person of the Man Christ Jesus.

Well may we say with David, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet.” Man is royal now that Christ is human! Man is exalted since Christ is humiliated. Man may go up to God now that God has come down to man. This is great, is it not? A mystery, certainly, but great in every way! See that you despise it not lest you miss the abounding benefit which flows to man through this golden channel.

My Brothers and Sisters, the mystery appears greatest of all because it is so nearly connected with our eternal redemption. There could have been no putting away of sin by vicarious suffering if God had not become Incarnate. Sin is not removed except by an atonement—neither would any person have sufficed to atone but one of like nature to those who had offended. By man came death—by man also must come resurrection. Jesus appears as Man to save His people from their sins by taking the sins of His people upon Himself and offering a propitiation for them. What a wondrous sight was the dying Redeemer! The Cross is the focus of all human history. I was almost going to say it is the center of the life of God, if such a thing can be.

All the ages meet in Calvary. Jesus is the central Sun of all events. O, gaze again, and marvel more and more that God should put Himself into the place of His offending creature, and in the Person of His dear Son should offer to eternal justice a compensation for the insults which sin had cast upon law and rule! There is no greatness in Heaven or earth if it is not here in the bleeding flesh of Jesus, the Son of God! All else is dwarfed into nothingness in His Presence. Beloved, the manifestation of God in Jesus Crucified will appear to be great to you if you have ever drank deep into its meaning. If, standing at the foot of the Cross, you have seen all your sins punished in the Person of the Incarnate God, and have heard the voice which says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” you cannot think lightly of the Word made flesh.

If you have learned that His blood has brought perfect pardon to all Believers, and that through the torn veil of His flesh the saints have access to God and entrance into Heaven, you will lay hold upon the great Truth of an Incarnate Deity with a grasp which neither the trials of life nor the terrors of death shall unclasp! You will hate the very thought of denying the Godhead of the Lord that bought you—you will be jealous for His great name, and burn with sacred zeal for His glory. Your heart will cry out indignantly, “Away from me, you rejecters of the Divine Redeemer! If you rob Christ of His glory I count you the worst of thieves. ‘Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father,’ and in denying Jesus you reject the one God Himself!”

2. The Apostle mentions, in the next place, the important witness by which the mission of Jesus was confirmed. He was “Justified in the Spirit.” By the word “Spirit,” we understand the Holy Spirit, although it may be understood of the spiritual nature of Christ in which He was always justified, though in the flesh He was condemned of men. It appears more natural to confine the expression to the Holy Spirit.

Every religion demands our attention in proportion to the certainty of its teachings and the value of its confirmatory testimony. How matchless is the seal which is set upon the mystery of godliness, since the Holy Spirit has been pleased Himself, Personally and repeatedly, to confirm it! If we demand trustworthy evidence, behold the Holy Spirit bearing witness to our most holy faith, both in Heaven and in earth!—“It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.”

Observe what part the Holy Spirit took in connection with our Lord. The formation of the Immaculate Body of the Holy Child Jesus was by the energy of the Holy Spirit—as the angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.” Afterwards, the Holy Spirit confirmed this same most sacred Person, in whom God was manifest, by descending upon Him at His Baptism in the waters of Jordan. John, who was the forerunner and witness of Jesus, bore record, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”

The heavens were opened, and the Spirit, the Voice of God, proclaimed, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” On one or two other occasions we have it upon the testimony of witnesses who were present that an audible voice was heard out of the excellent glory, saying, “This is My beloved Son: hear Him!” The greatest attestation which the Holy Spirit gave to Christ was the raising of Him from the dead. In some respects Christ rose from the dead by His own power, but it is a Scriptural doctrine that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.”

The power by which we are converted is evidently the Holy Spirit, and we read in the Ephesians, “The exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.” Moreover, let us not forget that 40 days after our Master had been taken up from us, while the disciples were gathered together with one accord in one place, suddenly they heard a sound as of a rushing mighty wind which filled all the place where they were sitting. The Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised, had come to make good the Word of the Lord. You have not forgotten the miraculous flames of fire which sat upon each of the disciples and how they spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance!

You know how that day 3,000 were converted to the faith by the testimony of those first champions of Christ! Thus the Holy Spirit bore witness with signs and miracles, and wondrous gifts, that He who professed to be Incarnate Deity was most truly God and the Savior of men! Beloved, if you complain that this attestation has now ceased and that the record of miracles is rather a strain upon your faith than an assistance to it, I would remind you that the Spirit of God has not ceased from the midst of the Church. The Holy Spirit no longer operates upon material substances—the sick are not healed and the dead are not raised—this we freely confess. But He still acts with equally wonderful results upon the minds of men.

In this very house there have been miracles performed, which, in lasting value, put the raising of the dead to shame! Many of us who are now present bear witness that by the Spirit of God we have been newly created, raised from spiritual corruption, delivered from the dominion of Satan and translated into the kingdom of God! The swine of drunkenness have been made lovers of holiness! The beasts of sensuality have become partakers of the Divine nature! What better sign is needed? When hearts of stone melt like wax and streams of penitence flow from souls as hard as flinty rocks—who will refuse to believe? Let the Gospel be judged by its fruits and we are satisfied with the trial. If it does not turn the moral desert into an Eden, transform the lion into a lamb, and raise up the beggar from the dunghill, then let it be rejected!

But since it has done this, and is doing it, let its despisers beware lest they commit the sin against the Holy Spirit while they reject the solemn evidences which He daily thrusts before our eyes. Brethren, in our own souls the blessed Spirit has borne most overwhelming witness when we have been bowed in penitence at Jesus’ feet, and have been lifted up into the loftiest joy as we found pardon in His blood. The Spirit of God is with us still, working with the Word of God. See the savage casting away his weapons, the cannibal softened into the man! What philosophy could not do and did not care to attempt—what civilization never could have accomplished alone, the Cross of Christ has effectually performed! The Spirit of God is with us, and both in the holiness of the saints and in the conversions of unbelievers He bears witness that God was in Christ.

3. Our Apostle writes, as the next part of the great mystery of godliness, that Christ “was seen of angels.” Jesus was seen of angels at His birth. They appeared to the shepherds and bade them hasten to Bethlehem while they, themselves, looked on with holy wonder—

*“They saw the Heaven-born Child, in human flesh arrayed, Benevolent and mild, while in a manger laid.  
And praise to God, and peace on earth,  
For such a birth, proclaimed aloud.”*

Our Lord was watched by holy spirits in the wilderness where, after He had conquered that arch tempter, angels ministered unto Him. He was with the wild beasts at one moment and seraphic spirits waited in His train. An angel ministered unto Him in Gethsemane when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood. Upon Calvary they watched Him, too, and doubtless, as the poet says*—*

*“Around the bloody tree they pressed with strong desire That wondrous sight to see, the Lord of Life expire. And, could their eyes have known a tear,  
Had dropped it there in sad surprise.”*

Visions of angels were seen by the witnesses of His Resurrection. Two clothed in white sat the one at the head and the other at the foot where the Body of Jesus had lain. Angels met Him at His Ascension when the clouds received Him out of the sight of His gazing followers. And they attended Him up to Glory, crying, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in.”

The Apostle mentions this to show the greatness of our religion since the most noble intellects are interested in it. Did you ever hear of angels hovering around the assemblies of philosophical societies? Very interesting papers are sometimes produced speculating upon geological facts. Startling discoveries are every now and then made as to astronomy and the laws of motion. We are frequently surprised at the results of chemical analyses, yet I do not remember ever reading, even in poetry, that angelic beings have shown any excitement at the news! The fact is that the story of the world’s history in geologic times, and all the facts about this world are as well known to angels as the letters of the alphabet are to us!

All our profound sciences and recondite theories must seem utterly contemptible to them. Those august minds which have been long ago created of God and preserved from defilement by His decree, are better able to judge than we are of the importance of things. And when we find them deeply interested in a matter, it cannot be of small account. Concerning an Incarnate God, it is said, “which things the angels desire to look into.” Their views of God’s manifesting Himself in the flesh are such that over the Mercy Seat they stand with outspread wings gazing in reverent admiration. And before the Throne they sing, “Worthy is the Lamb, for He was slain.”

The doctrine of Incarnate Deity may be folly to the Greeks, and the vainglorious wiseacres of this world may call it commonplace, but to angels it is an ever flowing fountain of adoring admiration. They turn from every other sight to view the Incarnate Redeemer, regarding His condescending deed of Divine Grace as a bottomless ocean of mystery, a topless steep of wonder! Jesus was seen of angels and they still delight to gaze upon Him—this, to the Apostle’s mind, was conclusive evidence that the doctrines of our faith are of the greatest importance.

4. Then, he passes on to the next Truth—Jesus Christ was preached unto the Gentiles. Was this a great thing? Is preaching a wonder? Yes. The preaching of the Gospel proves conclusively the grandeur of our religion. The nearest to Christ were the angels—He was seen of them. The furthest from Christ were fallen Gentiles who had given themselves up to the worship of the works of their own hands—to these, also, Jesus came. That Jesus Christ was preached to the Gentiles at all was a wonder which it behooves us not to forget.

As Paul says, “Therefore remember, that you, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus you who some times were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of two one new man, so making peace.”

The Gentiles were brutalized with groveling vices and no form of spiritual faith had ever found footing among them. Was, then, the most spiritual of all religions to be taught to them and carried to them by no other means than that of preaching? This surprised our Apostle! And what surprises me still more is this—that Christ was preached to the Gentiles by Jews—that those whose bigotry at that time was invincible so that they could not imagine such a thing as a Gentile being in covenant with God were the very men who with indefatigable ardor went among the Gentiles to preach Jesus Christ!

If you had told an intelligent Jew that some of his fellow countrymen would become Apostles to the Gentiles, to declare that the wall which surrounded the favored nation was broken down, he would have smiled incredulously and exclaimed, “Impossible! You may cut the Jew in pieces first. The belief that his race is peculiarly favored of God lies in the very heart and marrow of the Israelite. He will never consent to become one with the Gentile dogs.” Yet Jesus the King of the Jews, Israel’s hope and consolation, was first published to the heathen by Jews, and chiefly by one who boasted that he was a “Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee.”

Paul, the most ferocious of bigots, who counted that he did God’s service when he hunted out the disciples of Christ, became the Gentile’s friend and spiritual father! This is a startling fact. It is a most noteworthy fact in the history of our faith that Jesus is still preached among the nations, and the Church labors to make him known everywhere. What other religion spends so much energy in seeking converts?

If any of you were foolish enough to wish to become Jews, you would not be welcomed among the Jewish fraternity. No Israelite ever attempts to proselyte us to his opinions. It would be a novelty, indeed, to hear of Jewish missionaries sent out to convert the heathen from their superstitions, or to recover Christians from their errors! No, the Jew does not want us—he prefers to keep his heritage for himself and his heirs. How far different is it with the followers of Jesus, whose very watchword is “preach the Gospel to every creature!”

In the case of all other religions, the preaching to the Gentiles is absent. I am not aware of any Muslim society for the conversion of the world to the Prophet. I never saw in the streets of London a Brahmin, come from far, to convert the crowds of London to the doctrines of the Shasters. Nor have I ever seen a Buddhist thrusting himself into the midst of peril to win the savage to his creed. Can any other faith than the Christian show me a man traversing alone the center of Africa, like Livingstone, or dwelling alone with Bushmen, as Moffat has done? The fact is that the spirit of false creeds is rather monopoly than extension. But as for the religion of Christ, it is expansive as the arch of Heaven!

If I could, I would have all men saved! If it were possible, I would have every one of you partakers of Christ Jesus this very morning. And we would cheerfully lay down our lives if we could extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ to the utmost bounds of the earth. What is it that keeps up this incessant preaching of Christ? Nothing but the real force of our faith. O you heathens, if your religions are true, why do you not promulgate them? Gods of the heathen, if you are gods, why do you not command your worshippers to convert the nations to your allegiance?

But no, they confess the worthlessness of their system in that these systems are not preached among the Gentiles, and have no vitality to secure their spread. When these religions do attempt to spread themselves, which is rare enough, how do they do it? Mohammed put a scimitar into the hand of each one of his followers, and said, “That is the strength of Islam—use that sharp argument upon the nations.” But Christ refused all carnal weapons and chose the simple preaching of the Word. What other faith can dare to depend upon preaching—upon one man’s testimony to other men about Truth precious to himself? Surely this goes to show that the things which we believe are powerful and worthy to be considered with attentive respect.

5. Another great part of the mystery is that Christ is believed on in the world. I will acknowledge that I have often wondered at this sentence, and have asked why Paul should write it down as a great mystery that Christ should be believed on in the world. And yet it is a marvel of marvels! If you think how sunken the world was in vice—how darkened the understanding of man was with ignorance—it is astounding that such men should receive so holy and so spiritual a religion as that which Jesus Christ preached by His servants.

We come to you who are fond of sin and we tell you that you must give up your favorite pleasures, that cherished vices must be abandoned, that holiness which is distasteful to you must rule your life—and yet obnoxious as these things are to flesh and blood, when the Holy Spirit comes with the Word—you believe them and accept them joyfully. The Apostle, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, uses the following language: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

“And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Was not this extraordinary that such horrible characters should become lovers of the pure and holy Jesus? Must not a religion which can change such as these be something more than a cunningly devised fable?

In another place, we are told of all mankind, “There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.” Is it not a wonder that such depraved minds should perceive beauties in the Lord Jesus and yield their full confidence to Him? Indeed, to every saved man it is the greatest miracle of all that he is himself a Believer! When I come to look at the Truths of God upon which I rest, they are very simple, indeed, and yet around them so many doubts are cast by the evil of my own heart that I stand amazed my faith retains her hold!

I believe that Christ died for my sins with much more assurance than I believe anything else. No fact in history is one-half as certain to me, and yet, at times, it is so hard to believe it that it is clear to me that true faith is not of man but is a fruit of the Spirit. Great must be the Truth which forces itself upon the conviction of minds so dark and so benighted as ours. The Apostle winds up his summary of the mystery by reminding us that Christ was “received up into glory.” This is no small Truth, surely, that the Apostle and High Priest of our profession has not gone from us into obscurity, but is at this day sitting upon the Throne of God!

At this hour Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, upholding all things by the word of His power. He shall shortly come to be our Judge. He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, and all men shall be gathered before Him to receive their final sentence. This is no small Truth, but a great one to be proclaimed with zeal! Thus, throughout, the burden of our religion is far from trivial. “Great is the mystery of godliness.”

II. I must now detain you with a few NOTES UPON THIS SUMMARY. Paul has here given us an outline of the Christian faith and we note upon it as follows—First, it is all concerning Christ. Out of these six articles of Paul’s creed, they all speak of Christ, from which I gather that if we are to preach the Gospel faithfully. We must preach much concerning Jesus Christ. My dear Brothers, this must be the first, the middle and end of our ministry. That man of whom it cannot be said that he preaches Christ does not behave himself aright in the house of God. He evidently is not a messenger sent from Heaven.

It is our business here to cry with John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” Brothers and Sisters, as it is ours to preach Christ, so it is yours to receive Him. If you have received a Gospel of which Christ is not the top and bottom, throw it away! If you are resting on anything beside Christ Jesus, you are resting upon a rotten foundation. Get off from it lest you be deceived at the last! But if Christ is All in All to you, and His work and Person are the sum and substance of your hope, then be of good cheer—where Jesus is honored, souls are safely sheltered.

I notice, in the second place, that there is not here a single word upon Sacramentarianism. Now, in these days we are perpetually told by men who are manifestly in earnest that the great thing is the sacrament. According to their teaching God has committed to bishops and priests the fullness of His Divine Grace which we meekly and reverently may receive at their venerable hands. We are told that in connection with a few drops of water, sprinkled by the successors of the Apostles, children become regenerate! We are assured that through the laying on of these same blessed hands, we afterwards become confirmed in the faith and assured of our salvation!

We are told that through priestly power we are made partakers of the very body and blood of Christ, which, according to them, becomes literally present through their operation. When we come to die, they can anoint us with oil, consecrated by their power, and by this unction all our sins are forgiven us! The top and the bottom of the system is the priest, the priest, the priest! A man like ourselves, and not a whit better, but 10,000 times worse for his infamous impudence in pretending to be what he is not— this man, dressed out in as many colors as the peacock—is the divinely appointed medium of grace!

If this is the Truth of God, Paul did not know it, for, if he had known it, he would say, “Great is the mystery of godliness: God dwells in the priests. Hasten and kiss their feet, for by their ceremonials you get salvation.” Paul says nothing of the kind! He has nothing to reveal about candles, and capes, and pompous processions! All he has to say is this, “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory,” and that is all. How different this simple Gospel from the complex machinery of Popery and Anglicanism!

I want you to notice, still further, that in this summary there is no exhibition of mere doctrine. I believe, most firmly, in the doctrines commonly called Calvinism, and I hold them to be filled with comfort to God’s people. But if any man shall say that the preaching of these is the whole of the preaching of the Gospel, I am at issue with him. Brothers, you may preach those doctrines as long as you like, and yet fail to preach the Gospel! And I will go further and affirm that some who have even denied those truths, to our great grief, have nevertheless been Gospel preachers for all that, and God has saved souls by their ministry.

The fact is, that while the doctrines of election, final perseverance, and so on, go to make up a complete ministry, and are invaluable in their place, yet the soul and marrow of the Gospel is not there, but is to be found in the great fact that “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,” and so on. Preach Christ, young man, if you want to win souls! Preach all the doctrines, too, for the building up of Believers, but still the main business is to preach Jesus who came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. The Apostle tells us in the Corinthians that first of all he delivered unto us as soul-saving Truth, “how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day, according to the Scriptures.” Facts about Christ Jesus, and the promise of life through Him—these are the faith of the Gospel!

Let me also say that I do not perceive anything in this summary tending remarkably to exalt prophecy. I would not make this remark were it not that there is a certain troublesome sect abroad nowadays to whom the one thing needful is a perpetual speculation upon prophecy. All the bells in their steeple ring out, “Prophecy! Prophecy! Prophecy!” They plume themselves upon an expected secret rapture, and I know not what vain imaginings beside! Where prophecy is preached in connection with their shibboleth, there the Gospel is preached, but all ministers beside their own, however honored by God, are railed at by them as part of Babylon against whom men are to be warned.

They, indeed, are wise men, and can afford superciliously to look down upon their fellow Christians as the slaves of sect and system, being, I venture to say, far more sectarian than the worst of us, and more bigoted to their system than Romanists themselves! My dear Friends, if you have any time to spare and cannot find any practical work for Jesus, study the dark places of prophecy, but do not read modern prophetical works, for that is a sheer waste of time and nothing better. Hold off as you would from a serpent the idea that the study or preaching of prophecy is the Gospel, for the belief that it is so is mischievous beyond conception.

The Gospel which is to be vehemently declared is this—“God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” So long as London is reeking with sin, and millions are going down to Hell, let us leave others to prophecy. Let us go with anxious hearts to seek after souls and see if we cannot, by the Spirit’s power, win sinners from going down into the pit.

You will, doubtless, have observed that this summary of the Gospel is very simple. Whenever you meet with teaching which is cloudy and complicated, you may generally conclude that it is not the Gospel of your salvation, for the Truth of Christ is so plain that he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err. Perhaps some of you have been thinking that conversion and salvation are dark and mysterious things, and that you have to pass through many singular operations and feelings in order to be saved. Now, Beloved, the whole of our faith lies in a nutshell—he that believes in Jesus Christ the Incarnate God, is saved. These few Truths of God, if grasped by the mind, received and trusted in by the heart, will save you.

It is at the Cross that salvation must be found. We have not written over our religion, “Mystery, mystery, mother of harlots,” that is the sign of Babylon. But we have this to tell you, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” And the things which you have to believe are just these simplicities—Jesus the Son of God has come into this world as Man to save men. He has bled and died. He is proclaimed and preached. He is to be received and believed in. He has gone up to Glory to prepare a place for them that trust Him—and that is all!

III. THE INFERENCES I draw from this are just these. If this is a great Gospel, then how important it is for us to receive it! If the Gospel were a laborious system of ethics there are many in this house who never could be saved, for they could not understand it. But since it is so simple, why do men refuse it? “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” O will you not lay hold upon that Truth of God? I do pray the Spirit of God to take your minds off all philosophies and mysteries that you may come to Jesus only!

Trust in Christ and you are saved! Receive this simple truth! God calls it great. Angels think it great. The Holy Spirit attests it to be great. We who preach it feel it to be great. They who receive it acknowledge it to be great. Christ in Glory bears witness that it is great! O accept this great salvation! May the Spirit lead you to believe in the great Savior of great sinners!

Again, if it is so great, how important it is for us to spread it! It does not require us to go to college in order to tell of Jesus—we can, each in our sphere, publish His fame abroad. If this simple Truth is the message of God to perishing sinners, then in the name of common humanity, and above all, in the name of the love of Christ, let us deliver it! How this text ought to encourage us to spread the Gospel! When I am preaching the Gospel, many may say, “Oh, he is only telling us commonplace Truth.” Just so, I know that. And yet I feel within myself as if I were wheeling up God’s great cannon which will yet blow the gates of Hell to pieces! What? None of the venerable mysteries of Rome? What? None of the new philosophical discoveries? None of the imposing ceremonies? No, Brothers and Sisters, not one of them—they are all wooden guns, shams and counterfeits—and if ever they are fired off they will go to shivers.

This plain Truth of God, that “God was made flesh and dwelt among us,” is God’s great battering ram against which nothing can stand! Never lose heart in the Gospel, my Brothers, but think you hear the Apostle calling across the ages, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” Look for nothing greater, the Gospel is great enough! Keep to it. Never think you have told men enough times about it. As Napoleon told his warriors at the pyramids, “A thousand ages look down upon you!” Bleeding martyrs, from their graves, call to you to be faithful. Confessors who ascended to Heaven in fiery chariots implore you to be steadfast. Hold fast that you have received. Attempt not to mend the Truth! Venture not to shape it according to the fancy of the times, but proclaim it in all its native purity.

By this hammer the gods of Rome and Greece were dashed to shivers. By this lever the world was turned upside down! It is this Gospel which has brought glory to God, filled Heaven with redeemed souls, and made Hell to tremble in all its palaces of flame. Bind it about your heart and defy the hosts of Rome or Hell to unloose its folds! Wrap it about your loins in death and hold it as a standard in both your hands in life. This simple Truth of God, that “Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which is lost,” and that, “whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” must be your jewels, your treasure, your life!

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÷1Ti 4.8

THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS IN THE LIFE TO COME  
NO. 946

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”***1Ti 4:8***.**

WE endeavored, this morning to prove the profitableness of godliness as to the life which now is, and to discriminate as to what the promise of this life really is. We tried to prove that “the promise” of the life that now is—its real and highest beauty and excellence—consists in peace of mind, peace with God, contentment, and happiness of spirit. And while we pointed out that godliness did not ensure wealth, or health, or even a good name—for all these, even to godly men, might not be granted—yet we showed that the great end of our being, that for which we live and were created, that which will best make it worth while to have existed, shall certainly be ours if we are godly.

We did not think it an unimportant matter to expound the bearing of true religion upon this present state. But I trust we did not exaggerate that view so as to keep those in countenance who dream that this world is the main consideration—and that the wisest man is he who makes it the be-all and the end-all of his existence.

Beloved Friends, there is another life beyond this fleeting existence. This fact was dimly guessed by heathens. Strange as their mythology might be, and singular as were their speculations us to the regions of bliss and woe, even barbarous nations have had some glimmering light concerning a region beyond the river of death. Hardly yet have we been able to discover a people with no idea of an after-state. Man has scarcely ever been befooled into the belief that death is the finis of the volume of his existence.

Few, indeed, have been so lost to natural light as to have forgotten that man is something more than the dog which follows at his heel. That which was dimly guessed by the heathen was more fully worked out by the bolder and clearer minds among philosophers. They saw something about man that made him more than either ox or horse. They marked the moral government of God in the world, and as they saw the wicked prosper, and the righteous afflicted, they said, “There must be another state in which the GREAT AND JUST ONE will rectify all these wrongs— reward the righteous, and condemn the wicked.”

They thought it proved that there would be another life. They could not, however, speak with confidence. For reason, however right her inferences, does not content the heart, or give “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” That is reserved for faith. The best light of heathens was but twilight. Yet was there so much light in their obscurity that they looked beyond the stream of death and thought they saw shades as of creatures that had once been here and could not die. What was thus surmised and suspected by the great thinkers of antiquity has been brought to light in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He has declared to us that we shall live again, that there will be a Judgment and a Resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, and that there will be awarded to the righteous a reward that shall know no end, while the wicked shall be driven into a banishment to which there shall be no close. We are not left, now, to speculate nor to rely upon unaided reason. We have been told upon the authority of God, sometimes by the lips of Prophets, at other times by the lips of His own dear Son, or by His inspired Apostles, that there is a world to come, a world of terrors to the ungodly, but a world of promised blessing to the righteous.

My dear Hearer, if it is so, what will the world to come be to you? Will you inherit its promise? You may easily answer that question by another. Have you godliness? If you have, you have the promise of the life that is to come. Are you ungodly? Do you live without God? Are you without faith in God, without love to God, without reverence to God? Are you without the pardon which God presents to believers in Christ Jesus? Then you are without hope, and the world to come has nothing for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which will devour you.

I. GODLINESS CONCERNING THE LIFE TO COME POSSESSES A PROMISE UNIQUE AND UNRIVALLED. I say a unique promise, for, observe—infidelity makes no promise of a life to come. It is the express business of infidelity to deny that there is such a life, and to blot out all the comfort which can be promised concerning it. Man is like a prisoner shut up in his cell, a cell all dark and cheerless unless there is a window through which he can gaze upon a glorious landscape.

Infidelity comes like a demon into the cell, and with desperate hands blocks up the window, that man may sit forever in the dark, or at best may have the boasted light of a farthing rush-light called free-thinking. All that infidelity can tell him is that he will die like a dog. Fine prospect for a man who feels eternity pulsing within his spirit! I know I shall not die like the beast that perishes. And let who will propound the theory, my soul sickens and turns with disgust from it. Nor would it be possible by the most specious arguments so to pervert the instincts of my nature as to convince me that I shall thus die, and that my soul, like the flame of an out-burnt candle, shall be quenched in utter annihilation.

My inmost heart revolts at this degrading slander. She feels an innate nobility that will not allow her to be numbered with the beasts of the field, to die as they must do without a hope. Oh, miserable prospect! How can men be so earnest in proclaiming their own wretchedness? Enthusiasts for annihilation? Why not fanatics for Hell itself? Godliness has promise of the life that is to come, but infidelity can do nothing better than deny the ennobling revelation of the great Father and bid us be content with the dark prospect of being exterminated and put out of being. Aspiring, thoughtful, rational Men—can you be content with the howling wildernesses and dreary voids of infidelity? Leave them, I pray you, for the goodly land of the Gospel which flows with milk and honey! Abandon extinction for immortality! Renounce perishing for Paradise!

Again, let me remark that this hope is unique because popery in any of its forms cannot promise us the life which is to come. I know that it speaks as positively as Christianity does about the fact that there will be another life. But it gives us no promise of it—for what is the expectation of the Romanist, even of the best Romanist? Have I not before remarked to you that we have heard—and therefore it is no slander for us to say it—of “masses” being said for the repose of the souls of the most eminent Romanists?

Cardinals distinguished for their learning, confessors and priests distinguished for their zeal, and even Popes reputed to be remarkable for holiness and even infallibility, have, when they died, gone somewhere! I know not where, but somewhere where they have needed that the faithful should pray for the repose of their souls! That is a very poor look-out for ordinary people like ourselves. For if these superlatively good people are still uneasy in their souls after they die, and have in fact, according to their own statements, gone to purgatorial fires or to purgatorial chills—to be tossed, as certain of their prophets have informed us—from icebergs into furnaces, and then back again, until by some means, mechanical, spiritual, or otherwise, sin shall be burnt out, or evaporated from them. If that is their expectation, I think I should be inclined, as the Irishman said, to become a Protestant heretic, and go to Heaven at once, if there is so sorry a prospect for the Catholic.

Godliness has the promise of the life which is to come, but it is altogether unique in possessing such a promise. No voice from the Vatican sounds one-half so sweetly as that from Patmos, which we unabashedly accept—“I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. And their works do follow them.” Our sorrow for the departed is not embittered by the absence of hope, for we believe that “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” Neither superstition on the one hand, nor unbelief on the other, so much as dares to offer a promise as to the life to come.

No system based upon human merit ever gives its votaries a promise of the life to come which they can really grasp and be assured of. No selfrighteous man will venture to speak of the assurance of faith. In fact, he denounces it as presumption. He feels that his own basis is insecure, and therefore he suspects the confidence of others to be as hollow as his own. He lives between hope and fear—a joyless, unsatisfied life. While the believer in Jesus, knowing that there is no condemnation to him, awaits the hour of his entrance into Heaven with joyful expectancy. What is never promised to man’s fancied righteousness is secured to all who possess the righteousness of Christ Jesus. “Come, you blessed,” is their assured welcome—to be with Jesus—their entailed portion.

Godliness has a monopoly of heavenly promise as to the blessed future. There is nothing else beneath high Heaven to which any such promise has ever been given by God, or of which any such promise can be supposed. Look at vice, for instance, with its pretended pleasures— what does it offer you? It offers pleasure in the life that now is. But as it speaks, you detect the lie upon its face, for even in the life that now is vice gives but a hasty intoxication, to be followed by woe and redness of the eyes. It is true it satiates with sweets, but in all its tables there is vomit. Satiety follows its gluttony, dissatisfaction comes with discontent, loathing, remorse, and misery—like hounds at its heels.

Vice dares not say, it never has had the effrontery yet to say, “Do evil and live in sin, and eternal life will come out of it.” No, the theater at its door does not proffer you eternal life—it invites you to the pit. The house of evil communications, the drunkard’s settle, the gathering place of scorners, the chamber of the strange woman—none of these has yet dared to advertise a promise of eternal life as among the gifts that may tempt its votaries. At best, sin gives you but bubbles, and feeds you upon air. The pleasure vanishes, and the misery is left. Even this side of the tomb the hollowness of sinful mirth is clear to all but the most superficial, and he said truly who sang concerning merry worldlings —

*“They grin. But why? And how long the laugh? Half ignorance, their mirth. And half a lie To cheat the world, and cheat themselves, they smile. Hard either task! The most abandoned own That others, if abandoned, are undone—  
Then, for themselves, the moment reason wakes, Oh, how laborious is their gaiety!  
They scarce can swallow their ebullient spleen, Scarce muster patience to support the farce, And pump sad laughter till the curtain falls. Scarce did I say? Some cannot sit it out;  
Oft their own daring hand the curtain draws, And shows us what is their joy by their despair.”*

If such is the failure of the mirth of fools this side of eternity, of what little benefit can it prove hereafter?

So with other things not sinful in themselves—there is no promise of the life that is to come appended to them. For instance, birth. What would not some men give if they could but somehow trace their pedigree up to a distinguished Crusader, or up to a Norman knight reported of in the battle-roll of Hastings? Yet, nowhere in the world is there a promise of eternal life to blood and birth. “For when he dies he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise you, when you do well to yourself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers. They shall never see light.”

Genealogies and pedigrees are poor things. Trace us all up far enough, and we are all descended from that naked sinner who tried to cover his shame with fig leaves, and owed his first true garment to the charity of offended Heaven. Let the pedigree run through the loins of kings, yes, and of mighty kings, and let every one of our forefathers have been distinguished for his valor—yet no man shall pretend, because of this, that eternal life will be secured thereby. Ah, no. The king rots like a slave and the hero is devoured by the worm as though he had been but a swineherd all his days. Yes, and the flame unquenchable kindles an earl, and duke, and millionaire, as well as a serf and peasant.

And it is equally certain that no promise of the life that is to come is given to wealth. Men hoard it, and gather it, and keep it, and seal it down by bonds and settlements as if they thought they could carry some thing with them. But when they have gained their utmost, they do not find that wealth has the promise even of this life, for it yields small contentment to the man who possesses it. “Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abides not.”

As for the life to come, is there any supposable connection between the millions of the miser’s wealth and the glory that is to be revealed hereafter? No, but by so much more as the man lives for this world, by so much more shall he be accursed. He said, “I will pull down my barns and build greater.” But God calls him a fool, and a fool he is, for when his soul is required of him, whose shall these things be which he had prepared? No, you may grasp the Indies if you will. You may seek to contain within your estates all the lands that you can see far and wide, but you shall be none the nearer to Heaven when you have reached the climax of your avarice. There is no promise of the life that is to come in the pursuits of usury and covetousness.

Nor is there any such promise to personal accomplishments and beauty. How many live for that poor bodily form of theirs which so soon must molder back to the dust! To dress, to adorn themselves, to catch the glance of the admirer’s eye, to satisfy public taste, to follow fashion! Surely an object in life more frivolous never engrossed an immortal soul. It seems as strange as if an angel should be gathering daisies or blowing soap bubbles! An immortal spirit living to dress the body! To paint, to dye, to display a ribbon, to dispose a pin—is this the pursuit of an immortal? Yet tens of thousands live for little else. But ah, there is no promise of the life to come appended to the most noble beauty that ever fascinated the eye. Far deeper than the skin is the beauty which is admired in Heaven.

As for earth’s comeliness, how do time, and death, and the worm together make havoc of it! Take up yonder skull, just upturned by the sexton’s careless spade, “and get you to my lady’s chamber, and tell her, though she paint an inch thick, to this complexion she must come at last.” All her dressing shall end in a shroud, and all her washings and her dainty ornaments shall only make her but the sweeter morsel for the worm. There is no promise of the life to come to these frivolities—why, then, waste your time and degrade your souls with them?

Nor even to higher accomplishments than these is there given any promise of the life to come. For instance, the attainment of learning, or the possession of that which often stands men in as good place as learning, namely, cleverness, brings therewith no promise of future bliss. If a man is clever, if he can write interesting stories, if he can sketch the current fashions, if he can produce poetry that will survive among his fellow men—it matters not. Though his pen never wrote a line for Christ, and though he never uttered a sentence that might have led a sinner to the Cross. Though his work had no aim beyond this life, and paid no homage to the God of the Gospel, yet even professed Christians will fall at the man’s feet! And when he dies, will canonize him as a saint, and almost worship him as a Demigod!

I reckon the meanest Christian that loved his God, though he could only speak with a stammer the profession of his faith, is far nobler than he who possessed the genius of a Byron or the greatness of a Shakespeare who only used his ten talents for himself and for his fellow men, but never consecrated them to the great Master to whom the interest of them altogether belonged. No. There is no promise of the life that is to come to the philosopher, or to the statesman, or to the poet, or to the literary man, as such. They have no preference before the Lord. Not gifts but Divine Grace must save them. Humbly, penitently, and believingly they must find the promise of eternal life in godliness. And if they have not godliness, they shall find it nowhere.

Godliness has that promise, I say, and none besides. I saw in Italy standing at the corner of a road, as you may frequently see in Italy, a large Cross, and on it were these words, which I had not often seen on a Cross before—“Spes unica”—the only hope, the one unique hope, the one only hope of mankind. So would I tell you that on Christ’s Cross there is written this day, “Spes unica”—the one hope of men. “Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” To nothing else anywhere—search for it high or low, on earth or sea—to nothing else is the promise given save to godliness alone.

II. I pass on to notice, in the second place, that THE PROMISE GIVEN TO GODLINESS IS AS COMPREHENSIVE AS IT IS UNIQUE. I have not time on this occasion to go into all the promises of the life that is to come which belong to godliness—who shall give an inventory where the treasure is boundless, or map out a land which has no limit? It will suffice if I give you the heads of this great theme. That promise is something of this kind. The godly man, unless Christ shall come, will die as others die, as to the matter of outward fact, but his death will be very different in its essence and meaning.

He will pass gently out of this world into the world to come, and then, at that instant, he will begin to realize the promise which godliness gave him. For he will enter then, no, he has entered now, upon an eternal life far other than that which belongs to other men. The Christian’s life shall never be destroyed—“Because I live, you shall live also,” says Christ. There is no fear of the Christian’s ever growing aged in Heaven, or of his powers failing him. Eternal youth shall be to those who wear the unfading crown of life. Yon sun shall become black as a coal. yonder moon shall fail until her pale beams shall never more be seen. The stars shall fall like withered figs—even this earth, which we call stable, terming it terra firma, shall, with yonder heavens, be rolled up like a vestment that is worn out, and shall be laid aside among the things that were, but are not.

Everything which can be seen is but a fruit with a worm at the core, a flower doomed to fade. But the Believer shall live forever, his life shall be coeval with the years of the Most High. God lives ever, ever, ever, and so shall every godly soul. Christ, having given him eternal life, he is one with Jesus, and as Jesus lives forever, even so shall he. In the moment of death the Christian will begin to enjoy this eternal life in the form of wonderful felicity in the company of Christ, in the Presence of God, in the society of disembodied spirits and holy angels. I say in a moment, for from the case of the dying thief we learn that there is no wait upon the road from earth to Heaven—

*“One gentle sigh the fetter breaks—  
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone!’  
Before the willing spirit takes  
Its mansion near the Throne.”*

How does Paul put it? “Absent from the body.” But you have hardly said that word, when he adds, “present with the Lord.” The eyes are closed on earth and opened again in Heaven! They loose their anchor, and immediately they come to the desired haven. How long that state of disembodied happiness shall last it is not for us to know, but by-and-by, when the fullness of time shall come, the Lord Jesus shall consummate all things by the resurrection of these bodies. The trumpet shall sound, and as Jesus Christ’s body rose from the dead as the first fruits, so shall we arise, every man in his own order.

Raised up by Divine power, our very bodies shall be reunited with our souls to live with Christ, raised however, not as they shall be put into the grave to slumber, but in a nobler image. They were sown like the shriveled seed, they shall come up like the fair flowers which decorate your summer gardens. Planted as a dull unattractive bulb, to develop into a glory like that of a lovely lily with snowy cup and petals of gold. Sown like the shriveled barley or wheat, to come up as a fair green blade, or to become the golden ear. “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Come, my Soul, what a promise is given you in God’s Word of the life that is to come! A promise for my soul, did I say? A promise for my body, too. These aches and pains shall be repaid. This weariness and these sicknesses shall all be recompensed. The body shall be remarried to the soul, from which it parted with so much grief, and the marriage shall be the more joyous because there never shall be another divorce. Then, in body and in soul made perfect, the fullness of our bliss shall have arrived.

But will there not be a judgment? Yes, a judgment certainly. And if not a judgment for the righteous in a set ceremony, as some think, yet certainly in spirit. We shall gather at the Great White Throne, gather with the goats or gather with the sheep. But there is this promise to you who are godly, that you shall have nothing to fear in that Day of Judgment— you shall go to it with the blood-bought pardon in your bosom, to be shown before the Judgment Seat. You shall go to that judgment to have it proclaimed to men, to angels, and to devils, that “there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” none being able to lay anything to the charge of those for whom Jesus Christ has died, and whom the Father justifies.

You need not fear the judgment, you need not fear the conflagration of the world, or whatever else of terror shall be attendant upon the coming of Christ as a thief in the night. You have the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Listen to me! You have the promise that you shall enjoy forever the high dignity of being priests and kings unto God. You sons of toil, you daughters of poverty—you shall be peers in Heaven, you shall be courtiers of the Prince Imperial—yourselves being princes of the royal blood!

Your heads shall wear crowns, your hands shall wave palms of triumph. And as you shall have glorious rank, so shall you have companions suitable to your condition. The worldling’s haunt, the synagogue of Satan, shall be far away from you. No more shall you sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar. No idle talk shall vex you, no blasphemies shall inflict themselves upon your ears. You shall hear the songs of angels. And as they charm you, you shall also charm them by making known unto them the manifold wisdom of God. The holiest and best of men, redeemed by Jesus’ precious blood, shall commune with you, and, best of all —

*“He that on the Throne does reign  
You for evermore shall He feed;  
With the tree of life sustain,  
To the living fountain lead.”*

You shall have unbroken fellowship with God and with His Christ. What ravishing joy this will be! We shall better be able to experience than to imagine. Communion with Jesus here below uplifts us far above the world, but what its delights are in the unclouded skies of face-to-face fellowship, has not yet entered into the heart of man.

Hearken yet more, Beloved. You shall have suitable occupation. I know not what you may have to do in Heaven, but I do know it is written, “They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads, and His servants shall serve Him.” They serve Him day and night in His Temple. You would not be happy without occupation. Minds made like yours could not find rest except upon the wing—delightful and honorable employment shall be allotted you—suitable to your perfected capabilities. But, mark you, you shall have rest as well as service. No wave of trouble shall roll over your peaceful bosoms. You shall forever bathe your souls in seas of blissful rest—no care, no fear, no unsatisfied desire. For all desires shall be consummated, all expectations be fulfilled. God shall be your Portion, the infinite Spirit your Friend, and the ever-blessed Christ your elder Brother.

Into the joy of Heaven, which knows no bounds, shall you enter, according to His Words, “Enter you into the joy of your Lord.” And all this, and infinitely more than my tongue can tell you, shall be yours forever and forever, without fear of ever losing it, or dread of dying in the midst of it. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love Him, but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” All the kingdom which the Father has prepared, and the place which the Son has prepared, are yours, O Believer, by the promise of the Lord. For “whom He justified, them He also glorified.”

The promise goes with godliness, and if you have godliness there is nothing in Heaven of joy, there is nothing there of honor, there is nothing there of rest and peace—which is not yours. For godliness has the promise of it, and God’s promise never fails—

*“Lo! I see the fair immortals,  
Enter to the blissful seats;  
Glory opens her waiting portals,  
And the Savior’s train admits.  
All the chosen of the Father,  
All for whom the Lamb was slain,  
All the Church appear together,  
Washed from every sinful stain.  
His dear smile the place enlightens  
More than thousand suns could do;  
All around, His Presence brightens,  
Changeless, yet forever new.  
Blessed state! Beyond conception!  
Who its vast delights can tell?  
May it be my blissful portion,  
With my Savior there to dwell.”*

Perhaps within the next ten minutes we may be there! Who knows? I had half said, “God grant it to me!” No doubt, many anxious spirits would be glad to end so soon life’s weary journey and rest in the Fathers Home!

III. Now, very briefly, consider another point. I have shown you that the promise appended to godliness is unique and comprehensive, and now observe that IT IS SURE. “Godliness has promise.” That is to say, it has God’s promise. Now, God’s promise is firmer than the hills. He is God, and cannot lie. He will never retract the promise, nor will He leave it unfulfilled. He was too wise to give a rash promise—He is too powerful to be unable to fulfill it. “Has He said, and shall He not do it?”

Already tens of thousands to whom the promise was made have obtained a measure of this bliss in the glorification of their perfect spirits. We are on the road to the same happy state. Some of us are on the river’s brink. Perhaps the Lord may come suddenly, and we shall be changed, and so perfected without dying. Be that as the Lord wills, it is not a question which disturbs us. By God’s Grace, our faith is strong and firm. We are sure that we, too, shall enter into the rest which remains, and with all the blood-washed multitude shall in wonder and surprise adore the God before whose Throne we shall cast our crowns.

IV. But I shall not tarry upon that, for there comes a fourth thought. This promise is A PRESENT PROMISE. You should notice the participle, “having promise.” It does not say that godliness after awhile will get the promise, but godliness has promise now—at this very moment. My dear Hearer, if you are godly, that is, if you have submitted to God’s way of salvation. If you trust God, love God, serve God—if you are, in fact, a converted man—you have NOW the promise of the life that is to come. When we get a man’s promise in whom we trust, we feel quite easy about the matter under concern. A note of hand from many a firm in the city of London would pass current for gold any day in the week.

And surely when God gives the promise, it is safe and right for us to accept it as if it were the fulfillment itself, for it is quite as sure. We have the promise, let us begin to sing about it! What is more, we have a part of the fulfillment of it, for, “I give unto My sheep eternal life,” says Christ— shall we not sing concerning that? Believe in Jesus—you have eternal life NOW. There will be no new life given to you after death. You have even NOW, O Christian, the germ within you which will develop into the Glorylife above. Grace is Glory in the bud. You have the earnest of the Spirit. You have already a portion of the promise which is given to godliness.

Now, what you should do is to live now in the enjoyment of the promise. You cannot enjoy Heaven, for you are not there, but you can enjoy the promise of it, Many a dear child, if it has a promise of a treat in a week’s time, will go skipping among its little companions as merry as a lark about it. It has not the treat yet, but it expects it. And I have known in our Sunday schools our little boys and girls, months before the time came for them to go into the country, as happy as the days were long, in prospect of that little pleasure. Surely you and I ought to be childlike enough to begin to rejoice in the Heaven that is so soon to be ours! I know tomorrow some of you will be working very hard, but you may sing—

*“This is not my place of resting,  
Mine’s a city yet to come;  
Onward to it I am hasting  
On to my eternal home.”*

Perhaps you will have to fight the world’s battles, and you will find them very stern. Oh, but you can sing even now of the palm branch, and of the victory that awaits you! And as your faith looks at the crown that Christ has prepared for it, you will be much rested even in the heat of the battle. When a traveler who has been long an exile returns home, it may be after walking many miles he at last gets to the brow of the hill where he can see the Church of the little town, and get a bird’s-eye view of the parish. He gazes awhile, and as he looks again and again, says to himself, “Yes, that is the High Street there, and yonder is the turning by the old inn, and there—yes, there, I can see the gable of the dear old house at home.”

Though his feet may be blistered, the way may have been long, and the sweat may be pouring from his face, yet he plucks up courage at the sight of home. The last mile down hill is soon over, for he has seen his long-loved home. Christians, you may see it, you may see the goodly land from Nebo even now—

*“How near  
At times to faith’s far-seeing eye,  
The golden gates appear!”*

When the Crusaders first came in sight of Jerusalem, though they had a hard battle before them before they could win it, yet they fell down in ecstasy at the sight of the holy city. And do not you and I say, “Soldiers of the Cross, my fellow Crusaders in the holy war of righteousness, will you not in prospect of the coming glory sing—

*‘O my sweet home, Jerusalem,  
Would God I were in you!  
Would God my woes were at an end,  
Your joys that I might see!’?”*

When the brave soldiers, of whom Xenophon tells us, came at last in sight of the sea, from which they had been so long separated, they cried out, “Thallasse! Thallasse!”—“The sea! The sea!” And we, though death appears between us and the better land, can yet look beyond it and see

the— *“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood*

*Arrayed in living green,”*  
and bless God that a sight of what is to be revealed renders the burdens of the way light as we march towards Glory. Oh, live, live in the foretaste of Heaven. Let worldlings see that—

*“The thought of such amazing bliss  
Does constant joys create.”*

V. Last of all. This promise which is appended to godliness is A VERY NEEDFUL ONE. It is a very necessary one, for ah, if I have no promise of the life that is to come, where am I? Where am I? And where shall I be? Where shall I be? I live, I know. I die, I know I must. And if it all is true as this old Bible, my mother’s Bible, tells me—that there is a hereafter. If I have no godliness, then woe is the day to me! Oh, how much I want the promise of the life to come, for if I have not that I have a curse for the life to come.

I cannot die, God has made my soul immortal. Even God Himself will never annihilate me, for He has been pleased to create me an immortal spirit, and on I must live forever. There are some who say, and I think the doctrine is full of unnumbered perils to the souls of men, that God made man naturally mortal, and the soul can become extinct. And they go on to teach that sinners are made to live after death on purpose to be tormented for a longer or shorter time, and then at last are annihilated. What a God must He be to give them a life they need not have—on purpose—that He might torment them! I know no such God.

But HE, whom I adore, in His unbounded goodness, gave to mankind what was in itself a wondrous blessing—immortality. And if you, my Hearer, choose to turn it into a curse forever, it is you that are to be blamed for it! Not God who gave you the immortality which, if you believe in the appointed Savior, will be to you an eternity of bliss. You are now past all recall an immortal being, and if you die without hope in Christ there will remain only this for you—to go on sinning in another state as you have gone on sinning here. But you will get no pleasure from it as you think you do sometimes, here—on the contrary, you will be tortured with remorse concerning it. And you will be vexed with angry passions to think that you cannot have your will, passions that will make you struggle yet worse against your God, and make your misery consequently the greater.

The worm that never dies will be your own furious hatred of God. The fire that never shall be quenched is probably the flames of your own insatiate lust after evil. I say not that there will not be bodily pains, but the natural results of sin are the deepest Hell to the soul. Sin has made you unhappy now. It will ripen. It will increase. When everything that checks it shall be taken off, your true character will be developed, and with that development will come enlarging wretchedness. Separated from the company of the righteous, and placed among the wicked, you will go on to be worse and worse, and every stop in the increase of sin necessitates an increase of misery.

It is not true that God will punish you in mere caprice. He has ordained, and right enough was He to ordain it, that sin should punish itself—that sin should be its own misery, and its own anguish. Sin will be to you a never-ending death. O why will you die? Why will you die? Why will you, by the love of sin, bring upon yourselves an eternity of sin, an eternity of suffering? Turn unto Christ! I pray His Spirit to turn you. Come now, come now, and lay hold on eternal life!

I have been thinking while I have been preaching to you, this evening, of my own self, awhile, and I shall turn my thoughts to myself and any others who are preachers or teachers, and who try to do good to others. Years ago Hamburgh was nearly half of it burned down, and among the incidents that happened, there was this one. A large house had connected with it a yard in which there was a great black dog, and this black dog in the middle of the night barked and howled most furiously. It was only by his barking that the family was awakened just in time to escape from the flames, and their lives were spared.

But the poor dog was chained to his kennel, and though he barked and thus saved the lives of others, he was burned himself. Oh, do not you, who work for God in this Church, perish in that fashion! Do not permit your sins to enchain you, so that while you warn others, you become lost yourselves! See to it that you have the godliness which has the promise of the life that is to come.

And now, you who really desire to find godliness, remember, it is to be had in Christ, and only in Christ. I was in Windermere some three weeks ago on a hot, dusty day, and I saw a little gushing stream of water, and a chain with a ladle to it for the passerby to drink. I wanted to drink, and I went to it, but the ladle was cracked quite through, was very rusty, and would not hold a drop of water. Neither was the water, if it had been held in it, fit to drink. There are ways of salvation chosen by some that are equally as deceptive. They mock the traveler.

But oh, my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, is a river of mercy, deep and broad. You have but to stoop and drink, and you may drink as much as you will, and none shall tell you stop. Have you not His Word for it, “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”? God grant you may with your heart believe the Gospel of Jesus, for our heart believes the Gospel of Jesus, for Christ’s sake.

[Sermon #937, The Profit of Godliness in This Life, is the sermon Brother Spurgeon alluded to at the beginning of this sermon.]  
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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #937 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS IN THIS LIFE  
NO. 937

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.”***1Ti 4:8-9***.**

YOUR attention will be the more readily given to this passage, because Paul declares it to be a “faithful”—a most true and certain saying—and “worthy of all acceptation,” that is to say, worthy to be received and practiced by us all. Paul has four of these faithful sayings. The first, occurs in 1Ti 1:15, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The second is our text. The third is in 2Ti 2:12, “It is a faithful saying, if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” And the fourth is in Tit 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.”

We may trace a connection between these faithful sayings. The first one lays the foundation of our eternal salvation in the free Grace of God, as shown to us in the mission of the great Redeemer. The next affirms the double blessedness which we obtain through this salvation—the blessings of the upper and nether springs of time and of eternity. The third shows one of the duties to which the chosen people are called—we are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that “if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” The last sets forth the active form of Christian service, bidding us diligently to maintain good works. Thus we have the root of salvation in free Grace.

Next, we have the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is, and in that which is to come. And we have also the two great branches of suffering with Christ and serving with Christ, loaded with the fruits of the Spirit. Let us treasure up these faithful sayings. Let them be the guides of our life, our comfort, and our instruction. The Apostle of the Gentiles proved them to be faithful. They are faithful still, not one word shall fall to the ground. They are worthy of all acceptation, let us accept them now and prove their faithfulness. Let these four faithful sayings be written on the four corners of your house.

Today we consider the second of the four, and we will read the text again, “Bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” In the days when Paul wrote this Epistle, the Greeks and others paid great attention to physical culture, the development of the muscles, the proportion of the limbs, the production of everything in the body which might conduce to the soundness of manhood. The philosophy of

Greece all looked that way, and therefore at the various gymnasia bodily exercises of an athletic and even violent kind were undergone by men with the view of developing the body, and so assisting the soul.

It may be that Timothy, being yet a young man, fancied that there was something in this philosophy. And something, indeed, there is. In the original the Apostle Paul admits that it is so, for the passage might be read thus—“Bodily exercise verily profits a little,” or thus, “Bodily exercise profits for a short time.” Physical training is of some service—attention to it is not sinful nor to be condemned. It is of some use and has its proper place, but still it has no very eminent position in the Christian system. It occupies a place far in the background in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. It is but a minor part of a complete education. It profits a little, a little, for a little time.

But godliness, the worship of God, the fear of God, has a long and wealthy entail of blessing, having the promise both of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Its profiting is not little but great. Its benefit is not confined to the body, but is shared by the body and the soul. It is not limited by this mortal life, but overleaps the grave and brings its largest revenue of profit in the world where graves are all unknown.

This morning I am about to try and speak upon the profit of godliness to a man in this life. We will consider its having the promise of the life to come, in the evening, if God spares us.

With regard to this life, let it be remarked that the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ neither undervalues nor overvalues this present life. It does not sneer at this life as though it were nothing. On the contrary, it ennobles it, and shows the relation which it has to the higher and eternal life. It does not overvalue it by making this life, and the secular pursuits of it, the main object of any man. It puts it into an honorable but yet a secondary place, and says to the sons of men, “Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you.”

It is not, however, very easy to keep to the middle point of exact truth as to a due estimate of this present life—he who does so is taught of God. There are many who undervalue this life—let me mention some of them to you. Those undervalue it who sacrifice it to indulge their passions, or to gratify their appetites. Too many, for the sake of momentary gratifications, have shortened their lives and rendered their latter end bitterly painful to themselves. They conceived that the pleasures of the flesh were better than life. They were mistaken in their estimate. They made but a poor exchange when they chose lust and death, rather than purity and life.

The drunkard has been known to take his cups, though he knew that in so doing he was virtually poisoning himself. The man of hot passions has been seen to plunge into uncleanness, though the consequences of his folly have been plainly set before him. Men who for a morsel of meat, or a flash of merriment, are selling this world as well as the world to come, are fools, indeed. He that would have pleasure must not pursue it too furiously. Temperance is the rule here—moderation and the use, not excess and the abuse—will secure to us the pleasure even of this mortal life. Value not, I pray you, the transient joys which the animal appetites can bring to you. At least value them not so much as to shorten life for their sakes.

Some evidently undervalue their lives because they make them wretched through envy. Others are richer than they are, and they think it a miserable thing to be alive at all while others possess more of this world’s goods than they. They walk, they say, and toil while yonder person, who has no more deserts than they, is riding in his chariot. So, indeed, they count the chariot the main thing and not the life, and they will not enjoy their life because they cannot have a certain coveted addition which another possesses.

Haman is not grateful for all the mercies of life while unbending Mordecai sits in the king’s gate. He counts his honey to be bitterness because he cannot lord it at his will. God gets no thanks at all from the man for the innumerable mercies which he has. These are nothing. He pines for some particular supposed mercy which he has not. He considers that the fact of his being alive, and being favored of God in many respects, is nothing at all to be considered, because he has not all that big avarice might wish for. O poison not life by the envy of others, for if you do so, you miserably undervalue it!

The slaves of avarice undervalue their lives, for they do not care to make life happy, but pinch themselves in order to accumulate wealth. The miser who starves himself in order that he may fill his bags may well be reasoned with in this way—“Is not the life more than the meat, and the body than raiment? Skin for skin, yes, all that other men have will they give for their lives. But you give your life for this wealth, this glittering dust. You are willing to forego all the enjoyments that this life might afford you, that you may have a heap to leave to your uncertain heirs, who will probably squander it, and certainly forget the hands that scraped the hoard together.”

Why should I throw away myself for the sake of dying rich? Is it true success in life to have enjoyed nothing, to have poisoned all my existence merely that the world might be informed in a corner of the Illustrated News that I died worth so many thousands of pounds? This is to undervalue life, indeed.

So, also, do they undervalue it who in foolhardiness are ready to throw it away on the slightest pretext. He that for his country’s sake, or for the love of his fellow creature, risks life and loses it, truly deserves to be called a hero. But he, who, to provoke laughter and to win the applause of fools, will venture limb and life without need is but a fool himself, and deserves no praise whatever. He undervalues life who will display an art which endangers it, or who will run the risk of it for anything whatever short of the laudable motive of preserving liberty to his country, or life to his fellow men.

Holy Scripture never teaches us to undervalue our own lives. He that said, “You shall not kill,” meant that we were not to kill ourselves any more than others. We ought to seek by all we can do in the surroundings of our habitations, by our cleanliness, by carefully observing sanitary

laws, by never encouraging dangerous exhibitions, and by every other means to show our care of the life that now is, for it is a precious thing.

Yet, my Brethren, there can be such a thing as overvaluing this life, and multitudes have fallen into that error. Those overvalue it who prefer it to eternal life. Why, it is but as a drop compared with the ocean, if you measure time with eternity. Seventy or eighty years of dwelling here below—what are they when compared with infinite ages of existence in the Presence of the Most High? I reckon that this present life is not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us.

When men in fearful moments have denied the faith for the sake of saving their lives, they have overvalued this life. When to preserve themselves from the sword, or the fire, or the tortures of the rack, they have denied the name of Jesus, they have made a mistake and exchanged gold for dross. Alas, how many of us, in like condition, might have fallen into the same error? They overvalue this life who consider it to be a better thing than Divine love, for the love of God is better than life—His loving kindness is better than life itself.

Some would give anything for their lives, but they would give nothing for God’s love. If their lives were in danger, they would hasten to the physician, but though they enjoy not the love of God they yet sit at ease, and seek not the priceless benefit. They who feel aright think it a cheap thing to die, but an awful thing to live apart from God. They recognize that life would be but death unless God were with us, and that death itself is but the vestibule of life while God is our joy and our strength! Let us never set the present life before Divine love, and never let it be compared even for a moment with the pursuit of God’s Glory.

Every Christian man is to feel that he is to take care of his life in comparison with any earthly glory. But if it comes to a choice between God’s Glory and his life, he is to have no timorous hesitation in the matter, but at once sacrifice his life freely at his Lord’s altar. This has been ever the spirit of true Christians. They have never been anxious to die, nor have they been fearful concerning the loss of life. They have not thrown away their lives—they have known their value too well—but they have not withheld their lives for Christ’s sake. They have esteemed Him to be better than life itself. So you see the Scripture teaches us that there is a proper middle course in estimating this present life, and if we follow its instructions, we shall neither undervalue nor overvalue it.

It appears from the text, that godliness influences this present life, puts it in its true position, and becomes profitable to it.  
I. First, let me observe that GODLINESS CHANGES THE TENURE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS. It has “the promise of the life that now is.” I want you to mark the words—“it has the promise of the life that now is.” An ungodly man lives, but how? He lives in a very different respect from a godly man. Sit down in the cell of Newgate with a man condemned to die. That man lives, but he is reckoned dead in Law. He has been condemned. If he is now enjoying a reprieve, yet he holds his life at another’s pleasure, and soon he must surrender it to the demands of justice. I, sitting by the side of him, breathing the same air, and enjoying what in many respects is only the same life, yet live in a totally different sense. I have not forfeited my life to the Law. I enjoy it as far as the Law is concerned, as my own proper right—the Law protects my life, though it will destroy his. The ungodly man is condemned already, condemned to die, for the wages of sin is death. And his whole life here is nothing but a reprieve granted by the longsuffering of God.  
But a Christian man is pardoned and absolved. He owes not his life now to penal justice. When death comes to him it will not be at all in the sense of an infliction of a punishment. It will not be death, it will be the transfer of his spirit to a better state, the slumbering of his body for a little while in its proper couch to be awakened in a nobler likeness by the trump of the archangel. Now, is not life itself changed when held on so different a tenure? To live because I am now protected by the Law—is not that better than to be living at the sufferance of the Law?  
To live the life of an absolved man, of a free man, the life of God’s own child even in this present life—is not that a different thing from living the life of one to whom each hour measures out a nearer approach to the capital sentence, and to the execution of well-deserved punishment? The first is a life of pleasure—the second, disguise it as you may, is death in life, a life overshadowed with the darkness of eternal wrath.  
“Godliness has the promise of the life that now is.” That word changes the tenure of our present life in this respect, that it removes in a sense the uncertainty of it. God has given to none of you unconverted ones any promise of the life that now is. You are like squatters on a common who pitch their tents, and by the sufferance of the lord of the manor may remain there for awhile. But at a moment’s notice you must up tents and away.  
But the Christian has the promise of the life that now is. That is to say, he has the freehold of it. It is life given to him of God, and he really enjoys it. He has an absolute certainty about it. In fact, the life that now is has become to the Christian a foretaste of the life to come. Do you say that it is uncertain to the Christian whether he shall die or live? I grant you in one sense his remaining here is uncertain. Yet this is certain to him—he shall never die until it is best for him to die. He shall never depart this life till he is ripe for the life to come—he shall never, in fact, be removed from his present tabernacle till he himself, if he knew all, would be perfectly willing to be removed.  
Willing! Yes, far more! Overjoyed that his tabernacle should be dissolved that he might enter into his “House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The tenure is very different between the uncertainty of the ungodly who has no rights and no legal titles, and the blessed certainty of the child of God who lives by promise.  
Let me add that this word seems to me to sweeten the whole of human life to the man that has it. Godliness has the promise of life that now is— that is to say, everything that comes to a godly man comes to him by promise. Whereas if the ungodly man has any blessing apparent, it does not come by promise, it comes overshadowed by a terrible guilt which curses his very blessings and makes the responsibilities of his wealth and of his health and position redound to his own destruction. It works as a savor of death unto death through his willful disobedience.  
Everything that comes to the Christian comes by promise. He sees his daily bread, and he says, “It has my Father’s mark on it. He said my bread should be given me. Here comes the water from the crystal stream, it is flavored with the love of God. He said my water shall be sure.” He puts on his raiment, and it may not be so comely as the dress of others, but be says, “This is the livery my Father promised me.” He sleeps, and it is beneath the canopy of Divine protection. He wakes and he walks abroad with angels, according to the promise, bearing him up in their hands.  
Afflictions come to him by promise, the broad arrow of the great King is set on each one of them, for was it not said of old, “In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Me you shall have peace”? He can see everywhere the trace of Divine faithfulness in the keeping of the Covenant promise. He lives not the life of Ishmael, who by-and-by may be banished to the wilderness with the bondwoman, his mother. No, he lives the life of Isaac, the child of the promise, who is before long to inherit all things, and who even now is the darling child of his father, and rejoices in his father’s love.  
There is a vast difference between having the life that now is, and having the promise of the life that now is—having God’s promise about it to make it all gracious, to make it all certain, and to make it all blessed as a token of love from God.  
II. It is time that we pass on to THE BENEFIT WHICH GODLINESS BESTOWS IN THIS LIFE. Perhaps the fullness of the text is the fact that the flower of life, the crown of life, the highest blessedness and bliss of life, is secured to us by godliness. I have no doubt you have often heard interpretations of this text, very excellent—and it is not for me to judge or censure them—which lead to the belief that the way to make the best of both worlds is to be a Christian.  
I also subscribe to that, but I must demur to the way in which it is generally put. There is an excellent sermon by that notable Divine, Saurin, in which he urges this text as a proof that the best hope of success in the world is enjoyed by the Christian. I demur to that being the teaching of this text. There may be some truth in it, but I do not think it is much to be insisted on. It has been said that he who fears God has the best guarantee of health. It is true, there is nothing in godliness to destroy the health of the body. The true Christian is preserved from many of those passions, and excitements, and indulgences, which tend to produce disease and to bring on early death.  
That much is true, but I do not believe that godliness inevitably ensures good health. I believe, rather, that some godly men absolutely require for the highest perfection of their godliness, that they should be visited with sickness. It seems to me to be a very strange theory, to teach that godliness guarantees health, for it would lead to the supposition that all people who are unhealthy must necessarily be or have been deficient in godliness. And this is all the more untenable when we observe that some of the best people we have ever met have been those who have for years been bedridden by affliction which they certainly never brought upon themselves by any kind of sin.  
I would say to every young man, there is nothing in the pursuit of godliness that can injure your health, but I would not say to him, “If you are godly you have the promise of being a healthy man,” for I do not believe it, since unhealthiness may come from a thousand other sources besides impropriety of conduct. I will go farther, and affirm that godliness, when carried to its highest and most honorable degree of excellence, might sometimes render it necessary for a man to place himself where he would of necessity become unhealthy. I know that it was the highest godliness which made our missionaries fix their abodes among the fever marshes of Fernando Po and Old Calabar to preach the Gospel.  
When I heard from one of our missionaries, as I did personally, that he had at last become so acclimatized that he did not have the fever oftener than about two days out of three, I could not think that godliness in his case necessarily involved health. But I gathered that it might so happen that an eminently godly man might feel it necessary to go where he might say, “Farewell, Health, you are not, after all, the promise of the life that now is. I can bear to suffer, I can bear to creep about this world sick and ready to die if I may but have what is better than health—the luxury of winning souls for Christ—the honor and joy of instructing the ignorant in the faith of the crucified Redeemer.”  
It were wicked to think that a man has less of godliness who sacrifices his health for Christ’s sake. He certainly would not be the man to miss the promise, and yet if health were such a promise he would evidently have missed it.  
Again, we have heard it argued that the godly man has the best prospect of wealth in this world. Now I will also grant that as godliness delivers us from a multitude of expenses into which riot and dissipation would lead us, and as godliness creates habits of sobriety and economy, as godliness begets honesty, and honesty is even in a worldly sense the best policy, there are some reasons why Christian traders should grow rich, and godly men have much in their favor.  
But I also cannot help recognizing that while trade is as it is, there are many things which a Christian man cannot do, and dare not do, which some have done, and are to this day rich for having done them—dirty acts, mean, low, and groveling—which have brought wealth to the creatures who have practiced them. And yet more—I have known the best of Christians, and men, too, whose outward conduct has been fully conformable to their profession—who have lived and died poor. Now, if wealth is the promise of the life that now is, I venture to say that godliness does not infallibly or even generally secure it. The God-fearing man may have as fair an opportunity as any other in the race of life, but all things considered, this is all we can say. It may be that the godly man may be a poor man, and from a dozen circumstances not connected with his religion or his morals, may live and may die poor in this world, but rich in faith.  
It has also been said that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, in the sense that a Christian man is the most likely to have a good name, fame, and reputation among his fellow men. That also is true in a measure. In well-regulated society, the believer in Christ, through the holiness of his character, will be had in esteem, and even among the worst of men the excellence of his conduct will command a measure of respect. But for all that, I do not believe that repute among men is the promise of the life that now is—for what is it after all? Good repute among men, if it is deserved, I shall not decry. But if by any chance slander should come and take away the good man’s name—and it has often done so—shall I say pity the calumniated saint as one who has lost the promise of the life that now is?  
I dare not think it! Far rather would I bid him rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before him. And who is the most likely person to be slandered? Is it not the man who is most consistent with his profession, and most zealous in the spread of the faith? The Apostle Paul certainly never accounted riches to be the promise of the life that now is, for he had nothing. He had learned to be poor, and to labor with his hands. He certainly never reckoned health to be the promise of the life that now is, for he was in such circumstances of peril by land and sea, and among false brethren, that his life was in jeopardy for the Gospel. And as to a good name, he never regarded that as the promise of the life that now is, for he was willingly accounted as the offscouring of all things—some thought him mad, others thought him base, his repute with the multitude was gone.  
I will repeat what I have said, lest I be misunderstood. Under ordinary circumstances it is true that godliness wears a propitious face both towards health, and wealth, and name—and he who has respect to these things, shall not find himself, as a rule, injured in the pursuit of them by his godliness. But still I disdain altogether the idea that all these three things together are, or even make up a part of the promise of the life that now is. I believe some persons have the life that now is in its fullness, and the promise of it in its richest fulfillment, who have neither wealth, health, nor fame. Being blessed with the suffering Master’s smile and Presence, they are happier far than those who roll in wealth, who luxuriate in fame, and have all the rich blessings which health includes.  
Let me now show you what I think is the promise of the life that now is. I believe

it to be an inward happiness, which is altogether independent of outward circumstances. It is something richer than wealth, fairer than health, and more substantial than fame. This secret of the Lord, this deep delight, this calm repose, godliness always brings in proportion as it reigns in the heart.  
Let us try and show that this is so. A godly man, my Brethren, is one who is at one with his Maker. It must always be right with the creature when it is at one with the Creator. The Creator is Omnipotent, All-Just, All-Holy. When the creature is out of gear with the Creator it will always be dashing itself against the pricks, and wounding itself. As the Creator will not change, if the creature runs not parallel to the Divine will, the creature must suffer, must be unhappy, must be restless. But when godliness puts our will into conformity with the Divine will, the more fully it does so, the more certainly it secures to us happiness even in the life that now is.  
I am not happy necessarily because I am in good health, but I am happy if I am content to be out of health when God wills it. I am not happy because I am wealthy, but I am happy if it pleases me to be poor because it pleases God I should be. I am not happy because I happen to be famous, but I am happy if, being all unknown, I count it my highest fame to be accepted in the Beloved. A heart reconciled to the Divine will has full possession of the promise of the life that now is, for such peace with God is perfect happiness where it perfectly exists—conformity to God’s will is Heaven below. I pray that godliness may work in all of you a conformity to the Divine will, and then I am sure, whatever your outward lot may be, you will win the promise of the life that now is.  
The Christian man starting in life as such is best fitted for this life. He is like a vessel fittingly stored for all the storms and contrary currents that may await it. The Christian is like a soldier who must gladly go to battle, but he is protected by the best armor that can be procured. He wears the helmet and the breastplate. He wears the entire Divine panoply which heavenly wisdom has prepared to protect him from every dart of his adversaries. He has the promise of the life that already is, just as the man with a good sword and good armor has the best promise of success in battle.  
O that God may grant us Grace to know and feel that the best instruments and weapons of the warfare of this life are to be found in the arsenals of holiness, in the armories of confidence in God! In this sense we have again the promise of the life that now is. With a Christian all things that happen to him work for good. Is not this a rich part of the promise of the life that now is? What if the waves roar against him—they speed his boat towards the haven! What if the thunders and lightning come forth? They clear the atmosphere and promote his soul’s health.  
He gains by his losses, he grows healthy by his sicknesses, he lives by dying, he is enriched by being despoiled of his goods. Do you ask for any better promise than this? Is it not better that all things should work for my good, than that all things should be as I would wish to have them? They might all work my pleasure, and yet might all work my ruin. But now if they do not always please me—yet if they always benefit me—is not this the best promise of the life that now is?  
The Christian enjoys his God under all circumstances. That, again, is the promise of the life that now is. I spoke of his being reconciled to God— he is much more than that—he delights himself in his God. He finds God in Nature. The landscape glows for him with a more Divine color than any other eye can see. As for the heavens, with their starry glories, there is a light in them which has not yet been beheld by the natural man. He sees God in his solitude, and peoples his loneliness with the spirits that are akin with the Most High. He is, wherever he may be, never debarred from the society he loves best. A wish will find his God, a tear will bring him his best Beloved.  
He has but to sigh and cry when on the bed of sickness, and God comes and makes his bed for him. Blessed man, he has, indeed, the promise of the life that now is, for in it all, and over it all, he sees the Divine love shining for him with a supernal splendor and making earth but the porch of Heaven. This is to have the life that now is in the fullness of the promise. I am sure you will agree with me that the genuine possessor of godliness has the promise of the life that now is in his freedom from many of those cares and fears which rob life of all its luster.  
The man without godliness is weighted with the care of every day, and of all the days that are to come—the dread remembrance of the past, and the terror of the future as well. The godly man knows that all the past is forgiven, his transgressions are blotted out. As for the present, he casts that burden on the Lord. As for the future, he would not pry into it with anxious eye, but he leaves God to rule and govern as He wills. He sits down, calmly content that his Father’s will is right and good towards him. And as he is thus free from care, so is he free from the fear of men.  
Ungodly men, many of them, are servile to their fellow men. It is to them a most important question whether they are smiled upon or frowned at by their fellow worms. The godly man has learned to lift his head above the common race of mankind, and when he lives as he should, he neither thinks a thing the better because men praise it, nor the worse because they censure it. His rule is not popular opinion, nor the dictates of the philosophy of the hour. He believes what God tells him to be true, and what God prescribes he knows to be right. And he does this careless of man’s judgment, for none can judge him but his Master.  
That man has the promise of the life that now is who is in full enjoyment of the sweets of a clear conscience. He can afford to snap his fingers in the face of all mankind and declare that if the heavens themselves should fall, he would do the right, and dare all things for God. Oh, to have the yoke of human judgment from off your neck, and the bondage of man’s domineering opinion from off your spirit! This is to receive the promise of the life that now is.  
Moreover, the fear of death has gone from the Christian. This with many deprives the life that now is of everything that is happy and consoling. They are afraid in their merriest moments that the skeleton will disturb the feast. And when the dance is merriest, they think they hear the sound of the trumpet that will silence all. But the Christian is not afraid. To him the prospect of departure is rather joyous than grievous, and the breaking up of this mortal state is an event he looks for as the clearing away of multitudes of sorrows and the bringing in of mighty joys.  
Brothers and Sisters, to be free from the fear of death is to make life truly life—and he has it who leans wholly upon Christ—and knows that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. Put these things togetherpeacefulness with his fellow men, peace with God, a sense that all things are working for his good, fearlessness of man’s judgment, communion with the Most High—and surely you have described in a few words the very flower of life—the thing that makes it worth while to live.  
This does not lie, as I have said before, in accumulated treasure. It does not blush in the rosy cheek. It does not dwell in the trump of fame. It resides within, when the man walks with God and subdues the earth beneath his feet. When the soul communes with the spiritual, and makes the visible to glow in the light of the unseen. When the man’s peace and joy all stream from the deep springs of God’s love, and the man lives in God, and God lives in him. Herein lies the highest kind of life—it is the flower of the life that now is—and GODLINESS it is that has the promise of it.  
I must not detain you longer, except to make an application of the subject to the present assembly. Brothers and Sisters, you who have godliness, and live in the fear of God, let me entreat you to believe that there is provided for you in godliness, comfort, joy, and delight for the life that now is. You need not postpone your feasting upon Christ till you see Him face to face. Feed on Him this day. You need not wait for the joys of the Holy Spirit till you have shaken off this cumbrous clay. The joy of the Lord is your strength today. You need not think that your peace and rest remain as yet in the future, hidden from you. Eternal life with its blessings is a present possession.  
They that believe do enter into rest, and may enter into rest now. The clusters of Eshcol are before you, brought to you by a Divine hand before you cross the Jordan—  
*“The men of Grace have found  
Glory begun below,  
Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
From faith and hope do grow.”*  
We do not say that godliness has made all Believers rich, for some here will be content always to be poor. The whole body of the faithful cannot claim that godliness has brought them earthly treasure, for some of the greatest of them have written that if in this life only they had hope, they would have been of all men the most miserable. But without exception, the whole of us can unanimously declare that we have found in godliness the highest happiness, the supreme delight, the richest consolation.  
I pray you, therefore, who profess godliness, be not content unless you have the promise of the life that now is. Believe that you can not only make this life sublime, but make it joyous. Believe that you can now be raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You cannot find a Heaven in things below, for the moth is there, and the rust that corrupts. But you can, while here, if you set your affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth, find Glory begun within you, and a young Heaven already shining about your path. The life that now is—claim it! Up, you sons of Israel, and slay the Amalekites that would take away from you your comfort! Arise, you men that fear the Lord, and demand that doubts and fears, like the accursed Canaanites, shall be chased from the land. For the promise of God ought to be believed, and in the believing of it, your peace shall be like a river, and your joy shall overflow.  
Another application of the text is this. There is a bearing of it upon the sinner. It is quite certain, O ungodly man, that the promise of the life that now is belongs only to those who are godly. Are you content to miss the cream of this life? I pray you, if you will not think of the life to come, at least think of this. You desire to be happy. You have intelligence enough to know that happiness does not consist in externals, but in the state of your mind. I assure you, and there are thousands of my Brethren who can affirm the same, that after having tried the ways of sin, we infinitely prefer the ways of righteousness for their own pleasure’s sake even here, and we would not change with ungodly men even if we had to die like dogs.  
With all the sorrow and care which Christian life is supposed to bring, we would prefer it to any other form of life beneath the stars. There is no man like the Christian, after all. Happy are you, O Israel, a people saved of the Lord! We do not come to you and tell you that godliness will make you rich, although there is no need that it should make you poor. We do not tell you it will make you healthy. It certainly will not make you the reverse. But these are not the things with which we would bribe you—these are inferior blessings, which we dare not set before you as worthy of your seeking after in the first instance.  
But we do tell you that if you will but seek the Lord while He may be found, and put your trust in His Christ, who came to put away sin, you shall have the happiest, best, noble, most desirable life that can be enjoyed on earth! Now many of you believe this. I know you do. In your hearts you envy Christians—even poor Christians. You feel that you would gladly be as sick or as poor as yonder pious saint, if you might have his hope, if you might have his God. Well, if you know which is best, have which is best. “May I have it?” says one. Who said you might not? Does not the Lord invite you to taste and see that He is good?  
Has not He even commanded you, and are not these His Words, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”? Simply to trust, and to rely—this is to begin the Divine life, and this will introduce you into a nobler sphere than mortals know of. They rejoice when corn and wine fill their barns and their vats, but you will say, “Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon me,” and in that you will find a richer joy than they. “Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” God bless you, for Christ’s sake.

[Sermon #946, **The Profit of Godliness in the Life to Come**, is the sermon Brother Spurgeon preached in the evening of June 19, 1870, and is the companion sermon to this one.]

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÷1Ti 4.10

“TRUST IN THE LIVING GOD”  
NO. 2964

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1875.

**“We trust in the living God.”***1Ti 4:10***.**

IF we are inclined to grieve because everything around us changes, our consolation will be found in turning to our unchanging God. If we lament the ills of mortality, it will be wise for us to turn to Him “who only has immortality.” If our earthly joys fade and die, it is a blessed thing for us to be able to go to the fountain of undying joy and there to drink deep draughts of bliss which shall cause us to forget our misery.

Without any further preface, I ask you to follow me while first, in a very simple manner, I speak upon the great truth of the existence of the living God. And then, secondly, while I draw practical inferences from that existence. Before I close my discourse, I shall have a question to put to you.

I. First, for a little while, let us think of THE GREAT TRUTH OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE LIVING GOD. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.”

He meant, by that expression, first, that God is truly existing and not like the dead gods of the heathen, which are no gods at all—which, in fact, have no existence as gods. Vast multitudes have bowed down before images of wood, or stone, or ivory, or gold—but of them all it might truly be said, “Eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat.” It is a sure sign that a man’s understanding is dead when he can worship a dead god! But you and I, Beloved, “trust in the living God.” He is the God who made Heaven and earth and all that is in them. He is the God who supports the whole universe by the power of His almighty arms. He is the God who rules and overrules in Nature, Providence and Grace. He is the true God, the only real God—no dream God, no phantom or myth conjured up by imagination, but a real God, the only living and true God! May we worship Him, then, with real worship, real adoration and true sincerity of heart! What a blessing it is for us that we are able to worship the true God! We might have been left, as our remote ancestors were, to seek after God, if haply we might find Him, or to worship gods that are no gods and be lost in the mazes of superstition, unable to find the Most High. But “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” and, therefore, “we trust in the living God,” the real God!

A second meaning of this expression, I have no doubt, lies in the fact of God’s self-existence and independence. “We trust in the living God,” who is “living” in a very emphatic sense. You and I are living, but our existence is entirely dependent upon the will of God. Although He has given us immortal spirits, yet that immortality only comes to us by reason of the Divine decree. And the glorious immortality of Believers comes to them by virtue of their vital union with their ever-living Head, their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have no independent immortality—it is not inherent in us and it must be sustained by perpetual emanations of the Divine Power. It is a fire which could not maintain its own glow. It must be fed, or it would go out. But God is selfexistent, the great I AM—and if all His creatures would cease to be, He would be just as completely God without them as with them—

*“He sits on no precarious throne,*

*Nor borrows leave to be.”*  
His is a fire which burns without fuel—a sun which scatters light without itself diminishing! God is independent, self-existing, the only really “living” being in the entire universe in the fullest and most emphatic sense of the word, “living.”

What a joy it is to worship such a God as this, because nothing can diminish His life, His force, His power! If His courts are sustained, not by the tribute of men, but by His own wealth. If His sovereign state stands, not by the might of armies, but by His own Omnipotence and if He, Himself, is All-Sufficient, not because He gathers up all things into Himself, but because all things are from Him, and are all in Him in their germ and seed—is He not a God whom we all ought to worship—in whom, worshipping, we may joyfully trust—and relying on whom we may be perfectly at rest, for He cannot fail us, neither can He fail Himself in any respect or degree?

A third meaning of the expression, “living,” in Paul’s declaration, “We trust in the living God,” I have no doubt is to be found in the fact of the existence of God through all eternity. There was a time when you and I, who are now alive, were not alive. And there will be a time when, as far as this world is concerned, we shall be numbered with the dead. But there never was a period in which God did not live. He always was and always is and always will be “the living God.” Let your thoughts fly back to eternity if you can—for, mark you, all our ideas of eternity are very shallow and superficial. We cannot form any clear notion of what, “eternity,” means, and the very fact that we speak of a “past” eternity proves that we have to bring it down to our finite apprehension and to use inaccurate words to express our imperfect and incorrect ideas! But far back, when the sun, moon and stars—and the whole universe slept in the mind of God, as a forest sleeps within an acorn cup—even then God was “the living God.” Before the first ray of light had broken in upon the pristine darkness—yes, before there was any darkness—before anything was created—God was “the living God!” And He was just as great and as glorious as He is now. Without an angel to sing His praise, or a human being to look up to Him with holy reverence or with tearful repentance— yet still independent of them all, He was “the living God!” What a blessing it is for us that it was so! There was never a period in which Satan could plot and plan against us, but that God had eternally existed before him. That evil spirit is but the infant of a day compared with God, the Eternal of all the ages, the Everlasting Father who was always able to anticipate everything that could possibly occur, knowing beforehand all that might be detrimental to us, countermining every mine of the archenemy and baffling all the old serpent’s cunning in such a way as, in the end, to add still more to His own Glory!

And as He was “the living God” in the past, so He is “the living God” in the present, and just as truly living as He was ten thousand millions of years ago—to speak of eternity after the fashion of men. Dr. Watts hit the mark when he sang—

*“He fills His own eternal NOW,*

*And sees our ages pass.”*  
Ages and years are past, or present, or future to us—but they are all present to Him. When a man looks upon a map, he can cover a whole country with his hand. But a traveler has to journey many weary miles before he can cross that country from one end of it to the other! But on the map your hand covers it all. And all eternity is under the hand of God like that country on the map covered by a human hand. God is “the living God” now as much as He ever was—as powerful, as wise, as loving, as tender, as strong as He ever was, blessed be His holy name!

And so He will be throughout the whole of the future. We cannot tell all that will yet happen in this world, but one thing we know—God will always be “the living God.” It is probable that once powerful nations will be utterly destroyed and that there will be terrible disasters beyond anything that has yet been experienced. We know that the present dispensation will utterly pass away and that “the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed.” But this fact is sure, that He who has been the dwelling place of His people in all generations, will be the dwelling place of His people in all the generations that are yet to come. There will never be a funeral knell to tell us that our great Lord is dead. There will be no need for weeping among the blessed spirits above because He who was their Creator, Protector, Preserver, and Friend has ceased to be, for He will always be “the living God.” So, because of His eternal existence, He is right worthy to bear this title—yes, and to monopolize it, for it belongs to Him alone—

*“Great God! How infinite are Thee!*

***What worthless worms are we!  
Let the whole race of creatures bow,  
And pay their praise to You.  
Your Throne eternal ages stood,  
Ere seas or stars were made.  
You are the ever-living God,  
Were all the nations dead.  
Eternity, with all its years,  
Stands present in Your view.  
To You there’s nothing old appears—  
Great God! There’s nothing new.”***

The fourth meaning of the text seems to me to be this. God is called “the living God” as being always Himself really and truly God in the full capacity of His Being. Sometimes we say of a man that he is “all alive.” At another time, he does not appear to be fully quickened. He has life to some extent, but not in its fullness. We say of the man, by-and-by, that he is dead—not that he has ceased to exist, for man will no more cease to exist than will God, Himself, but we speak of him as dead because his body, which is part of his being, lies moldering in the tomb. But God is all life and only life. No portion of Him, (I must use human language, though the words are incorrect which I am using, as our words always must be when we speak of God), no faculty, no power, no attribute of God can be smitten by any paralysis, or can, in any degree, or in the slightest measurer, be subject to any failure which is at all akin to death. God is all alive and altogether life and nothing but life. God’s wisdom is always Infallible, His power is always almighty, His energy is at all times efficacious for everything that needs His attention. There can never come a time when He will be bowed down with age, or wearied with toil, or affected by suffering. “The living God” is the whole God, or, as the holy beings in Heaven call Him—and it means the same thing—“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come.” He is the whole God! Whatever the word, “God,” means—and we do not know, nor shall we ever know all that it means—it is too vast to be conceived by anyone but God, Himself—but, whatever that is, that is what God always is to the full measure, never in any degree diminished by what we call, “death.” He is evermore “the living God.”

I like to think of this Truth because God, Himself, speaks of it again and again. The Lord said to Moses in the wilderness, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short?” In the prophecy of Isaiah we read, “Thus says the Lord, Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?” And, a little later, this Prophet was Inspired to write, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save.” And today He is as mighty as He was in those glorious days when, in the van of Israel’s host, He led His people in safety through the depths of the Red Sea and delivered them forever from the iron bondage of Pharaoh. Yes, blessed be His holy name, He is still “the living God” as full of life and power as He ever was!

Another meaning of this expression is that God is active and energetic and not a mere name. There are plenty of people who are willing to believe in a god of a certain sort, but I hardly know how to describe their god. They are not atheists—they would be horrified if we called them by that name—but their notion is that everything is regulated by what they call, “the laws of Nature.” If you ask them what, “Nature,” is, they give you some curious answers. One man says, “I do not go into your places of worship and sit there, and hear you talk about God. I like to walk about and worship Nature.” If it is in London that a man talks like that, I should like to ask him what he calls, “nature.” Does he mean these miles of brick walls and the dark lanes and alleys at the back of them? If he means that, I should not like to worship his “Nature.” Or does he mean the grass in the meadows and the flowers of the field? If so, I hardly think that I should like to worship what cattle eat—it seems a degradation for a man to stoop as low as that! But they will say and do anything to get rid of the idea of the living and true God. “Nature”— “Providence”—and so on, are the expressions they use, just as if “God” did not enter into their calculations—or as if He had gone out of the business and left the whole concern to go on by itself! I should not like to be the child of a father who, the moment I was born, had me washed and dressed by machinery—and had a cradle ready for me to be rocked by machinery and fed me by machinery—who, all the while that I was under his roof, dressed me by machinery, fed me by machinery and taught me by machinery—but I never saw him. In fact, I only knew that there was some mysterious force about somewhere, but I never saw him or it—and never knew anything about his personality. That is the kind of dead force that many men call, “god.” But our God, in whom we trust, is a God with a great, warm, loving heart! He is a thinking God, an active God, a working, personal God who comes into the midst of this world and does not leave it to go on by itself. Although He is a stranger in the world, even as His people are also strangers and foreigners by reason of the revolt that men have made against their liege Lord and Sovereign, yet it is still His world and He is still in it!

I like to think of “the living God” being in this world which He created, for, now when I look at the cowslip or the daffodil, I know that it is God who paints these flowers of the spring so delicately. When I gather the geranium or the fuchsias, I know that it is God’s pencil which has been at work and I love to look at the blossom and feel that I am near to God— just as I should feel if I were to go into a friend’s studio and see there some of his sketches and paintings. I know that he has been there and that no other hand than his could paint that picture so well. And, in like manner, I know that no other hand but that of my God could paint these pictures of Nature so beautifully. Thus I am brought very near to “the living God.” O dear Brothers and Sisters, it is such a joy to me to remember that God is not a mere dead force—an abstract something or other which gives energy to the world, or which did give energy to it ages ago, but has now gone away and left the old energies to work till they wear themselves out! Oh, no. I believe that the Lord God still walks among the trees of this garden—that the Lord God, like a shepherd, still watches over His sheep—that the Lord God still speaks to us in the thunder, smiles upon us in the sunlight, scatters His blessings down in the dew and the rain—that He gives us the fruitful fields of harvest and the golden days in which the sheaves can be gathered into the garner— yes, and that He is just as truly at work for us in the winter months, sweetening the clods by the winds and the frost, and so preparing the earth to bring forth food for man and grass for the cattle. We delight to think that in all these ways, God is still “the living God.”

Yet once again, God is “the living God” in that He is the Source of life, the Giver of life and the Sustainer of life. We are living creatures, but He is the living Creator. We are living dependent, but He is “the living God” upon whom we all depend. He spoke us out of nothing and He could speak us back to nothing if He pleased to do so. We are the creatures of His will, living on His estates as tenants who may, at any moment, be dismissed at His pleasure, receiving the very breath that is in our nostrils at His absolute discretion! But God is Life, itself, and after all the streams which have flowed from Him to His creatures, there is as much life in Him as at the first. And when He says, “Return, you children of men,” and we go back to Him, He will have no more life than He has now, but He will be as He has always been, “the living God.”—

*“Let them neglect Your Glory, Lord,  
Who never knew Your Grace.  
But our loud songs shall still record  
The wonders of Your praise.  
‘Twas He, and we’ll adore His name,  
That formed us by a word!  
‘Tis He restores our ruined frame—  
Salvation to the Lord!”*

Now, in the six ways I have brought out only one thought—which I want to impress on your minds because it has been such a sweet thought to me. I have, in imagination, looked upon all whom I know upon the earth and I have said of them all, “They are dying creatures.” This is always true, but it is often forgotten. Yet, when one is taken away who has been very precious to us, we begin to realize this truth. Thinking over this matter, I seem to see a procession going past me. I can remember many of those who have passed me. They have gone by while I have remained here and I shall never see them here anymore—a long array of my Master’s servants, some of them bearing His banner aloft and others marching with their swords drawn because of fear in the night. Some of them were weak and feeble folk who had to be guarded on both sides by sturdy champions. And now, those of you who are before me as I speak, are also passing away—and there are more coming on, but they are only coming that they may go! I said, just now, that I was looking on at this procession, but that was a mistake, for I am in the procession and I am passing on with the rest! What shadows we all are! What fleeting things! What mists—what paintings on a cloud! We can scarcely say that we live, for, the moment we begin to live, that moment we begin to die and—

*“Every beating pulse we count,  
Leaves but the number less.”*

This earth is not “the land of the living.” This world is a dying world! The living world is beyond Death’s cold river. Here are graves innumerable. What part of the globe is there that has never yet been a cemetery? Every particle of dust which is blown in your face in the street may have once formed a portion of some living being! O Death, you rule over all! No, you do not, for there is One who rules over even you, O Death! You can have no power over “the living God.” You are His servant, permitted to work out His purpose, for it is through death that we pass into life. By the death of our redeeming Lord, we have been redeemed from destruction and, therefore, we can turn away from everything that wears the aspect of death and change, and turn to Him who is always the same and of whose years there is no end—the Eternal, in whom we trust!

II. Thus have I set forth, as best I could, the great Truth of the existence of “the living God.” Now, in the second place, LET US DRAW SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM THIS GREAT TRUTH.

And the first inference is this— an inference of reverential awe and holy trembling. What a great God He is whom we have professed to worship! When a poor pagan bows down before his wooden god, I should not wonder if what little sense he has should make him loathe and ridicule himself. But we have gathered here to worship “the living God.” Moses tells us, in the 5TH of Deuteronomy, verse 26, that the Israelites said, when the Law of God was given to them, “Who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?” Well might they stand there trembling because “the living God” had come down and touched the mountains so that they smoked like great altars of incense. This is the God whom we worship! Far from us be all trifling! Vain thoughts, be gone! Before “the living God” we should prostrate ourselves in the very dust. “O you who profess to serve the Lord, mind that you serve Him faithfully, for it is “the living God” whom you serve, the God who is not to be mocked with hypocritical service! O you who know that you are not reconciled to Him, remember that it is to “the living God” that you are not reconciled! And recollect that solemn and true declaration, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” And that other, “Our God is a consuming fire.” So I say that our first inference should be that of reverential awe and holy trembling.

The next should be, to God’s people, an inference of holy courage. Are we on the Lord’s side? Then, my Brothers and Sisters, let us never fear, for we are on the side of “the living God.” Who can successfully defy Him? Who dares to throw down the gage of battle against Him? You remember what young David said to Saul concerning Goliath of Gath, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” It was grandly put, as though he had said, “This big fellow is only the servant of a dead god and he and his god may both come out against me, and I, little as I am, yes, less than nothing in myself, will go to him in the name of the living God and bring back his head as the trophy of victory! Let no man’s heart fail because of him.” So now, if the biggest Goliath that ever lived at Rome or anywhere else should come stalking out against us, let us say, “Who is he, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” If the God of Israel is not now living, all is over with the cause of truth and righteousness. But we may say, as David did on another occasion, “The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock.” As long as He lives, we may boldly say, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

This, too, should be our great security in time of danger. I like to recall that incident in the life of Hezekiah when he took that abominable Assyrian letter, “and spread it before the Lord.” Do you ever take your letters to the Lord, Brothers and Sisters? That is the best thing in the world to do with them when they are evil ones. Hezekiah spread his letter before the Lord and said, “Lord, bow down Your ear and hear: open, Lord, Your eyes and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which has sent him to reproach the living God.” That was the point and the king felt quite sure that Sennacherib would be overthrown because he had defied the living God. If God had been a dead god, Sennacherib might have done with Him as he did with other idol gods. He asked, “Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed?” He did not realize that they were all broken to pieces because they were mere idols. But this time, he was defying “the living God.” If, Brothers and Sisters, “the living, God” is on your side, “no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” If you, Beloved, are walking before “the living God” in all sincerity, even if Sennacherib with a mighty host should come against you, the Lord your God would send His holy angel and smite your foes, and you should surely be delivered! Have no doubt or fear, if your God is “the living God.”

And this Truth of God, Brothers and Sisters, should always make us fearless of men, for, after all, what are men? Remember what the Lord said to His servant, the Prophet Isaiah, “Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?” The most powerful and most cruel man who ever dares to threaten you is only a man that shall die! And the Lord Jesus says to you, “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” Herod is soon eaten of worms. Persecuting monarchs soon disappear when God condemns them. Therefore, while “the living God” is your God, never be afraid of a dying man—

*“Fear Him, you saints, and you will then Have nothing else to fear.”*

Another inference from this Truth is this. It should bring relief to us in times of bereavement. Sorrow is natural to us, but to push sorrow to an extreme is wrong. I have heard of a good woman who had lost her husband and who continued sorrowing over her loss for a very long time. Her little boy saw her weeping day after day and, at last, plucking her by the gown, he said to her, “Mother, is God dead?” “No, dear,” she said, “but your father is.” But that question made her stop her grieving, as it well might, for if God is not dead, our best Friend still lives! So let us be of good cheer. If people had to come here and say, “That good woman whom God so greatly blessed in the Church’s work is dead. And that dear Brother whom we all loved, is dead. And the Pastor, too, is dead,” who could help sorrowing? But even then it would still be true that “the Lord lives!” Always get back to that great fact, “the Lord lives.” We shall have to put our Beloved ones into the grave, but, “the Lord lives,” blessed be His name! And as long as God lives, we need never ask, “What shall we do?” It is true that we shall not do much, but God will. We must never say, “Oh, there is such a great gap, it cannot be filled.” God is alive and He can fill it, so you must not give way to despondency or despair. We may grieve, for even Jesus wept, but let us never distrust the Lord, for as surely as He takes away one worker, He knows how to raise up another! And if the Lord should take your husband from you, He will, Himself, be your Husband. If He should let you be fatherless, He will be your Father. And if He should leave you childless, good woman, He will say to you, “Am I not better unto you than ten sons?” He can fill up every gap! Yes, and make your soul to overflow with supreme content—

*“‘Lo, I am with you,’ says the Lord,  
My Church shall safe abide,  
For I will ne’er forsake My own,  
Whose souls in Me confide.  
Through every scene of life and death,  
This promise is our trust.  
And this shall be our children’s song,  
When we are cold in dust.”*

This truth ought also to keep us from grieving too much over our losses and crosses in business. You have had a great loss today, Friend, and your face looks very long over it. Or you have heard of someone who was the means of bringing you much business who has moved or is dead. Well, “the Lord lives.” “Trust in the living God.” There have been times in the little business I have had to do for the Lord in connection with the Orphanage and the College, when the funds have been very short and sometimes we have run quite out. I have scraped the bottom of the meal barrel a good many times and I have had to squeeze the cruse to get a drop more oil out of it. But we have trusted in the living God and, up till now, we have always found Him worthy of being trusted! And we believe we always shall. There have been failures and mistakes on our part and on the part of our friends, but never any on God’s part. We must all bear that testimony. Let us, therefore, all “trust in the living God.” If an ill wind blows upon us, let us believe that somehow or other, it will blow us some good. And if a rough tide comes up, let us believe that it will in some way or other wash us nearer to our desired haven.

Once again, “we trust in the living God,” and this gives us the richest consolation concerning our departed Christian friends. As “the Lord lives,” and He is their God, they are not dead! You remember Christ’s argument with the Sadducees, it was this—God has said, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” So that the dead saints are not really dead. Whenever there comes out a new error, it generally breeds another, for errors are very prolific. Some people started the notion that the soul of man is not immortal—that the soul of the wicked would die. I was quite sure that when they got as far as that error, they would go still further and so the next notion was that every part of us will die when we die—that there is no soul that is immortal, or no soul at all—and that the righteous dead are all in their graves—souls and bodies and everything! That is the beautiful materialistic notion that after having received Christianity, we are expected to imbibe. But we are not such idiots, whatever they may think of us! We shall never believe that all our beloved friends, who, according to the Scriptures, have been with Jesus these many years, have never been with Jesus at all! In fact, do not exist at all, except whatever may be found of them in their coffins or in their graves! How could that be if God was their God and if Christ’s Words are true—“God is not the God of the dead, but of the living”? They are alive, Brothers and Sisters—as much alive as they were alive here, with the exception of that mortal part which they have left behind to be prepared for immortality, as Dr. Watts truly wrote—

*“Corruption, earth, and worms  
Shall but refine this flesh  
Till my triumphant spirit comes  
To put it on afresh.”*

We go down to our graves, as Esther went to her bath of spices, to be prepared for the embrace of the great King! And, in the morning of the Resurrection, this poor body of ours, all fair and lustrous, shall be reunited with our glorified spirit and we shall behold the face of the King in His beauty and be with Him forever and ever! “God is not the God of the dead” and, therefore, those of whom He is the God will never die! The inference is clear and forcible. Believe in it, hold to it and rejoice in it, for it will comfort you to know that as He is your God, you will never die. “God is not the God of the dead.” Then, blessed be His holy name, I am not dead, though once I was dead, for He has quickened me into life! And I shall never be dead any more, for Jesus said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” “The living God” is not the Father of dead souls, but He has an innumerable host of living children to be His heirs and to dwell with Him forever! Did you ever notice that passage where Joshua tells the people to be ready to go over the Jordan and says that when the priests’ feet shall touch the river, it shall divide and the Ark shall be carried across? “And then,” he said, “hereby you shall know that the living God is among you and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.” The joyful triumphs of Believers in death, when they metaphorically cross the Jordan are proofs to us that God is with His people, that He will drive out all our enemies before us and give us a triumphant entrance into the promised land above! Glory be to the name of “the living God” forever!

III. Now I finish with the question which I said I might ask. It is this— IS “THE LIVING GOD” YOUR GOD?  
If so, then remember how near He is to you, for Paul tells us in 2Co 6:16, “You are the temple of the living God.” I will not dwell on that sentence, though I am tempted to do so, but what a wonderful thing it is that “the living God” should be willing to dwell inside our bodies! Oh, let us keep these bodies pure and let us see to it that we never fall under that terrible curse, “If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” But may our body, soul and spirit be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
And, dear Brothers and Sisters, if “the living God” is really ours, let us thirst after Him. Let us say, as did the writer of the 42nd Psalm, “As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” He is “the living God,” so thirst after Him and keep on thirsting after Him—and do not be content to try to live without Him, for, to live without “the living God” is to have death in life and not truly to live at all! Think, child of God, “the living God” dwells within you! Seek to realize His Presence, long and pant to realize it more and more!  
Are any of you obliged to answer my question truthfully by saying, “No, the living God is not mine”? Then I must repeat to you those two texts that I quoted earlier in my sermon—“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” “For our God is a consuming fire.” That latter text has often been spoilt by being misquoted. I have many times heard it quoted, “God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire.” That is not the text at all. It is “our God”—the Christian’s God—God in Christ “is a consuming fire”—and if He is a consuming fire to His own people, what will He be to the ungodly? That is a wonderful question that is asked in Isa 33:14. “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” And the answer is, “Nobody can except the man that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly,” and so on. The Prophet goes on to describe the man who has been renewed by Grace, for he is the only man who can live in the everlasting burnings of the Divine majesty and purity. He can live there because the devouring fire will only burn up everything in him that is unlike God—but the new life that is in the Christian, the Grace that the Holy Spirit puts into us will endure the fire. Everything that appertains to man and to man’s work must be tried by fire, and if God has built into us the gold, silver and precious stones of His Grace, and if we have built upon them our life work, both we and our work will endure the trial by fire!  
But, Sinner, you will also have to go through that fire! And seeing that there is nothing in you but the wood, hay and stubble of self and sin— nothing in you but that which it foul and obnoxious to God, unholy and unrighteous—or self-righteous, which it really unrighteous—the fire will consume it! All your glory, your peace, your happiness, everything that makes life to be life will be taken from you and there shall remain for you nothing but existence! And this is the description of that existence— “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Oh, may the Lord who alone can give you life, give it to you now! For, if not, there will remain nothing but an everlasting death to be your portion! From that may you now be delivered by His infinite mercy, through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

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÷1Ti 4.13

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE  
NO. 3318

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING JUNE 21, 1866.

**“Till I come, give attendance to reading.”***1Ti 4:13***.**

OF course this counsel and exhortation is intended primarily as a direction to Christian ministers and especially to young Christian ministers. They must read much if they are to be profitable to others as preachers. There used to be a very stupid conceit in some sections of the Church, that if a minister read extensively, he would only give forth stale truth, or what some simpletons called, “dead men’s brains.” Men have now learned, however, that he will be most fresh and original in his own thoughts who most diligently cultivates his mind by studying and pondering the thoughts of other minds. He who never quotes, will never be quoted, and he who does not read is not very likely to be read. Of course the first thing the minister needs is to be taught of the Spirit, but then the question is—How does the Spirit teach? He teaches, no doubt, mainly through the Word and through our own experimental acquaintance with that Word. But if He pleases to reveal a Truth of God to another man, and I will not read that Truth as it has been recorded by that other man, I have neglected the teaching of the Spirit of God. You know, with regard to the Savior’s miracles, that there was not one of them that was unnecessary. He never did a thing by miracle which could have been performed by the ordinary laws of Nature. So it is with the teaching of the Spirit—I have no right to expect that the Spirit will reveal Truth to me without the use of a book when I can find it out for myself with the book. “The Holy Spirit helps our infirmities,” but not our idleness! He is given to us on purpose that He may help us when we are weak, but not that we may be indulged where we are slothful. I have sometimes had the unutterable misery of listening to a sermon which has been professedly dictated by the Spirit of God, but in which it was clear that the preacher had never thought upon the subject before he spoke—and I can only say that I was quite at a loss to perceive any peculiar beauty in the sermon, nor did I see anything at all which made it a source of edification superior to a sermon which had been prepared by someone else. I thought I detected a good many traits of human ignorance—and but very few traces of the working of the Holy Spirit.

There are many young fellows here tonight who are preparing for the ministry. I shall not, however, enlarge on this point, but shall only press on their earnest consideration and their most devout meditation. This Inspired exhortation, which is not mine, nor even an Apostle’s only, but the exhortation of the Holy Spirit of God through the Apostle—“Give attendance to reading.” If, Brothers, you would bless God’s Church and train up a band of really intelligent Christians, do not be always appealing only to the emotions, but also give out good, sound, strong Gospel Doctrine—and illustrate the Doctrine, so as to expound and comment to others. Do this especially by reading the words of the greatest masters in Scripture theology—and these will prove your delightful and dear companions and your splendid helpers in making your ministry richly profitable to your hearers.

This, however, is not our special subject for tonight. This same exhortation so peculiarly suitable to the minister, will suit all his hearers, too, because the ministry is not a religious caste peculiar to some few, but we are, all of us, to teach others according as God shall teach us! And in order that we may be useful in our sphere, as the minister is in his, we must adopt the same means to fit ourselves for our high privilege and to prepare us to be used by God. As the minister without reading will have but little power, so will it be with Christians in general. “Give attendance to reading” is an exhortation which I would press upon most of you, especially those of you who have leisure and who are not called to exhausting labors which take up all your time.

I am not, however, going to keep so closely to my text as merely to exhort you to read. I want to ask you to read God’s Word! That seems to me to be the Christian’s book. You may read other books and your mind may thereby be well-furnished with spiritual things, but if you keep to the Word of God, though you may be deficient in many points of a liberal education, you will not be deficient in the education that will fit you for blessed service here, for the service of skies, for communion with God on earth and communion with Christ in Glory!

My objective this evening is to say a few things about how to read the Bible. Last Thursday night we spoke at length upon God’s Word as to its excellencies. Tonight I think it fitting that we should speak a little about how to read that Word with greatest profit to our souls. In doing so we shall hope to consider seven precepts all bearing powerfully upon this important matter. Our first precept shall be—

I. READ AND DEPEND on the Spirit of God. How often do we open the sacred Book and read a Chapter through, perhaps at family prayer, or perhaps in our own private devotions and, having read from the first verse to the last, we shut up the book thinking we have done something very right and very proper—and in a vague way somehow profitable to us? Very right and very proper, indeed, and yet, right and proper as the thing is, we may really have gained nothing thereby! We may, in fact, have only drilled ourselves in the merely external part of religion and may not have enjoyed anything spiritual, or anything that can be beneficial to our souls if we have forgotten the Divine Spirit through whom the Word has come to us!

Ought we not even to remember that in order to properly understand the Holy Word we need to have the Holy Spirit to be His own Expositor? The hymn says concerning Providence—

*“God is His own interpreter*

*And He will make it plain”*  
and certainly it is so with regard to the Scriptures! Commentators and expositors are very useful, indeed, but the best expositor is always the author of a book, himself. If I had a book which I did not quite understand, it would be a very great convenience to me to live next door to the author, for then I could run in and ask him what he meant. This is just your position, Christian! The Book will sometimes puzzle you, but the Divine Author, who must know His own meaning, is always ready to lead you into its meaning! He dwells in you, and shall be with you, and Christ Jesus said, “When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall lead you into all Truth.”

But to understand the Word is not enough. We also need that He makes us to feel its power. How can we do this except through the Holy Spirit? “Your Word has quickened me,” O God, but it is only as You did quicken me through it. The Word of God is to be read literally, but, “it is the letter that kills.” Only “the Spirit gives life” and, excellent as are its statements, yet even they have no spiritual force in themselves! Unless the Holy Spirit shall fill them, even they shall become as wells without water and as clouds without rain. Have you not often found it so yourselves? I appeal now to your own experience. You have sometimes read a portion of Scripture and the page has seemed to glow, your heart has burned within you and you have said that the Word came home to you with power.

Just so, but it was the Holy Spirit who was bringing it home to your spirit in its true power and making it a sweet savor of life unto life to you! At other times, you may have read the very same page and painfully missed the sweetness which once you had tasted—and lost the lovely light that once flashed from it upon your mind’s eye!

Everything must depend upon the Spirit speaking through it, for even the light of the Word of God is, to a great extent, but moonlight. That is to say, it is a reflection of the light which streams from God, Himself, who is the one true source of light. If God shines not upon the Word when we read it, then the Word shines not back upon us, but becomes a dark Word to us, or as one says, “rather an obscuration than a Revelation, rather concealing God from us, than revealing Him to us.” Look up, reader! The next time the Book is in your hands, look up before you open it—and while your eyes are running down the page, look up and pray that God would shine upon it! And when the Chapter is finished and you put the Book away, take a minute, again, to look up and ask His blessing. If by reading the Scriptures we were only always reminded of the Holy Spirit. If we got no other good from the Scripture, itself, except the turning of our souls to think upon that Divine and blessed One, that would be, in itself, an inestimable blessing! Do read, then, thoughtfully remembering the great Author.

Our second precept is —  
II. READ AND MEDITATE.  
There is no exercise more out of fashion, nowadays, than meditation!

And yet, to use Brookes’ expression, “it is a soul-fattening duty.” The cattle crop the grass, but the nutrition comes from the chewing of the cud! Reading is the gathering together of our food, but meditation is the chewing of the cud, the digesting, the assimilating of the Truth of God! I quarry out the Truth when I read, but I smelt the ore and get the pure gold out of it when I meditate! Ruth gleaned, but afterwards she threshed. The reader is the gleaner, but he who meditates is the thresher, too. For lack of meditation the Truth of God runs by us and we miss and lose it. Our treacherous memory is like a sieve—and what we hear and what we read runs through it and leaves but little behind—and that little is often unprofitable to us by reason of our lack of diligence to get thoroughly at it. I often find it very profitable to get a text as a sweet morsel under my tongue in the morning and to keep the flavor of it, if I can, in my mouth all day!

I like to turn it over and over again in my mind, for any one text of the Scriptures you will find to be like the kaleidoscope. Turn it one way and you say, “What a fair Truth of God is this!” Turn it another way and you see the same Truth, but under how different an aspect! Turn it yet once more—and keep doing it all day—and you will be amazed and delighted to find in how many lights the same Truth will appear and what wonderful permutations and combinations you can find in it! When you have been doing this all day, you will be compelled to feel that there is an infinity about even one text, so that you can never completely comprehend it but find it still is beyond you! If you get a passage of Scripture given you, do not quickly give it up because you do not immediately seize its force and fullness. The manna which fell in the wilderness would not keep sweet beyond one day—if kept over unto the second, it bred worms and stank. But there was one portion of manna which was put into a golden pot and laid up in the Ark of the Covenant which never lost its sweetness and heavenly nutriment! And there is a way of keeping the precious portions of God’s Word that are given you today, in such a manner that you may go in the strength of it for forty days and continue to find fresh food in the same text day after day, and even month after month! But this is only to be done by meditating upon it. Our hymn has a fable in it when it says that the—

*“Spicy breezes*

*Blow soft over Ceylon’s isle.”*  
Voyagers who have been there, tell us that they have never smelt “the spicy breezes,” for the cinnamon yields no perfume till it is bruised and broken! And certainly God’s Word is exceedingly full of perfume, but not till it has been graciously bruised by reverent and loving meditation. You cannot get the sweetness and fragrance from it till you have smitten it again and again in the mortar of thought with the pestle of recollection. Meditate, then, upon these things!

“But how can we meditate,” asks one, “when we have so many things to think of?” But “one thing is necessary,” and it is necessary that the Christian should mediate upon the things of God! I know you must give your minds to many things and I cannot ask you not to do so, but whenever you have time to rest, then let your minds come back to the old home. The birds of the air are all day long picking up their food, but they go straight away to their roost at night, and so when the day’s business is over and the daily bread has been gained, fly to your nest and rest your soul in some precious portion of God’s Word. During the day, too, whenever you are freed from anxiety, let your mind dart upwards—and it will help you to do so if you take a text and make it as wings that enable you to fly to ponder heavenly things. Read and meditate!

The third rule for our guide should be —  
III. READ AND APPLY. What I mean is just this. Do not read the Bible as a Book for other people. Do not read it merely to say, “Yes, it is true. Very true. I believe its Doctrines to be the Revelation of the Infallible Mind of God, Himself.” But also endeavor in reading a page of the Scriptures, always to see how much it belongs to you. For some of you there is very little in the Word of God except threats. Pray God to help you to feel the solemnity even of the threats, for if you feel deeply the threats, now, you may be delivered from the tragic fulfillment of them by-and-by! If you are made to tremble under God’s Word, you may never be made to tremble under God’s hand. If you feel the wrath to come, now, you may never have to feel it in the next world. Ask God that His threats may drive you out of your sins and drive you to seek pardon in Christ. Then when you read descriptions of the human heart and the Fall, the corruption and the depravity of our nature, look and see yourselves as in a mirror and say of each man as you hear of his sin, “I am such a man as this was, and if I do not fall into precisely the same sin, yet the possibility and peril of it is in my heart and I could do so, but for God’s restraining Grace.” Take the very histories home to your heart and find a point in them, either of encouragement or of warning for yourselves. As for the Doctrines, remember that a Doctrine kills except as it is personally grasped and as you feel your interest in it. I have known some rejoice greatly in the Doctrine of Election who were never elected, and some who were very pleased with the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, but who had no faith by which to be justified! I have known of some, too, who gloried in Final Perseverance, but who, if they had finally persevered would certainly have been in Hell, for they were on the road there! It is one thing to know these Truths of God, and even to fight for them with the zeal and bitterness of a controversialist, but it is quite another thing to enjoy them as our own heritage and our portion forever! Ask the Lord to show you your interest in every Truth and do not be satisfied until you have an assured personal interest in them! Especially let this be so with the promises. “I will never leave you, nor forsake you!” Well, it is a very fine promise, but if it is read to me thus—“I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” what a transformed and glorified promise it then becomes! Stout old Martin Luther used to say, “All vital religion is in the personal and possessive pronouns.” Is it not so? “When you pass through the river I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you!” Oh, truly, such a promise is as a cluster of Eshcol, but it is in Eshcol’s valley and I cannot reach it there! The promise applied is the cluster brought to me just where I am and I can receive it and delight myself in its luscious sweetness!  
Take care, none the less, to seek for the application of precepts. Some are always looking out for other people’s duty and are great judges and critics for what others ought to do. “Who are you that judges another man?” To his own master he stands or falls. See what precepts are binding upon yourself and then, as a child of God, be your feet swift to run in the way of His commandments. Read the Bible as a man reads his relation’s will—to find what legacy there is in it for himself. Do with the Bible as the sick man does with the doctor’s prescription—follow it by personally doing what it bids you. Ask God not to let your Bible be another man’s Bible, but your own Bible—God’s own mouth speaking to your soul of the things which make for your peace.  
Fourthly—and this is very hard work—IV. READ AND PRACTICE. If you do not do this, you are reading to your own condemnation! If you read, “He that believes on Him is not condemned,” if you believe not, then you are “condemned already,” because you have not believed on the Son of God! The Gospel is a very solemn thing to every man because if it is not a savor of life unto life, since it must always be a savor of some sort—it therefore becomes a savor of death unto death! Some seem as if they read the Bible in order to know how not to do—the more God commands, the more they will not obey! Though He draws them, they will not come to Him. And when He calls them, they will give Him no answer. A sorry, sorry heart is that which so uses God’s Word as to make it an aggravation of its sin! Our life ought to be—and if God’s Grace is much in it, it will be—a new translation of the Bible. Speak of bringing the Bible down into the vernacular! Well, this is it! The worldling’s Bible is the Christian. He never reads the Book, but he reads the disciple of Christ and he judges the Christian religion by the lives of its professors! The world will learn better and will more likely be brought to know Christ when the lives of Christians are better, and when the Bible of the Christian Life shall be more in accordance with the Bible of Christian Doctrine! God make us holy! Sanctify us, spirit, soul and body, and then we shall be made finely serviceable both to the Church and to the world! Read and practice! But we shall only be able to do this as God the Holy Spirit shall help us. Then let us—  
V. READ AND PRAY. This is, perhaps, coming back almost to the first point, that is, read with dependence on the Holy Spirit. But I desire to impress a rather different thought upon your souls. Martin Luther says he learned more by prayer than he ever learned in any other way. A stone-breaker was one day on his knees breaking flints when a minister came by and said, “I see you are doing what I often do, breaking up hard things.” “Yes, Sir,” was the answer, “and I am doing it in the way in which you must do it, on my knees.”  
A passage in Scripture will often open up when you pray over it, which will defy mere criticism or looking to expositors. You put the text into action and then you comprehend it. I suppose if a man were studying anatomy and had never seen the body in life, he might not be able to know what a certain ligature was for, or such a bone—but if he could set that body moving, then he might understand the use of all the different parts, supposing he were able to see them. So when a text of Scripture lies, as it were, dead before us, we may not be able to understand it—but when by prayer the text grows into life and we set it in motion—we comprehend it at once! We may hammer away at a text sometimes in meditation and strike it again and again, and yet it may not yield to us, but we cry to God, and immediately the text opens and we see concealed in it wondrous treasures of Divine Wisdom and of Grace!  
But the prayer should not be merely that we may understand the text. I think we should pray over every passage in order that we may be enabled to get out of it what God would impart to us. A text is like a treasure chest which is locked—and prayer is the key to open it—and then we get God’s treasure! The text is God’s letter, full of loving words, but prayer must break the seal. When reading goes with praying and praying goes with reading, then a man goes on both his feet, the bird flies with both his wings! To only read is unprofitable—to pray without reading is not so soul-enriching, but when the two run together, they are like the horses pulling the chariot and they speed along right merrily!  
Read and pray Christian! But take care you do not read without watering your reading with your prayer. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase! And even in this blessed Book, Moses may plant and David may water, but prayer must cry to God or else the increase will not come! Now in the sixth place—  
VI. READ AND TRY. Try what you hear. Try what you profess. Try what you read. Goldsmiths keep bottles of acid by which they test everything that is offered them for sale, to see whether it is gold or merely tinsel. And the Christian should keep God’s Word near at hand and treasured in the soul, to test thereby all that he hears. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Many hearers believe all that is said because of the person who declares it to them. This is not according to Christ’s mind! We ought to receive nothing as vital religious truth except it is sent us from above! And however much we may respect the pastor or the teacher, we must not so give up our judgment to any man as to receive his teaching merely because he chooses to utter it. Bring every form of the Truth of God that is delivered to you, though it may glitter with oratory and seem reasonable and proper, to the test of Scripture! It is very difficult, however, to get men to do this. They seem to fancy that you have sinister motives the moment you tell them so. There is a conservatism in the nature of us all with regard to our religious faith which is right enough if it were balanced by another principle. To hold fast what I know is right, but to be willing to receive or to do anything that God would teach me to receive or do is more right still. I must know what it is to which I hold fast, or else I may be injuring myself by the fixedness by which I stand to what I have learned. The woman of Samaria said, “Our fathers worshipped God in this mountain.” That is the argument of numbers of persons. “Our fathers did so-and-so.” This would be a capital argument supposing that our fathers were always right, but a very absurd argument supposing that they were wrong! I hope we are not like that early Saxon who asked where his father and all his ancestors had gone— and when he was told they were no doubt lost—he replied to the missionary that he would rather go where they were than become a Christian and be separated from them!  
There are some who seem to be of this blood and boast in it. Their ancestors believed this or that, and they desire to follow them. Many there are who profess doctrines they have never learned and which they do not really know and grasp. They have the shell but they never reach the kernel. Is not this the case with many of us here tonight? If you even have a Doctrine of God in your mind, find out the text or texts which prove it! If there should happen to be other texts which seem to point the other way, do not cut and pare any of them down, but accept all and wait until the Spirit reveals wherein they really agree! Scripture is not to fit your opinions, but your opinions to conform to the blessed Word! There is a fable of a foolish gardener who had a tree that would persist in growing oddly. He did not like to restrain it and, therefore, had a wall built for it to grow upon. I think the man was far wiser who let the wall alone and changed the tree! There are people who are very apt to alter Scripture to suit their views, pulling out one word until it is never so long, dropping another, or completely changing the meaning of it, though everybody knows that it is the forced and unnatural one, or else tinkering up a text till it will fit some crank or peculiarity of theirs. This is not reverence! It is not treating God’s Word as it ought to be treated. God’s Word is no nose of wax to be shaped according to our fancies—or anybody else’s. Though nobody else should say what he means, God always does. He would not have us talk in language that is capable of half-a-dozen meanings—and He does not talk so Himself. He speaks so plainly that if we are candid and desire to know what He means, it is not difficult to do so, especially if we go to Him for it. Let us, then, take this advice and try the spirits whether they are of God and, like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures whether these things are so—and so read the Scriptures and try what we read.  
And, lastly, the text is significantly followed by, “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation.” I will, therefore, say in the seventh place—  
VII. READ AND TELL OUT what you read.  
This will be an effectual way of imprinting it upon your own memory. When you read a passage of Scripture and have any enjoyment therein, go to your sick neighbor and tell what God has said to you. If you meet an ignorant one when you know somewhat of the things of God, tell them to him. Nations are enriched by the interchanges of commerce and so are Christians! We each have something that another has not and he has something that we need. Let us trade together. “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another,” and it is very good that they should do so. Our talk is, alas, too often very frivolous—there is much chaff but little wheat. If we would but talk more of Scripture and establish it as a fashion among Christians, we would grow much faster and stronger, and be wiser in the things the Kingdom.  
I know one who, when he was a young man, read all day until evening came and then went every evening and preached. The preaching in the evening of what he had read during the day stamped and fastened the Truths of God upon his own mind and made them unspeakably profitable to him! When you have read for an hour or so, spend another halfhour in communicating to a child, or a servant, or a seeker, or to some bed-ridden saint the thing that has enriched and helped you.  
How I would press this upon you, everyone, my dear Brothers and Sisters, who are members of this Church. We owe very many of the conversions that have been worked here to the personal exertions of our Church members. God owns our ministry, but He also owns yours. It is to our delight at Church Meetings that when converts come, they often have to say that the Word preached from the pulpit was blessed to them, and yet I think that almost as often they say it was the Word of God spoken in some of the classes, or in the pews—for not a few of you have been spiritual parents to strangers who have dropped in! Continue doing this! Let our congregation be full of these spiritual sharpshooters who shall pick out, each man his man, and who shall fire with the gun of the Gospel directly at each individual!  
Of course, if you know nothing, you can tell nothing. If you have never read anything which by the blessing of God has been brought powerfully home to your own soul, do not attempt to speak to others. There must be something begun in your own soul, first, but if you have been brought into personal contact with Divine Truth, let it be the first impulse of your soul to—  
*“Tell to the sinners round  
What a dear Savior you have found.”*  
The woman of Samaria left her water pot and went into the city, and said, “Come, see a Man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?” My Beloved, let us do the same! I do not know a living thing, even a wild flower in the hedge, but seeks to prolong the existence of its species. The foxglove sheds its seeds all down the banks—no matter how tiny the flower may be, it seeks to produce its like. So you, Christian, who are the noblest work of God, should not be satisfied unless your life is a continually spreading around of the Truth of God which has been made vital to you and will be new life to others!  
What a grand crown and close to this night’s service it would be could we be used of God to bring a soul from darkness to light, and from slavery to liberty! We cannot do it of ourselves, but God may help us. Would you not walk a mile, yes, many miles to do it? Well, you need not walk miles! It is quite possible that the very person who, as it were by chance, is sitting next to you tonight, is the person whom God has predestinated to be blessed and to be blessed by you! At any rate, try it. There shall be nothing lost, there may be much gained. Why has God taught the Truth to you? For your own good? Yes, but you are not to be selfish! Be you, at least, as unselfish as the three lepers who, when they found the Syrian camp deserted and an abundance of gold and silver, said, “We do not well to stay here. This is a day of good tidings; let us go in the city and tell.” Dear Friend, you do not well if you read only for yourself! Having read, go out and tell what you have read, and the blessing shall come into your own bosom, even if it goes not out to others! And you shall be blessed and God shall be glorified!  
I would press this, in conclusion, upon some of you who are not converted. Often men have come to Christ by reading the Scriptures. Attend upon a preached ministry, but do also read and search the Scriptures. I recollect when I was seeking Christ. I read Doddridge’s Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, but the book muddled me much, though it is a very admirable book in some respects. Then I read Alleine’s Alarm, and then Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted, and all these only plowed my heart more and more. But the comfort which I got came out of God’s Word. It was from that precious text, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth.” Then I got light! Turn you away from all human books to the Divine Book, and from all human helpers to Him upon whom help is laid and who is mighty to save! Read God’s love in the Book of Atonement upon the Cross, written in the crimson lines of the Savior’s flowing blood and streaming veins! Look to Christ and trust in Him, and you shall live! May God bless you for Jesus’ sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *Psa 119:105-115***.**

Verse 105. Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. We are walkers through the city of this world and we are often called to go out into its darkness—let us never venture there without the lightgiving Word of God, lest we slip. Each man should use the Word of God personally, practically and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the Word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. We would not know the way, or how to walk in it, if Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it. It is a lamp by night, a light by day and a delight at all times! David guided his own steps by it and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams.

106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments. Under the influence of the clear light of knowledge he had firmly made up his mind and solemnly declared his resolve in the sight of God. Perhaps mistrusting his own fickle mind, he had pledged himself in sacred form to abide faithful to the determinations and decisions of his God. Whatever path might open before him, he was sworn to follow that only upon which the lamp of the Word of God was shining.

107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your Word. According to the last verse he had been sworn in as a soldier of the Lord, and in this next verse he is called to suffer hardness in that capacity. Our service of the Lord does not screen us from trial, but rather secures it for us! The Psalmist was a consecrated man and yet a chastened man. Quickening is the best remedy for tribulation—the soul is raised above the thought of present distress and is filled with that holy joy which attends all vigorous spiritual life—and so the affliction grows light.

108. Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your judgments. He offers prayer, praise, confession and testimony—these, presented with his voice in the presence of an audience—were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. He trembles lest these should be so ill-uttered as to displease the Lord and, therefore, he implores acceptance. When we render unto the Lord our best, we become all the more concerned to do better. If, indeed, the Lord shall accept us, we then desire to be further instructed that we may be still more acceptable.

109. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Your Law. He lived in the midst of danger. He had to be always fighting for existence— hiding in caves, or contending in battles. This is a very uncomfortable and trying state of affairs, and men are apt to think any expedient justifiable by which they can end such a condition. But David did not turn aside to find safety in sin. They say that all things are fair in love and war—but the holy man thought not so—while he carried his life in his hand, he also carried the Law of God in his heart!

110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts. Spiritual life is the scene of constant danger—the Believer lives with his life in his hand, and meanwhile all seem plotting to take it from him—by cunning if they cannot by violence. We shall not find it an easy thing to live the life of the faithful. Wicked spirits and wicked men will leave no stone unturned for our destruction. David was not snared, for he kept his eyes open and kept near his God.

111. Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. He chose them as his lot, his portion, his estate. And what is more, he laid hold upon them and made them so—taking them into possession and enjoyment. David’s choice is our choice. If we might have our desire, we would desire to keep the commands of God perfectly. To know the Doctrines, to enjoy the promises, to practice the commands—be this a kingdom large enough for me!

112. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even unto the end. He was not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical, persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart, throughout all his time, without erring or ending! He made it his end to keep the Law unto the end and that without end.

113. I hate vain thoughts: but Your Law do I love. The opposite of the fixed and Infallible Law of God is the wavering, changing opinion of men! David had an utter contempt and abhorrence for this—all his reverence and regard went to the sure Word of Testimony. In proportion to his love to the Law was his hate of man’s inventions. The thoughts of men are vanity, but the thoughts of God are Truth.

114. You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word. To his God he ran for shelter from vain thoughts! There he hid himself away from their tormenting intrusions and in solemn silence of the soul he found God to be his hiding place. When called into the world, if he could not be alone with God as his hiding place, he could have the Lord with him as his shield—and by this means he could ward off the attacks of wicked suggestions.

115. Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. If we fly to God from vain thoughts, much more shall we avoid vain men. Evildoers make evil counselors. Those who say unto God, “Depart from us,” ought to hear the immediate echo of their words from the mouths of God’s children, “Depart from us. We cannot eat bread with traitors.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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÷1Ti 5.22

ACCOMPLICES IN SIN  
NO. 3055

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 1873.

**“Neither be partaker of other men’s sins.”***1Ti 5:22***.**

WE have all abundant reason to look at home and see about our own sins. Nothing can be more absurd than for a man to take his hoe and weed everybody else’s garden—and leave all the thorns and thistles to flourish on his own plot. The old parable of the man who carried two bags, one behind and one in front, and who put other people’s faults into the one in front, and his own into the one at his back, is a very correct representation of the folly of those who have their eyes wide open to see the faults of their neighbors, but are totally blind to their own imperfections. If, as our proverb puts it, “Charity begins at home,” so should criticism—and criticism concerning character had better stop there. There is so much dirty linen in our own house needing to be washed that none of us need to take in our neighbor’s washing. “Mind your own business,” is a command that might have been spoken by Solomon, himself, and the Apostle Paul was inspired to write to the Thessalonians, “Study to be quiet and to do your own business.” And he and Peter very sternly condemned those who were “busybodies in other men’s matters.”

So it is not my intention to bid any of you to cease to look to your own affairs, but at the same time, I want to remind you that we cannot, in this world, live altogether to ourselves. He who is most bent upon minding his own business cannot help knowing that his next door neighbor has something to do with his garden. Even if he looks diligently after his own plot, thistle seeds from the left and the right may blow over into his garden and trouble will come to him from the very fact that he has neighbors! Our dwelling places in this life are not all detached— many of us have to live on streets and if our neighbor’s house is on fire, it is not at all unlikely that the flames may spread to our dwelling. Let us never be so concerned about our own interest as to be selfish, for even if we try to be wholly wrapped up in ourselves, we shall be compelled to notice the actions of others with whom we are more or less intimately linked—whether we wish to do so, or not. Hence, the message of the text is necessary, not to take us away from our own duty, but to help us to make sure that we are not “partakers of other men’s sins.”

The connection in which this text stands must be noticed. Timothy was exhorted by Paul to “lay hands suddenly on no man.” There were certain upstarts who wrongly thought that they could preach—and there were others who thought that they could rule in the churches. These persons probably gained a few or many partisans to support their claims. There were some of their relatives in the church who thought a great deal of their sons, or brothers, or uncles, or cousins, or there were friends who heard some man speak on a certain occasion with considerable fluency and, being unwise, they judged him to be man of master-mind and would have put him into the front rank of the army at once if the power to do so had rested with them! Paul tells Timothy, whom he had sent to exercise a general oversight over the officers and members of the church, not to be in a hurry to lay his hands upon these men, so as to endorse their claim, but to let them wait awhile until they were tried and tested—because if he allowed them to take office in the church and they committed faults or follies, he would be responsible for them and everybody would say, “We wonder that Timothy should have sent out such men as these.” So he was bid to be cautious lest he should become, in any way, “a partaker of other men’s sins.” None of us are exactly in Timothy’s position so we are not likely to fall into the fault against which Paul warned him—at least not in precisely the same form. Yet the text has a message to us and we may say to one another, “Be not partakers of other men’s sins.”

I. I shall first try to show you HOW WE CAN BE PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN’S SINS and, in doing that, I am afraid that the various ways in which we can do this will seem to be very many. And that if I am not very careful, you will think that my sermon is like Ezekiel’s valley of vision in which the bones were “very many” and “very dry.” I will not be more wordy than I can help, but at the same time I must deal with the subject somewhat in detail.

As to how we can become accomplices in other people’s sins— the preacher must first say to himself that he will be such a man if he is not true to his trust. If he shall teach false Doctrine, or if, teaching the true Doctrines, he shall teach them erroneously—if he shall keep back unpalatable Truths of God—if he shall allow sin to pass without reproof—if he shall see a great deficiency of spiritual life and service and not point it out—if, in brief, he shall be an unfaithful servant of Christ and his hearers shall thereby be kept in a low state of Divine Grace, inconsistent with their profession—and the unconverted shall be hindered from coming to Christ, he will become a partaker in other men’s sins. Indeed, I know of no man who is more likely to fall into the fault indicated in the text than a minister of the Gospel is! Oh, what Grace we need and what help from on high lest if we fail in faithfulness to God and our hearers, the doom of souls should be laid at our door and we should be partakers of other men’s sins! Brothers and Sisters, pray for us that this may not be our unhappy lot—

*“‘Tis not a cause of small import  
The pastor’s care demands,  
But what might fill an angel’s heart  
And filled a Saviors hands!  
They watch for souls for which the Lord  
Did heavenly bliss forego,  
For souls which must forever live  
In raptures or in woe.  
May they that Jesus, whom they preach,  
Their own Redeemer see—  
And watch YOU daily over their souls,  
That they may watch for THEE.”*

That piece is especially intended for myself and my Brother ministers. The rest of my discourse will be for you as well as myself. So next I must remind you that we can, all of us, be partakers of other men’s sins by willfully joining with them in any act of sin and doing as they do—like those sinners mentioned by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, who said, “Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse.” We must have nothing to do with such men! God forbid that we should! If we sin alone, it is bad enough, but if we sin in company, we have not only to answer for our own sins, but also for the sins of others, at least in part. If hand joins with hand in sin, there is a multiplication of its guilt, for each man who has helped to lead a fellow creature into iniquity will have his own transgression increased by the transgression of that other sinner. By their combination, the two will become capable of even greater guilt than they would have committed individually. God save us all from being accomplices in the sins of others by uniting with them in their sinful acts and deeds!

Further, we may be partakers in other men’s sins by tempting them to sin. This is a most hateful thing and makes the man who practices it to become the devil’s most devoted drudge, servant and slave. I have known such tempters of others—old men who, from their youth up, had sinned in such a shameful way that their very looks were full of lechery. There was a leer about their eyes that was almost enough to destroy all chastity that came beneath their glance. And their speech was full of the double entendre, insinuations and innuendoes which were almost worse than open profanity. I have known one such walking mass of putrefaction defile a whole parish—and when I have seen a boy walking with such a demon incarnate, or sitting down with him in the public-house, I knew that the boy’s character would be ruined if that vile doctor in devilry could only instruct him in the vices with which he is, himself, so shamefully familiar. There are such fiends in London and we could almost wish to have them all buried straightaway, for they are Satan’s servants spreading wickedness all around them! I do not suppose I am addressing one such dreadful creature, yet I know that some great sinners of that sort do come within these walls and they will, of course, be very angry because of my allusion to them. Yet I never knew a thief who was fond of a policemen and I do not expect or wish to secure the approval of scoundrels whose evil character I am exposing. If, Sir, I have described you and you will not repent of your sin, I tell you that the hottest place in Hell is reserved for you, for you have led young men to the alehouse and taught them to drink the devil’s drugs and to repeat your foul blasphemies and to imitate your scandalous lasciviousness! Yet before it is too late, I beseech you to repent of your sin, that it may be blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, which cleanses from all sin! But if not, “other men’s sins” will cry out against you for judgment at the bar of the Almighty! I solemnly charge all of you who have not committed this iniquity, to never do so—take care that you never say a word which might stain the innocence of a child’s mind and that you never let fall an expression which might, in any way, be the means of leading another person into sin—for it is an easy thing for us to become partakers of other men’s sins by tempting them to commit iniquity.

If there is any evil worse than that, I think it is that of employing others to sin. It was one of the basest parts of David’s great sin that when he wanted to have Uriah killed, he did not slay him, himself, but got Joab to expose him in a position where he was certain to be killed. It is horrible when a man is determined to be dishonest, yet gets someone else to commit the sin for him! It is a shameful thing that there are professedly “religious” employers who try to get their young men to say across the counter what they know is not according to truth. Are there not some of these so-called “Christian” employers who want young men who are not “too particular”? Do I not hear, every now and then, of young men who have been found to be too scrupulous and who have been told that they had better get situations somewhere else? They objected to describe the goods as their employer wanted them to do because they knew it would be a lie. They were told, “It is the custom in the trade and, therefore, must be so here.” That is to say because other persons were liars and cheats, these young men must be knaves—and their master must make money by their lying to his customers! Now, if I meant to thieve or deceive, I would do it myself—I would not employ young men and women, or old ones either, to lie and cheat for me! If any of you have done so, I pray God that He may lead you to repent of such abominable wickedness, for the sin is not one-half theirs and the other half yours—it is partly theirs, but it is far more yours if they are doing wrong at your bidding! God save us all from being “partakers of other men’s sins” in that way!

Some commit this great crime by driving other men into sin by the fears which they have inspired, or by oppressing them in their wages, or by setting them to do what must involve them in sin. I remember the case of a man who was employed where it was well known that some of the parcels which he collected on his way and carried to their destination would never be booked by him, but the price paid for the carriage would be secretly dropped into his own pocket. The man’s wages were so small that nobody, unless an idiot, ever believed that he lived on them, so, tacitly, the understanding was that the man would be sure to pilfer on his own account, so his wages were cut down below the point at which he could earn an honest living. I fear that there are many men who are dishonest for this reason—I will not excuse them, but I hope that if they are ever sent to prison for stealing, their masters will be sent with them, for they are equally guilty!

Yet again, we may become partakers of the sins of others by a misuse of our position over them. This is especially the case with parents. When a father is a man of loose habits, if his son follows his evil example, who is to blame? If a drunken father sees his child become a drunkard, whose fault is it? If he is a swearer and his son uses profane language, who taught the boy those oaths? Is not the guilt of that swearing largely the father’s? “Oh!” some of you say, “we would not teach our children either drunkenness or profanity.” Yet you are not, yourselves, Christians—you may be moral and truthful, and so on, but you are not Christians. And if your children are not converted, will they not say, “Our father was never converted, so why should we be?” “But we always take them to a place of worship.” I know you do. And your children say, “Father goes to a place of worship, but he does not believe in Christ and he never prays.” So if they grow up in the same way, who is to blame? You say that you trust they will not do so—then ask the Lord to make you a Christian, for then it will be more likely that your children will also be Christians. When you blame your children for wrongdoing, you ought to blame yourselves even more, for after all, what are they doing but what you yourself are doing?

Plato, the philosopher, one day saw a boy in the street behaving in a very shameful manner, so he walked straight into the house where the boy’s father lived and began to beat him. When he said to Plato, “Why do you beat me?” the philosopher replied, “I found your boy doing wrong. I did not beat him, but I beat you, for he must have learned it from you, or else it was your fault because you did not exercise proper discipline upon him at home.” Have you never felt, when you have seen the faults of your own children, that you ought to lay the rod on your own back because, in some way or other, you were an accomplice in your children’s sins? How much of the ruin of many children’s souls lies at their parents’ door! How sad it is that in many cases the influence of the mother and father is damning to their children! Men and women who have boys and girls at home who are very dear to you—can you bear the thought that you may, one day, have to say, “Our unchristian example has ruined our own children”?

“Oh, but we are members of the Church,” say some. Yes, I know you are, yet I speak to you as well as to others, for there are some of you who are bringing up your children in an improper manner. I do not see how they can be expected to love religion when they see your own household ordered so badly, or not ordered at all. The professor of religion who does not live consistently with his profession does more injury to the cause of Christ than a non-professor does! There are some who hang out the sign of, “The Angel,” but the devil keeps the inn! Someone has truly said that many a man’s house is like Noah’s ark in that it is pitched within and without with pitch. There is pitch in the dining-room—gluttony and drunkenness. And pitch in the bed-chamber—lasciviousness and wantonness. Pitch in the drawing-room—talk which is not even fit for the stables. And pitch in the shop, for much that is “dirty” goes on there. How can anyone expect good children to come out of such a house as that? May none of us, like Eli, be accomplices in our children’s sins through neglecting to rebuke them, or like David, through our evil example leading them into sin! On the contrary, let us pray for them, as Abraham cried to the Lord, “O that Ishmael might live before You!” I like to present to God the petitions and pleas which are so well worded in that hymn in “Our Own Hymn Book” which is attributed to Rowland Hill—

*“You, who a tender Parent are,  
Regard a parent’s plea—  
Our offspring, with an anxious heart,  
We now commend to Thee.  
Our children are our greatest care,  
A charge which You have given—  
In all Your Graces let them share,  
And all the joys of Heaven.  
If a centurion could succeed,  
Who for his servant cried,  
Will You refuse to hear us plead  
For those so near allied?  
On us You have bestowed Your Grace,  
Be to our children kind—  
Among Your saints give them a place,  
And leave not one behind.”*

The injunction of the text of course applies, in a measure, to the teacher of a class as well as to the parent of a family. If the teacher is inconsistent and his scholars imitate him, the guilt of their wrong-doing will, at least in part, rest upon the teacher. The same principle applies to all persons who are in positions of influence in the land. If I were preaching to the House of Commons and the House of Lords, I would probably have to say some things which they would not wish to hear again. Certain “honorable gentlemen” and “noble lords” talk very glibly about the necessity for the nation to be religious, yet their lives are not remarkably religious, so their talk is all hypocritical and great sin lies at their door! God will certainly punish princes and so-called “nobles” if their example is not such as the common people can safely follow.

But even though we may not be of royal or exalted rank, all of us will become “partakers of other men’s sins” if we set them bad examples. If they can quote us as having done certain wrong things which they have imitated, we must share in the guilt of their sin. Yet it is always a bad thing to follow a bad example. If I see anyone’s example to be bad, it ought not to be a temptation to me—and I am a partaker of that man’s sins if, knowing that he has done amiss—I also do amiss simply because he has done so first. If I know that his course is wrong, I ought to shun the rock on which his boat has been wrecked.

We can also be “partakers of other men’s sins” by countenancing them and there are many ways in which that may be done—for instance, by associating with ungodly men as though we did not think there was much harm in them. And worst of all, by laughing at and with them when their mirth is not pure fun. I fear that many a wicked man has been hardened in his sin because a professing Christian has laughed at his filthy jests.

We may also be “partakers of other men’s sins” by joining a church that holds unscriptural doctrines, or that does not act according to Apostolic precedent. Some people say, “We belong to such-and-such a church, but we don’t approve of its teaching or its practice.” What? You belong to it and yet you do not approve of its principles? Out of your own mouth you are condemned! If I unite with a church whose creed and catechism I do not believe, and whose ordinances I do not practice, I am guilty of my own share in all the error that is there! It is no use for me to say, “I am trying to undo the mischief”—I have no business to be there! If I join a pirate’s crew, I shall be responsible for all that is done by the whole crew. I have no business to be on that vessel at all and I must get off it at the first opportunity, or even fling myself into the sea rather than have a share in the pirates’ wrongdoing!

But supposing you have joined a church whose doctrines are Scriptural, you may be “partakers of other men’s sins” if the discipline of the church is not carried out as it should be. If we know that members are living in gross sin and do not deal with them either by way of censure or excommunication in accordance with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, we become accomplices in their sin. I often tremble about this matter, for it is no easy task where we count our members by the thousands. But may we never wink at sin, either in ourselves or in others! May you all, Beloved, exercise a jealous oversight over one another and so help to keep one another right! And let each one pray Charles Wesley’s prayer which we have often sung—

*“Quick as the apple of an eye,  
O God, my conscience make!  
Awake, my Soul, when sin is near,  
And keep it still awake.”*

Further, we may be “partakers of other men’s sins” by not rebuking them for sinning if it is our duty to do so, or by not doing all we can towards their conversion. For instance, by living in a certain neighborhood and never trying to bring the Gospel to the people in that neighborhood, or by not maintaining our consistent Christian walk as the separated people of God. In brief, let each one sing, from the heart, the rest of that hymn from which I began to quote just now—

*“I need a principle within  
Of jealous godly fear.  
A sensibility of sin,  
A pain to feel it near!  
I need the first approach to feel  
Of pride, or fond desire  
To catch the wandering of my will,  
And quench the kindling fire.  
That I from You no more may part,  
No more Your goodness grieve—  
The filial awe, the fleshy heart,  
The tender conscience give.  
If to the right or left I stray,  
That moment, Lord, reprove  
And let me weep my life away,  
For having grieved Your love.  
Oh may the least omission pain  
My well-instructed soul  
And drive me to the blood again,  
Which makes the wounded whole!”*

II. I must not say more upon this part of the subject lest I should weary you. So I pass on to ask, in the second place, WHY SHOULD WE SEEK TO AVOID BEING PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN’S SINS?

This will be a sufficient answer— Because we have more than enough sins of our own and cannot also carry other people’s. And also because if we are partakers in their sins, we shall also partake in their plagues. And because we do other men an injury by being accomplices with them—we steel and harden them in their sins. The weightiest reason of all is this— we should not be “partakers of other men’s sins” because, by so doing, we should grieve our holy and gracious God—and no true lover of Christ ought ever to do that! Remember what Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

III. My next question is—HOW CAN WE AVOID BEING PARTAKERS IN OTHER MEN’S SINS?  
And I reply—Only by the help of God’s Spirit! First, be very jealous about other men’s sins. I wish all parents acted as wisely as Job did concerning his children. They went to one another’s houses and feasted, so Job “rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” O parents, do likewise, for that is the way to keep yourselves from participation in your children’s sins!  
Next to being thus jealous with a holy jealousy, be always on the watch lest you should be “partakers in other men’s sins.” The man who wants to avoid certain diseases will take care not to go to an infected house. So, go not where sinners go, lest you should catch the infection of their sin. Remember how careful Abraham was not to take anything from the King of Sodom, “from a thread even to a shoelace,” even though it was his lawful share of the spoils of war. Be you equally careful concerning even the least sin.  
The next way to keep from being an accomplice in sin is by prayer. Augustine used to offer a short prayer which I commend to you all, “O Lord, save me from my other men’s sins!” Put this down among your other confessions, “O Lord, I confess unto you my other men’s sins! I mourn over my other men’s sins, I repent of my other men’s sins, I grieve on account of my participation in other men’s sins.” This will be a good way of keeping from committing them.  
I think I had better close by saying that I do not think we have, any of us, escaped from the meshes of this sermon. If we have done so, it is either my fault or the fault of our own consciences. I have tried to fire red-hot shot in all directions, not omitting myself—and most of us have felt that there was a shot specially meant for us. What had we better do then? I will call to your minds a verse which we often sing and which we will again sing almost immediately—  
*“There is a Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins—  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains!”*  
We are all stained with at least splashes from other men’s sins as well as our own, so let us all go to the Fountain and wash. Let us renew our faith in the precious blood of Jesus, for if we never had any faith in it before, may God graciously grant it to us now! If we had rebelled against the Queen and had been at last subdued by force—and if there had been an Act of Oblivion passed for all who wished to claim an interest in it— perhaps some would say to themselves, “We do not know that we took any great part in the rebellion, yet it may be that we did—and the safest thing for us all to do is to put down our names and so secure the benefit of the Act of Oblivion.” So I, as one of the guilty ones, confessing that it is so, desire to say to the great King, “My Lord, I am guilty of sins of my own, sins of my children, sins of my servants, sins of my neighbors, sins of my Church and sins of my congregation—but You have said, ‘I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.’ You have promised to blot out all sin from those who believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Lord, I believe in Him, so I claim the benefit of that Act of Oblivion.”  
Dear Hearer, will not you say the same? Will you not now obey that Divine command, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth”? Though you have gone to the ends of the earth, yet God says to you, “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” Look! Look! LOOK! It is little that you have to do! Indeed, it is nothing that you have to do, for God gives you Grace to do all that He requires of you. So trust in Him, rest in Him—the Lord help you to do so and then, whatever your sins may have been, though they may have been “as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” Though they may have been “red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” God bless you and save you, for His name’s sake! Amen.  
Now let us all sing the verse that I quoted just now—  
*“There is a Fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins—  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains”—*  
and let all who can sing it from the heart join in the well-known chorus— *“I do believe, I will believe,  
That Jesus died for me!  
That, on the Cross, He shed His blood From sin to set me free!”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **Psalms 73.**

You may have noticed that the 73rd Psalm and the 37th Psalm are on the same subject. It will help you to recall this fact if you remember that the figures are the same, only reversed.

Verse 1. Truly God is good to Israel. Settle that matter in your hearts. Whatever doubts may distress or disturb your mind, fix this point as certain— “Truly God is good to Israel.”

1, 2. Even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped. He was a good man, one of the leaders in Israel, yet he had to make this confession, “My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.”

3, 4. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. Many of them have so stifled conscience that it does not trouble them even in that last dread hour—and they pass into eternity with blinded eyes, self-deluded to the last.

5. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. They are not the children of God—and that is why they escape the rod of God. The rod is not for strangers, but for the children of the family. Yet the Psalmist began to envy these people because, said he, “they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.”

6. Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain. They wear it gladly and think it to be an ornament.  
6-9. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens. As though they would blow them down, as the wind blows the clouds that are full of rain.  
9. And their tongue walks through the earth. Like the ravening lion of the pit, seeking characters that they may destroy or devour. There is no end to the mischief that such people can do. If they are not in trouble, they make much trouble for other people and while they set themselves on so high a pinnacle, they are mean enough to slander the characters of the good.  
10. Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. They have to drink of the bitter cup again and again—it seems to them to be always full. And the wicked have their full cup— filled, as it seems, with the juice from the very finest fruit!

11. And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High? They admit that there is a God, but they ask, “What does He know, and how does He know?”

12-14. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. It was one of his greatest sorrows that the more holy he was, the more troubled he seemed to be—and the more closely he endeavored to follow his God, the more it seemed as if God only frowned upon him. Yet the Psalmist’s was no exceptional case, of which there is only one in all history—there have been many such and there are many such to this day!

15. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of your children. You know that some people have made up a kind of proverb like this, “If you think it, you may as well speak it.” But it is not so. Bad thoughts should never be spoken! If a man has a bottle of whisky in his house, or in his pocket, that is bad enough, but if the cork is never taken out, it will do no very great hurt to anybody. So if a man has evil thoughts but does not utter them, the mischief will not be so great as if he were to make them known to others.

16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. He could not bear the thought of offending God’s children, but at the same time, the problem itself, concerning the righteous and the wicked, until he could solve it, was too painful for him.

17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God. When he went into God’s holy place—when he began to understand God’s purposes and plans and looked beyond the present life into the dreadful future of the ungodly, he could say.

17. Then I understood their end. And understanding their end, his difficulty ceased, his puzzling problem was solved!  
18. Surely You did set them in slippery places. As if they stood upon a ridge of ice from which they must slip down—who wishes to be lifted up upon an Alp of prosperity from which he may be dashed down at any moment? If you knew that there was a man standing on the top of the Cross of St. Paul’s at this moment, I do not suppose that any of you would envy him—certainly I would not. Let him have a patent for standing there and let nobody else ever attempt it. And an ungodly man, in the elevated places of prosperity, is in such a perilous position that we need not envy him.  
18. You cast them down into destruction. Down they go! If not in this life, yet in the next, and who will envy them then?  
19, 20. How they are brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. When a man wakes up, the image that was before his mind, in his dream, is gone. And when God wakes up to judgment, these wicked men who were but as images in a night dream, shall pass away.

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. In the most tender and most vital parts of his being, he felt an inward and terrible pain.

22. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You. Judging as the beast judges that can only see the little grass around itself, and fattens itself, knowing nothing of the shambles and of the butcher’s knife that is being sharpened to kill it there. “So,” says the Psalmist, “I was like that, I forgot about the future, I did not judge as an immortal being should judge concerning the infinite and the eternal, but I judged things as a beast might judge by the narrow compass of its little grazing ground.

23. Nevertheless. This phrase is most delightful, coming in connection with his previous confession, “I was as a beast before you. Nevertheless.”  
23. I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand. That is your portion also, Christian! However few your pounds, however short your supplies, you are continually with God and He holds you by your right hand. Will you envy the ungodly after that?  
24. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. There is where your chief possession lies, locked up in that which is marked, “Afterward.” Not today, possibly not tomorrow, but, “afterward,” is your inheritance! “Afterward You will receive me to Glory.”  
25. Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You. Here is the Christian’s heavenly and earthly portion and treasure. He has his God, both here and hereafter—and this is better than all that can fall to the lot of the worldling!  
26, 27. My flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You. That is, setting their hearts on unlovely things and forgetting to love God.  
28. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works. The Psalm ends jubilantly, as it began, though part of it had been in a minor key.

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

÷1Ti 6.12  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2226 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE!”  
NO. 2226

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 18, 1891,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1891.

**“Lay hold on eternal life.”***1Ti 6:12***.**

PAUL was very anxious about Timothy, his own son in the faith. He loved him greatly and he had much confidence in him, but still he felt that the work of preaching the Gospel was such a responsible undertaking that he could not be too prayerful for him, nor too earnest in exhorting him to continued steadfastness in those things which he had received. So “the old man eloquent,” whose very pen seems to have borrowed some of the burning fervor of his heart, pours out his very soul to young Timothy in the earnest desire that he may find in him a true successor—one who, when Paul is compelled to lay down his trusteeship—will take it up and be faithful to his Lord and to the Gospel when his father in Christ is taken away from him. We cannot be too anxious about our young Brothers who are to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God. Always pray for students! Let them continually be mentioned in your private prayers than when those who have borne the burden and heat of the day shall rest with their fathers, God may raise up better men than they, who shall yet more faithfully proclaim His Word.

This passage of Scripture, “Lay hold on eternal life,” is suggestive from its connection. In the same verse Timothy is told to, “Fight the good fight of faith.” From this it is evident that if he lays hold on eternal life, he will have to fight for it and that if he has to fight, he can only fight by laying hold upon eternal life with a tenacious grip. Every Christian man is a soldier and no man will war a good warfare unless he lays hold upon eternal life with all his heart and soul. A man may fight the battles of earth with the life of earth, but our warfare is of a different kind—“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” With such foes we can only contend successfully when we are made invulnerable by the reception of the life of God within our souls. In a classic story we read of one who was dipped in the river Styx before he went forth to the battle so that the arrows of the foe might fall harmless about him. That fable becomes a fact for us when we “lay hold on eternal life.” The fiery darts of the wicked are quenched by our shield of faith!

The whole chapter forms a sort of preface to the text. Three classes of people seem to have existed in the community where Timothy was called to labor—each with different views of the best method of teaching those around them. First of all, there were some who intermeddled with social politics. They told the slaves that they might conspire against their masters and try to rectify the unquestionable wrongs which existed in that day. Paul desires, as much as anybody could, that injustice should come to an end and especially that slavery should be swept off the face of the earth, as it has largely been by the influence of the Gospel. But, taught of God, and seeing that it was by the proclamation of the Gospel that these evils would be most surely overcome—rather than by any hasty social change—he says to Timothy, “Leave that matter alone. Lay hold on eternal life! You are not sent to cleanse the Augean stable of politics and to set things socially right—let it be sufficient for you to lay hold on eternal life and to call upon the people to do the same. Every man to his own calling and this is yours, “Lay hold on eternal life.” Today many a young preacher and, perhaps some of the older ones, would do well to take heed to this advice of Paul given by the Spirit, for while every real social improvement, based on the principles of right and justice must have the sympathy of all Christian men, depend upon it that, in the long run, the surest way to raise men is to preach the Gospel to them! This will change their character and regenerated lives will soon result in altered social conditions.

Round about Timothy, too, there buzzed a set of men full of questions and difficulties—and discoveries of a false science which Paul calls, “profane and vain babblings.” These were in a most unhealthy state, “sick about questionings and disputes of words,” as the Apostle’s language in verse four may be literally rendered. Concerning such, he says to Timothy, “Do not answer such wrangling of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the Truth of God. Do not worry yourself about them! Let the bees or the wasps buzz as much as they like. As for you, lay hold on eternal life! Stick to your business. Go in for the one thing for which God has called you, the glorious work of saving souls! Let those who like such questions fight them out to the bitter end, but, as for you, lay hold on eternal life!”

Then Paul had noticed that, at Ephesus, there were certain men who were striving to be rich. Certain men, even of the members of the Church, who seemed to be sacrificing everything else for gain. They were counting that gain was godliness and that if they could get rich, they really were the better men for it. But Paul says to Timothy, “Leave money alone. Having food and raiment, let us be content. Your hand is not big enough to lay hold of two things. Therefore, since you can only have one, see that it is the vital thing. Lay hold on eternal life!” To use the rough old proverb, “Let the cobbler stick to his last.” “Timothy, stick to your business! Lay hold on eternal life—that is your main concern—‘Whereunto you are also called and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.’”

I like this plain dealing of the Apostle. He seems to say, “Come to the all-important point, Timothy, and stick to it. Let others go in for this, and that, and the other—but as for you, set before yourself the highest aim. Say to them, as I wrote to the Philippians last year from Rome, ‘This one thing I do’—‘Lay hold on eternal life.’”

The great complaint which we have to make against many is that they seem to be looking after the odds and ends, the paraphernalia, the minor affairs of life. They do not seem to aim at this point—eternal life! Is it not so in praying? Is there not much that passes by the name which is not real prayer? We might often say, “Get to the point, Man, and ask of God what you need! Come to real prayer and downright grips with the Angel! Wrestle with Him and prevail!”

Paul seems, also, to hint that there was in the preaching, even in his day, a great deal that was extraneous, ornamental, superfluous—and so he says to young Timothy, “Aim at the center of the target. Go in for this, the main business, first of all—lay hold on eternal life!

How much there is of our prayer which is only language. How much of our praise which is only music! How much there is in our Churches which is something that may have to do with the betterment of the people, but is not salvation, not winning souls for Christ! How much there is of teaching which may be Christian teaching, but is not the teaching of Christ! But here we clearly see that the Apostle focused everything to this one point and brought Timothy to this one thing—that he should “lay hold on eternal life”—and having laid hold on it, himself, should then set it forth before others with such vehemence and strong emphasis that they, also, might be persuaded to lay hold on it and be saved!

Oh, my dear Hearers! What does it matter what I have preached to you unless you get eternal life? What does it matter how I have said this or that to you, unless you have received, at the hand of my Master, that lifegiving stream which shall be in you “a well of water springing up into everlasting life”? With all your getting, I beseech you, get the understanding of the great mystery of godliness and become wise as to the life which is life, indeed!

I am now going to take this exhortation and press it upon each one here present, asking God to bless it. “Lay hold on eternal life.”  
I. First, then, WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE?  
In attempting to answer this question, I remark what should be perfectly obvious—it is a gift of God—the fruit of a Divine operation upon the heart. One of the first works of the Grace of God is to put within us eternal life. No man can create it, either in himself, or in his fellow men. Just as our physical life was bestowed upon us apart from any effort of our own, the Divine life cannot be evolved by any device of man—it must be imparted by the Spirit of God. At first, God created man “and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” And when, in Christ, man becomes a new creation, the work is as wholly and as really God’s. Eternal life is what no man has by nature, for he is dead in sin. No man can earn it, for carnal works cannot purchase a spiritual gift. And if a man toiled for a whole eternity, he would be no nearer the possession of eternal life than when he began.  
That it does not come by effort is clear, for how shall the dead, by any kind of effort, if effort they could make, attain to life? It does not come by outward ceremonies—these could never purchase that which God bestows freely. Yet how natural it is to the proud heart of man to seek to make payment for that which is to be obtained without money and without price! It is strange that men should expect God to take their gift when they refuse to accept His! If they would but remember that all their giving cannot enrich God—that they cannot give Him anything that He does not already possess—it would be quite evident to them that eternal life can come in no other way than by the gift of God! It is foolish to try to fill an already full vessel! It is profane as well as foolish to seek to be saved by giving to God instead of receiving from Him, or by anything we can bring to attempt to buy this eternal life. This is to imitate Simon Magus, to whom Peter said, “Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Neither with money nor with ceremonies can it be purchased. It is purely and solely the gift of God by Jesus Christ. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift”—the free gift—“of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”— *“Life is found alone in Jesus,  
Only there ‘tis offered thee—  
Offered without price or money’  
‘Tis the gift of God sent free!  
Take salvation,  
Take it now and happy be.”*  
This eternal life, given thus freely, is a present possession. “Eternal life” may sometimes be employed to set out the glories of Heaven, but not often—it is a thing possessed here. In the day in which we are regenerated, we receive the first germs of this everlasting life. When we are born again, it is, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.” It is a gift of God, a gift not reserved for the future, but given now, the moment a sinner believes in Christ! One of the first tokens of eternal life being given is the cry of prayer—and then come repentance of sin—and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is eternal life—the gift of God and a present possession. Have you received it? I do not ask you whether you know exactly the day or the hour when you received it, but are you alive unto God with a life you had not by nature, but which has been planted in you by God the Holy Spirit?  
This life is, in fact, the life of God in the soul. The Holy Spirit comes and breathes God’s life into dead men. There is nothing everlasting in itself but God—and there is no life that is everlasting except that which comes from the Everlasting One! The gift of God is not only the gift God gives, but God is the gift that is given! He it is who breathes into us this eternal life which is really Christ living in us! He, Himself, is “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” The Holy Spirit comes and dwells in the man! “We will come to him,” says Christ, “and take up Our abode with him.” The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each in a certain way, comes and dwells within the man—he becomes a Temple of the Holy Spirit and so he is alive unto God.  
Again, eternal life is a life which never dies. We speak very positively here. Eternal life cannot have an end! If it can come to an end by any process, whatever, then it is not eternal! This is as clear as words can make it. The life, then, which God gives to every soul in its regeneration, can never die! Hear these words of Christ—“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” We do not teach that if the life of God in a Believer were to die out, he could, nevertheless, be saved. No Scripture teaches that!  
We teach that if there is the life of God in a man, it is eternal—not only that it is going to be eternal, but that now, in its nature and essence, it is eternal and can be nothing but eternal life and, therefore, can never come to an end! It may be lessened; it may be sick; it may be obscure; but if it is there, since it is eternal life, it cannot come to an end! If it did, it could by no possibility be correctly said to be eternal life at all. Do you see, then, what a blessing is yours if you have received the gift of God? If by Grace you have received life through Jesus Christ, you have a life which will never die, a life which will outlast the sun and moon! You will see this world turned to a black coal. You will see all things expire, but your life and the life of God shall run on forever and ever. Well might Paul urge Timothy and well may we urge you to lay hold on such a life as this. So— *“Take, with rejoicing, from Jesus at once  
The life everlasting He gives!  
And know, with assurance, you never can die, Since Jesus, your righteousness, lives.”*  
Once more, this eternal life is the life that is perfected in Glory. It goes on developing and matures, even in this world, to a very high degree. There is a very great difference between the new-born babe and the fullgrown man and there is a great difference between the Believer who has just received eternal life and that riper saint who has come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. But it is the same life! It is the same life that says, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” which afterwards says, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” It is the same life, but a fuller measure thereof. One is life, the other is life more abundant. As certainly as the eternal life begins, even in the tiniest bud, so will it blossom and become fruitful until it comes to its full perfection in Glory. The life of Believers in Heaven, the life that never sins, the life that is absolute obedience, the life that is undiluted bliss is exactly the same life that is in the Believer right now! The same life that God gave him when he first believed is that with which he beholds the face of God— without a veil between them—as he treads the golden streets of the New Jerusalem!  
This, then, is eternal life—a new principle, a Divine principle, an inexhaustible, unquenchable, immortal principle. He that has it is blessed, indeed, among the sons of men! He that has it not is dead while he lives!  
Having thus considered the nature of this possession, we come back to the question we have already asked —Have we this eternal life? Have we received it as God’s gift? Is it, within our hearts, a lamp burning there, never to be put out? Do we know its present power and reality and have we joy therein? Yes, do we delight ourselves in God, who has brought us out of death into life—out of the region of the Valley of the Shadow of Death into that great light which is the beginning of Heaven, the dawn of the day that shall never end? If we do, let us unitedly lift up our hearts in praise and say, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!” Can we ever cease to adore His name, since He has bestowed such a treasure upon us? But if you have not yet become a possessor of it, I beseech you at this moment to hold out your empty hands and take the gift so freely offered! “And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life, but he that has not the Son of God has not life.”  
II. In the second place, the Apostle tells us to “lay hold on” eternal life. That is the main point of my present discourse. How DO WE LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE? There are degrees in the reception of this life, but happy is the man who fully apprehends that for which he is also “apprehended of Christ Jesus.” The Spirit of God lays hold of us in order that we may lay hold on eternal life! How we are enabled to do this is our present subject for consideration.  
First, if you would grasp this gift, believe in it as true. The very beginning of our hope is when the Lord leads us to believe that there is such a thing as eternal life—and that it is a tangible thing, not a dream or a vision—but a reality to be laid hold of. I certainly believe in the existence of a thing that I can lay hold upon. If “seeing is believing,” laying hold is even a more thorough mode of believing! Believe, then, that there is a higher life than Nature can ever create. If unconverted, you do not know anything about this in your own experience, but there is such a thing. There is life in Christ which He can give you. There is life by the Holy Spirit which He can work in you. He can strip you of those grave clothes of sin and raise you from your tomb. The words which Christ once addressed to Martha still sound in our ears—“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”  
Answer this question of my Master, “Do you believe this?” If you do, there is hope that you shall yet be a partaker of His Grace. Nothing can hinder when He begins to work! Though you feel as if you did not feel at all. Though you seem paralyzed and unable to repent or to believe—this life shall be given to you and it shall be given to you now if you look unto Him who was lifted up upon the Cross, that, “whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”  
Believe, my Brothers and Sisters, you that have this eternal life, in the power and reality of it! And whenever Satan tempts you to think that it is a fiction, a dream, a piece of enthusiasm, an idea born of fanaticism— resist him by the plain testimony of the Word of God—and the abundant witness of those who have gone before you, rejoicing in the power of it! Every child of God has times when he questions himself, but he can still truly say, “I am not what I used to be. I have feelings both of pain and joy that come not of the old life, but of the new, which has come to me by God’s gracious gift.”—  
*“Lord, I was dead. I could not stir  
My lifeless soul to come to Thee!  
But now, since You have quickened me,  
I rise from sin’s dark sepulcher.”*  
If any of you have not yet experienced such a change, begin, as I have told you, by believing that there is such a thing as eternal life. I wish that you who have not yet obtained this blessing would make a point of regularly attending some place where the Gospel is preached, saying, “It is to be had and I will have it. It is to be had by faith. ‘Faith comes by hearing.’ I will be an earnest hearer! ‘Hearing comes by the Word of God.’ I will take care to read and hear only the Word of God, so that faith may come to me and life may come by faith, for there is such a thing as receiving a new and spiritual life that shall make me far other than by nature I am. I believe it is true.” That is the first way of laying hold.  
But you do not lay hold of a thing by simply believing that there is such a thing! You must go farther. Appropriate it. There is a book and I believe that it is there, but if anybody told me that it was a present for me and said, “All that you have to do in order to have it is to lay hold upon it,” I should understand that he meant not only that I was to believe in its existence, but that I was to take it up and carry it home with me. That is how you are to “lay hold on eternal life.” Strange as it is, this is a thing which, though it is so simple, we cannot make awakened sinners understand! That eternal life is God’s free gift put within their reach and that they are to take hold of it for their own salvation seems harder for some to grasp than if it were the most intricate puzzle! Yet this is, perhaps, the clearest aspect of the great matter of salvation.  
It was Dr. Chalmers, I think, who used to say that he had no such comfort in the Gospel as when he viewed it as a simple offer on the one side, and a simple acceptance on the other. God gives—and we take! The Lord who has been chastening you, making you feel your sinnership and showing you that you are condemned and only fit to die, now says, “Lay hold on eternal life. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Him to be yours. Accept Him as your Substitute, bearing the death justly your due and, having given His life for you, now giving it to you. Make the exchange! Christ took your death—take His life! He bore your evil—take His good! Appropriate it. Lay hold on eternal life.” When people are sinking in the water and there is a life buoy or a rope near, they do not need much exhorting to lay hold upon it, nor any elaborate explanation of the way! They simply grip anything that gives them half a hope of being saved from the devouring

deep. Now, Soul, you are not to bring anything with you. That would be to fill your hands and then you could not lay hold of anything else! You are to come empty-handed, just as you are, to Christ, who is set before you. Be bold enough to take Him and let Him be yours! You need no worthiness. How could you be worthy of Him? He gives Himself freely to your unworthiness and sinnership! Confess these and lay hold on eternal life—appropriate it to yourself.  
The exhortation means more than that, however. Having appropriated it, keep it. Hold to it and never let it go. Hide it in your heart as a choice treasure and, if any would rob you of it, or frown you out of it, or laugh at you because you prize so highly what they so lightly esteem, lay hold on it still more! This is the work of the Grace of God which enables you, first, to take and then to keep it! Oh, what efforts will be made from within and from without to get you to give up eternal life! But here comes, in the exhortation, “Cling to it. Hold fast by it constantly. As with a death grip, grasp it with new energy. If you have held it with one hand, hold it with both hands. Yet more and more lay hold on eternal life.”  
And then, furthermore, keep yourself upon it. According to the text, you have to “Fight the good fight of faith.” Every now and then you will get an ugly knock, a bruise, a bleeding wound from your enemy. What are you to do? Always lay hold on eternal life, again, and it will strengthen you, stanch your wounds and make you, once more, strong in the day of battle. I would have you think much of this. If you believe in Christ, there is a life within you, like the life of God, which will never die—a life within you which will bring you to stand before the glorious Throne of Christ, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Do not, therefore, ever give up hope! Do not be staggered by what you may have to suffer here. In the midst of all the agony of the way, keep your heart upon God and upon the gift He has given you. “Lay hold on eternal life.” If between here and Heaven you could be burned as a martyr every day, it would be worth your while to bear it, laying hold on eternal life—  
*“The King above in beauty,  
Without a veil is seen!  
It were a well-spent journey,  
Though ten deaths lay between.”*  
If between here and Heaven you had nothing to bear but the cruelty of men and the unkindness of the enemies of Christ, you should bear it right manfully, and even joyfully, because you can say, “I know in myself that I have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance. Even here I have a life which the world did not give me and cannot take from me—therefore I hold to it, still, and I comfort myself with this sweet thought, that it is mine, the gift of God to me! It bears me up amid seas of grief. ‘My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.’”  
Further, I think that the Apostle, by the exhortation, “Lay hold on eternal life,” meant, let other things go. Here is a Brother, lately converted, who has been accustomed to keep his shop open on Sundays. He lives in a street where the best business is to be done on that day and if he closes his shop he will very likely be a great loser. What should he do? I thank God that the man has not asked anybody what he should do—he has done the right thing and trusted in his God! The Apostle seems to say, “Let anything else go, let everything else go, but lay hold on eternal life. Hold to that.” “Oh, but I should lose a living!” Yes, but if you lost a living and saved your life, what would you lose? Have you ever heard of the one who had a bag of gold on board a ship coming home from Australia? The ship was sinking and he went down to his cabin, put as much gold as he could into a belt, and then fastened the belt around his waist. When he leaped for the boat and missed it, it was not possible to pick him up, for he sank with the weight of his own gold round his loins! There was no hope for him—his treasure was his ruin!  
And many a man, in like manner, is, by all his toil, but preparing sure destruction for himself—toiling and working hard only that he may effectually ruin his own soul! Let these things go. “For what is a man advantaged if he gains the whole world and loses himself, or is cast away?” Even for the fleeting life of the body, a man will sacrifice all, thankful if he can get out of the burning house alive, though all his worldly goods are destroyed—glad to escape from the hands of the brigands, though they strip him of every possession. “All that a man has will he give for his life.” If this is wise for a transient life, how much more for the life which is eternal! We shall be gainers by losing everything, if by the loss we gain everlasting bliss! Let all that opposes go—friends, kindred, comfort, this present life— let them all go if, by the sacrifice, we may more firmly lay hold on eternal life! To keep that—and hold fast to it amidst the stress of temptation—is the main business of the Christian man! “Lay hold on eternal life.”  
And it means, in my text, more than that. Fight, and as you fight, lay hold upon the victory. While you are running for Heaven, often anticipate the joys of Heaven. I think you and I do not go to Heaven often enough. “Well” says one, “I thought we should go there when we died.” Yes, if you are a Believer in Christ, that is secure, but why not go there now? The Christian’s position is unique—he is in two worlds at once! Our Lord has quickened us, “and has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ.” Do you not know that the lower ends of all the streets of Heaven are near here? Victory—that is Heaven! Well, we even now overcome through the blood of the Lamb! Peace with God—that is Heaven! And at this moment, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God.” Holiness—that is Heaven! Yes, but we are made holy, now, by the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts. Communion with God—that is Heaven! But even today, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”  
Is it not good, sometimes, to sit down and anticipate the day when you will come into your inheritance? You have heard of the young prince, who, when his father wakened one morning, was found putting on the king’s crown. It was awkward in his case, but your Father will not object to your often putting on your crown! Try it and see how it fits. You will have a new song to sing—begin to sing it here! You will have holy work to do—“They serve God day and night in His Temple”—serve Him here! Christ is to dwell among us in Heaven—let us know that He dwells among us here! I like that verse of our hymn—  
*“I would begin the music here,  
And so my soul should rise!  
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear  
My passions to the skies!”*  
It was said of an old Puritan that Heaven was in him before he was in Heaven. That is necessary for all of us—we must have Heaven in us before we got to Heaven. If we do not get to Heaven before we die, we shall never get there afterwards. An old Scotchman was asked whether he ever expected to get to Heaven. “Why, Man, I live there,” was his quaint reply. Let us all live in those spiritual things which are the essential features of Heaven! Often go there before you go to stay there! If you come down tomorrow morning, knowing and realizing that Heaven is yours, and that you will soon be there, those children will not worry you half so much! When you go out to your business or to your work, you will not be half so discontent when you know that this is not your rest, but that you have a rest on the eternal hills where your heart has already gone—and that there your portion is in the everlasting dwellings! “Lay hold on eternal life.” Get a hold of it now! It is a thing of the future and it is a thing of the present—and even your part of it that is future can be, by faith, so realized and grasped as to be actually enjoyed while you are yet here. “Lay hold on eternal life.”  
I have not explained my text so fully or so clearly as I could wish. The life of which it speaks is beyond all language, but if you will obey the exhortation of the text, that will be the best exposition of it. Let him that has not this eternal life believe that it is to be had. Let the man whose heart aches for it, grasp it and appropriate it now—he need not be afraid that he will be repelled! Let him that has it, hold it fast as a jewel for which, sooner than part with it, he would sell house and home! Let him that has it, enjoy it even now. God help you in this manner to “lay hold on eternal life”!  
III. Now I have to finish with just a special word. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE THAT OUGHT CHIEFLY TO LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE?  
First, those who are called. This is the reason the Apostle gives to Timothy—“whereunto you are also called.” Beloved, there are some of you that have been called. A boy, who had come upon an errand, stood at my window this afternoon. Suddenly he ran away and I thought, “What made him go?” I found out that though I had not heard the voice, someone had called him and, therefore, he was gone. Imitate that boy! Go about this world as men who have been called by a voice that nobody has heard but you! Has God called you to Himself? He means you to come away from your old self and cease to live the old life—He would have you lay hold on eternal life! God never singles us out in this way unless He means to bless us! He never says, “Seek you My face,” in vain! Has God called you out from among men? Do you feel what your parents and friends at home do not feel? Is there a call to you like that call, “Samuel, Samuel,” and have you responded, “Here I am, for You did call me. Speak, for Your servant hears”? Oh, if God has favored you with a special and effectual call, then lay hold on eternal life with your whole heart and soul—and never let it go! Come what may, resolve that you will hold to this gift of God in life, in death and throughout eternity!  
Next, those who have confessed Christ ought especially to lay hold on eternal life—“whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Timothy had been baptized and probably there had been a great number of persons to encourage or watch him as he came forward to confess Christ. This, then, was a double reason why he should hold fast that on which he had laid hold. O you that have named the name of Christ and have put Him on by that wonderful symbol of death and burial and resurrection, “Lay hold on eternal life.” Do not play at Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Let these be stern, no, sweet realities to you! Lay hold, not only on the symbol, but on what the symbol means! Have you been “Buried with Him by baptism into death”? Then grasp the soul of the symbol. It is not a mere empty form, or only the badge of a sect, but a picture of the end of the old life of the flesh dying to the world and sin, that we may rise in “newness of life” to walk before God in the land of the living! Of all men, he who has been baptized should “lay hold on eternal life,” for, in proportion as his Baptism is true, he has no other life to lay hold of, having died and been buried with Christ!  
Then, also, we come to His Table and there we eat His flesh and drink His blood after a spiritual sort, receiving not merely bread and wine as memorials, but Himself, by faith, into our hearts! “Lay hold on eternal life,” for profession without eternal life is a fearful mockery. Without eternal life, to come to the Lord’s Supper will be to eat and drink condemnation to yourself, not discerning the Lord’s body! You that have professed Him before many witnesses, “Lay hold on eternal life.”  
And, especially do I say this to those who have been consecrated, like Timothy, to the service of the Christian ministry. You that have been permitted in any way, even in the Sunday school, to speak of Christ to children. You to whom the Lord has committed His Gospel, that you may impart it to others, “Lay hold on eternal life.” You will never do much in this work unless you have eternal life within your own soul. See to that first. A dead preacher—what is he but a mocker of dead souls? A dead teacher— what can she teach? A dead instructor of a Bible class—how shall the Word of Life have free course and be glorified? A blind man teaching about colors, or a dumb man teaching music is not more out of place than a man without eternal life trying to tell out the Gospel! What can he do? “Lay hold on eternal life,” or else quit this false position lest, when the Lord comes, He should say to you, “What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?” Ah, I am speaking to myself, now, and I will take it home. Will you also open your heart to whatever in the sermon belongs to you? And when it is done and my voice is silent to your ears, I pray that you may hear, for many a day, a gentle whisper saying to you, “Lay hold on eternal life.”  
You, poor Sinner, as you go after your follies and amusements, may the call, “Lay hold on eternal life,” come to you until you shall obey it and quit such trifles! And you, Christian, when you get into the world and are tempted to make gain by sin, while you will suffer loss by righteousness, may you hear a voice say, “Lay hold on eternal life”! And any of you who get the “cold shoulder” and the rough side of men’s tongues, when you begin to think that you cannot bear it, may you hear the voice saying, again, “Lay hold on eternal life.” Cling to that, for God, for Christ, for eternity, for Heaven! The eternal life is the only life worth living! God help you to live for it always and, if you do, it will be of His own Grace—and to Him shall be all the Glory, forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Timothy 6.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—567, 435, 538.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:  
The following letter from MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle, will give the readers of his sermons the latest available information concerning him—

Eastbourne, October 10, 1891. “Dear Friends—I was rightly directed to this place, for I have found a measure of appetite and feel much better. I think I shall soon be able to reach a warmer climate. This is the great desire of my doctor. The deaths of others cause anxiety about a chill, especially as I have lost one skin and the new one is exceedingly tender and would feel the influence of cold most readily. However, I am in those hands which control temperature and everything else! I am, indeed, happy in being borne up by the prayers of saints as by the hands of angels. I am relieved of great anxiety by the Lord’s plainly directing me to secure DR. PIERSON to fill the pulpit during my absence. He is a man after my own heart and a great winner of souls. He will not aim at anything but the Glory of God. He begs that the whole Church will grant him the aid of their united prayers and efforts. He is just now leaving America and will be ready to preach October 25, if the Lord wills. I shall be among you as soon as I feel that it would be right and wise—and then he will be ready to return to his own land. He has set aside everything to serve us. I was guided to him at the same moment that he was led of God to think of helping me.

“May our Lord be with you and grant you, each one, His Presence, power and peace! Oh, that many might yield to Jesus, now, that all may see that the Lord saves by every instrument! When MR. NEWMAN HALL bids sinners, ‘Come to Jesus,’ may the Holy Spirit draw them and the same in the evening! May you have a glorious day! MRS. SPURGEON’S company here makes me feel very happy, but when shall I meet with all the companions of my nearly 40 years’ service and feel that each one adds to my joy?  
“Yours very heartily,  
*C. H. SPURGEON.”*

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ETERNAL LIFE WITHIN PRESENT GRASP  
NO. 1946

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Lay hold on eternal life.”***1Ti 6:12***.**

**“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”***1Ti 6:19***.**

“LAY hold on eternal life.” Observe that this precept is preceded by another—“Fight the good fight of faith.” Those who lay hold on eternal life will have to fight for it. The way of the spiritual life is no easy one—we shall have to contest every step of the way along which it leads us. “Contest the good contest of the faith” would be an accurate rendering of the passage and a contest it is against the world, the flesh and the devil! If we live unto God, we shall need to war a daily warfare and tread down the powers of death and Hell.

We fight the good fight by firm faith in the Lord our God—“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith.” That fight is the fight of faith, fought for the faith and by the faith. The article should be inserted and then the words are—“Fight the good fight of the faith.” “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” “Hold fast the form of sound words.” It is worth fighting for, even if we come to resistance unto blood! He who dies for the faith has laid down his life in a worthy cause and he shall find it unto life eternal. We can only hope that we shall be able to live unto God by faith in Him and faith in the great Truths which He has revealed to be the object of our faith. When I say unto you, “Lay hold on eternal life,” do not imagine that this is to be done in a dream, or accomplished without awakening your utmost energies, nor even then without that Divine assistance which only faith can receive.

As my text follows the command to “fight the good fight of the faith,” it teaches us that the best way of contending for the faith is for ourselves, personally, to lay hold on eternal life. You cannot defend the faith by mere reasoning—victory does not come through an array of arguments which have been, before, used by men of learning—you must, yourself, possess the inward life and exhibit the force and power of it in your daily conduct if you would be successful in the holy war. Men who forget the Divine Life soon cast away the Divine Truth. If the life is not in us, we may make what profession of orthodoxy we like, but we shall, in all probability, before long, turn aside like others, unto crooked ways. Well are the two commands joined together—“Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on eternal life.” It reminds me of our Lord’s words, “I am the way, the truth and the life.”

My Brothers and Sisters, there is a higher and a better life than that which is known to the most of men. There is an animal life which all possess; there is a mental life which lifts us up above the beasts, but there is another life as much above the mental life as the mental life is above the mere animal life! The bulk of men are not aware of this and when they are told of it, they do not believe the statement. Men whom they would believe upon any other subject—honest and true men—are, nevertheless, regarded as a sort of madmen when they begin to talk about a spiritual life. How should the carnal mind discern that which is spiritual? it can only be spiritually discerned. But there is such a life, as many of us assuredly know, and this is the eternal life which we are bid to lay hold upon. The life of Heaven is none other than the Divine Life which God’s Grace imparts to Believers here below—only it is developed and brought to perfection. There is no jerk to the Believer in death—his line of life is unbroken. There is a change in his condition, for he drops this mortal body and those tendencies to sin which cling to it, but the same life is in him, in the body or out of it, unclothed or clothed. His life is the same day, only here it is the dawn, but in Glory it is full moon. His life is one and flows on like a river, widening and deepening until, at last, it swells into a sea of joyous, perfected life in Heaven!

Dream not that any of you will ever obtain eternal life hereafter unless you receive it in this life. Unless you are partakers of it now, tremble for the consequences! Where death finds you, eternity will leave you. Thus I read the Word of God. Let others read as they may. The only laying hold on eternal life that can be practiced by us must be commenced now—it is now brought to light by Christ Jesus in the everlasting Gospel—beware how you put it from you. Grip it now; lay hold of it now and hold on to it at all hazards! Do my expressions sound strange? Let me remind you of that exhortation of Holy Scripture—“Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” Once obtained, we may rest assured that this life will not be wrenched from us in the pangs of departure from the body nor in the Day of Judgment, nor throughout eternity! “Lay hold on eternal life.” I would dwell upon this precept, entreating the aid of the Holy Spirit that I may speak of this true life in a living and true manner.

I. “Lay hold on eternal life,” that is, BELIEVE IN IT. You cannot lay hold on it unless you know it to be a reality. We do not lay hold on shadows, or fictions, or fancies—there must be something substantial and tangible for us to lay hold upon. It is necessary, therefore, to begin by a realizing faith.

That we may believe in this life, let me say that Holy Scripture constantly describes men unrenewed by Divine Grace as being dead—they are “dead in trespasses and sins.” They “shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.” The natural life of fallen men, though it is cultivated to the highest degree so that they become sages and philosophers, is, nevertheless, nothing better than death as compared with the inner life which is called eternal. The life which you possess today, if you are ungodly men, will be taken from you. How suddenly none of us can guess! In this very house we have lately had a solemn reminder of our mortality. But if God gives to you the new life, if there is infused into you the Divine Life, it is eternal—a living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. It is the life of Christ in you—the sap of the undying vine flowing into the branches! Without this heavenly quickening you are dead while you live and as the tendency of death is to corruption, you will grow more and more sinful. Men who are dead in trespasses and sins, by-and-by proceed to a further stage—and frequently become so corrupt that society itself cries out, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” Without the quickening Spirit you will remain in spiritual death forever.

The Scripture represents Believers everywhere as possessing everlasting life. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” Our death in sin has passed away when we have believed in Christ. That first look of the spiritual eyes is sure proof that we possess within us the life of God and, henceforth, we are so linked with Jesus that because He lives, we shall live, also. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in Glory.”

This life is produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit within the heart . The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” It is by the new life worked of the Spirit that we enter the Kingdom. The infusion of the new life is the new birth and the entrance into the Kingdom. We are created anew in Christ Jesus, or, to use another expression, we are quickened and raised from among the dead! Beloved Hearers, do you know this change by personal experience? I know that many here present have passed from death unto life and I rejoice with them in Christ Jesus.

What a difference this quickening has made to those who have received it! What a marvelous life it is! It brings with it new perceptions, new emotions, new desires. It has new senses—there are new eyes with which we see the invisible; new ears with which we hear the voice of God, before inaudible! Then we have a new touch with which we lay hold on Divine Truths of God. Then we have a new taste so that we “taste and see that the Lord is good.” This new life ushers us into a new world and gives us new relationships and new privileges. The Lord Jesus, who makes all things new, sits upon the throne of the soul and is the center of new power and rule. Do you know this life? Some of us confidently bear witness of this life—but what does this avail to dead men? There is no change that can be comparable to that which is worked in men when they are quickened by the infusion of the Divine Life—it is as though the dead left their graves and much more than that!

The new life is a life of reconciliation. The possessor of it is at peace with God. We are no longer enemies, but friends of God; no longer heirs of wrath, but children of the Most High. The spirit of adoption within us cries, “Abba, Father.” We delight ourselves in God who becomes the spring of all our joys, the light of our delights. This delight in God draws us nearer and nearer to him in communion and fellowship—and this fellowship with God begets a new character in us like that of God. We are changed into the image of Him in whom we live and with whom we have communion! The new life has about it a spirituality, an elevation and a purity which are never found anywhere else. Under its power the man loves the things which are akin to the life of God and he enters into sympathy with God. The spiritual life has instinctive aspirations after holiness, even as the old natural life has desires after evil. It has new pains and new passions; new joys and griefs. A heavenly fire burns upon the altar of the renewed soul which will utterly consume all that is contrary to holiness. As our God is a consuming fire, so is the life of God within the soul of man—ultimately it will destroy, by the spirit of burning—all the accumulated mass of original and acquired sinfulness. Much of smoke may blind our eyes and make us weep during the process, but the end is beyond measure to be desired. Do we know this life? Does God live in us? Are our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit? If not, since the Lord lives, we can never see His face till we live. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living—and only those that live unto Him in Christ Jesus can be in communion with Him.

I scarcely need to tell you that this life is one of high enjoyment. Truly it is a life of battle and of strife against the old death, but the life itself is as peaceable as it is pure. The spiritual life has in it all the elements of Heaven. There is a fullness of joy about it, inasmuch as it brings us into communion with the Ever-Blessed One. On high days and holy days some of us have said, as a dear Sister said to me last Thursday night, “I am happy as God, Himself, can make me.” We can say, “God, my exceeding joy.” The Lord’s visits fill us with such calm content and overflowing peace that we rejoice with joy unspeakable. Those who know this happiness may truthfully be said to live—but those who know it not have missed “the life which is life, indeed.”

I want you all to get this idea into your heads—I mean all of you who have not learned this fact as yet—there is a life superior to that of common men! There is a life eternal, to be enjoyed here and now! I want this idea to become a practical force with you. Stephenson got the notion of a steam engine into his brain and the steam engine soon became an actual fact with him. Palissy, the potter, had his mind full of his art and for it he sacrificed everything till he gained his end. So may you, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, lay hold upon eternal life as being a blessed possibility— and may you be moved to seek it! There is an eternal life! There is a life of God in the soul of man! And I trust that you will, each one, resolve, “If it is to be had I will have it.” Therefore direct your thoughts and desires this way. When the heart begins to value this life and to sigh after it, it is not far from the Kingdom of God! The quickening Spirit is moving upon the soul when it begins to be restless in its fallen estate and feels a hunger after higher things. Oh that the Lord, Himself, would convince you this morning that the life spiritual and eternal is no fancy of enthusiasts, but a literal fact, a matter worthy of your very best consideration! In this way you will begin to “lay hold on eternal life.”

II. But this is not enough—it is merely the doorstep of the subject. “Lay hold on eternal life”—that is to say, POSSESS IT! Get it into your soul—be alive! What am I saying? My Brothers and Sisters, this eternal life must come to you before you will come to it! The Holy Spirit must breathe upon you, or you will remain in your natural death. Behold, He sends me to cry, “You dry bones, live!” And therefore I dare to speak as I have done. Apart from a Divine commission, I dare not speak thus to you!

How is eternal life grasped? Well, it is laid hold of by faith in Jesus Christ. It is a very simple thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and yet it is the only way of obtaining the eternal life. Jesus says, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” By faith we have done with self and all the confidences that can ever grow out of self—and we rely upon the full Atonement made by the Lord Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation. It is thus that we come to live! Faith and the new life go together and can never be divided! God grant that we may all lay hold on eternal life by laying hold of God in Christ Jesus!

This life once laid hold upon is exercised in holy acts. From day to day we lay hold on eternal life by exercising ourselves unto godliness in deeds of holiness and loving kindness. Let your life be love, for love is life. Let your life be one of prayer and praise, for these are the breath of the new life. We still live the animal and mental life, but these must be the mere outer courts of our being—our innermost life must be spiritual and wholly consecrated to God. Henceforth let devotion be your breathing, faith your heartbeat, meditation your feeding, self-examination your washing and holiness your walking! Let your best life be most thought of and most exercised. Be not content to use your eyes, but practice your faith in God. Neither be satisfied to exercise your limbs in moving your body, but in the power of the new life mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, walk without fainting! Lay hold on the eternal life by exercising it continually and never allowing it to lie dormant.

In laying hold upon it, remember that it is increased by growth. Zealously grasp more and more of it. Do not be afraid of having too much spiritual life! Lay hold on it, for Christ has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. My Brothers and Sisters, we are, none of us, what we might be! Let us reach after something higher! “To him that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance.” Let us not forget this encouraging Word of our Lord. You that have much life have the promise of more! We may covet earnestly this heavenly treasure. We are quickened, but perhaps our life is sickly—let us bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, for He has healing beneath His wings. Let us lay hold of the fullest measures of eternal life and go from strength to strength.

Remember that spiritual life is enjoyed in the fullest sense in close communion with God. “This is life eternal, to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” “Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace.” Do not think that those gates of Heaven cut us off from God, for they are never shut and we may enjoy daily fellowship with Him who reigns within1 In Heaven or on earth we are in the same Father’s house— yes, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever! We are not in Heaven yet, but Heaven may be in us. Men do not yet say of us, “He is with God,” but we know that God is with us. Let us endeavor to enjoy the eternal life now by abiding in the love of Christ. Then do we live, indeed, when He sups with us and we with Him. He, being raised from the dead, dies no more. And we, being raised with Him, live with Him, for Him and like He! This Christ-life in us comes to the front and pushes back the lower order of things. We cry no longer, “What shall we eat?” Or, “What shall we drink?” Or, “How shall we be clothed?” But we cry, “Lord, what would You have me to do?” Oh, to say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”!

III. Thirdly, “Lay hold on eternal life.” That is, WATCH OVER IT, guard it and protect it. Most men will preserve their lives at any cost. Unless they are drunk or mad, they will do anything for dear life—“Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life.” Let every Believer regard the life of God within him as being his most precious possession, more valuable by far than the natural life. It would be wise to lay down a thousand natural lives, if we had them, in order to preserve the spiritual life. It is infinitely better to suffer than to sin, to lose property than purity. God has given us this priceless jewel—let us guard it as the apple of our eye!

The other day we read in the newspapers of two persons in America being found dead from “starvation and cold.” And we also read that each of these persons was possessed of a considerable sum of money. We say, “What fools!” Men with sums of money about their persons, or hidden away in their rooms, and yet suffering the ills of need till they actually die of hunger—what madness is this! Are those more sane who injure and dwarf their spiritual life for the sake of intellectual pride, or carnal joy, or the esteem of men? Is not the spirit infinitely more precious than the body? Brethren, if we starve at all, let us starve our bodies and not our spirits! If anything must be stunted, let it be the baser nature! Let us not live eagerly for this world and languidly for the world to come. Having the Divine Life within us, let us not neglect to feed it and supply its needs.

Here is a man that gives up attendance at religious services in the week because he hungers to increase his business—he buys brass with gold! Another quits the place where he enjoys a Gospel ministry to go at a larger salary to a place where his soul will be famished—he barters fine flour for husks! Another goes into all sorts of evil company where he knows that his character is injured and his soul imperiled—and his excuse is that it pays! O Sirs, is it so, after all, that this eternal life which you profess to possess is of trifling value in your eyes? Then I declare before you that you do not possess it at all! How could you thus play the fool if the Lord had made you wise unto salvation? “Lay hold on eternal life,” for this is the chief good, for the sake of which you may quit inferior things. “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” First and foremost, guard beyond everything your life, your real life, wearing always “the armor of light,” “the whole armor of God.”

Here is a sinking ship and none can escape but those who can swim. One man grasps a life belt and puts it about him. Sensible man! Another carefully secures his gold into a girdle and binds it about his waist. Madman! He is treating himself as cruel wretches treat a dog whom they sink into the water with a stone about him! This last individual is the portrait of professing Christians who will be rich and, thereby, drown themselves in perdition and destruction. See the ninth verse of the chapter before us. Hold first and foremost onto eternal life and guard it with all your power, as being yourself, your all!

To that end the Apostle bade Timothy flee from those things which are detrimental to that life. “You, O man of God, flee these things.” A man that is very careful of his life will not remain in a house where fever has been rife. He looks to the drains and all other sanitary arrangements—and if these are hopelessly bad, he quits the house. No measure of cheapness or convenience will make him risk his life. Have you heard of men in their senses who will hunt for dens of fever and cholera and wantonly enter them? On the contrary, visitors are scared from a city or district by the mere rumor of cholera or other infectious disease. You who profess to be men of God must flee these things which are injurious to purity, to truth, to godliness, to communion with God—for these are detrimental to your best life.

Then the Apostle tells Timothy to seek after everything that would promote his eternal life. He says, “Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness”—seek after that which will exercise and develop your highest life. Frequent those hills of holiness where the atmosphere is bracing for your new-born spirit. I notice how people who are sickly will leave their homes and journey far for health. Not only will they sojourn upon the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, but they will encounter the pitiless cold of the Alps in mid-winter at St. Maritz or Davoust in the hope of restoration. If physicians would only guarantee prolongation of life, men would emigrate to inhospitable Siberia or banish themselves to Greenland’s icy mountains! Men will do anything for life. Shall we not be eager to do all that we can to foster our spiritual life? Christian people, do nothing that will damage your Heaven-born lives! Act in this according to the highest prudence.

God help us to lay hold on eternal life and to that end above all things lay hold on Christ! We only live in Him—He is our life. To be divided from Christ is as surely death to us as it would be death to the body to be separated from the head. Make Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of your existence, for without Him you can do nothing, nor even live. “This is the true God and eternal life.” To believe in Jesus is to live! To love Him much is to have life more abundantly. Cling to Jesus! Rest in the Lord, for He is our peace. Dwell on Calvary. Live between the First and Second Comings of the Lord. Lay hold on eternal life as a drowning man lays hold upon a spar and will not relax his grasp. It is not a vain thing for you, for it is your life. “He that has the Son, has life; and he that has not the Son of God, has not life.” Let us, therefore, steadfastly abide in the Son of God and so know that we have eternal life.

IV. But now, fourthly (and with the same brevity)—“Lay hold on eternal life,” that is, FULFILL IT. Labor that the time of your sojourning here shall be occupied not with this poor, dying existence, but with the eternal life. Fulfill the higher and the eternal life in every position of society. The chapter opens with advice to servants who, then, were slaves. Their earthly life was wretched, indeed, but the Apostle bids them live, not for this present life, but for the eternal life. Inasmuch as they could glorify God by continuing to bear the yoke and would not glorify Him by rising in insurrection against their masters, he bade them remain in their position until better times might come. He would have them, by Divine Grace, fulfill the relationship in which they found themselves.

Christianity is the deadly foe of slavery, but it took time to destroy it, and meanwhile, believing slaves were bid to glorify God in their station. And this is what the Gospel says to every one of us—Honor your station by glorifying God in it. When the famous Spartan warrior Brasidas complained that Sparta was so small a state, his mother replied to him, “My son, Sparta has fallen to your lot and it is your duty to adorn it.” Christian man, adorn the doctrine of God, your Savior, in all things! Wherever you are found, endeavor in that place to live out eternal life. Be not so anxious to change your position as to use it for eternal purposes. Are you a preacher? Seek not popularity by pleasing the times, but seek honor by pleasing God! Are you a master? Seek not to use your position to please self, but to bless your day and generation. Are you a servant? Be not perpetually lamenting because of your hard work and scant wage, but let all men see what Grace can do.

The eternal life should gild the lower life as the sun lights up the landscape. It is a sad pity when we let the lower life rise above us! Shall the horse ride the man? Shall the bullock drive the farmer? Let the position be bettered, if it may be, but if this cannot be improved, be you, yourself, improved—and a greater thing is done! Live not for time, but for eternity. What if I am a servant, yet I am the Lord’s freeman—let me live as such! What if I am poor, yet I am rich towards God, so let me enjoy my portion! Lay hold on eternal life all the more eagerly if in this temporal life you have little to lay hold on.

Fulfill this better life, also, by leaving alone those questions which would swallow up the hour. See how Paul destroys these devourers—“Questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputes of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw yourself.” He speaks in the end of the Epistle of “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.” We are overdone with these canker worms at this hour! Brothers and Sisters, you can go and interfere in all the controversies of the day if you like, but beware of the consequences! You can be a party politician if you like, or you can be a man of culture, loving speculation better than Revelation, if you think fit, but, if you take my advice, you will do nothing of the sort, but “lay hold on eternal life.”

I like that expression of Mr. Wesley’s preachers, when they were asked to interfere in this or that political struggle, they replied, “Our work is to win souls and we give ourselves to it.” Oh that churches would listen to this just now! They are going in for amusements and the church is vying with the theater! Oh that we would lay hold on eternal life and seek the salvation of men! Eternal life in our churches would soon cast out the rubbish which is now defiling them! Jesus in the churches would purify the temple of the puppets, as once He cleansed it of the traders. We need to receive anew this conviction that our one great business here below is to lay hold on eternal life, first making our own calling and election sure, and then seeking to bring others to Christ! Other questions compared with this are mere debates as to tweedledum and tweedledee! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth until they break each other in their anger! But we strive only for the Kingdom of Heaven which lies not in trivial things. It is ours to lay hold upon eternal life! As for the rest, the will of the Lord be done!

Further, the Apostle bids us do this so as to surmount the temptations of selfishness. He warns us that “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” He whose life’s object is to accumulate money is not a Christian! No man can serve two masters—and if Mammon is his master, Christ is not his Master. To prosper in business with the sincere desire of using everything for the honor and glory of God is laudable and proper. But to make this the end rather than the means is a horrible prostitution and debasement of our energies. To live for this world is to be dead to the world to come.

The Apostle bids us “lay hold on eternal life” rather than on this life—to gain riches of Grace rather than riches of gold. Furthermore, he has a word for us if we become rich—for he supposes that such a thing may be and that it did happen in his own day. He says—“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” As the alchemist was said to transmute brass and copper into gold, (though he did no such thing), so there is a real alchemy which can sublime gold and silver into everlasting treasure. These talents are not to be despised, but put out to interest for the Lord. They can be laid by where no rust does corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal. They can be traded with in a heavenly market and turned to everlasting gains. We can use them for helping in the work of the Lord and by distribution to the poor and needy.

I would that all men at this hour abounded in almsgiving, but specially those who are followers of the loving Jesus. Regard your transactions from the standpoint of eternity. Weigh what you do, not as it may be thought of by men of the world, but as it will be judged by yourself when you behold in the heavenly country the face of Him you love! I do not want you to have to say when you come to die, “I have had large possessions, but I have been a bad steward. I have had a competence and I have wasted my Master’s goods. All I have done with my wealth was to furnish my house well, perhaps to buy expensive pictures and to allow myself luxuries which did me more harm than good.” I hope, on the contrary, you will have to say, “I am saved by Grace, alone, and that Grace enabled me to consecrate my substance and put it to the best uses. I can render up my stewardship without fear. I did not live for the fleeting life which is now over, but for the life everlasting.”

Brothers and Sisters, some men spend so much upon themselves and so little for the Lord, that they seem to me to eat the apple and give Christ the parings! They hoard up the flour and give the Lord a little of the bran. Happy man who can carry out in life what he has dared to say in song—

*“All that I am and all I have,  
Shall be forever Yours!  
Whatever my duty bids me give,  
My cheerful hands resign.  
Yet if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call  
I love my God with zeal so great,  
That I should give Him all.”*

The Apostle means, when he says, “lay hold on eternal life,” get beyond today and tomorrow. Leap out of this month and this year. Live for the future; for eternity. Live not as insects that die in a day, but as men that live forever. This life is as a prick made on paper by a pin—it is too small a thing to compare with the everlasting future. The for-ever, whether of misery or bliss, dwarfs this life to nothing.

Once more, let me say the Apostle urges us to fulfill the higher life by sundry arguments. He says, “whereunto you are also called.” Sovereign Grace has called us to eternal life—we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God from among men, in order that we may live unto Him. We are bound to make eternal life our first and last consideration, for God has called us thereto. Be not false to the call. If you are a minister or deacon, you have an official call. Be not unmindful of it, but live up to your high calling. The Apostle adds, “and has professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Many of you did this in your Baptism, when, as Believers, you were buried with Christ “by Baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” In that sacred act you professed that the old nature was then and there to be regarded as buried and you would live for Christ and like Christ. Oh, be not false to your solemn vows, but lay hold on eternal life—not upon the miserable wretchedness of the passing hour! Then the Apostle sets before us the great example, “I charge you in the sight of God, who quickens all things and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that you keep this commandment.” Christ sacrificed everything for us. He gave Himself for us! He laid hold on things eternal—as for anything here below, He let it slip by for our sakes. Eternity was always pressing upon the heart of Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Therefore, if you are a Christian, professing to follow Christ, lay hold on eternal life and let this fill your grasp.

V. Last of all, and I have done, EXPECT ETERNAL LIFE. By the two hands of faith and hope lay hold on eternal life as the great reward of the righteous. Look for the crown of life which fades not away. The time comes when this mortal life shall be utterly swallowed up in eternal life. Let me suggest to you, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, that we think much about the life to come. We shall soon be there in the endless home, let us send our thoughts there like couriers in advance. Let the harps of angels ring out their music to our listening ears! Let the songs of the redeemed awaken us to unite with them in the praises of our Lord! You will soon be there—anticipate the joy! Put on your white robes by faith and even if a little imagination should come to the aid of faith, it will do no harm. Your heads will soon wear the crown—the crown which you will delight to cast at Jesus’ feet! Today you know the straits of poverty, but you are going where the streets are paved with transparent gold! You now know the aches and pains of this frail flesh, but you are going where perpetual youth and rigor shall cause all pain to flee away! You are passing quickly along the journey—think much of that journey’s end. Remember the rest which remains, the perfection which is promised, the victory which is secured, the communion which is provided, the Glory which is dawning! “His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face.” Think much of your home—every good child will do so.

When you think of it and your heart grows warm with the thought, then count it very near. Suppose you are to live a comparatively long life? Yet no human life is really long. Even to a young man, if he has to look forward to a gray old age, life is but a span. How brief it seems on looking back! When I remember the Brother who died in yonder pew last Sunday, I can but feel how near Heaven is to some among us. We have touched the celestial country! One Brother has just leaped on shore! The other day, all of a sudden, I saw the white cliffs of Dover. The swift ship had performed the passage so rapidly that the sea had been crossed before I had reckoned on reaching land. There were the cliffs. Just ahead, Brothers and Sisters, Heaven is just ahead! Run to the bows! Heaven ahoy! Do not forever continue gazing at the misty shores behind you. Look ahead! You are far nearer than you think, to the land of the immortal! We are within speaking distance of Heaven! The Lord hears our cry and we hear His

promise— *“How near to faith’s far-seeing eye  
The golden gates appear!”*  
In this way lay hold on eternal life by confident expectancy. Rehearse eternal life! Rehearse the service and joy of Heaven! They have  
rehearsals of fine pieces of music—let us have a rehearsal of Heaven’s  
harmonies. The thing is practicable. We have often enjoyed rehearsals of  
temple music in this Tabernacle. In this pulpit I have been within half an  
inch of Heaven—and I hope you know the same nearness in the pews! Let  
us begin the music here and now. Glorified saints praise the Lamb—let us  
praise Him! They worship the great God with transports of joy—let us  
worship with them! They find their all in Jesus—where else have we anything? Let our Sabbaths be, each of them, a taste of the Sabbath that  
shall have no end! Thus “lay hold on eternal life.”  
“Ah,” says one, “I wish I were already in Heaven.” Do not be in a hurry.  
The best expectancy is that which waits with patience. Our esteemed  
Brother, Mr. Lockhart, tells a story of one of his members, of the name of  
Carey—a royal name that! She was very sick and near to die, but she expressed a desire to live, at which he was somewhat astonished, for he  
knew her to be so well prepared to depart. She wished to stay here a while for a good and laudable reason. There was one thing which she could see here on earth—which she could not see in Heaven—and she wished to remain here to see it again and again. “What is that?” Mr. Lockhart asked. “It is the tear of repentance on the sinner’s cheek. I want to see a great many more of those before I go Home.” And so do I. O my unconverted Hearers, I would willingly stay out of Heaven to weep for you till you weep for sin! To see tears of repentance in all your eyes would be a Heaven to me!  
My Brothers and Sisters around me would be willing to wait, also, even until Jesus comes, if we could, by our waiting, help to give you repentance. Tears of repentance bedewing the cheeks of sinners are the diamonds of angels and the jewels of saints! Oh, that my beloved helpers may see many drops of the dew of repentance this morning when they come round among you! And may Jesus see them and speak peace to repenting hearts. Poor sinners! We would stay out of Heaven for such as you, even as Jesus came out of Heaven for such as you! Believe on the one appointed Savior and enter into eternal life—and we will dwell in Heaven together! The Lord grant it. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Timothy 6.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—885, 852, 229.

My Sermon readers who, from week to week, learn what I have said to my congregation would greatly gratify me if they would take in my monthly magazine, “The Sword and the Trowel,” and so learn what is done, as well as what is said. I think they will be interested by this periodical and I feel sure that this would lead to their lending a hand in those many holy enterprises in which I am engaged for my Lord’s sake. If I have helped you, dear Readers, help me! Order the magazine and see what those works are by which I try to show that the Doctrines of the Grace of God are not fruitless things.—C. H. S.

÷2Ti 1.6

OUR GIFTS AND HOW TO USE THEM  
NO. 1080

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

**“Therefore I remind you to you stir up the gift of God which is in you by the laying on of my hands.”***2Ti 1:6***.**

I SUPPOSE that Timothy was a somewhat retiring youth and that from the gentleness of his nature he needed to be exhorted to the exercise of the bolder virtues. He is bid not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord and to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He is called to the front, though his modesty would have kept him in the rear, and he is exhorted to command and teach, suffering no man to despise his youth. Perhaps, also, he was not a man of very vigorous action and needed, every now and then, a little touch of the spur to induce him to put forth all his dormant energy and keep himself and his Church thoroughly up to the mark in labor for Christ.

His was a choice spirit and therefore it was desirable to see it strong, brave and energetic. No one would wish to arouse a bad man, for like a viper he is all the worse for being awake. But in proportion to the excellence of the character is the desirability of its being full of force. The Apostle Paul tells Timothy, in his first Epistle, not to neglect the gift that is in him. And in the text before us he bids him stir up that gift—in each case he is sounding the trumpet in his ear and summoning him to intense action. He speaks of the gift that was conferred by the laying on of hands, and in the former Epistle he connects that with the hands of the presbytery.

Now it was no doubt the custom to lay on hands at the ordination of Christian ministers by the Apostles and there was an excellent reason for it—for gifts were thereby conveyed to the ordained. And when we can find anybody who can thereby confer some spiritual gift upon us, we shall be glad to have their hands laid on our heads. But we care not for empty hands. Rites cease when their meaning ceases. If practiced any longer they gender to superstition and are fit instruments of priestcraft. The upholding of the hands of the eldership, when they give their vote to elect a man to the pastorate, is a sensible proceeding, and is, I suspect, all the Apostle means when he speaks of the presbytery. But empty hands, it seems to me, are fitly laid on empty heads—and to submit to an empty ceremony is the most idle of all idle waste of time!

If Paul were here and could confer a gift, we should rejoice to receive it. Yes, and if the meanest man in Christendom, or woman, for that matter, could confer the smallest drachma of Divine Grace by the putting on of their hands, we would bow our head in the most humble manner. Till then we shall beg to decline submitting to the imposition, or assisting in it. For this reason, and others, we cannot use the text exactly as it stands in addressing this congregation. But leaving out the reference to laying on of hands, we may honestly, without violation of the current of Inspiration, proceed to exhort each one of you to stir up the gift that is in you!

There are many kinds of gifts. All Christians have some gift. Some may have but one talent, but all have one at the least. The Great Householder has apportioned to every servant a talent. No single part of a vital body is without its office. True, there are some parts of the body whose office has not been discovered—even the physician and the anatomist have not been able to tell why certain organs are in the human frame, or what office they serve—but as even these are found to be necessary, we are quite sure that they fulfill some useful purpose. Truly, there are some Christians who might be put in that category—it might puzzle anybody to know what they are capable of—and yet it is certain they have some charge committed to them to keep, and, if true Believers, they are essential parts of the body of Christ.

As every beast, bird, fish and insect has its own place in Nature, so has every Christian a fit position in the economy of Grace. No tree, no plant, no weed could be dispensed with without injury to Nature’s perfection. Neither can any sort of gift or Grace be lost to the Church without injury to her completeness. Every living saint has his charge to keep—his talent over which he is a steward. A measure of gift is in all of us, needing to be stirred up. Some have gifts outside of them rather than within them— gifts, for instance, of worldly position, estate and substance. These ought to be well used, and considering that in these times we have a starving world to deal with, and that one of the great impediments to the spread of the Gospel is, with some of us, the lack of means for the maintenance of those who should preach the Word, it does seem a strange thing that professors should store up God’s money and use it as if it were their own.

When for our orphans, our students, our tract distributors and our missionaries we need funds, how can men love the Lord with all their hearts and yet keep their thousands cankering at their bankers, or their tens resting in their purses? They have not learned to provide for themselves bags that wax not old. They do not understand that to keep their money they must give it away—that truly to preserve it they must dedicate it to God—that which is kept by the miserly for themselves is not really preserved, but wasted. That which is expended in the Master’s service is laid up in Heaven where neither moth nor rust can corrupt.

But I am not going to speak about that. I have not much reason to speak upon that subject to those who are immediately connected with me, for I have rather to praise you than to upbraid. Most of our dear friends here serve the Lord with the gifts that are outside of them—not all as we should, but many with more than ordinary liberality and some up to the full measure of their means, if not beyond them. There are, however, exceptions to all rules and there are a few who attend this place who need more than a gentle hint to excite anything like generosity in them. But we must go at once to the point in hand—“the gift that is in you,” we have now to speak of. First, the gift that may be in each one of us. And then, secondly, how we are to stir this gift up. And in conclusion, we will give reasons for the stirring of it.

I. First, then, WHAT GIFT IS THERE IN US? In some here present there are gifts of mind which are accompanied with gifts of utterance. It is no mean thing to be able to read the Scriptures and to see their inner meaning—to be able to compare spiritual things with spiritual and to be so taught in other matters so that we are able to see the hand of God in history and can, upon all such subjects, speak to edification. It is not everyone who has a mind who has also the gift of utterance, but where God is pleased to give to any man mind and mouth, he possesses a gift which he ought abundantly to use.

Many a man is mighty in the Scriptures but not eloquent. When the two things meet, as in Apollos, and are combined with a fervent spirit, a man of God has power, indeed! May I suggest that every Christian man here who is possessed of the faculty of eloquent discourse is bound to use it for Jesus Christ? Some young men spend their evenings in Debating Societies and the like, and I have not a word to say against that, but I have this to say—whatever you may do with this talent in other directions, the Lord, who has bought you with His blood, if you are a Christian man—has the first claim upon you and you are bound to use your powers of utterance in His cause.

“But I am not a minister!” What do you mean by that? Do you find anything in Scripture about clergy and laity? If so, you have read it with different eyes from mine! There were men called especially to the oversight of the Church and the preaching of the Word, but everyone, according to his gift, also had a call—and there is no man in the Church of God who has ability to speak who has any license to be silent. Not only the goldenmouthed orators, but the silver-tongued speakers—men of the second as well as of the first order—should serve in the Gospel of the Son of God. I shall not ask any young man whether he ought to preach, but whether he can prove that he ought not.

Every man is bound to tell another who is in danger, to escape from that danger. Everyone who has recovered from a dreadful disease is bound to tell others what remedy was made effectual in his case. Nothing can excuse us from, in some way or other, spreading abroad the Gospel of Jesus Christ! And if we have the ability to speak, it will go hard at last with us if we have been silent with our fellow men. The stones in the street might surely cry out against some religious professors who make the Houses of Parliament, the Council Chamber, the Courts of Justice, the Athenaeum, or the Mechanics’ Hall ring with their voices, and yet preach not Jesus—who can argue points of politics and the like, but not speak a word for Christ—eloquent for the world, but dumb for Jesus?

From this may God deliver us! If you have any gift, young man, come out and use it—or old man, also, if you have laid it by till late in the day. In these straitened times when the harvest is ripe and the laborers are few, let every man that has his sickle come forth into the field. Let no man say, “I pray you have me excused,” but by the blood that bought you, if you have tasted of the Water of Life, cry aloud and spare not, and be this your message—“Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.”

There are numbers of Believers who have not the gift of utterance with the tongue, who nevertheless can speak very fluently and admirably with the pen. If, then, you have the gift of the pen, are you using it for Christ as you ought? I need to stir up the gift that is in you. Letters have often been blessed to conversion! Are you accustomed to write with that view? Perhaps you are a great contributor to the postal revenue. Let me ask you what sort of matter it is with which you burden her Majesty’s mails? Do you write letters to your children and friends full of loving testimony to what the Grace of God has done for you? If you have not done so, dear Friends, try at once! Jesus wants consecrated pens and in His name I claim your service!

The writing of tracts and the dissemination of holy Truth by means of the press are most important—any person who has any gifts in that direction should be sure to use them. Why are writers upon religion often so dull, while the world commands talent and vivacity? Many thousands of pens are running every day upon the most idle nonsense and mailing booksellers’ shelves groan with the literature of fiction! Are there none who, with splendor of diction or in humbler guise, could write interestingly of the Gospel and tell of its power among the sons of men? If there is, in the tribe of Zebulon, any that handle the pen of the ready writer, let them not keep back from the help of the Lord—the help of the Lord against the mighty!

Another form of gift that belongs to us is influence. We have all of us influence of some sort—some more, some less. What an influence the parent has! To a great extent you mold your children’s lives. Some of us owe what we never can repay to our mothers. What they have done for us shall make us grateful to them even when they shall slumber in the dust. The nurse girl who has the care of little children should be very careful, for a remark she may make without intention may shape the character—yes, mar or bless the child’s character throughout eternity! And you who associate daily with working men—is there enough among Christian masters of earnest zeal to use a holy and affectionate influence among the employed?

If classes are alienated, one from the other, as it is to be feared they are, is it not because we meet each other just as a matter of business and that there is little of anything like Christian affection and communion between the one and the other? Indeed some laugh off the idea as ridiculous and tell me I know very little of the world to dream of such a thing! I will leave that question to the day which shall reveal all things, and I think I know who will prove to be right. Let every one of us reckon up what influence he has, and having done so, let us ask God’s Grace that we may use it aright. I shall not go into details here. You are all affecting those round about you for good or evil. As Christian men you are either leading others to Christ even unconsciously, or else you are deadening their consciences and leading them to think there is not much in religion after all—and surely you would not wish to do that! If you have the gift of influence, I would stir you up to use it.

Many of the elder members of the Church have another gift, namely, experience. Certainly, experience cannot be purchased nor taught. It is given us of the Lord who teaches us to profit. It is a peculiar treasure each man wins for himself as he is led through the wilderness. An experienced Christian is put in the Church on purpose that he may guide the inexperienced—that he may help those who are distressed with a word of comfort derived from his own experience of God’s helping hand in time of trouble—that he may warn the heedless by the mischiefs he himself has suffered through carelessness. Now, when an experienced Christian merely uses his experience for his own comfort, or as a standard by which to judge his fellow Christians, or makes use of it for self-exaltation as though he were infinitely superior to the most zealous young men—such a man mars his talent, does mischief with it—and makes himself heavily responsible.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I, who am so young in years compared with many of you, beseech you who have long walked in the ways of godliness to use your experience continually in your visitation of the sick, in your conversations with the poor, in your meetings with young beginners and in your dealings with backsliders! Let your paths drop fatness! Let the anointing God has given you fall upon those who are round about you! May you be of such a sort as a certain clergyman I heard of the other day. I asked a poor woman “What sort of man is he?” She said, “He is such a sort of man, Sir, that if he comes to see you, you know he has been there.” I understood what she meant—he left behind him some godly saying, weighty advice, holy consolation, or devout reflection which she could remember after he had left her cottage door. May our venerable friends always have this said of them!

Another gift which many have is the gift of prayer—of prayer with power—in private for the Church and with sinners. There are some who have learned by long practice how to knock at Heaven’s door so as to get a readier opening of the door than others. Numbers of these have coupled with this the gift of utterance in public prayer. Such dear friends ought not to be absent from the Prayer Meeting except when absolutely necessary. They should not only be content with coming to Prayer Meetings that are established, but they should stir up the gift that is in them and try to establish others in neglected places. There was never a period when the Church had too much prayer. “The Sacraments,” as they are called, may have been unduly exalted but who has ever unduly exalted prayer? Biblereadings may degenerate into mere discussion, and even preaching into a show of oratory—but prayer has vital elements about it which survive many an injury.

Alas! Alas for Churches that have given up Prayer Meetings! You shall judge of the Presence of God by the Prayer Meeting as accurately as you shall judge the temperature of the air by the thermometer. It is one of the truest signs that God is with the people when they pray—and it is one of the darkest signs that He has departed when prayer is lacking. You who have sweet communion with God in private, look upon your prevalence on the knee not only as a blessing for yourselves, but as a gift that is bestowed upon you for the good of others. There is another gift which is a very admirable one. It is the gift of conversation, not a readiness for chit chat and gossip—(he who has that wretched propensity may bury it in the earth and never dig it up again)—but the gift of leading conversation, of being what George Herbert called the “master-gunner.”

When we have that, we should most conscientiously use it for God. There lived, some 50 years or so ago, a set of great table-talkers who were asked out to dine because of their lively conversational powers. Now if this is in any of you, never waste it in mere pleasantries, but say something worth saying and aim at the highest results. Remember Jesus was a mighty table-talker, as the Evangelists take care to note. I wish I could, with discreet adroitness, break in upon a conversation in a railway carriage and turn it round to the Savior—turn it round to something worth speaking of. I often envy those of my Brethren who can go up to individuals and talk to them with freedom. I do not always find myself able to do so, though when I have been Divinely aided I have had a large reward.

When a Christian man can get hold of a man and talk to him, it is like one of the old men of war laying alongside a French ship and giving her a broadside, making every timber shiver and at last sending her to the bottom. How many a soul has been brought to Christ by the loving personal exhortations of Christian people who know how to do it? To be able, like Elijah, to stretch yourselves upon the dead child—to put your hands upon his hands, your feet upon his feet and breathe the life by God’s help into the dead—oh, some of you can do this better, perhaps, than those who are called to speak to hundreds and thousands! Do use it if you have the ability, and try to get the ability if you have it not.

Perhaps you possess it and have not found it out. No unconverted person should come to this place without your speaking to him. And as to a person attending the Tabernacle three Sundays without being spoken to by some Christian, it ought to be an impossibility and would be if all were in a right warm-hearted state, earnestly desiring the salvation of others! May God teach us, if we can converse personally with individuals, to furbish up the gift, keep it in good condition and continually use it. My inventory of the gifts which are in us is not complete, nor is it intended to be. Each person may have a separate gift. Even the gift to be able to lie still and suffer is not a small one. The gift of being able to be poor and content is not to be despised. The gift of nursing the sick or of interesting children should be lovingly employed. Neither ought any talent to be wrapped in a napkin. But, whatever it is, the word is, “Stir up the gift which is in you.”

II. And this brings us, secondly, to the consideration of HOW WE ARE TO STIR UP OUR GIFTS. First, we should do it by examination to see what gifts we really have. There should be an overhauling of all our stores to see what we have of capital entrusted to our stewardship. May I ask you for a minute to sit quietly and take stock of all God has given you? Remember you shall assess yourself, for I am sure your manhood, not to say your self-esteem, will not let you put yourself down as utterly without gifts.

If somebody were to speak of you depreciatingly, you would very soon defend yourself and argue for your own capacity in many departments. I would put you on your mettle and bring you to acknowledge your capabilities. Now think of all the abilities you have, dear Brother, dear Sister. What has God trusted you with? Add up each item and compute the total sum. What trading-money have you of your Lord’s? To whom much is given, of him much will be required. What, then, has been given to you? Such an enquiry will help you to stir up the gift that is in you. The selfexamination of every mental faculty, every spiritual attainment, every form of characteristic force or individual influence will be an excellent commencement for a more vigorous course of action.

Enquire what you can do, what more you could do, what more you might learn to do, what more you ought at least to attempt. Diminish nothing from the just amount of your possibilities and it will greatly tend to stir you up, if you then enquire, “How far have I done what I could do? How far have I used all that has been committed to me? How much of my life has been allowed to rust and how much has been made bright by wear and tear in the service of my Master?” It is not a pleasant duty to which I have invited you. You would be much more gratified if I asked you to consider some precious promise of the Covenant and certainly I should find it more consolatory to myself, but this is necessary. Sweet things are pleasant, but sharp things are often the more beneficial. Pillows for our heads are not our main desire—we wish, as soldiers of the Cross—to be found faithful, first of all and above all! We shall have to give an account before God. Oh, let us give an account before ourselves, now, in the forum of our own conscience and so stir up the gift that is in us!

The next mode of stirring up our gift is to consider to what use we could put the talents we possess. To what use could I put my talents in my family? Am I doing all I could for the children? Have I labored all I ought for my wife’s conversion—my husband’s conversion? Then about the neighborhood—is there nothing more that I could do for the salvation of my poor godless neighbors? Perhaps I see them drunk, profane, unchaste, irreligious, full of all manner of disobedience to God—can I not, by God’s Grace, uplift them? They never come to a place of worship—have I done all I could to get them there? I was not placed in that neighborhood without an object. If it is a dark part of London, I am put there to be a lamp if I am a Christian. Am I shining, then?

Some people prefer to live where there is light and for themselves the choice is wise, but I think, for usefulness, loving hearts might prefer to live in bad districts that they might do good. Are you doing all you can for Jesus? Come, answer like an honest man! Having done so, I have more for your self-inspection. Will you examine yourself in every relation in which you stand? As a master, stir up your gift in reference to those you employ. As a servant, stir up the gift towards your fellow servants. As a trader, stir up your gift in reference to those with whom you come in contact. Are you a sailor? Have you stepped in here tonight? What an opportunity you have, my Friend, in landing on many shores and doing something for Christ here, and there and everywhere!

Are you a commercial traveler and do you go to many places? Surely you might travel for our Lord with Gospel wares to be distributed without money and without price and yet attend to your own calling, none the less. If our Churches were in a right state of spiritual health, men would not first say, “What can I do to make money?” but, “What can I do to serve Christ, for I will take up a trade subserviently to that.” But if we cannot bring men to that point, we must at least say, (to all of you who profess to be Christians, at any rate), in whatever condition you are placed, high or low, rich or poor, you should live unto Christ! You should each enquire, “What can I do for the Lord in my present condition? What peculiar service does my position involve?” In this way, dear Friends, stir up the gift that is in you.

But, next, stir it up not merely by consideration and examination, but by actually using it. We talk much of working, but working is better than talking about working. To get really at it and to do something for soulwinning and spreading abroad the Glory of God is infinitely better than planning and holding committees. Away with windbags! Let us get to acts and deeds. None of us know what we can do till we try. The sportsman will tell you that there may be many birds in a field, but you know not how many till you walk through and then you discover them and see them on the wing. When the wheel turns you will be able to see the force of the current. You will see the speed of the horse when you put him to his best. Work, work and the tool that is blunt will get an edge by being used! Shine, and the light you have shall grow in the very act of shining!

He who has done one thing will find himself capable of doing two, and doing two will be able to accomplish four—and having achieved the four will soon go on to 12 and from 12 to fifty! And so, by growing multiples he will enlarge his power to serve God by using the ability he has. Does this tire you? Does my subject seem too much like salvation by works? Nothing is further from my thoughts! I am not, now, speaking upon salvation at all! Neither am I addressing those who are seeking after salvation. I am speaking to you who have been saved already by the Grace of God! You are saved, and on that point all is done. You are resting in the finished work of Christ. Should it ever seem hard to you to be stirred up to serve Him? Let the vision of His tearful face come up to you.

Behold His crown of thorns! Let Him turn His back to you, and count the gashes the Roman scourges made! Look at Him—a spectacle of blood and love! And is it possible that any service for Him can, by you, be considered difficult? To burn at a stake! If we could do it a thousand times, He well deserves that we should make the sacrifice! To give Him every pulse and every drop of blood and every breath we breathe—He well deserves it, glory be to His name! He merits all our love a thousand times over. I shall not fear to press upon you again and again and again that you use the gifts which are in you by actual service of so precious a Master.

And then, dear Friends, in addition to using our gift, every one of us should try to improve it. We have for years endeavored to stir up the young Christians of this congregation to educate themselves. By our evening classes it is intended that young men who preach in the street may get education in order to better preach the Gospel of Christ. And out of this congregation have gone hundreds whom God has owned as ministers of Christ and many such are being trained now. I would have every man put himself in training. I think every man ought to feel, “I have been Christ’s man with a talent; I will be Christ’s man with 10 if I can. If now I do not thoroughly understand the doctrines of His Gospel, I will try to understand them. I will read and search, and learn.”  
We need an intelligent race of Christians, not an affected race of boasters of culture—mental fops who pretend to know a great deal and know nothing—but we need hard students of the Word, adept in theology like the Puritans of old. Romanism will never do much with people who know the doctrines of the Word of God—it is a bat and hates sunlight. Every one of us ought to be students and learners, trying to get more ability for usefulness as well as to be built up ourselves in our most holy faith. To the younger members of our Churches, especially, we speak this. Give yourselves to reading, study and prayer. Grow mentally and spiritually. You teach in the class—you do well—but could not you do better if you knew more? And if you address children in the Sunday schools we are glad of it—but would you not do that better if you studied more perfectly the Truth of God?

Apollos was not ashamed to be taught, nor need the most successful laborer be ashamed to learn! Improve your gift, for that is one way of stirring it up. And then pray over your gifts—that is a blessed way of stirring them up—to go before God and spread out your responsibilities before Him. In my own case I have often to cry, “Lord, You have given me this Congregation, and O it is hard to be clear of the blood of them all, and to speak with affection and prudence, and courage to all so as not to leave one unwarned, unhelped, untaught. Help me, my Lord, that I may leave no one without his portion of meat in due season. Who is sufficient for these things? Only Your Grace is sufficient for me.”

It stirs one up to preach with all his might when he has laid before God in prayer his weakness. And the ability which God has given him, too, and asked that the weakness may be consecrated to God’s Glory and the ability accepted to the Lord’s praise. Should we not do just the same, whatever our calling is—take it to the Lord and say, “Assist me, great God, to live to You. If Your Grace in me is only as a handful of meal and a little oil, make it hold out—make it hold out! It is not much I can do, my Master. Help me to do it well and to continue steadfast and unwearied in it”? Pray over yourself, as it were.

Put your whole self upon the altar and then let the drink-offering be the pouring out of your tears before God in prayer that He would be pleased to accept you, to qualify you, to anoint you, to direct you and bless you in all that you do. This would be the most excellent manner of stirring up the gift that is in you. O Spirit of the living God, lead all Your people to downright, earnest and actual service of the Redeemer, and especially work in us to that end!

III. I will not linger longer there, but close with the third observation— WHY IS IT THAT WE SHOULD STIR UP THE GIFT THAT IS IN US? There are many replies to this. One or two will answer our purpose. We should stir up the gift that is in us because all we shall do, when we have stirred ourselves to the utmost and when the Spirit of God has strengthened us to the highest degree, will still fall far short of what our dear Lord and Master deserves at our hands! Ah, what must Jesus think of us when He remembers His own love? Was there ever such a contrast between His furnace seven times hotter and our iceberg spirits?

He spared not Himself but we are always sparing ourselves. He gives us everything to the last rag and hangs naked on the Cross. We keep almost all to ourselves and count self-sacrifice to be difficult. He labors, is weary and yet ceases not. We are a little weary and straightway we faint. He continued to preach on, notwithstanding all the ill return men made. We take offense and throw up our work because we are not appreciated as we should be. Oh, the little things which put some workers out of temper and out of heart! Oh, the looks or the not-looks! The words, or the silence that will make some spirits give up any place and any service and any work!

“Forbearing one another” seems to have gone out of fashion with many people. “Forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you,” is forgotten. Brothers and Sisters, if being doormats for Christ for all the Church to wipe their feet upon would honor Him, we ought to think it a great glory to be so used! Among genuine Christians the contention is for the lowest place—among sham Christians the controversy is for the higher positions. Some will ask the question now-a-days—“Which is the higher office—that of elder or deacon,” and so on. Oh, what triviality!

When the Master was going up to Jerusalem to die, there was a contention among the disciples which of them should be the greatest—and so it is with us. At times when Grace is low, our opinion of ourselves is very high, and then our love to Christ is so little that we soon take affront and are quick to resent any little insults, as we think them to be, where perhaps nothing of the kind was meant. Beloved, may we be saved from all this littleness of soul! And remember what obligations we are under to our Master—how we should have been dead in trespasses and sins but for Him—how we should have been in Hell but for Him—how our expectations tonight would have been “a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation” but for Him. But we are washed and cleansed and on the way to Heaven—and we owe it all to Him. Therefore let us stir up the gift that is in us and serve Him with all our might.

Another reason is that these are stirring times. If we are not stirring, everybody else is. The Church of God, it seems to me, is traveling along the road to Heaven in a broad-wheel wagon and all the world is going its own way by express speed. If men become at all earnest in the cause of God, worldly critics shout out, “Fanaticism! Excitement!” Did you ever stand on the Paris Bourse—ever hear the raving, raging excitement of those stock-jobbers as they are trying to buy various forms of scrip! Nobody says, “Look at these men! See how fanatical they are!” No, they expect to see excitement on the Bourse. But if we were half as excited for God and His Gospel, there would be a hue and cry all over the country, “Here’s a set of madmen! Here’s a set of fanatics let loose.”

Of good Mr. Rowland Hill they said, “The dear old gentleman’s too earnest.” “Why,” said he, “When I was at Wotton-Under-Edge I saw a piece of a gravel pit fall in upon two or three men when I was walking by, so I went into Wotton as fast as my aged legs could carry me and I shouted with all my might, ‘Help! Help! Help!’ and nobody said, ‘the dear old man’s too earnest.’” Oh, no, you may be as earnest as you like about saving people’s lives, but if their souls awaken your sympathy, some lukewarm professor or other is sure to be ready with a wet blanket to cool your ardor. And yet were there ever times in which the wheels of life revolved so swiftly as now? The world marches with giant strides! Everybody is up and awake, but the Church is asleep to a great extent.

For other things men labor, and tug, and toil and make sacrifices—for an idea they slaughter their fellow creatures! For the unity of a race they fatten fields with blood and make rivers run with gore. But to preach Christ and snatch sinners from the jaws of Hell they require of us to be chilled—and insist that we must not be too earnest—we must not go too fast. We must be prudent! We must be cool! From “prudence” and “coolness” good Lord, deliver us! From “decorum” and “propriety,” (wherein they stand in the way of our winning souls), good Lord deliver us! And from every conventionality and every idol that has been set up among us which prevents our being thoroughly useful and grandly serviceable to the cause of God, good Lord deliver us! Because these are stirring times, we ought to stir up the gift that is in us.

And then, again, we must stir up our gift because it needs stirring. The gifts and Graces of Christian men are like a coal fire which frequently requires stirring as well as feeding with fuel. You must not stir it up too much—the poker does not give heat, and stirring up a man of itself does not make him better—indeed, it is as injurious to a weak man to stir him up as it would be to an expiring fire in the grate. But yet there must be stirring and fires go out sometimes for the lack of it. There are times with us when we become dull and heavy, doing little or nothing—restless, indifferent—and then it is that we require rebuking. If there is a solid bottom of real Grace in us, we only need the poker that we be stirred up and straightway the fire begins to burn.

How I like to stir up some of you! I remember a dear Brother dropping in one Thursday night to hear the Word preached—an excellent Christian, but sluggish—but the Lord touched his heart with the spoken Word and he began to preach in the streets of the city where he resides! He has now one of the largest houses of prayer and God has given him hundreds of souls! He only needed stirring up! Is there no other Brother here, who, hearing this earnest word shall find it like a live coal from off the altar, touching his lips and moving him to go forth and preach the Word and serve his Master according to his ability? We must, then, dear Friends, stir ourselves up because if we do not, we may lose the faculty and rob ourselves of the power of usefulness! The knife which is not used loses its edge and the man who does not work for God loses much of his ability to do so in the future.

I shall give you another reason, and that is this. If we will but stir ourselves, Beloved, or rather, if God’s Holy Spirit will but stir us, we, as a Church may expect very great things! I can hardly tell you how comforted I felt last Monday evening. I said on Sunday, “The Elders and Deacons will meet to pray, and those of you who love souls and are concerned about them will kindly come, too, at six o’clock.” I was glad to see many of you who I know love the Lord fervently, and through that warm Prayer Meeting which we had before our more public gathering, we felt that we had laid hold upon our God. I know there is a blessing coming! I am sure of it! I hear “a sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees.” The Lord is with us! He never made His people agonize in secret and join together publicly in deep soul earnestness without intending to bless them!

We might as well fear, when the months are warm, that there will be no ripening of the wheat as to say when Christian’s hearts are warm towards God that there will be no conversions. It can’t be! Enquiring saints always make enquiring sinners. If we enquire of God for sinners, sinners will soon enquire for themselves. Up, therefore! Up, therefore, Beloved! Stir yourselves, for God is stirring us! And remember, there will be a great stir byand-bye. Business will all end, politics will be done with and all the matters in which you are concerned will be eternally closed. What a stir there will be in that day! Fallen we shall stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body!

What a stir about ourselves! What a stir about others! Where will they be? Will they be on the right hand, or on the left? Shall I see my boys in Heaven, or will they be cast out? What a stir there will be about your husband or your wife! What a stir there will be about your neighbors! Think of it! Think of it, I say, and be stirred now! If they die as they are, they will be damned—they must be. They must sink into Hell! There is no hope of their escape if they die unsaved.

What a stir there will be throughout all the nations in that day! And, surely, if we look at it in the light of eternity—in the light of that tremendous day when Christ, with clouds, shall come—we shall feel that there is nothing worth living for but serving God! We shall surely feel that the very core and center of all life is to bring glory to God by bringing sinners to Jesus Christ! God grant you may live as if you expected to die! We ought always to preach as though we should go out of the pulpit into Heaven and we should always to pray in that way. And we should always spend every day as if we had not another day to spend. For this we need much of the Holy Spirit’s power.

And He rests upon His people! May He come and rest upon us, now, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.  
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÷2Ti 1.9

SALVATION ALTOGETHER BY GRACE

NO. 703

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 29, 1866, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according  
to His own purpose and grace which was given  
to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”**

*2Ti 1:9***.**

IF we would influence thoughtful persons it must be by solid arguments. Shallow minds may be worked upon by mere warmth of emotion and force of excitement, but the more valuable part of the community must be dealt with in quite another manner. When the Apostle Paul was desirous to influence his son in the faith, Timothy, who was a diligent and earnest student and a man of gifts as well as of Divine Grace, he did not attempt to affect him by mere appeals to his feelings. Paul felt that the most effectual way to act upon him was to remind him of solid doctrinal Truth of God which he knew Timothy believed.

This is a lesson for the ministry at large. Certain earnest preachers are incessantly exciting the people, but seldom, if ever, instructing them. They carry much fire and very little light. God forbid that we should say a word against appealing to the feelings—this is most necessary in its place—but then there is a due proportion to be observed in it. A religion which is based upon, sustained, and maintained simply by excitement will necessarily be very flimsy and unsubstantial, and will yield very speedily to the crush of opposition or to the crumbling hand of time.

The preacher may touch the feelings by rousing appeals as the harpist touches the harp strings, and he will be very foolish if he should neglect so ready and admirable an instrument. But still, as he is dealing with reasonable creatures, he must not forget to enlighten the intellect and instruct the understanding. And how can he appeal to the understanding better than by presenting to it the Truth which the Holy Spirit teaches? Scriptural doctrine furnishes us with powerful motives to urge upon the minds of Christians.

It seems to me that if we could, by some unreasoning impulse, move you to a certain course of action it might be well in its way. But it would be unsafe and untrustworthy, for you would be equally open to be moved in an opposite direction by other persons more skilled in such operations. But if God enables us, by His Spirit, to influence your minds by solid Truth and substantial argument, you will then move with a constancy of power which nothing can turn aside. The feather flies in the wind, but it has no inherent power to move—and consequently when the gale is over it falls to the ground—such is the religion of excitement. But the eagle has life within itself and its wings bear it aloft and onward whether the breeze favors it or not—such is religion when sustained by a conviction of the Truth of God! The well-taught man in Christ Jesus stands firm where the uninstructed infant would fall or be carried away. “Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine,” says the Apostle, and those are least likely to be so carried who are well established in the Truth as it is in Jesus.

It is somewhat remarkable—at least it may seem so to persons who are not accustomed to think upon the subject—that the Apostle, in order to excite Timothy to boldness—to keep him constant in the faith—reminds him of the great doctrine that the Grace of God reigns in the salvation of men! He gives in this verse—this parenthetical verse as some call it, but which seems to me to be fully in the current of the passage—he gives in this verse a brief summary of the Gospel, showing the great prominence which it gives to the Grace of God, with the design of maintaining Timothy in the boldness of his testimony for Christ.

I do not doubt but that a far greater power for usefulness lies concealed within the Doctrines of Grace than some men have ever dreamed of. It has been usual to look upon doctrinal Truth as being nothing more than unpractical theory, and many have spoken of the precepts of God’s Word as being more practical and more useful. The day may yet come when, in clearer light, we shall perceive that sound doctrine is the very root and vital energy of practical holiness, and that to teach the people the Truth which God has revealed is the readiest and surest way of leading them to obedience and persevering holiness.

May the Holy Spirit assist us while we shall, first, consider the doctrine taught by the Apostle in this text. And secondly, the uses of that doctrine.  
I. Very carefully let us CONSIDER THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT BY THE APOSTLE IN THIS TEXT. Friends will remember that it is not our object to preach the doctrine which is most popular or most palatable. Nor do we desire to set forth the views of any one person in the assembly. Our one aim is to give what we judge to be the meaning of the text. We shall probably deliver doctrine which many of you will not like, and if you should not like it we shall not be at all surprised! Or even if you should be vexed and angry we shall not be at all alarmed because we never understood that we were commissioned to preach what would please our hearers, nor were expected by sensible, not to say gracious men, to shape our views to suit the notions of our audience.  
We count ourselves amenable to God and to the text. And if we give the meaning of the text, we believe we shall give the mind of God and we shall be likely to have His favor which will be sufficient for us, contradict us who may. However, let every candid mind be willing to receive the Truth of God if it is clearly in the inspired Word.  
1. The Apostle, in stating his doctrine in the following words, “Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” declares God to be the Author of salvation—“Who has saved us and called us.” The whole tenor of the verse is towards a strong affirmation of Jonah’s doctrine, “that salvation is of the Lord.”  
It would require very great twisting—involving more than ingenuity, it would need dishonesty—to make out salvation by man out of this text! But to find salvation altogether of God in it is to perceive the Truth of God which lies upon the very surface. No need for profound enquiry. The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err here—the text says as plainly as words can say, “God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling.”  
The Apostle, then, in order to bring forth the Truth that salvation is of Grace, declares that it is of God—that it springs directly and entirely from Him and from Him alone. Is not this according to the teaching of the Holy Spirit in other places where He affirms over and over again that the alpha and omega of our salvation must be found, not in ourselves, but in our God? Our Apostle, in saying that God has saved us, refers to all the Persons of the Divine Unity. The Father has saved us. “God has given to us eternal life” (1Jn 5:11). “The Father Himself loves you.” It was He whose gracious mind first conceived the thought of redeeming His chosen from the ruin of the Fall.  
It was His mind which first planned the way of salvation by Substitution. It was from His generous heart that the thought first sprang that Christ should suffer as the Covenant Head of His people, as said the Apostle, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:3-6).  
From the heart of Divine compassion came the gift of the only begotten Son: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The Father selected the persons who should receive an interest in the redemption of His Son, for these are described as, “called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). The plan of salvation in all its details sprang from the Father’s wisdom and grace. The Apostle did not, however, overlook the work of the Son. It is most certainly through the Son of God that we are saved, for is not His name Jesus, the Savior? Incarnate in the flesh, His holy life is the righteousness in which saints are arrayed, while His ignominious and painful death has filled the sacred bath of blood in which the sinner must be washed that he may be made clean.  
It is through the Redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, that the people of God become accepted in the Beloved. With one voice before the Eternal Throne they sing, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory.” And they chant that hymn because He deserves the glory which they ascribe to Him. It is the Son of God who is the Savior of men, and men are not the saviors of themselves. Nor did the Apostle, I am persuaded, forget that Third Person in the blessed Unity— the Holy Spirit.  
Who but the Holy Spirit first gives us power to understand the Gospel? “The carnal mind understands not the things that are of God.” Does not the Holy Spirit influence our will, turning us from the obstinacy of our former rebellion to the obedience of the Truth of God? Does not the Holy Spirit renew us, creating us in Christ Jesus unto good works? Is it not by the Holy Spirit’s breath that we live in the spiritual life? Is He not to us Instructor, Comforter, Quickener? Is He not everything, in fact, through His active operations upon our mind?  
The Father, then, in planning. The Son in redeeming. The Spirit, in applying the redemption, must be spoken of as the one God “who has saved us.” Brothers and Sisters, to say that we save ourselves is to utter a manifest absurdity! We are called in Scripture “a temple”—a holy temple in the Lord. But shall anyone assert that the stones of the edifice were their own architect? Shall it be said that the stones of the building in which we are now assembled cut themselves into their present shape and then spontaneously came together and piled this spacious edifice? Should anyone assert such a foolish thing we should be disposed to doubt his sanity! Much more may we suspect the spiritual sanity of any man who should venture to affirm that the great temple of the Church of God designed and erected itself!  
No! We believe that God the Father was the Architect, sketched the plan, supplies the materials, and will complete the work. Shall it also be said that those who are redeemed, redeemed themselves? That slaves of Satan break their own fetters? Then why was a Redeemer needed at all? How should there be any need for Jesus to descend into the world to redeem those who could redeem themselves? Do you believe that the sheep of God, whom He has taken from between the jaws of the lion, could have rescued themselves? It were a strange thing if such were the case.  
Our Lord Jesus came not to do a work of supererogation, but if He came to save persons who might have saved themselves, He certainly came without a necessity for so doing. We cannot believe that Christ came to do what the sinners might have done themselves! No, “He has trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him,” and the redemption of His people shall give glory unto Himself only!  
Shall it be asserted that those who were once dead have spiritually quickened themselves? Can the dead make themselves alive? Who shall assert that Lazarus, rotting in the grave, came forth to life of himself? If it is so said and so believed, then, no, not even then, will we believe that the dead in sin have ever quickened themselves! Those who are saved by God the Holy Spirit are created anew according to Scripture—but whoever dreamed of creation creating itself? God spoke the world out of nothing, but nothing did not aid in the creation of the universe! Divine energy can do everything, but what can nothing do?  
Now if we have a new creation, there must have been a creator, and it is clear that not being, then, spiritually created, we could not have assisted in our own new creation, unless, indeed, death can assist life, and non-existence aid in creation. The carnal mind does not assist the Spirit of God in new creating a man, but altogether regeneration is the work of God the Holy Spirit, and the work of renewal is from His unassisted power. Father, Son and Spirit, we, then, adore, and putting these thoughts together, we would humbly prostrate ourselves at the foot of the Throne of the august Majesty and acknowledge that if saved, He alone has saved us, and unto Him be the glory!  
2. We next remark that grace is in this verse rendered conspicuous when we see that God pursues a singular method, “Who has saved us and called us.” The peculiarity of the manner lies in three things—first, in the completeness of it. The Apostle uses the perfect tense and says, “who has saved us.” Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state and may ultimately be saved, but they are already saved.  
This is not according to the common talk of professors nowadays, for many of them speak of being saved when they come to die. But it is according to the usage of Scripture to speak of us who are saved. Be it known this morning that every man and woman here is either saved at this present moment, or lost—and that salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed and to be sung of in a future state—but a matter to be obtained, received, promised and enjoyed NOW! God has saved His saints, mark, not partly saved them, but perfectly saved them. The Christian is perfectly saved in God’s purpose. God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete.  
He is saved, also, as to the price which has been paid for him, for this is done not in part but in whole. The substitutionary work which Christ has offered is not a certain proportion of the work to be done, but, “it is finished,” was the cry of the Savior before He died. The Believer is also perfectly saved in his Covenant Head, for as we were utterly lost as soon as ever Adam fell, before we had committed any actual sin, so every man in Christ was saved in the second Adam when He finished His work. The Savior completed His work and in the sense in which Paul uses that expression, “He has saved us.”  
This completeness is one peculiarity—we must mark another. I want you to notice the order as well as the completeness—“who has saved us and called us.” What? Saved us before He called us? Yes, so the text says. But is a man saved before he is called by Divine Grace? Not in his own experience. Not as far as the work of the Holy Spirit goes. But he is saved in God’s purpose, in Christ’s redemption, and in his relationship to his covenant Head. And he is saved, moreover, in this respect—that the work of his salvation is done, and he has only to receive it as a finished work. In the olden times of imprisonment for debt it would have been quite correct for you to step into the cell of a debtor and say to him, “I have freed you,” if you had paid his debts and obtained an order for his discharge.  
Well, but he is still in prison! Yes, but you really liberated him as soon as you paid his debts. It is true he was still in prison, but he was not legally there, and no sooner did he know that the debt was paid and that receipt was pleaded before proper authorities, than the man obtained his liberty. So the Lord Jesus Christ paid the debts of His people before they knew anything about it. Did He not pay them on the Cross more than eighteen hundred years ago to the utmost penny? And is not this the reason why, as soon as He meets with us in a way of Grace, He cries, “I have saved you. Lay hold on eternal life”? We are, then, virtually, though not actually, saved before we are called. “He has saved us and called us.”  
There is yet a third peculiarity, and that is in connection with the calling. God has called us with a holy calling. Those whom the Savior saved upon the tree are, in due time, effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness. They leave their sins, they endeavor to be like Christ, they choose holiness—not out of any compulsion—but from the stress of a new nature which leads them to rejoice in holiness, just as naturally as before they delighted in sin. Whereas their old nature loved everything that was evil, their new nature cannot sin because it is born of God, and it loves everything that is good.  
Does not the Apostle mention this result of our calling in order to meet those who say that God calls His people because He foresees their holiness? Not so! He calls them to that holiness—that holiness is not a cause but an effect—it is not the motive of His purpose, but the result of His purpose. He neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them. The excellences which we see in a Believer are as much the work of God as the Atonement itself!  
This second point brings out very sweetly the fullness of the Grace of God. First—salvation must be of Grace, because the Lord is the Author of it, and what motive but Grace could move Him to save the guilty? In the next place, salvation must be of Grace because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Salvation is completed by God, and therefore not of man, neither by man. Salvation is worked by God in an order which puts our holiness as a consequence and not as a cause, and therefore merit is forever disowned.  
3. When a speaker desires to strengthen his point and to make himself clear, he generally puts in a negative as to the other side. So the Apostle adds a negative— “Not according to our works.” The world’s great preaching is, “Do as well as you can. Live a moral life and God will save you.” The Gospel preaching is this—“You are a lost sinner, and you can deserve nothing of God but His displeasure. If you are to be saved, it must be by an act of Sovereign Grace. God must freely extend the silver scepter of His love to you, for you are a guilty wretch who deserves to be sent to the lowest Hell. Your best works are so full of sin that they can in no degree save you—to the free mercy of God you must owe all things.”  
“Oh,” says one, “are good works of no use?” Good works are of use when a man is saved—they are the evidences of his being saved. But good works do not save a man, good works do not influence the mind of God to save a man, for if so, salvation would be a matter of debt and not of Grace. The Lord has declared over and over in His Word, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” “By the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.” The Apostle in the Epistle to the Galatians is very strong, indeed, upon this point. Indeed, he thunders it out again, and again, and again! He denies that salvation is even so much as in part due to our works, for if it is by works, then he declares it is not of Grace, otherwise Grace is no more Grace. And if it is of Grace, it is not of works, otherwise work is no more work.  
Paul assures us that the two principles of Grace and merit can no more mix together than fire and water—that if man is to be saved by the mercy of God—it must be by the mercy of God and not by works. But if man is to be saved by works, it must be by works entirely and not by mercy mixed with it, for mercy and work will not go together. Jesus saves, but He does all the work or none. He is Author and Finisher, and works must not rob Him of His due. Sinner, you must either receive salvation freely from the hand of Divine Bounty, or else you must earn it by your own unassisted merits, which is utterly impossible! Oh that you would yield to the first!  
My Brethren, this is the Truth of God which still needs to be preached. This is the Truth of God which shook all Europe from end to end when Luther first proclaimed it. Is not this the old thunderbolt which the great Reformer hurled at Rome—“Justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”? But why did God make salvation to be by faith? Scripture tells us—“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” If it had been by works it must have been by debt—but since it is by faith we can clearly see that there can be no merit in faith. It must be therefore by Divine Grace.  
4. My text is even more explicit, yet, for the eternal purpose is mentioned. The next thing the Apostle says is this: “Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose.” Mark that word—“according to His own purpose.” Oh how some people wriggle over that word, as if they were worms on a fisherman’s hook! But there it stands, and cannot be gotten rid of. God saves His people “according to His purpose.” No, “according to His OWN purpose.”  
My Brothers and Sisters, do you not see how all the merit and the power of the creature are shut out here, when you are saved, not according

to your purpose or merit, but “according to His own purpose”? I shall not dwell on this. It is not exactly the object of this morning’s discourse to bring out in full the great mystery of electing love, but I will not, for a moment, keep back the Truth of God. If any man is saved, it is not because he purposed to be saved, but because God purposed to save him.  
Have you never read the Holy Spirit’s testimony: “It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy”? The Savior said to His Apostles what He, in effect, says also to us, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you might bring forth fruit.” Some hold one and some another view concerning the freedom of the will, but our Savior’s doctrine is, “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” You will not come! Your wills will never bring you! If you do come, it is because Divine Grace inclined you! “No man can come unto Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw Him.” “Whoever comes to Me I will in no wise cast out,” is a great and precious general text, but it is quite consistent with the rest of the same verse—“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.”  
Our text tells us that our salvation is “according to His own purpose.” It is a strange thing that men should be so angry against the purpose of God. We ourselves have a purpose—we permit our fellow creatures to have some will of their own, and especially in giving away their own goods. But is my God to be bound and fettered by men, and not permitted to do as He wills with His own? But be this known unto you, O men that reply against God, that He gives no account of His actions, but asks of you, “Can I not do as I will with My own?” He rules in Heaven, and in the armies of this lower world, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are you doing?”  
5. But then the text, lest we should make any mistake, adds, “according to His own purpose and grace.” The purpose is not founded on foreseen merit, but upon Divine Grace alone. It is Grace, all Grace, nothing but Grace from first to last! Man stands shivering outside, a condemned criminal, and God, sitting upon His Throne, sends the herald to tell him that He is willing to receive sinners and to pardon them. The sinner replies, “Well, I am willing to be pardoned if I am permitted to do something in order to earn pardon. If I can stand before the King and claim that I have done something to win His favor, I am quite willing to come.”  
But the herald replies, “No, if you are pardoned, you must understand it is entirely and wholly as an act of Grace on God’s part. He sees nothing good in you. He knows that there is nothing good in you. He is willing to take you just as you are, filthy, and bad, and wicked, and undeserving. He is willing to give you graciously what He would not sell to you, and what He knows you cannot earn of Him. Will you take it?” And naturally every man says, “No, I will not be saved in that style.”  
Well, then, Soul, remember that you will never be saved at all, for God’s way is salvation by Grace! You will have to confess, if ever you are saved, my dear Hearer, that you never deserved one single blessing from the God of Grace. You will have to give all the glory to His holy name if ever you get to Heaven. And mark you, even in the matter of the acceptance of this offered mercy, you will never accept it unless He makes you willing! He does freely present it to every one of you, and He honestly bids you come to Christ and live. But come you never will, I know, except the effectual Grace which first provided mercy shall make you willing to accept that mercy. So the text tells us it is His own purpose and Grace.  
6. Again, in order to shut out everything like boasting, the whole is spoken of as a gift. Notice—lest, (for we are such straying sheep in this matter), lest we should still slip out of the field—it is added, “purpose and grace which He gave us.” Not, “which He sold us,” “offered us,” but “which He GAVE us.” He must have a word here which shall be a death-blow to all merit—“which he gave us”—it was GIVEN. And what can be freer than a gift, and what more evidently of Divine Grace?  
7. But the gift is bestowed through a medium, which glorifies Christ. It is written, “which was given us in Christ Jesus.” We ask to have mercy from the wellhead of Divine Grace, and we ask not even to make the bucket in which it is to be brought to us! Christ is to be the sacred vessel in which the Grace of God is to be presented to our thirsty lips. Now where is boasting? Why surely there it sits at the foot of the Cross and sings, “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Is it not Grace and Grace alone?  
8. Yet further, a period is mentioned and added—“before the world began.” Those last words seem to me forever to lay prostrate all idea of anything of our own merits in saving ourselves, because it is here witnessed that God gave us Divine Grace “before the world began.” Where were you then? What hand had you in it “before the world began”? Why, fly back, if you can, in imagination, to the ancient years when those venerable mountains, that elder birth of nature, were not yet formed! Fly back when world, and sun, and moon, and stars, were all in embryo in God’s great mind—when the unnavigated sea of space had never been disturbed by wing of seraph, and the awful silence of eternity had never been startled by the song of cherubim—when God dwelt alone.  
If you can conceive that time before all time, that vast eternity—it was then He gave us Grace in Christ Jesus. What, O Soul, had you to do with that? Where were your merits then? Where were you yourself? O you small dust of the balance, you insect of a day, where were you? See how Jehovah reigned, dispensing mercy as He would, and ordaining unto eternal life without taking counsel of man or angel, for neither man or angel then had an existence! That it might be all of Grace He gave us Grace before the world began!  
I have honestly read out the doctrine of the text, and nothing more. If such is not the meaning of the text I do not know the meaning of it, and I cannot, therefore, tell you what it is. But I believe that I have given the natural and grammatical teaching of the text. If you do not like the doctrine, I cannot help it. I did not make the text, and if I have to expound it I must expound it honestly as it is in my Master’s Word. And I pray you receive what He says, whatever you may do with what I say.  
II. I shall want your patience while I try to SHOW THE USES OF THIS DOCTRINE. The Doctrine of Grace has been put by in the lumber chamber. It is acknowledged to be true, for it is confessed in most creeds. It is in the Church of England articles. It is in the confessions of all sorts of Protestant Christians, except those who are avowedly Arminian, but how little is it ever preached! It is put among the relics of the past. It is considered to be a respectable sort of retired officer who is not expected to see any more active service.  
Now I believe that it is not a superannuated officer in the Master’s army, but that it is as full of force and vigor as ever. But what is the use of it? Why, first, it is clear from the connection that it has a tendency to embolden the man who receives it. Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed, and he gives this as a motive—how can a man be ashamed when he believes that God has given him Grace in Christ Jesus before the world was? Suppose the man to be very poor. “Oh,” he says, “what does it matter? Though I have but a little oil in the cruse, and a little meal in the barrel, yet I have a lot and a portion in everlasting things! My name is not in Doomsday Book nor in Burke’s Peerage—but it is in the book of God’s election, and was there before the world began!”  
Such a man dares look the proudest of his fellows in the face. This was the doctrine on which the brave old Ironsides fed—the men who, when they rode to battle with the war cry of, “The Lord of Hosts!” made the cavaliers fly before them like chaff before the wind. No doctrine like it for putting a backbone into a man, and making him feel that he is made for something better than to be trod down like straw for the dunghill beneath a despot’s heel. Sneer who will, the elect of God derive a nobility from the Divine choice which no royal patent can outshine! I would that Free Grace were more preached, because it gives men something to believe with confidence.  
The great mass of professing Christians know nothing of doctrine. Their religion consists in going a certain number of times to a place of worship, but they have no care for the Truth of God one way or another. I speak without any prejudice in this matter—but I have talked with a large number of persons in the course of my very extensive pastorate who have been for years members of other churches. And when I have asked them a few questions upon doctrinal matters it did not seem to me that they thought they were in error—they were perfectly willing to believe almost anything that any earnest man might teach them. But they did not know anything—they had no minds of their own—and no definite opinions.  
Our children, who have learned “The Westminster Assembly’s Confession of Faith,” know more about the Doctrines of Grace and the doctrine of the Bible than hundreds of grownups who attend a ministry which very eloquently teaches nothing. It was observed by a very excellent critic not long ago that if you were to hear thirteen lectures on astronomy or geology you might get a pretty good idea of what the science was, and the theory of the person who gave the lectures—but that if you were to hear thirteen hundred sermons from some ministers, you would not know at all what they were preaching about or what their doctrinal sentiments were. It ought not to be so.  
Is not this the reason why Puseyism spreads so, and all sorts of errors have such a foothold, because our people, as a whole, do not know what they believe? The doctrine of Election, if well received, gives to a man something which he knows and which he holds and which will become dear to him. Something for which he would be prepared to die if the fires of persecution were again kindled! Better still is it that this doctrine not only gives the man something to hold but it holds the man! Let a man once have burnt into him that salvation is of God and not of man, and that God’s Grace is to be glorified and not human merit, and you will never get that belief out of him!  
It is the rarest thing in all the world to hear of such a man ever apostatizing from his faith. Other doctrine is slippery ground, like the slope of a mountain composed of loose earth and rolling stones down which the traveler may slide long before he can even get a transient foothold. But this is like a granite step upon the eternal pyramid of Truth—get your feet on this—and there is no fear of slipping so far as doctrinal standing is concerned. If we would have our churches in England well instructed and holding fast the Truth of God, we must bring out the grand old verity of the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus before the world began!  
Oh may the Holy Spirit write it on our hearts! Moreover, my Brethren, this doctrine overwhelms, as with an avalanche, all the claims of priestcraft. Let it be told to men that they are saved by God, and they say at once, “Then what is the good of the priest?” If they are told it is God’s Grace, then they ask, “Then you do not want our money to buy masses and absolutions?” And down goes the priest at once! Beloved, this is the battering ram that God uses with which to shake the gates of Hell! How much more forcible than the pretty essays of many so-called Divines which have no more power than bulrushes, no more light than smoking flax!  
What do you suppose people used to meet in the woods for in persecuting times? They met by thousands outside the town of Antwerp, and suchlike places on the Continent, in jeopardy of their lives! Do you suppose they would ever have come together to hear that poor milk-and-water theology of this age, or to receive the lukewarm milk and water of our modern anti-Calvinists? Not they, my Brethren! They needed stronger meat, and a more savory diet to attract them. Do you imagine that when it was death to listen to the preacher, that men under the shadows of night, and amid the wings of tempest would then listen to philosophical essays, or to mere moral precepts, or to diluted, adulterated, soulless, theological suppositions?  
No! There is no energy in that kind of thing to draw men together under fear of their lives. So what did bring them together in the dead of night amidst the glare of lightning, and the roll of thunder? What brought them together? Why, the doctrine of the Grace of God! The doctrine of Jesus and of His servants Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin! For there is something in that doctrine which touches the heart of the Christian and gives him food such as his soul loves, savory meat, suitable to his Heaven-born appetite!  
To hear this, men braved death and defied the sword! And it we are to see once again the scarlet hat plucked from the wearer’s head, and the shaven crowns with all the gaudy trumpery of Rome sent back to the place from where they came—and Heaven grant that they may take our Puseyite Established Church with them—it must be by declaring all the doctrines of the Grace of God! When these are declared and vindicated in every place, we shall yet again make these enemies of God and man to know that they cannot stand their ground for a moment where men of God wield the sword of the Lord and of Gideon by preaching the doctrines of the Grace of God.  
Brothers and Sisters, let the man receive these Truths! Let them be written in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and they will make him look up. He will say, “God has saved me!” and he will walk with a constant eye to God. He will not forget to see the hand of God in Nature and in Providence. He will, on the contrary, discern the Lord working in all places, and will humbly adore Him. He will not give to laws of Nature or schemes of State the glory due to the Most High, but will have respect unto the unseen Ruler.  
“What the Lord says to me, that will I do,” is the Believer’s language. “What is His will that will I follow. What is His Word, that will I believe. What is His promise, on that I will live.” It is a blessed habit to teach a man to look up, look up to God in all things! At the same time, this doctrine of Election makes a man look down upon himself. “Ah,” he says, “I am nothing! There is nothing in me to merit esteem. I have no goodness of my own. If saved, I cannot praise myself. I cannot in anyway ascribe to myself honor. God has done it, God has done it.” Nothing makes the man so humble, but nothing makes him so glad! Nothing lays him so low at the Mercy Seat, but nothing makes him so brave to look his fellow man in the face. It is a grand Truth of God! Would to God you all knew its mighty power!  
Lastly, this precious Truth is full of comfort to the sinner, and that is why I love it. As it has been preached by some it has been exaggerated and made into a bugbear. Why, there are some who preach the doctrine of Election as though it were a line of sharp spikes to keep a sinner from coming to Christ! As though it were a sharp, glittering sword to be pushed into the breast of a coming sinner to keep him from mercy!  
Now it is not so. Sinner, whoever you may be, wherever you may be, your greatest comfort should be to know that salvation is by Divine Grace. Why Man, if it were by merit, what would become of you? Suppose that God saved men on account of their merits? Where would you drunkards be? Where would you swearers be? You who have been unclean and unchaste, and you whose hearts have cursed God, and who even now do not love Him—where would you be?  
But when it is all of Grace, why, then, all your past life, however black and filthy it may be, need not keep you from coming to Jesus. Christ receives sinners! God has elected sinners! He has elected some of the filthiest of sinners—why not you? He receives everyone that comes to Him. He will not cast you out. There have been some who have hated Him, insulted Him to His face—that have burned His servants alive, and have persecuted Him in His members—but as soon as they have cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” He has given them mercy at once!  
And He will give it to you if you are led to seek it. If I had to tell you that you were to work out your own salvation apart from His Grace it were a sad day for you. But when it comes to you yourself—filthy—there is washing for you! Dead—there is life for you! Naked—there is raiment for you! All undone and ruined—here is a complete salvation for you! O Soul, may you have Grace to lay hold of it, and then you and I together will sing to the praise of the glory of Divine Grace.

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÷2Ti 1.12

FAITH ILLUSTRATED  
NO. 271

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 21, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless**

**I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have  
believed and am persuaded that He is  
able to keep that which I have committed  
unto Him against that day.”**

*2Ti 1:12***.**

AN assurance of our safety in Christ will be found useful to us in all states of experience. When Jesus sent forth His seventy chosen disciples, endowed with miraculous powers, they performed great wonders and naturally enough they were somewhat elated when they returned to tell Him of their deeds. Jesus marked their tendency to pride. He saw that in the utterance—“Behold even devils were subject to us,” there was mingled much of self-congratulation and boasting. What cure, do you think, He administered—or what was the sacred lesson that He taught them which might prevent their being exalted above measure? “Nevertheless,” said He, “rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.”

The assurance of our eternal interest in Christ may help to keep us humble in the day of our prosperity. For when God multiplies our wealth, when He blesses our endeavors, when He speeds the plow—when He wafts the good ship swiftly onward—this may act as a sacred ballast to us, that we have something better than these things and therefore we must not set our affections upon the things of earth, but upon things above. And let our heart be where our greatest treasure is, I say, better than any lancet to spill the superfluous blood of our boasting, better than any bitter medicine to chase the burning fever of our pride. Better than any mixture of the most pungent ingredients is this most precious and hallowed wine of the Covenant—a remembrance of our safety in Christ. This, this alone, opened up to us by the Spirit, will suffice to keep us in that happy lowliness which is the true position of the full-grown man in Christ Jesus.

But note this—when at any time we are cast down with multiplied afflictions and oppressed with sorrow—the very same fact which kept us humble in prosperity may preserve us from despair in adversity. For mark you here, the Apostle was surrounded by a great fight of affliction. He was compassed about with troubles, he suffered within and without—and yet he says, “Nevertheless I am not ashamed.” But what is that which preserves him from sinking? It is the same truth which kept the ancient disciples from overweening pride. It is the sweet persuasion of his interest in

Christ. “For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” Get then, Christian Brethren and friends, get assurance. Be not content with hope—get confidence. Rest not in faith, labor after the full assurance of faith. And never be content, my Hearer, till you can say you know your election, you are sure of your redemption and you are certain of your preservation unto that day.

I propose this morning in preaching upon this text to labor both for the edification of the saint and the conversion of the sinner. I shall divide the text very amply thus—First, we have in it the grandest action of the Christian’s life, namely, the committing of our eternal interests into the hand of Christ. Secondly, we have the justification of this grand act of trust—“I know in whom I have trusted.” I have not trusted one whose character is unknown to me, I am not foolish, I have sure grounds for what I have done. And then we have, thirdly, the most blessed effect of this confidence—“I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.”

I. First, then I am to describe THE GRANDEST ACTION OF THE CHRISTIAN’S LIFE.  
With all our preaching, I am afraid that we too much omit the simple explanation of the essential act in salvation. I have feared that the anxious enquirer might visit many of our Churches and Chapels, month after month and yet he would not get a clear idea of what he must do to be saved. He would come away with an indistinct notion that he was to believe, but what he was to believe he would not know. He would, perhaps, obtain some glimmering of the fact that he must be saved through the merits of Christ, but how those merits can become available to him, he would still be left to guess. I know at least that this was my case—that when sincere and anxious to do or be anything which might save my soul, I was utterly in the dark as to the way in which my salvation might be rendered thoroughly secure. Now, this morning, I hope I shall be able to put it into such a light that he who runs may read and that the wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein.  
The Apostle says he committed himself into the hands of Christ. His soul with all its eternal interests. His soul with all its sins, with all its hopes and all its fears, he had put into the hands of Christ, as the grandest and most precious deposit which man could ever make. He had taken himself just as he was and had surrendered himself to Christ, saying— “Lord save me, for I cannot save myself. I give myself up to You, freely relying upon Your power and believing in Your love. I give my soul up to You to be washed, cleansed, saved and preserved and at last brought home to Heaven.”  
This act of committing himself to Christ was the first act which ever brought real comfort to his spirit. It was the act which he must continue to perform whenever he would escape from a painful sense of sin. The act with which he must enter Heaven itself—if he would die in peace and see God’s face with acceptance—he must still continue to commit himself into the keeping of Christ. I take it that when the Apostle committed himself to Christ, he meant these three things. He meant first, that from that good hour he renounced all dependence upon his own efforts to save himself.  
The Apostle had done very much, after a fashion, towards his own salvation. He commenced with all the advantages of ancestry. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, as concerning the law, a Pharisee. He was one of the very straightest of the straightest sect of his religion. So anxious was he to obtain salvation by his own efforts, that he left no stone unturned. Whatever Pharisee might be a hypocrite, Paul was none. Though he tithed his anise and his mint and his cumin, he did not neglect the weightier matters of the law. He might have united with truth, in the affirmation of the young man, “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” Hear you his own testimony—“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinks that he has whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.”  
Being exceedingly desirous to serve God, he sought to put down what he thought was the pestilent heresy of Christ. Being exceeding hot in his endeavors against everything that he thought to be wrong, he persecuted the professors of the new religion. He hunted them in every city, brought them into the synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme. When he had emptied his own country, he must needs take a journey to another, that he might there show his zeal in the cause of his God, by bringing out those whom he thought to be the deluded followers of an impostor.  
But suddenly Paul’s mind is changed. Almighty grace leads him to see that he is working in a wrong direction—that his toil is lost—that Sisyphus might as well seek to roll his stone up hill as for him to find a road to Heaven up the steeps of Sinai. That as well might the daughters of Danaus hope to fill the bottomless cauldron with a bucket full of holes, as Paul indulge the idea that he could fill up the measure of the Laws’ demands. Consequently he feels that all he has done is worth nothing and coming to Christ he cries, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”  
And now, my dear Friends, if you would be saved, this is what you must do. I hope many of you have already performed the solemn act—you have said to Jesus in the privacy of your closet—“O Lord, I have tried to save myself, but I renounce all my endeavors. Once I said, ‘I am no worse than my neighbors, my goodness shall preserve me.’ Once I said, ‘I have been baptized, I have taken the sacrament, in these things will I trust,’ and now, Lord, I cast all this false confidence to the winds— *‘No more, my God, I am set no more  
Of all the duties I have done.  
I quit the hopes I held before  
To trust the merits of Your Son.  
The best obedience of my hands  
Dares not appear before Your throne—  
But faith can answer Your demands  
By pleading what my Lord has done.’”*  
You cannot be saved if you have one hand on self and the other hand on Christ. Let go, renounce all dependence in anything you can do. Cease to be your own keeper—give up the futile attempt to be your own Savior and then you will have taken the first step to Heaven. There are but two, the first is—out of self, the next is—into Christ. When Christ is your all, then are you safe.  
But again, when the Apostle says he committed his soul to the keeping of Christ, he means that he had implicit confidence that Christ would save him now that he had relinquished all trust in self. Some men have gone far enough to feel that the best performance of their hands cannot be accepted before the bar of God. They have learned that their most holy acts are full of sin, that their most faithful service falls short of the demands of the Law. They have relinquished self, but they are not able yet to see that Christ can and will save them. They are waiting for some great revelation. They think, perhaps, that by some marvelous electric shock, or some miraculous feeling within them, they will be led to place their confidence in Christ. They want to see an angel or a vision, or to hear a voice. Their cry is, “How could I think that Jesus would save such an one as I am? I am too vile, or else I am too hardened. I am the odd man. It is not likely that Christ would ever save me.”  
Now, I doubt not that the Apostle had felt all this, but he overcame all this attacking of sin and he came at last to Christ and said, “Jesus, I feel that You are worthy of my confidence. Behold, I the chief of sinners am, I have nothing in myself that can assist You in taking me to Heaven. I shall kick and struggle against You rather than assist You. But behold, I feel that such is Your power and such Your love, that I commit myself to You. Take me as I am and make me what You would have me be. I am vile, but You are worthy. I am lost, but You are the Savior. I am dead, but You are the Quickener—take me—I beseech You. I put my trust in You and though I perish, I will perish relying on Your blood. If I must die, I will die with my arms about Your Cross, for You are worthy of confidence and on You do I rely.”  
And now, my Friends, if you will be safe, you must, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, do this also. You say you have given up all trust in self— well and good. Now place your trust in Christ, repose your all on Him. Drop into His arms—cast yourself into His power—lay hold on Him. You know how Joab, when he fled from the sword of Solomon, laid hold on the horns of the altar, thinking that surely when he had laid hold on the altar he was safe. His was vain confidence, for he was dragged from the horns of the altar and slain. But if you can lay hold on the horns of the altar of God, even Christ, you are most surely safe and no sword of vengeance can ever reach you.  
I saw the other day a remarkable picture, which I shall use as an illustration of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus. An offender had committed a crime for which he must die, but it was in the olden times when Churches were considered to be sanctuaries in which criminals might hide themselves and so escape. See the transgressor—he rushes towards the Church, the guards pursue him with their drawn swords, all thirsty for his blood. They pursue him even to the Church door. He rushes up the steps and just as they are about to overtake him and hew him in pieces on the threshold of the Church, out comes the Bishop and holding up the crucifix he cries, “Back, back! Stain not the precincts of God’s House with blood! Stand back!” And the guards at once respect the emblem and stand back, while the poor fugitive hides himself behind the robes of the priest.  
It is even so with Christ. The guilty sinner flies to the Cross—flies straight away to Jesus and though Justice pursues him, Christ lifts up His wounded hands and cries to Justice, “Stand back! Stand back! I shelter this sinner. In the secret place of My tabernacle do I hide him. I will not suffer him to perish, for he puts his trust in Me.” Sinner, fly to Christ! But you say, “I am too vile.” The viler you are, the more will you honor Him by believing that He is able to make you clean. “But I am too great a sinner.” Then the more honor shall be given to Him that you are able to confide in Him, great sinner though you are. If you have a little sickness and you tell your physician—“Sir, I am quite confident in your skill to heal,” there is no great compliment. But if you are sorely sick with a complication of diseases and you say—“Sir, I seek no better skill, I will ask no more excellent advice, I trust alone in you,” what an honor have you conferred on him—that you could trust your life in his hands when it was in extreme danger.  
Do the like with Christ. Put your soul in His care—dare it, venture it— cast yourself simply on Him. Let nothing but faith be in your soul. Believe Him and you shall never be mistaken in your trust.  
But I think I have not completely stated all the Apostle meant, when he said that he committed himself to Christ. He certainly meant those two things—self-renunciation and implicit belief in Christ’s power and willingness to save. But in the third place, the Apostle meant that he did make a full and free surrender of himself to Christ—to be Christ’s property and Christ’s servant forever. If you would be saved you must not be your own. Salvation is through being bought with a price. And if you are bought with a price and thus saved, remember, from that day forward you will not be your own.  
Today, as an ungodly sinner, you are your own master, free to follow the lusts of the flesh. Or, rather Satan is your great tyrant and you are under bondage to him. If you would be saved you must, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, now renounce the bondage of Satan and come to Christ, saying, “Lord I am willing to give up all sin. It is not in my power to be perfect but I wish it were, make me perfect. There is not a sin I wish to keep— take all away. I present myself before You. Wash me, make me clean. Do what You will with me. I make no reserve, I make a full surrender of all to You.”  
And then you must give up to Christ all you are and all you have by solemn indenture, signed and sealed by your own heart. You must say in the words of the sweet Moravian hymn—  
*“Take You my soul and all my powers.  
O take my memory, mind and will.  
Take all my goods and all my hours,  
Take all I know and all I feel.  
Take all I think and speak and do—  
O take my heart, but make it new.”*  
Accept the sacrifice—I am worthless, but receive me through Your owe merits. Take and keep me, I am, I hope I ever shall be Yours.  
I have now explained that act which is, after all, the only one which marks the day of salvation to the soul. I will give one or two figures, however, to set it in a clearer light. When a man has gold and silver in his house, he fears lest some thief may break through and steal and therefore if he is a wise man he seeks out a bank in which to store his money. He makes a deposit of his gold and his silver. He says in effect, “Take that, Sir, keep it for me. Tonight I shall sleep securely. I shall have no thought of thieves. My treasure is in your hands. Take care of that for me, when I need it, at your hands shall I require it.” Now in faith we do just the same with our blessed Redeemer. We bring our soul just as it is and give it up to Him. “Lord, I cannot keep it. Sin and Satan will be sure to ruin it—take it and keep it for me and in that day when God shall require the treasure, stand as my Sponsor and on my behalf return my soul to my Maker kept and preserved, by Your grace, to the end.”  
Or take another figure. When your adventurous spirit has sought to climb some lofty mountain, delighted with the prospect, you scale many and many a steep. Onward you climb up the rocky crags until at last you arrive at the verge of the snow and ice. There in the midst of precipices that scarcely know a bottom and of summits that seem inaccessible, you are suddenly surrounded with a fog. Perhaps it becomes worse and worse until a snow-storm completes your bewilderment. You cannot see a step before you—your are lost. A guide appears—“I know this mountain,” says he. “In my early days have I climbed it with my father. Over each of these crags have I leaped in pursuit of the chamois. I know every chasm and cavern. If you will follow me, even through the darkness, I will find the path and bring you down.  
But mark, before I undertake to guide you in safety, I demand of you implicit trust. You must not plant

your feet where you think it safest, but where I shall bid you. Wherever I bid you climb or descend you must implicitly obey and I undertake on my part to bring you safely down to your house again.” You do so—you have many temptations to prefer your own judgment to his but you resist them—and you are safe.  
Even so must you do with Christ. Lost today and utterly bewildered Christ appears. “Let Me guide you, let Me be an eye to you through the thick darkness. Let Me be your feet, lean on Me in the slippery places. Let Me be your very life. Let Me wrap you in My crimson vest to keep you from the tempest and the storm.” Will you now trust Him? Rely entirely, simply and implicitly upon Him? If so, the grand act of your life is done and you are a saved man and on the terra firma of Heaven you shall one day plant your delighted feet and praise the name of Him who saved you from your sins.  
I must add, however, that this act of faith must not be performed once only, but it must be continued as long as you live. As long as you live you must have no other confidence but “Jesus only.” You must take Him today, to have and to hold through life and in death, in tempest and in sunshine, in poverty and in wealth, never to part or sever from Him. You must take Him to be your only prop, your only pillar from this day forth and forever. What do you say, Sinner? Does God the Holy Spirit lead you to say “Yes?” Does your heart now confide in Jesus? If so, let the angels sing, for a soul is born to God and a brand is plucked from the eternal fire. I have thus described faith in Christ—the committing of the soul to him.  
II. This brings us to our second point—THE JUSTIFICATION OF THIS GRAND ACT OF TRUST.  
Confidence is sometimes folly—trusting in man is always so. When I exhort you, then, to put your entire confidence in Christ, am I justified in so doing? And when the Apostle could say that he trusted alone in Jesus and had committed himself to Him, was he a wise man or a fool? What said the Apostle? “I am no fool,” said he, “for I know whom I have believed. I have not trusted to an unknown and untried pretender. I have not relied upon one whose character I could suspect. I have confidence in One whose power, whose willingness, whose love, whose truthfulness I know. I know whom I have believed.”  
When silly women put their trust in yet more silly and wicked priests, they may say possibly that they know whom they have believed. But we may tell them that their knowledge must be ignorance indeed—that they are greatly deluded in imagining that any man, be he who he may, or what he may, can have any power in the salvation of his fellow’s soul. You come sneaking up to me and ask me to repose my soul in you. And who are you? “I am an ordained priest of the Church of Rome.” And who ordained you? “I was ordained by such a one.” And who ordained him? “It comes after all,” said he, “from the Pope.” And who is he and what is he more than any other man, or any other imposter? What ordination can he confer? “He obtained it directly from Peter.”  
Did he? Let the link be proven. And if he did, what was Peter and where has God given Peter power to forgive sin—a power which he should transmit to all generations? Be gone! The thick pollutions of your abominable Church forbid the idea of descent from any Apostle but the traitor Judas. Upon the Papal throne men worse than devils have had their seat and even a woman big with her adulteries once reigned as head of your accursed Church. Go purge the filthiness of your priesthood, the debauchery of your nunneries and the stygian filth of your mother city, the old harlot Rome. Talk not of pardoning others, while fornication is licensed in Rome itself and her ministers are steeped to the throat in iniquity.  
But to return. I rest no more on Peter than Peter could rest in himself— Peter must rest on Christ as a poor guilty sinner himself—an imperfect man who denied his Master with oaths and curses. He must rest where I must rest and we must stand together on the same great rock on which Christ does build His Church, even His blood and His everlasting merits. I marvel that any should be found to have such confidence in men, that they should put their souls in their hands. If however any of you wish to trust in a priest, let me advise you if you do trust him, to do it wholly and fully. Trust him with your cash-box, trust him with your gold and silver.  
Perhaps you object to that. You don’t feel at all inclined to go that length. But, my Friend, if you cannot trust the man with your gold and silver, pray, don’t trust him with your soul. I only suggested this because I thought you might smile and at once detect your error. If you could not trust such a fox with your business. If you would as soon commit your flocks to the custody of a wolf, why will you be fool enough to lay your soul at the feet of some base priest who, likely enough, is ten thousand times more wicked than yourself?  
Was Paul, then, justified in his confidence in Christ? He says he was because he knew Christ. And what did he know? Paul knew, first of all, Christ’s Godhead. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. If my soul is in His hand—  
*“Where is the power can reach it there, Or what can pluck it from there?”*  
If the wings of Omnipotence cover it, if the eyes of Omnipotence are fixed upon it and if the heart of eternal love does cherish it, how can it be destroyed? Trust not your soul, my fellow man, anywhere but with your God.  
If Jesus is your God rely fully in Him and think not that you can place a confidence too great in Him who made the heavens and bears the world upon His shoulders. Paul knew, too, that Christ was the Redeemer. Paul had seen in vision, Christ in the garden. He had beheld Him sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. By faith Paul had seen Jesus hanging on the Cross. He had marked His agonies on the tree of doom. He had listened to His death shriek, “It is finished,” and he felt that the atonement which Jesus offered was more than enough to recompense for the sin of man.  
Paul might have said, “I am not foolish in confiding my soul in the pierced and blood-stained hand of Him whose sacrifice has satisfied the Father and opened the gates of Heaven to all Believers.” Further, Paul knew that Christ was risen from the dead. By faith he saw Christ at the right hand of God, pleading with His Father for all those who commit themselves to His hand. Paul knew Christ to be the all-prevailing Intercessor. He said to himself, “I am not wrong in believing Him, for I know whom I have trusted, that when He pleads, the Father will not deny Him and when He asks, sooner might He even die than become deaf to Jesus’ prayer.”  
This was again, another reason why Paul dared to trust in Christ. He knew His Godhead, he knew His redemption, he knew His resurrection, he knew His ascension and intercession. And I may add, Paul knew the love of Christ, that love which passes kindness—higher than thought and deeper than conception. He knew Christ’s power, that he was Omnipotent, the King of kings. He knew Christ’s faithfulness. That He was God and could not lie. He knew His immutability, that He was “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday today and forever.” And having known Christ in every glorious office, in every Divine attribute and in all the beauty of His complex Character, Paul said, “I can with confidence repose in Him, for I know Him, I have trusted and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.”  
But Paul not only knew these things by faith, but he knew much of them by experience. Our knowledge of Christ is somewhat like climbing one of our Welsh mountains. When you are at the base you see but little, the mountain itself appears to be but one half as high as it really is. Confined in a little valley you discover scarcely anything but the rippling brooks as they descend into the stream at the base of the mountain. Climb the first rising knoll and the valley lengthens and widens beneath your feet. Go up higher and higher still, till you stand upon the summit of one of the great roots that start out as spurs from the sides of the mountain. You see the country for some four or five miles round and you are delighted with the widening prospect. But go onward and onward and onward and how the scene enlarges, till at last, when you are on the summit and look east, west, north and south, you see almost all England lying before you.  
Yonder is a forest in some distant country, perhaps two hundred miles away and yonder the sea and there a shining river and the smoking chimneys of a manufacturing town, or there the masts of the ships in some well known port. All these things please and delight you and you say, “I could not have imagined that so much could be seen at this elevation.” Now, the Christian life is of the same order. When we first believe in Christ we see but little of Him. The higher we climb the more we discover of His excellencies and His beauties. But who has ever gained the summit? Who has ever known all the fullness of the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the love of Christ which passes knowledge?  
Paul now grown old, sitting, gray haired, shivering in a dungeon in Rome—he could say, with greater power than we can, “I know whom I have believed.” Each experience had been like the climbing of a hill, each trial had been like the ascending to another summit and his death seemed like the gaining of the very top of the mountain from which he could see the whole of the faithfulness and the love of Him to whom he had committed his soul.  
III. And now, I close by noticing THE APOSTLE’S CONFIDENCE. The Apostle said, “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” See this man. He is sure he shall be saved. But why? Paul! Are you sure that you can keep yourself? “No,” says he, “I have nothing to do with that.” And yet you are sure of your salvation! “Yes,” said he, “I am!” How is it, then? “Why, I am persuaded that He is able to keep me. Christ, to whom I commit myself, I know has power enough to hold me to the end.” Martin Luther was bold enough to exclaim, “Let Him that died for my soul, see to the salvation of it.”  
Let us catechize the Apostle for a few minutes and see if we cannot shake his confidence. Paul! You have had many trials and you will have many more. What if you should be subject to the pangs of hunger, combined with those of thirst. If not a mouthful of bread should pass your mouth to nourish your body, or a drop of water should comfort you, will not your faith fail you then? If provisions are offered you, on condition of the denial of your faith, do you not imagine that you will be quashed and that the pangs of nature will overpower you?  
“No,” says Paul, “famine shall not quench my faith—for the keeping of my faith is in the hands of Christ.” But what if, combined with this, the whole world should rise against you and scoff you? What if hunger within should echo to the shout of scorn without? Would you not then deny your faith? If, like Demas, every other Christian should turn to the silver of this world and deny the Master, would not you go with them? “No,” says the Apostle, “my soul is not in my keeping, else might it soon apostatize. It is in the hand of Christ. Though all men should leave me, yet He will keep me.”  
But what, O Apostle, if you should be chained to the stake and the flames should kindle and your flesh should begin to burn. When your beard is singed and your cheeks are black, will you then hold Him fast!? “Yes,” says the Apostle, “He will then hold me fast.” And I think I hear him, as he stops us in the midst of our catechizing and replies, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”  
Paul, Paul, suppose the world should tempt you in another way. If a kingdom were offered you—if the pomp and pleasures of this world should be laid at your feet, provided you would deny your Master, would your faith maintain its hold then? “Yes,” says the Apostle, “Jesus would, even then, uphold my faith for my soul is not in my keeping, but in His, and empires upon empires could not tempt Him to renounce that soul of which He has become the guardian and the keeper. Temptation might soon overcome me, but it could not overcome Him. The world’s blandishments might soon move me to renounce my own soul. But they could not for one moment move Jesus to give me up.”  
And so the Apostle continues his confidence. But Paul, when you shall come to die, will you not then fear and tremble? “No,” says he, “He will be with me there, too, for my soul shall not die, that will be still in the hands of Him who is immortality and life.” But what will become of you when your soul is separated from your body? Can you trust Him in a separate state, in the unknown world which visions cannot paint? In the time of God’s mighty thunder, when earth shall shake and Heaven shall reel. Can you trust Him then? “Yes,” says the Apostle, “until that day when all these tempests shall die away into eternal calm and when the moving earth shall settle into a stable land in which there shall be no more sea, even then can I trust Him—  
*“I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power,  
What I’ve committed to His hands  
Till the decisive hour.”*  
O poor Sinner! Come and put your soul into the hands of Jesus! Attempt not to take care of it yourself. And then your life shall be hidden in Heaven and kept there by the Almighty power of God, where none can destroy it and none can rob you of it. “Whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.”

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KNOWING AND BELIEVING  
NO. 3331

A SERMON  
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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“I know whom I have believed.”***2Ti 1:12***.**

THE text is wholly taken up with three things—with knowing, with believing and with the Person who is known and believed. And upon both the knowing and the believing, Paul is very decided. He puts in no, “if,” no word of change. He does not say, “I hope so,” or, “I trust so,” but, “I know I have believed and I know whom I have believed.” It is all assurance and not a shadow of doubt! Let us imitate the Apostle, or ask for Grace to be able to imitate him, that we may shake off the dubious phraseology which is so common among Christians, nowadays, and may be able to speak with Apostolic confidence upon a matter upon which we ought to be confident if anywhere at all, namely—our own salvation!

As the text is thus taken up with knowing and believing, these two matters will be the subject of our meditation at this time. My first remark drawn from the text shall be—

I. THE ONLY RELIGIOUS KNOWING AND BELIEVING WHICH ARE OF A SAVING CHARACTER CONCERN THE PERSON OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. “I know,” says the Apostle—not, “what”—but, “whom I have believed.” He does not say, “I know the Catechism which I have believed,” nor, “I know the Institutes of Calvin,” nor, “I know the body and system of theology,” but, “I know whom I have believed.” Both the knowing and the believing center around the wondrous Person who for our sakes left His starry Throne and became a Man. Knowing whom is a saving knowledge and trusting whom is a saving trust—of which all other knowing and believing fall short!

Observe, then, that all other knowledge may be useful enough in itself, but if it does not concern Christ, it cannot be called saving knowledge. Some persons know a great deal about Doctrine. Perhaps they have taken up with the Calvinistic theology, or even with the hyper-Calvinistic and they really understand the system thoroughly well—and they certainly hold it with quite enough tenacity, if not too much. We know some who we believe would very cheerfully go to the stake in defense of some points of Doctrine so convinced are they of the orthodoxy of what they have received! Others take up another theory and go upon the Arminian principle—and they, too, know their set of doctrines and know them well. But, dear Friends, I may know all the Doctrines in the Bible, but unless I know Christ, there is not one of them that can save me! I may know Election, but if I cannot see myself as chosen in Christ Jesus, election will do me no good. I may know the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, but if I am not in Christ, I would only persevere in my sins—and such a final perseverance will be dreadful, indeed! It is one thing to know the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, but it is quite another thing to be justified by faith and to have peace with God! You may stand up for Imputed Righteousness and fight for it, and yet the righteousness of Christ may never be imputed to you! It is not knowing the creed, though that is well, that can save the soul—the knowledge that is needed is to know Him whom Paul believed!

And, again, a man may know something more than Doctrine. He may know a great deal about experience. There is a class of persons who sneer at Doctrine. They call the doctrinal preacher a mere “letterman.” As for themselves, they talk about deep experience. They have a consciousness of having a corrupt heart. They have discovered that they have evil tempers (by the way, other people, too, have discovered it)! They have discovered that they have defiled natures and everybody can see that they are not perfectly free from sin. But, strange delusion, because they know the disease, they fancy they have been healed! Because they have perception enough to see they are spiritually bankrupt, they, therefore, imagine that their debts are paid! Because they feel themselves to be in the Slough of Despond, they dream they are on the Rock!

But there is a vast difference between the two things. A man may think he has an experience of his own emptiness—no, he may truly possess it—but if it does not drive him to Christ, if he does not come and rest on the Lord Jesus, all his experiences are of no saving value! The foundation of the soul’s salvation is not experience of any or every kind, but the finished work, the meritorious blood and righteousness of our Lord and Savior!

There are some, too, who not only know experience and Doctrine, but who also know how to talk of them. They have mingled with Christian people until they can get up their phraseology and, as some Christians have cant expressions, these people can “cant” in any quantity and to any extent. They can talk about their “poor souls” and about, “the dear Lord,” and use all those other precious phrases of hypocrisy which lard some religious publications and which are to be found in the conversation of some people who ought to know better. They use these expressions and then, when they get in among the people of God, they are received with open arms! And they fancy that because they can talk as Christians talk, it is all well with them! But, oh, remember that if a parrot could call you, “father,” it would not, for all that, have become a child of yours! A foreigner may learn the language of an Englishman but never be an Englishman, but still remain a foreigner. So, too, you may take up the language of a Christian, but may never have within you the Spirit of God and, therefore, be none of His. You must know Him. “Know yourself,” said the heathen philosopher. That is well, but that knowledge may only lead a man to Hell. “Know Christ,” says the Christian philosopher, “know Him and then you shall know yourself”—and this shall certainly lead you to Heaven, for the knowledge of Christ Jesus is saving knowledge—“whom to know is life eternal.”

In addition to these valuable pieces of information, there are some who know a great deal ABOUT Christ, but here I must remind you that the text does not say, “I know about Christ,” but, “I know Him.” Ah, dear Hearer, you may have heard the Gospel from your youth up, so that the whole history of Christ is at your fingertips! But you may not know Him, for there is a deal of difference between knowing about Him, and knowing Him. You may know about a medicine, but still die of the disease which the medicine might have cured. The prisoner may know about liberty and yet lie and pine in his dungeon until, as John Bunyan put it, “the moss grows on his eyelids.” The traveler may know about the home which he hopes to reach and yet may be left out at nightfall in the midst of the forest. Many a man of business knows about wealth, or even concerning the millions of the Bank of England, and yet is a bankrupt or on the verge of poverty. Many a sailor knows about the port, but his ship drifts upon the rocks and all hands go down. It is not enough to know about Christ, it is knowing Christ, Himself, that alone saves the soul!

And, over and above, and in addition to all this, you may know the Scriptures from youth up. I suppose I have some—perhaps many—before me who are well acquainted with almost every Chapter in the. Bible. You could not be questioned upon any part of it so as to be really nonplussed. You have read the Book and you continue to read it—and I approve of your wise choice in so doing—and beg you to always continue in so excellent a practice! But remember, if you have not the Word of God in your heart it is of small use to have it merely in your head. Oh, to know Christ is our supreme and tragic need! Not to merely know texts and Scripture, for—“the letter kills, it is only the Spirit that quickens”—and unless you know Christ you do not know the vital Spirit of the Word of God! The only saving knowledge, then, is knowing Christ.

Well, now, so is it with the exercise of faith. You may know a great deal about faith, but the only saving faith is belief concerning Christ. “I know whom I have believed.” To believe Doctrine will not save a man. You may hold all the creed and be orthodox—and then be no better than the devil, for I suppose that the devil is a very sound theologian. He surely knows the Truth. He believes and trembles! But you may know it and not tremble—and so you may fall short of one virtue which even the devil possesses! A firm belief in what is preached to you is well enough in its way, but to believe a Doctrine as such cannot save you. Some have a belief in their minister—and I suppose that is so flattering to us that you will hardly expect us to speak against it—but of all vices, it is one most surely to be dreaded because it is so very dangerous! We charge you in the sight of God, always weigh what we have to say to you—and if it is not according to Scripture, cast it away as you cast away refuse! Take nothing merely because we say it! Let nothing that we preach be received upon our ipse dixit, but let it be tried and tested by the Word of God, for otherwise you may be led by the blind. And “if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch.” Ah, what multitudes of persons there are in England who are beginning to get their fellow man to perform their religion for them! They are too lazy to think! They are too idle to use whatever brains they have and so they get some mere simpleton who thinks that God is pleased with his putting on a white gown or a blue dress, or a black gown or green dress, a scarlet gown or mauve dress, is pleased with burning candles in the daylight and pleased with making a pungent odor in the church—they get such a creature as this to do their religion for them and then they lie down at night to rest, feeling perfectly satisfied that God is satisfied and they are all right! Oh, I charge you, believe not this delusion! It is not believing in a priest that will save you! Believing in the priest may be your ruin, but believing in Christ is the really vital point—the one thing that truly matters. He that believes in Christ is saved! But he that believes even the Pope of Rome shall find that he believes to his own eternal ruin!

Then again, it is not believing in ourselves. Many persons believe thoroughly in themselves. The doctrine of self-reliance is preached in many quarters now-a-days. I suppose that what is meant by the term is a good mercantile possession, a business virtue, but it is a Christian vice as towards spiritual things and emphatically towards the soul’s salvation! Self-reliance in this matter always ruins those who practice it. Rely on self? Let night rely on her darkness to find a light! Let emptiness rely on its insufficiency to find its fullness! Let death rely on the worms to give it immortality! Let Hell rely upon its fire to make it into Heaven—such trusts as these would be equally strong with those of the sinner who relies upon himself for salvation! Your belief must not be that you can force your way to Heaven, but you must believe Him, for anything else is an unsaving faith.

You see, then, that the knowledge which saves, and the belief which saves, both hang upon the Cross. They both look to the wounds of that dear Man, that blessed God who was there the Propitiation for our sins and who suffered in our place. My Hearer, are you trusting Christ? Are you hanging upon Him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? Do you know Him as a man knows his friend? Do you seek to know more of Him? Is He all your salvation and all your desire? If not, take home this solemn warning—whatever else you know, you are still ignorant, and whatever else you believe, you are still an unbeliever—unless you know and believe in Him who is the Savior of men!

I pass on now to a second point, which is this—  
II. THAT KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT FAITH IS VAIN.  
This is to try to balance with but one scale—to run a chariot on one

wheel. You have the double matter here. “I know whom I have believed.” It is good to know, but knowledge must be crowned with faith! It has been remarked that Paul does not say, “I know of whom I have heard.” He does not say, “I know of whom I have read.” He does not say, “I know of whom I have preached,” but, “I know whom I have believed.” Here he hits the nail on the head. Knowledge is useful in the bud. Mere reading, preaching, too, are well as an exercise—but believing is the fruit which must grow upon the Tree of Knowledge or else the knowledge will be of little use to us!

Now, my dear Friends, I know that I am addressing many of your class, many who know Christ in a certain sense. Know much about Him. You know of His Nature, you believe Him to be true Deity. You know Him to be Human like yourselves and for man’s sake made Man. You know His life. You have often read it. You often like to dwell upon the incidents of it. It is a genuine and great pleasure to sing of Bethlehem and its manger, of Cana and its marriage. You have turned over the pages of that Life of lives and felt enraptured with this matchless masterpiece of biography. You are well acquainted, too, with His death—it has often drawn tears to your eyes when you have thought of the shame and the spitting and the crown of thorns. You know something concerning His expiring cries. Your imagination has often pictured to you the wounded body of that dread Sufferer. You have thought that if you had been there, you would have wet His feet with your tears, you did so sympathize with Him. You know of His burial and of His Resurrection, too, and you have sweetly joined with us when we have been singing—

*“Angels, roll the rock away,*

*Jesus Christ is risen today”*  
and you have not been lacking when we have been singing of His Ascension! Your eyes have flushed with fire when you have heard the words—

*“They brought His chariot from on high,  
To bear Him to His Throne,  
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, ‘The glorious work is done.’”*

You know that He reigns in Heaven! You know that He has prepared mansions for His people. You know that He intercedes for sinners. You expect that He will come. You believe in His Second Advent and when the Te Deum has been sung in your hearing—“We believe that You shall come to be our Judge,” you have said, “Yes! I do—I do—I believe it.” Now, if you know all this, you know that which it is very important to be known, but if you stop short here, where are you? Why, I have no doubt there have been hundreds who knew this, but who have given their bodies and souls to the devil and have lived in open sin, day by day! If you could go to the condemned cell tonight, I would not wonder if the wretch confined there knows all this. If you were to go into the flaunting gin palaces which are scattered to our shame and curse all over London— where men and women are drinking liquid fire at this very moment—you would find that half of them know all this, but they do not drink any the less for it! If you were to go into the lairs of vice, you would find that the most abandoned know all this, but it does them no good! And I will add also this—that the lost spirits in Hell went there knowing all this! And the devil, himself, knows it all, but he still remains a devil! Ah, my Hearer, I charge you before God, do not sit down and say, “I know, I know, I know.” Do you believe? Do you BELIEVE?

The common answer given very frequently to the city missionary is just this—men say to them, “There is no need for you to come here and tell me anything. I know all about it.” Ah, but do you believe in Jesus? What is the good of your knowing unless you believe? I do not think that the most of you who go to places of worship need so much instruction in Divine Truth as you need an earnest appeal to your hearts not to stop short at instruction! You do know, and that, indeed, shall be, indeed, part of your damnation—that you had the light but you would not see! That Jesus came into your street and came near to you, but you would not have Him! The medicine was there, but you died because you would not take it! The food was on the table, but you would sooner perish with hunger than receive it as the free gift of Heaven! Ah, my Hearer, your knowing will not benefit you, but will be a plague to you! The poor savage in his kraal in Central Africa who never heard the name of Jesus shall die with at least this mitigating circumstance—that he never rejected the Savior’s love! The million a month who die in China, for a million do die every month in China—the million who die every month in China die with this one solace, at any rate, that they never sinned against the light of Christianity, nor rejected the Truth as it is in Jesus! This is more than you can say! This will never help to make a dainty couch for you, when you make your bed in Hell! The responsibility of having known shall add remorse to the whips of accusing conscience and make Hell still more terrible! Oh, may God grant that we may not stop short with knowledge, alone, but may know Christ as Him whom we have believed! But still we have in the next place—

III. FAITH WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE IS BUT A BIRD WITH ONE WING. The old faith of the fuller is coming back in some places today. You remember what the fuller said, “Yes, he believed” He believed—what did he believe? He believed, “What the Church believed.” And what did the Church believe? “Well, the Church believed—well, what he believed.” And, pray tell, what did he and the Church, together, believe? “Why, they both believed the same thing.” Ah, how many there are of that sort today! They say, “We think he ought to be sincere, you know, and if he is sincere, it does not matter much whether it is absolutely true. He need not trouble greatly to enquire whether what he believes is Scriptural or not, or whether it is according to God’s Revelation—that will take up too much of his time and thought—and look too much like being obedient to God’s will. Just be sincere, you know, and then, hit or miss, whatever your mother or father happened to be in religious character, go at it with all your might and it will be all right.”

Now, unfortunately, that does not happen to be the Truth of God—and we do not find people in this world getting on in proportion to their sincerity. I suppose our friends who bought Overend and Gurney’s shares were sincere enough in their belief that they were buying a good thing, but I should fancy that their opinions have undergone a change of late! No doubt there have been persons who have taken prussic acid, sincerely believing that it would benefit them, but I suppose it has killed them, notwithstanding their sincerity. If a man should travel due south in order to get to the Orkney Islands, however sincere he might be, he would probably discover himself in the Bay of Biscay before long. The fact is, it is not sincerity, alone—it is the studious endeavor to find out what the right is and what the Truth is—that is the only safe way for us! We do not, therefore, ask you to believe without knowing what you are to believe. It is impossible. Do not think a man can hold in his hands four or five doctrines and say to you, “Do you believe them?” “Well, but what are they?” “Never mind! You are a true Believer and you must believe then without knowing them.” A man who has no power of belief at all says, “Oh, yes, I believe. I will kiss your feet if necessary, or do anything you like to tell me.” But the thoughtful man, the man who is likely to be saved, says at once, “I find it impossible to believe until I first know what I am to believe.”

I have sometimes thought when I have heard addresses from some revival Brothers who had kept on saying time after time, “Believe, believe, believe,” that I would like to have known for myself what it was we were to believe in order to our salvation. There is, I fear, a great deal of vagueness and crudeness about this matter. I have heard it often asserted that if you believe that Jesus Christ died for you, you will be saved. My dear Hearer, do not be deluded by such an idea! You may believe that Jesus Christ died for you and may believe what is not true! You may believe that which will bring you no sort of good whatever. That is not saving faith! The man who has saving faith attains to the conviction that Christ died for him afterwards, but it is not of the essence of saving faith. Do not get that into your head or it will ruin you! Do not say, “I believe that Jesus Christ died for me,” and because of that feel that you are saved! I pray you to remember that the genuine faith that saves the soul has for its main element—trust—absolute rest of the whole soul—on the Lord Jesus Christ to save me, whether He died in particular or in special to save me or not and, relying as I am, wholly and alone on Him, I am saved! Afterwards I come to perceive that I have a special interest in the Savior’s blood, but if I think I have perceived that before I have believed in Christ, then I have inverted the Scriptural order of things and I have taken as a fruit of my faith that which is only to be obtained by rights— by the man who absolutely trusts in Christ, and Christ alone, to save!

The matter, then, which saves is this—a man trusts Christ, but he trusts Christ because he knows Him. See! He knows Christ and, therefore, he trusts Him. How does he come to know Him? Well, he has heard of Him, he has read of Him, he seeks Him in prayer and when he has learned His Character, he trusts Him. Occasionally young converts will say to us, “Sir, I cannot trust Christ.” I never try to argue with them about it, but say, “Then you do not know Him, because to truly know Christ is sure to bring trust.” I believe there are some men in the world whom you have only to know to trust because they are so transparently honest, so clearly truthful that you must trust them! The Savior is such a Person as that. Let me tell you, Sinner, God was made flesh and dwelt among us—do you believe that? “Yes.” He lived a holy life. He died a painful death. The merit of His life and death is set to the account of everyone who trusts in Him and He declares that if you trust in Him, He will save you. Now surely you can trust Him! You say, “No, I cannot.” Why not? Is He not able? He is Divine—therefore you cannot raise the question. Is He not willing? He died—that argues willingness surely to do a lesser thing, since He has done the greater! Surely you cannot doubt that! The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is an answer to every form of doubt. Do you know, I feel with regard to Christ, myself, that instead of its being any difficulty to trust Him, I find it very difficult not to trust Him if I cannot find any reason why I should distrust Him. I was turning over the other day some odds and ends of my own brain to see if I could find any reason why Christ should not receive my soul. Well, I could not find half a one, but I could think of 20,000 reasons why I should believe in Him to save me, even if I had a million souls! I feel as if His way of saving is so magnificent and the working of it out so Divinely generous, that His offerings were so great, His Person is so glorious, that I could not only cast my one soul on Him, but 50,000 souls if I had them! Why, I cannot find any reasonable ground for doubting Him! Soul, I would to God that you would think of Him in the same light!—

*“He is able, He is willing*—

*Doubt no more!”*  
You know something of Him. Oh, may God give the Grace to add to your knowledge, trust, and then shall you have true saving faith!

Let it be remarked here that in proportion as our genuine knowledge of Christ increases, so we shall find that our trust in Him will increase, too. The more we know Christ, the more we shall trust Him because every new piece of knowledge will give new arguments for immovable confidence in Him! Oh, if you have not seen Christ, I can understand your doubting Him, but if you have leaned your head upon His bosom, if He has ever kissed you with the kisses of His lips, if He has ever taken you into His banqueting house and waved His banner of love over you, I know you will feel, “Doubt You, Jesus, doubt You? Why, how can I? I know the power of Your arm. I know the love of Your heart. I know the efficacy of Your blood. I know the Glory of Your Person. I know the faithfulness of Your Word. I know the Immutability of Your oath and I can trust You and, either sink or swim, my soul casts herself upon You, You blessed Savior!”

But now there may be some present who are saying, “I cannot say I know whom I have believed.”  
IV. “HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I MAY BELIEVE IN HIM?” The answer is, search the Word of God with a desire to find Him. Seek out the most Christ-exalting ministry in your neighborhood, in whatever denomination you can find it, and listen to it with all your ears and with all your heart. Get to your chamber and there seek the Lord to illuminate you in the matter of the Lord Jesus Christ! Ask Him to reveal His Son in you. I tell you this—faith comes by hearing and by hearing the Word of God—and when to these is added earnest seeking, you shall not be long without finding Him! They who seek Christ are already being sought of Him. You who desire Him shall have Him! You who want Him shall not be long without Him. It is to have Christ to some degree, to hunger and to thirst after Him—and when you feel that you cannot be content without Him, He will not let you be, but will soon come to you! I believe there are some who will get peace with Christ tonight! Do you understand it, dear Friend? You have nothing to do. You have nothing to be. You have not even anything to learn, except that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! You know that. Now, trust Him, and if you do, it is all done and you are saved! If you have trusted in Him whom God has revealed as your Savior, it is not a matter of twenty minutes nor much less a matter of months, but you are saved at once!—  
*“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Salvation in full through Christ’s blood.”*When a man once gets into the lifeboat, if it were certain that the lifeboat would never sink, he is saved as soon as he gets in. Now, the act of faith does, as it were, put us into the lifeboat of Christ Jesus and we are saved immediately! You may have many a tossing, but you will get safely to land at last. If you want faith you must get it, as I have told you, by knowing Him, studying the Word of God, listening to it and seeking His face. But make use of what you know, or else what you know will be like the stale manna and will be of no use to you. Believe it as you know it. Use it up as you get it. And if you already know Christ to be a sinner’s Savior, and know that you are a sinner, then come tonight and put your trust in Him! And be of good cheer because He will never, never, never cast you away! And now, lastly, I should like to ask a question, and it is this—  
V. HOW MANY ARE THERE WHO DO KNOW CHRIST?  
We all know something of which we are a little proud, but, “I know, I know, I know,” is a very poor thing to say when you do not know Christ! “I know,” says my young friend over there who has been to Oxford or Cambridge University, “I know So-and-So.” “I know,” says another, “such-and-such a special line of distinguished thinking.” But do you know Christ, my dear Friend? “Ah, thank God,” says one upstairs, and another good soul below, “we can hardly read, Sir, but we do know Him.” I would change places with you, Friends, much sooner than I would with the most learned of men who do not know Christ, because when they come to the gates of death, you know, he who keeps the gate will not say, “Do you know the classics? Have you read Horace? Have you studied Homer? Do you know mathematics? Do you understand logarithms or conic sections?” No, but he will say, “Do you know Christ?” And if you scarcely even know your own native tongue, yet if you know Christ, the gates of Heaven shall fly open to let you in!  
Now, do you know Christ? Do let the question go round to each one, “Do I know Christ?” Well, then, do you believe Christ? Do you trust Christ? “Yes, thank God!” says one, “with all my imperfections I can sing the hymn—  
*“On Christ the solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand.”*  
Oh, then, Brothers and Sisters, let us be of good cheer, for, trusting Him, He will never fail us! Believing Him, He will never leave us! We shall see His face in Glory. Oh, that the day were come! But when it does, to His name shall be all the praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *2Ti 4:1-11***.**

Verses 1, 2. I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His Kingdom, preach the Word of God. We are not to use such strong language as this unless there is some sufficient reason for it. We must not be too hot upon cold matters, but even this is better than to be cold upon matters that require heat. When John Calvin wished to leave Geneva to complete his studies elsewhere, that man of God, Farrell, knowing how necessary it was for the Church that Calvin should remain at Geneva, charged him before God that he dared not go—and hoped that a curse might light upon all his studies, if for the sake of them he should forsake what he held to be his duty. So sometimes, like the Apostle, we may before the Judge of the quick and dead, charge men not to forsake their work and calling.

2. Be instant in season and out of season. The Greek word means, “Stand up to it,” as when a man is determined to finish his work, he stands right up to it. Stand over your work, putting your whole strength into it—standing up over it. “In season and out of season,” because the Gospel is a fruit which is in season all the year round! Sometimes these “out of season” sermons, preached at night or at some unusual time, have been of more service than the regular ordinances of God’s House. Mr. Grimshaw used to ride on horseback from village to village throughout the more desolate parts of Yorkshire and wherever he met with ten or a dozen people, he would preach on horseback to them, preaching sometimes as many as 24 sermons in a week! That was being instant “out of season” as well as “in season.” So should God’s Timothys be and, indeed, all of us!

2. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine. That is, do not exhort with mere declamation, but put some argument into your exhortation! Some men think it quite enough to appear to be in earnest, though they have nothing to say. Let such exhorters remember that they are to exhort with Doctrine—with solid teaching!

2. For the time will come when they will not endure sound Doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. When men have not good preachers, they are sure to have a great many of them! Those nations which have the worst priests always have them in swarms. So let us be thankful if God sends us a glowing and zealous minister, for even those who count it an affliction to have a minister, would be more afflicted if they had not a good one! But how evil it is when men get itching ears, when they need someone to be perpetually tickling them, giving them some pretty things, some fine pretentious intellectualism! In all congregations there is good to be done, except in a congregation having itching ears. From this may God deliver us!

4. And they shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto fables. When a man will not believe the Truth of God, he is sure, before long, to be a greedy believer of lies! No persons are so credulous as skeptics. There is no absurdity so gross but what an unbeliever will very soon be brought to receive it, though he rejects the Truth of God!

5, 6. But watch you in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. How complacently he talks about it! It is only a departure, though Caesar’s sword might smite his head from his body! And truly death to the Believer is no frightful thing. “Go up,” said God to Moses, and the Prophet went up, and God took away his soul to Him—and Moses was blessed! And so, “Come up,” says God to the Christian, and the Christian goes up, first to his chamber and then from his chamber to Paradise!

7, 8. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give Me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing. This seems, then, to be a distinguishing mark of a true child of God—he loves the appearing of Christ! Now there are some professors who never think of the Second Advent at all. It never gives them the slightest joy to believe that—

*“Jesus the King will come,  
To take His people up  
To their eternal home.”*

Truly they are mistaken and are surely wrong, for was not this the very comfort that Christ gave to His disciples? “If I go away, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there you may be also.” I trust, dear Friends, we are among those “who love His appearing,” and if we are, it is a sure prophecy that we shall have a crown of righteousness!

9, 10. Do your diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica. Demas was once almost a martyr! He was upon the very edge of suffering, but now you see he goes back to the world—he is not content to lie in the dungeon and rot with Paul, but will rather seek his own ease. Alas, Demas, how have you dishonored yourself forever, for every man who reads this passage, as he passes by flings another stone at the heap which is the memorial of one cowardly spirit who fled from Paul in danger!

10. Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. It is likely that Paul had sent Crescens and Titus away upon a mission, but now, from certain intimations, the Apostle is sure that his time of death is coming on and so, indeed, it was, for his head was struck off by Nero’s orders a few weeks after the writing of this Epistle—and now he somewhat laments that he had sent them away. And would not you and I want the consolation of kind faces round about us, and the sweet music of loving voices in our ears if we were about to be offered up?

11. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you for he is profitable to me for the ministry. That is one of the prettiest verses in the Bible! You remember that the Apostle Paul quarreled with Barnabas about this very Mark, because John Mark would not go into Bythinia to preach the Word, but left Paul and Barnabas. Therefore Paul would not have Mark with him anymore because he had turned in the day of trouble. But now Paul is about to die and he wishes to be perfectly at peace with everyone. He has quite forgiven poor John Mark for his former weakness. He sees Divine Grace in him and so he is afraid lest John Mark should be under some apprehensions of the Apostle’s anger. And so he puts in this very kind passage, without seeming to have any reference at all to the past, but he gives him this great praise—“for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #908 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ASSURED SECURITY IN CHRIST  
NO. 908

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 2, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that  
which I have committed unto Him against that day.”** *2Ti 1:12***.**

IN the style of these Apostolic words there is a positiveness most refreshing in this age of doubt. In certain circles of society it is rare nowadays to meet with anybody who believes anything. It is the philosophical, the right, the fashionable thing, nowadays, to doubt everything which is generally received. Indeed, those who have any creed whatever are by the liberal school set down as old-fashioned dogmatists, persons of shallow minds, deficient in intellect, and far behind their age. The great men, the men of thought, the men of high culture and refined taste consider it wisdom to cast suspicion upon Revelation, and sneer at all definiteness of belief.

“Ifs” and “buts,” and “perhaps” are the supreme delight of this period. What wonder if men find everything uncertain—when they refuse to bow their intellects to the declarations of the God of Truth? Note then, with admiration, the refreshing and even startling positiveness of the Apostle— “I know,” says he. And that is not enough—“I am persuaded.” He speaks like one who cannot tolerate a doubt. There is no question about whether he has believed or not. “I know Whom I have believed.” There is no question as to whether he was right in so believing. “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” There is no suspicion as to the future. He is as positive for years to come as he is for this present moment. “He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”

Now there is a positiveness which is very disgusting—when it is nothing but the fruit of ignorance and is unattended with anything like thoughtfulness. But in the Apostle’s case, his confidence is founded not on ignorance, but on knowledge. “I know,” says he. There are certain things which he has clearly ascertained, which he knows to be fact. And his confidence is grounded on these ascertained Truths of God. His confidence, moreover, was not the fruit of thoughtlessness, for he adds, “I am persuaded.” As though he had reasoned the matter out and had been persuaded into it—had meditated long upon it, and turned it over—and the force of Truth had quite convinced him, so that he stood persuaded.

Where positiveness is the result of knowledge and of meditation, it becomes sublime, as it was in the Apostle’s case. And being sublime it becomes influential. In this case it certainly must have been influential over the heart of Timothy, and over the minds of the tens of thousands who

have, during these nineteen centuries, perused this Epistle. It encourages the timid when they see others preserved. It confirms the wavering when they see others steadfast. The great Apostle’s words, ringing out with trumpet tone this morning, “I know, and I am persuaded,” cannot but help to cheer many of us in our difficulties and anxieties. May the Holy Spirit cause us not only to admire the faith of Paul, but to imitate it, and to attain to the same confidence!

Some speak confidently because they are not confident. How often have we observed that brag and bluster are only the outward manifestations of inward trembling? They are but concealments adopted to cover cowardice! As the schoolboy, passing through the Churchyard, whistles to keep his courage up, so some people talk very positively because they are not positive. They make a pompous parade of faith because they desire to sustain the presumption which, as being their only comfort, is exceedingly dear to them.

Now in the Apostle’s case, every syllable he speaks has beneath it a most real weight of confidence which the strongest expressions could not exaggerate. Sitting there in the dungeon, a prisoner for Christ, abhorred by his countrymen, despised by the learned, and ridiculed by the rude, Paul confronted the whole world with a holy boldness which knew no quailing. A boldness resulting from the deep conviction of his spirit. You may take these words and put what emphasis you can upon each one of them, for they are the truthful utterance of a thoroughly earnest and brave spirit. May we enjoy such a confidence ourselves, and then we need not hesitate to declare it—for our testimony will glorify God and bring consolation to others.

This morning for our instruction, as the Holy Spirit may help us, we shall first consider the matter in question, that which Paul had committed to Christ. Secondly, the fact beyond all question, namely, that Christ was able to keep him. Thirdly, the assurance of that fact, or how the Apostle was able to say, “I know and am persuaded.” And fourthly, the influence of that assurance when it rules in the heart.

I. First, then, dear Friends, let us speak for a few minutes upon THE MATTER IN QUESTION.  
1. That matter was, first of all, the Apostle’s deposit of all his interests and concerns into the hands of God in Christ. Some have said that what Paul here speaks of was his ministry. But there are many reasons for concluding that this is a mistake. A great array of expositors, at the head of whom we would mention Calvin, think that the sole treasure which Paul deposited in the hands of God was his eternal salvation. We do not doubt that this was the grandest portion of the priceless deposit—but we also think that as the connection does not limit the sense, it cannot be restricted or confined to any one thing. It seems to us that all the Apostle’s temporal and eternal interests were, by an act of faith, committed into the hands of God in Christ Jesus.  
To the Lord’s gracious keeping the Apostle committed his body. He had suffered much in that frail tabernacle—shipwrecks, perils, hunger, cold, nakedness, imprisonments, beatings with rods and stoning had all spent their fury upon him. He expected before long that his mortal frame would become the prey of Nero’s cruelty. None could tell what would then happen to him—whether he should be burned alive to light up Nero’s gardens, be torn to pieces by wild beasts to make a Roman holiday—or become the victim of the headsman’s sword. But in whatever way he might be called to offer up himself a sacrifice to God, he committed his body to the keeping of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.  
He was persuaded that in the day of the Lord’s appearing he would rise again, his body having suffered no loss through torture or dismemberment. He looked for a joyful resurrection and asked no better embalming for his corpse than the power of Christ would ensure it.  
He gave over to Christ at that hour his character and reputation. A Christian minister must expect to lose his reputation among men. He must be willing to suffer every reproach for Christ’s sake. But he may rest assured that he will never lose his real honor if it is risked for the Truth’s sake and placed in the Redeemer’s hands. The day shall declare the excellence of the upright, for it will reveal all that was hidden and bring to light that which was concealed. There will be a resurrection of characters as well as persons. Every reputation that has been obscured by clouds of reproach for Christ’s sake shall be rendered glorious when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let the wicked say what they will of me, said the Apostle, I commit my character to the Judge of the quick and the dead.  
So also his whole lifework he delivered into the hands of God. Men said, no doubt, that Paul had made a great mistake. In the eyes of the worldly wise he must have seemed altogether mad. What eminence awaited him had he become a rabbi! He might have lived respected and honored among his countrymen as a Pharisee. Or if he had preferred to follow the Grecian philosophies, a man with such strength of mind might have rivaled Socrates or Plato! But instead, he chose to unite himself with a band of men commonly reputed to be ignorant fanatics who turned the world upside down. Ah, well, says Paul, I leave the reward and fruit of my life entirely with my Lord, for He will at last justify my choice of service beneath the banner of His Son. And then the assembled universe shall know that I was no mistaken zealot for a senseless cause.  
So did the Apostle resign to the hands of God in Christ his soul, whatever its jeopardy from surrounding temptations. However great the corruptions that were within it, and the dangers that were without, he felt safe in the great Surety’s hands. He made over to the Divine Trustee all his mental powers, faculties, passions, instincts, desires and ambitions. He gave his whole nature up to the Christ of God to preserve it in holiness through the whole of life. And right well did his life-course justify his faith.  
He gave that soul up to be kept in the hour of death, then to be strengthened, sustained, consoled, upheld, and guided through the tracks unknown—up through the mysterious and unseen—to the Throne of God, even the Father. He resigned his spirit to Christ, that it might be presented without spot or wrinkle or any such thing in the Last Great Day. He did, in fact, make a full deposit of all that he was, and all that he had, and all that concerned him, into the keeping of God in Christ, to find in his God a faithful Guardian, a sure Defender and a safe Keeper. This was the matter, then, about which the Apostle was concerned.  
2. But next to this, the matter in question concerned the Lord’s ability to make good this guardianship. The Apostle did not doubt that Christ had accepted the office of Keeper of that which he had committed to Him. The question was never about Christ’s faithfulness to that trust. The Apostle does not even say that he was confident that Jesus would be faithful. He felt that assertion to be superfluous. There was no question about Christ’s willingness to keep the soul committed to Him—such a statement Paul felt it unnecessary to make. But the question with many was concerning the power of the once crucified Redeemer to keep that which was committed to Him.  
Oh, said the Apostle, I know and am persuaded that He is able to do that. Mark, my dear Friends, that the question is not about the Apostle’s power to keep himself. That question he does not raise. Many of you have been troubled as to whether you are able to endure temptation. You need not debate the subject. It is clear that apart from Christ you are quite unable to persevere to the end. Answer that question with a decided negative at once, and never raise it again. The enquiry was not whether the Apostle would be found meritorious in his own righteousness in the Day of Judgment, for he had long ago cast that righteousness aside.  
He does not raise that point. The grand question is this, “Is Jesus able to keep me?” Stand to that, my Brethren, and your doubts and fears will soon come to an end. Concerning your own power or merit, write, “despair,” straightway upon its forehead. Let the creature be regarded as utterly dead and corrupt, and then lean on that arm, the sinews of which shall never shrink. And cast your full weight upon that Omnipotence which bears up the pillars of the universe. There is the point—keep to it, and you will not lose your joy. You have committed yourself to Christ. The great question now is not about what you can do, but about what Jesus is able to do. And rest assured that He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him.  
3. The Apostle further carries our thoughts on to a certain set period— the keeping of the soul unto what he calls “that day.” I suppose he calls it, “that day,” because it was the day most ardently expected and commonly spoken of by Christians. It was so usual a topic of conversation to speak of Christ’s coming and of the results of it, that the Apostle does not say, “the advent,” he simply says, “that day.” That day with which Believers are more familiar than with any other day beside. That day, the day of death if you will, when the soul appears before its God. The Day of Judgment, if you please—that day when the books shall be opened and the record shall be read.  
That day, the winding up of all, the sealing of destiny, the manifestation of the eternal fate of each one of us. That day for which all other days were made. Christ Jesus is able to keep us against that day. That is to say, He is able to place us, then, at the right hand of God, to set our feet upon the Rock when others sink into the pit that is bottomless. To crown us when others shall be accursed. To bring us to eternal joy when sinners shall be cast into Hell.  
Here was the matter of consideration—can the Great Shepherd of souls preserve His flock? Ah, Brethren, if you have never searched into that question, I should not wonder but what you will! When you are very low and weak, and heart and flesh are failing. When sickness brings you to the borders of the grave and you gaze into eternity, the enquiry will come to any thoughtful man—Is this confidence of mine in the Christ of God warranted? Will He be able in this last article, when my spirit shivers in its unclothing, will He be able to help me now?  
And in the more dreadful hour, when the trumpet peal shall awake the dead, shall I, indeed, find the Great Sin Bearer able to stand for me? Having no merit of my own, will His merit suffice? From ten thousand sins will His blood, alone, cleanse me? Nothing can ever equal this matter in importance. It is one of most pressing urgency of consideration.  
II. It is a happy circumstance that we can turn from it to our second point, to dwell for a while upon THE FACT BEYOND ALL QUESTION, namely, that God in Christ is able to keep that which we have committed to Him.  
The Apostle’s confidence was that Christ was an able Guardian. So he meant, first, that Jesus is able to keep the soul from falling into damning sin. I suppose this is one of the greatest fears that has ever troubled the true Believer. Have you ever prayed that you might rather die than turn aside from Christ? I know I have, and I have sung bitterly in my soul that verse—  
*“Ah, Lord! With such a heart as mine,  
Unless You hold me fast,  
I feel I must, I shall decline,  
And turn from You at last.”*  
Now, troubled Christian, remember that your Lord is able to keep you under every possible form of temptation. “Ah,” you say, “the Apostle Paul had not the trials I have. I think he had. But if he had not, Jesus had. And Christ has ability to keep you under them. Do I hear one say, “I am the only one of my household that has been called by Grace, and they all oppose me. I am a lonely one in my father’s house”? Now, Paul was precisely in your condition. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and he was regarded by his people with the most extreme hate because he had come out from among them to follow the Crucified One.  
Yet Paul felt that God was able to keep him, and you may depend upon it—though father and mother forsake, and brothers and sisters scoff—He whom you trust will keep you also firm in the faith. “Ah,” says another, “but you do not know what it is to strive with the prejudices of an education hostile to the faith of Jesus. When I seek to grow in Grace, the things I learned in my childhood force themselves upon me and hinder me.” And was not the Apostle in this case? As touching the Law he had been a Pharisee, educated in the strictest sect, brought up in traditions that were opposed to the faith of Christ. And yet the Lord kept him faithful even to the end.  
None of his old prejudices were able so much as to make him obscure the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. God is able to keep you, also, despite your previous prejudices. “Ah,” says one, “but I am the subject of many skeptical thoughts. I often suffer from doubts of the most subtle order.” Do you think that the Apostle never knew this trial? He was no stranger to the Greek philosophy, which consisted of a bundle of questions and skepticisms. He must have experienced those temptations which are common to thoughtful minds. And yet he said, “I know that He is able to keep me.” Believe me, then, the Lord Jesus is equally able to keep you.  
“Yes,” says another, “but I have so many temptations in the world. If I were not a Christian, I should prosper much better. I have openings now before me by which I might soon obtain a competence, and perhaps wealth, if I were not checked by conscience.” Do you forget that the Apostle was in like case? What might he not have had? A man of his condition in life—his birth and parentage being altogether advantageous—a man of his powers of mind and of his great energy! He might have seized upon any attractive position. But those things which were gain for him, he counted loss for Christ’s sake. And he was willing to be less than nothing, because the power of Divine Grace kept him true to his profession.  
But you tell me you are very poor, and that poverty is a severe trial. Brothers and Sisters, you are not so poor as Paul. I suppose a few needles for his tent-making, an old cloak, and a few parchments made up all his wealth. A man without a home, a man without a single foot of land to call his own, was this Apostle. But poverty and want could not subdue him— Christ was able to keep him even then. “Ah,” you say, “but he had not my strong passions and corruptions.” Most surely he had them all, for we hear him cry, “I find, then, a Law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another Law in my members, warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the Law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”  
He was tempted as you are, yet he knew that Christ was able to keep him. O trembling Christian, never doubt this soul-cheering fact—that your loving Savior is able to keep you. But the Apostle did not merely trust Christ thus to keep him from sin—he relied upon the same arm to preserve him from despair. He was always battling with the world. There were times when he had no helper. The Brethren often proved false, and those that were true were frequently timid. He was left in the world like a solitary sheep surrounded with wolves. But Paul was not faint-hearted. He had his fears, for he was mortal—he rose superior to them, for he was Divinely sustained. What a front he always maintains! Nero may rise before him—a horrible monster for a man even to dream of—but Paul’s courage does not give way.  
A Jewish mob may surround him, they may drag him out of the city— but Paul’s mind is calm and composed. He may be laid in the stocks after having been scourged, but his heart finds congenial utterance in a song rather than a groan. He is always brave, always unconquerable, confident of victory. He believed that God would keep him, and he was kept. And you, my Brothers and Sisters, though your life may be a very severe conflict and you sometimes think you will give it up in despair—you never shall relinquish the sacred conflict. He that has borne you onward to this day will bear you through, and will make you more than conqueror, for He is able to keep you from fainting and despair.  
Doubtless, the Apostle meant, too, that Christ was able to keep him from the power of death. Beloved, this is great comfort to us who so soon shall die. To the Apostle, death was a very present thing. “I die daily,” said he. Yet was he well assured that death would be gain rather than loss to him, for he was certain that Christ would so order all things that death should be but like an angel to admit him into everlasting life. Be certain of this, too, for He who is the Resurrection and the Life will not desert you. Do not, my Brothers and Sisters, fall under bondage through fear of death, for the living Savior is able to keep you, and He will.  
Do not, I pray, look too much at the pains, groans, and dying strife. Look rather to that kind Friend, who, having endured the agonies of death before you, can sympathize with your sufferings, and who, as He ever lives, can render you available assistance. Cast this care on Him, and fear no more to die than you fear to go to your bed when night comes.  
The Apostle is also certain that Christ is able to preserve his soul in another world. Little is revealed in Scripture by way of detailed description of that other world. Imagination may be indulged, but little can be proved. The spirit returns to God who gave it, this we know. And in the instant after death the righteous soul is in Paradise with Christ. This, too, is clear. Yet whether we know the details or not, we are assured that the soul is safe with

Christ. Whatever danger from evil spirits may await us on our journey from this planet up to the dwelling place of God. Whatever there may be of conflict in the last moment, Jesus is able to keep that which we have committed to Him.  
If I had to keep myself, I might, indeed, tremble with alarm at the prospect of the unknown region. But He that is the Lord of death and of Hell, and has the keys of Heaven, can surely keep my soul on that dread voyage across a trackless sea. It is all well. It must be well with the righteous— even in the land of death—for our Lord’s dominion reaches even there— and being in His dominions we are safe. Paul believed, lastly, that Christ was able to preserve his body. Remember my statement that Paul committed all that he had, and was, to God in Christ?  
We must not despise this body. It is the germ of the body in which we are to dwell forever. It shall be raised from corruption into incorruption, but it is the same body. Developed from weakness into power, from dishonor into glory, it never loses its identity. The marvel of the resurrection will not fail of accomplishment. It may seem an impossibility that the body which has rotted in the tomb, and, perhaps been scattered in dust over the face of the soil—which has been absorbed by vegetables, which has been digested by animals, which has passed through countless circles of change—should be raised again. Yet impossible as it seems, the Lord Jesus Christ will perform it.  
It must be as easy to construct a second time as to create out of nothing at the first. Look at creation and see that nothing is impossible with God. Think of the Word, without whom was not anything made that was made, and straightway you will talk no longer of difficulties. With man it may be impossible, but with God all things are possible. In your entirety, my Brethren, in the integrity of your manhood, spirit, soul, and body—all that is essential to your nature, to its happiness, to its perfection. Every part of you and every power of you—you having placed all in the hands of Christ—shall be kept until that day, when in His image you shall stand, and prove in your own persons the power which in your faith you do, this day, devoutly trust.  
III. We shall, in the third place, pass on to notice THE ASSURANCE OF THAT FACT, or how the Apostle Paul attained to it.  
“I cannot talk like that,” says one. “I cannot say, ‘I know, and I am persuaded,’ I am very thankful that I can say, I hope, I trust, I think.” Dear Friends, in order to help you to advance, we will notice how the Apostle Paul attained to such assurance. One main help to him was the habit, as seen in this text, of always making faith the most prominent point of consideration. Faith is twice mentioned in the few lines before us. “I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” Paul knew what faith was, namely, a committal of his precious things into the custody of Christ.  
He does not say, “I have served Christ.” No. He does not say, “I am growing like Christ, therefore I am persuaded I shall be kept.” No. He makes most prominent in his thought the fact that he believed, and so had committed himself to Christ. I would to God, dear Friends, that you who are subject to doubts and fears, instead of raking about in your hearts to find evidences and marks of growth in Grace and likeness to Christ, and so on, would first make an investigation concerning a point which is far more vital—namely this—have you believed?  
Dear anxious Heart, begin your search on this point. Do you commit yourself to Christ? If you do, what though marks should be few and evidences for awhile should be obscure, he that believes on Him has everlasting life. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. The evidences will come, the marks will be cleared in due time. But all the marks and evidences between here and Heaven are not worth a single farthing to a soul when it comes to actual conflict with death and Hell.  
Then it must be simple faith that wins the day. Those other things are good enough in brighter times. But if it is a question whether you are safe or not, you must come to this, “I have rested with all my heart on Him that came into the world to save sinners, and though I am the very chief of sinners, I believe He is able to save me.” You will get to assurance if you keep clear about your faith.  
The next help to assurance, as I gather from the text, is this. The Apostle maintained most clearly his view of a personal Christ. Observe how three times he mentioned his Lord. “I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” He does not say, “I know the doctrines I believe.” Surely he did, but this was not the main point. He does not say, “I am certain about the form of sound Words which I hold.” He was certain enough about that, but it was not his foundation. No mere doctrines can ever be the stay of the soul. What can a dogma do? What can a creed do?  
Brethren, these are like medicines—you need a hand to give them to you. You want the physician to administer them to you—otherwise you may die with all these precious medicines close at hand. We want a person to trust. There is no Christianity to my mind so vital, so influential, so true, so real, as the Christianity which deals with the Person of the living Redeemer. I know Him, I know He is God, I know that He is mine. I trust not merely in His teaching, but in Him. Not on His laws, rules, or teachings am I depending so much as on Himself, as a Person. Dear Brothers and Sisters, is that what you are doing now?  
Have you put your soul into the keeping of that blessed Man who is also God? He who sits at the right hand of the Father? Can you come in faith to His feet and kiss the prints of the nails? Can you look up into His dear face and say, “Ah, Son of God, I rely upon the power of Your arms, on the preciousness of Your blood, on the love of Your heart, on the prevalence of Your plea, on the certainty of Your promises, on the immutability of Your Character. I rest on You, and on You alone”? You will get assurance readily enough, now. But if you begin to fritter away your realization of the Person of Christ and live merely on dogmas and doctrines, you will be far removed from real assurance.  
Brothers and Sisters, the Apostle attained this full assurance through growing knowledge. He did not say, “I am persuaded that Christ will save me, apart from anything I know about Him.” But he begins by saying, “I know.” Let no Christian among us neglect the means provided for obtaining a fuller knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. I would that this age produced more thoughtful and studious Christians. I am afraid that apart from what many of you gather from the sermon, or from the reading of the Scriptures in public, you do not learn much from the Word of God, or from those innumerable instructive books which godly men have bequeathed to us.  
Men are studious in various schools and colleges in order to obtain knowledge of the classics and mathematics. But should we not be even more diligent that we may know Christ? That we may study Him, and all about Him—and no longer be children, but in knowledge may be men? Many of the fears of Christians would be driven away if they knew more. Ignorance is not bliss in Christianity, but misery. Knowledge sanctified and attended by the Presence of the Holy Spirit is as wings by which we may rise out of the mists and darkness into the light of fall assurance. The knowledge of Christ is the most excellent of sciences. Seek to be masters of it, and you are on the road to full assurance.  
Once, again, the Apostle, it appears from the text, gained his assurance from close consideration as well as from knowledge. “I know and am persuaded.” As I have already said, persuasion is the result of argument. The Apostle had turned this matter over in his mind. He had meditated on the pros and cons. He had carefully weighed each difficulty, and he felt the preponderating force of Truth swept every difficulty out of the way. O Christian, if you made your mind more familiar with Divine Truth, you would, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have much more assurance! I believe it is the doctrine which we have least studied in the Word which gives us the most trouble in our minds. Search it out and look.  
The divisions among Christians, nowadays, are not so much the result of real differences of opinion as of want of accurate thought. I believe we are getting closer and closer in our theology, and that on the whole, at least among the Nonconforming Churches of England, very much the same theology is preached by all evangelical ministers. But some are not careful of their terms and words, and use them incorrectly. And so they seem to preach wrong doctrines when in their hearts they mean rightly enough. May we come to be more thoughtful, each of us, for a thousand benefits would flow from there.  
Thinking of the Deity of Christ, considering of the veracity of the Divine promises, meditating upon the foundations of the Everlasting Covenant, revolving in our minds what Christ has done for us—we should come at last, by the Spirit’s teaching—to be fully persuaded of the power of Christ to keep the sacred charge which we have given to Him. Doubts and fears would vanish like clouds before the wind. How many Christians are like the miser who never feels sure about the safety of his money, even though he has locked up the iron safe and secured the room in which he keeps it—and locked up the house—and bolted and barred every door?  
In the dead of night he thinks he hears a footstep, and tremblingly he goes down to inspect his strong-room. Having searched the room and tested all the iron bars in the windows, and discovered no thief, he fears that the robber may have come and gone, and stolen his precious charge. So he opens the door of his iron safe. He looks and pries, he finds his bag of gold all safe, and those deeds, those bonds—they are safe, too. He puts them away, shuts the door, locks it, bolts and bars the room in which is the safe and all its contents. But even as he goes to bed he fancies that a thief has just now broken in! So he scarcely ever enjoys sound, refreshing sleep.  
The safety of the Christian’s treasure is of quite another sort. His soul is not under bolt and bar, or under lock and key of his own securing. He has transferred his all to the King eternal, immortal, invisible—the only wise God, our Savior—and such is his security that he enjoys the sleep of the Beloved, calmly resting, for all is well. If Jesus could fail us, we might wear sackcloth forever! But while He is Immutable in His love and Omnipotent in his power, we may put on the garments of praise. Believing as we do that eternal love neither can, nor will desert a soul that reposes in its might, we triumph in heart and find glory begun below.  
IV. Now to close. What is THE INFLUENCE OF THIS ASSURANCE when it penetrates the mind? As time fails me, I shall but say that, as in the Apostle’s case, it enables us to bear all the disgrace which we may incur in serving the Lord. They said Paul was a fool. “Well,” replied the Apostle, “I am not ashamed, for I know Whom I have believed. I am willing to be thought a fool.” The ungodly may laugh at us now, but their laughs will soon be over, and he will laugh that wins forever.  
Feel perfectly confident that all is safe and you can let the world grin at you till its face aches. What does it matter what mortals think? What difference does it make what the whole universe thinks if our souls are beloved of God? You will, my dear Friends, as you live in full assurance of God’s love, grow quite indifferent to the opinions of the carnal. You will go about your heavenly service with an eye only to your Master’s will—and the judgment of such as cavil and carp will seem to you to be too inconsiderable to be worth a thought.  
If you doubt and fear, you will be hard put to it. But if you are serenely confident that He is able to keep you, you will dare the thickest of the fray—fearless because your armor is of God. Assurance will give you a serenity within which will qualify you for doing much service. A man who is always worrying about his own soul’s salvation can have little energy with which to serve his Lord. But when the soul knows the meaning of Christ’s words, “It is finished,” it turns all its strength into the channels of service out of love to such a blessed Savior.  
O you that doubt, and therefore fret and care, and ask the question, “Do I love the Lord or not? Am I His or am I not?”—how I wish this suspense were over with you! O you who fear daily, lest, after all, you will be castaways—you lose your strength for serving your God! When you are sure that He is able to keep what you have committed to Him, then your whole manhood, excited by gratitude, spends itself and is spent in your Master’s cause. God make you men to the fullness of vigor by giving you a fullness of assurance.  
Those who are unsaved in this place may well envy those who are. That which attracted me to Christ—I have not heard of others brought in this way, but this brought me to Christ mainly—was the doctrine of the safety of the saints. I fell in love with the Gospel through that Truth. What, I thought, are those who trust in Jesus safe? Shall they never perish and shall none pluck them out of Christ’s hands? Everybody esteems safety. One would not insure his life where he thought there was a doubt as to the safety of the insurance. Feeling that there was perfect safety if I gave myself up to the Redeemer, I did so. And I entertain no regrets to this day that I committed my soul to Him.  
Young people, you cannot do better than early in life entrust your future with the Lord Jesus. Many children at home appear to be very excellent. Many lads, before they leave their father’s house, are amiable and commendable in character. But this is a rough world—and it soon spoils the Graces that have been nurtured in the conservatory of the home. Good boys very often turn out very bad men. And girls who were so lovely and pure at home have been known to become very wicked women.  
O children, your characters will be safe if you trust them with Jesus! I do not say you will be rich if you trust Christ, nor that you will prosper after the manner of men. But I do say that you shall be happy in the best sense of that word, and that your holiness shall be preserved through trusting yourself with Jesus. I pray that you may be led to desire this, especially any of you who are leaving your father’s house, or are setting up in business on your own account. Commit yourselves to God!  
This first Sunday of a new year. What time more suitable for beginning aright? O may the Holy Spirit softly whisper in your ears reasons that shall persuade you to give yourselves to Christ! I say again, my testimony is that you cannot do a wiser or a better thing. Oh, the happiness my soul has known in resting on my Lord! I wish you knew it. I would not cease to be a Christian if I might be made a king or an angel. No character can be to me so suitable or so happy as that of a humble dependant upon the faithful love of my redeeming Lord.  
O come and trust Him, dear young Friends! You older ones—do you need that I should speak to you, when you are getting so near your grave? You are now out of Christ—how soon may you be in Hell? You younger ones, I say, embrace this flying hour and let this be the day of which you shall sing in after years —  
*“It is done! The great transaction’s done!  
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine—  
He drew me, and by His Grace I followed on, Charmed to confess the voice Divine.  
High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,  
That vow renewed shall daily hear—  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”*

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CONFIDENCE AND CONCERN

NO. 1913

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that  
He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard  
of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto you keep by the  
Holy Spirit which dwells in us.”***2Ti 1:12-14***.**

OUR Apostle was in prison. If he was confined in the Mammertine, those of us who have shivered in that dark underground dungeon may well pity him. And if he was confined in the prison of the Praetorian Guards, he fared no better, for the near company of such rough and cruel soldiers would involve much suffering. The Apostle was not only a prisoner, chained by his right hand to a soldier both day and night, but he was, to his intense sorrow, forsaken by his friends. The encouragements of Christian communion are exceedingly great and the loss of them is very bitter. Those who ought to have gloried in the Apostle for his fervor, his self-sacrifice, his courage and his zeal, had turned against him. He writes to Timothy, “This you know, that all they which are in Asia have turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” It would seem that these two notable persons were ashamed of Paul’s chain and, to their endless disgrace, turned against him.

Deserted in his utmost need, deprived of his liberty and treated as a breaker of the laws, we could not have marveled if the Apostle had been somewhat dispirited. Active spirits are apt to fret in confinement and tender hearts bleed under desertion. Beside that, the man of God was in daily danger of execution by the tyrant’s sword. He was not likely to be spared by the monster who occupied the Roman throne and already he had the sentence of death in himself. Any morning he might be awakened by a rough summons to come forth and die. See him, then—such a one as Paul the Aged! Wearing his chain, he sits in his cell, expecting soon to die a cruel death—but instead of being personally discouraged—he has encouragement to spare for others! He is thinking of young Timothy and not of himself! As for himself, he says, “Nevertheless, I am not ashamed.” And then he charges his young Brother not to be disheartened nor shaken in faith, but bravely to carry on the great work committed to his charge. It is grand to see how calmly this man bore himself! In his case it was, indeed, true, that “stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.” Paul ranged the world with his free missionary spirit and he reigned more royally in his prison than Caesar in his palace! No one envies Nero, but many have felt that Paul’s sufferings might readily be embraced for the sake of his exalted life.

What was the cause of the cool courage of the Apostle? On what foundation was his peace built? How was his confidence sustained? He tells us in our text how his fears were removed—and he also informs us as to a matter which pressed upon his mind. Our discourse this morning will be an attempt to show at once Paul’s confidence and his concern. I pray God to bring our minds into a parallel line with that of the Apostle so that we may enjoy the most serene peace, as Paul did, and may, at the same moment, feel a noble concern for higher interests than those which begin and end with ourselves! The honored Apostle had committed all his own matters into the hands of God and so was at perfect peace about them. But he experienced deep anxiety for another treasure which was committed to him—which he handed over to Timothy with an earnest entreaty that he would guard it by the Holy Spirit. The blending of deep peace and holy zeal will give us a condition of heart of a most desirable kind!

Our subject opens up to us under four divisions. First, we shall notice what Paul had done. Then, secondly, what Paul knew. Thirdly, what Paul was persuaded of. And lastly, what he was concerned about.

I. First, observe carefully WHAT PAUL HAD DONE. I will speak but briefly here.  
He had trusted a Person—“I know whom I have believed.” He had trusted that Person with full, clear knowledge of Him—so trusted that he did not alter his trust as years rolled by but, as he grew in the knowledge of that Person, he was also confirmed in his confidence in Him—“I know whom I have believed.”  
He does not say, “I know what I have believed,” though that would have been true. He does not say, “I know when I believed,” though that would have been correct. Nor does he say, “I know how much I have believed,” although he had well weighed his faith. He does not even say, “I know in whom I have believed,” but he goes still closer! He says expressly, “I know whom I have believed,” as much as to say, “I know the Person into whose hand I have committed my present condition and my eternal destiny. I know who He is and I, therefore, without any hesitation, leave myself in His hands.” Brothers and Sisters, it is the beginning of spiritual life to believe Jesus Christ! Is not this the one word that we preach to you continually? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Many are the Scriptural assurances to the same effect. Paul had not ventured upon a fancy, but he had trusted in a well-known Friend! He had not done this in ignorance, nor in fanaticism, nor in desperation, but with cool, clear, deliberate judgement—knowing whom he had trusted. Ignorance is a wretched foundation, but sure knowledge is like a rock!  
Paul had gone further and had practically carried out his confidence, for he had deposited everything with this Person. He had unreservedly committed his body, soul, spirit, character, life and immortality to the guardian care of that Person whom he knew and loved so well! I may believe in a person and yet I may never have committed anything to his charge—he might not wish that I would do so, nor be willing to accept any trust at my hands. But we must go that length with the Lord Jesus. While we are bound to believe in the Lord Jesus as faithful and true and able to save, this belief is not enough, in itself, to work salvation—we must, in consequence of this belief—actually and definitely convey out of our own keeping all our eternal interests and put them into His keeping. We must make the Lord Jesus Christ the depository of all our anxieties and hopes. He must be to us the banker who has the custody of all our valuables, bonds and title-deeds—yes we must also leave ourselves with Him—all that we are, all that we have, all that we expect to have, we must confide with Jesus.  
A poor idiot, who had been instructed by an earnest Christian, somewhat alarmed him by a strange remark, for he feared that all his teaching had been in vain. He said to this poor creature, “You know that you have a soul, John?” “No,” said he, “I have no soul.” “No soul!” thought the teacher, “this is dreadful ignorance.” All his fears were rolled away when his half-witted pupil added, “I had a soul, once, and I lost it, but Jesus found it. And so I have let Him keep it.” How could he better have expressed his faith? Is not that exactly what the Apostle meant—he passed his soul out of his own keeping into the care of Jesus, his Lord? As a man leaves his estate with a trustee, or as the patient entrusts his life to his physician, even so had the Apostle Paul committed himself into the hands of that glorious Person whom having not seen, he loved!  
I pause here to ask whether we have all done the same. This is a vital question. If you, my Friend, are keeping your own soul, you have a poor keeper! You will lose your soul as surely as you attempt to be your own savior! Have you once and for all transferred salvation work from yourself to Jesus? Are you looking out of yourself and looking to Jesus, only? Are you leaning upon the Beloved? Are you living in Him? If so, your safety is secure. In the hands of Jesus, a soul must be safe. In the keeping of Jesus, nothing shall hurt you either night or day. In Him you dwell in a fortress and high tower—and no enemy shall molest you. Through time and eternity you are secure! Death shall leave you sleeping on His bosom! Resurrection shall awaken you in His likeness and endless ages shall display your security in Him forever and ever!  
What Paul did is summed up in these words, “I know whom I have believed,” “I have committed everything to Him.”  
II. The next thing is, WHAT DID PAUL KNOW? He tells us plainly, “I know whom I have believed.” We are to understand by this that Paul looked steadily at the Object of his confidence and knew that he relied upon God in Christ Jesus. He did not rest in a vague hope that he would be saved, nor in an indefinite reliance upon the Christian religion, nor in a sanguine expectation that all things would, somehow, turn out right at the end. He did not hold the theory of our modern divines, that our Lord Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in one way or another, is more or less remotely connected with the forgiveness of sin. No, Paul knew the Lord Jesus Christ as a Person and he deliberately placed himself in His keeping, knowing Him to be the Savior!  
His countrymen did not know Jesus, or they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, but Paul knew Him. Those around the Apostle were strangers to the Lord Jesus and could not sympathize with Paul, yet he knew Him. Some of them curiously asked, “Who is this Christos of whom you sing?” Others asked, “Who is this Crucified One, of whom you make so much fuss?” Paul answers by avowing his own faith—“I know whom I have believed.” He had no phantom Savior, no mythical Savior, no unknown Savior, no Savior sharing salvation with two or three others. Paul knew no company of saints and virgins, nor even a church to which he trusted his soul—he says, “I know whom I have believed.” Jesus was a distinct Person to the Apostle, so real as to be known to him as a man knows a friend. Paul knew nobody else so well as he knew his Lord!  
By faith he knew Jesus as He was born at Bethlehem, partaker of our humanity, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh—a Brother born for adversity. He knew Him as He died on Calvary, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. He knew Him as dead and buried in the tomb of Joseph—and as risen from the dead for our justification! He knew Him as gone up into Glory and sitting at the right hand of God, clothed with honor and majesty. Because of all this, the Apostle trusted his Lord. On what better ground could he have gone? What could be more reasonable than that he should entrust his all with One so fitted to preserve him till he day of His appearing?  
Dear Friends, do you really know Christ Jesus as a real Person? Do you trust in Him as now living? I beseech you, do not trust the weight of your salvation upon a doctrine! A statement, an abstraction, cannot save you— you need the active interference of a Person. Do not trust in a form of faith, nor in a code of rules. What are they? Trust in the living Person of Him who, though He was dead, rose again and always lives to make intercession for us at the right hand of God, even the Father! I trust that you have no hesitation as to faith in Him, but that you can sing with me— *“Jesus, my God, I know His name,  
His name is all my trust!  
Nor will He put my soul to shame,  
Nor let my hope be lost.”*  
Paul also knew the Character of Jesus whom he trusted. His perfect Character abundantly justified the Apostle’s implicit trust. Paul could have said, “I know that I trust in One who is no mere man, but very God of very God. I have not put my soul into the keeping of a priest, like unto the sons of Aaron, who must die, but I have rested myself in One whose Priesthood is according to the Law of an endless life—a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He upon whom I confide is He without whom was not anything made that was made, who sustains all things by the Word of His power and who, at His coming, shall shake both the heavens and the earth, for all fullness of Divine energy dwells in Him.” Paul knew that his Christ was God as well as Man and so he felt safe in relying upon Him.  
He knew also that this blessed Person was pre-eminently satisfactory to the heart of the eternal God. What manner of perfection must concentrate itself in Him in whom the Father, Himself, delights? Think of Him as the great Sacrifice for sin who has made a complete, absolute and everlasting Atonement, to which nothing can be added, from which nothing shall ever be taken away! Think of Him in whom the Justice of God is vindicated and the Love of God is displayed! When my own eyes dart a glance to Calvary and I picture the Lord of Glory dying there for my sake, I cannot allow a doubt to live—I feel compelled to trust—I cannot but rest in perfect peace when I see that great Sacrifice which has forever put away all the sins of Believers!  
Beloved, Paul knew whom he had believed as being Divine in His Person and complete in His Sacrifice, but more than that. Paul knew that the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom he trusted his soul, was now adorned with all the Glory of Heaven and clothed with all the Omnipotence of the mighty God. He knew that, if he was bound, Jesus was not bound and that, if he must die, yet Jesus could not die. He knew that the Lord shall reign forever and ever and his expectant ears caught the hallelujahs of eternity when the Crucified shall be acknowledged Lord of All! “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth,” said Jesus, “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them.” Paul felt that such power was worthy of boundless confidence and, therefore, he said—“I know whom I have believed.” Jesus was to Paul’s faith no longer the despised and rejected Nazarene; no longer the condemned and crucified Man of Sorrows, but He was the acknowledged King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He knew Him in His risen Glory. Happy, happy, happy heart which has such knowledge of Jesus and such confidence in Him!  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, I think I have shown you why Paul had much faith in Jesus. How could he do otherwise than trust in One of whom he knew such wonderful things? But how did Paul come to know Christ? I suppose he knew Him in great part by the Word of God. Every page of Scripture, as the Apostle perused it, revealed Jesus to him. These Scriptures are the swathing-bands of the Holy Child Jesus. Unroll them and there He is! This Book is a royal pavilion within which the Prince of Peace is to be met with by Believers who look for Him. In this celestial mirror, Jesus is reflected! This is a sure testimony—more to be trusted than the sight of the eyes, or the hearing of the ears. Do you know Christ by seeing Him in His Word?  
Paul also knew Jesus in another way than this. He had personal acquaintance with Him. He knew Him as “the Lord Jesus, who appeared unto him in the way.” When he was going to Damascus to persecute the saints of God, this same Jesus spoke out of the excellent Glory and said to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” Brethren, have we any personal acquaintance with Christ? If not, our witness will not run parallel with Paul’s utterance in our text, “I know whom I have believed.” Did Jesus ever call you to Himself, and have you answered His call? Has He so spoken as to change the whole current of your life? Does He still speak to you? Do you remember a sacred place, a consecrated spot where Jesus has met you? Have you a chamber where He meets you and manifests Himself to you as He does not to the world? If so, you can well trust Him whose love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit. You can well trust Him, for He is no stranger, but your near kinsman who is mindful of you and visits you. Cannot you join with our poet and softly sing— *“Yes, though I have not seen and still  
Must rest in faith alone,  
I love You, dearest Lord, and will,  
Unseen, but not unknown.”*  
There are other gates of the soul beside eyes and ears, other touches than those of the hands and other feelings than those of the flesh. Our inner spirit, when it would commune with the spiritual world, disdains to use the gross and inefficient instruments of this poor body—she cannot, with these, have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. By its own inner hands, our spirit has touched Him. With her own inner mouth she has kissed the Well-Beloved. With other than a material eyes she has beheld her unseen Spouse. Our eyes do not see—we see through our eyes even these temporal things—but we see eternal things without the need of eyes. Our spirit needs no intervening medium, but she sees in her pure spirit the pure spirit of Jesus, face to face! More than the senses could convey to the soul, she perceives without them! This is a Divine and blessed knowledge and the Apostle could, with all his heart, declare that it was his own. Though he had once known Christ after the flesh, he declared that after the flesh he knew Him no more, but he knew Him so well and so truly after the spirit that he said, without reserve, “I know whom I have believed.”  
He knew the Lord, also, by practical experience and trial of Him. Paul had tested Jesus amidst furious mobs, when stones fell about him, and in prison when the dampness of death chilled him to the bone! He had known Christ far out at sea, when Euroclydon drove him up and down in the Adriatic. And he had known Christ when the rough blasts of unbrotherly suspicion had beaten upon him on the land. All that he knew increased his confidence! He knew the Lord Jesus because He had delivered him out of the mouth of the lion. “I know,” he said—he was past the age of speculation and theory. Look at his hoary locks and his scarred face—he is no fair-weather sailor—he has sailed with his Lord upon the great deeps and has suffered many things for His sake. And now, after all his experience, he does not say that he hopes, supposes, or thinks, but he writes, “I know.”  
Glorious dogmatist, we are not ashamed to follow in your track! Where is there any comfort or stimulus except in the Truth of God assuredly believed? To doubt is to be downcast and feeble. Only in solemn assurance is there courage and strength. Come on, you who quibble and criticize— Paul meets you with, “I know!” You demand that he shall maintain his thesis with logic? He answers, “I know!” What he knew of his Lord was as sure to him as his own consciousness. He had no reserve in his mind for future alterations of creed, for he had reached certainty. “I know whom I have believed.” He could not doubt Him, nor distrust Him, nor stir an inch from the absolutely unlimited confidence which he reposed in Him. Beloved, I trust we know as much of Jesus as leads us to a living faith in our living Lord. Some people do not know much else, but they are well educated if they know this! Others are skillful in classics, mathematics and applied sciences, but if they do not know Jesus, in whom the saints believe, they are in the worst of ignorance! I pray God to send such untaught persons to His infant school, for it is written, “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” May we be taught of God to know Jesus by that practical acquaintance which engenders trust in Him!  
III. Thirdly, let us enquire—WHAT WAS THE APOSTLE PERSUADED OF? If one should say to a Christian man, “Pray, Sir, what are your opinions?” he might answer, “I have no opinions, but I know whom I have believed.” If the enquirer then said, “But what is your persuasion?” he might answer, “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him.” This method of treating matters is far better than forming mere opinions for ourselves, or borrowing persuasions from others.  
Implicitly Paul declares his faith in our Lord’s willingness and faithfulness. He does not mention these in words, but sometimes there is great instruction in omissions—things not said may, perhaps, be more conspicuous by their absence than things which are spoken. Silence is often more emphatic than speech. Paul does not raise the question whether the Savior was willing or faithful to keep what he had committed to Him—he takes that for granted. He will not even assert his knowledge of the Truth and Grace of his Redeemer—he leaves these among the things which could not be questioned for a moment! Dear Heart, if you have given yourself to Christ, Christ has given Himself to you—do not doubt His readiness to receive you! If you are leaning upon the Beloved, He is willing to be leaned upon and He will never fail you. If, in very truth His Word is your trust, the Lord will never run back from His promise. Has He not said it and will He not do it? Take this for granted! Receive it as an acknowledged principle which none may question.  
But the point which the Apostle expressly mentions is the power of Christ—“I am persuaded that He is able.” He had a solemn conviction of the ability of the Lord Jesus, who is able to save unto the uttermost. Let us hope

that no Believer here has any doubt about the power of Christ. If he has, the doubt is most absurd! He that goes to the sea for salt water cannot rationally fear that he will be forced to come back with an empty bucket. He that lifts up his face to the sun can have no doubt but that his features will be bright with the light. So he that turns to Christ may be persuaded that there is no lack of sufficiency or ability in Him.  
“Oh,” one says, “I do not doubt the ability of Christ to save me!” May I ask you, then, what you do doubt? “Oh, I doubt my own merit, my own ability and so forth.” What have any of these things to do with the matter in hand, which is the power of Jesus? These things are altogether out of the circle! All the salvation of a man depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ—and if He is able to save you, why are you full of fears? If you have committed your money to the banker and you say, “I am afraid it is not safe,” the only justifiable reason for such suspicion must be because the bank is not solvent. Would you say, “I doubt about my money because I have a headache?” Would that be rational? Would you say, “I am afraid my money is unsafe because my eyesight is failing me?” Does that influence the safety of your deposit at the bank? Nothing can affect that matter but lack of stability in the bank, itself.  
If you have committed yourself to the care of the Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot listen to those miserable, “ifs,” and “buts”—they are unreasonable and irrelevant. I blow them away as so much chaff. If Jesus is able to save and you are trusting Him, there is no room for distrust. Can you doubt the Lord’s ability? Have we not believed in His Godhead and in the almighty power with which the Father has girt Him as the God-Man, the Mediator, now that He has gone up into His everlasting reward? If these are facts, how can it be difficult to trust such a One? Trust my soul with Christ? Why, if I had all your souls within my body, I could trust them all to Him! And if every sin that man has done in thought, word and deed since worlds were made, or time began, could meet upon my one guilty head—I dare say it—the precious blood of Jesus could wash them all away! Trust Him with one soul? Yes, indeed, it seems too little a thing!  
He that goes on board a great Atlantic liner does not say, “I venture the weight of my body upon this vessel. I trust it to bear my ponderous frame.” Yet your body is more of a load to the vessel than your soul is to the Lord Jesus. Did you ever hear of the gnat on the horn of the ox which feared that it might be an inconvenience to the huge creature? O Friend, you are but a gnat in comparison with the Lord Jesus! No, you are not so heavy to the ascended Savior as the gnat to the ox! You were a weight to Him once, but having borne that load once and for all, your salvation is no burden to Him now. Well may you say, “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.”  
What was this which Paul had committed to Christ? He committed to Him everything that he had for time and for eternity—his body, his soul, his spirit—all fears, cares, dangers, sins, doubts, hopes, joys. He just made a clean removal of his all from himself to his Lord. “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” See how the eyes of the Apostle light up as he tells his copyist to write down, “He is able to keep my deposit against that day.” If he had little joy and rejoicing in his waiting time, he would, nevertheless, look to have his full of it in that day of days, that day in which his Lord would appear! He left everything with Jesus with a view to the Advent, the Judgment, and the eternal Glory! Then would he look for his Divine Keeper to produce the deposit entrusted to Him. There will be no need in that day to ask, “My Lord, is it all right?” Yes, we may picture Him as coming in all His Glory and majesty to be admired in all them that believe! He sits upon the Throne of His Glory and there are you among the countless multitude!  
Suppose you could say, “My Lord, I trusted You with my soul. Am I safe? I trusted You with my eternal interests. Are they all secure?” How sweet will be His reply, as He says to His Father, “Of them which You gave Me have I lost none.” And to us, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you!” If any enquire of us in Glory, “How did you get here?” we will answer, “He brought us here.” If they say, “How is it that you are on His right hand?” we will reply, “Because His own right hand brought us there.” “But how is it that you are so bright in your apparel?” “We have washed our robes and made them white in His blood.” “How is it that after you were converted you did not turn back?” “He kept us in the Way and preserved our lives, for He said, ‘Because I live, you shall live also.’” “How is it that you have escaped the power of the enemy, since you were only a sheep, and a wolf was after you?” “It is because He said, ‘I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.’”  
When the Lord shall make up His last account of His jewels in that Great Day, we shall be found in Christ, even as gems are found in a golden vault! In the Lord Jesus Christ, all His elect, all His blood-bought, all His called, all His justified, all His believing people shall be found in that day. None of His redeemed shall be absent in the day when the sheep shall pass, again, under the hand of Him that counts them. All who were marked with the blood-mark here below shall be folded in the pastures of Glory! “I know whom I have believed,” says Paul, “and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”  
Those of you who are acquainted with the original will follow me while I forge a link between my third division and my fourth. If I were to read the text, thus, it would be quite correct—“I am persuaded that He is able to keep my deposit against that day.” Here we have a glimpse of a second meaning. If you have the Revised Version, you will find in the margin, “that which He has committed to me.” And the original allows us to read the verse whichever way we choose—“He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him”—or “that which He has committed unto me.” This last expression, though I could not endorse it as giving the full sense of the text, does seem to me to be a part of its meaning. It is noteworthy that, in the 14th verse, the original has the same phrase as in this verse. It runs thus—“that good deposit guarded by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.”  
Inasmuch as the words are the same—the Apostle speaking of “my deposit” in the 12th verse and, in the 14th verse speaking of “that good deposit”—I cannot help thinking that one thought dominated his mind. His soul and the Gospel were so united as to be, in his thought, but one deposit—and this he believed that Jesus was able to keep. He seemed to say, “I have preached the Gospel which was committed to my trust and now, for having preached it, I am put in prison, and am likely to die, but the Gospel is safe in better hands than mine.” The demon of distrust might have whispered to him, “Paul, you are now silenced and your Gospel will be silenced with you! The Church will die out. The Truth of God will become extinct!” “No, no,” says Paul, “I am not ashamed, for I know that He is able to guard my deposit against that day.”  
I cannot tell you what heart-cheer it often brings to my soul, in these evil days, to join in the confidence of this text! At the present moment it seems as if parts of the Church had almost forgotten the Gospel of the Grace of God. We hear on all hands, “another gospel, which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ.” We hear the noise of archers at every place of drawing of water and the wayfaring man almost ceases from the highways of Zion. Worldliness is growing over the Church, she is overgrown with the moss of it. The visible Church is honeycombed through and through with a baptized infidelity! Unholy living is following upon unbelieving thinking. They boast that they have nearly extirpated Puritanism—some of us are described as the last of the race! Have they quenched our coal? Far from it! The light of the Doctrines of Grace shall yet again shine forth as the sun!  
Elijah was known to say, “As the Lord lives, before whom I stand.” And this also is my confidence—the Truth of God lives because God lives! Though Truth were dead and buried, it would rise again. The day is not far distant when the old, old Gospel shall again command the scholarship of the age and shall direct the thoughts of men! Even if it were not so, it would be a small matter, for it signifies little, except to themselves, what men think, since God is true and with the Truth of God there is power. The fight is not over! The brunt of the battle is yet to come! They dreamed that the old Gospel was dead more than a hundred years ago, but they dug its grave too soon. Conformists and Nonconformists had, alike, gone over to a cold Socinianism and in the old sanctuaries, where holy men once preached with power, modern dreamers droned out their wretched philosophies! All was decorous and dead, but God would not have it so. All of a sudden, a voice was heard from Oxford, where the Wesleys and their companions had found a living Savior and were bound to tell of His love!  
From an inn in Gloucester there came a youth who began to preach the Everlasting Gospel with a trumpet tongue. A new era dawned. Two schools of Methodists with fiery energy proclaimed the living Word of God. All England was awakened! A new springtide arrived—the time of the singing of birds had come—life rejoiced where once death withered all things! It will be so again. The Lord lives and the Gospel lives, too. Our charioteers are driving as fast as they can in the direction of Unitarianism and spiritual death, but the Lord will lay His hand upon the bridles of the horses, though Jehu himself drives them, and He shall turn them back by the way they came! “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep my deposit against that day.”  
IV. This leads me on to this fourth point—WHAT THE APOSTLE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT. The matter about which he was concerned was this deposit of his—this everlasting Gospel of the blessed God. He expresses his concern in the following words—“Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto you, keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.”  
First, he is concerned for the steadfastness of Timothy and, as I think, for that of all young Christians and especially of all young preachers. What does he say? “Hold fast the form of sound words.” I hear an objector murmur, “There is surely not much in words.” Sometimes there is very much in words. Vital truth may hinge upon a single word. The whole Church of Christ once fought a tremendous battle over a syllable—but it was necessary to fight it for the conservation of the Truth of God. Only the unorthodox ridicule words and with them it is an affectation, for were they not impressed with the importance of words, they would not be so eager to alter them. “Surely we may change our terms.” I have no objection if I know that your intentions are honest!  
“Surely we may change the form of a creed, however sound it may be.” Do so if you like. I will not contend for words to no profit. But as for some of you who ask for these changes, I shrewdly suspect that you would get rid of a phrase that you might be rid of that which the phrase means. You gentlemen who say, “Surely you will not stick out for a word,” are, after all, neither so innocent nor so liberal as you appear to be. Brethren, it is not a word they would amend, but a Truth of God they would efface! I intend calling a rose a rose, even though I admit that by another name it might smell as sweet, for I perceive that there is an intent to inflict upon me a rank smelling weed which is no rose at all! When people rail at creeds as having no vitality, I suppose that I hear one say that there is no life in eggshells. Just so—there is no life in egg shells—they are just so much lime, void of sensation.  
“Pray, my dear Sir, do not put yourself out to defend a mere shell.” Truly, good Friend, I am no trifler, nor so litigious as to fight for a mere shell. But listen! I have discovered that when you break eggshells you spoil eggs! And I have learned that eggs do not hatch and produce life when shells are cracked! I have come to be rather tender about shells, now that I find that certain rogues are depriving me of chickens by cracking my eggshells! At certain periods when everybody is sound and right at heart, it may be wise to revise expressions, but we will have none of it when the very air is tainted with unbelief! If you walk round certain continental towns you will see bright lawns and gardens where once there stood grim walls. In times of peace we are glad to see fortifications demolished, but, mark you, when the Prussians are around Paris, no Frenchman will tolerate the proposition to throw down the forts! This is our case, today, and therefore we hold fast the form of sound words!  
“We hate your narrowness—your nasty narrowness! You are shut in within your walls of creeds and beliefs!” Yes, gentlemen, so we are. And we mean to remain so, since we see how you hate the Gospel. If everything were in peace and we believed in you, we might, perhaps, think about turning bulwarks into boulevards—but at the present moment we will do nothing of the kind, but rather hear the voice of our old captain from his prison at Rome, crying—“Hold fast the pattern of wholesome words which you have heard from me.” Brothers, do not change your posture nor shift your position! Stand fast on the Immutable Truth of God, trusting and loving your Lord. Hold the old faith and hold it in the old fashion, too. We are crossing the stream and can make no change of horses. Brothers, why should we change? Do these tempting novelties offer any real improvement on the old? Do they offer us anything to die upon? Can these new teachings afford us comfort in poverty, in sickness, in depression of spirit or in prospect of the Day of Judgment? They are only pretty flowers for the children of this world to play with. They suit well with minds that love frivolities, but they are not for men whose life is a warfare against sin! The eternal Truths revealed within this Book and grasped by the hands of our inner life—these are everything to us—therefore we shall stand by them even to the last with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus!  
The Apostle was anxious not only that the men should stand, but that the Everlasting Gospel, itself, should be guarded. “That good thing which was committed unto you, keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.” O Friends, it were better for us that the sun were quenched than that the Gospel were gone! I believe that the moralities, the liberties and, perhaps, the very existence of a nation depend upon the proclamation of the Gospel in its midst! Have you not noticed that where the Gospel has been given up and various forms of infidelity have ruled, foul pollution has also boiled up from below! The very idea of morality seems to have departed from some men by whom belief in God has been rejected. The Lord save us from the general spread of this mischief! Let the sea, itself, cease to ebb and flow sooner than the Gospel fail to be preached among the sons of men! If the whole Church were to die for the defense of the Gospel, it were a cheap price to pay for the maintenance of it! I speak solemnly when I say that our main care in life should be to preserve this Gospel intact and hand it down to our descendants. God grant that future ages may not have to curse us for having been undecided or cowardly in the hour of conflict!  
How are we to keep the faith? There is only one way. It is of little use trying to guard the Gospel by writing it down in a trust-deed—it is of small service to ask men to subscribe to a creed—we must go to work in a more effectual way. How is the Gospel to be guarded? “By the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.” If, my dear Brothers and Sisters, the Holy Spirit dwells in you and you obey His monitions, are molded by His influences and exhibit the result of His work in the holiness of your lives, then the faith will be kept. A holy people are the true bodyguard of the Gospel. Only living people, in whom the Holy Spirit is the soul of their soul and the spirit of their spirit, are able to keep the Truth of God living and influential in the world! Let the power of the Gospel be missing where it may, it must be present where the Holy Spirit abides, for He makes the Word of God to be a living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever! God send us, more and more, the Holy Spirit! May He be in us as rivers of Living Water! Oh for His heavenly Presence in this day of blasphemy and rebuke! Amen.

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÷2Ti 1.13

THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS  
NO. 79

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 11, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”** *2Ti 1:13***.**

MY incessant anxiety for you, dearly Beloved in the faith of Jesus Christ, is that I may be able, in the first place, to teach you what God’s Truth is. And then, trusting that I have, to the best of my ability, taught you what I believe to be God’s most holy Gospel, my next anxiety is that you should “hold fast the form of sound words.” So that whatever may occur in the future—should death snatch away your pastor, or should anything occur which might put you in perilous circumstances—my desire is that even if you were tempted to embrace any system of heresy, you might, everyone of you, stand as firm and as unmoved as rocks! And you would be as strong as mountains abiding in the faith which was once delivered unto the saints whereof you have heard and which we have proclaimed to you. If the Gospel is worth your hearing—and if it is the true Gospel, it is worth your hearing—our anxiety is that you should be so established in the faith that you may, “hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, for He is faithful who has promised.”

The Apostle most earnestly admonished Timothy to, “hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard from him in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” I do not suppose that by this, it is intended that Paul ever wrote for Timothy, a list of Doctrines. Or that he gave him a small abstract of divinity, to which he desired him to subscribe his name, as the articles of the Church over which he was made a pastor. If so, doubtless that document would have been preserved and enrolled in the canons of Scripture as one of the writings of an Inspired man! I can scarcely think such a creed would have been lost, while other creeds have been preserved and handed down to us. I conceive that what the Apostle meant was this—“Timothy, when I have preached to you, you have heard certain grand outlines of the Truth of God. You have heard from me the great system of faith in Jesus Christ. In my writings and public speaking you have heard me continually insist upon a certain pattern or form of faith. Now I bid you, my dearly beloved son in the Gospel, Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

This morning I shall first attempt to tell you what I conceive to be a, “form of sound words,” which we are to hold fast. In the second place, I shall endeavor to urge upon you the strong necessity of holding fast that form. In the third place, I shall warn you of some dangers to which you will be exposed, tempting you to give up the form of sound words. Then, in the last place I shall mention the two great holdfasts, faith and love in Christ Jesus, which are the great means of “holding fast the form of sound words.”

I. What is a, “FORM OF SOUND WORDS”? Ten thousand persons will quarrel upon this. One will say, “MY creed is a form of sound words.” Another will declare that his creed, also, is sound if not Infallible! We will not, therefore, enter into all the minute details which distinguish creeds from each other, but just simply say that no system can be a form of sound words unless it is perfectly Scriptural. We receive no Doctrines as the doctrines of men—whatever authority comes to us which is not the authority of the Holy Spirit and Inspired by God, is no authority at all to us! We laugh to scorn all the dogmatism of men. We care for nothing they assert, however strongly they declare it, or however eloquently they plead for it. We utterly reject and discard it! We hold it a sin to “take for Doctrines the commandments of men.” We give no heed to the traditions that are handed down to us. If our opponent cannot quote text or verse for anything he advances, we hold no argument with him! Scripture is the only weapon we can acknowledge.

But since it is said that texts may be found to prove almost everything, we must remark that a form of sound words must be one that exalts God and puts down man. We dare not, for a moment, think that any Doctrine is sound that does not put the crown upon the head of Jesus and does not exalt the Almighty. If we see a doctrine which exalts the creature, we do not care one fig about what arguments may be brought to support it! We know that it is a lie—unless it lays the creature in the very dust of abasement and exalts the Creator. If it does not do this, it is nothing but a rotten doctrine of pride. It may dazzle us with the brilliant malaria rising from its marshes, but it can never shed a true and healthful light into the soul. It is a rotten doctrine, not fit to be built on the Gospel, unless it exalts Jehovah Jesus, Jehovah, the Father, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit!

We think, also, that we may judge of the soundness of Doctrine by its tendency. We can never think a doctrine sound when we see plainly upon its very surface that it has a tendency to create sin in men. Unless it is a Doctrine according to godliness, we cannot conceive it to be a Doctrine of God! Unless the believer of it, earnestly and truthfully believing it, does give himself to virtue—unless that Doctrine has in itself a natural tendency to promote in him a love to the right—we are at first sight, suspicious of it. And if we find on examination that it is a licentious doctrine— it may have all the glitter and the glare of novelty, but we cast it away as not being the Doctrine of Christianity, because it does not promote holiness in the soul.

We shall, perhaps, be asked what we do regard as a form of sound words and what those Doctrines are which are Scriptural, which at the same time are healthful to the spirit and exalting to God. We answer, we believe a form of sound words must embrace, first of all, the Doctrine of God’s Being and Nature. We must have the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity. Any Doctrine which has not the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as equal Persons in one undivided essence, we cast aside as being unsound. We are sure that such doctrines must be derogatory to God’s Glory. And if they are so, it is enough for us. If any man despises either Father, Son or Holy Spirit, we despise him and despise his teachings and cannot even say to him, “I wish you God speed.”

Now we hold that a form of sound words must look upon man aright as well as upon God aright. It must teach that man is utterly fallen, that he is sinful, and for his sin, condemned. It must teach that man in himself is altogether hopeless of salvation. If it exalts man by giving him a character which is not a true one and clothing him with a spurious robe of righteousness, woven by his own fingers, we reject and utterly discard it!

And next, we think that a Doctrine that is sound must have right views of salvation as being of the Lord, alone. Unless we find in it everlasting, unchanging love, working out a salvation for a people “who were not a people,” but were made a people by special Divine Grace—unless we find discriminating love, others may say what they will—we cannot consider such a creed to be a form of sound words unless we discern redeeming mercy openly and boldly taught! Unless we see Final Perseverance and all those great and glorious Truths which are the very bulwarks of our religion, others may embrace the doctrine as being a form of sound words, but we cannot and we dare not! We love the old system of our forefathers. We love the old Truths of Scripture, not because they are old, but because we cannot consider anything to be Truth which does not hold the Scriptural view of salvation. I think Paul, himself, in this very Chapter, gives us a form of sound words where he speaks of “God who has saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

I need not stop, this morning, to prove to you that which I have briefly hinted at as a form of sound words because you believe it and believe it firmly. I am not about to urge you to receive it, because I know you have already received it! But what I have to say is, “Hold fast,” I beseech you, “the form of sound words which you have heard from me in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

II. Now let me show you THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING FAST THIS FORM OF SOUND WORDS, AND KEEPING IT FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, FOR THE CHURCH’S SAKE, FOR THE WORLD’S SAKE.

First, for your own sake hold it fast, for thereby you will receive ten thousand blessings. You will receive the blessing of peace in your conscience. I proclaim, before God, that if at any time I ever doubt one of the great things I receive from God, instantly there comes an aching void which the world can never fill and which I can never get filled until I receive that Doctrine, again, and believe it with all my heart! When at any time I am cast down and dejected, I always find comfort in reading books which are strong on the Doctrines of the faith of the Gospel. If I turn to some of them that treat of God’s eternal love, revealed to His chosen people in the person of Christ—and if I remember some of the exceedingly great and precious promises made to the elect in their Covenant Head—my faith at once becomes strong and my soul, with sublime wings, mounts upwards towards its God! You cannot tell, Beloved, if you have never tasted, how sweet is the peace which the Doctrines of Grace will give to the soul! There is nothing like them. They are—

*“A Sovereign balm for every wound,*

*A cordial for our fears.”*  
They are God’s sweet lullaby, wherewith He sings His children to sleep, even in storms. They are God’s sheet anchors which are cast out into the sea to hold our little vessels fast in the midst of tempests. There is a “peace of God which passes all understanding,” which accrues to a man who is a strong Believer. But you know the tendency of the day is to give up old land marks and to adopt new ones—and to avow anything rather than the old-fashioned Divinity! Well, my dear Friends, if any of you like to try new doctrines, I warn you that if you are the children of God, you will soon be sick enough of those new-fangled notions, those newly invented doctrines which are continually taught! You may, for the first week, be pleased enough with their novelty. You may wonder at their transcendental spirituality, or something else which entices you on—but you will not have lived on them long before you will say—“Alas! Alas! I have taken in my hands the apples of Sodom! They were fair to look upon, but they are ashes in my mouth.” If you would be peaceful, keep fast to the Truth, hold fast the form of sound words—so shall, “your peace be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

“Hold fast the form of sound words,” again, let me say, because it will tend very much to your growth. He who holds fast the Truth will grow faster than he who is continually shifting from doctrine to doctrine. What a mighty number of spiritual weathercocks we have in this world right now! We have men who in the morning hear a Calvinistic preacher and say, “Oh, it is delightful.” In the evening they hear an Arminian and they say, “Oh, it is just as good. And no doubt they are both true, though one contradicts the other!” The glorious charity of the present day is such that it believes lies to be as good as the Truth of God—and lies and His Truth have met together and kissed each other! And he that teaches the Truth of God is called a bigot—and the Truth of God has ceased to be honorable in the world! Ah, Beloved, we know better than to profess such unlimited but false charity! The truth is, we know how to “hold fast the form of sound words,” which was given to us, because in this way we grow! Changeable people cannot grow much. If you have a tree in your garden and plant it in one place today, and tomorrow place it somewhere else, how much bigger will it be in six months? It will very likely be dead! Or if it does not die, it will not be very much grown. It will be marvelously stunted. So it is with some of you—you plant yourselves here. Then you are persuaded that you are not quite right and you go and plant yourself somewhere else. Why, there are men who are “anythingarians”—who go dodging about from one denomination to another—and cannot tell what they are! Our opinion is of these people that they believe nothing and are good for nothing—and anybody may have them who likes. We do not consider men to be worth much unless they have settled principles and “hold fast the form of sound words.” You cannot grow unless you hold it fast. How could I know any more of my faith, in ten years’ time, if I allowed it to take ten forms in ten years? I would know but a little in each and know nothing thoroughly of one. But he that has one faith and knows it to be the faith of God and holds it fast—how strong he becomes in his faith! Each wind or tempest does but confirm him, as the fierce winds root the oaks and make them strong, standing firmly in their places. But if I shift and change, I am none the better, but rather the worse. For your own peace, then, and for your growth, “hold fast the form of sound words.”

But, my Beloved, I would beseech you to hold it fast for your own sakes from a remembrance of the great evils which will follow the contrary course. If you do not “hold fast the form of sound words,” listen to me while I tell you what will happen to you!

In the first place, every deviation from the Truth of God’s Word is a sin. It is not simply a sin for me to do a wrong act, but it is a sin for me to believe a wrong Doctrine. Lately our ministers have absolved us all from obeying God in our judgments. They have told us, point blank, many of them, in their drawing rooms and some of them in the pulpit, that we shall never be asked in the Day of Judgment what we believed! We have been told that for our acts we shall be responsible but for our faith we shall be irresponsible, or something very much like it. They have told us plainly that the God who made us, although He has authority over our hands, our foes, our eyes and our lips, has but little authority over our judgments! They have told us that if we make ever such blunders in Divinity, they are not sins as long as we can live right lives. But is that true? No! The whole man is bound to serve God. And if God gives me a judgment, I am bound to employ that judgment in His service. And if that judgment receives an untruth, it has received stolen goods and I have sinned as much as if I put forth my hand to take my neighbor’s goods! There may be degrees in the sin. If it is a sin of ignorance, it is, nevertheless, a sin—but it is not so heinous as a sin of negligence, which I fear it is with many. I tell you, Beloved, if, for instance, Baptism is not by immersion, I commit a sin every time I practice it! And if it is by immersion, my Brother commits a sin who does not practice it! If Election is true, I am committing a sin if I do not believe it. And if Final Perseverance is true, I am committing a sin before Almighty God if I do not receive it. And if it is not true, then I sin in embracing what is not Scriptural! Error in Doctrine is as much a sin as error in practice. In everything, we are bound to serve our God with all our might—exercising those powers of judging and believing which He has given us. I warn you, Christians, not to think it is a little thing to hold faith with a feeble hand—it is a sin every time you do anything which makes you waver in the faith of Jesus Christ! Remember, too, that error in Doctrine is not only a sin but a sin which has a great tendency to increase. When a man, once in his life, believes a wrong thing, it is marvelous how quickly he believes another wrong thing! Once open the door to a false doctrine—Satan says it is but a little one—yes, but he only puts the little one in like the small end of the wedge—and he means to drive in a larger one! And he will say it is only a little more and a little more and a little more. The most damnable heretics who ever perverted the faith of God, erred by littles and littles! Those who have gone the widest from Truth of God have only gone so by degrees. Whence came the Church of Rome, that mass of abominations? Why, from gradual departures! It did not become abominable at first. It was not the “mother of harlots” all at once. But it first did deck itself in some ornaments, then in others, and, by-and-by, it went on to commit its fornications with the kings of the earth! It fell little by little—and in the same way it separated itself from God’s Truth. For centuries it was a Church of Christ and it is difficult to say, in looking at history, when was the exact point in which it ceased to be numbered with Christian Churches. Take care, Christians, if you commit one error, you cannot tell how many more you will commit!

“Hold fast the form of sound words,” because error in Doctrine almost inevitably leads to error in practice. When a man believes wrongly, he will soon act wrongly. Faith has a great influence on our conduct. As a man’s faith is, so is he. If you begin to imbibe erroneous doctrines, they soon have an effect on your practice. Keep fast to the bulwarks of your fathers’ faith. If you do not, the enemy will make sad havoc with you. “Hold fast the form of sound words which was delivered unto you.”

1. And now, for the good of the Church, itself, I want you all to “hold fast the form of sound words.” Would you wish to see the Church prosperous? Would you wish to see it peaceful? Then “hold fast the form of sound words.” What is the cause of divisions, schisms, quarrels and bickering among us? It is not the fault of the Truth of God! It is the fault of man’s errors! There would have been peace in the Church—entire and perpetual peace—if there had been purity. Going down to Sheerness on Friday, I was told by someone on board that during the late gale, several of the ships there had their anchors rent up and had gone dashing against the other ships and had done considerable damage. Now, if their anchors had held fast and firm, no damage would have been done. Ask me the cause of the damage which has been done to our Churches by the different denominations and I tell you, it is because all their anchors did not hold fast. If they had held fast by God’s Truth, there would have been no disputing. Disputing comes from errors. If there are any ill feelings, you must not trace it to the Truth of God—you must trace it to man’s errors. If the Church had always kept firm to the faith and had always been united to the great Doctrines of the Truth, there would have been no disputes. Keep firm to your belief and you will prevent discord in the Church!

Keep to your faith, I say again, for the Church’s sake, for so you will promote strength in the Church. I saw lying between Chatham and Sheerness, a number of ships that I supposed to be old hulks. And I thought how stupid Government was to let them remain there and not chop them up for firewood, or something else. But someone said to me, those ships can soon be fitted for service. They look old, now, but they only need a little paint and when the Admiralty requires them, they will be commissioned and made fit for use. So we have heard some people say, “there are those old Doctrines—what good are they?” Wait. There is not a Doctrine in God’s Bible that has not its use! Those ships that you may think are not needed, will be useful, by-and-by. So it is with the Doctrines of the Bible. Do not say, “Break up those old Doctrines, you can do without them.” No, we need them and we must have them! Some people say, “Why do you preach against Arminians? We have not much to fear from them, now.” But I like to practice my men so they’ll be ready when the time comes for action! We are not going to burn our ships! They will be needed, by-and-by, and when we sail out of harbor, the men will say, “Whence came these old ships?” “Why,” we will reply, “they are just the Doctrines you thought good for nothing. Now we bring them out and we will make good use of them!” Nowadays we are having new and marvelous hymn books, full of perfect nonsense. And we are having new theories and new systems. And they say, “Why be so stringent? Our Christian Brethren may believe what they like on those points just now.” But as certain as there is a Church in this land, they will need our old ships to fight their battles! They may do very well in times of peace, but they will not do in the time of war! They will then need our broadside to support the faith of the Gospel, though now they laugh at us. For the strength of the Church, my Brothers and Sisters, I bid you, “hold fast the form of sound words.”

“Well,” says one “I think we ought to hold the Truth of God firmly, but I do not see the necessity for holding the form of it. I think we might cut and trim a little and then our doctrines would be received better.” Suppose, my Friends, we should have some valuable egg and someone should say, “Well, now, the shell is good for nothing—there will never be a bird produced by the shell, certainly—why not break the shell?” I would simply smile in his face and say, “My dear Friend, I need the shell to take care of what is inside. I know the vital principle is the most important, but I need the shell to take care of the vital principle.” You say, “Hold fast the principle, but do not be so severe about the form. You are an old Puritan and want to be too strict in religion—let us just alter a few things and make it a little palatable.” My dear Friends, do not break the shell. You are doing far more damage than you think. We willingly admit the form is but little, but when men attack the form, what is their objective? They do not hate the form. They hate the substance! Keep the substance, then, and keep the form, too. Not only hold the same Doctrines but hold them in the same shape—just as angular, rough and rugged as they were, for if you do not, it is difficult to change the form and to keep fast the substance. “Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Jesus Christ.”

2. Again, I say, “hold fast the form of sound words,” for the Word’s sake. Pardon me when I say that, speaking after the manner of men, I believe that the progress of the Gospel has been awfully impeded by the errors of its preachers. I never wonder when I see a Jew, an unbeliever in Christianity—for this reason—that the Jew very seldom sees Christianity in its beauty. For hundreds of years, what has the Jew thought Christianity to be? Why, pure idolatry! He has seen the Catholic bow down to blocks of wood and stone. He has seen him prostrating himself before the Virgin Mary and all saints. And the Jew has said, “Ah, this is my watchword—“hear, O Israel, the Lord, your God, is our Lord. I could not be a Christian, for to worship one God is the essential part of my religion.” So, too, the heathens, I believe, have seen a false system of Christianity. They have said, “What? Is that your Christianity?” And they did not receive it. But I believe that when the Gospel is purged from all the rudiments of men and all the chaff and dust have been winnowed from it— and it is presented in all its naked simplicity—it will be sure to win the day! And I say again, speaking as a man, the Gospel might have made ten thousand fold greater progress if it had been preached in all its simplicity, instead of that diluted or rather distorted form in which it is commonly proclaimed. If you would see sinners saved, if you would see God’s elect gathered in, “Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

III. And now, very briefly, in the third place, LET ME WARN YOU OF TWO DANGERS.  
One is that you will be very much tempted to give up the form of sound words that you hold on account of the opposition you will meet with. I do not prophesy that you will have corporeal persecution, though I know there are some poor creatures, here, who have to endure that from ungodly husbands and such like. But you will, all of you, in some measure, if you hold the Truth of God, meet with the persecution of the tongue. You will be laughed at—your Doctrine will be held up to ridicule—exhibited in a grotesque manner. You will be caricatured in all that you believe and you will be sometimes tempted to say, “No, I do not believe that,” though all the while you do. Or if you do not positively say it, you will at times be led to turn a little because of the laughter you cannot stand and the scoff of the worldly-wise is rather too hard for you. Oh, my Beloved, let me warn you against being thus drawn aside! “Hold fast the form of sound words” in the midst of all ridicule.  
But the greatest obstacle you will have is a sort of slight and cunning trying to pervert you to the belief that your Doctrine is the same one which is just the very opposite! The enemy will try to persuade you that something he holds is quite harmless, though opposed to what you hold. And he will say, “You do not want to be broaching these things. They will bring forth controversy—there is a way of squaring your sentiments with mine.” And you know we all like to be thought so charitable! The greatest pride in the world, now, is to be thought charitable in sentiment. Some of us would run a hundred miles rather than be called a bigot or an Antinomian. I beseech you, be not drawn aside by those who are so ready to subvert your faith! They do not by openly attacking it, but insidiously undermine every Doctrine, saying this does not really matter and that does not matter, while all the while they are trying to pull down every castle and fortress wherewith God has guarded His Truth and His Church!  
IV. And now, in the last place, I am to tell you of the GREAT HOLDFASTS WHEREBY YOU ARE TO HOLD FAST THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.  
If I might be allowed to mention one or two before coming to those in the text, I would say, in the first place, if you want to hold fast the Truth, seek to get an understanding of it. A man cannot hold a thing fast unless he has a good understanding of it. I never want you to have the faith of the coal miner who was asked what he believed. He said he believed what the Church believed. “Well, but what does the Church believe?” He said the Church believed what he believed and he believed what the Church believed and so it went all the way round. We do not want you to have that faith! It may be a very pernicious faith, a very obstinate faith—but it is a very foolish faith! We want you to understand things, to get a true knowledge of them. The reason why men forsake the Truth of God for error is that they have not really understood the Truth. In nine cases out of ten, they have not embraced it with enlightened minds. Let me exhort you parents as much as lies in you to give your children sound instruction in the great Doctrines of the Gospel of Christ. I believe that what Irving once said is a great truth. He said, “In these modern times you boast and glory and you think yourselves to be in a high and noble condition because you have your Sunday schools and British Schools and all kinds of schools for teaching youth. “I tell you,” he said, “that philanthropic and great as these are, they are the ensigns of your disgrace. They show that your land is not a land where parents teach their children at home! They show you there is a lack of parental instruction—and though they are blessed things, these Sunday schools—they are indications of something wrong. For if we all taught our children, there would be no need of strangers to say to our children, ‘Know the Lord.’”  
I trust you will never give up that excellent Puritan habit of catechizing your children at home. Any father or mother who entirely gives up a child to the teaching of another, has made a mistake. There is no teacher who wishes to absolve a parent from what he ought to do himself! He is an assistant, he was never intended to be a substitute. Teach your children, Parents! Bring out your old catechisms, again, for they are, after all, blessed means of instruction and the next generation shall outstrip those who have gone before it. The reason why many of you are weak in the faith is this you did not receive instruction in your youth in the great things of the Gospel of Christ. If you had, you would have been so grounded, settled and firm in the faith, that nothing could by any means have moved you. I beseech you, then, understand God’s Truth and then you will be more likely to hold fast by it!  
But then, Christian Brothers and Sisters, above all things, if you would hold fast the Truth, pray yourselves right into it. The way to get a Doctrine is to pray till you get it. An old divine says, “I have lost many things I learned in the House of God, but I never lost anything I ever learned in the closet.” That which a man learns on his knees, with his Bible open, he will never forget. Well, have you ever bowed your knees and said, “Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law”? If you have seen that wondrous thing, you will never forget it. He that prays himself into God’s Truth will never be gotten out of it by the very devil, himself, though he were to put on the garb of an angel of light! Pray yourselves into the Truth.  
But the two great holdfasts are here given—faith and love. If you would hold the Truth of God fast, put your faith in Jesus Christ and have an ardent love towards Him. Believe the Truth. Do not pretend to believe it, but believe it thoroughly. And he who does believe it and fixes his faith, first in Christ and in all Christ says, will not be likely to let it go. Why, we do not believe religion, most of us! We pretend to believe it, but we do not believe it with all our heart and all our soul, with all our might and all our strength—not with that, “faith which is in Christ Jesus.” For if we did, come storms, come trials, like Luther of old, we would not flinch because of persecution, but stand fast in the evil day, having our faith fixed upon a Rock!  
And then the second holdfast is love. Love Christ and love Christ’s Truth because it is Christ’s Truth, for Christ’s sake. And if you love Christ’s Truth, you will not let it go. It is very hard to turn a man away from the Truth he loves. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot argue with you about it, but I cannot give it up—I love it and cannot live without it. It is a part of myself, woven into my very nature. And though my opponent says that bread is not bread and I cannot prove that it is, yet I know I go and eat it. It is wonderfully like it to me and it takes away my hunger. He says that stream is not a pure stream. I cannot prove that it is, but I go and drink of it and find it the river of the water of life to my soul.” And he tells me that my Gospel is not a true one—well, it comforts me, it sustains me in my trials, it helps me to conquer sin and to keep down my evil passions and brings me near to God. And if my Gospel is not a true one, I wonder what sort of thing a true one is—mine is wonderfully like it and I cannot suppose that a true Gospel would produce better effects! That is the best thing to do—to believe the Word—to have so full a belief in it that the enemy cannot pull you away. He may try to do it, but you will say— *“Amidst temptations sharp and long,  
My soul to the same refuge flies!  
Faith is my anchor, firm and strong,  
When tempests blow or billows rise.”*  
Hold on then, Christian, to “faith and love which are by Christ Jesus”— two blessed holdfasts wherewith we grasp the Truth of God’s Word.  
And now, Brothers and Sisters, I pray that my Master will enable you to see the importance of what I have uttered. Perhaps you may not think it so important, now, especially those of you who are young. But there are some here, the fathers of this Church, who will tell you that the older they grow and the longer they live, the more they find the Truth of God to be valuable. They may, perhaps, in their youth have had a little radicalism in them with regard to God’s Truth, but they are conservative in their views of it now! They feel it to be worth conserving. It would be well for us if, with regard to the Truth, we began to be conservative as soon as we believed it and held it fast and never let it go. I think the chief fault of the present day is that in seeking to be charitable, we do not hold the Truth firmly enough. I met, some time ago, with the case of an eminent minister in the Gospel, a Brother whom I respect and esteem, who preached a sermon from the text, “Prove all things.” A young man was there who was professedly a Believer in Christianity. But such was the style in which the subject was handled, that after hearing that sermon, he went home and bought some infidel works. The consequence is that he has become entirely apostate even from virtue, itself, and has forsaken everything that he once held to be true! I say, send your anchor right down, young Christian—and whatever may come against you, still hold on by that Truth. And you may yet, even then, “prove all things.” But while you are doing it, remember to “hold fast that which is good.” Do not “prove all things” by giving up that which is good to do it!  
Now such of you as know not the Lord, if you are ever saved, let me tell you that the most likely place for you to meet with salvation is under a pure Gospel ministry. Therefore there is a lesson for you. Attend where the Gospel is preached.  
Again—the most likely way for you ever to receive God’s Grace is to believe God’s Truths. Never kick against God’s Doctrines, but receive them! And I have one thing to say to you this morning, if in your heart, poor Sinner, you can say, “I believe God’s Gospel to be a glorious Gospel.” You are not far from something else. If you can say, “I submit to all its demands, I believe God just if He destroys me and if He saves me, it will only be because of His Sovereign Mercy,” then, Sinner, there are good hopes for you! You have proceeded some way on the road to Heaven. If you can but do one thing more and say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” And if you can come to the Cross of Christ and say, “Jesus, I love Your Gospel and I love Your Truth. If I perish, I will perish believing all Your Truth, I will perish clasping Your Cross. If I die, I will die proclaiming that You are a just and gracious God and still, in my poor way, holding fast the form of sound words,” I tell you, poor Soul, God will never damn you! If you do believe in Jesus Christ and hold fast His Words, He will look upon you in Love. He will say, “Poor Soul, though he does not know that these Truths are his, yet he thinks them precious. Though he dares not hope that they belong to him, yet he will fight for them. Though he does not know that he is really a soldier of the Cross, chosen of Me before time began, yet see how valiantly he strives for Me.” And the Lord will say, “Poor Soul, you love the things that you think are not your own—I will make you rejoice in them as your own, by My Grace. You love Election, though you think you are not elect—that is an evidence that you are Mine.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and you shall be saved.”  
And now my Brothers and Sisters, stand fast, I beseech you. If my tears, if my bended knees, if my cries, yes, if my blood could prevail with you to lay to heart what I have said, this morning, here should be tears and cries and blood, too—if I could but make you all hold fast in these evil, perilous times! Hold fast and with the tenacity of the dying hand of the sinking mariner—“Hold fast,” I beseech you, “the form of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3531 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷2Ti 1.18

“THAT DAY” AND ITS DISCLOSURES  
NO. 3531

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1916.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15, 1872.

**“The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day.”** *2Ti 1:18***.**  
[The original title was “The Day”…]

GRATITUDE is never failing in Christians. When they have received a benefit, they are sure to acknowledge it. When Paul was at Rome, Onesiphorus found him out very diligently, and was not ashamed of his chains, but ministered to his necessities and, therefore, Paul felt bound to him and to his family in perpetual thankfulness. Let none of us ever be accused of ingratitude—it is one of the worst of sins. Paul, no doubt, would have done all he could for Onesiphorus in other ways, but he added to all other ways of showing his gratitude, that of praying for him— praying the prayer which we have here put on record in the Book of Inspiration. Learn hence that if we can do nothing else for our benefactors, we can bless them by our prayers. Let us be abundant in pouring out supplications before the Throne of God for all those who in any way have done us a service. We also learn from the text that the best of men have need to be prayed for. I cannot doubt but that Onesiphorus was saved. He seems to have been a most decided follower of Christ, for when others did not know Paul because he was a prisoner, Onesiphorus knew him. He sought him out—he sought him out diligently—even into the poorest quarters of that great city of Rome. He hunted him out, though probably the population at that time was not less, but perhaps far more than four millions of people. He found the Apostle and he ministered unto his need. He was a good man and yet Paul prayed for him—prayed for him a prayer which would be appropriate for a bad man, too, “The Lord grant that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day!” The best of us needs to be prayed for! Let us be thankful if we have anybody to pray for us. Let us count the prayers of the faithful to be our truest riches. He is the happiest man who shall have the most of God’s people lift up their hearts in prayer for him!

I call your attention, tonight, however, to none of these surrounding particulars. I want to fix your minds upon one thing. I desire, anxiously desire, that we may all be led to look forward to that day of which the Apostle here speaks. And our first point shall be that day. Then our second point shall be the mercy of that day. First, then—  
I. “THAT DAY.”  
Paul speaks of the Day of Judgment here. He does not specify it, because it was so commonly believed in and expected among Christians, that it was quite sufficient for him to say, “that day.” From the earliest times, wherever there has been Divine Light, that day has been expected. Enoch, also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord. And his prophecy, though very early, was so clear that the Jew, who almost closes the Book of Inspiration, quotes it—feeling, I suppose, that he could not use words mode expressive than those which came from that ancient Prophet. All along the pages of Scriptural history you read of men raised up to tell of “that day.” Asaph, in the Psalm we read just now, gave a most accurate description of that day when the Lord shall judge His people. And Daniel, when he saw the Throne of God set and the Ancient of Days come, perceived that day for which we also are now looking. Nothing, perhaps, is more often spoken of in Scripture than “that day.” The New Testament teems with allusions to that Day of Judgment, when the Lord shall be revealed with flaming fire. I say it was so commonly understood that Paul had no need to say anything except, “that day.” Questions will be asked tonight by some, “When will that day come?” to which I would answer, it were better for us to be prepared for it, come when it may, than to be anxious to fix its date! We can give you no information, because “of that day and of that hour knows no man— no, not even the angels of Heaven.” After trying to discover what I can of the future, I arrive at this conclusion from Scripture, that the Lord would have us be in a state of perpetual vigilance and expectancy and, therefore, He has studded the Scriptures with phrases to the effect that He comes quickly. Truly His, “quickly,” will not be the same as ours, but I think the noontide of the world may have passed and these are the latter days—and we might to be looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man. He may come tomorrow! He may come tonight! He may delay His coming, but He shall come at such an hour as the mass of men think not, and at an hour when they are not aware! That day shall overtake them as a thief in the night, and come upon them as pain upon a woman in childbirth. Some may curiously ask whether the Day of Judgment will be a natural day or not. Will it be a day of 24 hours? To which we again reply, we have no information—but we know that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It will be a definite period. Whatever its length or brevity, it will suffice for an accurate judgment and a judgment of all mankind! Whether it shall occupy a thousand years or a single day, the work will be done—done thoroughly, done effectually, done forever—for all the race of Adam. Let us rest assured of that.

It is far more important for us to know these things about that day— first, that it will be ushered in as no other day has been. The day began in Eden with the rising sun. And when the sun’s first beams had lit up the sky, the birds began to sing right joyously among the trees. But “that day” shall be ushered in, not by the rising sun, but by the Sun of Righteousness Himself! He shall arise with all the Glory of His Father and the holy angels shall come with Him. There will be sights and sounds on that tremendous morning such as never were seen or heard by mortal men before! Even Sinai’s tremendous pomp, which made Moses fear and quake, shall be outdone in that dread day when the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel, and with the voice of God. It will be a day of days. Its dreadful surroundings are spoken of in Scripture, but, after all, words can but feebly describe them. It will be a day especially notable for the Revelation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! As yet He is hidden among the sons of men. He was as one concealed incognito. He traveled through this world and they counted Him a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. He has gone into His Glory, but He is concealed at the right hand of God from the gaze of men below. They see Him not. They know Him not!

But in that day He shall sit upon the clouds of Heaven and every eye shall see Him—and they, also, who crucified Him. Then shall they say that He is Divine, and no longer shall they dare to dispute it! Then shall the Jew see that He is the Messiah who was to come and then shall the Gentile perceive that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The flashings of His Glory shall convince all mankind—and the wicked shall stand speechless before His Judgment Seat! Pilate then shall not ask Him, “What is truth?” for he, alas, too late, shall perceive it! They shall bring no accusation against Him, then, for to their confusion they shall see that He was no traitor, but a King! Judas shall not sell Him, then, for he shall perceive, then, that he who sold Him was the son of perdition, to perish forever! Oh, what a day shall that be when, coming out of His chamber, rejoicing like a strong man to run a race, the Bridegroom of the Church shall appear, and all His saints shall appear with Him! It will be a day remarkable for its wonderful convictions. There will be a general assembly held on that day such as never has been held before! For, first, the Son of God shall be the center of all eyes, and around Him shall be His Father’s angels. Heaven shall send her pomp to swell His train. He shall come and His saints, also, shall come with Him. The glorified shall come to sit with Him and then, as in a moment, the dead shall arise. I shall go into no minute questions or particulars, now, but certainly at that moment there shall stand upon the earth all the dead, both small and great—they that were on the earth buried in it and they that were in the sea shall all arise—and as the trumpet rings out clear and loud, the whole multitude of men that lived and died shall start up from their tombs to see their God upon His Throne! And those who are alive at that time—all shall come and live again—and the raised bodies of men and the spirits of the just! There shall come up from the infernal pit of Hell, lost spirits, too, and the chief foe of God and man, long scarred by Jehovah’s lightning—he shall come and lift his brazen front once more, and the saints shall judge the fallen angel who long had persecuted them! He shall receive his final sentence and begin the utmost Hell which God had reserved for the devil and his angels, so that there on this poor planet, little compared with greater stars, and yet in God’s sight most glorious of them all, there shall be a convocation of the three worlds! Heaven, Earth and Hell shall meet together, and Christ, in the midst of them all, shall judge the world in righteousness and the people with equity. Oh, what a day will that day be!

And it will be a day, in addition to the general convocation, of universal excitement. Next week the day of thanksgiving will move London from end to end, but there will be tens of thousands to whom it will be no day of thanksgiving, but perhaps of bitter sorrow. There will be nothing that could make them thankful in the pageantry of that day. So of all the days that have ever happened to the sons of men, there have been some unmoved thereby. Let us speak as though our soul were in every word— some of our Hearers will slumber, or their minds will wander. But on that day there will be no indifferent spectators of that tremendous pomp! The wicked shall wake up—their indifference shall have gone and they shall be filled with dismay and despair! They shall long for annihilation! They shall ask the rocks to cover them, and the mountains to conceal them. The righteous shall not be listless, either, for theirs shall be boldness in the Day of Judgment, and joy, and triumph, and acclamations of welcome with which they shall hail the King of Kings sitting upon His Throne! There will be a general excitement. Hell will howl its loudest howl and Heaven will resound with its loftiest songs on that closing day of the drama of time, that day of which the Apostle speaks!

And that will be a day of wondrous revelations. On that day we shall detect the hypocrite. See him yonder? The mask has fallen. See the leprosy on his brow? Then shall we see the men who were misrepresented, who were counted the offscouring of all things, though of them the world was not worthy! The filth with which men pelted them in the pillory of scorn shall fall off and their garments shall be whiter than any fuller can make them in the Glory of the Righteousness which Christ shall put upon them! There will be a resurrection of reputations in that day. And at the same time there will be the judgment of mere profession. Perhaps in that hour we shall understand the Providence of God infinitely better than we do now. Then we shall see the evil of men’s hearts as we never saw it, for every idle word that man has spoken shall be published there, and transgressions of midnight that were covered up with curtains of lies shall suddenly stand revealed as in the noonday sun—and the men who scorned the righteous and were themselves guilty of abominable sin! Oh, what a revealing day! The housetops, then, shall ring with secrets that have been hidden in the closet, and men shall read the writing, as it were, upon the sky, the dark sayings and the hidden things which were of old.

And then when the revealing shall have come, it will be a day of final judgment. From almost any court on earth there is an appeal. Even after the judge puts on the black cap and condemns the criminal, he yet appeals to public opinion and to the mercy from the nation, and perhaps an unworthy life may yet be spared. But from that Judgment Seat there shall be no appeal! Forever and forever fixed is the fate of men whom Christ has judged. “He that is filthy, let him be filthy, still, and he that is unrighteous let him be unrighteous still.” No change can take place, and no appeal can ever be made. ‘Tis done, ‘tis sealed, ‘tis inevitable. ‘Tis over forever and forever—forever saved, or forever lost! That day, then, ought to be a matter of personal interest to everyone of my Hearers, yes, and to everyone beneath the sun. It will be the last day of time! Then there will be no more counting of rising and setting suns, no reckoning by waxing and waning moons. Then there will be no revolutions of the year to mark the period of time, nor will men count by centuries. It shall be eternity— one ocean of eternity without landmarks by which to say, “Thus far have we gone, and thus far have we yet to go.” Oh, wondrous day! Oh! marvelous day! The last day of time, a day forever to be remembered— remembered by the wicked in Hell, to whom it shall be said, “Son, remember,” and remembered, I think, by the righteous in Heaven forever, for they shall look back to that day when Christ appeared and they were declared to be the blessed of the Father to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world! Oh, how I blame my tongue and chide myself that I cannot speak upon this theme as I would, but nevertheless may the solemn facts make up for my lack of speech and may they tell upon your souls! Now I must turn to the second point, and speak upon—

II. THE MERCY OF THAT DAY.  
The mercy which is prayed for in this verse, “The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day.” Will that prayer be heard? Will that prayer be heard for me, for you, each one of you in this area, in these galleries? Will God have mercy on you in that day? I will tell you—  
First, He will have no mercy in that day upon those who had no mercy upon others. If you cannot forgive, neither shall you be forgiven! If you cannot kneel down and sincerely pray, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive them that are indebted to us,” then the gates of Heaven are fast barred against you! If you take your brother by the throat and say, “Pay me what you owe me,” the great Master of us all will commit you to the tormentors, because your great debt has not been paid! Relentless, malicious, revengeful men, take heed of that! Lay it on your pillow tonight and let it pierce your heart—if you forgive not every man his brother, your heavenly Father will not forgive you!  
Next, God will have no mercy in that day upon those who lived and died in wickedness. Here is the proof of it, “The wicked shall be turned into Hell,” and Hell means not mercy, but misery! The men that have lied in the breaking of God’s Law from day to day, from childhood to manhood, perhaps from manhood to old age, and have died still sinning—for them there shall be no mercy whatever! There shall be no mercy for those who neglect salvation. Again I give you God’s words for it, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” These people had not done any particular mischief to anybody else. They had not persecuted Christ. They had not reviled His Gospel. They had not been heretics—they simply neglected the matter. “How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?” You shall not escape at all! If you neglect His mercy, here, mercy will neglect you forever!  
Then, again, they shall have no mercy who said they needed none. Are there not some here who fancy that they need no mercy from God? They do their best. They are excellent in character. They are well deserving and they expect to enter into Heaven through their good deeds. You seek no mercy, you shall have none! You proudly reject it. You trust to your own righteousness—you seek to have what you merit—you shall have what you merit—but that will be to be driven forever from the Presence of God! There cannot be mercy to those who will not confess that they need mercy. There shall be no mercy in that day for those who sought no mercy here. Prayerless souls? You are graceless souls and mercy shall be denied you then! You will pray loudly enough then! Oh, how they pray in Hell! What tears and groans send they up to Heaven! They would gladly have mercy there, but Mercy’s day is over—Justice has turned the key and hurled that key into the abyss where it can never be found! They are prisoners forever beneath the wrath of God! They who will not ask for it deserve not to have it. When mercy is to be had for the asking, if man turns upon his heels and refuses to ask, what shall God do but say, “Because I called and you refused—I stretched out My hand and no man regarded—I also will mock at your calamity. I will laugh when your fear comes”? There shall be no mercy for those who ask no mercy.  
Further, there shall in that day be no mercy for those that scoffed at Christ, denied His dignity, railed at His people, broke His Sabbath and altogether abhorred His Gospel. Oh, Sirs, you fight a desperate battle against Him who made the heavens and the earth and who is the darling Son of God! In fighting against Christ, you dash yourselves upon the bosses of Jehovah’s buckler! You cast yourselves upon the point of His spear! Be wise and stop your rebellion. “Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.” How shall the wax contend with the fire, or the thistles wage war with the flames? Yet you are doing this, O you that rebel against Christ! You shall either break or bow. Bow, I pray you, for if not, He shall break you with a rod of iron! He shall break you in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Beware, you that despise Him, lest in the day of His coming He despises your image and you utterly perish.  
There shall in that day be no mercy for those who refuse the Gospel. And I am sorry to say there are some here of that sort. Those cannot be said to refuse the Gospel who do not know it, but most of you do know it. I was thinking this afternoon, as I prayed God to let this subject get into my own soul, about some of you who do not lack for light and instruction, who do not need to know more about the way of salvation, or about the penalty of neglecting it. What you need is a new heart and a right spirit! You need your will subdued! You need decision of character! You need to be made thoughtful—you need to be made prayerful! I cannot do this for you, but I can warn you over and over and over again that they who go to Hell from under the shadow of the pulpit wherein there is an earnest ministry, go there with an emphasis! They that fall from the heights of privilege fall, indeed, into the Lake of Fire! God grant that not a solitary one of the many hearers who gather here may know what it is to have it said, “It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you. They would have repented had they heard the Gospel, but you heard it and repented not.”  
I must add to all this that there shall be no mercy in that day for those who have sold their Lord. “Where are they?” you ask. “Does there live on this earth a miscreant who has sold his Lord?” God have mercy on the man—he not only lives on earth, but he is here! He was once a professor, but he found it more profitable to cease from religion, and he has done so. He once came to the Communion Table, but he fell into lustful habits and he is no member of Christ. He has defiled the Temple of God—and God shall destroy him! He could sometimes pray in public—at the Prayer Meeting, but he dares not pray now—he has enough conscience left to let him cede from such hypocrisy! He sold his Lord for pleasure. He sold his Lord for money. He sold his Lord for the fear of man. “Verily I say unto you, he who is ashamed of Me and My Word, of him will I be ashamed when I shall come in the Glory of My Father and all My holy angels with Me.” You know who spoke those words! They were spoken by Him whose hands were pierced! He has said it, and oh, note, you apostates, note it well, “He that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in Heaven. Verily I say unto you, I never knew you! Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” Oh, where is this unhappy man? May God have mercy on him, tonight, for He will have no mercy upon him in that day if he dies as he now is!  
And I shall close that list by saying in that day God will have no mercy for false professors. He will have no mercy upon preachers who could talk glibly, but whose lives were not consistent with their own teaching. What a condemnation shall await me if I am not found in Christ after having preached so continuously to so many thousands! Oh, whatever a man shall be in Hell, may God grant he may never be an unfaithful minister of Christ, condemned out of his own mouth! But what shall I say of unfaithful deacons and Elders, and Church members? Their condemnation will be as just as it is terrible! Why needed they to add to their other sins the sin of a false profession? If they loved not Christ they need not have been traitors. There was no necessity for them to come forward and be baptized into the Triune name! There was no demand upon them to come to the Table in remembrance of Christ’s death if they were not His! They voluntarily thrust themselves into a profession which was a lie and into the midst of a Church with which they were not akin. Surely if He begins first at the House of God, His judgments will be most terrible upon false professors! For this chaff there shall be the unquenchable fire, for it was once upon the Lord’s threshing floor! For this dross there shall be consuming flames, for it was once in alliance with the precious gold which the King calls His own. I feel inclined to stop preaching and to pray for myself. The Lord have mercy upon me in that day! And then to take you all by name, if I could know you all, one by one, and kneel here and say, “The Lord have mercy upon this man—this woman—this child— in that day.” But I beg you pray it for yourselves! Now, in the silence of your souls, let this prayer go up vehemently to Heaven, “O God, have mercy upon me! Have mercy upon me in that day and to that end have mercy upon me now.”  
I close, but I never like to close a sermon when it looks like Jeremiah’s roll—written inside and outside with lamentations. Let us have a sweet word or two to finish with. We spoke of that day—for a moment let me speak of this day—of this day! You have not come to that day yet. Today it is not judgment, but love that rules the hour. Now the Great White Throne is not yet set, neither is there a trumpet that rings in your ears, but it is an affectionate voice which speaks to you and says, “Mercy is still to be had! Mercy is to be had by false professors! Mercy is to be had by apostates! Mercy is to be had by the very chief of sinners!” This is a night, this very night, in which prayer will be answered! God has said, “Seek and you shall find.” This is a night in which Christ waits to be gracious! He is exalted on high on purpose to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. This is a night in which sin may be forgiven! You are on praying ground—you are still on pleading terms! The sentence is not passed. The wax is still melted and it is not stamped and cold. There is hope for you! Better than that, there are kind invitations for you— there are loving exhortations! How long these may stand good, I cannot tell. As far as any one of us may be concerned, the Judgment Day may come tomorrow. It may come to all mankind—but as far as the practical fact is concerned—it may come in death to any one of us tonight. I look round me, now, and I remember a month ago certain seats in this place that were occupied by those that are now gone—gone to their account. If it were right, I think I could point my finger to some of you that are sitting in the places of dead men. They were their seats. They used to sit there, some of them, and they rejoiced in every word they heard! Is a sinner filling a saint’s place?  
There are some, again, that are gone out of this company who gave us no evidence of Grace. Alas, is there no sinner sitting in the place where one sat before him who forgot God? You are all passing away—I am passing with you. We are all shadows. We fly like an arrow through the air. We are a wind that passes and it is not. Oh, make sure of eternal things, Brothers and Sisters! Whatever you lose, lose not Christ! Whatever you miss, miss not salvation! May God impress you with this thought. May He impress you, moreover, with this thought—that, “today is the accepted time; today is the day of salvation”—and may some of you be unable to sleep tonight until you have found the Savior—  
*“For should swift death this night overtake you, And your couch become your tomb,”*

then tomorrow, if unregenerate and unforgiven, you would be shut up where hope can never come to you! Oh, seek His face tonight! Dare not permit yourselves to feel the image of death upon you in sleep unless you have felt the scepter of Christ, touched by faith, communicate life and pardon to you! Seek Him! Oh, seek Him! Seek Him while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near! The Lord bless you, everyone of you, and may we meet in Heaven without exception, for Christ’s sake! Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *2Ti 1:1-18***.**

Verse 1. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. Paul takes high ground. He is not an Apostle by the will of the Church, but an Apostle by the will of God! God’s will is the great motive power in the Church of God. Some talk a great deal about man’s will. What do you think of God’s will, the will of the Almighty? Surely that shall stand! Paul felt that he had that at the back of him. “Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” Hence he always speaks very boldly. He never asks leave of anybody. If he is an Apostle by the will of God, he exercises his office without fear!

2. To Timothy, my dearly beloved son—Son in the faith. When all the ties of natural descent shall be forgotten, sonship in Christ will continue. I do not doubt that in Heaven Timothy is still Paul’s son—Paul is still father to Timothy, for the relation is of the Spirit.

2. Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I think I have called upon you to notice that when Paul writes to a Church, it is, “Grace and peace.” Whenever he writes to a minister, it is, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” I have sometimes wondered whether we ministers need mercy more than other people, and I suppose that we do, or else the Apostle would not have said, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” Oh, if a minister gets to Heaven, it will be a wonder! His responsibilities are so great. “Who is sufficient for these things?” It will be a marvelous display of mercy if any of us shall be able to say at last, “I am clear of the blood of all men,” for we have not only our own blood, but the blood of others to look to in this matter.

3. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day. For this Paul thanks God. He never forgot to pray for Timothy, and it is a matter of thankfulness. When we feel moved to pray, though it is for another, the spirit of prayer is essentially the same, whatever its object—and we ought to be thankful when we feel continually able to pray for a friend. “I thank God,” he says, and he says that he had served God with a pure conscience all his days. So he had, but it was a blind conscience. At first, when he was a Pharisee, he still served God, though he then ignorantly persecuted the people of God! Oh, but it is a good thing sincerely to follow after God. May we be helped to do so. “I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day.”

4. Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy. What were those tears? Tears of holy men and women are as precious as diamonds! Paul had noticed the tears twinkling in brother Timothy’s eyes—the tears of repentance, the tears of gratitude, the tears of fervent desire. He had noticed that and, being mindful of all this, he wished to see that dear face again! Christianity does not make us unsociable. It gives us new ties of love, fresh brothers, fresh sons.

5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice: and I am persuaded that in you, also. Happy son who has grandmother and mother before him in the faith! Unhappy young man who has quit the faith of his fathers and has turned aside altogether. If such are here, we would remember them in our prayers, but we cannot say that we can remember them with joy.

6. Therefore I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God which is in you by the putting on of my hands. Stir up your gifts like a fire. It will not burn without sometimes poking. Stir it up! And every now and then it is a good thing to have the heart stirred up, awakened, quickened, brought to a higher diligence. We must try to do this. Perhaps there are some dear friends here who have a large measure of latent gifts, dormant faculties. Stir up the gift that is in you!

7. For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Neither Paul nor Timothy had a cowardly spirit. They were, neither of them, afraid. God had taught them His Truths and they knew them, and they held them, defying all opposition.

8. Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me, His prisoner. What? Were people ashamed of Paul? Oh, yes, dear Friends. The great Apostle, because he was persecuted, found himself despised by some of the very people who owed their souls to him! It is the lot of those who are faithful to Christ to find even good men sometimes turning against them. But what of that? They are responsible to their Master, not to their fellow servants! Yet it is a hard thing when any come to be ashamed of you—ashamed of you, though you know that you have done right. I do not wonder that he puts it even to Timothy, “Be not you, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner.” Some of us know what it is to have trained and brought up those about us, who were to us what Timothy was to Paul—who have been ashamed of us and of the testimony of our Lord.

8. But be you partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God. You will need the power of God to do it, and mind you do it. Take your full share in whatever affliction the Gospel brings upon Christians. “According to the power of God.”

9. Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. How plain it is that he earnestly believed in the eternal Election of Believers—in their being in Christ and in their possession of Grace in Christ. “Grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” God’s love to His people is not a thing of yesterday! He loved them before the world was made and He will love them when the world has ceased to be. “It was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

10-12. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an Apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles. Indeed, for this cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Paul knew that Grace could keep his soul, but I think that he here means that he could keep his own Gospel. Paul had kept it, kept the faith, but he committed it now into the hands of the Greater One, who would keep it when every Apostle was dead, and every faithful witness had passed away. “He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

13. Hold fast the form of sound words. Many say they have no creeds, and there is hardly an Epistle in which there is not a distinct mention of a creed.

13. Which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Hold fast the Truth of God. Hold fast the very form and shape of it! If you are to keep the life that is in an egg, you must not break the shell. Take care of it all, and take care of it all the more when, with specious reasoning they say, “We will hold the same Truth of God, only in a different form.” Why a different form at all, if they do not wish to hold a different Doctrine altogether? No, my Brothers, especially you that are like young Timothy, take this passage to heart. “Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”

14. That good thing which was committed unto you keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us. This is what we need! If the Holy Spirit is in us, we shall never trifle with the Truth. He is the lover and revealer of Truth, and we shall press the Doctrines of the Word of God and the Word of God, itself, nearer and nearer to our hearts in proportion as the Holy Spirit dwells in us!

15. This you know, that all they who are in Asia have turned away from me; What? Turned away from Paul? Some people think it is an awful thing because certain people turn away from a minister of Christ. It is not an awful thing at all, except for them! Paul stands fast—even he, the bravest of the brave—and they all turn aside from him. What of that? Does Paul flinch? No, not he! “This you know, that all they who are in Asia have turned away from me.”

15. Of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. Two men who ought to have known better! Paul evidently fixed his eyes upon them—more bitter than others, more perverse, more cruel, more willfully guilty in turning aside from him.

16, 17. The Lord grant mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains. But when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. You could not tell in Rome where a prisoner was. The registers were not open to investigation. You had to go from prison to prison, and pay the guards to get admission, or to be told who might be there, but Onesiphorus was determined to find Paul. I suppose that he went to the Mamertine, a dungeon in which some of us have been—one dungeon under the bottom of another. The first one has no light, except through a round hole at the top. And the second has a round hole through which you drop into the lower one. We think that Paul was there. It is a tradition that he was. And then there is the Palatine prison, which was at the guard house of the Praetorian guards, near the palace on the Palatine Hill. There Paul certainly was, and Onesiphorus went from one jail to another. “Have you seen a little Jew with weak eyes?” I daresay that was his description of him. “He is a friend of mine. I want to speak with him.” “What? That Paul?—the man that is chained to one or another of us every morning? We have twelve hours of it and he preaches to us most of the time! And we know it by the time we are let go again!” “Oh, that is the man,” said Onesiphorus. “That is the man! Does he talk about Jesus Christ?” “Oh, nothing else but that. He will not let any soldier go from being bound to him without hearing about Jesus Christ.” “That is my man,” said Onesiphorus. He sought him out very diligently, and he found him!

18. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, you know very well.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #938 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷2Ti 2.2

A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST  
NO. 938

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“A good soldier of Jesus Christ.”***2Ti 2:2-3***.**

MANY men, many minds. In reference to what a Christian is there have been very many and diverse opinions. According to the notions of some, a Christian is an exquisite of remarkably delicate tastes. He cannot worship except it be in a place whose architecture is correctly Gothic, otherwise his dainty soul will be shocked. He is unable to offer prayer aright unless his devotions are uplifted upon the wings of the choicest music. And, even then, scarcely will he be successful unless he is aided by sundry gentlemen, whose pedigree, like that of racehorses, can be clearly traced, and whose garments the tailor has fashioned according to the directions of the ecclesiastical fashion book for the various seasons of the year.

If this is to be a Christian in these days, it must be confessed that Paul has said little concerning this delicate and artistic sort of creature, unless, indeed, he had reference to it in Gal 4:9-11, which read at your leisure—neither would Paul’s Master acknowledge it.

With some a Christian is a spiritual gourmet. He attends upon the ministry of the Word for no purpose but to be fed. He strongly denounces every sermon that is aimed at the conversion of sinners, for he looks even upon the Bible itself as a book solely intended to yield him personal consolation. The more any doctrinal teaching promises him a monopoly of good things, and the more it excludes others, the better he enjoys it—it being to him a particular part of the sweetness of the feast to believe that but a very slender company may dare to partake of it.

For him to live is to enjoy and not to serve. To gratify his selfishness he would blot out the free invitations of the Gospel. He is not a hearer only, but certainly he is not also a doer. He is a hearer and a feeder, in a certain coarse sense, upon the Word of God, and nothing more. That is not Paul’s ideal of a Christian. He does not picture him with his napkin in his hand, sitting at a banquet table, but rather with a sword girt upon his thigh, ready for the conflict.

To some, the highest form of Christian is a great reader—a profound student of the best of books—for the purpose of composing spiritual riddles. He reads for no practical end. He is a picker-out of words, a spellerover of syllables, a magnifier of microscopic points, a proficient in biblical hair-splitting. The more a passage perplexes others the more sure he is of its meaning. He cares most for things which have the least practical bearing. He is a peeper through spiritual spyglasses, fancying that he can interpret what wiser men leave to God to expound. He is a hunter after spiritual conies, which, if caught, would never pay the huntsman for his toil, while the weightier matters he holds in small esteem. This does not seem to have been Paul’s conception of a Christian. For the Apostle was no lover of foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife.

And I am afraid I must add that with some the ideal of a Christian is that of a man who can sleep out his existence in blissful serenity—a man who, having believed, or professed to believe in Christ—has settled his lifework forever, and from now on can say, “Soul, take your ease, you have from now on much goods laid up for many years in your own security. Eat, drink, be merry in the Gospel. But as for feeding the hungry or clothing the naked, are you your brother’s keeper? What is that to you? See you to yourself, and if you, yourself are right, let fate, or Providence, or Sovereignty, take care of the rest.”

Paul does not appear to have pictured true Believers as sluggards sound asleep upon the downiest beds. His description of a Christian in the text is that of a soldier. And that means something far different either from a religious fop, whose best delight is music and millinery, or a theological critic who makes a man an offender for a word. Or a spiritual glutton who cares for nothing but a lifelong enjoyment of the fat things full of marrow. Or an ecclesiastical slumberer who longs only for peace for himself. Paul represents him as a soldier and that, I say, is quite another thing.

For what is a soldier? A soldier is a practical man, a man who has work to do, and hard, stern work. He may sometimes, when he is at his ease, wear the fineries of war, but when he comes to real warfare he cares little enough for them. The dust and the smoke, and the garments rolled in blood—these are for those who go soldiering. And swords all hacked, and dented armor, and bruised shields—these are the things that mark the good, the practical, soldier. Truly to serve God, really to exhibit Christian graces, fully to achieve a lifework for Christ, actually to win souls—this is to bear fruit worthy of a Christian.

A soldier is a man of deeds, and not of words. He has to contend and fight. In war times his life knows little of luxurious ease. In the dead of night, perhaps, the trumpet sounds to boot and saddle—just at the time when he is most weary—and he must hurry to the attack just when he would best prefer to take his rest in sleep. The Christian is a soldier in an enemy’s country always needing to stand on his watchtower, constantly to be contending, though not with flesh and blood—with far worse foes— namely, with spiritual wickedness in high places.

The Christian is a self-sacrificing man as the soldier must be. To protect his country, the soldier must expose his own bosom. To serve his King, he must be ready to lay down his life. Surely he is no Christian who never felt the spirit of self-sacrifice. If I live unto myself I am living unto the flesh, and of the flesh I shall reap corruption. Only he who lives to his God, to Christ, to the Truth of God, to the Church, and to the good old cause—only he is the man who can reckon himself at all to be a soldier of Jesus Christ.

A soldier is a serving man. He does not follow his own pleasure. He is under law and rule. Each hour of the day has its prescribed duty. And he must be obedient to the word of another and not to his own will and whim. Such is the Christian. We serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Though no longer the slaves of man so as to dread his frown, we are servants of Christ who has loosed our bonds.

The soldier is full often a suffering man. There are wounds, there are toils, there are frequent stays in the hospitals—there may be ghastly cuts which let the soul out with the blood. Such the Christian soldier must be ready to suffer, enduring hardship, not looking for pleasure of a worldly kind in this life, but counting it his pleasure to renounce his pleasure for Christ’s sake. Once again, the true soldier is an ambitious being. He pants for honor, seeks for glory. On the field of strife he gathers his laurels, and amidst a thousand dangers he reaps renown.

The Christian is fired by higher ambitions than any earthly warrior ever knew. He sees a crown that can never fade. He loves a King who best of all is worthy to be served. He has a motive within him which moves him to the noble deeds—a Divine spirit impelling him to the most self-sacrificing actions. Thus you see the Christian is a soldier, and it is one of the main things in Christian life to contend earnestly for the faith, and to fight valorously against sin.

Paul does not exhort Timothy to be a common, or ordinary soldier, but to be a “good soldier of Jesus Christ.” For all soldiers, and all true soldiers may not be good soldiers. There are men who are but just soldiers and nothing more. They only need sufficient temptation and they readily become cowardly, idle, useless and worthless. But he is the good soldier who is bravest of the brave, courageous at all times. He is zealous, does his duty with heart and earnestness. He is the good soldier of Jesus Christ who, through Divine Grace, aims to make himself as able to serve his Lord as shall be possible.

He tries to grow in Grace and to be perfected in every good word and work that he may be in his Master’s battles fit for the roughest and sternest service, and ready to bear the very brunt of the fray. David had many soldiers, and good soldiers, too, but you remember it was said of many, “These attained not unto the first three.” Now Paul, if I read him rightly, would have Timothy try to be of the first three, to be a good soldier. And surely I would, this morning, say to my dear comrades in the little army of Christ meeting here—let each one of us try to attain unto the first three. Let us ask to be numbered among the King’s mighties, to do noble work for Him and honorable service, that we may bring to our Master’s cause fresh glory. Be it ours to covet earnestly the best gifts, and as we have had much forgiven, let us love much, and prove that love by action.

Before I proceed fully to open up this metaphor, let me say that though we shall use military terms this morning, and stirring speech, it should ever be remembered that we have no war against persons, and that the weapons which we use are not such as are forged for the deadly conflicts of mankind. The wars of a Christian are against principles, against sins, against the miseries of mankind, against that Evil One who has led man astray from his Maker. Our wars are against the iniquity which keeps man an enemy to himself. The weapons that we use are holy arguments and consecrated lives, devotion and prayer to God, teaching and example among the sons of men.

Ours is battling for the peace, and fighting for rest. We disturb the world to make it quiet, and turn it upside down to set it right. We pull down strongholds that they may not pull down the Zion of God. We dash down the mighty that the humble and the meek may be established. We have no sympathy with any other war, but count it an evil of the direst sort, let it be disguised as it may. Now with that caution, whatever I shall seem to say will not sound as though I loved or excused ordinary warfare—for nothing can be more abhorrent to the Christian man than

wholesale slaughter. Nothing can be more desired by us than the promised era when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.

Now let us come to the work of this morning. First, we shall describe a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and when we have done so, we shall exhort you to be such.

I. First, then, this morning, we shall endeavor TO DESCRIBE A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST. We must begin with this fundamental—he must be loyal to his King. A soldier of Jesus Christ owns the Divine Redeemer as his King, and confesses His sole and undivided sovereignty in the spiritual kingdom. He abhors Antichrist in all its forms, and every principle that opposes itself to the reign of the Beloved Prince of Peace. Jesus is to him both Lord and God. The day when he enlisted, he did, as it were, put his finger into the print of the nails, and said with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.”

This was his enlistment declaration, and he remains true to it. “Christ is All,” is his motto, and to win all men to obedience to Immanuel is his lifework. Till he sheathes his sword in the last victory, the Crucified is sole monarch of his soul. For Him he lives, for Him he would even dare to die. He has entered into solemn league and covenant, to maintain against all comers that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Moreover, the Christian soldier not only acknowledges Jesus to be his King, but his heart is full of loving devotion to Him as such. Nothing can make his heart leap like the mention of that august, that more than royal name. He remembers who Jesus is, the Son of God, “the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God.” He remembers what Jesus did, how He loved him, and gave Himself for him. He looks to the Cross and remembers the streams of blood whereby the elect were redeemed, even when they were enemies of God. He remembers Christ in Heaven, enthroned at the right hand of the Father.

He loves Him there, and it ravishes his heart to think that God has highly exalted the once-despised and rejected One, and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. He pants for the time when the Crucified shall come in His Glory, and rule the nations as their liege Lord. He loves Jesus so that he feels he belongs to Him altogether, bought with His blood, redeemed by His power, and comforted by His Presence. He delights to know that he is not his own, for he is bought with a price. And since he loves his King, and loves Him with an ardor unquenchable—for many waters cannot drown his love, neither can the floods quench it—he loves all the King’s Brethren and servants for the King’s sake.

He hails his Brethren in arms with hearty affection. He loves the grand old banner of the Gospel. He prays for the wind of the Holy Spirit to expand its furls, that all eyes may behold its beauties. He is steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints, and rejoices so much at every doctrine of the Gospel that he would gladly lay down his life to preserve it to the world. Above all, he loves the crown of his King, and the cause of his Master. Oh, could he set the Captain of his salvation higher among men, he would be content to die in the ditch of neglect and scorn! Could he but see the King come to His own, and the Heir of all things loyally acknowledged by His revolted provinces, he would be satisfied whatever might become of himself. His heart is more than loyal, it is full of personal affection for the Chief among ten thousand.

I ask you, Brethren, whether it is so with you? Believing, yes, knowing that it is so with many, I would to God it were thus with all. Brethren, I know you love Jesus well, no music sounds to your ears so sweetly as His charming name. No song of choicest minstrel is half so sweet. The very thought of Him with rapture fills your breasts. Assuredly you have one of the first marks of good soldiers—go on, I pray you, to that which lies beyond.

The next characteristic of a good soldier is that he is obedient to his captain’s commands. He would be no soldier at all who would not take his marching orders from his leader, but must needs act after his own mind. He would soon be dismissed from service, if not shot by order of a court martial for crimes which military rule cannot tolerate. Now, without enlarging on that illustration, let me ask every Christian here, and myself first of all, are we doing all the Master’s will? Do we wish to know the Master’s will? I should not like that any part of the Scripture should be distasteful to me. I would tremble if there were portions of my Lord’s Testimony which I feared to read, or found it convenient to forget.

It is terrible when men are obliged to pass over certain texts, or else to cut and square them to make them agree with their beliefs. We should not practice an ordinance merely because our Church teaches it, or our parents believed in it. We must read the Scriptures and search the question for ourselves, or we are not respectful to our Lord. The soldier who did not take the trouble to read the orders of his superior might justly be suspected of mutinous intentions. Disobedience rankles in any heart where there is carelessness about knowing the Lord’s will. Be courageous enough always to look Scripture in the face—it is, after all, nothing more than your bare duty.

Better for us that we changed our sentiments every day in order to be right, than that we held to them obstinately while we had some fear that perhaps we were wrong. To live a life of obedience is a greater matter than some suppose. Obedience is no second-rate virtue—“to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” “If you love Me”—what does Jesus say, “Go to the stake for Me,” or, “Preach before kings for Me”? No, neither of these things is expressly selected, but “If you love Me, keep My commandments,” as though this were the surest and most accepted test of love. May you thus, then, being loyal to the King, be in the second place obedient to His commands.

The third matter for a good soldier to mind is this—if he is, indeed, a first-class soldier, worthy of the service—to conquer will be his ruling passion. The fight is on, and the soldier’s blood is up, and now he feels, “I must drive the enemy from his entrenchment, I must take yonder redoubt. I must plant our conquering standard on the castle of the foe, or I must die. Accursed be the sun if he goes down this day and sees me turn my back upon the enemy.” He is resolved that he will win or lie cold and stark upon the battlefield. The Christian man, in order that he may win for Christ the souls of others, may make known Christ’s Truth, may establish Christ’s Church on fresh ground, is quite as ready to suffer or die

as is the boldest member of the most renowned regiment.

To do this he disentangles himself as much as he can from all other ambitions and aims, “for he that wars, entangles not himself with the affairs of this life.” With a good soldier of Christ the master passion is to spread the Gospel, to save souls from perishing—and he would sooner do this and be poor than be rich and neglect it. He would sooner be useful and live unknown than rank among the great ones of the earth and be useless to his Lord. A truly good soldier of Jesus Christ knows nothing about difficulties except as things to be surmounted. If his Master bids him perform exploits too hard for him, he draws upon the resources of Omnipotence, and achieves impossibilities.

Wellington sent word to his troops one night, “Ciudad Rodrigo must be taken tonight.” And what do you think was the commentary of the British soldiers appointed for the attack? “Then,” said they all, “we will do it.” So when our great Captain sends round, as He does to us, the Word of command, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” if we were all good soldiers of the Cross, we should say at once, “We will do it.” However hard the task, since God Himself is with us to be our Captain, and Jesus the Priest of the Most High is with us to sound the trumpet, we will do it in Jehovah’s name. May such dauntless resolution fire your breasts, my Brothers and Sisters, and may you thus prove yourselves “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

The passion for victory with the soldier often makes him forget everything else. Before the battle of Waterloo, Picton had had two of his ribs smashed in at Quartre Bras, but he concealed this serious injury, and, though suffering intense agony, he rode at the head of his troops, and led one of the great charges which decided the fortunes of the day. He never left his post, but rode on till a ball crushed in his skull and penetrated to his brain. Then in the hot fight the hero fell. How few among us could thus endure hardness for Jesus? O that we felt we could suffer anything sooner than be turned aside from accomplishing our lifework for Him we love!

In that same battle one of our lieutenants, in the early part of the day, had his left forearm broken by a shot. He could not, therefore, hold the reins in his hand, but he seized them with his mouth and fought on till another shot broke the upper part of the arm to splinters, and it had to be amputated. But within two days there he was, with his arm still bleeding, and the wound all raw, riding at the head of his division. Brave things have been done among the soldiers of our country—O that such brave things were common among the armed men of the Church militant!

Would to God that in the teeth of suffering we could all persevere in living the holy life He bids us live, and in zealously spreading abroad that glorious Gospel which has saved our souls and which will save the souls of others. Great Master, by Your own example inspire us with this valor! I desire to see in this, our Beloved Church, more of you who are resolved that Christ’s Gospel shall conquer this South of London. That it shall conquer the world! That Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. I long to witness more of that dogged perseverance among Christians which would make them work on and on, even without success, and persevere under every discouragement, until at last their Master shall give them their reward on earth, or else take them away to their reward in Heaven. To be a good soldier of Jesus Christ there must be a passion for victory, an insatiable greed for setting up the Throne of Jesus in the souls of men.

Fourthly, a good soldier is very brave at a charge. When the time comes and the orders are given for the good soldier to advance to the attack, he does not wish himself away. Though a perfect hail of hurtling shot whistles all around, and the ranks of the army are thinned, he is glad to be there—for he feels the stern joy that flushes the face in the light of battle—and he only wants to be within arm’s length of the foe and to come to close quarters with him. So is it with the genuine Christian when his heart is right with God. If he is bid to advance, let the danger be what it may, he feels he is honored by having such a service allotted to him.

But are we all such? I fear not. How many of us are silent about Jesus Christ in private conversation? How little do we show forth our light before men. If we were good soldiers, such as we ought to be, we should select every favorable opportunity in private as well as in public communion with our fellow men, and prudently but yet zealously press the claims of Jesus Christ and His Gospel upon them. Oh, do this, Beloved, and good will come of it! We should each one be seeking to have his own special work for Jesus, and if no one else were attempting the task, we should, like the brave men who rush in to the storming of a battery, carry the flag first and plant it, knowing that there are hundreds of others who will follow the first brave man, who might not be able perhaps to lead the way themselves.

My Beloved, may you and I be ready for anything, and bold to bear witness for Christ before a scoffing world. In the pulpits where we preach, in the workshops where we labor, in the markets where we trade, in every company amidst which we are called to move—wherever we may be, may we be brave enough to own our Lord and to uphold His cause.

But this is not all that goes to make a good soldier. A good soldier is like a rock under attack. So British soldiers have been. They have stood in solid squares against the enemies’ cavalry until their foes have dashed upon them madly, gnashed their teeth, fired in their faces, thrown their guns at them, and yet might just as well have ridden against granite rocks. For our soldiers did not know how to yield, and would not retreat. As fast as one fell another filled up the gap, and there stood the square of iron defying the rush of the foe.

We want this kind of fixed, resolved, persevering godliness in our Churches, and we shall have it if we are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Alas, too many are exhausted by the zeal at first exhibited. For a time they can reach the highest point, but to continue on, and on, and on—this is too difficult a task for them. How many young people will join the Church and for awhile seem very zealous and then grow cold! Alas, it is not always the young, there are some among yourselves who were once most diligent in your various forms of service. What hinders you that you are not diligent in your Master’s business now? Has Christ given you leave to retire into inglorious ease? Does He exempt you from service?

Take heed lest you are also exempt from reward. No, we must through all our Christian life maintain our integrity, resist temptation, tread the separated path, and seek the souls of men with undying ardor—with indefatigable earnestness—wrestling with God for men and with men for God.

Oh, for more of this stern determination to stand, and having done all—to still stand!

The last mark of a really good soldier of Jesus Christ is that he derives his strength from on High. This has been true even of some common soldiers, for religious men, when they have sought strength from God, have been all the braver in the day of conflict. I like the story of Frederick the Great. When he overheard his favorite general engaged in prayer, and was about to utter a sneering remark, the fine old man, who never feared a foe, and did not even fear his majesty’s jest, said, “Your Majesty, I have just been asking aid from your Majesty’s great Ally.” He had been waiting upon God.

This is how Christians get the victory. They seek it from the Church’s great Ally, and then go to the conflict sure that they shall win the day. He is the best Christian who is the best intercessor. He shall do the most who shall pray the best. In the battle of Salamanca, when Wellington bade one of his officers advance with his troops and occupy a gap which the Duke perceived in the lines of the French, the general rode up to him, and said, “My lord, I will do the work, but first give me a grasp of that conquering right hand of yours.” He received a hearty grip, and away he rode to the deadly encounter.

Often has my soul said to her Captain, “My Lord, I will do that work if You will give me a grip of Your conquering right hand.” Oh, what power it puts into a man when he gets a grip of Christ, and Christ gets a grip of him! Fellowship with Christ is the fountain of the Church’s strength. Her power did never lie in her wealth, nor in the eloquence of her preachers, nor in anything that comes of man. The strength of the Church is Divine, and if she fails to draw strength from the Everlasting Hills, she becomes weak as water. Good soldiers of Jesus Christ, watch unto prayer, “praying in the Holy Spirit,” for so shall you be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

II. Thus I have in a very poor way described a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Give me a few minutes while I EXHORT YOU TO BE SUCH. And, mark you, I shall speak especially to the members of this Christian Church. I exhort you, dear Brethren, who are soldiers of Christ, to be good soldiers, because many of you have been so. Paul was likely to commend the Churches when he could, and I feel I may honestly and from my heart commend many of you, for you have served your Lord and Master well.

I know you have nothing whereof to glory, for when you have done all, you are unprofitable servants. But still I rejoice, and will rejoice when I see the work of the Holy Spirit in you. And I will venture to say that I have seen here instances of Apostolic ardor and self-sacrifice such as I have read of in ancient records, but hardly ever expected to see. There are those in this House this day who will shine as stars forever and ever, for they have turned many to righteousness. Dishonor not your past, I beseech you! Fall not from your high standing. “Forward” is your motto! Never think of declining, but rather advance in love to God, and in the ardor of your zeal.

Be good soldiers still, and depart not from your first love. I am sure there is greater need of good soldiering now than ever. Ten years ago, or sixteen years ago, when first I addressed you, the power of popery in this land was nothing compared to what it is now. In those days the Church of England was more generally Protestant. Now it is so frequently popish that I may broadly say that now we are afflicted with two popish churches—that of Rome and that of Oxford. The second one is not one whit better than the first—only more crafty and insidious—inasmuch as it attracts to itself a number of godly and gracious men who protect the villains who bear a Protestant name and who are doing the Pope’s work.

I grieve to know that the evangelical clergy of England, by their continued union with the Church of England are acting as a shield to the ritualistic or popish party, and giving them every opportunity to work out their schemes for leading the nation back to popery en masse. Around this very spot a battle will have to be fought between the Sacramentarians and the lovers of the Gospel. At your very doors the battle is come at last. It was not so till but lately, but here it is—and you that are men must show your colors, and serve your Master against innumerable and constantly active foes. You have never failed me, you have always been bold and steadfast, and laborious, and so let it be, for the time requires it.

I can see on all hands that many of you young men are being attracted by the worldly amusements which surround us, for our dangers are not only those of popery, but those of the world, the flesh, and the devil. There must be greater earnestness and a deeper piety among you, or the next generation will become unworthy of yourselves—your grief—and not your joy. I pray you see to this. Be good soldiers, for much depends upon it. Your country will be blessed in proportion as you are earnest. Nonconformity in England will lose all its power if it loses its godliness. I do not care much for our political strength—I was about to say I am almost indifferent to our political rights—I care for them, but only so much as to occupy a very minor place in my consideration.

Our spirituality is the main matter. It is this, alone, that can make us a blessing to our country. Sons of the Puritans, you must walk with God, or your day is past—you will be swept away as Esther would have been, who came to the kingdom for the salvation of her nation—if she had not fulfilled the office for which God had exalted her. You have grown in numbers, grown in strength. O that you may grow in Grace, love the Gospel better, and love Christ better, for your country needs it, your children need it, you, yourselves need it! The times are perilous, and yet they are hopeful! By their peril, and by their hopefulness, I beseech you, be good soldiers of Jesus Christ! Good soldiers we ought to be, for it is a grand old cause that is at stake. It is the kingdom of God, it is the Church of Christ, it is the Word of God, the Truth, the doctrine of the Gospel, the crown of Jesus, that are all at stake.

I grant you that none shall ever shake the Throne of Jesus, for though “the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing,” yet shall His Throne be established. But we now speak according to the manner of men. God has been pleased to leave this matter to His Church, which is the pillar and ground of the Truth. Oh then! Stand up manfully, and fight earnestly when so much rests upon it! God grant that you may not be as the children of Ephraim, who being armed and carrying bows turned their backs in the day of battle.

I implore you, my Brethren, and mostly myself, to be good soldiers of

Jesus when you consider the fame that has preceded you. A soldier, when he receives his colors, finds certain words embroidered on them to remind him of the former victories of the regiment in which he serves. Look at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and see the long list of the triumphs of the faithful. Remember how Prophets and Apostles served God. Remember how martyrs joyfully laid down their lives. Look at the long line of the reformers and the confessors. Remember your martyred sires and covenanting fathers, and by the Grace of God I beseech you, walk not unworthy of your noble lineage.

Be good soldiers because of the victory which awaits you. Oh, it will be a grand thing to share in the ultimate triumph of Christ, for triumph He will! When all His soldiers shall come back from the war, and the King Himself at their head with the spoils of the victory. When they shall come back to the metropolitan city, to the ivory palaces of the great Captain. When the song is heard, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors.” When the question shall be answered, “Who is the King of Glory?” by the reply, “The Lord of Hosts, the Lord mighty in battle, He is the King of Glory,” it will be a glorious thing to have shared the fight, for so surely you shall share the honors of that coronation day!

A crown is prepared for that head though it is now made to ache with care for the cause. There is a palm branch for that hand which now toils in the fight. There are silver sandals for those feet which have now to march over weary miles for Christ’s sake. Honor and immortality not to be imagined till they are enjoyed await every faithful soldier of the Cross!

Besides, and lastly, if I want another argument to make you good soldiers, remember your Captain, the Captain whose wounded hands and pierced feet are tokens of His love to you. Redeemed from going down to the pit, what can you do sufficiently to show your gratitude? Assured of eternal Glory by-and-by, how can you sufficiently prove that you feel your indebtedness? Up, I pray you! By Him whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and yet were wet with tears—by Him on whose head are many crowns, and who yet wore the crown of thorns—by Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and yet bowed His head to death for you—resolve that to life’s latest breath you will spend and be spent for His praise. The Lord grant that there may be many such in this Church—good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Two or three words and I will close. At this present time I contemplate exhorting you to engage in fresh efforts for Christ. I do not know that you are relaxing, neither have I complaints to make of any. But I would wish that we would commence with renewed vigor this day, if God so wills it. As I myself commence a new year of Sundays as to my own age, I desire to see a new era of greater exertion in the cause of Jesus Christ. And, in order that it may be successful, let not a single man or woman on the Church-roll be missing from his or her post in the spiritual conflict.

It is a remarkable fact that on the eve of a great battle in the Peninsular War the officers read the muster-roll, and noted that “not a man was missing.” They had all good stomach for the fight, and were all there. You that are in the Sunday school, you that distribute your tracts, you that preach in the streets—every man to his post! And if you have no post as yet, find one—let there not be one idler, not one single loiterer, for a single sluggard may mar the work. Then if we are to be successful let nothing divide us. The motto of one of our most famous regiments embroidered on their banner is, “Quis separavit.” Who shall separate us?

We are but mortals, and, therefore, little jealousies may spring up. And among us there may be little causes of personal vexation, but brave warriors in the olden times who had fallen out have been known to come together on the eve of battle and say, “Come, let us be reconciled, we may die tomorrow. Besides, we join in common hatred of the foe and love to the king.” Let your peace be unbroken, your union indissoluble, and God will bless you.

To help us to succeed now, let us lay down this one rule—let no low standard of work, or virtue, or spiritual attainment, content any one of us. Let us resolve to be as good Christians as can be found beneath the stars, as fond of Christ as human hearts can be, doing and giving as much for Christ as we can do or give consistently with other duties. Let us spare nothing, and keep back no part of the price. Let there be no Ananias and Sapphira among us, but all be as John, who loved his Lord. And Paul, who counted all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord.

Next, let me say let the present moment be seized. I should like to saturate this district with a mass of tracts simply teaching the Gospel and protesting against the bastard popery around us. Heaven and earth are being raised around us just now. Our poor are being bribed, the houses of our members are being systematically visited with the view of decoying them from our worship. We are told that a certain small building used by the Episcopal body is the parish Church, and we ought to attend it. I might far more truthfully assert this to be the Church of the parish by the choice of a far more numerous body, but I care not to make pretensions which prove nothing.

The true question is—do we follow Christ, and uphold the teachings of Scripture? If so, our standing is unassailable. Doubtless the word has gone forth that Dissent must be crushed, but if we live near to God, and maintain our zeal, Dissent will rise invincible from every attack. Foreseeing the gathering storm, it is our consolation that we know where He dwells who is Master of the tempest, and can walk the waters for our help, and calm the sea around the weather-beaten boat. It becomes us now at this present moment to be indefatigable, to put forth all our strength for the Truth of God, even the Lord’s pure Word in doctrine and in ordinance.

Let no man’s heart fail him. There is no fear of defeat. Lo, these many years the Lord of Hosts has been with us as a Church, and He will still be our Helper. We have seen the rise and fall of many who blazed for awhile—but are now quenched in darkness—while we have increased from a handful to this mass, and God who has been our trust, and is still our stay, will not forsake us now. He has not drawn you together, and held you in one body by cords of love, that after all you may prove to be a powerless unwieldy mass of associated Christians. He intends to direct and strengthen you for nobler ends and purposes!

God, even our own God, will bless us! Immanuel, God with us, leads the van. The Truth, like the virgin daughter of Zion, shakes her head at boastful error, and laughs it to scorn. Let Falsehood put on her tawdry garments and think herself a queen, and say that she shall sit alone, and see no sorrow. Let Error come forth in her panoply and wave her flaunting banner before the sun. She draws near her end. Her armor—what is it?

It is but pasteboard, and the lance of Truth shall pierce it through and through. Her banner, what is it but a foul rag of the Roman harlot? It shall be laid in the dust.

No, let Error bring forth all her hosts, and let them stand in their serried ranks, and through them the faithful soldiers of Jesus will ride and bow the columns like reeds in the wind. In these days, the doctrines and traditions of men compass us about, yes, like bees they compass us about, but in the name of the Lord will we destroy them. Only let us have confidence in God, and the victory is sure. As for the thought of turning back, that can never be endured. A message came to Sir Colin Campbell at the Alma, that Her Majesty’s Guards were falling thick and fast beneath the shot, had they not better retire for a little while into safe quarters? The answer was, “It were better, Sir, that everyone of Her Majesty’s Guards should lie dead on this battlefield than turn their backs on the enemy.”

And it is so. Let us die, yes—it were to be devoutly wished rather than we lived a coward’s life! Let the preacher first of all be carried to his grave. Let him never live to see the shame of this Israel. Let these eyes be sealed in death rather than behold “Ichabod” written on these walls! No, Brethren, it shall not be! You will serve Jesus, you will love Him, and “Onward to victory” shall be your watchword from today on. Be more in PRAYER— for this is the great matter. Seek out, each one, your own sphere of action—give yourselves wholly to it. And if any grow cold or careless, let him remember Jesus says, “I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”

This blessed supping with Jesus will restore you! Though you are like Laodicea, “neither cold nor hot,” fellowship with Jesus will renew the love of your espousals. Oh, then, my Brethren, in Jesus’ name I bid you be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!

I have not preached to sinners, but you will do that if you catch the spirit of this sermon. There will be many thousands of words to sinners spoken as the result of this exhortation, if God, the Holy Spirit, makes it answer my design. Only this word to those who are not soldiers of Jesus Christ—trust Him now! Come now and kiss His silver scepter of Divine Grace. He will forgive the rebel, and take him to be His servant. God bless you. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1653 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷2Ti 2.8

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS  
NO. 1653

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 9, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel.”***2Ti 2:8***.**

FROM long sickness my mind is scarcely equal to the work before me. Certainly, if I had ever sought after brilliance of thought or language, I should have failed, today, for I am almost at the lowest stage of incapacity. I have only been comforted in the thought of preaching to you this morning by the reflection that it is the doctrine, itself, which God blesses, and not the way in which it may be spoken—for if God had made the power to depend upon the speaker and his style, He would have chosen that the Resurrection, grandest of all the Truths of God, would have been proclaimed by angels rather than by men! Yet He set aside the seraph for the humbler creature.

After angels had spoken a word or two to the women, their testimony ceased. The most prominent testimony to the Resurrection of the Lord was, at first, that of holy women, and afterwards that of each one of the guileless men and women who made up the 500 or more whose privilege it was to have actually seen the risen Savior and who, therefore, could bear witness to what they had seen, though they may have been quite unable to describe with eloquence what they had beheld! Upon our Lord’s rising I have nothing to say! And God’s ministers have nothing to say beyond bearing witness to the fact that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead.

Put it in poetry. Proclaim it in sublime Miltonic verse—it will come to no more! Tell of it in monosyllables and write it so that little children may read it in their first spelling books and it will come to nothing less—“The Lord is risen, indeed!” is the sum and substance of our witness when we speak of our risen Redeemer. If we do but know the Truth of this Resurrection and feel the power of it, our mode of utterance is of secondary consequence, for the Holy Spirit will bear witness to the Truth of God and cause it to produce fruit in the minds of our hearers.

Our present text is found in Paul’s second letter to Timothy. The venerable minister is anxious about the young man who has preached with remarkable success and whom he regards, in some respects, as his successor. The old man is about to put off his tabernacle and he is concerned that his son in the Gospel should preach the same Truths of God as his father has preached—and should by no means adulterate the Gospel. A tendency showed itself in Timothy’s day and the same tendency exists at this very hour—to try to get away from the simple matters of fact upon which our religion is built—to something more philosophical and hard to be understood.

The Word of God which the common people heard gladly is not fine enough for cultured sages and so they must surround it with a mist of human thought and speculation. Three or four plain facts constitute the Gospel, even as Paul puts it in the 5th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians—“For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” Upon the Incarnation, life, death and Resurrection of Jesus, our salvation hinges. He who believes these Truths of God, aright, has believed the Gospel and, believing the Gospel, he shall without doubt find eternal salvation!

But men want novelties. They cannot endure that the trumpet should give forth the same certain sound! They crave some fresh fantasia every day. “The Gospel with variations” is the music for them! Intellect is progressive, they say; they must, therefore, march ahead of their forefathers. Incarnate Deity, a holy life, an atoning death and a literal Resurrection— having heard these things, now, for nearly 19 centuries, they are just a little stale—and the cultivated mind hungers for a change from the oldfashioned manna. Even in Paul’s day this tendency was manifest and so they sought to regard facts as mysteries or parables—and they labored to find a spiritual meaning in them till they went so far as to deny them as actual facts!

Seeking an ambiguous meaning, they overlooked the fact, itself, losing the substance in a foolish preference for the shadow. While God set before them glorious events which fill Heaven with amazement, they showed their foolish wisdom by accepting the plain historical facts as myths to be interpreted or riddles to be solved. He who believed as a little child was pushed aside as a fool, that the disputer and the scribe might come in to mystify simplicity and hide the light of the Truth of God! Hence there had arisen a certain Hymenaeus and Philetus, “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the Resurrection is already past; and overthrow the faith of some.” Turn to verse 17 and read for yourselves. They spirited away the Resurrection! They made it to mean something very deep and mystical—and in the process they took away the actual Resurrection altogether.

Among men there is still a craving after new meanings, refinements upon old doctrines, and spiritualization of literal facts. They tear out the heart of the Truth of God and give us the carcass stuffed with hypotheses, speculations and larger hopes. The golden shields of Solomon are taken away and shields of brass are hung up in their place—will they not answer every purpose—and is not the metal more in favor with the age? It may be so, but we never admired Rehoboam and we are old-fashioned enough to prefer the original shields of gold! The Apostle Paul was very anxious that Timothy should stand firm to the old witness and should understand, in their plain meaning, his testimonies to the fact that Jesus Christ of the seed of David rose again from the dead.

Within the compass of this verse several facts are recorded and, first, there is here the great Truth of God that Jesus, the Son of the Highest, was anointed of God. The Apostle calls Him “Jesus Christ,” that is, the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Sent of God. He calls Him, also, “Jesus,” which signifies a Savior, and it is a grand Truth that He who was born of Mary; He who was laid in the manger at Bethlehem; He who loved and lived and died for us, is the ordained and anointed Savior of men! We have not a moment’s doubt about the mission, office and design of our Lord Jesus! In fact, we hang our soul’s salvation upon His being anointed of the Lord to be the Savior of men!

This Jesus Christ was really and truly Man, for Paul says He was “of the seed of David.” True He was Divine and His birth was not after the ordinary manner of men, but still, He was, in all respects, partaker of our human nature and came of the stock of David. This, also, we believe. We are not among those who spiritualize the Incarnation and suppose that God was here as a phantom, or that the whole story is but an instructive legend. No, in very flesh and blood did the Son of God abide among men! He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh in the days of His sojourn here below. We know and believe that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. We love the Incarnate God and in Him we fix our trust.

It is implied, too, in the text, that Jesus died, for He could not be raised from the dead if He had not first gone down among the dead and been one of them! Yes, Jesus died—the Crucifixion was no delusion, the piercing of His side with a spear was most clear and evident proof that He was dead— His heart was pierced and the blood and water flowed from them. As a dead Man, He was taken down from the Cross and carried by gentle hands and laid in Joseph’s virgin tomb. I think I see that pale corpse, white as a lily! Mark how it is stained with the blood of His five wounds which make Him red as the rose. See how the holy women tenderly wrap Him in fine linen with sweet spices and leave Him to spend His Sabbath all alone in the rock-hewn sepulcher.

No man in this world was ever more surely dead than He. “He made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death.” As dead they laid Him in the place of the dead, with napkin and grave clothes fit for a grave. Then they rolled the great stone at the grave’s mouth and left Him, knowing that He was dead. Then comes the grand Truth of God, that as soon as the third sun commenced, Jesus rose again! His body had not decayed, for it was not possible for that Holy Thing to see corruption! But still, it had been dead and, by the power of God, by His own power, by the Father’s power, by the power of the Spirit—for it is attributed to each of these in turn—before the sun had risen, His dead body was quickened!

The silent heart began to beat, again, and through the stagnant canals of the veins, the life-flood began to circulate. The soul of the Redeemer again took possession of the body and it lived once more! There He was within the sepulcher, as truly living as to all parts of Him as He had ever been! He literally and truly, in a material body, came forth from the tomb to live among men till the hour of His Ascension into Heaven! This is the Truth of God which is still to be taught, refine it who may, spiritualize it who dare! This is the historical fact which the Apostles witnessed! This is the Truth of God for which the confessors bled and died! This is the doctrine which is the keystone of the arch of Christianity! And they that hold it not have cast aside the essential Truth of God. How can they hope for salvation for their souls if they do not believe that “the Lord is risen, indeed”?  
This morning I wish to do three things. First, let us consider the bearings of the Resurrection of Christ upon other great Truths of God. Secondly, let us consider the bearings of this fact upon the Gospel, for it has such bearings, according to the text—“Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel.” And thirdly, let us consider its bearings on ourselves, which are all indicated in the word, “Remember.”

I. First, then, Beloved, as God shall help us, let us CONSIDER THE BEARINGS OF THE FACT THAT JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD. It is clear at the outset that the Resurrection of our Lord was a tangible proof that there is another life. Have you not quoted a great many times certain lines about, “That undiscovered country from whose journey no traveler returns”? It is not so! There was once a Traveler who said, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go away I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there you may be also.”

He said, “A little time and you shall see Me, and again a little time and you shall not see Me because I go to the Father.” Do you not remember these words of His? Our Divine Lord went to the undiscovered country and He returned! He said that at the third day He would be back, again, and He was true to His Word! There is no doubt that there is another state for human life, for Jesus has been in it and has come back from it! We have no doubt as to a future existence, for Jesus existed after death! We have no doubt as to a Paradise of future bliss, for Jesus went to it and returned! Though He has left us, again, yet that coming back to tarry with us 40 days assures us that He will return a second time, when the hour is due, and then pledge with us for a thousand years and reign gloriously on earth amongst His ancients!

His return from among the dead is a pledge to us of existence after death and we rejoice in it! His Resurrection is also a pledge that the body will surely live, again, and rise to a superior condition, for the body of our blessed Master was no phantom after death any more than before. “Handle Me, and see.” Oh wondrous proof! He said, “Handle Me, and see”! And then to Thomas, “Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side.” What deception is possible here? The risen Jesus was no mere spirit! He promptly cried, “A spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have.” “Bring Me,” He said, “something to eat.” And as if to show how real His body was, though He did not need to eat, yet He did eat—and a piece of a broiled fish and honeycomb were proofs of the reality of the act!

Now, the body of our Lord in its risen state did not exhibit the whole of His glorification, for otherwise we should have seen John falling at His feet as dead! And we should have seen all His disciples overcome with the Glory of the vision! But, still, in a great measure, we may call the 40 days’ sojourn—“The life of Jesus in His Glory upon earth.” He was no longer despised and rejected of men, but a Glory surrounded Him. It is evident that the raised body passed from place to place in a single moment; that it appeared and vanished at will and was superior to the laws of matter. The risen body was incapable of pain, of hunger, thirst, or weariness during the time in which it remained here below—fit representative of the bulk of which it was the first fruits.  
Of our body, also, it shall be said before long, “It was sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it was sown in dishonor, it is raised in Glory.” Let us, then, as we think of the risen Christ, rest quite sure of a future life and quite sure that our body will exist in it in a glorified condition! I do not know whether you are ever troubled with doubts in connection with the world to come—as to whether it can be true that we shall live eternally. Here is the point which makes death so terrible to doubters, for while they have realized the grave, they have not realized the life beyond it! Now, the best help to that realization is a firm grip of the fact that Jesus died and Jesus rose again.

This fact is proved better than any other event in history! The witness to it is far stronger than to anything else that is written either in profane or sacred records. The rising of our Lord Jesus Christ being certain, you may rest assured of the existence of another world! That is the first bearing of this great Truth of God. Secondly, Christ’s rising from the dead was the seal to all His claims. It was true, then, that He was sent of God, for God raised Him from the dead in confirmation of His mission. He had said, Himself, “Destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it up.” Look, there He is—the Temple of His body is rebuilt! He had even given this as a sign, that as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so should the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth—and should then come forth to life again.

Behold His own appointed sign fulfilled! Before men’s eye the seal is manifest! Suppose He had never risen? You and I might have believed in the truth of a certain mission which God had given Him, but we could never have believed in the truth of such a commission as He claimed to have received—a commission to be our Redeemer from death and Hell! How could He be our Ransom from the grave if He had, Himself, remained under the dominion of death? Dear Friends, the rising of Christ from the dead proved that this Man was innocent of every sin! He could not be held by the bands of death, for there was no sin to make those bands fast! Corruption could not touch His pure body, for no original sin had defiled the Holy One! Death could not keep Him a continual prisoner because He had not actually come under sin! And though He took sin of ours and bore it by imputation and, therefore, died, yet He had no fault of His own and must, therefore, be set free when His imputed load had been removed.

Moreover, Christ’s rising from the dead proved His claim to Deity. We are told in another place that He was proved to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead. He raised Himself by His own power and though the Father and the Holy Spirit were cooperative with Him and, therefore, His Resurrection is ascribed to them, too, yet it was because the Father had given Him to have life in Himself that, therefore, He arose from the dead! Oh, risen Savior, Your rising is the seal of Your work! We can have no doubt about You now that You have left the tomb! Prophet of Nazareth, You are, indeed, the Christ of God, for God has loosed the bands of death for You! Son of David, You are, indeed, the elect and precious One, for You live forever! Your Resurrection life has set the sign-manual of Heaven to all that You have said and done, and for this we bless and magnify Your name.

A third bearing of His Resurrection is this—and it is a very grand one— the Resurrection of our Lord, according to Scripture, was the acceptance of His Sacrifice. By the Lord Jesus Christ rising from the dead, evidence was given that He had fully endured the penalty which was due to human guilt. “The soul that sins, it shall die”—that is the determination of the God of Heaven! Jesus stands in the sinner’s place and dies—and when He has done that, nothing more can be demanded of Him, for he that is dead is free from the Law of God. You take a man who has been guilty of a capital offense. He is condemned to be hanged. He is hanged by the neck till he is dead—what more has the Law to do with him? It has done with him, for it has executed its sentence upon him.

If he can be brought back to life, he is clear from the Law. No writ that runs in Her Majesty’s dominions can touch him—he has suffered the penalty. So when our Lord Jesus rose from the dead, after having died, He had fully paid the penalty that was due to Justice for the sin of His people and His new life was a life clear of penalty, free from liability. You and I are clear from the claims of the Law of God because Jesus stood in our place and God will not exact payment both from us and from our Substitute! It were contrary to justice to sue both the Surety and those for whom He stood! And now, joy upon joy! The burden of liability which once did lie upon the Substitute is removed from Him, also, seeing He has, by the suffering of death, vindicated Justice and made satisfaction to the injured Law of God!

Now both the sinner and the Surety are free! This is a great joy, a joy for which to make the golden harps ring out a loftier style of music. He who took our debt has now delivered Himself from it by dying on the Cross. His new life, now that He has risen from the dead, is a life free from legal claims and it is the token to us that we whom He represented are also free! Listen! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again.” It is a knockdown blow to fear when the Apostle says that we cannot be condemned because Christ has died in our place, but he puts a double force into it when he cries, “Yes, rather, that is risen again!”

If Satan, therefore, shall come to any Believer and say, “What about your sins?” Tell him Jesus died for them and your sins are put away. If he come a second time and says to you, “What about your sins?” Answer him, “Jesus lives, and His life is the assurance of my justification; for if our Surety had not paid the debt, He would still be under the power of Death.” Inasmuch as Jesus has discharged all our liabilities and left not one farthing due to God’s Justice from one of His people, we live and are clear—and we live in Him and are clear, also, by virtue of our union with Him. Is not this a glorious doctrine, this doctrine of the Resurrection, in its bearing upon the justification of the saints? The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins, but He rose again for our justification!

Bear with me while I notice, next, another bearing of this Resurrection of Christ. It was a guarantee of His people’s resurrection. There is a great Truth of God that never is to be forgotten, namely, that Christ and His people are one, just as Adam and all his seed are one. That which Adam did, he did as a head for a body—and as our Lord Jesus and all Believers are one—that which Jesus did, He did as a Head for a body. We were crucified together with Christ! We were buried with Christ! And we are risen together with Him! Yes, He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus! He says, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

If Christ is not raised from the dead, your faith is in vain and our preaching is in vain! And you are yet in your sins! And those that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished—and you will perish, too! But if Christ has been raised from the dead, then all His people must be raised, also—it is a matter of Gospel necessity! There is no logic more imperative than the argument drawn from union with Christ. God has made the saints one with Christ—and if Christ has risen, all the saints must rise, too! My soul takes firm hold on this and as she strengthens her grasp, she loses all fear of death!

Now we bear our dear ones to the cemetery and leave them, each one in his narrow cell, calmly bidding them farewell and saying—  
*“So Jesus slept—God’s dying Son  
Passed through the grave and blest the bed! Rest here, dear saint, till from His throne The morning breaks and pierces the shade.”*

It is not merely ours to know that our Brothers and Sisters are living in Heaven, but also that their mortal parts are in Divine custody, securely kept till the appointed hour when the body shall be reanimated and the perfect man shall enjoy the adoption of God! We are sure that our dead men shall live—together with Christ’s dead body they shall rise! No power can hold in durance the redeemed of the Lord. “Let My people go” shall be a command as much obeyed by Death as once by the humbled Pharaoh who could not hold a single Israelite in bonds! The day of deliverance comes quickly—

*“Break from His throne, illustrious morn! Attend, O earth, His sovereign Word!  
Restore your trust, a glorious form  
He must ascend to meet His Lord.”*

Once more, our Lord’s rising from the dead is a fair picture of the new life which all Believers already enjoy. Beloved, though this body is still subject to bondage like the rest of the visible creation, according to the Law of God stated in Scripture, “the body is dead because of sin,” yet, “the spirit is life because of righteousness.” The regeneration which has taken place in those who believe has changed our spirit and given to it eternal life! But it has not affected our body further than this—that it has made it to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit and thus it is a holy thing—and cannot be obnoxious to the Lord, or swept away among unholy things.

But the body is still subject to pain and weariness, and to the supreme sentence of death. Not so the spirit! There is already within us a part of the resurrection accomplished, since it is written, “And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” You once were like the ungodly—under the Law of sin and death—but you have been brought out of the bondage of corruption into the liberty of life and Grace, the Lord, having worked in you gloriously, “according to the working of His mighty power, which He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.”  
Now, just as Jesus Christ led, after His Resurrection, a life very different from that before His death, so you and I are called upon to live a high and noble spiritual and heavenly life, seeing that we have been raised from the dead to die no more! Let us joy and rejoice in this! Let us behave as those who are alive from the dead—the happy children of the Resurrection of Christ! Do not let us be money-grubbers, or hunters after worldly fame. Let us not set our affections on the foul things of this dead and rotten world, but let our hearts fly upward, like young birds that have broken loose of their shells—upward towards our Lord and the heavenly things upon which He would have us set our minds! Living truth, living work, living faith—these are the things for living men—let us cast off the grave clothes of our former lusts and wear the garments of light and life! May the Spirit of God help us in further meditating upon these things at home.

II. Now, secondly, LET US CONSIDER THE BEARINGS OF THIS FACT OF THE RESURRECTION UPON THE GOSPEL, for Paul says, “Jesus Christ was raised from the dead according to my Gospel.” I always like to see what way any kind of statement bears on the Gospel. I may not have many more opportunities of preaching and I have made up my mind to this one thing—that I will waste no time upon secondary themes—and when I do preach, it shall be the Gospel, or something very closely bearing upon it.

I will endeavor, each time I preach, to strike under the fifth rib and never beat the air. Those who have a taste for the superfluities may take their fill of them—it is for me to keep to the great necessary Truths of God by which men’s souls are saved! My work is to preach Christ Crucified and the Gospel which gives men salvation through faith! I hear, every now and then, of some preaching sermons about some bright new nothing or another. Some preachers remind me of the emperor who had a wonderful skill in carving men’s heads upon cherry stones! What a multitude of preachers we have who can make wonderfully fine discourses out of a mere passing thought of no consequence to anyone!

But we need the Gospel! We have to live and die—and we must have the Gospel! Certain of us may be cold in our graves before many weeks are over and we cannot afford to toy and trifle—we need to see the bearings of all teachings upon our eternal destinies and upon the Gospel which sheds its light over our future! The Resurrection of Christ is vital because, first it tells us that the Gospel is the Gospel of a living Savior. We have not to send poor penitents to the crucifix, the dead image of a dead man!

We say not, “These are your gods, O Israel!” We have not to send you to a little baby Christ nursed by a woman! Nothing of the sort! Behold the Lord that lives and was dead and is alive forevermore! Behold our Master who has the keys of Hell and of death! Behold in Him a living and accessible Savior who, out of Glory still cries with loving accents, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” I say we have a living Savior— and is not this a glorious feature of the Gospel?

Notice, next, that we have a powerful Savior in connection with the Gospel that we preach, for He who had power to raise Himself from the dead has all power now that He is raised! He who in death vanquishes death, can much more conquer by His life! He who being in the grave did, nevertheless, burst all its bonds, can assuredly deliver all His people! He who, coming under the power of the Law of God, did, nevertheless, fulfill the Law, and thus set His people free from bondage, must be mighty to save! You need a Savior strong and mighty, yet you do not need one stronger than He of whom it is written that He rose again from the dead! What a blessed Gospel we have to preach—the Gospel of a living Christ who has returned from the dead leading captivity captive!

And now notice that we have the Gospel of complete justification to preach to you. We do not come and say, “Brethren, Jesus Christ, by His death, did something by which men may be saved, if they have a mind to be, and diligently carry out their good resolves.” No, no! We say Jesus Christ took the sins of His people upon Himself and bore the consequences of them in His own body on the Cross—so that He died—and having died and paid the penalty, He lives again! And now all for whom He died, all His people whose sins He bore, are free from the guilt of sin! You ask me, “Who are they?” and I reply, as many as believe on Him!

Whoever believes in Jesus Christ is as free from the guilt of sin as Christ is! Our Lord Jesus took the sins of His people and died in the sinner’s place—and now being, Himself, set free, all His people are set free in their Representative! This doctrine is worth preaching! One may well rise from his bed to talk about perfect Justification through faith in Christ Jesus! One might as well stay asleep as rise to say that Jesus accomplished little or nothing by His passion and His Resurrection! Some seem to dream that Jesus made some little opening by which we have a slight chance of reaching pardon and eternal life if we are diligent for many years. This is not our Gospel! Jesus has saved His people! He has performed the work entrusted to Him! He has finished transgression and made an end of sin! And He has brought in everlasting righteousness— and whoever believes in Him is not condemned and never can be!

Once again, the connection of the Resurrection and the Gospel is this—it proves the safely of the saints, for if when Christ rose, His people rose, also, they rose to a life like that of their Lord—and therefore they can never die. It is written, “Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him,” and it is so with the Believer! If you have been dead with Christ and are risen with Christ, death has no more dominion over you! You shall never go back to the beggarly elements of sin! You shall never become what you were before your regeneration! You shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Jesus’ hands. He has put within you a living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever! He says, Himself, “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life.”

Therefore hold fast to this and let the Resurrection of your Lord be the pledge of your own final perseverance!  
Brothers and Sisters, I cannot stop to show you how this Resurrection touches the Gospel at every point, but Paul is always full of it. More than 30 times Paul talks about the Resurrection and, occasionally, at great length, giving whole chapters to the glorious theme! The more I think of it, the more I delight to preach Jesus and the Resurrection! The glad tidings that Christ has risen is as truly the Gospel as the doctrine that He came among men and for men presented His blood as a ransom! If angels sang Glory to God in the highest when the Lord was born, I feel impelled to repeat the note, now, that He is risen from the dead!  
III. And so I come to my last head and to the practical conclusion— THE BEARING OF THIS RESURRECTION UPON OURSELVES. Paul expressly bids us to, “Remember” it. “Why?” asks one, “we don’t forget it.” Are you sure you don’t? I find myself far too forgetful of Divine Truths. We ought not to forget, for this first day of the week is consecrated for Sabbatical purposes to remind us to think of the Resurrection. On the seventh day men celebrated a finished creation. On the first day we celebrate a finished redemption. Bear it, then, in mind!  
Now, if you will remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David rose from the dead, what will follow? First, you will find that most of your trials will vanish. Are you tried by your sin? Jesus Christ rose again from the dead for your justification! Does Satan accuse? Jesus rose to be your Advocate and Intercessor! Do infirmities hinder? The living Christ will show Himself strong on your behalf! You have a living Christ and in Him you have all things! Do you dread death? Jesus, in rising again, has vanquished the last enemy! He will come and meet you when it is your turn to pass through the chilly stream and you shall ford it in sweet Company! What is your trouble? I care not what it is, for if you will only think of Jesus as living, full of power, full of love and full of sympathy—having experienced all your trials, even unto death—you will have such a confidence in His tender care and in His boundless ability that you will follow in His footsteps without a question! Remember Jesus and that He rose again from the dead—and your confidence will rise as on eagles’ wings!  
Next, remember Jesus, for then you will see how your present sufferings are as nothing compared with His sufferings, and you will learn to expect victory over your sufferings even as He obtained victory. Kindly look at the chapter and you will find the Apostle saying in the third verse, “You therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” and further on in the 11th verse, “It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead in Him, we shall also live in Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” Now, then, when you are called to suffer, think— “Jesus suffered, yet Jesus rose again from the dead. He came up out of His baptism of griefs the better and more glorious for it and so shall I!”  
Therefore go into the furnace at the Lord’s bidding and do not fear that the smell of fire shall pass upon you. Go down into the grave and do not think that the worm shall make an end of you any more than it did of Him! Behold, in the Risen One, the type and model of what you are and are to be! Fear not, for He conquered! Stand not trembling, but march boldly on, for Jesus Christ of the seed of David rose from the dead—and you who are of the seed of the promise shall rise again from all your trials and afflictions—and live a glorious life!  
We see here, dear Brothers and Sisters, in being told to remember Jesus, that there is hope even in our hopelessness! When are things most hopeless in a man? Why, when he is dead! Do you know what it is to come down to that, so far as your inward weakness is concerned? I do. At times it seems to me that all my joy is buried like a dead thing and all my present usefulness and all my hope of being useful in the future are in a coffin and laid underground like a corpse. In the anguish of my spirit and the desolation of my heart, I could count it better to die than to live. You say it should not be so. I grant you it should not be so, but so it is!  
Many things happen within the minds of poor mortals which should not happen. If we had more courage and more faith they would not happen. Yes, but when we go down, down, down, is it not a blessed thing that Jesus Christ of the seed of David died and was raised from the dead? If I sink right down among the dead, yet will I hold to this blessed hope—that as Jesus rose again from the dead, so, also, shall my joy, my usefulness, my hope, my spirit rise! “You, which have showed us great and sore troubles shall quicken us, again, and bring us up from the lowest depths of the earth.”  
This casting down and slaying is good for us. We take a deal of killing and it is by being killed that we live. Many a man will never live till his proud self is slain. O proud Pharisee, if you are to live among those whom God accepts, you will have to come to the slaughterhouse and be cut in pieces as well as killed. “This is dreadful work,” says one, “this dividing of joints and marrow, this spiritual dismemberment and destruction.” Assuredly, it is painful, and yet it were a grievous loss to be denied it! Alas, how many are so good and excellent, strong and wise, clever and all that, that they cannot agree to be saved by Grace through faith! If they could be reduced to less than nothing, it would be the finest thing that ever happened to them.  
Remember what Solomon said might be done with the fool, and yet it would not answer—he was to be ground in a mortar among wheat with a pestle—pretty hard dealing that, and yet his folly would not depart from him. Not by that process alone, but through some such method, the Holy Spirit brings men away from their folly. Under His killing operations, this may be their comfort that, if Jesus Christ rose literally from the dead, (not from sickness, but from death), and lives again, even so will His people! Did you ever get, where Bunyan pictures Christian as getting—right under the old dragon’s foot? He is very heavy and presses the very breath out of a fellow when he makes him his footstool!  
Poor Christian lay there with the dragon’s foot on his chest, but he was just able to stretch out his hand and lay hold on his sword, which, by God’s Grace, lay within his reach. Then he gave Apollyon a deadly thrust which made him spread his dragon wings and fly away. The poor crushed and broken pilgrim, as he gave the stab to his foe, cried, “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; though I fall, yet shall I rise again!” Brothers and Sisters, do the same! You that are near despair, let this be the strength that nerves your arm and steels your heart. “Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to Paul’s Gospel .”  
Lastly, this proves the futility of all opposition to Christ. The learned are going to destroy the Christian religion. Already, according to their boasting, it has pretty nearly come to an end! The pulpit is infertile—it cannot command public attention. We stand up and preach to empty benches! As you see—or do not see—nothing remains for us but to die decently, so they insinuate. And what then? When our Lord was dead, when the clay-cold corpse lay watched by the Roman soldiers, and with a seal upon the enclosing stone—was not the cause in mortal jeopardy? But how fared it? Did it die out? Every disciple that Jesus had made forsook Him and fled—was not Christianity then destroyed?  
No, that very day our Lord won a victory which shook the gates of Hell and caused the universe to stand astonished! Matters are not worse with Him at this hour! His affairs are not in a sadder condition, today, than then. No, see Him today and judge! On His head are many crowns and at His feet the hosts of angels bow! Jesus is the master of legions, today, while the Caesars have passed away! Here are His people—needy, obscure, despised, I grant you, still—but assuredly somewhat more numerous than they were when they laid Him in the tomb! His cause is not to be crushed! It is forever rising! Year after year, century after century, bands of true and honest hearts are marching up to the assault of the citadel of Satan! The prince of this world has a stronghold, here on earth, and we are to capture it! But as yet we see small progress, for rank after rank the warriors of the Lord have marched to the breach and disappeared beneath the terrible fire of death. All who have gone before seem to have been utterly cut off and destroyed, and still the enemy holds his ramparts against us.  
Do you think nothing has been done? Has death taken away those martyrs, and confessors, and preachers, and laborious saints, and has nothing been achieved? Truly if Christ were dead, I would admit our defeat, for they that are fallen asleep in Him would have perished! But as Christ lives, so the cause lives, and they that have fallen are not dead— they have vanished from our sight for a little while—but if the curtain could be withdrawn, every one of them would be seen to stand in his lot unharmed, crowned and victorious! “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?” These are they that were defeated! Why, then, their crowns? These are they that were dishonored! Why, then, their white robes? These are they who clung to a cause which is overthrown! Why, then, their long line of victories, for there is not a vanquished man among them all?  
Let the Truth of God be spoken! Defeat is not the word for the cause of Jesus, the Prince of the house of David! We have always been victorious, Brothers and Sisters! We are victorious now. Follow your Master on your white horses and be not afraid! I see Him in the front with His bloodstained vesture around Him, fresh from the winepress where He has trod down His foes. You have not to present atoning blood, but only to conquer after your Lord! Put on your white raiment and follow Him on your white horses, conquering and to conquer! He is nearer than we think and the end of all things may be before the next jibe shall have come forth from the mouth of the last new skeptic. Have confidence in the Risen One and live in the power of His Resurrection!

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NOT BOUND YET

NO. 1998

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 18, 1887,  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.”***2Ti 2:9***.**

YOU will observe, if you read the preceding verse, which, indeed, it would be wrong to sever from the text, that the doctrine of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was the sheet anchor of Paul’s comfort, as it was the great substance of his preaching. “Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my Gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.” Perhaps we do not give sufficient prominence to the doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Possibly, also, for this reason we do not fully grasp the idea of “the power of His Resurrection.” Our Lord’s death was not the close of His career—He still passed onward. From the Cross to the sepulcher was still forward. With weeping and mourning they laid Him in the tomb—surely that was the finis of His course. Ah, no, He passed into the grave, it is true, but He also passed through it! The grave had hitherto seemed a cul-de-sac—a blind alley from which there was no exit. All the footsteps pointed to entrance, but none to return. It looked like a dread abyss swallowing all and offering passageway to none.

Look what our Lord Jesus has done! He has made a tunnel of it for all His redeemed to pass into the Kingdom of God—we enter at the grave to emerge in the resurrection into eternal life! In this lies part of the power of His Resurrection, that He has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. It looked like an iron door or gate of death, but He has unhinged it, yes, He has taken it quite away. The grave was once “a charnel house to fence the relics of lost innocence,” but it is so no longer—the imprisoning stone is rolled away! By passing through death, our Lord has made a thoroughfare for us. We take death and the grave in transit, now—they do not hinder our advance to Glory, immortality and eternal life! Our course is always onward, whatever may lie in the way!

In the strength of that Truth of God, Paul, when he found himself in prison, expected to come out of it. When he saw great difficulties in the way to Heaven, he expected to go through those difficulties and to come out with gain at the further end thereof. This helped to cheer him in his darkest moments. His brave heart thus spoke within him and said, “What if I should be even dead and buried, I shall rise again! And if the Gospel should seem dead and buried, yet it will rise again! And if the particular cause which I am advocating in Rome should seem dead and buried, yet it must come to life again. I take courage from the great Truth of God that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead according to my Gospel.”

Friends, I think we, too, may encourage ourselves in our hour of sorrow. From the tomb of our Lord, we may gather gems of comfort! Though He died, yet He is dead no longer! And though He was buried, yet the sepulcher could not hold Him—and that same victorious power which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, will also bring all His sheep with Him in due time—though they, also, shall descend into the same darkness of the tomb—

*“Vain the stone, the watch, the seal  
Christ has burst the gates of Hell!  
Death in vain forbids His rise,  
Christ has opened Paradise.  
Lives again our glorious King!  
‘Where, O death, is now your sting?’  
Once He died our souls to save!  
‘Where’s your victory, boasting grave?’  
Soar we now where Christ has led,  
Following our exalted Head;  
Made like He, like He we rise;  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.”*

I like much this self-forgetting sentence of the Apostle, “I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.” He is shut up in the gloomy dungeon at Rome. No hideous cells could be worse than Roman dungeons usually were. No prison is a desirable place, but a Roman prison was a very vestibule of death. Paul is not only in prison, but in bonds! His right arm is chained to the left hand of a soldier. He cannot do anything except under the inspection of his enforced companion, who, kindly as he may be disposed, cannot be so closely bound to him without causing him much discomfort. One would not like to be chained to the best man that ever lived, but much less to a rough Roman soldier! Paul is in bonds as he writes. His fetters clank, but he makes light of them and finds more than sufficient comfort in the reflection, “I suffer as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.”

I am going to talk to you upon that point with as much brevity as I can. First, I call your attention to this grand Truth, that the Word of God is not bound—in what sense is this true? And, secondly, for what reasons is this true? And, thirdly, what other facts run parallel to this fact, that though the preacher is bound, yet the Word he preaches is not bound?

I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE IS IT TRUE that, “the Word of God is not bound”? Possibly a meditation upon this text may revive the spirits of some who are cast down. May the Holy Spirit, Himself, bless the subject to us!

That the Word of God is not bound, is, at this time, true in many senses. And, first, it is not bound so that it cannot be preached. Paul could preach it even when in bonds and he did preach it, so that the Gospel was made known throughout Caesar’s palace—and there were saints in the imperial household! Many came to and fro into the Praetorian guard-room and heard the Word from the mouth of the Apostle. You may be quite sure that he never neglected to make known the message of the Gospel to all that visited him in his prison, so that the Word of God was not bound, even, with respect to himself!

And, dear Friends, whatever saddens us at this hour, we rejoice that the Word of God still finds a tongue and a voice with which to speak to the multitudes. That Word of God which, when there was nothing, spoke everything into existence, would still be able to speak for itself if not a single tongue voluntarily yielded itself to give forth speech for God! But, at the same time there are many tongues which gladly proclaim the glorious Grace of God, the Word of God is not bound by reason of the lack of men to make it known—the true Apostolic succession continues among us and, “Christ is preached.” That everlasting Gospel will never be silenced! It will still be proclaimed to the ends of the earth and to the end of time. It shall never cease to bless the world so long as the sea pulses with tides and time is checkered with night and day—

*“Nor shall Your spreading Gospel rest,  
Till through the world Your truth has run;  
Till Christ has all the nations blest  
That see the light, or feel the sun.”*  
“The Word of God is not bound.” Nineteen centuries after Paul, we still have an open Bible and a free pulpit. Blessed be God for this! There have been a great many attempts to bind the Word of God, but yet it has not been bound. The preachers of the holy faith of Christ have been hunted to death. They have “wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented”—but, “the Word of God has not been bound.” When Hamilton was burned in Scotland, there was such an impetus given to the Gospel through his burning that the adversaries of the Gospel were known to say, “Let us burn no more martyrs in public, for the smoke of Hamilton’s burning has made many eyes to smart until they were opened.” So, no doubt, it always was! Persecution is a red hand which scatters the white wheat far and wide. I need not remind you how the ashes of God’s martyred servant, cast into a brook, were borne onward to a river and afterwards to the sea—and by the sea they were carried to every shore! The Word of God is not bound by the binding of the preachers, but it happens to the persecuted as to Israel in Egypt—“The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.” Probably the Church of God has never had better times, certainly she has never had happier times, than during periods of persecution! These were the days of her purity and, consequently, her glory. When she has been in the dark, God has been her light—and when she has been driven to and fro by the cruelties of men—then has she most effectually rested under the shadow of the Almighty!  
“The Word of God is not bound” so as to be no longer a living, working power among men. Sometimes the enemies of the Truth of God have thought that they had silenced the last witness and then there has been an unexpected outburst—and the old faith has been to the front again. When in Scotland, under the reign of Moderates, the Gospel seemed to have died out, one earnest man, by Providence, fell in with a little book, Fisher’s, “Marrow of Divinity.” He was enlightened as to the pure Truth of God, began, at once, to preach it and found thousands to rejoice in it! That marrow has never been taken away from Scotland’s bones ever since, nor can it, nor shall it, let the devil do what he may! A desperate and subtle attempt is now being made, but it will be assuredly foiled through the Wisdom of God. Yet, if it should come to this, that they should get rid of all the preachers of the Gospel—of the men who would thunder out God’s Word like Boanerges, or speak it out in tender tones as Barnabas—if the last of the faithful testifiers were consigned to the tomb, God would be sure to raise up another generation to publish His Truth, so that the Word of God would not lack a spokesman in the midst of the earth! The devil’s work is never done—one word from the Lord—and it is all undone in an instant!  
The enemies of the Gospel have also attempted to bind it by the burning of books. I have in my possession an early copy of Luther’s sermons and I was told how very rare it was because, at first, the circulation was forbidden, and afterwards they were bought up and burned as soon as they were met with. And what did they do? They only put fire into Luther when they burned his sermons—they drove him to be more outspoken than he otherwise might have been—and so they helped the cause they thought to destroy! It is impossible that the Truth of God can die. It has about it the Immortality of God. It is utterly impossible that the Truth of the Gospel shall die, since it is wrapped up in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns forever! He must see of the travail of His soul and must be satisfied for all the scoffs and agonies He has endured. Neither will less content Him than a Kingdom in which all others shall be merged.  
“The Word of God is not bound.” It will still be preached despite the scoffs of philosophers and the roaring of devils. Do not, therefore, at any time sit down in despair because of evil times, for the times are always evil in one respect or another! Do not imagine that the Truth of God will become extinct and that the simple Gospel will be forgotten. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God’s Word shall never pass away! If the Gospel which we hold is of men, it will be overthrown—and let it be—let us see it die without regret! But if it is of God, none can overcome it and woe unto those who set themselves to do so! If these things are so, why are we so timorous? If our Gospel is, as some think, only man’s voice, it shall die down into the eternal silences. But if it come from Heaven, it shall increase into the everlasting chorus of Heaven! Error shall be blown away like smoke from the chimney, or like March dust in the north wind—but God’s own Word is as eternal as God Himself! As the sun is not blown out by the tempest, nor the moon quenched by the damp of the night, so is not the Gospel destroyed by the sophistries of perverse minds! Therefore, let us comfort one another with these words, “The Word of God is not bound.” It will be preached till doomsday!  
Another sense must be remembered—the Word of God is not bound so that it cannot reach the heart. You may have, perhaps, dear Friend, some very obdurate relative about whose salvation you have very great concern. You have prayed long and have used the means within your reach perseveringly. You have also used extraordinary means and you have looked for an immediate result. But as yet the hard heart does not melt. As yet you see no tear of repentance and hear no cry of faith and, moreover, it may be that your friend refuses to go and hear the Gospel and appears to be more opposed to it than before! I see that you are beginning to be bound in spirit, for the hot tears force up your eyelids and scald their way down your cheeks while I mention the painful subject. You are hardly able to speak a good word, however much you desire it, for you have so often been repulsed. I think I hear you complaining to the Lord in prayer and saying—  
*“But feeble my compassion proves,  
And can but weep where most it loves;  
Your own all-saving arm employ,  
And turn these drops of grief to joy.”*  
But oh, remember that “the Word of God is not bound!” God has ways of reaching the hardest hearts and melting them—and He can do it in a moment when such a work is least expected! He has ways of making His servants draw the bow at what to them is a venture, but to Him is an absolute certainty—and between the joints of the harness the shaft of conviction finds its way! Do not give anybody up in despair! While God is almighty, have hope for the chief of sinners! Hope on, hope always, even when your last argument seems to have failed and your last instruction has been refused. It is well that it should be so, that in the work of salvation God may have all the glory and you may learn to love Him and trust Him all the better in years to come. “The Word of God is not bound.” Sometimes it happens to those whom we love that they are removed from the means of Grace, but even then the Word of God is not bound. We thought full surely, while we could take them to hear the minister whom God blessed to us, that they were within the reach of God’s Grace. But now they have gone away and our spirit sinks. At this hour, perhaps, they are on the sea, or you have had a letter telling you that they live in a place remote from Gospel preaching. You sigh within your soul and think, “Oh, now they cannot be saved!” But the Word of God is not bound! Had we not, a little while ago, an instance of one whom we were praying for at a Prayer Meeting and that night, while we were praying, it was a moonlight night, and as he was walking the deck of the ship, the Lord met with him? When no tongue was able to reach him, the memory of what he had heard at home came over his soul and he was humbled before God! I was telling, just a little while ago, at our Prayer Meeting, a very singular instance of how, just lately, three or four sermons on Sunday evenings have been made most useful to a young friend. He was going away to Australia unconverted and without God. He went on board to depart and when the vessel steamed out of dock, it ran into another ship and he was obliged to wait and spend almost a month here while the vessel was being repaired. The Lord met with him on those Sunday nights and he has gone, now, leaving in his mother’s heart the sweet persuasion that he has found his mother’s God! The God of all Grace has ways of getting at human hearts when, to our thinking, every avenue is fast closed! He can reach the poor in the slums of London. He can reach the harlot in her chambers of iniquity. He can touch the most debauched man in town in his lordly mansion. There is not a soldier who has gone into the ranks for the sake of hiding away from God and indulging his passions, but what the Lord can conquer him! There is not a runaway thief but what the Lord can find him when the police cannot! He knows just where His fugitives are—His warrants are out against them and when the time comes, His Grace will arrest them—  
*“Thus the eternal counsel ran,  
‘Almighty Grace, arrest that man’!”*  
And he was arrested, though he never thought that he should be made to turn to God and seek eternal life. “The Word of God is not bound.” It goes forth conquering and to conquer!  
But sometimes we are apt to think a case is more hopeless, still, when, in addition to natural depravity and the absence of the means of Grace, there springs up a skepticism, perhaps a downright derision of the Word of God and of things sacred. One is apt to think, then, “It is all over now. It is of no further use praying for such an one.” I am not so sure that the case is any the worse for being openly declared and honestly described. Nothing is more deadly than absolute indifference and, sometimes, when a man begins to avow himself an infidel, it is only that his conscience is troubling him and he is obliged to take some drug with which to stifle it— no drug is more handy for his use than avowed infidelity. A profession of skepticism is often nothing more than the whistling of the boy as he goes through the churchyard and is afraid of ghosts and, therefore, “whistles hard to keep his courage up.” They try to get rid of the thought of God because of that ghost of conscience which makes cowards of them all! They might have professed to be Believers if it had not become too barefaced an inconsistency to live as they do and yet acknowledge God.  
I think it would be a good rule for all Christians to immediately pray whenever they hear a man swear. Pray for that particular man and keep him in your mind’s eye as far as you can, hoping that he may be converted to God. “The Word of God is not bound.” Even blasphemy and infidelity yield to the conquering touch of Sovereign Grace. I knew a man who had lived a life of carelessness and indifference, with occasional outbursts of drunkenness and other vices. This man happened, one day, on Peckham Rye, to hear a preacher say that if any man would ask anything of God, He would give it to him. The assertion was much too broad and might have done harm, but this man accepted it as a test and resolved that he would ask and thus would see if there really was a God. On the Saturday morning of that week, when he was going early to his work, the thought came upon him, “Perhaps there is a God, after all.” He was ready to swoon as the possibility struck him and then and there he offered the test petition, concerning a matter which concerned himself and his fellow workmen!  
His prayer was granted in a remarkable manner and he came, then, to be a believer in God! He is more than that, now, and has found his way to be a believer in all that God has spoken and has found peace through believing in Jesus Christ. It struck me as wonderful that this man, who never had any religious care at all, should, all of a sudden, be turned to serve the living God! The preacher at Peckham Rye never had a more unlikely hearer and yet he succeeded with him! Oh, pray for them! Pray for them till the doors of death enclose them, till the bolts of the gates of eternal destiny are driven home! Pray for them! Pray for them! Never cease to cry to God for those who go to the utmost extremity of sin, for though you cannot reach them, “the Word of God is not bound.” It is not bound, then, as to the preaching of it, nor as to its power to reach the heart! Still further, it is not bound as to its power to comfort the soul. I have— perhaps you have in your measure—to deal with persons under conviction of sin; with others who are suffering through ill health, or mental decline; with some who groan under Satanic temptation and various forms of mental trial causing awful depression of spirits. We have spoken to certain of them many times without being able to bring them the Light of God and comfort. We put the Gospel very plainly to them and try to place it in different lights, hoping that somehow or other they may see hope. Alas, we are often unable to touch the wound of their spirit. And, oh, how they baffle us! How frequently have we had to cry out, “O God, help us!” We cannot comfort these poor people. The man in the iron cage, described by Bunyan, is repeated many times over in our observation. We bring the promises. We bring the doctrines. We bring our own experience to bear upon such persons, but their despair defies our consolation! The darkness is too dense for our poor rushlight to remove. The captive is too closely shut up in prison for us to set him free.  
But here is a blessed Truth of God—“The Word of God is not bound.” By-and-by that blessed Word of God will break into the midnight darkness! Let us, therefore, continue to ply the afflicted with the Word of God, searching out its most cheering assurances and giving them full and free scope. Perhaps we put too much of our own explanation with the Lord’s own Words—perhaps we have thought that clever illustrations were necessary—and so have overlaid the Truth of God with our poor imagination! When we have come to the end of our explanations and our illustrations, it may be that the Word which is not bound will come in and give liberty to the captives! Wonderful cases have we seen of persons driven to despair and ready to lay violent hands upon themselves, who have been raised up and set at joyful liberty by the Word of God, of itself, alone! Oh, that some may prove its Divine power tonight!  
One Scripture has set many at liberty—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Hear it, think of it, believe it and be at peace. I think a second passage has been fruitful above all other texts—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Let a man muse on that verse till he sees his fetters turn to cobwebs and his prison walls dissolve like dreams! You are bound, poor sinner, but the Word of God is not bound! You

are bound, poor preacher, but the Word of God is not bound! You are bound, dear mother, dear father—bound up in your weakness and unable to do anything for your wayward child—but the Word of God is not bound! It wears no bonds but it is able to take them from all who groan under them.  
Thus I have given you several senses of the text. There is another one. The Word of God is not bound in the sense that it cannot be fulfilled. I now allude principally to the promises and prophecies of God’s Word. If there is a promise of deliverance to you and you cannot see the way in which you are to be delivered, you may not, therefore, doubt the promise, for that would dishonor the Lord who spoke it. The Word of God is not bound! The Word of God will cleave its own way and reach its own destination. Who makes a path for the lightning? The lightning burns its own instant way. Who shall make a path for the Word of God? It will effect its own design. Jehovah speaks and it is done. He said to the primeval darkness, “Let there be light!” And there was light. Now, if God has given a promise to you, He will as readily fulfill His Word of promise to the least of His people, as He will make His own Word effective for His own designs in Nature, Providence, or Judgment. The Word of God is not bound! You are come, perhaps, to your last penny, but He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” You have come to your last grain of strength, but He faints not, neither is He weary, and He has said, “As your days, so shall your strength be.” And so shall it be. Oh, that we could believe the promises of God! We do not half believe them, Brothers and Sisters. We have never yet pressed the best of the wine out of them because we have let them lie like uncrushed bunches of grapes! Truly they are beautiful to look upon, like the clusters of Eshcol, but that is not the way to know all that is in them. Oh, that we had but faith to tread them in the winepress, that the ruddy juice might run out and we might drink and be refreshed!  
Remember that God has promised nothing beyond His strength, nothing beyond His will. God carries out His promise to the full! He may sometimes exceed it, but He certainly never falls short of it. Therefore, let us be comforted tonight with the recollection that God’s Word is free to effect its own accomplishment. His decree is Omnipotence resolving and His Providence is Omnipotence acting. “The Word of God is not bound.” There is yet one other sense. “The Word of God is not bound” so that it cannot endure and prevail unto the end. I know that there are those who think it dead and, therefore, they are anxious to attend its funeral and bury it out of sight, while the new theology shall dance on its grave. They call us poor old fogies for believing in the old Gospel—and tell us to go home and order our coffins—and leave the world to these wiser men. They begin to crow as if their work of defeating us had been unquestionably done. We are out of date. We are dead. We are extinct! Perhaps so! Perhaps so! But we think they will be mistaken in their imagination, for the Word of God is not defeated, after all. And if it were—if it were bound like the Lord Jesus and were taken before priests and princes to be scourged and spit upon. And if it were crucified among thieves and taken down from the Cross and laid in the tomb. And if the grave were sealed and watched by mighty men, yet the story would not be ended! Because the Lord lives, it would live again and its Resurrection power would be testified in the midst of its adversaries! For this Gospel, on which we have rested our souls, and on which our fathers rested throughout their generations, this is not bound!  
Who is to bind it? With what will they bind it? Green willow branches, ropes and bars of brass cannot hold this greater than Samson! It shall snap them in pieces as twigs! There is no overcoming the free Gospel! They dreamed that they had bound it many times before and they cried in mockery, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson,” but they have had to learn its might when least they expected it and so they shall yet again! Philosophy and heresy are in league and they gather their armies in haste. The Lord shall make them as the sheaves of the threshing floor. Therefore, let us be of good comfort, Brothers, and rest quite sure that, though we are beaten, the Word of God is not beaten! And though we are in a minority and our preaching at a discount, it does not matter—“The Word of God is not bound.”  
II. For a moment or two I have further to enquire, WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND? It is not bound because it is the voice of the Almighty. If the Gospel is, indeed, the Gospel of God, and these Truths are Revelations of God, Omnipotence is in them! It is not possible that the Omnipotent Word can be bound. Who will attempt the deed? Go bit the tempest! Put a chain about the hurricane, control the winds and bridle the raging sea! And when you have done these, you are but at the beginning of your task—you cannot, even then, hinder the Omnipotence of God which finds a chariot for itself in the Word of God and rides forth conquering and to conquer!  
Moreover, the Holy Spirit puts forth His power in connection with the Word of God and, as He is Divine, He is unconquerable! He comes as a rushing, mighty wind—who can stop Him? He comes as fire—who can stand before His flaming vehemence? The Holy Spirit’s being with the Gospel is the reason of its great power. It is not that Truth, alone, is mighty and will prevail, but that the Spirit of Truth works mightily by it and causes it to subdue the minds of men. If we had no Holy Spirit, what could we do? But as He has promised to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to His people, while He reproves the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, we know that “the Word of God is not bound.” The Holy Spirit manifests His own Sovereign will, doing what He pleases, even as the wind blows where it wishes—and this is the surest proof that His Word “is not bound.”  
If you needed another reason less strong than these two, I should say, “How can it be bound while it is so necessary to men?” There are certain things which, if men need, they will have. I have heard say that in the old Bread Riots, when men were actually starving for bread, no word had such a terribly threatening and alarming power about it as the word, “Bread!” when shouted by a starving crowd. I have read a description by one who once heard this cry—he said he had been startled at night by a cry of, “Fire!” but when he heard the cry of, “Bread! Bread!” from those that were hungry, it seemed to cut him like a sword. Whatever bread had been in his possession, he must, at once, have handed it out. So it is with the Gospel—when men are once aware of their need of it, there is no monopolizing it. None can make “a ring” or “a corner” over the precious commodity of heavenly Truth. Neither can anyone put this candle under a bushel so as to conceal its light. It cannot be hidden because there are so many that need it. They are pining, these myriads of London, these myriads all over the world—and though they hardly know it—yet there is a cry coming up forever from them for something which they can never find except in Christ! You may depend upon it—you cannot stop the Gospel being preached while there is this awful hunger after it in the souls of men. They must have it! You cannot cheat them into enduring a substitute for it.  
You may set up your altars and put up your gimcrackeries, but they won’t have them instead of the Gospel! You may preach your speculations and tell them “modern thought” has done away with the old Gospel, but as soon as the Holy Spirit shows them their state by nature and their future danger, they sweep all this rubbish away! As the mower lays the grass in swaths to dry in the sun when he has passed up and down the field, so will the nations of the earth sweep away the green and flowery growths of human philosophy—and either give them to beasts to eat, or cast them into the oven! When men once know what they need, they will have it, despite priests or princes, scientists or skeptics. Oh, it must be so! This dire need of men must be met—the Word of the Lord cannot be bound.  
I have one thing else to tell you. The Word of God is not bound because, when once it gets into men’s hearts, it works such an enthusiasm in them that you cannot bind it. You cannot silence lips which have been touched by a live coal from off the Altar of Christ! When the humblest woman gets to know the Gospel, you may say, “There, hold your tongue about it!” But you charge her in vain! She cannot but speak of what the Lord has done for her. The converted man must talk to his work mates about it. You may say, “It would be very irregular for you to hold a meeting. It would be out of all character for a mere working man to stand up on the village green.” But he is very likely to do it. You let the man alone—he cannot help it! Look at the many that gathered together in the desert in the South of France in the old persecuting times! Why did they thus risk their lives? Why did they expose themselves to be ridden down by dragoons? They could not help it! They were eager for the Gospel! They were in danger of being broken on the wheel if they preached, or listened to preaching, but they could not help it—they must hear the Word of the Lord! The preacher said, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.” Their adversaries tortured them and sent them to the galleys. They threatened them with banishment and death, but all in vain. You had better let them go on, for you cannot stop them! In our own land there was no binding the Word of God, for those who knew it felt compelled to spread it.  
There is Master Bunyan. They have put him in prison and his family is nearly starving. They bring him up and they say, “You shall go out of prison, John, if you won’t preach. Go home and tag your laces, that is what you have to do, and leave the Gospel alone. What have you got to do with that?” But honest John answers, “I cannot help it. If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the help of God. I will lie here till the moss grows on my eyelids, but I will never promise to cease preaching the Gospel.” They could sooner bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion, than govern the movements of the Spirit of God in men! The love of Christ is such that when it once pours into a man’s heart, it must run out at his lips in loving testimony! Has He not put rivers of Living Water into the midst of those who once drink of the life-giving stream? And they must speak of it, even till they die! III. Now I come to the close. ONE OR TWO OTHER FACTS RUN PARALLEL TO THE TEXT. Paul is bound, but the Word of God is not bound. Read it thus—the preacher has had a bad week. He is full of aches and pains. He feels ill, but the Word of God is not ill. Oh, what a blessing that is! We preach a healthy Gospel even though we are unhealthy ourselves. In this, let the invalid rejoice! Dear suffering worker, your work shall not suffer, for it is a sound Gospel which you preach, though you, yourself, are hampered by a poor, weak body!  
“What will become of the congregation when a certain minister dies?” Well, he will be dead, but the Word of God is not dead. God buries His workmen, but His work goes on. One light goes out, but another torch flames forth. Star by star sinks beneath the horizon, but another star appears on the other side to make glad the night. The Word of God is not dead when the preacher is dead!  
“Oh, but the worker is so feeble!” The Word of God is not feeble. “But the worker feels so stupid.” But the Word of God is not stupid. “But the worker is so unfit.” But the Word of God is not unfit. You see it all comes to this— the preacher is bound, but the Word of God is not bound! The worker is feeble, but the Word of God is not feeble! You are nothing and nobody, but the Word of God cannot be said to be nothing and nobody—it is everything and everybody—it is girt about with All Power.  
But you bitterly and truthfully lament that Christian men are, nowadays, very devoid of zeal. “All hearts are cold in every place.” The old fire burns low. But the Word of God is not cold, nor lukewarm, nor in any way losing its old fire! “Such and such a congregation is as frozen as the North Pole.” Yes, but the Word of God is not frozen! Divine Truth is not turned into an iceberg. Do not fret yourself into despair as to the condition of the Church, since the Lord lives! Things are bad, indeed, without His power, but then in the dark hour the Glory of the Lord will shine out. “Yes,” says one, “but I am disgusted with the cases I have lately met with of false brethren.” Yes, but the Word of God is not false. “But they walk so inconsistently.” I know they do, but the Word of God is not inconsistent. “But they say they have disproved the faith.” Yes, they have disproved their own faith, but they have not disproved the Word of God for all that! The Word of God is not affected by the falsehood of men. “If we believe not, He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” And till He denies Himself we need not make much account of who else denies Him. “Oh, but,” says one, “it is an awful thing to think of the spiritual ruin of so many that are round about us, who hear the Gospel and yet, after all, willfully refuse it, and die in their sins.” Truly this is a grievous fact. They appear to be bound by their sins like beasts for the slaughter, but the Word of God is not bound or injured. It was said of old that it would be a sweet savor unto God in them that are saved, and in them that perish—in the one a savor of life unto life, and in the other a savor of death unto death.  
Is not the fact as the Lord, Himself, forewarned us? The ungodly reject the Gospel, but the Gospel has not, therefore, failed. O Sinners, you cannot overcome God’s Word! You have defeated its influence of love upon yourselves, but it is not defeated, after all. If you will not come to Christ, others will—the Spirit of the Lord shall bring them. Christ shall see of the travail of His soul. If you turn away from His precious blood and refuse the redemption that He has worked, Christ shall not be disappointed as to the result of His passion. He shall see His seed and shall prolong His days. You may bite at the Gospel, but it shall be as when the viper in the fable gnawed at the file and destroyed his teeth. You may seek to put out the Gospel light, but you will be thrusting your hand into the fire and your own flesh shall be consumed!  
Do not try to war against the Gospel! Choose some other adversary than the Lord God Almighty and His invincible Gospel. I pray you, cease to fight against the Lord, for the Word of God is not bound! However much you may try to bind it, you shall find that it has its liberty and it will, in the next world, have liberty to accuse and to condemn if you will not now give it liberty to persuade and to save you! God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Timothy 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—484, 766, 478.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
BELOVED FRIENDS—I would not have written this week, only you desire it. I have suffered much from neuralgic pain, for the weather was wet and windy. Today a summer’s sun is shining and we hope for better things.

I rejoice to hear good news of the preachers who have favored me by filling the pulpit in my absence. May the blessing of the Lord rest upon the good Seed which they have sown and on the rest of the services which will take place before my return! I should like to be thoroughly well before I return, but that is not the case just now. Still, I am resting and hoping and, being out of the world’s wars and fights, I have a better opportunity for recovering tone and energy.

Receive my hearty Christian love and my sincere thanks for all you do to support the work and keep me from any anxiety about it. I am sure that the Lord, who has provided, will provide even to the end—and bring glory to His name by the doing of it.

It is an easy matter to trust when you feel bright and joyous, but we honor the Lord most by believing in Him when we feel depressed and circumstances are saddening. God is to be trusted whatever the weather may be, inside or out. God’s Truth will prevail, even if every Apostle should turn out to be a Judas and every prophet a Balaam.

In confidence in the unchanging God, let us forever abide. Yours in the Gospel of Jesus Christ,  
Mentone, December 9th, 1887.  
*C. H. SPURGEON.*

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÷2Ti 2.12

SUFFERING AND REIGNING WITH JESUS  
NO. 547

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING JANUARY 3, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.”***2Ti 2:12***.**

**MY venerable friend who has up to now sent me a text for the New Year, still ministers to his parish the Word of Life and has not forgotten to furnish the passage for our meditation today. Having preached from one of a very similar character a short time ago, I have felt somewhat embarrassed in preparation. But I will take courage and say with the Apostle, “To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” If I should bring forth old things on this occasion, be you not unmindful that even the wise householder does this at times. For oft-recurring sickness the same wine may be prescribed by the most skillful physician without blame. No one scolds the contractor for mending rough roads again and again with stones from the same quarry. The wind which has borne us once into the haven is not despised for blowing often from the same quarter, for it may do us good service yet again. And therefore I am assured that you will endure my repetitions of the same Truths of God, since they may assist you to suffer with patience the same trials.**

**You will observe that our text is a part of one of Paul’s faithful sayings. If I remember rightly, Paul has four of these. The first occurs in [1Ti 1:8](tw://bible.*?id=54.1.8|_AUTODETECT_|), that famous, that chief of all faithful sayings, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. “A golden saying, whose value Paul himself had most marvelously proved. What shall I say of this verse, but the same—the lamp of a lighthouse, it has darted its ray of comfort through leagues of darkness and guided millions of tempest-tossed spirits to the port of Peace.**

**The next faithful saying is in the same Epistle, at the fourth chapter and the ninth verse. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.” This, too, the Apostle knew to be true, since he had learned in whatsoever state he was in to be content. Our text is a portion of the third faithful saying. And the last of the four you will find in [Tit 3:8](tw://bible.*?id=56.3.8|_AUTODETECT_|), “This is a faithful saying and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” We may trace a connection between these faithful sayings.**

**The first one, which speaks of Jesus Christ coming into the world to save sinners, lays the foundation of our eternal salvation in the Free Grace of God, as shown to us in the mission of the great Redeemer. The next affirms the double blessedness which we obtain through this salvation—the blessings of the upper and nether springs—of time and of eternity. The third faithful saying shows one of the duties to which the chosen people are called. We are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that “if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” The last faithful saying sets forth the active form of Christian service, bidding us diligently to maintain good works.**

**Thus you have the root of salvation in Free Grace. You have next the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is and in that which is to come. And you have also the two great branches of suffering with Christ and service of Christ loaded with the fruits of the Spirit of all Divine Grace. Treasure up, dear Friends, those faithful sayings, “Lay up these words in your heart; bind them for a sign upon your hand that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.” Let these choice sayings be printed in letters of gold and set up as tablets upon the doorposts of our house and upon our gates. Let them be the guides of our life, our comfort and our instruction. The Apostle of the Gentiles proved them to be faithful. They are faithful still, not one word shall fall to the ground. They are worthy of all acceptation—let us accept them now and prove their faithfulness—each man for himself.**

**This morning’s meditation is to be derived from a part of that faithful saying which deals with suffering. We will read the verse preceding our text. “It is a faithful saying: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.” All the elect were virtually dead with Christ when He died upon the tree—they were on the Cross—crucified with Him. In Him, as their representative, they rose from the tomb and live in newness of life. Because He lives, they shall live also. In due time the chosen are slain by the Spirit of God and so made dead with Christ to sin, to self-righteousness, to the world, the flesh and the powers of darkness.**

**Then it is that they live with Jesus! His life becomes their life and as He was, so are they also in this world. The Spirit of God breathes the quickening Grace into those who were once dead in sin and thus they live in union with Christ Jesus. When Believers die, though they may be sawn in sunder, or burnt at the stake, yet, since they sleep in Jesus, they are preserved from the destruction of death by Him and are made partakers of His immortality. May the Lord make us rooted and grounded in the mysterious but most consolatory doctrine of union with Christ Jesus.**

**We must at once advance to our text—“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.” The words naturally divide themselves into two parts—suffering with Jesus and its reward—denying Jesus and its penalty.**

I. **SUFFERING WITH JESUS AND ITS REWARD. To suffer is the common lot of all men. It is not possible for us to escape from it. We come into this world through the gate of suffering and over death’s door hangs the same escutcheon. We must suffer if we live, no matter in what style we spend our existence. The wicked man may cast off all respect for virtue and riot in excess of vice to the utmost degree, yet, let him not expect to avoid the well-directed shafts of sorrow. No, rather let him look for a tenfold share of pain of body and remorse of soul. “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”**

**Even if a man could so completely degrade himself as to lose his intellectual powers and become a brute, yet even then he could not escape from suffering. For we know that the brute creation is the victim of pain as much as more lordly man. Only, as Dr. Chalmers well remarks, the brutes have the additional misery that they have no mind endowed with reason and cheered by hope to fortify them under their bodily affliction.**

**Understand, O Man, that however you may degrade yourself, you are still under the yoke of suffering—the loftiest bow beneath it nor the meanest can avoid it. Every acre of humanity must be furrowed with this plow. There may be a sea without a wave but never a man without sorrow. He who was God as well as Man had His full measure pressed down and running over! Let us be assured that if the Sinless One was not spared the rod, the sinful will not go free. “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” “Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward.”**

**If then, a man has sorrow, it does not necessarily follow that he shall be rewarded for it since it is the common lot brought upon all by sin. You may smart under the lashes of sorrow in this life but this shall not deliver you from the wrath to come. Remember, you may live in poverty and drag along a wearisome existence of ill-requited toil. You may be stretched upon a bed of sickness and be made to experience an agony in every single member of your body. And your mind, too, may be depressed with fears, or plunged in the depths of despair. And yet, by all this you may gain nothing of any value to your immortal spirit, for, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”**

**And no amount of affliction upon earth can alter that unchanging rule so as to admit an unregenerate man into Heaven. To suffer is not peculiar to the Christian—neither does suffering necessarily bring with it any recompense of reward. The text implies most clearly that we must *suffer with* Christ in order to *reign with* Him. The structure of the preceding verse plainly requires such a reading. The words, “with Him,” may be as accurately supplied at the close of the one clause as the other. The suffering which brings the *reigning* with Jesus must be a *suffering* with Jesus.**

**There is a very current error among those poor people who are ignorant of true religion that all poor and afflicted people will be rewarded for it in the next state. I have heard working men refer to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus with a cruel sort of satisfaction at the pains of Dives because they have imagined that, in the same manner, all rich people would be cast into the flames of Hell without a drop of water to cool their tongue—while all poor persons like Lazarus would be triumphantly carried into Abraham’s bosom.**

**A more fearful mistake could not be made! It was not the *suffering* of Lazarus which entitled him to a place in Abraham’s bosom. He might have been licked by all the dogs on earth and then have been dragged off by the dogs of Hell! Many a man goes to Hell from a dunghill. A drunkard’s hovel is very wretched—is he to be rewarded for bringing himself to rags? Very much of the beggary we see abroad is the result of vice, extravagance, or folly—are these things so meritorious as to be passports to Heaven?**

**Let no man deceive himself so grossly! On the other hand the rich man was not cast into Hell because he was rich and fared sumptuously. Had he been rich in faith, holy in life and renewed in heart, his purple and fine linen would have done him no hurt. Lazarus was carried above by the angels because his *heart* was in Heaven—and the rich man lifted up his eyes in Hell, because he had never lifted them up towards God and heavenly things. It is a work of Free Grace in the heart and character which shall decide the future—not poverty or wealth. Let intelligent persons combat this notion whenever they meet with it.**

**Suffering here does not imply happiness hereafter. It is only a certain order of suffering to which a reward is promised—the suffering which comes to us from fellowship with the Lord Jesus and conformity to His image. A few words here, by way of aiding you in making the distinction. We must not imagine that we are suffering *for* Christ and *with* Christ if we are not *in* Christ. If a man is not a branch of the Living Vine, you may prune and cut until the sap flows and the branch bleeds but he will never bring forth heavenly fruit. Prune the bramble as long as ever you like. Use the knife until the edge is worn away—the brier will be as sharp and fruitless as ever!**

**You cannot by any process of pruning translate it into one of the vines of Eshcol. If a man remains in a state of nature, he is a member of the earthly Adam—he will not, therefore, escape suffering—but ensure it. He must not, however, dream that because he suffers he is suffering with Christ! He is plagued with the old Adam. He is receiving with all the other heirs of wrath the sure heritage of sin. Let him consider these sufferings of his to be only the first drops of the awful shower which will fall upon him forever—the first tingling cuts of that terrible whip which will lacerate his soul forever.**

**If a man is in Christ, he may then claim fellowship with the second Man, who is the Lord from Heaven and he may expect to bear the image of the heavenly in the Glory to be revealed. O my Hearers, are you in Christ by a living faith? Are you trusting in Jesus only? If not, whatever you may have to mourn over on earth, you have no hope of reigning with Jesus in Heaven. Supposing a man to be in Christ—it does not even follow, then, that all his sufferings are sufferings with Christ. If a good man were, out of mistaken views of mortification and self-denial, to mutilate his body, or to flog his flesh as many a sincere enthusiast has done, I might admire the man’s fortitude, but I should not allow for an instant that he was suffering with Christ!**

**Who called men to such austerities? Certainly not the God of Love! If, therefore, they torture themselves at the command of their own fancies, fancy must reward them, for God will not. If I am rash and imprudent and run into positions for which neither Providence nor Grace has fitted me, I ought to question whether I am not rather sinning than communing with Christ. Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. If somebody had cut his ear off, what would you say? He took the sword and he feels the sword! He was never commanded to cut off the ear of Malchus and it was his Master’s gentleness which saved him from the soldiers’ rage.**

**If we let passion take the place of judgment, and let self-will reign instead of Scriptural authority, we shall fight the Lord’s battles with the devil’s weapons! And if we cut our own fingers we must not be surprised. On several occasions, excited Protestants have rushed into Romish cathedrals, have knocked down the priest and dashed the wafer upon the ground, trod upon it and in other ways exhibited their hatred of idolatry. Now when the Law has interposed to punish such outrages, the offenders are hardly to be considered as suffering with Christ! This I give as one instance of a class of actions to which overheated brains sometimes lead men under the supposition that they will join the noble army of martyrs.**

**The martyrs were all *chosen* to their honorable estate. And I may say of martyrdom as of priesthood, “No man takes that honor upon himself but he that is called thereunto as was Aaron.” Let us mind we all make a distinction between things which differ and do not pull a house down on our heads and then pray the Lord to console us under the trying Providence.**

**Again, in troubles which come upon us as the result of sin, we must not think we are suffering with Christ. When Miriam spoke evil of Moses and the leprosy polluted her, she was not suffering for God. When Uzziah thrust himself into the temple and became a leper all his days, he could not say that he was afflicted for righteousness’ sake. If you speculate and lose your property, do not say that you are losing all for Christ’s sake! When you unite with bubble companies and are duped, do not whine about suffering for Christ—call it the fruit of your own folly. If you will put your hand into the fire and it gets burned, why, it is the nature of fire to burn you or anybody else! Be not so silly as to boast as though you were a martyr.**

**If you do wrong and suffer for it, what thanks have you? Go behind the door and weep for your sin, but come not forth in public to claim a reward. Many a hypocrite, when he has had his deserts and has been called by his proper name, has cried out, “Ah, I am persecuted!” It is not an infallible sign of excellence to be in bad repute among men. Who feels any esteem for a cold-blooded murderer? Does not every man reprobate the offender? Is he, therefore, a Christian because he is spoken against and his name cast out as evil? Assuredly not! He is a heartless villain and nothing more. Brethren, truthfulness and honesty should stop us from using expressions which involve a false claim. We must not talk as if we suffered nobly for Jesus when we are only troubled as the result of sin. O, to be kept from transgression! Then it matters not how rough the road of obedience may be—our journey shall be pleasant because Jesus walks with us.**

**Be it observed, moreover, that suffering such as God accepts and rewards for Christ’s sake must have God’s Glory as its end. If I suffer that, I may earn a name, or win applause among men. If I venture into trial merely that I may be respected for it, I shall get my reward—but it will be the reward of the Pharisee and not the crown of the sincere servant of the Lord Jesus. I must mind, too, that love to Christ and love to His elect is ever the mainspring of all my patience, remembering the Apostle’s words, “Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profits me nothing.”**

**If I suffer in bravado, filled with proud defiance of my fellow men. If I love the dignity of singularity and out of dogged obstinacy hold to an opinion, not because it is right—but because I choose to think as I like, then I suffer not with Jesus. If there is no love to God in my soul. If I do not endure all things for the elect’s sake, I may bear many a cuff and buffeting, but I miss the fellowship of the Spirit and have no recompense.**

**I must not forget, also, that I must manifest the Spirit of Christ or I do not suffer with Him. I have heard of a certain minister, who, having had a great disagreement with many members in his Church, preached from this text, “And Aaron held his peace.” The sermon was intended to portray himself as an astonishing instance of meekness. But as his previous words and actions had been quite sufficiently violent, a witty hearer observed that the only likeness he could see between Aaron and the preacher, was this, “Aaron held his peace and the preacher did not.”**

**It is easy enough to discover some parallel between our cases and those of departed saints, but not so easy to establish the parallel by holy patience and Christ-like forgiveness. If I have, in the way of virtue, brought down upon myself shame and rebuke. If I am hot to defend myself and punish the slanderer. If I am irritated, unforgiving and proud—I have lost a noble opportunity of fellowship with Jesus. I must have Christ’s Spirit in me, or I do not suffer acceptably. If like a sheep before her shearers, I can be dumb. If I can bear insult and love the man who inflicts it. If I can pray with Christ, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If I submit all my case to Him who judges righteously and count it even my joy to suffer reproach for the cause of Christ—then and only then, have I truly suffered with Christ.**

**These remarks may seem very cutting and may take away much false but highly-prized comfort from some of you. It is not my intention to take away any *true*** comfort from the most humble Believer who really suffers with my Lord. But God grant we may have honesty enough not to pluck flowers out of other men’s gardens, or wear other men’s honors. Truth will only be desired by true men.

I shall now very briefly show what are the forms of real suffering for Jesus in these days. We have not now to rot in prisons, to wander about in sheepskins and goatskins, to be stoned, or to be sawn in sunder—though we ought to be ready to bear all this if God wills it. The days of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace are past, but the fire is still upon earth. Some suffer in their estates. I believe that to many Christians it is rather a gain than a loss, so far as pecuniary matters go, to be Believers in Christ. But I meet with many cases—cases which I know to be genuine—where persons have had to suffer severely for conscience sake.

There are those present who were once in very comfortable circumstances, but they lived in a neighborhood where the majority of the business was done on a Sunday. When Divine Grace shut up their shop, trade left them. And I know some of them are working very hard for their bread, though once they earned abundance without any great toil. They do it cheerfully for Christ’s sake, but the struggle is a hard one. I know other persons who were employed as servants in lucrative positions involving sin, but upon their becoming Christians they were obliged to resign their former post and are not at the present moment in anything like such apparent prosperity as they were.

I could point to several cases of persons who have really suffered to a very high degree in pecuniary matters for the Cross of Christ. Brethren, you may possess your souls in patience and expect as a reward of Grace that you shall reign with Jesus your Beloved! Those feather-bed soldiers who are broken-hearted if fools laugh at them should blush when they think of those who endure real hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Who can waste his pity over the small griefs of faint hearts when cold, hunger, and poverty are cheerfully endured by the true and brave?

Cases of persecution are by no means rare. In many a country village squires and priests rule with a high hand and smite the godly villagers with a rod of iron. “No blankets, no coals, no almshouse for you if you venture into the Meeting House. You cannot live in my cottage if you have a Prayer Meeting in it. I will have no religious people on my farm.” We who live in more enlightened society little know the terrorism exercised in some of the rural districts over poor men and women who endeavor conscientiously to carry out their convictions and walk with Christ.

True Christians of all denominations love each other and hate persecution, but nominal Christians and ungodly men would make our land as hot as in the days of Mary if they dared. To all saints who are oppressed, this sweet sentence is directed—“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.” More usually, however, the suffering takes the form of personal contempt. It is not pleasant to be pointed at in the streets and have opprobrious names shouted after you by vulgar tongues. Nor is it a small trial to be saluted in the workshop by opprobrious epithets, or to be looked upon as an idiot or a madman.

And yet this is the lot of many of the people of God every day of the week. Many of those who are of the humbler classes have to endure constant and open reproach. And those who are richer have to put up with the cold shoulder and neglect and sneers as soon as they become true disciples of Jesus Christ. There is more sting in this than some dream. And we have known strong men who could have borne the lash brought down by jeers and sarcasms, even just as the wasp may more thoroughly irritate and vex the lion than if the noblest beast of prey should attack him. Believers have also to suffer slander and falsehood. It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory, but I know a man who scarcely ever speaks a word which is not misrepresented and hardly performs an action which is not misconstrued.

The press at certain seasons, like a pack of hounds, will get upon his track and worry him with the most bases and undeserved abuse. Publicly and privately he is accustomed to be sneered at. The world whispers, “Ah, he pretends to be zealous for God, but he makes a fine thing of it!” Mark you, when the world shall learn what he does make of it, maybe it will have to eat its words! But I forbear such is the portion of every servant of God who has to bear public testimony for the Truth of God.

Every motive but the right one will be imputed to him. His good will be evil spoken of. His zeal will be called imprudence—his courage, impertinence—his modesty, cowardice. It is impossible for the true Believer in Christ who is called to any eminent service to do anything right. He had better at once learn to say with Luther, “The world hates me and there is no love lost between us, for as much as it hates me, so heartily do I hate it.” He meant not the men *in* the world, for never was there a more loving heart than Luther’s. But he meant the *fame*, the *opinion*, the *honor* of the world he trod beneath his feet. If in your measure you bear undeserved rebuke for Christ’s sake, comfort yourselves with these words, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

Then again, if in your service for Christ you are enabled to sacrifice yourself—bearing upon yourself inconvenience and pain, labor and loss—then I think you are suffering with Christ. The Missionary who tempts the stormy deep—the herald of the Cross who penetrates into unknown regions among savage men—the tract distributor toiling up the mountainside—the teacher going wearily to the class—the village preacher walking many toilsome miles—the minister starving on a miserable pittance—the evangelist content to break down in health—all these and their like suffer with Christ.

We are all too much occupied with taking care of ourselves. We shun the difficulties of excessive labor. And frequently behind the entrenchments of taking care of our constitution we do not half as much as we ought. A minister of God is bound to spurn the suggestions of ignoble ease—it is his calling to labor! And if he destroys his constitution, I for one, thank God that He permits us the high privilege of so making ourselves living sacrifices. If earnest ministers should bring themselves to the grave, not by imprudence, for that we would not advocate—but by honest labor, such as their ministry and their consciences require of them—they will be better in their graves than out of their graves if they come there for the cause of Christ. What? Are we never to suffer? Are we to be carpet-knights? Are God’s people to be put away in padding, perfumed with lavender and boxed up in quiet softness? No! Not unless they would lose the reward of true saints!

Let us not forget that contention with inbred lusts, denials of proud self, resistance of sin and agony against Satan are all forms of suffering with Christ. We may, in the holy war within us, earn as bright a crown as in the wider battlefield beyond us. O for Grace to be ever dressed in full armor, fighting with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness of every sort! There is one more class of suffering which I shall mention and that is, when friends forsake, or become foes. Father and mother forsake sometimes. The husband persecutes the wife. We have known even the children turn against the parents. “A man’s foes are they of his own household.” This is one of the devil’s best instruments for making Believers suffer. And those who have to drain this cup for the Lord’s sake shall reign with Him.

Brethren, if you are thus called to suffer for Christ, will you quarrel with me if I say, in adding all up, what a very little it is compared with *reigning* with Jesus? “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.” When I contrast our sufferings of today with those of the reign of Mary, or the persecutions of the Albigenses on the mountains, or the sufferings of Christians in Pagan Rome—why ours are scarcely a pin’s prick—and yet what is the reward? We shall reign with Christ!

There is no comparison between the service and the reward. Therefore it is all of Grace. We do but little and suffer but little—and even that little, Grace *gives* us! And yet the Lord grants us, “A far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.” We are not merely to *sit* with Christ, but we are to *reign* with Christ. All that the pomp imperial of His Kingship means. All that the treasure of His wide dominions can yield. All that the majesty of His everlasting power can bestow— all this is to belong to you—*given* to you of His rich, Free Grace, as the sweet reward of having suffered for a little time with Him!

Who would draw back, then? Who among you will flinch? Young man, have you thought of flying from the Cross? Young woman, has Satan whispered to you to shun the thorny pathway? Will you give up the crown? Will you miss the Throne? O Beloved, it is so blessed to be in the furnace with Christ, and such an honor to stand in the pillory with Him that if there were no reward, we might count ourselves happy! But when the reward is so rich, so super-abundant, so eternal, so infinitely more than we had any right to expect—will we not take up the Cross with songs and go on our way rejoicing in the Lord our God?

II. DENYING CHRIST, AND ITS PENALTY. “If we deny Him, He also will deny us.” Dreadful “if,” and yet an “if” which is applicable to every one of us. If the Apostles, when they sat at the Lord’s Supper, said, “Lord, is it I?” surely we may say as we sit here, “Lord, shall I ever deny You?” You who say most loudly, “Though all men shall deny You, yet I will not”—you are the most likely to do it!

In what way can we deny Christ? Some deny Him openly, as scoffers do, whose tongue walks through the earth and defies Heaven. Others do this willfully and wickedly in a doctrinal way, as the Arians and Socinians do who deny His deity—those who deny His Atonement, who rail against the inspiration of His Word—these come under the condemnation of those who deny Christ. There is a way of denying Christ without even speaking a word and this is the more common.

In the day of blasphemy and rebuke, many hide their heads. They are in company where they ought to speak up for Christ. But they put their hands upon their mouths. They come not forward to profess their faith in Jesus. They have a sort of faith, but it is one which yields no *obedience*. Jesus bids each Believer to be baptized. They neglect His ordinance. Neglecting that, they also despise the weightier matters of the Law. They will go up to the House of God because it is fashionable to go there. But if it were a matter of persecution, they would forsake the assembling of themselves together.

In the day of battle they are never on the Lord’s side. If there is a parade, and the banners are flying and the trumpets are sounding, if there are decorations and medals to be given away, there they are. But if the shots are flying, if trenches have to be carried and forts to be stormed, where are they? They have gone back to their dens and there will they hide themselves till fair weather shall return.

Mind, mind, mind, for I am giving a description, I am afraid, of some here. Mind, I say, you silent ones, lest you stand speechless at the bar of Judgment. Some, after having been long silent and so practically denying Christ, go farther and apostatize altogether from the faith they once had. No man who has a genuine faith in Christ will lose it, for the faith which God gives will live forever. Hypocrites and formalists have a name to live while yet they are dead—and after a while they return like the dog to its vomit and the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Certain professors do not run this length, yet practically deny Christ by their lives, though they make a profession of faith in Him.

Are there not some here who hove been baptized and who come to the Lord’s Table but what is their character? Follow them home. I would to God they never had made a profession because in their own houses they deny what in the House of God they have avowed. If I see a man drunk. If I know that a professor indulges in lasciviousness. If I know a man to be harsh and overbearing and tyrannical to his servants. If I know another who cheats in his traffic and another who adulterates his goods. And if I know that such men profess allegiance to Jesus—which am I to believe—their words or their deeds? I will believe that which speaks loudest! And as actions always speak louder than words, I will believe their actions—I believe that they are deceivers whom Jesus will deny at the last.

Should we not find many present this morning belonging to one or other of these grades? Does not this description suit at least some of you? If it should do so, do not be angry with me but stand still and hear the Word of the Lord. Know, O Man that you will not perish even if you have denied Christ, if now you fly to Him for refuge. Peter denied, but yet Peter is in Heaven. A transient forsaking of Jesus under temptation will not bring on everlasting ruin, if faith shall step in and the Grace of God shall intervene. But persevere in it—continue still in a denial of the Savior and my terrible text will come upon you—“He also will deny you.”

In musing over the very dreadful sentence which closes my text, “He also will deny us,” I was led to think of various ways in which Jesus will deny us. He does this sometimes on earth. You have read, I suppose, of the death of Francis Spira. If you have ever read it, you never can forget it to your dying day. Francis Spira knew the Truth of God. He was a reformer of no mean standing, but when brought to death, out of fear, he recanted. In a short time he fell into despair and suffered Hell upon earth. His shrieks and exclamations were so horrible that their record is almost too terrible for print. His doom was a warning to the age in which he lived.

Another instance is narrated by my predecessor, Benjamin Keach, of one whom, during Puritanical times, was very earnest for Puritanism but afterwards, when times of persecution arose, forsook his profession. The scenes at his deathbed were thrilling amid terrible. He declared that though he sought God, Heaven was shut against him. Gates of brass seemed to be in his way. He was given up to overwhelming despair. At intervals he cursed. At other intervals he prayed and so perished without hope.

If we deny Christ, we may be delivered to such a fate. If we have stood highest and foremost in God’s Church and yet have not been brought to Christ—if we should become apostates—a high soar will bring a deep fall. High pretensions bring down sure destruction when they come to nothing. Even upon earth Christ will deny such. There are remarkable instances of persons who sought to save their lives and lost them. One Richard Denton, who had been a very zealous Lollard and was the means of the conversion of an eminent saint, when he came to the stake, was so afraid of the fire that he renounced everything he held and went into the Church of Rome.

A short time after, his own house took fire, and going into it to save some of his money, he perished miserably, being utterly consumed by that fire which he had denied Christ in order to escape. If I must be lost, let it be any way rather than as an apostate. If there is any distinction among the damned, those have it who are wandering stars, trees plucked up by the roots, twice dead, for whom Jude tells us, is “reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” *Reserved*! As if nobody else were qualified to occupy that place but themselves. They are to inhabit the darkest, hottest place because they forsook the Lord.

Let us, my dear Friends, rather lose everything than lose Christ. Let us sooner suffer anything than lose our ease of conscience and our peace of mind. When Marcus Arethusus was commanded by Julian the apostate to subscribe towards the rebuilding of a heathen temple which his people had pulled down upon their conversion to Christianity, he refused to obey. And though he was an aged man, he was stripped naked and then pierced all over with lancets and knives. The old man still was firm.

If he would give but one halfpenny towards the building of the temple, he could be free—if he would cast in but one grain of incense into the censer devoted to the false gods, he might escape. He would not countenance idolatry in any degree. He was smeared with honey and while his innumerable wounds were yet bleeding, the bees and wasps came upon him and stung him to death. He could die, but he could not deny his Lord. Arethusus entered into the joy of his Lord, for he nobly suffered with Him!

In the olden time when the Gospel was preached in Persia, one Hamedatha, a courtier of the king, having embraced the faith, was stripped of all his offices, driven from the palace and compelled to feed camels. This he did with great content. The king, passing by one day, saw his former favorite at his ignoble work, cleaning out the camel’s stables. Taking pity upon him he took him into his palace, clothed him with sumptuous apparel, restored him to all his former honors and made him sit at the royal table. In the midst of the dainty feast, he asked Hamedatha to renounce his faith.

The courtier, rising from the table, took off his garments with haste, left all the dainties behind him, and said, “Did you think that for such silly things as these I would deny my Lord and Master?” And away he went to the stable to his ignoble work. How honorable is all this! How shall I denounce the meanness of the apostate—his detestable cowardice to forsake the bleeding Savior of Calvary to return to the beggarly elements of the world which he once despised and to bow his neck again to the yoke of bondage? Will you do this, O followers of the Crucified?

You will not! You cannot! I know you cannot if the Spirit of the Lord dwells in you and it must dwell in you if you are the children of God. What must be the doom of those who deny Christ, when they reach another world? Perhaps they will appear with a sort of hope in their minds and they will come before the Judge, with, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” Who are you? He says. “Lord, we once took the Lord’s Supper—Lord, we were members of the Church, but there came very hard times. My mother bade me give up religion. Father was angry. Trade went bad. I was so mocked at, I could not stand it. Lord, I fell among evil acquaintances and they tempted me—I could not resist. I was Your servant—I did love You—I always had love towards You in my heart, but I could not help it—I denied You and went to the world again.”

What will Jesus say? I know you not! “But, Lord, I want You to be my Advocate.” I know you not! “But, Lord, I cannot get into Heaven unless You should open the gate—open it for me.” I do not know you! I do not know you! “But, Lord, my name was in the Church Book.” I know you not—I deny you. “But will You not hear my cries?” You did not hear Mine—you did deny Me and I deny you. “Lord, give me the lowest place in Heaven, if I may but enter and escape from wrath to come.” No, you would not brook the lowest place on earth and you shall not enjoy the lowest place here. You had your choice and you did choose evil. Keep to your choice. You were filthy, be you filthy still. You were unholy, be you unholy still.

O, Sirs, if you would not see the angry face of Jesus! O, Sirs, if you would not behold the lightning flashing from His eyes and hear the thunder of His mouth in the day when He judges the fearful and the unbelieving and the hypocrite. If you would not have your portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, cry this day mightily unto God, “Lord, hold me fast, keep me, keep me. Help me to suffer with You, that I may reign with You. But do not, do not let me deny You, lest You also should deny me.”

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÷2Ti 2.13

ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS UNAFFECTED BY HUMAN UNBELIEF  
NO. 1453

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” ***2Ti 2:13***.

THIS is one of the five faithful sayings which the Apostle mentions. All those faithful sayings are weighty and important. I suppose that they may have come into the possession of the Church by having been uttered by some of those Prophets who were raised up to cherish the infancy of the Church, such as Agabus and the daughters of Philip and others. These may have been some of their more remarkable sayings which laid hold upon the minds of good men; were quoted by the preachers and teachers and so became current throughout the Church. Such golden sayings were minted into proverbs and passed from hand to hand, enriching all who received them. To the saints they became “familiar in their mouths as household words” and were specially named faithful or true sayings.

No doubt the Apostle Paul gave his endorsement to many of these holy proverbs, but five of them he has encased in the amber of Inspiration and handed down for our special note. Perhaps it may interest you to notice them as they occur. The first one, probably the best one, is in the First Epistle of Timothy, first chapter, and the 15th verse, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” I can suppose that the good news was frequently conveyed by humble-minded Christians to the outside world in that short and compact form—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,” so that it was commonly known to be a saying among Christians. It was the way in which those who could not preach a sermon and, perhaps, could scarcely compose a sentence for themselves, learned the pith and marrow of the Gospel and had it in a concise and simple form for instructing others. Converts were in the habit of telling this to their heathen friends and acquaintances wherever they went, that they might know what Jesus Christ had come to do and might be led to believe on His name.

The next faithful or true saying is in the First Epistle of Timothy, the third chapter and the first verse. “This is a true saying , If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.” Any man who desires to oversee the Church of God and to be in the midst of the people as a shepherd, desires a good work. He will bring himself great anxiety, labor and travail, but the work is honorable and has so large a spiritual reward that a man is wise to choose it and to give his whole life to it. Another of these faithful sayings will be found in the First Epistle of Timothy, the fourth chapter, and the eighth verse, for so the words run, “For bodily exercise profits a little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. For therefore we both labor and suffer

reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.”

Godliness has the profit of this life and the next and, therefore, godly men are content to suffer, because they expect and receive an abundant blessing as the result thereof at the hand of God. Such a proverb as this was greatly needed in persecuting times and it is still valuable in these greedy days when men find godliness a hindrance to their hasty snatching at wealth and, therefore, turn aside unto ways of dishonesty and falsehood. The next is the one which constitutes our text. We will not, therefore, read it again till we come to handle it. But the fifth is in Titus, the third chapter, and the eighth verse—“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” That those who believe in Jesus should manifest the holy character of their faith by their lives is another one of these faithful sayings which comes with all the greater force from Paul because he, above all men, was free from any suspicion of legality, or the putting of human merit into the place of the Grace of God which is received by faith.

And now, coming to the faithful saying before us, it may not strike you at first, but scholarly men have observed that the 11th , 12th and 13th verses assume the form of a hymn. The Hebrew hymns were written in parallelisms, not, of course, in rhymes, and these three verses are thought to have been one of the oldest of Christian hymns—

*“It is a faithful saying:  
For if we are dead with Him,  
We shall also live with Him:  
If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: If we deny Him, He also will deny us:  
If we believe not, yet He abides faithful:  
He cannot deny Himself.”*

This is a miniature Psalm—one of those Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with which the saints of God were known to edify one another. I am sure this last part of this brief hymn is well worthy to be regarded as a faithful saying among ourselves. Brethren, we may often mention it. We may frequently quote it. We may roll it under our tongue as a sweet morsel. We may pass it from one to another as a classic saying of Christian wisdom—“If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.”

In handling it at this time I would divide it into two folded parts. The first double portion is, the sad possibility, with the consoling assurance. “If we believe not”—sad possibility, “yet He abides faithful”—consoling assurance. The second part of our subject is the glorious impossibility and the sweet inference that we may draw from it. The glorious impossibility is— “He cannot deny Himself” and the inference we draw from it is the obverse or converse of our text—If we believe, He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.

I. To begin, then, with THE SAD POSSIBILITY AND THE CONSOLING ASSURANCE—If we believe not, yet He abides faithful.” I must take the sad possibility first—“if we believe not,” and I shall read this expression as though, first of all, it concerned the world in general, for I think it may so be fairly read. If we believe not—if mankind believes not, if the race believes not, if the various classes of men believe not—yet He abides faithful. The rulers believe not and there are some that make this a very great point. They said concerning Jesus, “Have any of the rulers believed on Him?”

If Lord So-and-So hears the preacher, there must be something in what he says. Englishmen are wonderfully impressed with the judgment of a duke or an earl and even with that of titled folk of lower degree. If any of the rulers believe in Him, who among worshippers of rank would raise a question? Is it published under authority? Do the great ones subscribe to it? “Oh, then,” says one, “it must be good and it must be true.” Now, I venture to say that all history proves that the Truth of God has very seldom been accepted by the rulers of this world and, for the most part, the poorest of the poor have been more able to perceive the Truth than the greatest of the great have ever been!

There would have been no Christianity in the world at the present moment if it had not found a shelter in workshops and in cottages. It has flourished among the despised poor when it has been condemned by the great ones of the earth. Well, Sirs, if we believe not—that is, if our greatest men, if our senators and magistrates, princes and potentates, believe not—it does not affect the Truth of God in the smallest conceivable degree—“yet He abides faithful.” Many, however, think it more important to know on which side the leaders of thought are enlisted and there are certain persons who are not elected to that particular office by popular vote, who, nevertheless, take it upon themselves to consider that they are dictators in the republic of opinion.

They are advanced men and far ahead of the old school of Divines. Some of us think that they are advancing in the direction of going backwards and that they are putting ignorant guess-work into the room of proved doctrine and solid, experimental, Scriptural teaching. Still, as in their own opinion they are our superiors and pioneer the way of progress, we will, for a moment, think of them as such. Now, in our Lord’s day the advanced thinkers were not on His side at all—they were all against Him— and after He had departed, the greatest peril of the Church of God arose from the advanced thought of the period. The Gnostics and other Grecian thinkers came forward and threw their philosophical mud into the pure stream of the Gospel till there was no plain statement which was not rendered mythical, mystical, confused, or clouded, so that only the initiated could possibly understand it.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ was meant to be the most plain Truth that ever shone upon the sons of men. It was meant to be legible in its own light by the young, the unlearned and the simple. But the advanced thinkers took the Gospel and twisted it, colored it, adorned it and bedaubed it till by the time it came through their various processes you would not have known it to be the same thing at all! And, in fact, Paul said that it was not the same thing, for he called it, “another gospel,” and then he corrected himself and said it was not another—“But there are some,” he said, “that trouble you.” However, we need not care because of these wise men, for if they believe not, but becloud the Gospel, yet God abides faithful!

If over there in the groves where Socrates and Plato gathered disciples by their philosophy; if over there, I say, there should not be found a single philosopher who believes in God, so much the worse for the philosophers! It does not affect the Gospel or our faith in it—if they believe not, He abides faithful! If Paul at the Areopagus gets no sympathy except from two or three and, in fact, they have only asked him there to “hear what this babbler says” and though they all, as they go home, say that Paul is beside himself and mad—and a setter forth of strange gods—yet Paul is right and the Lord abides faithful! Yes, and I venture to enlarge this thought a little more. If the rulers do not believe and if the philosophical minds do not believe—and if, in addition to this, public opinion, so called, rejects it— yet the Gospel is still the same eternal Truth of God.

Public opinion is not the test and gauge of the Truth of God, for public opinion has continually altered and it will continue to alter. The aggregate thinking of fallible men is less than nothing when set against the one solitary mind of God, who is Infallible, as He reveals it to us by the Holy Spirit in the Words of Truth in the Scriptures. But some think that the old Gospel cannot be right because, you see, everybody says that it is out of date and wrong. That is one reason for being the more sure that it is right, for the world lies in the Wicked One and its judgment is under his sway. What are multitudes when they are all under the influence of the Father of Lies?

The greatest majority in the world is a minority of one when that man is on God’s side. Count heads, do you? Well, count by the millions if you like, but I shall rather weigh, than count—and if I speak the Truth of God—I have more weight on my side than can be found in a million who believe not! I wish we all partook of the spirit of Athanasius when he said, defending the Deity of his great Master, “I, Athanasius, against the world.” You must learn to stand alone! When you know that you have a grip on revealed Truth, you may not set all the judgments of men in comparison with the eternal and Infallible judgment of the mighty God! No, though we believe not, that is, the mass of us and nations of us, “yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.”

I want to ask your thoughtful attention to one consideration here. Have you not often heard it said that ministers ought to be abreast of the times; that theology should be always toned and varied so as to suit the advanced thought of the wonderful period in which we live? And as this is a time when infidelity appears to be in the very air, we are told that we ought to sympathize with it very earnestly and heartily, for it is a form of struggling for the Light which we ought to encourage. Now, this is another sort of talk from what I hear from the Apostle Paul. He has no sympathy with it! He put his foot on it. “Let God be true and every man a liar”—that is the style in which he speaks! As to going in to study the philosophies in order to tune the Gospel to their note, he says, “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

When he finds that this style of doctrine does not please the Jew and that it is a stumbling block to him and that it does not please the Greek, but makes him sneer and call it foolishness, does the Apostle, therefore, say, “Come here, dear Jewish Friend. I have a way of putting this which will show you that I do not quite mean what you thought I did. I used the word, “Cross,” in a certain sense not at all objectionable to Judaism”? Does he gently whisper, “Come to me, my learned Greek Friend and I will show you that your philosophers and I mean the same thing”? Not a bit! No, he stands fast and firm to Christ crucified and salvation by His blood, as, by God’s Grace, I trust we are resolved to do. Though we believe not— that is, though the whole world believe not—yet God’s Gospel is not to be altered to suit human whims and fancies, but in all its forms, in all its Divine authority, unpaved, uncut, worked out as a whole, it is still to be proclaimed, for, “He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.”

Now, having spoken of our text as referring to the world in general, it is, perhaps, a more sorrowful business to look at it as referring to the visible Church in particular. The Apostle says, “Though we believe not,” and surely he must mean the visible Church of God. And does the Church of God ever fall into such a state that we may say of it, “It believes not”? Yes, the visible Church has many and many a time fearfully turned aside. Go back for a type of it to the wilderness. The children of Israel were brought up out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. They were fed in the wilderness with angels’ food and made to drink of water from the Rock—but they were continually doubting their God—

*“Now they believe His word  
While rocks with rivers flow.  
But soon with sin they grieve the Lord,  
And judgments lay them low.”*

And what happened? Did God depart from His purpose to give the land that flowed with milk and honey to the seed of Abraham? Did He break up the Covenant and grow weary of it? No—Abraham’s seed inherited the land and they dwelt therein, every man under his own vine and fig tree. Though the visible people of God rejected Him full often, so that for their unbelief they died in the wilderness, yet He remained faithful—He did not, He could not deny Himself. Well, now, it comes to pass, sometimes, according to this type, that the visible Church of God apostatizes from the Truth of God. The Doctrines of Grace, the Truths of the Gospel are obscured, beclouded, scarcely preached—preached with gaudy words or hid behind ceremonies and rites and all sorts of things.

And what happens? Are the foundation Truths removed? Is the eternal verity reversed? Has God recalled His promises? Oh no! “He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Alas, the Church of God seems to lose, sometimes, her faith in prayer! Her pleading assemblies become scarce. Her prayer for men’s conversion is scarcely raised. Few come together to supplicate the Lord and besiege the Mercy Seat. But what then? Does God change? Does He forsake His cause? Oh, no: “He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” At such times the Church almost loses her faith in the Holy Spirit and looks upon preaching as, perhaps, a necessary evil to be borne with—not as the vehicle by which the Holy Spirit saves men. They have small confidence in God’s Word that, “By the foolishness of preaching” He will “save them that believe.”

They do not expect the kingdom of Christ to be predominant, but they say, “Since the fathers fell asleep what long ages have dragged along and what slow progress Christianity has made! It is a hopeless cause. Let us be content to let the heathen world alone.” At such time they lose all heart and all faith in God! Have we not seen large portions of the visible Church

of God decline into such a state as this till we have been ready to ask with our Master, “When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?” But, what then, my Brothers and Sisters? Suppose we should live to see a degenerate Church everywhere? Suppose it should become like Laodicea, till the Lord should seem to spew the visible Church out of His mouth because she has become neither hot nor cold?

Suppose He should say of the professing Church of today as He did of Shiloh of old—“Go now to Shiloh where My place was at the first and see if there is one stone left upon another that is not cast down”? He took the candlestick away from Rome and He may take that candlestick away from other Churches, too. But would that prove that God was unfaithful, or that He had denied Himself? No, Beloved, no! His faithfulness would then be seen in the judgment with which He would visit an unfaithful Church. Yes, and it is seen today. You shall see a Church which does not believe in the simple Gospel grow few and feeble. According as the Churches cease to be evangelical, they are diminished and brought low. A Church that neglects prayer becomes disunited, scattered, lethargic, all but dead.

A Church that has no faith in the Holy Spirit may carry on her ordinances, but it will be with barren formality and without power from on high—all of which proves the faithfulness of Him who said, “If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” If they cast away from them that which is their strength, it is but faithfulness on God’s part that they should become weak. All the history of the Church, if you read it, from the days of Christ till now, will go to show that He deals with His Church in such a way as to make her see that He is faithful, whatever she may be. He will help her when she turns to Him. He will bless her when she trusts Him. He will crown her when she exalts Him. But He will bring her low and chasten her when she turns, in any measure, aside from the simplicity of her faith. Thus does He prove that He is still faithful.

Once more, my Brethren, I will read the text in a somewhat narrower circle. “If we believe not”—that is to say, if the choicest teachers, preachers and writers believe not, yet He abides faithful. One of the most shocking trials to young Christians is the fall of an eminent teacher. I have known some that have been almost ready to give up their faith when someone who appeared to be very earnest and faithful has suddenly apostatized. Such things have happened in our memory, to our intense grief and I want, therefore, to put it very, very plainly. If it should come to pass that anyone whom you revere as having been blest to your soul—whom because you have received from him the Word of Life—if such a one upon whom you may, perhaps, have learned much, should, in the future, turn out not to be true and faithful and should not believe, do not follow his unbelief, for “if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.”

Peter denies his Master—do not follow Peter when he is doing that, for he will have to come back weeping and you will hear him preaching his Master again. Worse still, Judas sells his Master—do not follow Judas, for Judas will die a wretched death and his destruction shall be a warning to others to cling more closely to the King. You may see the man who stood like a cedar in Lebanon fall by one stroke of the devil’s axe, but do not, therefore, think that the trees of the Lord, which are full of sap, will fall, too. He will keep His own, for He knows them that are His.

Pin not your faith to any man’s sleeve. Let not your confidence rest on any arm of flesh, neither say, “I believe because of the testimony of such a one and I hold to the form of sound words because my minister has held it,” for all such props may be pulled away and all of a sudden may fail you! Let me put this very, very plainly. If we believe not—if those that seem to be the choice teachers of the age, the most successful evangelists of the period—if those who seem to stand the highest in the esteem of God’s people, should, in an evil hour, forsake the eternal verities and begin to preach to you some other gospel which is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I beseech you follow us not, whoever we may be or whatever we may be!

Suffer no teachers, however great they may be, to lead you to doubt, for God abides faithful! Keep to the revealed will and mind of God—for “He cannot deny Himself.” Here, then, is the fearful possibility and side by side with it rims this most blessedly consoling assurance—“He abides faithful.” Jesus Christ abides—there are no shifts and changes in Him. He is a rock and not a quicksand! He is the Savior whether the rulers and the philosophers believe in Him or refuse Him; whether the Church and her ministers are true to Him or desert Him. He is the same Savior, God-Man, sitting supreme upon the Truth of God. “Why do the heathens rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed? He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Yet,” says He, “have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.”

They cannot affect the imperial throne of our immortal Lord! He is still “the blessed and only Potentate” and so He must be, let them say what they will! And as Christ remains the same Savior, so we have the same Gospel. They have improved upon it, they tell us! Well, well, I feel so satisfied with the Gospel as I get it from Paul and the Inspired Apostles that I would rather not have this improved gospel if they will allow me to keep to the old original. But so it is, like babies pleased with new toys, they cry their “modern thought” and culture and advanced ideas! He that has once tasted the old wines does not desire the new, because he says, “The old is better.”

Our Savior and His Gospel abide the same! The Gospel of Paul, the Gospel of Augustine, the Gospel of Calvin, the Gospel of Whitefield, the Gospel of any succession of faithful men you like to mention suffices us. He abides faithful! And as the Gospel is the same, so does Christ remain faithful to His engagements to His Father. He has promised to keep those whom the Father gave Him and He will keep them even to the end. And when the sheep shall pass again under the hands of Him that counts them, He will say, “Of all whom You gave me I have lost none.” “He abides faithful.” To sinners all over the world He says that if they come to Him, He will not cast them out and He is faithful to that. He graciously promises that “whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And He will be faithful to that.  
He is also faithful to His saints. He has promised to preserve them to

His eternal kingdom and Glory and He will preserve them. He says, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands”—and He has held them in His loving grasp and He will hold them even to the end! And all this, though all the unbelief in the world should rise against Him! He will stand to every Word He has spoken and carry out every promise He has declared, though all should distrust and deny. “Yes and amen in Christ Jesus” are all the promises, henceforth and forever—and we shall find it so.

II. And now we have but a little time to spend upon the second very important part of our text, which is A GLORIOUS IMPOSSIBILITY WITH A SWEET INFERENCE THAT MAY BE DRAWN FROM IT. “He cannot deny Himself.” Three things God cannot do. He cannot die. He cannot lie. And He cannot be deceived. These three impossibilities do not limit His power, but they magnify His majesty, for these would be infirmities, and infirmity can have no place in the Infinite and Ever-Blessed God. Here is one of the things impossible with God—“He cannot deny Himself.” What is meant by that?

It is meant, first, that the Lord Jesus Christ cannot change as to His Nature and Character towards us, the sons of men, for if He were to change He could only change from one state to another—from a better to a worse or from a worse to a better. If from a better to a worse, that were to deny Himself, indeed, by ceasing to be as good as He is by Nature. And if from a worse to a better, that were to deny Himself by proving that He was not, before, so good as He might have been! In no one point can Jesus Christ be changed, for He is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.” If in any point He changed, He would, in that point, deny Himself. But He cannot do this, for being God He changes not.

His Word cannot alter. I want you to notice this, because His Word is so conspicuously Himself. His name shall be called the Word of God. Yes, He is Himself the Logos, the Eternal Word, and that Word cannot change. “The grass withers, and the flower falls away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” O servant of the Lord, the assurance which Paul and Peter gave, you may give! That same Word of mercy which those first messengers of Heaven went forth to declare, you may declare, for it still stands the same! He cannot deny His Word since that Word is Himself and He cannot deny Himself. He cannot, beloved Friends, withdraw the salvation which He has presented to the sons of men, for that salvation is, indeed, Himself.

Jesus is the salvation of Israel. If a sinner wants to know where salvation lies, we point him to the Christ of God. He is not only a Savior, but He is Salvation itself! And His salvation cannot be changed, for if it were changed He would be Himself changed or denied and He cannot deny Himself. There is still the same pardon for the chief of sinners; still the same renewing for the hardest hearts; still the same generous response to those who have strayed most; still the same adoption into the family for aliens and foreigners. His salvation, as Peter preached it at Pentecost, is the salvation which we preach to sinners today. “He cannot deny Himself.” And then the Atonement is still the same, for that, too, is Himself—He has, by Himself, purged our sins.

He Himself is the Sacrifice. Well did the poet say—  
*“Dear dying Lamb,  
Your precious blood*

*Shall never lose its power.”*  
Because it is His blood, it must be unchanged in efficacy. He cleanses away our sins by Himself. His blood is His life and He always lives. And since He always lives, He is “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” Blessed be His name, the atoning Sacrifice has not, even in the smallest degree, lost its efficacy! It is just as mighty as when it washed the dying thief from the foulness of Hell into the purity of Heaven and carried him from the gallows to a throne! Oh, how blessed must its power be to have cleansed so foul a wretch and to have placed him with the Master Himself in Paradise the same day! The Atonement cannot change, for that would involve that Jesus had denied Himself.

And the Mercy Seat, the place of prayer, still remains, for if that were altered He would have denied Himself, for what was the Mercy Seat, or propitiatory, but that golden lid upon the Covenant Ark? What was it but Christ Himself, who is our Propitiatory, the true Mercy Seat? You may always pray, Brothers and Sisters, for if prayer were denied its efficacy, God would have denied Himself! This is His memorial, “The God that hears prayer,” and if He does not hear prayer He has denied Himself and ceased to be what He was. Jehovah will never so deny Himself as to become like Baal, a deaf God—to imagine it would be blasphemy!

And here is another sweet thought— Christ’s love to His Church and His purpose towards her cannot change, because He cannot deny Himself and His Church is Himself. I mean not that visible Church of which I spoke just now, which is a mixed multitude, but I mean that invisible Church, that spiritual people, that bride of Christ which no man sees, for she is prepared in darkness and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth—and her Lord Himself will never actually see her till she is perfected, even as Adam never saw Eve, but slept until the great God had finished His bride and presented her in all her matchless beauty to be His sister and spouse. The day comes when the Lord Jesus Christ shall thus receive His perfected bride—and meanwhile He cannot change towards her, but His espousals shall be confirmed. She was taken out of His side when He lay in deep sleep of death and she is fashioned to be like He, so that when in joy He shall behold her, His joy and her joy shall be full. No, He will never, never deny her, for He cannot deny Himself. His plan of love shall be carried out and all His thoughts of Grace fulfilled.

Nor will any of His offices towards His Church and people ever fail. The Prophet shall be Prophet forever—“He cannot deny Himself.” The Priest shall be a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec and will never refuse to offer our prayers and praises and to cleanse our souls, for He cannot deny Himself. The King will never cease to reign, or doff His crown, or lay down His scepter, for He cannot deny Himself. The Shepherd will forever keep the flock. The Friend will eternally stick closer than a brother. The Husband will still love His spouse. All that He is in relation to His people shall continue and abide, for He abides faithful. “He cannot deny

Himself.”

Now, my last word is about an inference. The text says, “If we believe, not, yet He abides faithful.” It runs on that supposition. Now, Brethren, take the other supposition—suppose we do believe? Will He not be faithful in that case, too? And will it not be true that He cannot deny Himself? I will suppose that a sinner is, at this moment, saying, “I believe that Christ can save me. I will go and ask Him, I will go and trust Him.” Ah, He will not deny Himself by rejecting your cry! I tell you, if He were to shut you out, dear Soul, whoever you may be, if you go to Him, He would deny Himself! He never did deny Himself yet. Whenever a sinner comes to Him, He becomes his Savior. Whenever He meets a sick soul, He acts as his physician.

Now, I have heard of persons who have been physicians who were ill, or weary and needed rest—an accident has happened and they have felt inclined to get out of the way, if they could, because they were very hardworked and worn out. They have told their servant to say, “My master is not at home!” But my Master never denied Himself! He will never get out of the way of a sinner! If you go to Him, you will find Him at home and on the look-out for you! He will be more glad to receive you than you will be to be received, for He “waits to be gracious.” As Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, waiting for the people to pay their dues, so does Christ sit at the receipt of sinners waiting for them to mention their needs!

He is watching for you. I tell you again that He cannot reject you—that would be to alter His whole Character and “un-Christ” Himself! To spurn a coming sinner would un-Jesus Him and make Him to be somebody else, and not Himself any longer. “He cannot deny Himself.” Go and try Him! Go and try Him. I wish some trembling soul would, at this moment, go and cast Himself upon Christ and then report to us the result. Come, poor quivering Seekers, sing in your heart, unbelieving as you are, that hymn of ours*—*

*“I can but perish if I go,  
I am resolved to try!  
For if I stay away, I know  
I must forever die.”*

Oh, but if you were to perish at His feet, you would be the first that ever did so out of all those who have ever come to Him! And that first man has never been seen yet! Go and try my Lord and see for yourselves.

Well now, you Christian people, I want you to come, also. If you believe your Lord, He will be faithful to you. Suppose it is a time of trouble with you? He will be faithful to you—go and cast your burden upon Him. Suppose at this time you are much exercised with spiritual distress? Go to the Lord as you did at first, as poor, guilty, rebellious sinners—and cast yourself upon Him and you will find Him faithful. “He cannot deny Himself.” If my Lord were not kind to me tonight when I go to Him with my burdens, I should think that I had knocked at the wrong door because the Lord has been so good and so faithful to me up to now that it would take my breath away if I found Him changed! Oh, how good, how exceedingly good is my Lord!

Did not we sing just now—  
*“He by my side has always stood:*

*His loving kindness, oh, how good!”?*  
I could sing that with all my heart and I hope many of you could earnestly join with me. You have a dear mother, or a fond wife, or a choice friend and none of them has ever spoken anything but kindness to you— if, therefore, in some dark hour you were to go to them and,, instead of showing sympathy, they gave you sharp words and you could evidently see that they did not love you, how surprised you would be! So should I be if I were to meet anything but love from my dear Lord after all these years of tenderness! There is no fear of it, for “He cannot deny Himself.”

So I finish by saying that we shall find it so in connection with the things of His kingdom and the concerns of His Truth. There is a great uproar just now about the God of Providence and they call me, I know not by what names, for speaking the Truth for my Master. Well, what comes of it? Shall we, therefore, be afraid? No! If we believe, we shall find Him faithful—He will not deny Himself. Is the good old cause really in danger from skepticism and superstition? Speaking after the manner of men, it may seem so, but it never really is so. Even if it were tottering, we must not put our hand upon the Ark of the Lord to steady it.

God’s cause is always safe! I do not know whether we may live to see it, but as surely as the Lord lives the Truth of God will be triumphant in England! They may tell us that Puritanism is thrust to the wall, but it will take the crown of the causeway yet. The old cause goes back a little to take a breath, but she will make such a leap in this land as shall utterly surprise the soothsayers, for the Lord will make the Diviners mad and they that count the towers and say that Zion is utterly fallen shall not know where to hide their heads! The devil once flew all over Europe and said, “It is all mine. Here they are, selling indulgences and the Pope and I are master of it all.”

But there was a poor monk who had not, himself, seen the Light of God but for a short time, who nailed his theses on the door of a Church and from that hour the Light of Christ began to spread all over Europe! And do you think the Lord is short of Luthers? Do you imagine that He has no sword or spear left in His armory? I tell you He has as many instruments within reach as there are stars in the sky! When the influence of the Gospel appears to recede, it is like the tide when it is ebbing out. Steadily it goes back and if we did not know better, we should begin to think that the silver waves would all give place to mire and shingle—yet when the hour comes, at the very minute—the waters pause and remain at one point awhile.

Then up comes the first wave of the wash and another and another and another and another, rising, advancing, conquering the shore till the set has come to her fullness again! So must it be and so shall it be with the ocean of the Truth of God! Only let us have faith and we shall see the Gospel at the flood, again, and old England covered with it! Doubt what you like, Brothers and Sisters, but do not doubt Divine Truth or doubt God! Hold on to the side that is most disgraced and dishonored—that has the worst word from men—for Christ and His Church usually have the bleak side of the hill. Be content to breast the stream with courage learned from your Redeemer and Lord, for the day comes when to have stood with the Truth and with the Son of the Highest will be the grandest honor that a creature can have worn. May that honor be ours, for Jesus’

sake. Amen.  
**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Timothy 2.**HYMNS FROM **“OUR** OWM HYMN BOOK”—192, 664, 196.

TO MY BELOVED CHURCH AND CONGREGATION: DEAR FRIENDS—After a long and severe illness I am now on my way to the South of France to seek rest and gather strength in a less trying climate. The Church has requested me to take three months’ furlough and as this corresponds with the serious counsel of physicians and judicious friends, I shall probably accept the considerate advice. I have promised to correspond with you and with my sermon readers, week by week, by a note appended to the sermon, or by a short discourse such as I have written during the last two weeks.

This, then, to commence with—I have reached Paris [Jan. 18, 1879] by easy stages and I am none the worse for the traveling, but all the better for the change. Snow is falling heavily and may detain us, but if not, we hope to be at Mentone next Wednesday. It would have been a far greater pleasure to me to have been able to occupy my pulpit, but as this must not be, I am right glad to speak by the press. May the weekly sermon be used by the Lord in a greater degree, now that the preacher’s voice ceases for a while to proclaim His Gospel. One great favor I have to ask of you all—will you unite in hearty prayer that there may be a great revival at the Tabernacle during my absence?

You have united to celebrate the 25th year of my pastorate by noble testimonies which I have dedicated to the Lord’s work. Now unite with even greater ardor in seeking a great, a surpassing, a crowning spiritual blessing! The Lord’s own Word is, “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse and prove Me now, herewith, if I will not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing, that you shall not have room enough to receive it.” You have fulfilled the precept, now enquire for the promise!

The Lord has guaranteed heavenly blessing, a Divine blessing, an overwhelming blessing—do not be content without it, or it will look as if you despised the promise of the Lord. We stand on vantage ground, now. Let us plead with double importunity, saying, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.” Then will the windows open and the Divine hand pour out the benediction of His Spirit—and salvation shall come to multitudes through Christ Jesus our Lord. My love be with you all. Yours for Jesus’ sake, *C. H. SPURGEON*

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÷2Ti 2.15

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH  
NO. 1217

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1875, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Rightly dividing the word of truth.”***2Ti 2:15***.**

TIMOTHY was to divide rightly the Word of God. Every Christian minister must do this if he would make full proof of his ministry and if he would be clear of the blood of his hearers at the Last Great Day. Of the whole 20 years of my printed sermons, I can honestly say that this has been my aim—rightly to divide the Word of Truth. Wherein I have succeeded, I magnify the name of the Lord. In which I have failed I lament my faultiness. And now once more we will try, again, and may God the Holy Spirit, without whose power nothing can be done aright, help us rightly to divide the Word of Truth.

The expression is a very remarkable one because it bears so many phases of meaning. I do not think that any one of the figures by which I shall illustrate it will be at all strained, for they have been drawn from the text by most eminent expositors, and may be fairly taken as honest comments, even when they might be challenged as correct interpretations of the text. “Rightly dividing the word of truth” is our authorized version, but we leave it for a little to consider other renderings. Timothy was neither to mutilate, nor twist, nor torture, nor break in pieces the Word of God, nor keep on the outside of it, as those do who never touch the soul of a text, but rightly to divide it, as one taught of God to teach others.

I. The Vulgate version translates it—and with a considerable degree of accuracy—“Rightly HANDLING the word of truth.” What is the right way, then, to handle the Word of Truth? It is like a sword and it was not meant to be played with. That is not rightly to handle the Gospel. It must be used in earnest and pushed home. Are you converted, my Friends? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Are you saved, or not? Swords are meant to cut and hack, wound and kill—and the Word of God is for pricking men in the heart and killing their sins. The Word of God is not committed to God’s ministers to amuse men with its glitter, nor to charm them with the jewels in its hilt, but to conquer their souls for Jesus!

Remember, dear Hearers, if the preacher does not push you to this— that you shall be converted, or he will know the reason why. If he does not drive you to this—that you shall either willfully reject, or cheerfully accept Christ—he has not yet known how rightly to handle the great “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” Now, then, where are you personally at this moment? Are you unbelievers, upon whom the wrath of God abides, or are you Believers who may lay claim to that gracious Word, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life”?

Oh that the Lord would make His all-discerning Word go round this place and strike at every conscience and lay bare every heart with its mighty power!

He that rightly handles the Word of God will never use it to defend men in their sins, but to slay their sins! If there is a professing Christian here who is living in known sin, shame upon him! And if there is a nonChristian man who is living in sin, let his conscience upbraid him! What will he do in that day when Christ comes to judge the hearts of men? Remember, the books shall be opened and every thought shall be read out before an assembled universe! I desire to handle the Word of God so that no man may ever find an excuse in my ministry for his living without Christ and living in sin, but may know clearly that sin is a deadly evil and unbelief the sure destroyer of the soul! He has, indeed, been made to handle the word aright who plunges it like a two-edged sword into the very heart of sin!

The Gospel ought never to be used for frightening sinners from Christ. I believe it is so handled sometimes. Sublime doctrines are rolled like rocks in the sinner’s way and dark experiences set up as a standard of horror which must be reached before a man may believe in Jesus—but to rightly handle the Word of Life is to frighten men to Christ rather than from Him—yes, to woo them to Him by the sweet assurance that He will cast out none that come! That He asks no preparations of them, but if they come at once, as they are, He will assuredly receive them. Have I not handled the Word of Truth in this way hundreds of times in this house? Has it not been a great magnet attracting sinners? As a magnet has two poles, and with one pole it repels, so, no doubt, the Truth of God repels the prejudiced, rebellious heart—and thus it is a savor of death unto death. But our object is so to handle it that the attractive pole may come into operation through the power of the Spirit of God—and men may be drawn to Christ.

Moreover, if we rightly handle the Word of God we shall not preach it so as to send Christians into a sleepy state. That is easily done. We may preach the consolations of the Gospel till each professor feels “I am safe enough. There is no need to watch, no need to fight, no need for any exertion whatever! My battle is fought, my victory is won. I have only to fold my arms and go to sleep.” No, no! This is not how we handle the Word of God, but our cry is, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Reckon not yourselves to have attained unto perfection, but forget the things that are behind, and reach forward to that which is before, looking unto Jesus.”

This is rightly to handle the Word of God. And, oh, Beloved, there is one thing that I dread above all others—that I should ever handle the Word of God so as to persuade some of you that you are saved when you are not. To collect a large number of professors together is one thing. But to have a large number of true saints built together in Christ is quite another. To get up a whirl of excitement and to have people influenced by that exment so that they think, full surely, that they are converted, has been done a great many times. But the bubble, has, by-and-by, vanished. The balloon has been filled until it has burst. God save us from that! We want sure work—lasting work—a work of Divine Grace in the heart.

If you are not converted, do not pretend that you are. If you have not known what it is to be brought down to see your own nothingness and then to be built up by the power of the Spirit upon Christ as the only foundation, O, remember that whatever is built upon the quicksand will fall with a crash in the hour of trial! Do not be satisfied with anything short of a deep foundation, cut in the solid rock of the work of Jesus Christ. Ask for real vital godliness, for nothing else will serve your turn at the Last Great Day. Now, this is rightly to handle the Word of God—to use it to push the Truth of God home upon men for their present conversion, to use it for the striking down of their sins—to use it to draw men to Christ, to use it to arouse sinners and to use it to produce, not mere profession, but a real work of Grace in the hearts of men

May the Holy Spirit teach all the ministers of Christ after this fashion to handle the two-edged sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.  
II. But now, secondly, my text has another meaning. It has an idea in it which I can only express by a figure. “Rightly dividing, or STRAIGHT CUTTING. A plowman stands here with his plow and he plows right along from this end of the field to the other, making a straight furrow. And so Paul would have Timothy make a straight furrow right through the Word of Truth. I believe there is no preaching that God will ever accept but that which goes decidedly through the whole line of Truth from end to end, is always thorough, honest and downright. As the Truth of God is a straight line, so must our handling of the Truth be straightforward and honest, without shifts or tricks.  
There are two or three furrows which I have labored hard to plow. One is the furrow of free Grace. “Salvation is of the Lord”—He begins it, He carries it on, He completes it. Salvation is not of man, neither by man, but of Grace alone. Grace in election, Grace in redemption, Grace in effectual calling, Grace in final perseverance, Grace in conferring the perfection of Glory—it is all Grace from beginning to end! If we say, at any time, anything which is really contrary to this distinct testimony that salvation is of Grace, do not believe us! This furrow must be plowed fairly, plainly and beyond all mistake.  
Sinner, you cannot be saved by any merit, penance, preparation, or feeling of your own! The Lord, alone, must save you as a work of gratis mercy, not because you deserve it, but because He wills to do it to magnify His abundant love. That is the straight furrow of the Word. We endeavor always to make a straight furrow upon the matter of human depravity—to preach that man is fallen, that every part and passion of his nature is perverted, that he has gone astray altogether, is sick from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet—yes, is dead in trespasses and sins, and corrupt before God. “There is none that does good, no, not one.”  
I have noticed some preachers plowing this furrow very crookedly, for they say, “There are still some very fine points about man and many good things in him which only need developing and educating.” You may have read, in the history of Mr. Whitfield’s time, what a howl was made at him because he once said that man was half beast and half devil. I do not think he ever got nearer the truth than when he said that—only I would beg the beast’s pardon—for a beast would scarcely become so evil and vile as human nature becomes when it is left alone to fully develop itself! O pride of human nature, we plow right over you!  
The hemlock stands in your field and must be cut up by the roots. Your weeds smile like fair flowers, but the plow must go right through them till all human beauty is shown to be a painted Jezebel, and all human glorying a bursting bubble. God is everything, man is nothing! God in His Grace saves man, but man by his sin utterly ruins himself until God’s Grace interposes. I like to plow a straight furrow here. Another straight furrow is that of faith. We are sent to tell men that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and our duty is to put it so. “Salvation is not of works”—works is not the furrow. Not of prayers—that is not the furrow. Not of feelings—that is not the Gospel Arrow. Not of preparations and amendments and reforms—but by faith in Jesus Christ. He that believes on Him is not condemned.  
As we begin the new life by faith, we must abide in it by faith. We are not to be saved by faith up to a certain point and then to rely upon ourselves. Having begun in the Gospel we are not to be perfected by the Law. “The just shall live by faith.” We live by faith at the wicket gate and we live by faith until we enter into our eternal rest. Believe!—that is the grand Gospel precept and we trust we have never gone out of this furrow, but have tried to plow right across the Gospel field from end to end, crying, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth, for Jehovah is God, and beside Him there is none else.”  
Another furrow which some do not much like to plow, but which must be distinctly marked if a man is an honest plowman for God, is that of repentance. Sinner, you and your sins must part! You have been married long and you have had a merry time of it, perhaps, but you must part. You and your sins must separate, or you and your God will never come together! You may not keep one sin. They must all be given up! They must be brought out like the Canaanite kings from the cave and hanged up before the sun. Not one darling must be spared. You must forsake them, loathe them, abhor them and ask the Lord to overcome them. Do you not know that the furrow of repentance runs right through the Christian’s life? He sins, and as long as he sins he repents of his sin. The child of God cannot love sin—he must loathe it as long as he sees any of it in existence!  
There is the furrow of holiness, that is the next turn the plowman takes. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” We have preached salvation by Grace, but we do not preach salvation to those who still continue in sin. The children of God are a holy people—washed, purged, sanctified and made zealous for good works. He who talks about faith, and has no works to prove that his faith is a living faith, lies to himself and lies before God. It is faith that saves us, not works—but the faith that saves us always produces works. It renews the heart, changes the character, influences the motives and is the means in the hand of God of making the man a new creature in Christ Jesus. No nonsense about it, Sirs—you may be baptized and re-baptized, you may attend to sacraments, or you may believe in an orthodox creed—but you will be damned if you live in sin.  
You may become a deacon, or an elder, or a minister, if you dare, but there is no salvation for any man who still harbors his sins. “The wages of sin is death”—death to professors as well as to non-professors. If they hug their sins in secret, God will reveal those sins in public and condemn them according to the strict justice of His Law. These are the furrows we have tried to plow—deep, sharp cut and straight. O, that God might plow them, Himself, in all your hearts, that you may know, experimentally, how the Truth of God is rightly divided!  
III. There is a third meaning to the text. “Rightly dividing the word of truth” is, as some think, an expression taken from the priests dividing the sacrifices. When they had a lamb or a sheep, a ram or a bullock to offer, after they had killed it, it was cut in pieces, carefully and properly. And it requires no little skill to find out where the joints are, so as to cut up an animal discreetly. Now, the Word of Truth has to be taken to pieces wisely—it is not to be hacked or torn as by a wild beast—but rightly divided.  
There has to be DISCRIMINATION AND DISSECTION. It is a great part of a minister’s duty to be able to dissect the Gospel—to lay one piece there, and another there, and preach with clearness, distinction and discrimination. Every Gospel minister must divide between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. It is a very nice point, that, and many fail to discern it well, but it must always be kept clear, or great mischief will be done. Confusion worse confounded follows upon confusing Grace and Law. There is the Covenant of Works—“This do, and you shall live,” but its voice is not that of the Covenant of Grace which says, “Hear and your soul shall live.” “You shall, for I will”—that is the Covenant of Grace.  
It is a covenant of pure promise unalloyed by terms and conditions. I have heard people put it thus—“Believers will be saved if, from this time forth, they are faithful to Grace given.” That smells of the Covenant of Works! “God will love you”—says another—“if you—.” Ah, the moment you get an “if” in it, it is the Covenant of Works and the Gospel has evaporated! Oil and water will sooner mix than merit and Grace! When you find the Covenant of Works anywhere, what are you to do with it? Why, do what Abraham did and what Sarah demanded, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”  
If you are a child of the Free-Grace promise, do not suffer the Hagar and Ishmael of legal bondage and carnal hope to live in your house. Out with them! You should have nothing to do with them. Let Law and Gospel keep their proper places. The Law is master to bring us to Christ, but when we have come to Christ we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Let the Law principle go its way to work conviction in sinners and destroy their ill-grounded hopes, but you abide in Christ Jesus even as you have received Him. If you are to be saved by works then it is not of Grace, otherwise work is no more work. And if saved by Grace, then it is not of human merit, otherwise Grace is no more Grace. To be absolutely clear, here, is of the first importance, for on the rocks of legality many a soul has been cast away.  
We need, also, to keep up a clear distinction between the efforts of nature and the work of Grace. It is commendable for men to do all they can to improve themselves, and everything by which people are made more sober, more honest, more frugal, better citizens, better husbands, better wives is a good thing. But that is nature and not Grace. Reformation is not regeneration. “You must be born again,” still stands for the good as well as for the bad. To be made a new creature in Christ Jesus is as necessary for the moral as for the debauched, for when flesh has done its best, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”—and men must be born of the Spirit or they cannot understand spiritual things, or enter into Heaven.  
I have always tried to keep up this distinction and I trust none of you will ever mistake the efforts of nature for the works of Divine Grace. Do what you can for human reformation, for whatever things are honest and of good repute you are to foster, but, still, never put the most philanthropic plan, or the most elevating system in the place of the work of Sovereign Grace, for, if you do, you will do 10 times as much mischief as you can possibly do good. We must rightly divide the Word of Truth.  
It is always well, too, for Christian men to be able to distinguish one Truth of God from another. Let the knife penetrate between the joints of the work of Christ for us and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Justification, by which the Righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, is one blessing. Sanctification, by which we, ourselves, are made personally righteous, is another blessing. I have known some describe Sanctification as a sort of foundation, or at least a buttress for the work of Justification. Now, no man is justified because he is sanctified—he is justified because he believes in Him that justifies the ungodly. Sanctification follows Justification. It is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul of a Believer, who, first of all, was justified by believing in Jesus while as yet he was unsanctified. Give Jesus Christ all the glory for His great and perfect work and remember that you are perfect in Christ Jesus and accepted in the Beloved. But, at the same time, give glory to the Holy Spirit and remember that you are not yet perfect in holiness, but that the Spirit’s work is to be carried on and will be carried on all the days of your life.  
One other point of rightly dividing should never be forgotten—we must always distinguish between the root and the fruit. He is a very poor botanist who does not know a bulb from a bud—but I believe that there are some Londoners who do not know which are roots and which are fruits, so little have they seen of anything growing! And I am sure there are some theologians who hardly know which is the cause and which is the effect in spiritual things. Putting the cart before the horse is a very absurd thing, but many do it. Hear how people will say—“If I could feel joy in the Lord I would believe.” Yes, that is the cart before the horse, for joy is the result of faith, not the reason for it! “But I want to feel a great change of heart, and then I will believe.” Just so—you wish to make the fruit the root. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” that is the root of the matter! Change of life and joy in the Lord will spring up as gracious fruits of faith and not otherwise. When will you discriminate?  
Thus I have given you three versions of my text—rightly handling, straightly furrowing, and wisely discriminating.  
IV. The next interpretation of the Apostle’s expression is practically CUTTING OUT the Word for holy uses. This is the sense given by Chrysostom. I will show you what I mean here. Suppose I have a skin of leather before me and I want to make a saddle. I take a knife and I begin cutting out the shape. I do not want those parts which are dropping off on the right and round this corner—they are very good leather—but I cannot, just now, make use of them. I have to cut out my saddle and I make that my one concern.  
Or, suppose I have to make a pair of reins out of the leather. I must take my knife round and work away with one object, keeping clearly before me what I am aiming at. The preacher, to be successful, must also have his wits about him. And when he has the Bible before him he must use those portions which will have a bearing upon his grand aim. He must make use of the material laid ready to his hand in the Bible. Every portion of the Word of God is very blessed and exceedingly profitable, but it may not happen to be connected with the preacher’s immediate subject and, therefore, he leaves it to be considered another time. And, though some will upbraid him for it, he is much too sensible to feel bound to preach all the doctrines of the Bible in each sermon!  
He wants to have souls saved and Christians quickened and, therefore, he does not forever pour out the vials and blow the trumpets of prophecy. Some hearers are crazy after the mysteries of the future. Well, there are two or three Brothers in London who are always trumpeting and vialing. Go and hear them if you want to! I have something else to do. I confess I am not sent to decipher the Apocalyptic symbols—my errand is humbler but equally as useful—I am sent to bring souls to Jesus Christ!  
There are preachers who are always dealing with the deep things, the very deep things. For them the coral caves of mystery and the far descending shafts of metaphysics have a mighty charm. I have no quarrel with their tastes, but I do not think the Word of God was given us to be a riddle book. To me the plain Gospel is the part which I cut out and rightly cut out of the Word of God. There is a soul that needs to know how to find peace with God. Some other Brother can tell him where predestination falls in with free agency, I do not pretend to know. But I do know that faith in Jesus brings peace to the heart. My business is to bring forth

that which will save souls, build up saints and set Christians to work for Christ. I leave the mysteries, not because I despise them, but because the times demand that we, first, and above all other things, seek the souls of men!  
Some Truths of God press to be heard. They must be heard now, or men will be lost. The other Truths they can hear tomorrow, or by-and-by, but now escape from Hell and fitness for Heaven are their immediate business! Fancy the angels sitting down with Lot and his daughters, inside Sodom, and discussing predestination with them, or explaining the limits of free agency! No, no! They cry, “Come along,” and they take them by the arm and lead them out, saying, “Flee, flee, flee, for fire is coming down from Heaven and this city is to be destroyed!”  
This is what the preacher has to do—leaving certain parts of the Truth of God for other times, he is now rightly dividing the Word of Truth when he brings out that which is of pressing importance. In the Bible there are some things that are essential, without which a man cannot be saved at all. There are other things which are important, but still, men are saved, notwithstanding their ignorance of those things. Is it not clear that the essentials must have prominence? Every Truth ought to be preached in its turn and place, but we must never give the first place to a second Truth, or push that to the front which was meant to be in the background of the picture.  
“We preach Christ,” said the Apostle, “Christ and Him crucified.” And I believe that if the preacher is rightly to divide the Word, he will say to the sinner, “Sinner, Christ died, Christ rose again, Christ intercedes. Look to Him. As for the difficult questions and nice points, leave them for awhile. You shall discuss them by-and-by, so far as they are profitable to you, but just now, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is the main matter.” The preacher must, thus, separate the vital from the secondary, the practical from the speculative and the pressing and immediate from that which may be lawfully delayed. And in that sense he will rightly divide the Word of Truth.  
V. I have given you four meanings. Now I will give you another, leaving out some I might have mentioned. One thing the preacher has to do is to ALLOT TO EACH ONE HIS PORTION. And here the figure changes. According to Calvin, the intention of the Spirit, here, is to represent one who is the steward of the house and has to apportion food to the different members of the family. He has rightly to divide the loaves so as not to give the little children and the babes all the crust. He has to rightly supply each one’s necessities, not giving the strong men milk, nor the babes hard diet—not casting the children’s bread to the dogs, nor giving the swine’s husks to the children—but placing before each his own portion.  
Let me try and do it. Child of God, your portion is the whole Word of God. Every promise in it is yours! Take it. Feed on it. Christ is yours. God is yours. The Holy Spirit is yours. This world is yours and worlds to come. Time is yours. Eternity is yours. Life is yours. Death is yours. Everlasting Glory is yours! There is your portion! It is very sweet to give you your royal meat. The Lord gives you a good appetite. Feed on it! Feed on it! Sinner, you who believe not in Jesus, none of this is yours! While you remain as you are, only the threats are yours. If you refuse to believe in Jesus, neither this life nor the next is yours, nor time, nor eternity. You have nothing good.  
O, how dreadful is your portion now, for the wrath of God abides on you! O, that you were wise, that your character might be changed, for until it is, we dare not flatter you. There is not a promise for you, nor a single approving sentence! You get your food to eat and your raiment to put on, but even that is given to you by the abounding long-suffering of God and it may become a curse to you unless you repent. I am sorry to bring you such a portion but I must be honest with you. That is all that I can give you. God has said it—it is an awful sentence—“I will curse their blessings.” O, Sinner, the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked!  
We have also to divide a portion to the mourners, and O, how sweet a task that is, to say to those that mourn in Zion that the Lord will give them beauty for ashes. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The Lord will restore peace unto His mourners! Fear not, neither be dismayed, for the Lord will help you! But when we have given the mourners their sweet meats we have to turn round upon the hypocrites and say to them, “You may hang your heads like bulrushes. You may rend your garments and pretend to fast, but the Lord, who knows your heart, will suddenly come and unmask you! And if you are not sincere before Him—if you are weighed in the balances and found wanting—He will deal out the gall of bitterness to you forever! For his mourners there is mercy, but for the deceiver and the hypocrite there is judgment without mercy.”  
It is a very pleasant thing, moreover, to deal out a portion to the seeker—when we say, “He that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden,” says Christ, “for I will give you rest.” Take your portion and be glad! We have to turn round and say to others who think they are seekers, but who are delaying, “How long will you wait between two opinions?” How is it that you continually hesitate and refuse to believe in Jesus, and stay in the condition of unbelief, when the Gospel mandate is, “Believe—believe now and live”? So we have to give to one comfort, to another counsel—to one reproof, to another encouragement. We have to give to one the invitation—to another the warning. This is to rightly divide the Word of Truth.  
Yes, and sometimes God enables His servants to give the Word very remarkably to some men. I believe that if I were to tell a few of the things which have happened to me during the last 21 years they would not be believed. Or if I were to tell you of passages of history which are known to me that have occurred in this Tabernacle to people who have come here and to whom I have spoken the exact Word, not knowing them for a moment, the facts would sound like fictions. I will give you one instance. Some of you may remember my preaching from the text, “What if your father answers you roughly?” There came into the vestry, after that sermon, a venerable Christian gentleman, bringing with him a young foreigner whom he was anxious to satisfy upon one point.  
He said, “Sir, I want you kindly to answer this question—have you seen me, concerning this young gentlemen?” “No, Sir, certainly not,” I said. And assuredly, though I knew the gentleman who addressed me, he had never spoken to me about the foreign stranger whose very existence was, up to that moment, unknown to me. Said he, “This young gentleman is almost persuaded to be a Christian. His father is of quite another faith and worships other gods. And our young friend knows that if he becomes a Christian he will lose his father’s love. I said to him, when he conversed with me, come down and hear Mr. Spurgeon this morning. “Here he came, and your text was, ‘What if your father answers you roughly?’ Now, have you ever heard a word from me about this young gentleman?” “No, never,” I said. “Well,” said the young man, “it is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard in my life.” I could only say, “I trust it is the voice of God to your soul. God knows how to guide His servants to utter the Word most fitted to bless men.”  
Some time ago a town missionary had, in his district, a man who never would suffer any Christian person to come into his house. The missionary was warned by many that he would get a broken head if he ventured on a visit. He therefore kept from the house though it troubled his conscience to pass it by. He made a matter of prayer of it, and one morning he boldly ventured into the lion’s den and the man said, “What have you come here for?” “Well, Sir,” he said, “I have been conversing with people in all the houses along here, but I have passed you by because I heard you objected to it. But somehow I thought it looked cowardly to avoid you and therefore I have called.”  
“Come in,” the man said. “Sit down, sit down. Now, you are going to talk to me about the Bible. Perhaps you do not know much about it yourself. I am going to ask you a question and if you can answer me you shall come again. If you do not answer it, I will bundle you downstairs. Now,” he said, “do you understand me?” “Yes,” said the other, “I do understand you.” “Well, then,” he said, “this is the question—where do you find the word, ‘girl,’ in the Bible, and how many times do you find it?” The city missionary said, “The word, ‘girl,’ occurs only once in the Bible, and that is in the Book of Joel, the third chapter and the third verse. ‘They sold a girl for wine.’”  
“You are right,” he said, “but I would not have believed you knew it, or else I would have asked you some other question. You may come again.” “But,” said the missionary, “I should like you to know how I came to know it. This very morning I was praying for direction from God and when I was reading my morning chapter I came upon this passage, ‘And they sold a girl for wine,’ and I took down my Concordance to see whether the word, ‘girl,’ was to be found anywhere else. I found that the word, ‘girls,’ occurs in the passage, ‘There shall be girls and boys playing in the streets of Jerusalem,’ but the word did not occur as, ‘girl,’ anywhere but in Joel.”  
The result, however, of that story, however odd it seems, was that the missionary was permitted to call and the man took an interest in his visits. And the whole family were the better—the man and his wife, and one of his children becoming members of a Christian Church some time afterwards. What an extraordinary thing it seems, yet, I can assure you that such extraordinary things are as commonplaces in my experience. God does help His servants rightly to divide the Word, that is to say, to allot a special portion to each special case, so that it comes upon the man as if everything about him was known.  
Before I came to London, a man met me one Sunday, in a dreadful state of rage. He vowed he would horsewhip me for bullying him from the pulpit. What had I said, I asked. “What have you said? You looked me in the face and said, ‘What more can God do for you? Shall He give you a good wife? You have had one—you have killed her by bad treatment! You have just got another and you are likely to do the same by her.’” “Well,” I said, “did you kill your first wife by your bad treatment?” “They say so, but I was married on Saturday,” said he. “Did you not know it?” “No, I did not, I assure you,” I replied. “I have no knowledge whatever of your family matters, and I am sure I wish you joy with your new wife.” He cooled down a great deal but I believe that I had struck the nail on the head that time—that he had killed his wife with his unkindness and he scarcely liked to bring his new wife to the place of worship to be told of it.  
The cap fit him. And if any cap fits you, I pray you wear it, for so far from shrinking from being personal, I do assure you I try to be as personal as I can, for I long to see the Word go home to every man’s conscience, and convict him and make him tremble before God and confess his sin and forsake it!  
VI. You must give me a few more minutes while I take the last point, which is this. Rightly to divide the Word of Truth means to TELL EACH MAN WHAT HIS LOT AND HERITAGE WILL BE IN ETERNITY. Just as when Canaan was conquered, it was divided by lot among the tribes, so the preacher has to tell of Canaan, that happy land, but he has to also tell of the land of darkness and of death-shade, and to let each man know where his last abode will be. You know it. You who come here know it.  
Need I repeat a story that we have gone over and over a thousand times? As many as believe in Jesus and are renewed in heart, and are kept by the Grace of God through faith unto salvation, shall inherit eternal life. But as for those who believe not on God, who reject His Son, who abide in their sins—there remains nothing for them but “a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation.” “The wicked shall be turned into Hell with all the nations that forget God.” “These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” “Beware,” says God—“Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.” O, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!  
Believer, there is your portion—in the blessed land! Sinner, unless you repent, there is your portion—in the land of darkness and of weeping—of wailing and of gnashing of teeth! I take a religious newspaper from America and the last copy I had of it bore on it these words at the end, in good large type, printed in a practical, business-like, American way—“If you do not want to have this paper, discontinue it NOW. If you wish to have it for the year 1876, send your subscription NOW. If you have any complaint against it, send your complaint NOW. If you have removed, send a notice of your change of residence NOW.”  
There was a big “NOW” at the end of every sentence! As I read it, I thought, well, that is right. That is common sense. And it struck me that I would say to you on this last Sunday night of the year, if you wish to forsake your sins, forsake them NOW. If you would have mercy from God through Jesus Christ, believe on Him NOW. What fitter time than before the dying year is gone—NOW, NOW, NOW? In that very paper I read a story concerning Messrs. Moody and Sankey on the same point.  
The story is that while they were preaching in Edinburgh, there was a man sitting opposite to them who was very deeply interested, and was drinking it all in. There was a pause in the service and the man went out with his friend, but when he reached the door he stopped and his friend said, “Come away, Jamie.” “No,” he said, “I will go back. I came here to get good to my soul and I have not taken it all in yet, I must go back again.” He went back, and sat in his old place and listened again. The Lord blessed him. He found Christ and so found salvation. Being a miner, he went down the pit the next day, to his work, and a mass of rock fell on him. He was taken out, but he could not recover. He said to the man who was helping him out, “O, Andrew, I am so glad it was all settled last night. Oh, Mon,” said he, “it was all settled last night.”  
Now, I hope those people who were killed in the railway accident on Christmas Eve could say—“It was all settled the night before.” What a blessed thing it will be for you, if you should meet with an accident tomorrow, to say, “Blessed be God, it was all settled last night. I gave any heart to Jesus, I yielded myself to His Divine Love and Mercy, and I am saved.” O Holy Spirit, grant it may be so, and You shall have the praise. Amen and amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Timothy 2.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—1,041, 960. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1854 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷2Ti 2.19

THE FOUNDATION AND ITS SEAL— A SERMON FOR THE TIMES

NO. 1854

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 9, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows them that are His,’ and,  
‘Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’”** *2Ti 2:19***.**

PAUL had met with many difficulties in his earnest career, but his most painful trials came from false brethren. It is battle, enough, for the Church to contend with the world, but what is she to do when she has to contend with herself? To go forth weeping, bearing precious seed and, in due time, to reap it in the heat of the sun is toil enough for the farmer— but what is he to do when the tares are sown among the wheat and they spring up and well-near choke the growing grain? He is distressed and knows not what to do! At first he is eager to root up the tares; then he fears that he might root up the wheat with them and so, at his Master’s command, he lets both grow together until the harvest. This he does with tears in his eyes, for he foresees that those growing tares must do fearful mischief to the good seed and, in the end, where he looked for much, he will gather little.

A compact army of brave spirits, every man in health and every man a hero, can march across a continent and strike at the foe, time after time— and every stroke shall fall as from the hammer of Thor. But if you have the leadership of a great and motley host—and there are many sick folk to be carried in the ambulances, while others are faint-hearted, cowardly and cold in the cause and, yet another company are half suspected of a design to go over to the adversary—then the captain’s hair may well turn gray in a night at the thought of what may be the result of a battle! Paul was full of somewhat similar anxieties when about to leave the field of conduct to receive his crown. He was handing over his commission of Watchman of the Churches to Timothy and, as he did so, it was with a trembling hand, as he thought of the evil influences which were at work within the Church, itself. Outside persecution seemed light enough to him, but internal dissension, heresy and ungodliness weighed upon his spirit.

When I read this Second Epistle to Timothy, it reminds me, somewhat—only it is a great improvement upon it—of David’s addressing Solomon and reminding him of those who had given him trouble in his lifetime. He exhorted him how to deal wisely with them lest his kingdom should be disturbed by them. You notice that throughout the Epistle, the Apostle makes more mention of troublesome individuals than in any other letter. In the first chapter there is Phygellus and Hermogenes. And now we come upon Hymenaeus and Philetus. These dogs generally hunt in couples. A little further on you get Demas and Alexander, the coppersmith, who had done much evil to the Apostle. The departing saint, harboring no resentment, yet has great anxiety of spirit as to what these mischiefmakers might do with a young man like Timothy, since they had been such thorns in his own side.

It is a cheering thing to note that while Paul mentions these things with a gracious anxiety, they do not disturb the serenity of his faith, nor make him question, for a moment, the success of the cause, nor doubt the success of the work which the Lord had worked by his own hands. These are his words—“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: therefore there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them, also, that love His appearing.” Courage, then, servant of God! Whatever may be your trials because of an apostatizing church, your faith will give you victory! Be faithful to the Word of the Holy Testimony and the Truth of God shall yet prevail. Live much in communion with your Master, for by His name shall you triumph!

Project yourself into the eternal future. Feel the crown already upon your head when it is aching under many sorrows! Hear the Master’s word, “Well done,” when you are weary with the noise of them that oppose the Cross. Stand fast! Having done all, still stand! The campaign is not lost. Despite all that has happened, or ever shall happen, not one jot the less does, “the foundation of God stands sure.” The work of God goes on and the reward which God gives to the workers is not diminished, nor even placed in danger. Therefore, in patience, possess your soul.

This morning, with deep solemnity of soul, I approach this text and pray that the Spirit of God may bless it to us all. I see in it, three things. The first, perhaps, is rather in the context, it is the lamentable overthrow of which the Apostle has been speaking. He says that these two men, Hymenaeus and Philetus, overthrew the faith of some. Secondly, we shall survey the abiding foundation—“the foundation of God stands sure.” And then, thirdly, the instructive inscription upon the foundation stone, “The Lord knows them that are His.” And, “Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

I. First, let us think, for a little, of THE LAMENTABLE OVERTHROW which the Apostle so much deplored.  
The Apostle observed with sorrow a general coldness. It was, in some respects, coldness towards himself, but in reality it was a turning away from the simplicity of the Doctrine of Salvation by Grace through faith. He says in the 15th verse of the previous chapter, “This you know, that all they which are in Asia are turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes,” two men, I suppose, of whom he had hoped better things—perhaps persons who had professed a warm attachment to him. Their departure was the unkindest cut of all.  
A great lack of spiritual life and zeal for the Truth of God is our trial, today. Laodicea is not the only Church that is neither cold nor hot. I am, at this moment, unwillingly compelled to believe that a very serious blight is upon many of our Churches. From a wide correspondence, I gather that a wintry chill is just now upon the Church—possibly it is not to such an extent as in certain terrible periods—but still to a very saddening degree. There is not that firmness in the faith, that holiness of life and that enthusiasm for the Cross of Christ that one would wish to see. I view the immediate prospect with serious anxiety. Yet, I was reading Mr. Bunyan’s words concerning the age in which he lived and I find that he had similar apprehensions in his time. And I notice that before his day, each loyalhearted man of God was troubled with similar fears.  
Nor were those fears childish—they were not a presumptuous trembling for the Ark of the Lord, but a godly jealousy lest the enemy should get an advantage over the hosts of God. It is a mercy that there should be somebody to complain; somebody to express the longing of the Church for better things. I am sure that there is grave reason for regret at this moment. Though we look with the greatest gratitude upon all the things that are good, we still have to look with heavy hearts upon much that is grievous to the Spirit of God in the Churches of the present day.  
Furthermore, the Apostle saw with much alarm that teachers were erring. He names two especially, Hymenaeus and Philetus, and he mentions the doctrine that they taught—not needlessly explaining it, but merely giving a hint at it. They taught, among other things, that the Resurrection was already past. I suppose they had fallen into the manner of certain in our day who spiritualize or rationalize everything. They say, “This is mythical! This death of Christ is to be understood as the triumph of selfsacrifice. This Resurrection of Christ means the revival of forgotten principles.” Thus they hold an atonement which is no Atonement and a resurrection which is no Resurrection. They appear to accept the great historical fact and yet they reduce it to fiction! This is the subtlety of the old serpent! Somehow or other, these men manage to extract from the Gospel an attractive philosophy, but it is not the Gospel which God intended to be preached! They seek, rather, the wisdom of man’s thought than the Revelation of God’s thoughts. You need not that I go into particulars, for all around us men are dealing craftily with the Truth of God—adulterating it and in heart denying it. These are, by no means, persons to be trifled with—many of them are keen, acute, and thoughtful—and it is the great peril of the Church, at this moment, that she numbers such among her teachers. These can stab under the shield. We care not for the besiegers outside, but we are distressed because of the traitors within! God grant that this thing may go no further, but may His people become alarmed by the growing decline of the Church and resolve to be rid of this destructive influence which eats as does a canker.  
In Paul’s day, many professors were apostatizing from the faith because of the evil leaders. Sheep are such creatures to follow something, that, when they do not follow the shepherd, they display great readiness to follow one another. When Hymenaeus and Philetus taught a highly intellectual doctrine, many people who fancied themselves to be cultured, must necessarily be of their mind. Hymenaeus had discovered a method of being abreast of the times, so that the Christian teacher could figure in the heathen academy and be complimented for his liberal views. These “cultured” teachers looked down with contempt upon those uncouth fishermen who were so unlearned and ignorant as to believe that the teaching of Jesus meant what it said, for they, themselves, gave the Gospel a more rational meaning! They thought themselves profound and eclectic men who could see the soul of things and, therefore, they rejected the simplicity of the Cross and put in its place the theories of the philosophers. They took away the foundation facts under the pretence of building higher and thus the faith of many was overthrown.  
Take away the Resurrection and what remains of the Gospel? The Resurrection of Christ and the consequent resurrection of His people is the keystone of the arch of the Christian system! And if that is removed as a myth, the whole building falls. The Apostle saw numbers of persons led astray by this error as, alas, we see many in these times deluded with kindred falsehoods! It becomes Christian men, nowadays, to carefully discriminate as to what they hear. I read, the other day, a complaint as to small towns having many chapels where one might have sufficed. Truly, one might suffice if the Gospel were faithfully preached in it, but a score would not be enough if, in them all, there was an absence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of the life and power of the Holy Spirit! When another Gospel is introduced, those who love the Truth of God are bound to enter their earnest protest and to form another congregation. I am for unity in the life and Truth of God, and for our coming closer and closer together— spiritual men to spiritual men—but that is quite another thing from making an aggregate of this great motley mass of Christian profession and unchristian teaching, since it has so little of the true life of Christ within it! Would to God that in every place where Christ is preached professedly, He were preached truthfully! Oh that you who profess to follow Christ were really doing so! But what is the chaff to the wheat? How much of chaff is mixed with every heap that lies upon our Lord’s threshing floor!  
Paul also deplored that ungodliness increased. He says that the profane and vain babblings of his time increased unto more ungodliness. O Brothers and Sisters, it is godliness that we need—the living of the soul with God, in God and to God. We need a holy fear of God, a sacred sense of God, a true delight in God! We need less of man and more of God! Less of mere creed-repeating and more of vital faith in God. Less following of men and more following of God in Christ Jesus. More of union with God, living in God and likeness to God. Oh that He would work this in us! The world grows dark with accursed lusts and the Christian Church grows more conformed to the ungodly world. Persecutions unto death have ceased—it is easy and respectable to bear the Christian name—and, therefore, the separation from the world, which is the glory of Christians, becomes less and less apparent!  
My heart is sorely wounded with the sight of some who will come into God’s house and undertake God’s service during the Sabbath and yet, during the week they are unjust, oppressive, graceless and greedy—not servants of God, but servants of self and sin! By unholy professors, the Cross is dishonored, the Holy Spirit is grieved and Christ is put to an open shame! All this vexed the heart of the Apostle in his day and it is our cross and burden at this hour. “Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us!”  
II. Now let us turn to the subject which supplied Paul with consolation. He speaks of the ABIDING FOUNDATION—“Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure.” It is a joy to quit the ever-moving flood for the firm, substantial rock. It is bliss to feel that there is something under your feet, something substantial, abiding, sure. “Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands sure.” Though the earth is removed and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea—though the waters thereof roar and are troubled and though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof—yet will we not fear, for the Lord Jehovah changes not!  
What is this foundation which stands sure? Those who have interpreted the passage have given many meanings to it, but I believe that all those meanings are really one. For the sake of clearness, I would give three answers to the enquiry—the foundation is, secretly, the purpose of God; doctrinally, the Truth of God; effectively, the Church of God—in all, the system of God whereby He glorifies His Grace. The foundation is the Divine purpose. Though men prove fickle, false, wicked and the Church is sorely grieved, “nevertheless” God’s purpose is carried out! The Covenant of Grace is fulfilled and the Glory of God is revealed. God has a grand design from which He has never swerved, no, not by so much as a hair’s breadth! His purpose shall stand! He will do all His pleasure. It is incumbent upon us to believe in the responsibility of men and to feel the weight of that Truth, for as a Truth of God, it is of the most solemn importance. It is our duty to give ourselves up with all our might to the doing of that which is right, as if all things depended on us. Yet when we are baffled by matters which are beyond our control, it is a blessed thing to fall back upon the purpose and Providence of the Almighty—and feel that though we are defeated—He cannot be! There is a power high over all which works for righteousness. The Messiah “shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has set judgement in the earth and the isles shall wait for His Law.” The Divine design in creation shall be effected and in redemption and in Providence, it shall be the same. The Lord shall be, at the last, victor all along the line! The good shall glorify Him and even the evil shall be compelled to magnify the greatness of His majesty. “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.” God Himself, who is in very deed the Foundation of all things, stands sure!  
The Apostle also meant the Divine Truth, which is the foundation of the Gospel. He had been speaking about certain Truths of God which were spirited away by those two unworthies, Hymenaeus and Philetus, and he says, “Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure.” Interpreters have thought that Paul points at the doctrine of the Resurrection. No doubt he does, but he includes every other doctrine which is a foundational Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yonder is a man who has proved that Jesus is not truly God. Let him prove what he likes, since Jesus is God for all that! Another man has disproved the substitutionary Atonement of Christ—let him disprove it if he pleases, for it is just as true! Rhetoric and logic can do wonders in appearance, but they do nothing in reality. The orator’s thunder has not shaken the unchangeable Truth of God! He is proud of his triumphs, but as we look into the Book and look into the dear Master’s face, we feel that, “nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure.”  
No Truth of God has ever been destroyed by all the fires through which it has passed! The fire which tried the bush in the wilderness was a much more potent element than any that men can kindle, for it was God’s own Presence and He is, emphatically, “a consuming fire.” Yet the bush was not consumed by such a fire! What, then, can destroy it? Even so, since the Truth can stand the test of God, the All-Trying One, depend upon it, it can endure the test of such poor fires as man can bring to bear upon it! In a broad Scotch version I read, “The bush lowe’d and was nane the waur”— that is to say, “it was none the worse.” Brethren, the Gospel is none the worse for all the opposition which has surrounded it, though it has been as fierce as a devouring flame! Only the additions of men have been burnt out of it. Everything that can be consumed ought to be consumed and only that which cannot be burned is really God’s eternal Truth. All that has happened by all the controversy of all the ages, is that man’s fiction has been separated from God’s foundation—man’s speculation has been purged out of God’s Revelation! The foundation of God stands sure and, oh, the joy of this fact to every heart that loves the Lord!  
But, further, I think Paul meant, here, not only the purpose of God and the Truth of God, but God’s Divine work in the world in the salvation of His own. The Divine Election of God has been fulfilled so far—and those whom God has really saved—in whom there has been a real work of Grace, stand sure when all others are overthrown. You look upon the Church and lament that so many have turned aside; that so many others are very poor specimens of Christians; that so many more are sadly questionable and that a certain company are evidently false. Well, it is very sad, but there is a remnant according to the election of Grace—“the foundation of God stands sure.” Those who were really laid upon the foundation by the Spirit of God—those who are vitally united to Christ—these still stand firm in faith and character! Those who are truly born of God live unto God! The righteous hold on their way. The choice spirits endure unto the end. Does not Jesus say, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”? Does He not declare that, “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers”?  
The teachers of error would, if it were possible, have deceived the very elect, but the chosen detect the deception by the spiritual discernment which is in them and by the teaching of the Holy Spirit! They love the Truth and live the Truth—and the Truth lives in them. Thus in their persons, “the foundation of God stands sure.” Brothers and Sisters, let us take great joy in this foundation of God, this faithful Church of God which is steadfast and immovable in the day of blasphemy and rebuke. Blessed be the name of the Lord, He still has a quickened people! He still has a Church in the world—in all communities of professing Christians, there is a secret seed of faithful ones—and while the floods and the winds have driven down the stream, the many towering houses that were built upon the sand, yet the house of God still stands upon the Rock!  
It is not yet complete so as to be fully built as the great House of God is to be. At the present it wears, rather, the aspect of a foundation, or basement, than of a house—but it will rise by degrees to be a fair palace—and even now the King, Himself, deigns to dwell in it! What there is of the true Church is a sure prophecy of what there shall be before long. “The foundation of God stands sure.” Let us take courage from this and be not sorely moved nor dismayed in the day of apostasy. “They went out from us, but they were not of us.” The hireling flees because he is an hireling. Let us not dwell exclusively upon the mournful side, lest we lose that joy of the Lord which is our strength. Our Master wept over Jerusalem, once, but He also rejoiced in spirit when His mind looked another way. In His heart He always mourned over the woes of ungodly men, but still, He thought and spoke of more cheering themes—and so must we. It would not become us to let any one form of thought penetrate our hearts through and through with painful monotony. You can contemplate the sad side of things till you become so wretched as to be unable to do good! Have a brave and hopeful heart. When you see a black cloud, look for its silver lining. When you see that which looked like substantial material consumed in the fire, be thankful that if the wood and hay are gone, the gold and silver remain. God is laying a foundation for the future, a foundation so sure that it cannot be moved! And He will build upon it, course after course of jeweled stones till its walls, great and high, appear unto all men!  
Soon shall we see its windows of agate and its gates of carbuncle. Soon shall the glittering pinnacles of “the terrible crystal” shine in the eternal light and, best of all, we shall inhabit the house forever and go no more out, for the Lord God and the Lamb shall be the Glory of that House and His faithful ones shall be built into it as living stones! Pluck up courage, then, and stand in your place, O you who are trembling! Let, “Onward!,” be your watchword! Victory is not so far away as we fear. The retreat of yonder cowards is nothing—the turning back of the men of Ephraim is according to their nature. But be strong and

quit yourselves like men, for the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge!  
III. Now, we are, in the third place, as we may be helped of the Holy Spirit, to look at this foundation and observe THE INSTRUCTIVE INSCRIPTION. I think this figure best expresses the Apostle’s intent. He represents the foundation stone as bearing an inscription upon it, like the stone mentioned by the Prophet Zechariah, of which we read, “I will engrave the graving thereof, says the Lord of Hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” The custom of putting inscriptions upon foundation stones is ancient and general. In the days of the Pharaohs, the royal cartouche was impressed upon each brick that was placed in buildings raised by royal authority. The structure was thus known to have been erected by a certain Pharaoh. Here we have the royal cartouche, or seal, of the King of Kings set upon the foundation of the great palace of the Church. The House of Wisdom bears, on its forefront and foundation, the seal of the Lord. The Jews were known to write texts of Scripture upon the doorposts of their houses—in this, also, we have an illustration of our text.  
The Lord has set upon His purpose, His Gospel, His Truth, the double mark described in the text—the Divine Election and the Divine Sanctification. This seal is placed to declare that it belongs to the Lord, alone, and to set it apart for His personal habitation. Does not the Lord thus say, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it”? By His choice and by His sanctifying Grace, He has formed a people for Himself and they shall show forth His praise. The inscription, moreover, is put upon the foundation stone, that every man may take heed how he builds on it. We cannot be sure, when we build, that every stone we place upon the foundation is well and truly laid there—“The Lord knows them that are His.” But we have this mark to guide us—those who truly name the name of Christ depart from all iniquity. “By their fruits you shall know them.”  
We are to use judgement in our building and this is the rule of it—we must look for holiness in every real convert, for, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is labor in vain to build those into the visible Church who are not sanctified in the spirit of their minds. In doctrine, also, it is in vain to preach unless our doctrine is according to godliness. A holy God will not dwell with an unholy people! If the foundation is holy, so must the building be. The seal upon the foundation is the mark of the builder and the indication of the object of that which is built. It is intended to denote the character of the entire edifice, for God’s building is all of one piece and of one nature throughout. On each individual Christian, who is truly so, there is the private seal of Divine knowledge and the public seal of Divine likeness. God knows and approves each true Believer and each true Believer proves his knowledge of God and his delight in Him by departing from iniquity.  
My inmost soul vehemently desires to aid in building up a Church that shall be composed of men approved of God—God-fearing, God-loving men and women in whom God lives and who, therefore, live unto Him! What a Church this will be! Upon such a people will be seen the second mark, for they will hate all sin and flee from it. They love that which is good, true, loving and God-like. In us these two things must meet—God’s free and sovereign Grace towards us and our hearty and practical obedience to His will, or else we are not His sealed ones and are not built on His sealed foundation.  
If I might use another illustration, I can suppose that when the stones for the Temple were quarried in the mountains, each one received a special mark from Solomon’s seal, marking it as a Temple stone and, perhaps, denoting its place in the sacred edifice. This would be like the first inscription, “The Lord knows them that are His.” But the stone would not long lie in the quarry. It would be taken away from its fellows, after being marked for removal. Here is the transport mark in the second inscription—“Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The first seal marked it for the Lord, the second secured its removal from the common stones around it. First comes election and then sanctification follows. I want every professing Christian to have that double mark and so to be Christ’s man, known of all to be such by coming out from the unclean and being separated unto the Lord. Remember the words of the Prophet Isaiah—“Depart you, depart you, go you out from them, touch no unclean thing; go you out of the midst of her; be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.”  
Carefully follow me while I notice that the first mark is concerning God and us, and the second mark is concerning us and God.  
The first is concerning God and us. “The Lord knows them that are His.” He knows, that is, He foresees and predestinates, for, “whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate.” Those that are His, He always has known to be His, for they were His from before the foundation of the world! They are His known ones when He deals with them in Grace and comes into their hearts by His powerful operations. He watches over them by a special Providence, knowing the way that they take and never losing sight of them.  
The text teaches us that the Lord discriminates—“The Lord knows them that are His.” Some who bear His name are not His and He knows them not. He will say of them at the last, “I never knew you.” They are supposed to be His. They suppose themselves to be His—they are taken into His Church as His, they continue throughout a long life nominally His—but they are discovered at the last. There is another and severer test than that of ministers, elders and Church votes—the Lord knows the secret things of the heart. Be not deceived, God is not mocked! There is an eye that has no failure in its vision, but sees to the very soul of things and reads the hypocrite despite his pretended sanctity! This discernment on the part of God should make us walk very truthfully before Him. Let none of us profess to be the Lord’s unless we are such—nor ever pretend to an experience which we have not truly felt, for the Lord cannot be, in any measure, deceived—He searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.  
“The Lord knows them that are His,” signifies that He is familiar with them and communes with them. They that are really the Lord’s property are also the Lord’s company—He has conversation with them. They know Him and He knows them. He makes Himself known to them and they make themselves known to Him. O Brothers and Sisters, do you know God? Does God know you? Will He ever say, “I never knew you”? When I have been cast down, I have said unto the Lord—“Lord, You cannot say You do not know me, for I have knocked at Your door by the hour together! I have burdened You with my needs and haunted You with my groans. I have been Your daily beggar, receiving large alms at Your hands.” It is a blessed thing to be sure that we are not unknown in Heaven. At least we have the fellowship of asking and receiving, if no more.  
Further, the words imply God’s preservation of His own, for when God knows a man, He approves him and, consequently, preserves him. “The Lord knows them that are His” and He will keep such to the end. This man, Hymenaeus, and his fellow, Philetus, may deceive many, but the Lord, who is the true Pastor of the Church, will keep His own sheep according to His word—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” This is the first seal of the sure foundation. Be not afraid of it. “The Lord knows them that are His.”  
The second seal is concerning us and God—“Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Observe how the practical always goes with the doctrinal in holy Scripture. Those whom Free Grace chooses, Free Grace cleanses. We are not chosen because we are holy, but chosen to be holy and, being chosen, the purpose is no dead letter, but we are made to seek after holiness. Note that the word is universal as to Believers—“Let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” You expect ministers to be careful in their conduct and so they should be. But are not their people under the same obligation? Elders and deacons are expected to be gracious. This, indeed, is as it should be, but why not those of whom they are the servants? Let everyone that is called a Christian, or trusts Christ, or preaches Christ, or teaches Christ, flee far from the ways of unrighteousness!  
This is a sweeping precept as to the thing to be avoided—let him, “depart from iniquity”—not from this or that crime or folly, but from iniquity, itself, from everything that is evil, from everything that is unrighteous or unholy! O you Christian people, be holy, for Christ is holy! Do not pollute that holy name by which you are named. O you people of God, if you are, indeed, the Lord’s, let no sin dwell with you! Do not say, “It is a constitutional sin.” You are born again, what have you to do with the old constitution but to mortify it? Do not say, “Oh, but others do it.” What have you to do with others?—to their own master they stand or fall! Depart from iniquity on your own account, even as Israel departed out of Egypt. Let your family life, your personal life, your business life be as holy as Christ, your Lord, would have it to be.  
The text is very decisive—it does not say, “Let him put iniquity on one side,” but, “Let him depart from it.” Get away from evil. All your lives long travel further and further from it.  
Do you know where my text originally came from? I believe it was taken from the Book of Numbers. Read in the 16th chapter the story of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. In the Septuagint, almost the same words occur as those now before us. Moses and Aaron were the servants of God and they were, so to speak, the foundation of the building of the Jewish Commonwealth. Moses was faithful in all his house. Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled and sought to overthrow that foundation—and Moses replied to them, “The Lord will show who are His, and who are holy; and will cause him to come near unto Him; even him whom He has chosen will He cause to come near to Him.” So Moses bids them come and bring their censers and officiate as priests, if they dare to do so. There they stand and there stands Aaron and the Lord knows and shows who are His!  
Now, turn to the 26th verse of the same chapter and read, “Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.” Then the faithful fled away from their tents on every side and, before long, the ground split asunder that was under them and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up. What a parallel is the whole chapter with my text! And what a warning to all who teach false doctrine within the Church of God! Judgment will surely overtake them. The Lord shall “gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity and shall cast them into a furnace of fire.” The Lord Jesus is exercising discipline in His Church every day. It is no trifling matter to be a Church member and no small business to be a preacher of the Gospel. If you name the name of Christ, you will either be settled in Him or driven from Him! There is continually going on an establishment of living stones upon the foundation and a separating from it of the rubbish which gathers.  
Come to Christ, we say, and oh that you would come! But still do not come to Him pretendedly and nominally, for, “His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” To and fro goes that great winnowing fan and every breath of the wind drives away chaff that looks like wheat! Who can tell, by sight, what it is? The good grain falls to the ground, but lo, the chaff is blown away! Yonder fire that is burning outside the threshing floor destroys it. Judgment must begin at the House of God! The Lord may let the wicked remain in this world unpunished for many a day, but if you come near to Him, He will be sanctified in you, or upon you. There is discipline within my Master’s house and if you come under His roof, you must come under that discipline. For this cause in olden times many were sick in the Churches and many died prematurely—and it is still so, for within His great house a jealous God maintains a strict rule. Thus says the Lord, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” Look how He dealt with Ananias and Sapphira within the Church, while many a liar outside of it grows gray in falsehood! Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord because they offered strange fire, while many another man has lived on in the blackest iniquities. For Achan’s sin, the whole nation of Israel was sorely troubled! What a solemn thing is iniquity in the Church of God!  
Brothers and Sisters, I conclude with a brief but earnest appeal. Let us seek after the highest degree of holiness. Let us not be satisfied with being nominal Christians! Let us aim at the greatest measure of godliness. Let us plunge into the stream of Grace, immersing ourselves wholly into the life of God. How many professors appear to know nothing of the real force and energy of the Spirit of God in subduing sin and creating holiness! Theirs is a shallow life. Alas, how much they lose! They come under the obligations of the House of God, but they do not know the infinite privileges of that house. It is for the truly spiritual that God reserves the choicest of His dainties. Be half a Christian and you shall have enough religion to make you miserable—be wholly a Christian and your joy shall be full! Walk with God in the light as He is in the light and you shall have fellowship with Him, such as shall make earth akin to Heaven!  
But take a little light and a little darkness and attempt to make a mixture of them—seek to join the Church and the world—and you shall have neither the pleasures of the world nor the comforts of the Spirit. It is a pity for a man to miss joys which an angel might covet! What an injury such professors are to the Church! Each one pulls his companions up or drags them down. Every man in the Church is either a help or a hindrance. No Christian man can live to himself. He may attempt to confine himself within his own ribs, button up his coat and fancy that what he does is to himself, alone, and that his tongue and his heart are his own, but it is not so. A smell steals forth from every man’s life and it is either like the spikenard of the alabaster box, or like the reeking of a dung-hill. God help us to remember our influence upon others!  
Think, also, how much the world is injured by Christians who are not Christians! Oh Friends, we need, nowadays, a sterling Christianity! We cannot do with German silver, now! We must have the real metal. I was about to say I would sooner you had no religion and made no pretence to having any, than to have the imitation of it. Sin is real today. We have heard enough of how far sinners will go—they venture not only to the brink of Hell, but they snatch the accursed fire out of the pit, itself, and bring it into our city! Shall saints be shams, when sinners are so real? Shall Baal have worshippers that cut themselves with knives and leap upon his altar in the frenzy of their lust—and shall Jehovah have only a faithless company who, as yet, are halting between two opinions and do not know whether He is God or not? Oh for a Church of God that will shake itself loose from the world! If we had but one such Church, there would be hope for our age. God send it!  
Last of all, how is Christ shamed and dishonored when we are not holy, but worldly, covetous, proud and unloving! Oh, Sirs, it seems to me that since the foundation of God was laid in agony and bloody sweat and, since God Himself became Incarnate that He might lay the foundation of holiness in the world, we ought to take heed how and what we build thereon! We must come to it, for, “other foundation can no man lay.” And it behooves us to come very solemnly to it and to know what we mean by building thereon. True godliness is not to say, “I believe,” but to believe! Not to talk of repentance, but to repent! It is not to speak of regeneration, but to be born again! It is not to talk about consecration, but really to live to God! It is not to speak about the Holy Spirit, but to have Him dwelling in you!  
Be it ours to have the Truth of God in the inward parts and Grace in the core of the heart. Oh, may God bring us to this! We ask it for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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÷2Ti 2.20

THE GREAT HOUSE AND THE VESSELS IN IT  
NO. 1348

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

**“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but, also, of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man, therefore, purges himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”** *2Ti 2:20-21***.**

ONE of the most serious calamities which can befall a Church is to have her own ministers teaching heresy. Yet this is no new thing—it has happened from the beginning. Paul and Peter and James and John, in their Epistles, had to speak of seducers in the Churches, even in those primitive days, and ever since then there have arisen in the very midst of the House of God those who have subverted the faith of many and led them away from the fundamental Truths of God into errors of their own inventing.

The Apostle compares this to gangrene which is one of the most dangerous and deadly mischiefs which can occur to the body. It is within the body—it eats deeper and deeper into the flesh, festering and putrefying— and if it is not stopped it will continue its ravages till life is extinguished by “black mortification.” False doctrine and an unchristian spirit in the midst of the Church, itself, must be regarded as such a gangrene—a silent wolf ravenously gnawing at the heart—the vulture of Prometheus devouring the vitals. No external opposition is one-half so much to be dreaded!

Yet here is our comfort when distressed at the evils of the present age, among which this is one of the chief, that the Truth of God abides forever the same! “The foundation of God stands sure.” There is no moving that. Whether 10,000 oppose it or promulgate it, the Truth of God is still the same in every jot and tittle. Even as the sun shines evermore, as well when clouds conceal its brightness as when, from a clear sky, it pours abroad a flood of glory, the lovers of profane and vain babblings have not taken away from us, nor can they take from us, the eternal Truths of God!

The Lord lives, though they have said, “There is no God.” The precious blood of Jesus has not lost its efficacy, though divines have beclouded the Atonement. The Spirit of God is not less mighty to quicken and to console though men have denied His personality. The Resurrection is as sure as if Hymenaeus and Philetus had never said that it is passed already. And the eternal Covenant of Grace abides forever unbroken though Pharisees and Sadducees unite to revile it! The foundation of God stands sure and, moreover, the foundation of the Church remains sure, also, for, blessed be God, “the Lord knows them that are His.”

All that God has built upon the foundation which He, Himself, has laid, keeps its place—not one living stone that He ever laid upon the Foundation has been lifted from its resting place. Earthquakes of error may test the stability of the building and cause great searching of heart, but sooner shall the mountains which are round about Jerusalem start from their seats than the work or Word of the Lord be frustrated! The things which cannot be shaken remain unaltered in the very worst times. “After all,” says the Apostle, in effect, though in fewer words, “it is not such a very great wonder that there should be persons in the Church who are not of the sterling metal of sincerity, nor of the gold and silver of Truth which endures the fire. You must not look at Hymenaeus and Philetus as if they were prodigies. There have been many like they are and there will be many more. These ill weeds grow in all ages and they multiply and increase.”

Where, dear Brothers and Sisters, beneath the skies shall we find absolute purity in any community? The very first family had a Cain in it and there was a wicked Ham even in the select few within the Ark. In the household of the father of the faithful there was an Ishmael. Isaac, with all his quiet walk with God, must be troubled with an Esau. And you know how, in the house of Jacob, there were many sons that walked not as they should. When the Church of God was in the wilderness and had a barrier of desert between it and the outer world, yet you know how Korah, Dathan and Abiram were there, beside many other troublers in Israel!

Yes, even amidst the most select part of the visible Church of God, in the priesthood, there were found those that dishonored it. Nadab and Abihu were slain with fire before the Lord and Hophni and Phinehas died in battle because they had made themselves vile, though God’s anointed priests. Even when our Divine Master had formed for Himself—

*“A little garden, walled around,*

*Chosen, and made peculiar ground,”*  
in which there were but 12 choice trees, yet one of them bore evil fruit. “I have chosen you 12, and one of you is a devil.” In the great field which Christ has sown, tares will spring up among the wheat, for the enemy

takes pains to sow them. Neither is it possible for us to root them up. In the king’s garden, briars will grow—thorns, also—and thistles will the most sacred soil yield us.

Even the lilies of Christ grow among thorns. You cannot keep the best of Churches altogether pure, for though the Lord Himself has prepared a vineyard and make a winepress and built a wall about it, yet the foxes come and spoil the vines. And though our great Lord has an orchard which yields rare fruit, yet when He comes to visit it, He finds a barren fig tree, dug about and fed, it is true, but still barren! Look to Christ’s fold on earth and behold there are wolves in sheep’s clothing there! Look to the net which His servants draw to shore and there are both good and bad fish in it. Yes, lift your eyes to the skies and though there are myriads of stars, yet you shall mark wandering stars among them—and meteors which are and are not—and are quenched in the blackness of darkness forever. Until we shall come to the Heaven of the Most High we must expect to find chaff mixed with the wheat, dross with the gold, goats with the sheep and dead flies in the ointment. Only let us see to it that we are not of that ill character, but are precious in the sight of the Lord.

Coming to the text, the Apostle suggests the encouragement I have already given, under a certain metaphor. He says that in a great house there will naturally be varieties of furniture. And there will be vessels and utensils of many kinds—some of them will be of wood and of earthenware, for meaner purposes—but others of gold and silver, for state occasions— when the honor and glory of the great proprietor are to be displayed. There are vessels of precious metal in a great house and these are its honor, decking the tables on high festivals when the Master is at home. But there are others of baser stuff kept in the background, never displayed at times of rejoicing, but meant for common drudgery.

There are cups and flagons of solid silver prized as perpetual heirlooms of the family which are carefully preserved. And there are plates and pots which are soon worn out and are only of temporary use. There are many sets of them being broken up in the lifetime of a family. The same is true in the Church of God which, being in the world, has its common side and its common vessels. But being, also, a heavenly house, the Church has its nobler furniture, far more precious than gold which perishes though it is tried with fire.

For our instruction, may the Holy Spirit help us while we look, first, at the great house. Secondly, at the meaner vessels, peeping into the kitchen. Thirdly, at the nobler vessels, going into the china cabinet to look at the silver and gold. And then, fourthly, before we leave the house, let us ask for an interview with the Master, Himself.

I. First, let us consider THE GREAT HOUSE. The Apostle compares the Church to a great house. We feel sure he is not speaking of the world. It did not occur to him to speak about the world and it would have been altogether superfluous to tell us that in the world there are all sorts of people—everybody knows that! The Church is a great house belonging to a great Person, for the Church is the House of God, according to the promise— “I will dwell in them, and walk in them.”

The Church is the temple in which the Lord is worshipped, the palace in which He rules. It is His castle and place of defense for His Truth. It is the armory out of which He supplies His people with weapons. The Church is God’s mansion in which He abides—“This is My rest forever. Here will I dwell for I have desired it.” There it is that He rests in His love and, in infinite condescension, manifests Himself as He does not unto the world. King Solomon built a house for himself in the forest of Lebanon, and behold, the Lord has, of living stones, built for Himself a far more glorious house where He may abide! It is a great house because it is the house of the great God! Who can be so great as He? It is a great house because planned and designed upon a great scale.

I fear that some who live in the house have no idea how great it is. They have a very faint notion of its length and breadth. The great thoughts of God are far beyond their most elevated conception, so that He might say to them as He has said to others, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways, says the Lord.” The palace of the King of kings is “exceedingly magnificent,” and for spaciousness far excels all the abodes of earthly princes. We read of the golden palace of Nero, that it

reached from hill to hill and enclosed lakes and streams and gardens beneath its wondrous roof. But behold, the Lord has stretched the line of His electing Grace over nations and kindreds even to the ends of the earth!

His house takes in a mighty sweep of humanity. Many are the rooms in the house and there are dwellers in one room who have never yet seen any part of the great house but the little chamber in which they were born! They have never walked through the marvelous corridors, or moved in the vast halls which God has built with cedar pillars and cedar beams and carved work of heavenly workmanship. Some good men hardly care to see the long rows of polished columns, quarried by Grace from the rough mass of Nature which now shine resplendent as monuments of Divine Love and Wisdom! Colossal is the plan of the Eternal—the Church of God is worthy of the infinite mind!

Angels and principalities delight to study the stupendous plan and well they may—as the great Architect unrolls His drawings, piece by piece, to let them see the various sections of the complete design, they are struck with admiration and exclaim, “ Oh the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!” The Church is no narrow cottage wherein a few may luxuriate in bigotry, but it is a great house, worthy of the infinite heart of Jehovah, worthy of the blood of Jesus, the Incarnate God, and worthy of the power of the ever-blessed Spirit!

It is a great house because it has been erected at great cost and with great labor. Who can tell the cost of this mansion? It is a price beyond price, for God has given His only-begotten Son—He had but one, and Heaven could not match Him—that He might redeem unto Himself a people who should be His dwelling place forever. Solomon’s temple, now that they have laid bare a part of the foundations, even though it is in utter ruin, astonishes all beholders as they mark the enormous size and accurate adjustment of the stones—what must it have been in its glory? What cost was lavished on that glorious house!

But think of the labor and the skill, the Divine art and engineering with which Jehovah has hewn out of the rock of sinful nature the stones with which He builds up His spiritual house! What energy has the Holy Spirit displayed! What resurrection power! Harder than any granite we were by nature, yet has He cut us away from the rock of which we formed a part and fashioned and squared us—and made us to be built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Tell it to the praise of the glory of His Grace, that the Lord’s Omnipotent power and boundless wealth of love are revealed in His Church!

When our eyes shall see the Church of God, at last, in all her beauty descending out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of God and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like unto a jasper stone—when we shall see, I say, that the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal—when we shall see its deep foundations laid in the eternal purpose and its walls built up with lofty pinnacles of glory, high as the Divine Person of her Lord. And when we shall mark its wondrous compass, broad enough to hold the glory and honor of the nations—then shall we shout for joy as we behold the riches and the power and the splendor of the great King of kings who has built for Himself this great house!

It is a great house, again, because its household arrangements are conducted on a great scale. You know how country people, when there is some rich lord living in the village, speak always of his mansion as “the great house.” It is the great house for which those bullocks are being fattened and those sheep and lambs will be consumed at the great house, for there are many in the family and none are allowed to go hungry. Solomon kept a great house. When you read the account of the daily provision for his table, you see that it was a great house, indeed—a vast and truly royal establishment!

Yes, but neither for quality nor quantity could Solomon’s palace match the great house of God in its plenty. Speak of fine flour—behold, He has given us angels’ food! Speak of royal dainties—behold, the Lord has given us fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well-refined! What a perpetual feast does the Lord Jesus keep up for all His followers! If any of them hunger it is not because their rations are stinted. If there are any complaints, it is not because the Master’s oxen and fatlings are not freely provided! Ah, no, to every man there is a good piece of meat and a flagon of wine dealt out, even as David dealt it out in the day when he removed the Ark unto the hill of Zion.

Glory be to God! He has said, “Eat, O Friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!” In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest and He will make unto all nations a feast of fat things. Behold, His oxen and fatlings are killed, all things are ready. It is a great house, where great sinners are fed on great dainties and filled with the great goodness of the Lord! It is a great house for the number of its inhabitants. How many have lived beneath that roof tree for ages. “Lord,” they say like a great host, “You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.” God is the home of His people, and His Church is the home of God!

And what multitudes are dwelling there now! Not only the companies that we know of, with whom it is our delight to meet for solemn worship, but all over the world the Lord has a people who dwell in the midst of His Church! And, though men have disfigured their Master’s house by chalking up odd signs over some of the rooms and calling them by other names than those of the Owner, yet the Lord’s people are all one Church—and to whatever part or party they may seem to belong, if Christ is in them they belong to Him of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named— and they make up but one spiritual house. What a swarm there is of the Lord’s children and yet not one of the family remains unfed. The Church is a great house wherein thousands dwell, yes, a number that no man can number!

Once more, it is a great house because of its importance. People speak of “the great house” in our remote counties because to the whole neighborhood it bears a special relationship, being connected with some of its most vital interests—county politics and police—dignity and wealth find their center at “the great house.” The Church is a great house because it is God’s hospice where He distributes bread and wine to refresh the weary and entertains wayfarers that otherwise had been lost in the storm. It is God’s hospital into which He takes the sick and there He

nourishes them till they renew their youth like the eagle’s.

It is God’s great lighthouse with its lantern flashing forth a directing ray so that wanderers far away may be directed to the haven of peace. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.” It is the seat of God’s magistracy, for there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Behold, the Lord has set His King upon His holy hill of Zion and therefore shall the power of His scepter go forth to the ends of the earth! The great house of the Church is the university for teaching all nations! It is the library wherein the sacred oracles are preserved! It is the treasury wherein His Truth is deposited and the registry of new-born heirs of Heaven!

It is important to Heaven as well as to earth, for its topmost towers reach into Glory and there is in it a ladder, the foot of which rests on earth, but the top reaches to Heaven—up and down which the angels come and go continually. Said I not well that the Apostle had wisely chosen the figure when he called the Church a great house?

II. We will now go inside the great house and we at once observe that it is well furnished. Our text, however, invites us to note that it contains a number of MEANER VESSELS, articles of the coarser kind for ordinary and common uses. Here are plates, wooden buckets, pitchers and pots and various vessels of coarse pottery. Some have thought that this figure of vessels to dishonor relates to Christians of a lower grade, persons of small Grace and of less sanctified conversation. Now, although Believers may, from some points of view, be comparable to earthen vessels, yet I dare not look upon any child of God, however low in Grace, as a vessel to dishonor!

Moreover, the word, “these,” refers to the earthen and wooden vessels— surely they cannot represent saints—or we should never be told to purge ourselves from them! If a man is God’s child, into whatever state and condition he may fall it is our business to look after him and endeavor to restore him, remembering ourselves, also, lest we be tempted. But it cannot be right to purge ourselves from even the least of our believing Brothers and Sisters! Besides, that is not the run of the chapter at all.

The real meaning is that in the Church of God there are unworthy persons serving inferior and temporary purposes who are vessels to dishonor. They are in the Church, but they are like vessels of wood and vessels of earth—they are not the treasure of the mansion, they are not brought out on state occasions and are not set much store by—for they are not “precious in the sight of the Lord.” The Apostle does not tell us how they came there, for it was not his intent to do so and no parable or metaphor could teach everything. Neither will I stay to describe how some professors have come into the Church of God—some by distinct falsehood and by making professions which they knew were untrue—others through ignorance and others, again, by being self-deceived and carried away with excitement.

The parable does not say how they got there, but they are there—yet they are only vessels of wood and vessels of earth. It is no credit to them that they are where they are, for they are not vessels to honor, though in an honorable place. It is no honor to any man to be a member of a Christian Church if he is, in himself, intrinsically worthless though they make a minister of him, or elect him deacon! It is no honor to him to be in office if the metal he is made of does not fit him for so honorable a purpose. He is an intruder in an honorable position and it is a dishonor to him to be where he is. It is no honor to a weed to grow in the best part of the garden. It is no honor to a barren fig tree to cumber the finest ground in the vineyard.

Ah, dear Friend, if you are in the Church of God, but not truly one of the Lord’s people, it is a dishonorable thing of you to have come there! And it is equally dishonorable for you to remain there without fulfilling that great requisite which is demanded of everyone who names the name of Jesus—that he departs from all iniquity! The vessels in the great house are, however, of some use, even though they are made of wood and earth. And so there are persons in the Church of God whom the Lord Jesus will not acknowledge as His treasure, but He, nevertheless, turns them to some temporary purpose. Some are useful as the scaffold to a house, or the dogshores to a ship, or the hedges to a field. I believe that some unworthy members of the Church are useful in the way of watch dogs to keep others awake, or knives to let blood, or burdens to try strength. Some quarrelsome members of the Church help to scour the other vessels lest they should rust through being peaceful.

The Church is made up of men who are yet in the body and it has to deal with the outside world. And sometimes the worldly men who are in her serve some purpose in connection with this, her lowest need. Judas made a good treasurer, for his economy saved more than he stole. Joab was a good warrior for David, though he was by no means a saint. False professors do not make the Gospel untrue and sometimes, when they have spoken it, God has blessed it. You may see, if you go down the Kennington Park road today, a row of young trees planted by the road—how are they kept up while yet they are slender? Why, small posts of dead timber hold them up! And even so, a dead Sunday school teacher may yet be useful to a genuine Christian child—and a dead deacon may be the financial support of a living Church! Yes, and there are dead preachers, too, who, nevertheless, serve to fill up a space—but what vessels to dishonor they are!

It is a dreadful thing, however, for those who are like the posts I just mentioned, because the quicker the young tree grows, the sooner will the post be taken away, having no participant in the life which it helped to support. You see, then, that the base professors who get into the Church are turned to some good for His Church by our great Master. The servants of the great house can use the wooden ware and the earthenware, for a while, for rough everyday purposes, even as mere formalists can be employed in some scullery work or another.

There is one thing noticeable—the wooden and earthen vessels are not for the Master’s use. When He holds high festival His cups are all of precious metal! “All King Solomon’s drinking vessels were of gold.” Would you have the King of kings set an earthen pot upon His royal table? Shall the guests at His table eat from wooden bowls? False professors are only useful to the servants, not to the Master—they serve base purposes and are not to be seen on those great days when He manifests His Glory. The

Great Master overrules all things, being the Master of the servants and, as far as that which answers the purpose of His servants, is serviceable to Him. But personally, between the King at His table and the wooden vessel, there is no congruity—it would be an insult to hand Him wine in any but a sumptuous cup of precious metal, or to bring Him butter in any but a lordly dish!

How sad it is that many Christians are useful to the Church in various ways, but as for personal service rendered to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, they have no share, whatever, and never can have till Grace changes them from wood to silver, or from earth to gold. Note that in these vessels of which the Apostle speaks the substance is base. They are wood, or they are earth, nothing more. So are we all, by nature, of base material. Grace must make us into silver or into golden vessels or the Master cannot, Himself, use us, nor can our use in the Church ever be to honor. The wooden vessels in the Church are very easily hacked and carved and spoiled—if a man is inclined to mischief, he can put his knife to them and can cut great notches in them. He can ruin their character and render them worthless. Cunning teachers can soon take away from merely nominal Christians what they professed to believe, for they are very readily cut and hacked by those who play at such games.

As for the earthen vessels, how soon they are broken! Outside of any great house there are the remains of many broken pots which fell to the ground and shattered to pieces. And, I am sorry to say, we, also, can find enough of such relics to sadden us all. There were some in this house, once, who were comely to look upon. But there came a temptation and brushed them from the table—and they were shattered in a moment! Others of precious metal have endured far more shocks and tests of a severer kind. But those being only of earth were broken at once. Heaps of crockery accumulate outside every great house and certainly outside the great house of Christ. These vessels unto dishonor, though turned to some account, require a great deal of care on the part of the servants.

When our forefathers used to eat from wooden plates, the time the good wives used to spend in scalding and cleaning them to keep them at all sweet to eat upon was something terrible! And there are members of the Church who take a world of time from pastors and elders to keep them at all decent—we are continually trying to set them right, or keep them right in the common relationships of life. There are quarrels in their families which must be settled lest they become scandals—and these occupy the careful thought of their fellow Christians who have to watch for their good. Or they get lax in their doctrines, or foolish in their habits, or loose in their business transactions and we have to be scouring and cleaning them times without number!

Certain sorts of earthen vessels you have to be very particular in handling. Like egg-shell china, you may hardly look at them. Thank God I have not many in this Church—perhaps none of that sort as far as my handling is concerned—but other people’s touches, though quite as wise, are not so welcome. Certain earthen vessels get dreadfully chipped unless they have dainty handling. If a Brother does not take his hat off to them in very lowly style and behave very reverently, they are ready to take offense! They feel themselves hurt and slighted when no such thing was intended. They stand upon their dignity and expect the fullest recognition of it. These are real earthen pots, very apt to be chipped, perhaps a little cracked already and needing a great deal of care and trouble on the part of the Lord’s servants, lest they should go to pieces and spill everything that is put into them.

There are such in all great houses, and in the Master’s great house there are, I fear, not just a few. They are useful up to a certain point, but they bring no honor to the house because there are plenty as good as they in other houses—every cottage can have common earthen pitchers in it. They are vessels in which is no pleasure. They are not peculiar, or precious. Nobody ever sounds abroad the Master’s fame because He has so many thousands of wooden bowls or earthen pots. No, the king’s honor comes from the plates—the gold and silver vessels, the peculiar treasure of kings. People speak about these rich goods and say, “You should see the sideboards loaded down with the massive services of gold and silver! You should see how the tables groan beneath the splendor of the royal feast when the king brings forth his treasures.”

True Christians are the glory of Christ, but false professors bring, at their very best, only dishonor. Better the smallest silver vessel than the largest earthen one! Better the least of all the saints than the greatest of vain professors! So much upon the vessels of dishonor.

III. We are now going into the treasury, or plate room, and will think of THE NOBLER VESSELS. These are, first of all, of solid metal—vessels of silver and vessels of gold. They are not all equally valuable, but they are all precious. Here is weight for you—here is something that is worth treasuring—something which will last for ages and at any time will endure the fire. Now, in real Christians, those who really love the Lord, there is something substantial and weighty. When you get hold of them, you know the difference between them and the wooden professor. Even those who do not like them—strange taste, that which does not appreciate silver and gold—are nevertheless compelled to say, “That is a genuine article, worth a great deal, weighty and substantial.”

Now, we shall, none of us, ever be vessels of silver and gold unless the Lord makes us so by Divine Grace. Vessels of earth are things of nature— any potter can make them. Vessels of wood are common enough. Copper soon produces a pail. But a vessel of silver or of gold is a rarer thing! It costs mining and searching, furnace work and fashioning, toil and skill. On each vessel unto honor, Jesus Himself has put His hand to mold and fashion it—and to cause it to be “prepared unto glory.” Did you ever hear how vessels come to be golden? Listen to this, and you shall know. One very dear to me has put the story into rhyme—

*“ ‘Oh that I were a cup, a golden cup  
Meet for the Master’s use!  
Brimming and trembling with that draught of joy (The love of His beloved and purchased ones) Which fills His heart with gladness.’  
So spoke a poor, vile, broken, earthy thing, A worthless castaway.  
The Master heard and when He passed that way*

*He stooped and touched it with His wounded hand— When lo! Its baseness vanished, and instead There stood a golden chalice wondrous fair, And overflowing with deep love for him!  
He raised it to His gracious lips, and quaffed ‘The wine that makes glad the heart of God,’ Then took the cup to Heaven.”*

On the vessels of honor you can see the hallmark. What is the hallmark which denotes the purity of the Lord’s golden vessels? Well, He has only one stamp for everything. When He laid the foundation what was the seal He put upon it? “The Lord knows them that are His, and let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from all iniquity.” That was God’s seal! That was the impress of the great King upon the foundation stone. Do we find it here? Yes, we do. “If a man, therefore, purges himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor.” You see, then, that the man who is the golden or silver vessel, departs from all iniquity—and that is the token of his genuine character.

The man who is truly the Lord’s, seeks to be cleansed, not only from the open sin of the world, but from the common sin of professing Christians. He labors to be purged from that which the wooden vessel and the earthen vessel would delight in. He wants to be pure within and without. He desires perfection. He labors daily to conquer every sin and strives with all his might to serve his Lord. He is not content to have a fair appearance, as wood and earth may have—he wishes to be solid, substantial metal, purged and purified to the utmost possible degree and fit for the highest purposes. Now, this seeking after purity is the hallmark of the King’s vessels of gold and silver.

Notice, however, that they are purged, for the Lord will not use filthy vessels no matter what they may be. He will only use those that are clean. And He would have His true people purged, as I have said before, not only from gross sin, but from doctrinal error and from association with the perverse-minded. We are to be purged from Hymenaeus and Philetus and from the vain babblings of which the Apostle has been speaking in the previous part of the chapter. I fear that Christian men do a great deal of mischief by their complicity with those who are teaching what is downright falsehood. If we are to serve the Lord in the matter of advancing His Truth, we must be true to the Truth of God ourselves. If we join hand in hand with others and so form a confederacy when the very pillars of the temple are being pulled down by rude hands, it may be we shall be partakers of other men’s sins. We must be clean-handed in this matter!

And then notice that these gold and silver vessels are reserved as well as purged. They are made meet for the Master’s use. Nobody is to drink out of them but the King, Himself. This is the blessedness of the child of God when he comes to be what he should be, that he can sing as we did just now—  
As Joseph had a cup out of which he, alone, drank, so the Lord takes His people to be His peculiar treasure, vessels for His personal use. Brethren, I count it an honor to be useful to the meanest child of God, but I confess that the honor lies mainly in the fact that I am thereby serving the Master, Himself. Oh, to be used by God! This is to answer the end of our being. If you can feel that God has used you, then may you rejoice, indeed!

*“I am Yours and Yours, alone, This I gladly, fully own!  
And in all my works and ways, Only now would seek Your praise.”*

There are some Christians whom the Lord cannot much use, because, first of all, they are not cleansed from selfishness. They have an eye to their own honor or aggrandizement. The Lord will not be in complicity with selfish aims! Some men are self-confident—there is too much of the “I” about them—and our Master will not use them. He will have our weakness, but not our strength! And if we are great somebodies, He will pass us by and take some little nobody and make use of him. The Lord cannot use other men because they are too apt to be proud. If He were to give them a little success, it would be dangerous to their Christian existence! Their poor brains would begin to swim and they would think the Lord could hardly do without them! Indeed, when they meet with a little encouragement they swell into such wonderful people that they expect everybody to fall down and worship them!

God will not use them, neither will He set upon His table vessels which are in any way defiled. There must be purity! A man may work his heart out in the ministry or the Sunday school, but if he is practicing some secret sin he cannot prosper—it is not possible that God should honor him! There may be a measure of apparent success for a time and, in God’s Sovereignty, He may use His Truth, itself, in spite of the man, but the man himself will not be useful to the Master. Littleness of Grace and contentedness with that spiritual poverty, also puts many a man aside. We must be full if God is to pour out of us to the thirsty! We must be full of His Light if we are to illuminate the darkness of others! We cannot reveal to the world what the Lord has not revealed to us.

Oh, for a holy character and holy communion with God! Then we shall be golden vessels fit for the Master’s use and so, according to the text, we shall be ready for every good work—ready for the work when it comes and ready at the work when it has come—because completely consecrated to God and subject to His hand. In this readiness for whatever comes we shall be honored. Men may despise us, as they will, but what does it matter if God honors us? This height of Grace may cost us a sharp experience, but must not gold be tried with fire? As thieves are most anxious to steal not the pots and wooden vessels, but the gold and the silver, so we may expect to be exposed to greater temptations and greater persecutions than others.

More Grace involves more trials, but then we shall have the delight of glorifying God more. Oh, to be vessels unto honor! Beloved members of this Church, aspire to this! You have acknowledged in your names, that you are Christians! You have been baptized into the sacred name of the Divine Trinity! You have borne, up to now, a consistent moral character, but oh, see to it that the inner substance is the real metal—the gold and silver! See to it that you are reserved for the Lord’s own special use! Be as consecrated to Him as were the bowls before the altar. Never let the

world drink out of you, as Belshazzar did out of the vessels taken at Jerusalem. May the Lord grant that you may never be defiled, but may be kept, by His Grace, pure and consecrated to Him.

IV. Fourthly, for a moment we must speak about THE MASTER. He is introduced here, you see, as having certain vessels meet for His use—and this shows that He is in the house. There would be no need to reserve vessels for His use if He were not there—He is in the midst of His Church by His indwelling Spirit. How this ought to make us wish to be purged, sanctified and ready for Him! Your Master is not far away. His Presence in the Church is promised—“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” What manner of persons, therefore, ought you to be?

Secondly, the Master knows all about the house and knows the quality of all the vessels. There is no deceiving Him with the wooden plate—He knows it is not gold. And as for that earthen cup, though it may be gilt all over, He knows it is not gold. He reads the heart of everyone here present—wood or earth, silver or gold—the Master understands us. And then reflect that the Master will use us all as far as we are fit to be used. We are in God’s house and if we are wood, He will put us to wooden use.

There are many wooden preachers. If we are earth and earthly-minded He may put us to earthly uses, as He did Judas, who carried the bag, but had no Grace. If you are silver He will give you silver use. And if you are gold He will give you golden service in which you shall be happy, honored and blessed. What comes of this, then, lastly? Why, Brothers and Sisters, let us bestir ourselves that we be purged, for the text says, “If a man therefore purges himself.” It throws this business upon each one of us personally—a man must purge himself from ill company! And when we have confessed the responsibility, let us turn to God in prayer and feel that thorough purging is a work which we cannot achieve and, therefore, we cry, “Cleanse me, O God! Sanctify me! Make me meet for Your service and prepared for every good work.”

Beloved, finish with earnest prayer. Pray God that you may not be hypocrites! Beseech the Lord to search you and try you, that you not be found deceivers. And when you are sure that you are His, then ask Him to make you not merely silver, for it is very apt to tarnish, but rather the precious gold which, when exposed to the worst influences, scarcely shows a trace of dullness. Pure unalloyed gold may we be! And then may the Master, both in secret and public, use us to His own joy. May He refresh Himself with our love and faith, yes, may His joy be fulfilled in us, that our joy may be full. God grant it may be so, for Christ’s sake.

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Sermon #2089 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷2Ti 3.5

THE FORM OF GODLINESS WITHOUT THE POWER  
NO. 2088

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, JUNE 2, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”***2Ti 3:5***.**

PAUL warns us of certain characters which will appear in the last times. It is a very terrible list. The like have appeared in other days but we are led by his warning to apprehend that they will appear in greater numbers in the last days than in any previous age. “Lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”

These will swarm like flies in the decay of the year and will make the times exceeding perilous. We are nearing that period at this very time. That these people would, some of them, be within the Church is the most painful part of it. But they will be so, for they are comprehended in this last clause of the black catalog, which we have taken for our text—“Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.”

Paul does not paint the future with rose-colored glasses—he is no smooth-tongued Prophet of a golden age into which this dull earth may be imagined to be glowing. There are sanguine Brothers and Sisters who are looking forward to everything growing better and better and better, until, at last, this present age ripens into a millennium. They will not be able to sustain their hopes, for Scripture gives them no solid basis to rest upon. We who believe that there will be no millennial reign without the King and who expect no rule of righteousness except from the appearing of the righteous Lord, are nearer the mark.

Apart from the second Advent of our Lord, the world is more likely to sink into a pandemonium than to rise into a millennium. A Divine interposition seems to me the hope set before us in Scripture and, indeed, to be the only hope adequate to the occasion. We look to the darkening down of things. The state of mankind, however improved politically, may yet grow worse and worse spiritually. Certainly, we are assured in verse 13 that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” There will spring up in the Christian Church and round about it, a body of faithless men who profess to have faith—ungodly men who will unite with the saints—men having the form of godliness but denying the power.

We may call these hard times, if we will, but we have hardly yet come to the border of those truly harder times when it will go hard with the Church and she shall need, even more than today, to cry mightily unto the Lord to keep her alive. With this cloud upon our spirit, we come to the text itself. Let us consider it carefully and may the Holy Spirit help us!

True religion is a spiritual thing but it necessarily embodies itself in a form. Man is a spiritual creature but the human spirit needs a body in which to enshrine itself. And thus, by this need, we become allied to materialism. And if not “half dust, half Deity,” as one has said, we are certainly both matter and soul. In each of us there is the form or body and the soul or power. It is so with religion—it is essentially a spiritual thing but it requires a form in which to embody and manifest itself.

Christian people fall into a certain outward method of procedure, a peculiar outward mode of uttering their faith, which becomes to true godliness what the body is to the soul. The form is useful, the form is necessary, the form ought to be vitalized—just as the body is useful and is necessary and is vitalized by the soul. If you get both the form, as modeled in the Word of God and the power, as bestowed by the Spirit of God, you do well and are living Christians. If you get the power alone, without the ordained form, you somewhat maim yourself. But if you get the form without the power, then, you dwell in spiritual death.

The body without the spirit is dead. And what follows upon death with flesh? Why, corruption—corruption so horrible that even love itself has to cry, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” So that if there is in any the body of religion without the life of religion, it leads to decay and thus to corruption—and that has a tendency to decompose the character. The raw material of a devil is an angel bereft of holiness. You cannot make a Judas except out of an Apostle. The eminently good in outward form, when without inward life, decays into the foulest thing under Heaven. You cannot wonder that these are called “perilous times,” in which such characters abound.

One Judas is an awful weight for this poor globe to bear but a tribe of them must be a peril, indeed. Yet, if not of the very worst order, those are enough to be dreaded who have the shadow of religion without its substance. Of such I have to speak at this time—from such may God give you Divine Grace to turn away! May none of us ever be spots in our feasts of love, or clouds without water carried about of winds. But this we shall be if we have the form of godliness without the power thereof.

With great solemnity of soul I approach this subject, seeking from the Lord the aid of His Spirit, who makes the Word to be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. First, I shall speak of the men, and secondly, of their folly. And when I am done with that, I shall have some words of instruction to give by way of conclusion.

I. First, let us talk awhile of THE MEN. They had the form of godliness but denied the power thereof. Note what they had and then observe what they had not. They had a form of godliness. What is a form of godliness? It is, first of all, attention to the ordinances of religion. These, so far as they are Scriptural, are few and simple. There is Baptism, wherein, in figure, the Believer is buried with Christ, that he may rise into newness of life. And there is the Lord’s Supper, wherein, in type and emblem, he feeds upon Christ and sustains the life which came to him by fellowship with Christ’s death. Those who have obeyed the Lord in these two ordinances have exhibited in their own persons the form of godliness. That form is every way instructive to others and impressive to the man himself.

Every baptized person and every communicant at the Lord’s Table, should be godly and gracious. But neither Baptism nor the Lord’s Supper will secure this. Where there is not the life of God in the soul, neither holiness or godliness follow upon the ordinances. And thus we may have around us baptized worldlings and men who go from the table of the Lord to drink the cup of devils. It is sad that it should be so. Such persons are guilty of presumption, falsehood, sacrilege and blasphemy. Ah me, we sit beside such every Sabbath!

The form of godliness involves attendance with the assemblies of God's people. Those who have professed Christ are accustomed to come together at certain times for worship and, in their assemblies, they join in common prayer and common praise. They listen to the testimony of God by His servants whom He calls to preach His Word with power. They also associate together in Church fellowship for purposes of mutual help and discipline. This is a very proper form—full of blessing both to the Church and to the world—when it does not die down into mere form. A man may go to Heaven alone but he will do better if he travels there with Mr. Great-Heart and Father Honest and Christiana and the children.

Christ’s people are called sheep for one reason—they love to go in flocks. Dogs do very well separately but sheep do best in company. The sheep of Christ love to be together in the same pasture and to follow in a flock the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. Those who constantly associate in worship, unite in Church fellowship and work together for sacred purposes have the form of godliness and a very useful and proper form it is. Alas, it is of no value without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some go further than public worship. They use a great deal of religious talk. They freely speak of the things of God in Christian company. They can defend the doctrines of Scripture, they can plead for its precepts and they can narrate the experience of a Believer. They are fondest of talking of what is doing in the Church—the tattle of the streets of Jerusalem is very pleasant to them. They flavor their speech with godly phrases when they are in company that will relish it. I do not censure them—on the contrary, I wish there were more of holy talk among professors. I wish we could revive the old habit, “They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.”

Holy conversation causes the heart to glow and gives to us a foretaste of the fellowship of the glorified. But there may be a savor of religion about a man’s conversation and yet it may be a borrowed flavor—like hot sauces used to disguise the staleness of ancient meat. That religion which comes from the lips outward but does not well up from the deep fountains of the heart is not that living water which will spring up unto eternal life.

Tongue godliness is an abomination if the heart is destitute of Divine Grace.

More than this—some have a form of godliness upheld and published by religious activity. It is possible to be intensely active in the outside work of the Church and yet to know nothing of spiritual power. One may be an excellent Sunday school teacher after a fashion and yet have need to be taught what it is to be born again. One may be an eloquent preacher, or a diligent officer in the Church of God and yet know nothing of the mysterious power of the Spirit of Truth upon the heart. It is well to be like Martha in service. But one thing is needful—to sit at the Master’s feet and learn as Mary did.

When we have done all the work our position requires of us, we may only have displayed the form of godliness. Unless we hearken to our Lord and from His Presence derive power, we shall be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Brethren, I speak to myself and to each one of you in solemn earnestness. If much speaking, generous giving and constant occupation could win Heaven, we might easily make sure of it. But more than these are needed. I speak to each one of you. And if I singled out anyone more than another to be the pointed object of my address, it would be the best among us—the one who is doing most for his Master and who, in his inmost soul, is thinking, “That warning does not apply to me.”

O my active and energetic Brother, remember the word, “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” If any of you dislike this searching sermon, your dislike proves how much you need it. He that is not willing to search himself should stand self-incriminated by that unwillingness to look at his affairs. If you are right, you will not object to be weighed in the balances. If you are, indeed, pure gold, you may still feel anxiety at the sight of the furnace but you will not be driven to anger at the prospect of the fire. Your prayer will always be, “Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I need not enlarge further. You all know what a form of godliness is and most of us who are here present hold fast that form—may we never dishonor it! I trust we are anxious to make that form accurate according to Scripture so that our form of godliness may be that into which the earliest saints were delivered. Let us be Christians of a high type, cast in our Lord’s own mold. But do not become sticklers for the form and neglect the inner life—that will never do. Shall we fight about a man’s clothes and allow the man, himself, to die?

But now, as these people had not the power of godliness, how did they come to hold the form of it? This needs several answers. Some come by the form of godliness in an hereditary way. Their ancestors were always godly people and they almost naturally take up with the profession of their fathers. This is common and where it is honest, it is most commendable. It is a great mercy when, instead of the fathers, shall be the children. And we may hopefully anticipate that our children will follow us in the things of God, if by example, instruction and prayer, we have sought it before the Lord.

We are unhappy if we do not see our children walking in the God’s Truth. Yet the idea of birthright membership is an evil one and is as perilous as it is unscriptural. If children are taken into the Church simply because of their earthly parentage, surely this is not consistent with that description of the sons of God which is found in the inspired Scripture— “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God. ” Not generation but REGENERATION, makes the Christian. You are not Christians because you can trace a line of fleshly descent throughout twenty generations of children of God.

You must, yourselves, be born again. For except a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Many, no doubt, lay hold naturally on the form of godliness because of family ties—this is poor work. Ishmael is a sorry son of Abraham and Esau of Isaac and Absalom of David. Grace does not run in the blood. If you have no better foundation for your religion than your earthly parentage, you are in a wretched case.

Others have accepted the form of godliness by the force of authority and influence. They were, as lads, put apprentice to godly men. As girls, they were under the guidance of pious teachers. And as they grew up, they came under the influence of persons of superior intelligence and character who were on the Lord’s side. This accounts for their form of godliness. Many persons are the creatures of their surroundings—religion or irreligion is with them the result of circumstances. Such persons were led to make a profession of faith in Christ because others did so and friends encouraged them to do the same.

The deep searching of heart, which they ought to have exhibited, was slurred over and they were found among the people of God without having to knock for entrance at the wicket gate. I do not wish anyone to condemn himself because he was guided to the Savior by godly friends—far from it. But, nevertheless, there is danger lest we fail to have personal repentance and personal faith and are content to lean upon the opinions of others.

I have seen the form of godliness taken up on account of friendships. Many a time courtship and marriage have led to a formal religiousness, but a lacking heart. The future husband is induced to make a profession of religion for the sake of gaining one who was a sincere Christian and would not have broken her Lord’s command to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Godliness should never be put on in order that we may put a wedding ring upon the finger—this is a sad abuse of religious profession.

Other kinds of friendship, also, have led men and women to profess a faith they never had and to unite themselves visibly with the Church, while in spirit and in truth they were never truly a part of it. I put these things to you that there may be a great searching of heart among us all and that we may candidly consider how we have come by our form of godliness. Certain persons assume the form of godliness from a natural religious disposition. Do not suppose that all unconverted people are without

religion. Much religiousness is found in the heathen and there are races which have naturally more of reverence than others.

The German, with his profound philosophy, is often free, not only from superstition but from reverence. The Russian is by race naturally religious, not to say superstitious. I am speaking after the manner of men— the usual Russian takes off his hat to Holy Places, pictures and persons— and he is little inclined to disbelieve or scoff. We perceive like differences among our own acquaintances—one man is readily fooled by skeptics, while another is ready, with open mouth, to believe every word. One is naturally an infidel, another is as naturally credulous.

I mean, then, that to some the form of godliness commends itself because they have a natural leaning that way. They could not be happy unless they were attending where God is worshipped, or unless they were reckoned among the Believers in Christ. They must play at religion even if they do not make it their life business. Let me remind you of the questionable value of that which springs out of fallen human nature. Assuredly it brings no one into the spiritual kingdom, for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “You must be born again.” Beware of everything which springs up in the field without the sowing of the husbandman, for it will turn out to be a weed. O Sirs, the day will come when God will try us as with fire and that which comes of unregenerate nature will not stand the test but will be utterly consumed!

I do not doubt that, in these silken days, many have a form of godliness because of the respect it brings them. Time was when to be a Christian was to be reviled, if not to be imprisoned and, perhaps, burned at the stake. Hypocrites were fewer in those days for a profession cost too much. Yet, strange to say, there were some who played the Judas even in those times. Today religion walks forth in her velvet slippers. And in certain classes and ranks, if men did not make some profession of religion, they would be looked upon with suspicion and therefore men will take the name of Christian upon them and wear religion as a part of full dress.

The cross is at this day worn as a necklace. The cross as the instrument of our Savior’s shame and death is forgotten, and instead thereof, it is made the badge of honor, a jewel wherewith ungodly men may adorn themselves. Is this indicative of the deceitfulness of the age? Beware of seeking respect by a hypocritical godliness. Honor gained by a heartless profession is, in God’s sight, the greatest disgrace. The actor may strut in his mimic royalty, but he must take off his crown and robes when the play is over. And what will he then be?

From the days of Iscariot until now, some have taken up the form of godliness to gain thereby. To make gain of godliness is to imitate the son of perdition. This is a perilous road and yet many risk their souls for the lucre which they find therein. Apparent zeal for God may really be zeal for gold. The Emperor Maximilian showed great zeal against idolatry and published a decree that images of gold and silver should be melted down. He was extremely zealous about this. The images were all to be melted down and the metal forfeited to the emperor.

It was shrewdly suspected that this great iconoclast was not altogether swayed by unselfish motives. When a business brings grist to the mill, it is not hard to keep to it. Some love Christ because they carry His money bag for Him. Beware of that kind of godliness which makes a man hesitate until he sees whether a duty will pay or not and then makes him eager because he sees it will answer his purpose.

Once more—I do not doubt that a form of godliness has come to many because it brings them ease of conscience and they are able, like the Pharisee, to thank God that they are not as other men are. Have they not been to Church? Have they not paid for their pew? They can now go about their daily business without those stings of conscience which would come of neglecting the requirements of religion. These people profess to have been converted and they are numbered with Believers. But, alas, they are not of them.

Of all people these are the hardest to reach and the least likely to be saved. They hide behind the earthworks of a nominal religion. They are out of reach of the shot and shell of Gospel rebukes. They fly among the sinners and they have taken up their quarters among the saints. Sad is that man’s plight who wears the name of life but has never been quickened by the Holy Spirit. Thus, I have very feebly tried to show what these men had and why they had it.

Let us now remember what they did not have. They had “the form” of godliness. But they were denied “the power.” What is that power? God Himself is the power of godliness, The Holy Spirit is the life and force of it. Godliness is the power which brings a man to God and binds him to Him. Godliness is that which creates repentance towards God and faith in Him. Godliness is the result of a great change of heart in reference to God and His Character. Godliness looks towards God and mourns its distance from Him. godliness hastens to draw near and rests not till it is at home with God.

Godliness makes a man like God. Godliness leads a man to love God and to serve God. It brings the fear of God before his eyes and the love of God into his heart. Godliness leads to consecration, to sanctification, to concentration. The godly man seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and expects other things to be added to him. Godliness makes a man commune with God and gives him a partnership with God in His glorious designs. And so it prepares him to dwell with God forever.

Many who have the form of godliness are strangers to this power and so are in religion worldly, in prayer mechanical, in public one thing and in private another. True godliness lies in spiritual power and they who are without this are dead while they live.

What is the general history of those who have not this power? Well, dear Friends, their course usually runs thus—they do not begin with denying the power but they begin by trying to do without it. They would like to become members of the Church and as they fear that they are not fit for it, they look about for something which looks like conversion and the

new birth. They try to persuade themselves that they have been changed—they accept emotion as regeneration and a belief of doctrine for belief in Christ.

It is rather hard at first to reckon brass as gold but it grows easier as it is persisted in. Patching up a conversion and manufacturing a regeneration, they venture forward. At the first they are a good deal suspicious of themselves but they industriously kill every question by treating it as a needless doubt. Thus, by degrees, they believe a lie.

The next step is easy—they deceive themselves and come to believe that they are surely saved. All is now right for eternity, so they fancy. And they fold their arms in calm security. Meeting with godly people, they put on a bold front and speak up as bravely as if they were the true soldiers of King Jesus. Good people are charmed to meet with fresh Brethren and at once take them into their confidence. Thus they deceive others and help to strengthen themselves in their false hope.

They use the choice phrases of earnest Christians. Mixing with them, they pick up their particular expressions and pronounce Shibboleth in the most approved fashion. At last they take the daring step of denying the power. Being without it themselves, they conceive that others are without it, also. Judging from their own case, they conclude that it is all an affair of words. They get on very well without any supernatural power and others, no doubt, do the same—only they add a little cant to it to please the very godly folk.

They practically deny the power in their lives, so that those who see them and take them for Christians say, “There really is nothing in it. For these people are as we are. They have a touch of paint here and a little varnish there but it is all the same wood.” Practically, their actions assure the world that there is no power in Christianity. It is only a name. Very soon, privately, in their hearts they think it is so and they invent doctrines to match. Looking about them they see inconsistent Christians and faulty Believers and they say to themselves, “There is not much in faith, after all. I am as good as any of these Believers and perhaps better, though I am sure there is no work of the Spirit in me.”

Thus, within their own hearts they believe, what, at first, they dare not speak—they count godliness an empty thing. By-and-by, in some cases, these people profanely deny the Divine power of our holy faith and then they become the greatest enemies of the Cross of Christ. These traitors, nourished in the very House of God, are the worst foes of the Truth of God and righteousness. They ridicule that which once they professed to reverence. They have measured Christ’s corn with their own bushel. And because they never felt the powers of the world to come, they imagine that no one else has done so either.

Look at the Church of the present day. The advanced school, I mean. In its midst we see preachers who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. They talk of the Lord Jesus but they deny His Godhead, which is His power. They speak of the Holy Spirit but deny His personality, wherein lies His very existence. They take away the substance and power from all the doctrines of Revelation, though they pretend still to believe them. They talk of redemption but they deny substitution, which is the essence of it.

They extol the Scriptures but deny their infallibility, wherein lies their value. They use the phrases of orthodoxy and believe nothing in common with the orthodox. I know not which to loathe the more—their teachings or their spirit—surely they are worthy of each other. They burn the kernel and preserve the husk. They kill the truth and then pretend to reverence its sepulcher—“they say they are Jews and are not but do lie.”

This is horrible, but the evil is widely spread and in the presence of it the children of God are framing compromises, selling their Lord and becoming partakers with the despisers of His Truth. “Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.” It is the sin of the age—the sin which is ruining the Churches of our land.

**II.** In the second place, we are to observe THE WICKED FOLLY of this hypocritical conduct. Those who rest in the mere show of godliness are acting in a shameless manner and I will try to expose it.   
First, they degrade the very name of Christ. Brethren, if there is no spiritual power in godliness, it is worth nothing. We want no clouds without rain. Of shams and mere pretences we have more than enough. Those who have not the power of godliness show us a very damaging picture of religion. They make out our Lord’s religion to be comparable to a show at a country fair, with fine pictures and loud drumming on the outside and nothing within worth a moment’s consideration. The best of the show is on the outside.   
Or if there is anything within, it is a masquerade where all act borrowed parts but no one is what he seems to be. Gracious Lord, never suffer us so to act as to make the world think that our Redeemer is nothing more than the clever manager of a theater, where nothing is real but all is pantomime. Brothers and Sisters, if you pray at all, pray God to make you real through and through. May you be made of true metal! It were better for you that you had never been born than that you should make Christ dishonorable among the sons of men by leading them to conclude that religion is all a piece of acting.   
The folly of this is illustrated by the fact that there is no value in such a dead form. The form of godliness without the power is not worth the trouble it takes to put it together and keep it together. Imitation jewels are pretty and brilliant. But if you take them to the jeweler he will give you nothing for them. There is a religion which is all paste gems—a godliness which glitters but is not gold. And in that day when you will want to realize something from it, you will be wretchedly disappointed.   
A form of godliness joined to an unholy heart is of no value to God. I have read that the swan was not allowed to be offered upon the altar of God because, although its feathers are as white as snow, yet its skin is black. God will not accept that external morality which conceals internal impurity. There must be a pure heart as well as a clean life. The power of godliness must work within, or else God will not accept our offering. There is no value to man or to God in a religion which is a dead form.   
Next, there is no use in mere formality. If your religion is without spiritual life, what is the use of it? Could you ride home on a dead horse? Would you hunt with dead dogs? Would anyone like to go into battle with a pasteboard helmet? When the sword fell on it, what use would such a helmet be? What an outcry has been raised about bad swords! Is false religion any better? In the depth of winter can you warm yourself before a painted fire? Could you dine off the picture of a feast when you are hungry?   
There must be vitality and substantiality—or else the form is utterly worthless. And worse than worthless, for it may flatter you into deadly self-conceit. Moreover, there is no comfort in it. The form without the power has nothing in it to warm the heart, to raise the spirits, or to strengthen the mind against the day of sickness, or in the hour of death. O God, if my religion has been a mere form, what shall I do in the swelling of Jordan? My fine profession will all disappear and nothing will come of it wherewith I may face the last enemy.   
Peter called hypocrites “wells without water.” You are thirsty and you gladly spy a well. It is well surrounded with a curb and provided with a windlass and bucket. You hasten to draw water. What? Does the bucket come up empty? You try again. How bitter is your disappointment! A well without water is a mockery. It is a mere pit of destruction—a deadly delusion. Are some of you possessors of a religion which never yields you a drop of comfort? Is it a bondage to you? Do you follow Christ as a slave follows his master? Away with such a religion!   
The godliness which is worth having is a joy to a man—it is his choice, his treasure, his all. When it does not yield him conscious joy, yet he prizes it as the only source from which joy is expected of him. He follows after Christ with love, out of his heart’s desire after Him and not from the force of fashion, or the power of fear.   
To have the form of godliness without the power of it is to lack constancy in your religion. You never saw a mirage, perhaps. But those who have travel in the East, when they come home, are sure to tell you about them. It is a very hot and thirsty day and you are riding on a camel. Suddenly there rises before you a beautiful scene. Just a little from you are brooks of water, flowing between beds of osiers and banks of reeds and rushes. Yonder are palm trees and orange groves. Yes, and a city rises on a hill, crowned with minarets and towers.   
You are rejoiced and ask your guide to lead you nearer to the water which glistens in the sun. He grimly answers, “Take no notice, it is a mirage. There is nothing yonder but the burning sand.” You can scarce believe him. It seems so real! But lo, it is all gone, like a dream of night. And so is the hope which is built upon the form of godliness without the power. The white ants will eat up all the substance of a box and yet leave it standing till a touch causes the whole fabric to fall in dust—beware of a profession of which the substance has been eaten away. Believe in nothing which has not the stamp of eternity upon it.   
Be careful, poor Child—you may blow your bubble and the sunlight may paint it with rainbows. But in an instant it is gone and not a trace of it remains. Your transient globe of beauty is for you and your fellow children and not for men.   
In reality, this kind of religion is in opposition to Christ. It is Jannes and Jambres over again—the magician of hypocrisy is trying to work miracles which belong to God only. In appearance he would produce the same marvels as the finger of God. But he fails. God grant we may never be guilty of resisting the Truth of God by a lying profession. False men do serious injury to true godliness. For, like Ehud, they come with a pretended message from God and with their dagger sharpened at both edges, they strike vital godliness in its very heart. Nobody can do so much damage to the Church of God as the man who is within its walls but not within its life.   
This nominal godliness, which is devoid of power, is a shameful thing. I close with that. It is a shameful thing for this life, for the Lord Jesus loathes it. When He passed by the fig tree, which was so early with its leaves but so empty of fruit, He saw therein the likeness of the vainglorious professor who has no real holiness and He said, “Henceforth let no fruit grow on you forever.” His Word withered it at once—it stood a terrible emblem of the end of a false profession.   
How shameful will such a fruitless, lifeless professor be in eternity, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed! What shame and everlasting contempt will await him when his falsehood shall be detected and his baseness shall fill all holy minds with horror! O, beware of the Hell of the false professor!   
I have done when I have added a few words of instruction. The form of godliness is most precious. Let those who feel the power of godliness honor it and use it. Do not despise it because others have damaged it. Come forth and make an open profession of religion. But see that you have the power of it. Cry to God that you may never wear a sleeve which is longer than your arm—I mean may never go beyond what is really and truly your own. It will be better for you to go to God as a lost soul and cry for mercy, than to profess yourself saved when you are not.   
Yet confess Christ without fail or fear. Do not be ashamed of Jesus because of the ill manners of His disciples. Regard the ill savor of false professors as a part of the cross which you will have to bear for your Lord. To be associated with some who are not true seems inevitable in this life—however carefully we choose our company.   
My next is a word of discrimination. Those to whom my text has nothing to say will be the first to take it home to themselves. When I discharge my heart with a faithful sermon, certain trembling souls whom I would gladly comfort are sure to think that I mean them. A poor woman, in deep distress, comes to me, crying, “Sir, I have no feeling.” Dear heart, she has ten times too much feeling. Another moans out, “I am sure I am a hypocrite.” I never met with a hypocrite who thought himself one. And I never shall.   
“Oh,” said another, “I feel condemned.” He that feels himself condemned may hope for pardon. If you are afraid of yourselves I am not afraid of you. If you tremble at God’s Word, you have one of the surest marks of God’s elect. Those who fear that they are mistaken are seldom mistaken. If you search yourselves and allow the Word of God to search you, it is well with you. The bankrupt trader fears to have his books examined. The sound man even pays an accountant to overhaul his affairs. Use discrimination and neither acquit nor condemn yourself without reason.   
If the Spirit of God leads you to weep in secret for sin and to pray in secret for Divine Grace. If He leads you to seek after holiness. If He leads you to trust alone in Jesus, then you know the power of godliness and you have never denied it. You who cry, “Oh, that I felt more of the power of the Holy Spirit, for I know that He could comfort and sanctify me and make me live the life of Heaven on earth!” You are not aimed at either by the text or the sermon. For you have not denied the power. No, no, this text does not belong to *you* but to quite another class of people.   
Let me give you a word of admonition. Learn from the text that there is something in godliness worth having. The “form” of godliness is not all—there is a blessed “power.” The Holy Spirit is that power and He can work in you to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. Come to Jesus Christ, dear Souls. Do not come to the minister, nor to the Church, in the first place. But come to Jesus. Come and lay yourselves at His feet and say, “Lord, I will not be comforted unless You comfort me.” Come and take everything at first hand from your crucified Lord. Then shall you know the power of godliness.   
Beware of second-hand religion, it is never worth the carrying home. Get your godliness direct from Heaven by the personal dealing of your own soul with your Savior. Profess only what you possess and rest only in that which has been given you from above. Your heavenly life, as yet, may be very feeble but the grain of mustard seed will grow. You may be the least in Israel but that is better than being the greatest in Babylon.   
The Lord bless these words and apply them to each one in his own way by His Holy Spirit. You can make either a blister of them or a plaster of them, as conscience shall direct. God guide you, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection***, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307**

**÷2Ti 3.15**

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND THE SCRIPTURES

NO. 1866

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 18, 1885, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”***2Ti 3:15***.**

HOW very remarkably the times repeat themselves! As I said just now, in the reading of the chapter, the warning which Paul gave concerning his own times is quite as necessary for this present age. Again darkness thickens and the mists hang heavily around our footsteps. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse and very many have turned away their ears from the Truth of God to listen to fables. Nor do we wonder that it is so. History must repeat itself so long as we have the same human nature to deal with, the same sins to ensnare mankind, the same Truth to be trifled with and the same devil to stir men up to the same mischief.

But, Brothers and Sisters, when the same evils come, we must apply to them the same remedies. When a disease appears which has done deadly mischief in past times, physicians inquire for medicines which, on a former occasion, curbed the enemy. We are bound to do the same in spiritual matters. We must see what Paul did in his day when the malaria of false doctrine was in the air. It is remarkable how very simple, as a rule, everything is that is really effective. If a discovery is made in science or machinery, it is complicated, at first, and that for the very reason that it is imperfect. But all improvements are in the direction of simplicity. It is just the same with spiritual teachings. When we get at reality, we cut off superfluity. Let us not talk of inventing wise measures for the present distress in the spiritual world, but let us use the great remedy which was so effectual in Paul’s day! Paul, himself, taught young Timothy the Gospel— he made him not only hear his doctrine, but see his practice. We cannot force the Truth of God upon men, but we can make our own teaching clear and decided—and make our lives consistent therewith. Truth and holiness are the surest antidotes to error and unrighteousness. The Apostle said to Timothy, “Continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.”

He then dwelt upon another potent remedy which had been of great service to the young preacher, namely, the knowing of the Holy Scriptures from his earliest childhood. This was, to young Timothy, one of his best safeguards. His early training held him like an anchor and saved him from the dreadful drift of the age. Happy young man, of whom the Apostle could say, “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus!”

Brothers and Sisters, to be prepared for the coming conflict, we have only to preach the Gospel and to live the Gospel—and also to take care that we teach the children the Word of the Lord! This last is especially to be attended to, for it is by the mouth of babes and sucklings that God will still the enemy. It is idle to dream that human learning must be met by human learning, or that Satan must cast out Satan. No! Lift up the bronze serpent wherever the fiery serpents are biting the people and men shall look to it and live. Bring the children out and hold them up—and turn their little eyes towards the divinely ordained remedy, for still there is life in a look—life as against the varied venoms of the serpent which are now poisoning the blood of men! There is no cure, after all, for midnight but the rising sun. No hope remains for a dark world but in that Light of God which lightens every man. Shine forth, O Sun of Righteousness, and mist, cloud and darkness must disappear. Brothers, keep to the Apostolic plans and rest assured of Apostolic success! Preach Christ! Preach the Word in season and out of season—and teach the children. One of God’s chief methods for preserving His fields from tares is to sow them early with wheat. Upon that I am going to speak, this morning, as the Holy Spirit shall help me.

In tracing the gracious work of God upon the heart of Timothy and upon others who are favored as he was, I shall notice that this work commenced with early instruction—“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures.” And secondly, it was quickened and made effectual by saving faith—“The Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Then we shall notice that the effect of this early teaching upon Timothy was that it created a solid character and, furthermore, that it produced great usefulness.

I. The work of God’s Grace in Timothy COMMENCED WITH EARLY INSTRUCTION—“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures.”  
Note the time for instruction. The expression, “from childhood,” might be better understood if we read it, “from a very child” or, as the Revised Version has it, “from a babe.” It does not mean a well-grown child, or youth, but a child just rising out of infancy. From a very child Timothy had known the sacred writings. This expression is, no doubt, used to show that we cannot begin too early to imbue the minds of our children with Scriptural knowledge. Babes receive impressions long before we are aware of the fact. During the first months of a child’s life, it learns more than we imagine. It soon learns the love of its mother and its own dependence— and if the mother is wise, it learns the meaning of obedience and the necessity of yielding its will to a higher will. This may be the keynote of its whole future life. If it learns obedience and submission early, it may save a thousand tears from the child’s eyes and as many from the mother’s heart. A special vantage ground is lost when even babyhood is left uncultured.  
The Holy Scripture may be learned by children as soon as they are capable of understanding anything. It is a very remarkable fact which I have heard asserted by many teachers, that children will learn to read out of the Bible better than from any other book. I scarcely know why. It may, perhaps, be on account of the simplicity of the language—and I believe it is so. A Biblical fact will often be grasped when an incident of common history is forgotten. There is an adaptation in the Bible for human beings of all ages and, therefore, it has a fitness for children. We make a mistake when we think that we must begin with something else and lead up to the Scriptures. The Bible is the book for the peep of day. Parts of it are above a child’s mind, for they are above the comprehension of the most advanced among us. There are depths in it where leviathan may swim—but there are also brooks in which a lamb may wade. Wise teachers know how to lead their little ones into the green pastures beside the still waters.  
I was noticing, in the life of that man of God whose loss presses very heavily upon many of our hearts, namely, the Earl of Shaftesbury, that his first religious impressions were produced by a humble woman. The impressions which made him Shaftesbury, the man of God and the friend of man, were received in the nursery! Little Lord Ashley had a godly nurse who spoke to him of the things of God. He tells us that she died before he was seven years of age—clear proof that early in life his heart had been able to receive the seal of the Spirit of God—and to receive it by humble instrumentality. Blessed among women was she whose name we know not, but who worked incalculable service for God and man by her holy teaching of the chosen child! Young nurses, note this.  
Give us the first seven years of a child, with God’s Grace, and we may defy the world, the flesh and the devil to ruin that immortal soul! Those first years, while yet the clay is soft and plastic, go far to decide the form of the vessel. Do not say that your office, you who teach the young, is in the least degree inferior to ours, whose main business is with older folks. No, you have the first of them and your impressions, as they come first, will endure last—oh that they may be good and only good! Among the thoughts that come to an old man before he enters Heaven, the most plentiful are those that before visited him when he sat upon his mother’s knee. That which made Dr. Guthrie ask for a “bairn’s hymn” when he was dying is but an instinct of our nature which leads us to complete the circle by folding together the ends of life. Childlike things are dearest to old age! We shuffle off a portion of the coil that surrounds and hampers us and go back, again, to our more natural selves and, therefore, the old songs are on our lips and the old thoughts are in our minds! The teachings of our childhood leave clean cut and sharp impressions upon the mind which remain after 70 years have passed. Let us see that such impressions are made for the highest ends.  
It is well to note the admirable selection of instructors. We are not at a loss to tell who instructed youthful Timothy. In the first chapter of this Epistle, Paul says, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in you, also.” No doubt grandmother Lois and mother Eunice united in teaching the little one. Who should teach the children but the parents? Timothy’s father was a Greek and probably a heathen, but his child was happy in having a venerable grandmother, so often the dearest of all relatives to a little child. He had also a gracious mother, once a devout Jewess and afterwards, also, a firmly believing Christian who made it her daily pleasure to teach her own dear child the Word of the Lord.  
O dear mothers, you have a very sacred trust reposed in you by God! He has, in effect, said to you, “Take this child and nurse it for Me and I will give you your wages.” You are called to equip the future man of God, that he may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. If God spares you, you may live to hear that pretty boy speak to thousands and you will have the sweet reflection in your heart that the quiet teachings of the nursery led the man to love his God and serve Him! Those who think that a woman detained at home by her little family is doing nothing, think the reverse of what is true! Scarcely can the godly mother quit her home for a place of worship, but dream not that she is lost to the work of the Church—far from it—she is doing the best possible service for her Lord! Mothers, the godly training of your offspring is your first and most pressing duty! Christian women, by teaching children the Holy Scriptures, are as much fulfilling their part for the Lord as Moses in judging Israel, or Solomon in building the Temple!  
Nowadays, since the world has in it, alas, so few of Christian mothers and grandmothers, the Church has thought it wise to supplement the instruction of home by teaching held under her fostering wing. Those children who have no such parents, the Church takes under her maternal care. I regard this as a very blessed institution. I am thankful for the many of our Brothers and Sisters who give their Sabbaths—and many of them a considerable part of their week evenings, also—to the teaching of other people’s children who somehow grow to be very much their own. They endeavor to perform the duties of fathers and mothers, for God’s sake, to those children who are neglected by their own parents—and therein they do well. Let no Christian parents fall into the delusion that the Sunday school is intended to ease them of their personal duties. The first and most natural condition of things is for Christian parents to train up their own children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.  
Let holy grandmother’s and gracious mothers, with their husbands, see to it that their own boys and girls are well taught in the Book of the Lord. Where there are no such Christian parents, it is well and wisely done for godly people to intervene. It is a Christly work when others undertake the duty which the natural doers of it have left undone. The Lord Jesus looks with pleasure upon those who feed His lambs and nurse His babes, for it is not His will that any of these little ones should perish. Timothy had the great privilege of being taught by those whose natural duty it is, but where that great privilege cannot be enjoyed, let us all, as God shall help us, try to make up to the children the terrible loss which they endure. Come forward, earnest men and women, and sanctify yourselves for this joyful service!  
Note the subject of the instruction. “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures”—he was led to treat the Book of God with great reverence. I lay stress upon those two words, “Holy Scriptures.” One of the first objects of the Sunday school should be to teach the children great reverence for these holy writings, these Inspired Scriptures. The Jews esteemed the Old Testament beyond all price and though, unfortunately, many of them fell into a superstitious reverence for the letter and lost the spirit of it, yet were they much to be commended for their profound regard to the Holy Oracles. Especially is this feeling of reverence needed nowadays. I meet with men who hold strange views, but I do not care one-half so much about their views, nor about the strangeness of them, as I do about a certain something which I spy out at the back of this novel thinking. When I find that, if I prove their views to be unscriptural, I have, nevertheless, proved nothing to them, for they do not care about Scripture—then I have found out a principle far more dangerous than mere doctrinal blundering!  
This indifference to Scripture is the great curse of the Church at this hour! We can be tolerant of divergent opinions, so long as we perceive an honest intent to follow the Statute Book. But if it comes to this, that the Bible, itself, is of small authority to you, then we have no need of further parley—we are in different camps and the sooner we recognize this, the better for all parties concerned. If we are to have a Church of God at all in the land, Scripture must be regarded as holy and to be had in reverence. This Scripture was given by Holy Inspiration and is not the result of dim myths and dubious traditions! Neither has it drifted down to us by the survival of the fittest as one of the best of human books. It must be given to my children and accepted by ourselves as the Infallible Revelation of the Most Holy God! Lay much stress upon this—tell your children that the Word of the Lord is a pure Word, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Let their esteem for the Book of God be carried to the highest point!  
Observe that Timothy was taught not only to reverence holy things in general, but especially to know the Scriptures. The teaching of his mother and his grandmother was the teaching of Holy Scripture. Suppose we get the children together on the Sabbath and then amuse them and make the hours to pass away pleasantly? Or instruct them, as we do in the weekdays, in the elements of a moral education—what have we done? We have done nothing worthy of the day, or of the Church of God! Suppose that we are particularly careful to teach the children the rules and regulations of our own Church and do not take them to the Scriptures? Suppose that we bring before them a book which is set up as the standard of our Church but do not dwell upon the Bible—what have we done? The aforesaid standard may or may not be correct and we may, therefore, have taught our children the Truth of God or have taught them error! But if we keep to Holy Scripture, we cannot go aside. With such a Standard we know that we are right. This Book is the Word of God and if we teach it, we teach that which the Lord will accept and bless.  
O dear teachers—and I speak here to myself, also—let our teaching be more and more Scriptural! Fret not if our classes forget what we say, but pray them to remember what the Lord says. May Divine Truths about sin, righteousness and judgement to come be written on their hearts! May revealed Truths of God concerning the love of God, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit never be forgotten by them! May they know the virtue and necessity of the atoning blood of our Lord, the power of His Resurrection and the Glory of His Second Coming! May the Doctrines of Grace be engraved as with a pen of iron upon their minds and written as with the point of a diamond upon their hearts—never to be erased! Brothers and Sisters, if we can secure this, we have not lived in vain. The generation now ruling seems bent on departing from the eternal Truths of God, but we shall not despair if the Gospel is impressed upon the memory of the rising race.  
Once more upon this point—it appears that young Timothy was so taught as a child that the teaching was effectual. “You have known the Holy Scriptures,” says Paul. It is a good deal to say of a child that he has “known the Holy Scriptures.” You may say, “I have taught the children the Scriptures,” but that they have known them is quite another thing. Do all of you who are grown up, know the Scriptures? I fear that although knowledge in general increases, knowledge of the Scriptures is far too rare! If we were now to hold an examination, I am afraid that some of you would hardly shine in the lists at the end. But here was a little child who knew the Holy Scriptures! That is to say, he had a remarkable acquaintance with them. Children can get that—it is by no means an impossible attainment. God blessing your efforts, dear Friends, your children may know all of Scripture that is necessary to their salvation. They may have as true an idea of sin as their mother has. They may have as clear a view of the Atonement as their grandmother can have. They may have as distinct a faith in Jesus as any of us can have!  
The things that make for our peace require no length of experience to prepare us for receiving them—they are among the simplicities of thought. He may run that reads them—and a child may read them as soon as he can run! The opinion that children cannot receive the whole Truth of the Gospel is a great mistake, for their child-condition is a help rather than a hindrance! Older folk must become as little children before they can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Do lay a good groundwork with the children. Let not Sunday school work be slurred, nor done in a slovenly manner. Let the children know the Holy Scripture! Let the Scriptures be consulted rather than any human book.  
II. Our second need was to be that this work was QUICKENED BY SAVING FAITH. The Scriptures do not save, but they are able to make a man wise unto salvation. Children may know the Scriptures and yet not be children of God. Faith in Jesus Christ is that Grace which brings immediate salvation. Many dear children are called of God so early that they cannot precisely tell when they were converted—but they were converted—they must, at some time or other, have passed from death to life. You could not have told this morning, by observation, the moment when the sun rose, but it did rise—and there was a time when it was below the horizon and another time when it had risen above it. The moment, whether we see it or not, in which a child is really saved, is when he or she believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps for years Lois and Eunice had been teaching the Old Testament to Timothy while they, themselves, did not know the Lord Jesus. And, if so, they were teaching him the type without the antitype—the riddles without the answers—but it was good teaching, for all that, since it was all the Truth of God which they then knew.  
How much happier, however, is our task, since we are able to teach concerning the Lord Jesus so plainly, having the New Testament to explain the Old! May we not hope that even earlier in life than Timothy, our dear children may catch the thought that Christ Jesus is the Sum and Substance of Holy Scripture and, so, by faith in Him may receive power to become the sons of God? I mention this, simple as it is, because I want all teachers to feel that if their children do not as yet know all the doctrines of the Bible and if there are certain higher or deeper Truths of God which their minds have not yet grasped, still, children are saved as soon as they are wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus! Faith in the Lord Jesus, as He is set forth in Scripture, will surely save. “If you believe with all your heart, you may,” said Philip to the eunuch—and we say the same to every child—you may confess your faith if you have any true faith in Jesus to confess. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ and so put your trust in Him, you are as truly saved as though gray hairs adorned your brow.  
Notice that by this faith in Christ Jesus, we continue and advance in salvation. The moment we believe in Christ we are saved, but we are not at once as wise as we may be and hope to be. We may be, as it were, saved unintelligently. I mean, of course, comparatively so, but it is desirable that we should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us and so be wise unto salvation. By faith, children become little disciples and, by faith, they go on to become more proficient. How are we to go on to wisdom? Not by quitting the way of faith, but by keeping to that same faith in Christ Jesus by which we began to learn. In the school of Grace, faith is the great faculty by which we make advances in wisdom. If by faith you have been able to say A, B and C, it must be by faith that you shall go on to say D, E and F, until you shall come to the end of the alphabet and be an expert in the Book of Wisdom. If by faith you can read in the spelling book of simple faith, by the same faith in Christ Jesus you must go on to read in the classics of full assurance and become a scribe well instructed in the things of the Kingdom of God. Keep, therefore, close to the practice of faith from which so many are turning aside.  
In these times men look to make progress by what they call thought, by which they mean vain imagination and speculation

We cannot advance a step by doubt—our only progress is by faith. There are no such things as “steppingstones of our dead selves.” Unless, indeed, they are steppingstones down to death and destruction! The only steppingstones to life and Heaven are to be found in the Truths of God revealed to our faith. Believe God and you have made progress! So let us pray for our children, that they may constantly know and believe more and more, for the Scripture is able to make them wise unto salvation, but only through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Faith is the result to aim at. Faith in the appointed, anointed and exalted Savior. This is the anchor to which we would bring these little ships, for here they will abide in perfect safety!  
Observe that the text gives us a plain intimation that by faith, knowledge is turned into wisdom. Exceedingly practical is the difference between knowledge and wisdom. See it in the text, “From a child you have known.” But it is faith, faith alone, that turns that knowledge into wisdom—and thus the Holy Scriptures are “able to make wise unto salvation.” “Knowledge is power,” but wisdom is the application of that power to practical ends! Knowledge may be bullion, but wisdom is the minted gold, fit for circulation among men! You can give your children knowledge without their having faith, but they must have faith given them of the Holy Spirit before that knowledge can become wisdom! Scriptural knowledge is wisdom when it influences the heart, when it rules the mind, when it affects the daily life, when it sanctifies the spirit, when it renews the will. O Teachers, pray for your dear children that God would give them faith in Christ Jesus so that the knowledge which you have given them may turn to wisdom! Go as far as you can go with the teaching, but always cry mightily unto the Lord that His Holy Spirit may work regeneration, create faith, impart wisdom and give salvation.  
Learn yet, again, that faith finds her wisdom in the use of knowledge conferred by the Scriptures. “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith.” Faith never finds her wisdom in the thoughts of men, nor in pretended revelations. She resorts to the Inspired Writings for her guidance. This is the well from which she drinks, the manna on which she feeds. Faith takes the Lord Jesus to be her wisdom. The knowledge of Christ is, to her, the most excellent of the sciences. She asks only—What is written? And when that question is answered, her difficulties are ended! I know it is not so with this unbelieving age and this it is which causes me to go mourning and lamenting. Alas for a Church which rejects the testimony of the Lord! As for us, we abide by the Word of the Lord and from it we will not stir an inch!  
See then, my Hearers, what is needed for all of you who are unconverted. The Holy Scriptures must be made the means of your salvation through faith. Know the Bible, read the Bible, search the Bible—and yet the Bible, alone, will not save you! What did our Lord, Himself, say? “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me; and you will not come unto Me that you might have life.” If you come not to Jesus, you will miss eternal life! Searching the Scriptures is able to make you wise unto salvation “through faith which is in Christ Jesus”—but not without that faith! Pray, you Sunday school teachers, that you may see this faith worked in the children whom you teach! What a blessed groundwork for faith, your teaching of the Holy Scriptures will be! But never mistake it for the building, itself, which is of faith alone!  
III. Time fails me. I cannot dwell as I would upon other points, but I beg you to notice, in the third place, that sound instruction in Holy Scripture, when quickened by a living faith, CREATES A SOUND CHARACTER. The man who, from childhood has known the Holy Scriptures, when he obtains faith in Christ, will be grounded and settled upon the abiding principles of the unchanging Word of God. I wish it were so with the bulk of those who profess and call themselves, “Christians.” In these days we are surrounded by unsettled minds, “ever learning, but never coming to a knowledge of the Truth of God.” These are carried about by every wind of doctrine. What numbers of professors I have known who go into one place of worship and hear one form of doctrine and apparently approve it because the preacher is “a clever man!” They hear an opposite teaching and they are equally at home, because, again, it is “a clever man!” They join with a Church and you ask them, “Do you agree with the views of that community?” They neither know nor care what those views may be—one doctrine is as good as another to them. Their spiritual appetite can enjoy soap as well as butter! They can digest bricks as well as bread!  
These religious ostriches have a marvelous power of swallowing everything—but they have no spiritual discernment, no appreciation of the Truth of God. They follow any “clever” person and, in this, prove that they are not the sheep of our Lord’s pasture, of whom it is written, “A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.” We desire to build up a Church with those who know what they know and can give a reason for what they believe. The true Believer’s great reason for his faith is, “It is written.” Christ our Master met the tempter in the wilderness with, “It is written.” Though He was, Himself, Inspired, yet His teaching was full of the Old Testament—He was always quoting the Words of the Inspired Book and, therein, setting us an example.  
If you and I would contend with Satan and with an evil world, so as to overcome in the conflict, we must take care to take our stand squarely and firmly upon the Scriptures! Let us treat our opponents to volleys of Scripture! Let us fire point-blank with sacred texts! These are arguments which wound and kill! Our own reasonings are mere paper pellets, but Scriptural proofs are bullets of steel! Our opponents will find it useless to try to lead us away from the old faith when they perceive that we will not budge an inch from Holy Scripture. We are bomb-proof when we shelter beneath the Word of the Lord. The cunning craftiness of deceivers is foiled by the clear simplicity of, “Thus says the Lord.”  
Those who know the Scriptures and so believe in Jesus, are pillared upon a personal acquaintance with the foundations of their faith. “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures”—they were not treated with an ignorant reverence, but with an intelligent homage. How much I desire that each one of you may be a personal student of the Holy Scriptures! We need to know them for ourselves! Personally grasping them as a Revelation of God to himself, the godly man loves them, studies them, feels them, lives upon them and so knows them! By this means he becomes as independent of other men. Paul is to die. Poor Timothy! Yes, it will be, “poor Timothy!” if he carries his faith in Paul’s bosom and has none in his own heart! But Timothy’s Bible is not going to die! Timothy’s knowledge of Scripture is not going to be taken from him, nor is the Holy Spirit about to depart from him!  
Look at some of our Churches—while a well-instructed Gospel minister leads the way, the Brethren abide in their steadfastness. The good man dies and where is the Church? No doubt, those who are instructed in the Scriptures remain in their places, but the more ignorant are scattered like chaff! There are numbers, now, in this part of London, wandering about, who were once zealous for the faith, but are now almost indifferent to it. I will not mention names, but I could do so readily enough—I mean the names of esteemed Brethren who gathered an earnest following about them, but they are gone—and with their going, numbers of their followers have gone, too! I fear there could not have been a sound knowledge of the Word of God, or these people would have survived the great loss of their teacher. Oh, to have a good personal building up upon the solid Word of God! Then you will know what you know and you will hold fast to it—and there will be no driving you away from the standards of the faith. I labor for this among you and I pray that I may not labor in vain.  
The man that has been taught the Scripture from his youth is anchored by the Divine influences of that Scripture. It has so operated upon him that he knows for himself its Divine power. He knows the difference between the Truth of God and error by the effect produced on his heart and life. Without any boasting, he is able to discern between things that differ because about Scriptural Truth there is a strange, mysterious unction which does not attend the teachings of the most learned of men. I cannot explain to you what this unction is, but every child of God knows it. When I read a text of Scripture, even if I do not now it to be a text of Scripture by memory, I perceive its Divine origin at once by a mystic influence which it exerts over my heart. The most striking passages of any sermon are wellplaced texts. A sentence from the mouth of God will have more permanent power over a Christian man than the best composed of human statements! God’s Word is living, powerful and has a power to enter the heart beyond that of any other word! The Words of the Bible strike and stick— they enter and abide.  
He that has been taught in Scripture, steeped in Scripture, saturated with Scripture—is conscious of its permeating influence and it gives him permanence of conviction. Like the crimson dye in cloth, the tint of Scripture is not to be gotten out of the soul when once fixed there! It is dyed ingrain—it enters into the very nature of the man! Bible Truths influence his thoughts, words and deeds—it is all-pervading—he begins to eat, drink and sleep Holy Scripture. The man’s heart is fixed on God, fixed in the Truths of God and fixed in holy living. He will stand fast, however evil the days. Though all the rest should apostatize, this man cannot, for the Divine Word, through faith, has bound him to the Altar of the Lord and, in the Truth of God he must and will both live and die, come what may.  
Besides, a man that has once been taught in the Scripture and to whose soul the Spirit has blessed that teaching, has come to yield himself to the supremacy of Scripture and this must operate to the shaping of his character. I confess that sometimes I come across a text which does not, at first blush, agree with other teachings of Scripture which I have already received—and this startles me for the moment. But one thing is settled in my heart, namely, that I will follow the Scripture wherever it leads me and that I will renounce the most cherished opinion rather than shape a text or alter a syllable of the Inspired Book. It is not mine to make God’s Word consistent, but to believe that it is so! When a text stands in the middle of the road, I drive no further. The Romans had a god they called, “Terminus,” who was the god of landmarks. Holy Scripture is my sacred landmark and I hear a voice which threatens me with a curse if I remove it! Sometimes I say to myself, “I did not think to find this Truth to be just so, but as it is so, I must bow. It is rather awkward for my theory, but I must alter my system, for the Scripture cannot be broken.” “Let God be true, but every man a liar.”  
We want our children to have this deep reverence for Scripture, even as we have it ourselves. There it stands! The eternal pen has written it and we accept it! If God has said it, we have no desire to question it, lest the Scripture should say to us, “No but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” We must bow before the Infallibility of the Holy Spirit and say, “Lord, teach me what this means. What I know not, teach me.” He who goes through the world with an intense reverence for Scripture will be a man, indeed. The Lord will make good in him that Word—“Them that honor Me I will honor.” Angels and men, before long, reverence the man who reverences the Word of God. Feed your mind on the pulse of Scripture and, like Daniel and his comrades, your countenance shall appear fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children who eat the portion of the king’s meat from the philosophic tables of the world.  
While on this point, I would also say that this kind of instruction will hold a man fast against the differing seductions of the age. Here I go into one place of worship and I see a pretty little dolls’ house at the far end and people are bowing down before some paper flowers and candlesticks! Around the building I see pictures of virgins and saints, but he who has read his Bible enters not into this modern idolatry! A priest once said to a poor Irishman, “There will be no good come of your reading the Bible.” “Why,” replied the man, “it is written, ‘Search the Scriptures.’ Please, your Reverence, I was just reading, ‘you shall read it to your children’ and the priests have no children—how can you account for that?” “Ah!” replied the priest, “the likes of you cannot understand the book.” “Well,” said the man, “if I cannot understand it, it will do me no harm, but if I can understand it, it will do me great good.”  
Just so! The Bible is a very dangerous book to superstition, but to nothing else! Spread it, then, to the winds of Heaven and read it, every one of you! To the Law and to the Testimony! If we speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light of God in us! He that holds to the Bible will be equally free from the dangers of rationalism which are now so abundant and he will keep himself clean from the ravings of anarchy which now sound like the cries of dragons from the dark places of the earth! People are beginning to forget the Commandment, “you shall not steal,” and they are planning various methods of political thievery by which the foundations of society will be shaken. Love of Holy Scripture will be the sheet anchor of the State as well as of the Church! If men are thoroughly grounded in Holy Scripture, we shall undergo political changes with great advantage—but if not, there is mischief brewing. The Bible is the cornerstone of our future hope.  
IV. Now, lastly. As this early teaching creates a fine solid character, so will it PRODUCE GREAT USEFULNESS. I will say nothing more than just this. Thus Timothy became above all others a choice companion for Paul, one upon whom Paul looked with love and remembered with joy. Companions for Apostles are only to be produced in the school of Holy Scripture. Those who have communed with Moses, David and the Prophets, are fit to associate with an Apostle. It is something to produce out of a child a comrade for a veteran servant of the living God! Let a man of God get side by side with a youth who knows the Scriptures and he feels, “This is fit company for me.” Paul, worn with years of persecution, strokes his gray beard and his eyes light up with joy as he looks on that young Timothy! What is there about him more than about any other? Why, only that he knows the Scriptures and they have made him wise unto salvation!  
There were, no doubt, fine young fellows to be found who gloried in preferring the advanced thought of philosophers to the stereotyped teachings of Holy Scripture. But had they begun to talk to the Apostle upon their new theories, Paul would have dismissed them with words of warning. He knew nothing of them or of their “other Gospel,” except that they troubled him and the Churches. Without Scriptural training, a convert has no grit, no backbone and no soul in him. But when Paul looked on a gracious youth who knew the Scriptures and held fast to them, he thanked God and took courage.  
This young man became a minister and an Evangelist. He was a preacher of such a sort that we should have been glad to have heard him. God send us many such! Perhaps we might have said, “The young man’s opinions were rather crude and his expressions were somewhat rough, but we can put up with that from so young a man. On the other hand, what a richness of Scripture there was in him! What depth of thought! Did you not notice he had not got through a dozen sentences before he had quoted Scripture? And when he came to prove his point, he did not give half-a-dozen rationalistic arguments, but he brought out a single Word from the Lord and the point was settled.” You must agree with a man who is at home with his Bible. This is the kind of preacher that we need more of! Instruct your children well, beloved Teachers, that they, also, may become Scriptural teachers in due time.  
Timothy became, also, a great champion for the faith. He came forward and in the midst of all those who were preaching false doctrine, he stood firm to the end—he was steadfast, unmovable, courageous—because as a child he had known the Scriptures! O Teachers, see what you may do! In your schools sit our future Evangelists. In that infant class sits an Apostle to some distant land! There may come under your training hand, my Sister, a future father in Israel! There shall come under your teaching, my Brother, those that are to bear the banners of the Lord in the thick of the fray! The ages look to you each time your class assembles!  
Oh, that God may help you to do your part well! We pray with one heart and one soul that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with our Sunday schools from this day and till He comes. Amen and Amen!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—** *2Ti 1:1-8***;** *2Ti 3:1-17***;** *2Ti 4:1-8***.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—4, 480, 119 (SONG VI).

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÷2Ti 4.6

A LAST LOOKOUT  
NO. 989

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

**“The time of my departure is at hand.”** *2Ti 4:6***.**

SO near, so very near the change—his removal from this to another world. And so very conscious of it. Yet Paul looked back with calm satisfaction. He looked forward with sweet assurance. And he looked round with deepest interest on the mission that had engaged his life. As you must have noticed while we were reading the chapter, in his case “the ruling passion was strong in death.” Writing what he well knows is the last letter he shall ever write, its main topic is care for the Church of God— anxiety for the promotion of the Truth of God—zeal for the furtherance of the Gospel.

When he is dead and gone from the post of service, the scene of suffering, the field of enterprise—on whom shall his mantle fall? He desires that in Timothy he may find a worthy successor, strong in the faith, sincere of heart, and having dauntless courage—one who will wield the sword and hold the banner when his hand is palsied in death. Men have usually shown us what lies at the bottom of their heart when they have come to die. Often their last expiring expressions have been indicative of their entire character.

Certainly you have before you in the last sentences of Paul’s pen a fair epitome of his entire life. He is trusting in the Savior. He is anxious to show his love for that Savior. The welfare of the Christian Church and the advancement of the holy cause of the Gospel are uppermost in his mind. May it be yours and mine to live wholly for Christ, and to die also for Him. May this ever be foremost in our thoughts—“How can I advance the kingdom of our Lord and Savior? By what means can I bless His Church and people?”

It is very beautiful to observe the way in which Paul describes his death in this verse. According to our translation he speaks of it as an offering. “I am now ready,” he says, “to be offered.” If we accept this version he may be supposed to mean that he felt as one standing like a bullock or a lamb, ready to be laid on an altar. He foresaw he would die a martyr’s death. He knew he could not be crucified as his brother Peter had been, for a Roman citizen was, as a rule, exempt from that ignominious death. He expected to die in some other manner. Probably he guessed it would be by the sword, and so he describes himself as waiting for the sacrificial knife to be used, that he might be presented as a sacrifice.

So I say the words of our translation would lead us to think. But the original is far more instructive. He here likens himself, in the Greek, not to an offering, but to the drink offering. Every Jew would know what that meant. When there was a burnt sacrifice offered, the bullock or the victim then slain was the main part of the sacrifice. But sometimes there was a

little, what if I say, an unimportant supplement added to that sacrifice?— a little oil and a little wine were poured on the altar or the bullock—and thus a drink offering was said to be added to the burnt offering.

Now Paul does not venture to call himself an offering— Christ is his offering. Christ is, so to speak, the Sacrifice on the altar. He likens himself only to that little wine and oil poured out as a supplement—not necessarily to its perfection—but tolerated in performing a vow, or allowed in connection with a free will offering. You can confirm this if you refer at your leisure to the fifteenth chapter of Numbers, from the fourth to the eighth verses. The drink offering was thus a kind of addendum by which the person who gave it showed his thankfulness.

So Paul is resolved to show his thankfulness to Christ, the great Sacrifice, and he is willing that his blood should be poured as a drink offering on the altar where his Lord and Master was the great Burnt Offering. He rejoices when he can say, “I am ready to be presented as a drink offering unto God.” We have mainly to do with the second description which he gives of his death. What does he say, when the hour that this grim monster must be grappled with, is at hand? I do not find him sad. Those who delight in gloomy poetry have often represented death in terrible language. “It is hard,” says one*—*

*“To feel the hand of death arrest one’s steps, Throw a chill blight on all one’s budding hopes, And hurl one’s soul untimely to the shades.”*

And another exclaims—  
*“O God, it is a fearful thing  
To see the human soul take wing,  
In any shape, in any mood!  
I’ve seen it rushing forth in blood,  
I’ve seen it on the breaking ocean,  
Strive with a swollen convulsive motion.”*

Not so the Apostle Paul. I do not even hear him speak of flying through the gate as our grand old poet has described death. He does not say, “The hour of my dissolution is at hand”—a very proper word if he had used it. But he is not looking so much at the process as at the result of his dying. He does not even say, “The hour of my death is at hand,” but he adopts a beautiful expression, “The time of my departure”—words which are used sometimes to signify the departure of a vessel from the port—the pulling up of the anchor so that it looses its moorings when about to put out to sea. So he feels himself like a ship lying at the harbor for awhile—but he says, “The time for pulling up the anchor, the time for letting loose the cable, and cutting from the mooring is at hand. I shall soon be launched upon my voyage.”

And he knew right well where that voyage would end—in the fair havens of the Port of Peace—in the better country where his Lord had gone before him. Now we will proceed very briefly to say a word about departure. And then a shorter word still about the time of our departure. And then a little more about the time of our departure being at hand—trying here, especially, to bring forward some lessons which may be of practical usefulness to each one of us.  
I. First, then, dear Brethren, let us think a little about OUR DEPARTURE. It is quite certain we shall not dwell here forever—we shall not live here below as long as the first man did, or as those antediluvian fathers who tarried some eight or nine hundred years. The length of human life then led to greatness of sin. Monstrosities of evil were ripened through the long continuance of physical strength and the accumulating force of eager passions. All things considered, it is a mercy that life is abridged and not prolonged to a thousand years.

Amidst the sharp competition of man with man, and class with class, there is a bound to every scheme of personal aggrandizement a limit to all the spoils of individual despotism, a restraint upon the hoardings of any one’s avarice. It is well, I say, that it should be so. The narrow span of life clips the wings of ambition, and frustrates it of its prey. Death comes in to deprive the mighty of his power, to stop the speed of the invader, to scatter abroad the possessions of the rich. The most reprobate men must end their career after they have had their three score years and ten, or their four score years of wickedness.

And as for the good and godly, though we mourn their exit—especially when we think that they have been prematurely taken from us—we remember how the triumphs of genius have been, for the most part, achieved in youth. And how much the world has been enriched by the heads and hearts of those who have but sown the seeds of faith and left others to reap the fruits. If into less than the allotted term they have crowded the service of their generation, we may save our tears, for our regrets are needless. The summons will reach each one of us before long. We cannot stop here as long as the gray fathers of our race—we expect— and it is meet that we should prepare to go.

The world itself is to be consumed one day. “The elements shall melt with fervent heat.” The land on which we stand we are likely to call terra firma, but beneath it is probably an ocean of fire, and it shall, itself, feel the force of the ocean. We must not marvel the house being so frail that the tenants are unsettled and migratory. Certainly, whether we doubt it or not, we shall have to go. There will be a departure for us.

Beloved Believer in Christ Jesus, to you the soft term, “Departure,” is not more soft than the Truth it represents. To die is to depart out of this world unto the Father! What do you say about your departure? What do you say of that from which you go, and what do you think of that land to which you go? Well, of the land from which we go, my Brethren, we might say many hard things if we would—but I think we had better not. We shall speak more correctly if we say the hard things of ourselves.

This land, my Brethren, has been a land of mercy to us—there have been sorrows in it, of course. But in bidding it farewell we must do it justice and speak the truth concerning it. Our sorrows have usually sprung up in our own bosoms, and those that have come from the soil, itself, would have been very light if it had not been for the plague of our hearts, which made us vex and fret over them. Oh, the mercy you and I have enjoyed in this life! It has been worthwhile to live for us who are Believers. Even had we to die like a dog dies, it has been worthwhile to live for the joy and blessedness which God has made to pass before us.

I dare not call that an evil country in which I have met my Savior, and received the pardon of my sins! I dare not call that an ill life in which I have seen my Savior, though through a glass darkly. How shall I speak ill of that Lamb where Zion is built? It is beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the place of our solemn assemblies where we have worshipped God! No, cursed of old as the earth was to bring forth the thorn and the thistle, the existence of the Church of God in that land seems to a great degree to have made reparation for the blight to such as know and love the Savior.

Oh, have we not gone up to the House of God in company with songs of ecstatic joy? And have we not, when we have gathered round the Table of the Lord—though nothing was upon it but the type and emblem—have we not felt it a joyous thing to be found in the assembly of the Saints, and in the courts of the Lord’s House even here? When we loose our cable, and bid farewell to earth, it shall not be with bitterness in the retrospect. There is sin in it, and we are called to leave it. There has been trial in it, and we are called to be delivered from it. There has been sorrow in it, and we are glad that we shall go where we shall sorrow no more.

There have been weakness, and pain, and suffering in it, and we are glad that we shall be raised in power. There has been death in it, and we are glad to bid farewell to shrouds and to knells. But for all that, there has been such mercy in it, such loving kindness of God in it that the wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as a rose! We will not bid farewell to the world, execrating it, or leaving behind us a cold shudder and a sad remembrance— we will depart, bidding adieu to the scenes that remain, and to the people of God that tarry there a little longer—blessing Him whose goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, and who is now bringing us to dwell in the House of the Lord forever!

But, dear Brethren, if I have had to speak in a somewhat apologetic manner of the land from which we depart, I shall need to use many apologies for my own poor talk about the land to which we are bound. Ah, where do you go, spirit loosened from your clay—do you know? Where do you go? The answer must be, partly, that we don’t know. None of us have seen the streets of gold of which we sang just now. Those harpings of the harpers, harping with their harps, have never fallen on these ears. Eye has not seen it, ear has not heard it—it is all unrevealed to the senses— flesh and blood cannot inherit it, and, therefore, flesh and blood cannot imagine it.

Yet it is not unknown, for God has revealed it unto us by His Spirit. Spiritual men know what it is to feel the spirit—their own new-born spirit—living, glowing, burning, triumphing within them. They know, therefore, that if the body should drop off they would not die. They feel there is a life within them superior to blood and bone, and nerve and sinew. They feel the life of God within them, and none can deny it. Their own experience has proven to them that there is an inner life.

Well, then, when that inner life is strong and vigorous, the spirit often reveals to it what the world of spirits will be. We know what holiness is, do we not, Brethren? Are we not seeking it? That is Heaven—perfect holiness is Heaven. We know what peace means—Christ is our Peace. Rest—He gives us rest—we find that when we take His yoke. Rest is Heaven. And rest in Jesus tells us what Heaven is. We know, even today, what communion with God is. If anyone should say, “I do not know it,” I should reply to him thus—Suppose I said to you, “You know not what it is to eat and drink”? The man would tell me that I belied him, for he knew, as he knew his own existence, what it was to eat and drink.

And, as surely as I live, I have communion with God! I know it as certainly as you know that I have declared it to you. Well, Friends, that is Heaven. It has but to be developed from the germ to the produce, and there is Heaven in its full development. Communion with Believers—in like manner—know we not what that is? Have we not rejoiced in each other’s joys, been made glad with the experience of our Brethren? That, too, carried to perfection, will be Heaven. Oh, to throw yourself into the bosom of the Savior and lie there taken up with His mind and His love— yielding all things to His supremacy—beholding your King in Him!

When you have been in that state you have had an ante past of Heaven. Your view may have been but as one seeing a man’s face in the shadows, yet you would know that man again even by the shadow—so we know what Heaven is. We shall not be strangers in a strange land when we get there. Though, like the Queen of Sheba, we shall say, “The half has not been told me,” yet we shall reflect on it thus—“I did surmise there would be something of this sort. I did know from what I felt of its budding in my soul below that the full-blown flower would be somewhat of this kind.”

Where, then, is that spirit going that is departing to soar through places unknown? Your answer is, “I am going—going to the Throne of Him whose Cross first gave me life, and light, and hope. I am going to the very bosom of my Savior, where I hope to rest and to have fellowship with the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven.” This is your departure that you have in near prospect.

Suppose, dear Friend, the thought of departing from this world to Heaven should ever startle you, let me remind you that you are not the first that ever went that way. Your vessel is in the pool, as it were, or in the dock. She is going out on her voyage—oh, but you will not go alone— nor have to track your course through paths unnavigated or unknown before! When the Portuguese captain first went by the Cape of Storms it was a venturous voyage, and he called it the Cape of Good Hope when he had rounded it.

When Columbus first went in search of the New World, his was a brave spirit that dared cross the unnavigated Atlantic. But oh, there are tens of thousands that have gone where you go! The Atlantic that severs us from Canaan is white with the sails of the vessels that are on voyage there! Fear not! They have not been wrecked. We hear good news of their arrival—there is good hope for you. There are no icebergs on the road, no mists, no counter currents, and no sunken vessels or quicksands.

You have but to cut your moorings, and with Christ on board you shall be at your desired haven at once. Remember, too, your Savior went that way. Have you to depart? Christ departed, too. Some of my Brethren are always so pleased—pleased as some children are with a new toy—at the idea that they shall never die. They hope that Christ will come before the

time of their decease—for, “we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Well, let Him come! Yes, let Him come quickly!

But if I had my choice. Were it permitted me to choose, I would prefer to pass through the portals of the grave. Those that are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will not prevent, go before, or steal a march on them which are asleep. But surely they will lack one point of conformity to their Lord—for He disdained not to sojourn awhile in the tomb— though it were impossible that He should be held of death. Let the seal of death, then, be set upon this face of mine, that my fate in the matter may be like His. Enoch and Elijah were exempt from this privilege—privilege I call it—of conformity to His death.

But it is safe to go by the beaten track, and desirable to travel by the ordinary route to the heavenly city. Jesus died. Through the valley of shadows, the vale of death-shades, there are the footprints of Immanuel all the way along—go down into it and fear not. Think you, too, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we may well look forward to our departure, and look forward to it comfortably, too? Is it not expedient by reason of nature? Is it not desirable by reason of Grace? Is it not necessary by reason of Glory?

I say, is not our departure necessary by reason of nature? Men are not, when they come to old age, what they were in the prime of their days. The staff is needed for the foot, and the glass is wanted for the eye. And after a certain number of years, even those on whom Time has gently laid his hand find the taste is gone. They might proclaim, like old Barzillai, that they know not what they eat or drink. The hearing fails, the daughters of music are silent, the whole tenement gets very crazy.

Oh, it were a melancholy thing if we had to continue to live! Perhaps there is no more hideous picture than that which the satirist drew of men who lived on to six or seven hundred years of age—that strange satirical man, Swift. Be thankful that we do not linger on in imbecility. Kind Nature says we may depart. She gives us notice and makes it welcome by the decays that come upon us. Besides, Divine Grace desires it. For it were a poor experience of His kindness as our best and true Friend that did not make us long to see our Savior’s face. It is no mere driveling sentiment, I hope, when we join to sing*—*

*“Father, I long, I faint to see  
The place of Your abode!  
I’d leave Your earthly courts, and flee  
Up to Your seat, my God!”*

I must confess there was one verse in the hymn we sung just now which I could not quite chime in with. I am not eagerly wishing to go to Heaven this night. I have a great deal more to do here! Therefore I do not want to take a hasty leave of all below. To full many of us, I suppose, there are times of quiet contemplation and times of rapt devotion when our thoughts surmount these lower skies, and look within the veil and then, oh, how we wish to be there! Yet there are other times. Times of strenuous activity when we buckle on the armor and press to the front. And then we see such a battle to be waged, such a victory to be won, such a work to be worked, that we say—“Well to abide in the flesh, to continue with you all for the joy and furtherance of your faith seems more loyal to Christ, more necessary for you, and more in accord with our present feelings.”

I think it is idle for us to be crying to go Home. It is too much like the lazy workman that wants Saturday night to come when it is only Tuesday morning. Oh, no! If God spares us to do a long life’s work, so much the better. At the same time, as a spark flies upward to the sun, the central source of flame, so does the newborn spirit aspire towards Heaven, towards Jesus, by whom it was kindled. And, I add, that Glory demands it, and makes our departure necessary. Is not Christ in Heaven praying that we may be with Him where He is?

Are there not the saints in Heaven, of whom it is said, they without us cannot be perfect? The circle of the skies cannot be completed until all the redeemed are there. The grand orchestra of Glory misses some notes as yet. What if the bass is full? There are still some trebles and tenors needed! There are some sopranos that will be requisite to swell the enchanting melodies and consummate the worship of the Eternal! What, therefore, Nature prepares for, Grace desires, and Glory, itself, demands, we have no just cause to shudder at. Our departure need not make us afraid.

II. Having thus occupied so much time on this first point, I have little or no room to enlarge on the second. THE TIME OF OUR DEPARTURE, though unknown to us, is fixed by God, unalterably fixed. It is so rightly, wisely, lovingly settled and prepared for that no chance or haphazard can break the spell of destiny. The wisdom of Divine Love shall be proven by the carefulness of its provision. Perhaps you will say—“It is not easy to discern this. The natural order of things is so often disturbed by casualties of one kind or another.”

Let me remind you, then, that it is through faith, only through faith, that we can understand these things. For it is as true now of the Providence of God as it was of old of the creation of God that “things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Because the mode of your departure is beyond your own comprehension, it does not follow that the time of your departure is not foreseen by God. “Ah, but,” you say, “it seems so shocking for anyone to die suddenly, unexpectedly, without warning, and so come to an untimely end!”

I answer you thus: If you take counsel with death your flesh will find no comfort—but if you trust in God, your faith will cease to parley with these feverish anxieties, and your spirit will enjoy a sweet calm. Dire calamities befell Job when he was bereaved of his children and his servants, his herds and his flocks. Yet he took little heed of the different ways in which his troubles were brought about. Whether by an onslaught of the Sabeans or by a raid of the Chaldeans—whether the fire fell from Heaven, or the wind came from the wilderness—it mattered little. Whatever strange facts broke on his ears, one thought penetrated his heart, and one expression broke from his lips—“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord”!

So, too, Beloved, when the time of your departure arrives—be it by disease or decay, be it by accident or assault that your soul quits its present tenement—rest assured that “your times are in His hands” And know of a

surety that “all His saints are in His hands likewise. Besides this, dear Friends, since the time of our departure must come, were the manner of it at our own disposal, I think we should most of us say, “What I shall choose, I know not.” Fevers and chills, the pangs and tortures of one malady or another, or the delirium incident to sickness. Can we really prefer one over the other? Or are the shock of a disaster, or the terror of a wreck at sea to be preferred? One is the prolonging of pain—the other the dispatch of fate. Should we covet and desire weeks or months spent in the vestibule of the grave?

Rather should we say, Let the Lord do with me as seems Him good. To live in constant communion with God is a sure relief from all these bitter frettings. Those who have walked with Him have often been favored with such premonitions of their departure as no physician could give them. Survivors will tell you that though death seemed to come suddenly to the godly merchant, he had in the last acts of his life appeared to expect and prepare for it. He even had taken an affecting farewell of his family while in the vigor of health as though he were aware that he was setting out on his last journey, which a few hours afterwards it proved to be.

So, too, the minister of Christ has sometimes fallen, expiring in his pulpit with a nunc dimittis, “Now let Your servant depart in peace” on his lips—secretly, but surely—made ready to depart and to be with his Lord. There is a time to depart. And God’s time to call me is, by His Grace, my time to go.

III. Now, to our third point—THE TIME AT HAND. “The time of my departure is at hand.” In a certain sense, every Christian here may say this. For whatever interval may interpose between us and death, how very short it is! Have you not all a sense that time flows faster than it did? In our childish days we thought a year was quite a period of time, a very epoch in our career. Now as for weeks—one can hardly reckon them! We seem to be traveling in an express train, flying along at such a rate that we can harshly count the months!

Why, the past year only seemed to come in at one door and go out at the other. It was over so soon. We shall soon be at the terminus of life, even if we live for several years. But in the case of some of us, God knows of whom, this year, perhaps this month, will be our last. I think tomorrow night we shall have to report at the Church Meeting the deaths of nine members of this Church within the last eight or nine days. Since these have gone, some of us may expect to follow them.

There are those who will evidently go—disease has set in upon them. Some of those disorders that in this land seem to be always fatal tell these dear friends that the time of their departure is undoubtedly at hand. And then old age, which comes so gracefully and graciously to many of our matrons and our veterans, shows, past all dispute, “the time of your departure is at hand.” The lease of your life is almost up. Not, indeed, that I only would address myself to such special cases. I speak to every Brother and Sister in Christ here, “The time of our departure is at hand.”

What then, dear Friends? Is not this a reason for surveying our condition again? If our vessel is just launching, let us see that she is seaworthy. It would be a sad thing for us to be near departing and yet to be just as near discovering that we are lost. Remember, dear Friends, it is possible for anyone to maintain a decent profession of Christ for fifty years, and be a hypocrite, after all. It is possible to occupy an office in the Church of God, and that of the very highest, and yet to be a Judas.

And one may not only serve Christ, but suffer for Him, too, and yet, like Demas, may not persevere to the end. For all that looks like Grace is not Grace. Where true Grace is, there it will always be. But where the semblance of it is, it will oftentimes suddenly disappear. Search yourself, good Brothers and Sisters. Set your house in order, for you must die and not live. Have you the faith of God’s elect? Are you built on Christ? Is your heart renewed? Are you verily an heir of Heaven? I charge every man and woman within this place, since the time of his departure may be far nearer than he thinks, to take stock, and reckon up, and see whether he is Christ’s or not.

But if the time of my departure is at hand, and I am satisfied that it is all right with me, is there not a call for me to do all I can for my household? Father, the time of your departure is at hand—is your wife unsaved? Will you pass another night without lovingly speaking to her of her soul? Are those dear boys unregenerate? Is that girl still thoughtless? The time of your departure is at hand! You can do little more for the lads and lasses—you can do little more for the wife and the brother. Oh, do what you can!

Sister, you are consumptive. You will soon be gone. You are the only Christian in the family. God sent you there to be a missionary. Do not have to say, when you are dying, “The last hope of my family is going out, for I have not cared for their souls.” Masters, you that have servants about you, you must soon be taken away. Will you not do something for their souls? I know if there were a mother about to go to Australia, and she had to leave some of her children behind, she would fret if she thought, “I have not done all that needs to be done for those poor children. Who will care for them now their mother is gone?” Well, but to have neglected something necessary for their temporal comfort would be little in comparison with not having cared for their souls! Oh, let it not be so! Let it not be a thorn in your dying pillow that you did not fulfill the relations of life while you had the opportunity! “The time of my departure is at hand.”

Then there is a third lesson. Let me try to finish all my work, not only as regards my duty to my family, but in respect to all the world so far as my influence or ability can reach. Rich men, be your own executors. Do what you can with your substance while it is your own. Men of talent, speak for Jesus before your tongue has ceased to articulate and becomes a piece of clay. George Whitfield may supply us with a fine model of this uniform consistency. He was so orderly and precise in his habits, and so scrupulous and holy in his life that he used to say he would not like to go to bed if there were a pair of gloves out of place in the house, much less were his will not made, or any part of his duty unfulfilled to the best of his knowledge.

He wished to have all right, and to be fully prepared for whatever might happen, so that, if he never woke again from the slumbers of the night, nobody would have cause to reflect upon anything he had left undone, entailing needless trouble on his wife or his children. Such care bestowed on what some account to be trifles is a habit worthy of our imitation. The main work of life may be sadly spoiled by negligence in little things. This is a striking test of character. “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust, also, in much.”

Oh, then, time is fleeting, dispatch is urgent! Gather up your thoughts, quicken your hands, speed your pace, for God commands you to make haste. If you have anything to do, you must do it soon. The wheels of eternity are sounding behind you. Press on! If you are to run a race you must run it fast, for Death will soon overtake you. You may almost feel the hot breath of the white horse of Death upon your cheeks already. O God, help us to do something before we go and be no more seen!

It was grand of the Apostle that in the same breath, when he said, “The time of my departure is at hand,” he could also say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” So may we be able to say when the time of our departure has arrived. If the time of our departure is at hand, let it cheer us amid our troubles. Sometimes, when our friends go to Liverpool to sail for Canada, or any other distant region—on the night before they sail they get into a very poor lodging.

I think I hear one of them grumbling, “What a hard bed! What a small room! What a bad view!” “Oh,” says the other, “never mind, Brother. We are not going to live here. We are off tomorrow.” Think you in like manner, you children of poverty—this is not your rest. Put up with it—you are away tomorrow! You sons of sorrow, you daughters of weakness, you children of sickness, let this cheer you—

*“The road may be rough,  
But it cannot be long  
And I’ll smooth it with hope,  
And cheer it with song.”*

Oftentimes when I have been traveling on the Continent I have been obliged to put up at an hotel that was full, where the room was so inconvenient that it scarcely furnished any accommodation at all. But we have said, “Oh, never mind—we are off in the morning! What matters it for one night?” So, as we are soon to be gone, and the time of our departure is at hand, let us not be ruffling our tempers about trifles, nor raise evil spirits around us by caviling and finding fault. Take things as you find them, for we shall soon be up and away.

And if the time of my departure is at hand, I should like to be on good terms with all my friends on earth. Were you going to stop here always, when a man treated you badly, apart from a Christian spirit, you might as well have it out with him. But as we are going to stop such a little while, we may well put up with it. It is not desirable to be too ready at taking an offense. What if my neighbor has an ugly temper? The Lord has to put up with him, and so I may. There are some people with whom I would rather dwell in Heaven forever than abide with them half an hour on earth. Nevertheless, for the love of the Brethren, and for the peace of the Church, we may tolerate much during the short time we have to do with peevish moods and perverse humors.

Does Christ love them, and shall not we? He covers their offenses! Why, then, should we expose them or publish them abroad? If any of you have any grievances with one another—if there is any bickering, or jealousy between you—I should like you to make up tonight, because the time of your departure is at hand. Suppose there is someone you spoke harshly to— you would not like to hear tomorrow that he was dead, would you? You would not have minded what you said to him if he had lived—but now that the seal is set upon all your communications, one with another, you could wish that the last conversation had been more friendly.

There has been a little difference between two brothers—a little coldness between two sisters. Oh, since one or other of you will soon be gone, make up! Live in love, as Christ loved you and gave Himself for you! If one of you were going to Australia tomorrow, never to come back again, and you had had a little tiff with your brother, why I know before you started you would say, “Come, Brother, let us part good friends.” So now, since you are so soon to depart, end all strife, and dwell together in blessed harmony till the departure actually occurs.

If the time of my departure is at hand, then let me guard against being elated by any temporal prosperity. Possessions, estates, creature comforts dwindle into insignificance before this outlook. Yes, you may have procured a comfortable house and a delightful garden, but it is not your rest—your tenure is about to expire. Yes, you may say, “God did prosper me last year, the bank account did swell, the premises were enlarged, and the business thrived beyond all expectation.” Ah, hold them loosely. Do not think that they are to be your Heaven. Be very jealous lest you should get your good things here, for if you do, you will not have them hereafter.

Be not lifted up too much when you grasp the pain of which you must so soon quit your hold. As I said of the discomfort of the hotel, we did not think much of it, because we were going away. So, if it happens to be very luxurious, do not be enamored of it, for you must go tomorrow. “These are the things,” said one, when he looked at a rich man’s treasures, “that make it hard to die.” But it need not be so if you hold them as gifts of God’s kindness, and not as gods to be worshipped with self-indulgence. You may take leave of them with composure, “knowing in yourselves that you have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

Lastly, if the time of our departure is at hand, let us be prepared to bear our testimony. We are witnesses for Christ. Let us bear our testimony before we are taken up and mingle with the cloud of witnesses who have finished their course and rested from their labors. Do you say, “I hope to do that on my dying bed”? Brothers and Sisters, do it now—do it now—for you may never have opportunity to do it then.

Mr. Whitfield was always desirous that he might bear a testimony for Christ in the hour of death. But he could not do so at that momentous crisis, for as you well know, he was suddenly taken ill after preaching, and very soon expired. Was this to be grievously deplored? Ah, no. Why, dear Friends, he had borne so many testimonies for his Lord and Master while he was alive, there was no need to add anything in the last few moments before his death, or to supply the deficiencies of a life devoted to

the proclamation of the Gospel.

Oh, let you and I bear our testimony NOW! Let us tell to others, wherever we can, what Christ has done for us. Let us help Christ’s cause with all our might while it is called today. Let us work for Jesus while we can work for Him. As to thinking we can undo the effect of our idleness by the spasmodic effort of our dying breath, that were a vain hope, indeed, compared with living for Jesus Christ. Your dying testimony, if you are able to bear it, will have the greater force if it is not a sickly regret, but a healthy confirmation of your whole career.

I only wish these words about departure were applicable to all here. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” But, “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways, and live.” O unconverted Man, Woman—the time for letting loose your cable draws near. It is even at the door. You must shortly set sail for a far country. Alas, then yours is not the voyage of a passenger with a sweeter clime, a happier home, a brighter prospect in view.

Your departure is the banishment of a convict with a penal settlement looming in the distance—fear all widespread and hope all blank—for the term of your banishment is for eternity! I fear there are some of you who may depart before long full of gloom with a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. I seem to see the Angel of Death hovering over my audience. He may, perhaps, select for his victim an unconverted soul. If so, behind that Death Angel attends something far more grim.

Hell follows death to souls that love not Christ. Oh, make haste, make haste! Seek Christ! Lay hold on eternal life. And may infinite Mercy save you, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen and Amen.

“THE TREASURY OF DAVID,” BY C. H. Spurgeon, VOLS. I & II. This work is the substance of many Libraries. It contains the essence of all the commentators upon the Psalms, both ancient and modern. Besides containing original observations by the Author, it is crowded with the wisdom of hundreds of the most eminent writers. Reviewers pronounce the work to be of the highest value. The volumes are published at 8s. each, and contain far more matter than is generally sold for half a guinea. Vol. I is now in the fourth thousand. Published by PASSMORE & ALABASTER, Paternoster Row, and may be had of all.

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÷2Ti 4.13

PAUL—HIS CLOAK AND HIS BOOKS  
NO. 542

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 29, 1863, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you, and the books, but especially the parchments.”** *2Ti 4:13***.**

FOOLISH persons have made remarks upon the trifles of Scripture. They have marveled why so little a matter as a cloak should be mentioned in an Inspired Book. But they ought to know that this is one of the many indications that the Book is by the same Author as the Book of Nature. Are there not things which our short-sightedness would call trifles in the volume of Creation around us? What is the peculiar value of the daisy upon the lawn, or the buttercup in the meadow? Compared with the rolling sea, or the eternal hills, how inconsiderable they seem!

Why has the humming bird a plumage so wondrously bejeweled and why is so much marvelous skill expended upon the wing of a butterfly? Why such curious machinery in the foot of a fly, or such a matchless optical arrangement in the eye of a spider? Because to most men these are trifles, are they to be left out of Nature’s plans? No. Because greatness of Divine skill is as apparent in the minute as in the magnificent—even so in Holy Writ—the little things which are embalmed in the amber of Inspiration are far from inappropriate or unwise.

Besides, in Providence are there not trifles? It is not every day that a nation is rent by revolution, or a throne shaken by rebellion—far oftener a bird’s nest is destroyed by a child, or an anthill overturned by a spade. It is not at every hour that a torrent inundates a province, but how frequently do the dewdrops moisten the green leaves? We do not often read of hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes, but the annals of Providence could reveal the history of many a grain of dust borne along in the summer’s gale, many a sear leaf rent from the poplar and many a rush waving by the river’s brim.

Learn to see in the little things of the Bible the God of Providence and Nature. Observe two pictures and you will, if thoroughly skilled in art, detect certain minute details which indicate the same authorship if they are by the same hand. The very little things often, to men of artistic eye, identify the painter more certainly than the more prominent strokes, which might far more easily be counterfeited. Experts detect a handwriting by a slight quivering in the upstrokes, the turn of the final mark, a dot, a cross, or even less matters.

Can we not see the legible handwriting of the God of Nature and Providence in the very fact that the sublimities of Revelation are interspersed with homely, everyday remarks? But they are not trifles. I venture to say that my text has much in it of spiritual instruction. I trust that this cloak may warm your hearts this morning, that these books may give you instruction, and that the Apostle himself may be to you an example of heroism, fitted to stir your minds to imitation.

I. First, let us LOOK AT THIS MEMORABLE CLOAK which Paul left with Carpus at Troas. Troas was a principal seaport town of Asia Minor. Very likely the Apostle Paul was seized at Troas on the second occasion of his being taken before the Roman emperor. The soldiers usually appropriated to themselves any extra garments in the possession of an arrested person, such things being considered as the perquisites of those who made the arrest. The Apostle may have been forewarned of his seizure, and therefore prudently committed his few books and his outer garment, which made up all his household stuff, to the care of a certain honest man named Carpus.

Although Troas was a full six hundred miles’ journey from Rome, yet the Apostle Paul is too poor to purchase a garment, and so directs Timothy, as he is coming that way, to bring his cloak. He needs it much, for the sharp winter is coming on and the dungeon is very, very chilly. This is a brief detail of the circumstances. What kind of cloak it was, certain learned commentators have spent whole pages in trying to discover. But as we know nothing at all about it, ourselves, we will leave the question to them—believing that they know as much as we do, but no more.

1. But what does the cloak teach us? There are five or six lessons in it. The first is this—let us perceive here, with admiration, the complete selfsacrifice of the Apostle Paul for the Lord’s sake. Remember, my dear Friends, what the Apostle once was. He was great, famous, and wealthy. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. He was so zealous among his brethren that he could not but have commanded their sincere respect. He was attended by a guard of soldiers when he went from Jerusalem to Damascus. I do not know whether the horse on which he rode was his own, but he must have been a man of importance to have been allotted so important a post in religious matters.

He was a man of good standing in society and doubtless everybody looking at young Saul of Tarsus would have said, “He will make a great man. He has every chance in life. He has a liberal education, a zealous temperament, abundant gifts and the general esteem of the Jewish rulers. He will rise to eminence.” But when the Lord met him that day on the road to Damascus, how everything changed with him! Then he could truly say, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him.”

He begins to preach—away goes his character. Now nothing is too bad for Paul among his Jewish associates. “Away with such a fellow from the earth. It is not fit that he should live,” was the exact expression of Jewish feeling towards him. He continues his labors and away has gone his wealth—he has either scattered it among the poor, or it has been sequestered by his former friends. He journeys from place to place at no small sacrifice of comfort. The wife to whom he was probably once united—for no unmarried man could vote in the Sanhedrim as Paul did against Stephen—had fallen sick and died and the Apostle now preferred a life of singleness, that he might give himself entirely to his work.

If only in this world he had hope, he would have been of all men the most miserable. He has at last grown gray, and now the very men who owed their conversion to him have forsaken him. When he first came into Rome they stood with him, but now they have all gone like winter’s leaves, and the poor old man, “such an one as Paul the aged,” sits with nothing in all the world to call property but an old cloak and a few books—and those are six hundred miles away. Ah, how he emptied himself, and to what extremity of destitution was he willing to bring himself for Christ’s name sake!

Do not complain that he mentions his clothes—a greater than he did so and did so in an hour more solemn than that in which Paul wrote the Epistle. Remember who it was that said, “They parted My garments among them and upon My vesture did they cast lots.” The Savior must die in absolute nakedness and the Apostle is made something like He as he sits shivering in the cold.

Brethren, was Paul right in all this? Were his sacrifices reasonable? Was the object which he contemplated worthy of all this suffering and self-denial? Was he carried away by an excessive heat of fanaticism to spend upon an inferior object what was not required of him? No Believer here thinks so. You all believe that if you could give up substance and talent and esteem, yes, and your own life, also, for Christ, it would be well spent. I say you think so, but how many of us have ever carried it out? Had I not better say, how few of us? There are some who seldom have an opportunity for sacrificing for Christ at all. What they give is spared from their superfluity—they never feel it.

It is a high luxury when a man has such a love for Jesus that he is able to give until he pinches himself. If Paul were reasonable, what are you and I? If Paul only gives as a Christian should do, how ashamed should we be of ourselves? If he will bring himself to poverty for Christ, what shall we say of those base-born professors who will not lose a trifle in their trade for honesty’s sake? What shall we say of those who say “I know how to get money and I know how to keep it, too,” and look with scorn upon those who are more generous than they? If you are content to condemn Paul and charge him with folly, do so. But if not, if this is but a reasonable service and such as the infinite Grace of God which Paul experienced required of him, then let us do something of the like sort. If you have experienced as much love, love the Lord as much and spend and be spent for the Lord Jesus!

2. Secondly, dear Friends, we learn how utterly forsaken the Apostle was by his friends. If he had not a cloak of his own, could not some of them lend him one? Ten years before, the Apostle was brought in chains along the Appian way to Rome. And fifty miles before he reached Rome, a little band of members of the Church came to meet him. And when he came within twenty miles of the city, at the “Three Taverns,” there came a still larger group of the disciples to escort him, so that the chained prisoner, Paul, went into Rome attended by all the Believers in that city.

He was then a younger man. But now for some reason or other, ten years afterward, nobody comes to visit him. He is confined in prison and they do not even know where he is, so that Onesiphorus, when he comes to Rome, has to seek him out very diligently. He is as obscure as if he had never had a name and though he is still as great and glorious an Apostle as ever, men have so forgotten him, and the Church has so despised him that he is friendless! The Philippian Church, ten years before, had made a collection for him when he was in prison. And though he had learned in whatsoever state he was, to be content, yet he thanked them for their contribution as an offering of a sweet smelling savor unto God.

Now he is old and no Church remembers him. He is brought to trial and there are Eubulus and Pudens and Linus—will not some of them stand by his side when he is brought before the emperor? “At my first answer no man stood with me.” Poor soul, he served his God and worked himself down to poverty for the Church’s sake, yet the Church has forsaken him! Oh, how great must have been the anguish of the loving heart of Paul at such ingratitude! Why did not the few who were in Rome, if they had been ever so poor, make a contribution for him? Could not those who were of Caesar’s household have found a cloak for the Apostle? No. He is so utterly left, that although he is ready to die of fever in the dungeon, not a soul will lend or give him a cloak.

What patience does this teach to those similarly situated! Has it fallen to your lot, my Brother, to be forsaken of friends? Were there other times when your name was the symbol of popularity, when many lived in your favor like insects in your sunbeam? And has it come to this, now, that you are forgotten as a dead man out of mind? In your greatest trials do you find your fewest friends? Have those who once loved and respected you fallen asleep in Jesus? And have others turned out to be hypocritical and untrue? What are you to do now?

You are to remember this case of the Apostle. It is put here for your comfort. He had to pass through as deep waters as any that you are called to ford, and yet remember, he says, “Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.” So now, when man deserts you, God will be your Friend. This God is our God forever and ever—not in sunshiny weather only, but forever and ever! This God is our God in dark nights as well as in bright days.

Go to Him, spread your complaint before Him. Murmur not. If Paul had to suffer desertion, you must not expect better usage. Let not your faith fail you as though some new thing had happened to you. This is common to the saints. David had his Ahithophel, Christ his Judas, Paul his Demas—and can you expect to fare better than they? As you look at that old cloak, as it speaks of human ingratitude, be of good courage and wait on the Lord, for He shall strengthen your heart. “Wait, I say, on the Lord.”

3. There is a third lesson. Our text shows the Apostle’s independence of mind. Why did not the Apostle borrow a cloak? Why did he not beg one? No, no, no! That is not to the Apostle’s taste at all. He has a cloak and though it is six hundred miles away, he will wait until it comes. Though there may be some that may lend, he knows that they who go a borrowing go a sorrowing, and that they who beg are seldom welcome. I do not think a Christian man should blush to borrow or to beg if he is absolutely brought to it, but I never like that class of people who do either systematically.

I wish many of the poor would not damage the charity of others by being so ready to beg on every presence of necessity. A Christian man would do well to remember that it is never to his honor, though it is not always to his dishonor, to beg. “I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed,” said the unfaithful steward. And if he had been a faithful one he would have been more ashamed, still. I say again, when it comes to the pinch and a man must ask of his fellows, let him do it boldly. But let him never be too ready to do it, but, like the Apostle, as long as he can do without it, let him say, “I have labored with my own hand and eaten no man’s bread for nothing.”

He taught that the minister of God had a right to be supported by the people. “If you partake of their spirituals,” says he, “it is right that you give of your temporals.” He insists upon it that they are not to muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Yet though he holds this as a great general principle, he never takes anything himself. He follows his trade of tent making. He stitches away at the canvas and earns his own living so that he is chargeable unto no man. Noble example! How anxious all Christians ought to be to see that they do not come to want in their old age!

Yet Paul does come to poverty—his independent spirit is not broken at the last, for he will wait till his own cloak is brought six hundred miles rather than ask any man to give or lend. Let the Christian man be quite as independent, for though independence is not a Christian grace, yet it is a common grace which, when wreathed with Christianity, is very beautiful and befits the character of a son of God.

4. The fourth remark is—see here, how very little the Apostles thought about how they were dressed. Paul wants enough to keep him warm. He asks no more. There is no doubt whatever that the other parts of his garments were getting very dilapidated—that he was, indeed, in a state of rags. And so he needed the cloak to wrap about him. We read in olden times of many of the most eminent servants of God being dressed in the poorest manner. When good Bishop Hooper was led out to be burnt, he had been long in prison and his clothes were so gone from him that he borrowed an old scholar’s gown, full of rags and holes, that he might put it on and went limping with pains of sciatica and rheumatism to the stake.

We read of Jerome of Prague, that he lay in a damp, cold dungeon and was refused anything to cover him in his nakedness and cold. Some ministers are very careful lest they should not always be dressed in a canonical or gentlemanly manner. I like that remark of Whitfield’s, when someone of a bad character wondered how he could preach without a cassock. “Ah,” he said, “I can preach without a cassock, but I cannot preach without a character.” What matters the outward garment, so long as the character is right?

This is a lesson to our private members, too. We sometimes hear them say, “I could not come out on the Sunday—I had not fit clothes to come in.” Any clothes are fit to come to the House of God with, if they are paid for, no matter how coarse they may be. If they are the best God has given you, do not murmur. Inasmuch as the trial of raiment is a very sharp one to some of the poorest of God’s people, I think this text was put into the Bible for their comfort. Your Master wore no soft and dainty raiment. His garment was the simple peasant’s smock-frock—woven from the top throughout without seam—and yet He never blushed to wear it in the presence of kings and priests.

I shall always believe that the Christian ought to cultivate a noble indifference to these outward things. But when it comes to the pinch of absolute want of clothing, then he may comfort himself in this thought, “Now am I companion with the Master. Now do I walk in the same temptation as the Apostles. Now I suffer even as they also suffered.” Every saint is an image of Christ. But a poor saint is His exact image, for Christ was poor. So, if you are brought to such a pinch with regard to poverty that you scarcely know how to provide things decent by way of raiment, do not be dispirited. But say, “My Master suffered the same, and so did the Apostle Paul.” And so take heart and be of good cheer.

5. Paul’s cloak at Troas shows me how mighty the Apostle was to resist temptation. “I do not see that,” you say. The Apostle had the gift of miracles. Our Savior, though able to work miracles, never worked anything like a miracle on His own account. Nor did His Apostles. Miraculous gifts were entrusted to them with Gospel ends and purposes—for the good of others and for the promotion of the Truth of God. But never for themselves. Our Savior was tempted of the devil, you will remember, when He was hungry, to turn stones into bread. That was a strong temptation—to apply miraculous powers which were intended for other ends—to His own comfort.

But He rebuked Satan and said, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Paul also had power to have created a cloak if he had liked. Why could he not? His very shadow healed the sick! If he had willed it, he could have prevented the cold and damp from having any effect upon himself. He who had once raised to life dead Eutychus, when he had fallen from a loft, and brought back the vital heat, could certainly have kept the heat in his own body if he had chosen. And I am bold to say the devil often came to him and said, “If you are an Apostle of God, if you can work miracles, command this atmosphere to rise in temperature, or these rags to be joined together and form you a comfortable raiment.”

You do not know—you cannot tell, for you were never put to it—what were the stern struggles the Apostle must have had in resisting the foul temptation to use his miraculous gifts for himself. O Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid you and I are much more ready to give way to self than was the Apostle. We preach the Gospel and if God helps us, oh, directly the devil will have us to take some of the praise. “You preached a good sermon this morning,” said one to John Bunyan, as he came down the stairs. “You are too late,” said Honest John, “the devil told me that when I was preaching.” Yes, God works the miracles, but we take the honor to ourselves.

There is the temptation for any man who has gifts to use them to his own purposes. And if he does, he is an unfaithful steward to his Master. I do beseech you, whether in the Sunday school or the Church, never let the miracle-working power which God has given you be used for yourselves. You can do for Christ’s sake mighty things through faith and prayer, but never let prayer and faith be prostituted to so base a purpose as to minister unto the flesh. I know carnal minds will not comprehend this, but spiritual minds, who know the temptations of the devil, will know how stern must be a life-long battle to keep ourselves back from doing that which might apparently make us happy, but which would at the same time make us unholy.

6. The sixth lesson from this cloak is we are taught in this passage how precisely similar one child of God is to another. I know we look upon Abraham and Isaac and Jacob as being very great and blessed beings—we think that they lived in a higher region than we do. We cannot think that if they had lived in these times, they would have been Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We suppose that these are very bad days and that any great height of Divine Grace, or self-denial is not very easily attainable.

Brethren, my own conviction is that if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had lived now—instead of being less, they would have been greater saints—for they only lived in the dawn, and we live in the noon. We hear the Apostles often called “Saint” Peter and “Saint” Paul. And thus they are set up on high as on an elevated niche. If we had seen Peter and Paul we should have thought them a very ordinary sort of people—wonderfully like ourselves. And if we had gone into their daily life and trials, we should have said, “Well, you are wonderfully superior to what I am in Grace, but somehow or other, you are men of like passions with me. I have a quick temper, so have you, Peter.

“I have a thorn in the flesh, so have you, Paul. I have a sick house, Peter’s wife’s mother lies sick of a fever. I complain of the rheumatism, and the Apostle Paul, when aged, feels the cold and wants his cloak.” Ah, we must not consider the Bible as a Book intended for transcendental superelevated souls—it is an everyday Book and these good people were everyday people. They had more Divine Grace, but we can get more Grace as well as they could—the Fountain at which they drew is quite as full and as free to us as to them. We have only to believe after their fashion and trust to Jesus after their way—and although our trials are not the same as theirs, we shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

I like to see religion brought out in everyday life. Do not tell me about the godliness of the Tabernacle. Tell me about the godliness of your shop, your counter, and your kitchen. Let me see how Divine Grace enables you to be patient in the cold, or joyful in hunger, or industrious in labor. Though Grace is no common thing, yet it shines best in common things.

To preach a sermon, or to sing a hymn is but a paltry thing compared with the power to suffer cold and hunger and nakedness for Christ’s sake. Courage then, courage then, fellow Pilgrim! The road was not smoothed for Paul any more than it is for us. There was no royal road to Heaven in

those days any more than there is now. They had to go through sloughs and bogs and mire—just as we do—  
*“They wrestled hard as we do now  
With sins and doubts and fears,”*  
but they have gained the victory at last, and even so shall we! So much then, for the cloak which was left at Troas with Carpus.  
II. We will LOOK AT HIS BOOKS. We do not know what the books were, and we can only form some guess as to what the parchments were. Paul had a few books which were left, perhaps wrapped up in the cloak, and Timothy was to be careful to bring them. Even an Apostle must read. Some of our very ultra-Calvinistic Brothers and Sisters think that a minister who reads books and studies his sermon must be a very deplorable specimen of a preacher. A man who comes up into the pulpit, professes to take his text on the spot and talks any quantity of nonsense is the idol of many.  
If he will speak without premeditation, or pretend to do so, and never produce what they call a dish of dead men’s brains—oh, that is the preacher! How rebuked are they by the Apostle! He is Inspired and yet he wants books! He has been preaching at least for thirty years, and yet he wants books! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants books! He had been caught up into the third Heaven and had heard things which it was unlawful for a men to utter, yet he wants books! He had written the major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants books!  
The Apostle says to Timothy, and so he says to every preacher, “Give yourself unto reading.” The man who never reads will never be read. He who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men’s brains proves that he has no brains of his own. Brothers and Sisters, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. You need to read. Renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible sound theological works, especially the Puritan writers and expositions of the Bible. We are quite persuaded that the very best way for you to be spending your leisure is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterward you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master’s service. Paul cries, “Bring the books”—join in the cry.  
Our second remark is that the Apostle is not ashamed to confess that he does read. He is writing to his young son, Timothy. Now some old preachers never like to say a thing which will let the young ones into their secrets. They suppose they must put on a very dignified air and make a mystery of their sermonizing. But all this is alien from the spirit of truthfulness. Paul wants books and is not ashamed to tell Timothy that he does. And Timothy may go and tell Tychicus and Titus if he likes—Paul does not care.

Paul herein is a picture of industry . He is in prison. He cannot preach—what will he do? As he cannot preach, he will read. As we read of the fishermen of old and their boats, the fishermen were out of them. What were they doing? Mending their nets. So if Providence has laid you upon a sick bed and you cannot teach your class—if you cannot be working for God in public, mend your nets by reading. If one occupation is taken from you, take another and let the books of the Apostle read you a lesson of industry.

He says, “ Especially the parchments.” I think the books were Latin and Greek works but the parchments were Oriental. And possibly they were the parchments of Holy Scripture. Or, as likely, they were his own parchments, on which were written the originals of his letters which stand in our Bible as the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and so on. Now, it must be, “Especially the parchments” with all our reading. Let it be especially the Bible. Do you attach no weight to this advice? This advice is more needed in England now than almost at any other time, for the number of persons who read the Bible, I believe, is becoming smaller every day.

Persons read the views of their denominations as set forth in the periodicals. They read the views of their leader as set forth in his sermons or his works. But the Book, the good old Book, the Divine Fountainhead from which all Revelation wells up—this is too often left. You may go to human puddles until you forsake the clear crystal stream which flows from the Throne of God. Read the books, by all means, but especially the parchments. Search human literature, if you will, but especially stand fast by that Book which is Infallible, the Revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**III.** We now want to have AN INTERVIEW WITH THE APOSTLE PAUL HIMSELF, for we may learn much from him. It is almost too dark to see him—we will find him in that frightful den! The horrid dungeon—the filth lies upon the floor till it looks like a road which is seldom scraped—the draft blows through the only little slit which they call a window. The poor old man, without his cloak, wraps his ragged garment about him. Sometimes you see him kneeling down to pray and then he dips his pen into the ink and writes to his dear son, Timothy. No companion, except Luke, who occasionally comes in for a short time. Now, how shall we find the old man? What sort of temper will he be in?

We find him *full of confidence in the religion which has cost him so much.* For in the first chapter, at the twelfth verse, we hear him say, “For this reason I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” No doubt, often the tempter said to him, “Paul, why you have lost everything for your religion! It has brought you to beggary. See, you have preached it and what is the reward of it? The very men you have converted have forsaken you. Give it up, give it up, it cannot be worth all this. Why, they will not even bring you a cloak to wrap round you. You are left here to shiver and very soon your head will be struck from your body. Take off your hand from the standard and retire.”

“No,” says the Apostle, “I *know* Whom I have believed.” Why, I have heard of professors who say, “Ever since I have been a Christian I have lost in my business and therefore I will give it up.” But our beloved Apostle clings to it with a life grip. And oh, there is no heart in our piety if our afflictions make us doubt the Truth of our religion. For these trials, inasmuch as they work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, render us such that we are not ashamed, but we do the more firmly hold on to Christ. Just think, you hear the Apostle say, “I know Whom I believe.” It is very easy for *us* to say it. We are very comfortable, sitting in our pews. We shall go home to our plentiful meal. We shall be clothed comfortably.

We have friends about us who will smile at us and it is not hard to say, “I know Whom I have believed.” But if you were vexed on the one hand by Hermogenes and Philetus, and on the other hand by Alexander the coppersmith, and Demas, you would not find it quite so easy to say, “The Lord is faithful.” Behold this noble champion who is just as much unmoved at the worst as he was at the best times. “I know how to be full,” said he once. And now he can say, “I know how to suffer hunger—I know how to abound and how to suffer loss.”

But he is not only confident. You will notice that this grand old man is *having communion with Jesus Christ in his sufferings*. Turn to the second chapter, at the tenth verse. Did ever sweeter language than this come from anyone? “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saving: For if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself.” Ah, there are *two* in the dungeon—not only the man who is suffering trouble as an evildoer, even unto bonds—but there sits with him One like unto the Son of Man, sharing all his griefs and bearing all his despondencies and so lifting up his head. Well may the Apostle rejoice that he has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Nor is this all. Not only is he confident for the past and in sweet communion for the present, but *he is resigned for the future*. Look at the fourth chapter and the sixth verse. “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” It is a beautiful emblem taken from the sacrificial bullock. There it is, tied to the horns of the altar, and ready to be offered. So the Apostle stands as a sacrifice ready to be offered upon the altar. I am afraid that we cannot all say we are ready to be offered. Paul was ready to be a *burnt offering*. If God willed it, he would be burnt to ashes at the stake. Or he would be a *drink offering*, as he did become, when a stream of blood flowed under the sharp sword.

He was ready to be a *peace offering*, if God willed it, to die in his bed. In any case, he was a *freewill offering* unto God, for he offered himself voluntarily. As he says, “I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand.” Glorious old man! Many a professed Christian has been clothed in scarlet, and fared sumptuously every day and yet never could say he was ready to be offered. Rather he looked upon the time of his departure with grief and sorrow. As you think, then, of poor, shivering, ragged Paul, think of the jewel which he carried in his breast. And O you sons of poverty, remember that the magnificence of a holy life and the grandeur and nobility of a consecrated heart can deliver you altogether from any shame which may cling to your rags and poverty! For as the sun at setting paints the clouds with all the colors of Heaven, so your very rags, poverty, and shame may make your life the more illustrious as the splendor of your piety lights them with heavenly radiance!

We have not quite concluded with the Apostle. We find him not only resigned, but *triumphant*. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” See the Grecian warrior just returned from battle? He has many wounds and there is a gash across his brow. His breast is streaming here and there with cuts and flesh wounds. One arm is dislocated. He halts, like Jacob, on his thigh. He is covered with the smoke and dust of battle. He is besmeared with much blood. He is faint, and weary, and ready to die, but what does he say? As he lifts up his right arm, with his buckler tightly clasped upon it, he cries, “I have fought a good fight, I have kept my shield.” That was the object of ambition with every Grecian warrior. If he kept his *shield* he came home glorious.

Now, *faith* is the Christian’s shield. And here I see the Apostle, though he wears all the marks of the conflict, yet he triumphs in these marks of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I have fought a good fight. My very scars and wounds prove it. I have kept the faith.” He looks to that golden buckler of the faith fastened to his arm and rejoices in it. The tyrant Nero, nor all the warriors of Rome never had such triumph as the Apostle Paul! None of them had such true glory as this solitary man who has trod the winepress alone. And of the people—there were none with him—who has stood against the lion, a solitary champion, with no eye to pity and no arm to save, still triumphant to the end? Brave spirit! Never mind the old cloak at Troas, so long as your faith is safe.

Once more. He not only triumphs in the present, but he *is in expectation of a crown*. When the Grecian wrestler had fought a good fight, a crown was presented to him. And so Paul, who writes about the old cloak, also writes— “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

When I was picturing Paul, and talking of the poverty of many Believers—“Ah,” said the Sinner, “Who would be a Christian? Who would suffer so much for Christ? Who would lose everything as Paul did?” Worldly minds here are thinking—”What a fool, to be led away by such an excitement!” Ah, but see how the tables have turned! “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown!” What if he had been robed in scarlet, had rolled in wealth, and been great? And what if there had been no crown for him in Heaven? No joy hereafter—but a fearful looking for of judgment? See, he springs from his dungeon to his throne! Nero may cut off his head, but that head shall wear a starry crown. Courage, then, you that are downtrodden, afflicted, and despairing! Be of good cheer, for the end will make up for the way. And all the roughness of the pilgrimage will be well recompensed by the Glory which shall await all those who are resting upon Christ Jesus.

We close, having done with this old cloak, when we say, is it not beautiful as you read this Epistle, and, indeed, all the Apostle’s letters, to see how *everything which the Apostle thought of was connected with Christ*? How he had concentrated every passion, every power, every thought, every act, every word—and set the whole upon Christ. I believe that there are many who love Christ after a sort, just as the sun shines today. But you know if you concentrate the rays of that sun with a magnifying glass and fix all the rays upon any object, then what heat there is, what burning, what flame, what fire!

So many men scatter their love and admiration on almost any and every creature, and Christ gets a little, as we all get some rays of the sun. But that is *the man*, who, like the Apostle Paul, brings all his thoughts and words to a focus. Then he burns his way through life. His heart is on fire. Like coals of juniper are his words. He is a man of force and energy. He may have no cloak, yet for all that, he is a great man and the Czar in his imperial mantle is but a driveling dwarf by the side of this giant in the army of God. O, I wish we could set our thoughts on Christ this morning. Are we trusting in Him this morning? Is He all our salvation and all our desire? If He is, then let us live to Him.

Those who are wholly Christ’s are not many. O that we were espoused as chaste virgins unto Christ—that we might have no other lover and know no other object of delight! Blind are these eyes to all but Christ. And deaf these ears to any music but the voice of Christ. And lame these feet to any way but that of obedience to Him! Palsied these hands to anything but work for Him. And dead this heart to every joy if Jesus cannot move! Even as a straw floats upon the river and is carried to the ocean, so would I be bereft of all power, and will to do anything but that which my Lord would have me do—and be carried along by the stream of His Grace right onward, ready to be offered up, or ready to live, ready to suffer, or ready to reign just as He wills—only that He may be served in my living and dying!

It will little matter what cloak you wear, or if you have not any at all, if you have but such a concentration of all your bodily and mental powers and spiritual energies upon Christ Jesus and upon Him alone. May those of you who have never trusted Jesus be ready to rely upon Him now. He did not forsake Paul, even in extremity, and He will not forsake you—

***“Trust Him, He will never deceive you, Though you hardly of Him deem. He will never, never leave you, Nor will let you quite leave Him.”***

Therefore trust Him now and forever, for Jesus’ sake. Amen. Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection,* **Version 1.0 . Ages Software, 1.800.297.4308**

**÷2Ti 4.20**

THE SICK MAN LEFT BEHIND  
NO. 1452A

FROM THE SICK ROOM OF C. H. SPURGEON.  
JANUARY 12, 1879.  
“But Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.”  
***2Ti 4:20***.

THESE are among the last words of Paul the Apostle, for we find them in the closing verses of the last of his Epistles. The chapter reminds us of a dying man’s final adieu to his best friend, in the course of which he calls to mind the associates of his life. Among his memories of love we find Paul recollecting Trophimus who had frequently shared with him the perils of rivers and perils of robbers which so largely attended the Apostle’s career. He had left the good man ill at Miletum and as Timothy at Ephesus was within an easy journey of him, there was no need to add a hint that he should visit him, for he would be sure to do it.

The love of Jesus works great tenderness and unity in the hearts of His disciples. The overflow of our Lord’s great soul has saturated all His true followers with brotherly affection—because Jesus has loved Paul, Paul loves Timothy and Timothy must love Trophimus. From this love there arises communion of feeling so that in sympathy they share each other’s joys and griefs. When one member rejoices, the body rejoices—and when one member suffers the whole body suffers with it. Trophimus is sick and Paul cannot forget him, though he, himself, expects in a few weeks to die a martyr’s death! Neither would he have Timothy ignorant of the fact, though twice, within a few verses, he hurries him to come to Rome, saying, “Do your diligence to come shortly unto me.”

If Timothy could not personally visit the sick friend, yet it was well that he should know of his affliction, for he would then remember him in his prayers. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.” Let us remember those who are one with us in Christ and especially let us bear on our hearts all those who are afflicted in mind, body, or estate. If we have had to leave Trophimus at Miletum, or at Brighton, or at Ventnor, let us leave our heart’s love with him. And if we hear that another Trophimus lies sick not far from our own home, let us accept the information as in itself a sufficient summons to minister to the afflicted friend.

May holy sympathy pervade all our souls, for however active and zealous we may be, we have not yet reached a perfect character unless we are full of compassion, tender-hearted and considerate of the sorrowful, for this is the mind of Christ. Simple as the statement of our text certainly is, it is found in an Inspired Book and it is, therefore, more than an ordinary note in a common letter. Like another verse of the same chapter, “The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when you come, bring with you, and the books, but especially the parchments,” has been judged to be beneath the dignity of Inspiration, we think not so. The God who counts the hairs of our heads in Providence may well mention His sick servant on

the pages of Inspiration!

Instead of quibbling at the littleness of the recorded fact, let us admire “the love of the Spirit” who, while He lifts Ezekiel and Daniel above the spheres and raises the language of David and Isaiah to the utmost pitch of poetry and eloquence, yet deigns to breathe in such a line as this— “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” Can we learn anything more from this plain line of Apostolic penmanship? Let us see. If the same Divine Spirit who Inspired it, will shine upon it, we shall not read it in vain!

I. From the fact that Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletum we learn that IT IS THE WILL OF GOD THAT SOME GOOD MEN SHOULD BE IN ILL HEALTH. Whatever the malady may have been which affected Trophimus, Paul could certainly have healed him if the Divine Spirit had permitted the use of his miraculous powers to that end. He had raised up Eutychus from death and he had given back the use of his limbs to the cripple at Lystra. We feel, therefore, fully assured that had God allowed the Apostle so to use his healing energy, Trophimus would have left his bed and continued his journey to Rome.

Not so, however, had the Lord willed. The good fruit-bearing vine must be pruned and Trophimus must suffer—there were ends to be answered by his weakness which could not be compassed by his health. Instantaneous restoration could have been given, but it was withheld under Divine direction. This doctrine leads us away from the vain idea of chance. We are not wounded by arrows shot at a venture, but we smart by the determinate counsel of Heaven! An overruling hand is everywhere present, preventing or permitting ill and no one shaft of disease is ever let fly by stealth from the bow of death! If someone must be ill, it was a wise Providence which selected Trophimus, for it was better for him to be ill than Titus, or Tychicus, or Timothy.

It was well, too, that he happened to be ill at Miletum near to his own native city, Ephesus. We cannot always see the hand of God in Providence, but we may always be sure that it is there. If not a sparrow lights on the ground without our Father, surely not a child of the Divine family is laid low without His sacred will! Chance is a heathenish idea which cannot live in the Presence of an everywhere present, living and working God! Away with it from every Christian mind! It is dishonoring to the Lord and grievous to ourselves!

This also delivers us from regarding affliction as being always brought upon men by their personal sin. Many a sickness has been the direct result of intemperance, or some other form of wickedness—but here is a worthy, well-approved Brother laid aside and left on the road through a malady for which he is not blamed in any measure. It is too common, nowadays, for men to be of a hard and cruel spirit and ascribe the illnesses, even, of those who are true children of God to some fault in their habits of life. We wonder how they would like to be dealt with in this manner if they were suffering and could wash their hands in innocence in reference to their daily lives?

In our Lord’s day they told Him, “Lord, he whom You love is sick.” And Solomon, long before that time, wrote, “Whom the Lord loves He corrects; even as a father the son in whom he delights.” This was a much better, more humane and more truthful speech than the frozen philosophy of modern times which traces each man’s sickness to his own violation of natural law and, instead of pouring in the balm of consolation, pours out the sulfuric acid of slanderous insinuation! Let the afflicted examine himself to see if the rod is not sent to correct some secret evil and let him diligently consider where he may amend—but far be it from us to stand at his bedside like judges or lictors and look upon our friend as an offender as well as a sufferer!

Such brutality may be left to the philosophers, but it would ill become the sons of God! We may not think a shade the less of Trophimus because he is sick at Miletum. He is probably a far better man than any of us and perhaps for that very reason he is more tried. There is gold in him which pays for putting into the crucible—he bears such rich fruit that he is worth pruning—he is a diamond of so pure a water that he will repay the lapidary’s toil. This may not be quite so true of any of us and, therefore, we escape his sharper trials. Let us, as James says, “count them happy that endure,” and like David, say, “Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your Law.”

What do the Scriptures say? —“For whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?” Lazarus of Bethany, Dorcas, Epaphroditus and Trophimus are a few of that great host of sick folk whom the Lord loves in their sicknesses, for whom the promise was written, “The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: You will make all his bed in his sickness.”

II. We have only strength and space for mere hints and so we notice, secondly, that GOOD MEN MAY BE LAID ASIDE WHEN THEY SEEM TO BE MOST NEEDED—as Trophimus was when the aged Apostle had but a scanty escort and required his aid. Paul needed him, badly enough, soon after he had been obliged to leave him at Miletum, for he writes sorrowfully, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me.” “And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.” How glad he would have been with Trophimus, for we see how he begs Timothy to come with all speed and to bring Mark, whose service he greatly needed with him.

Yet not even for Paul’s sake can Trophimus be suddenly raised up! His Lord sees it to be necessary that he should feel the heat of the furnace and into the crucible he must go. We think that the Church cannot spare the earnest minister, the indefatigable missionary, the faithful deacon, the tender teacher—but God thinks not so! No one is indispensable in the household of God! He can do His own work not only without Trophimus, but even without Paul! Yes, we go further—it sometimes happens that the work of the Lord is quickened by the decease of one upon whom it seemed to depend! When a broad, far-spreading tree is cut down, many smaller trees which were dwarfed and stunted while it stood, suddenly shoot up into vigorous growth—even so, one good man may do much and yet, when he is removed, others may do more!

Temporary illnesses of great workers may call to the front those who would otherwise, from modesty, have remained in the rear—and the result may be a great gain. Poor Trophimus had, in his healthier days, been the innocent cause of bringing Paul into a world of trouble, for we read in Act 21:27 that a tumult was made by the Jews because they imagined that Paul had brought Trophimus into the Temple and so had defiled it. Now, when he could have been of service, he is sick and, no doubt, it was a great grief to him that it should be so. Yet for him, as oftentimes for us, there was no alternative but to submit himself under the hand of God and feel that the Lord is always right.

Why do we not yield at once? Why do we chomp the bit and paw the ground, restless to be on the road? If our Lord bids us stand still, can we not be quiet? Active spirits are apt to become restive spirits when under the restraining hand—energy soon sours into rebellion and we quarrel with God because we are not allowed to glorify Him in our own way—a foolish form of contest which at bottom means that we have a will of our own and will only serve God upon condition of having it indulged!

Brothers and Sisters, he who writes these lines knows what he writes and this is the verdict of his experience—God’s work needs us far less than we imagine and God would have us aware of this fact, for He will not give His Glory to human instruments any more than He will allow His praise to be bestowed on graven images!

III. Our text clearly shows us that GOOD MEN WOULD HAVE THE LORD’S WORK GO ON WHATEVER BECOMES OF THEM. Paul did not desert Trophimus, but left him, because a higher call summoned him to Rome. Trophimus, we may be sure, did not wish to delay the great Apostle, but was content to be left. No doubt they both felt the separation but, like true soldiers of Christ, they endured hardness and, for the sake of the cause, parted company for a while. It would be a great grief to a truehearted worker if he knew that any fellow-laborer slackened his pace for his sake. The sick in an army of an earthly monarch are necessarily an impediment, but it need not be so in the army of the King of kings!

Spiritual sickness is a sore hindrance, but sickness of body should not delay the host. If we cannot preach we can pray. If one work is out of our reach, we can try another and if we can do nothing, our inability should serve as a call to the vigorous to be doing all the more! Trophimus is sick, then let Timothy be the more energetic! Trophimus cannot attend the Apostle, then let Timothy be the more diligent to come before winter! Thus, by acting as an incentive, the lack of one man’s service may produce tenfold more in others who are awakened to extra exertions.

Brethren, it will be the sweetest alleviation to the pains of a sick pastor if he sees you each and all nerved to special diligence. His enforced rest will be the better enjoyed if he knows that the Church of God is not a sufferer because of it. And his whole mind and spirit will minister to the health of his body if he sees the fruit of the Spirit of God in all of you, keeping you faithful and zealous. Will you not see to this for Jesus’ sake?

÷Tit 1.2

WHAT GOD CANNOT DO!  
NO. 568

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 8, 1864, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“God, that cannot lie.”***Tit 1:2***.**

TRUTH once reigned supreme upon our globe and then earth was Paradise. Man knew no sorrow while he was ignorant of falsehood. The Father of Lies invaded the garden of bliss and with one foul lie he blighted Eden into a wilderness and made man a traitor to his God. Cunningly he handled the glittering falsehood and made it dazzle in the woman’s eyes— “God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

Proud ambition rode upon that lie as a conqueror in his chariot and the city of Mansoul opened its gates to welcome the fascinating enemy. As it was a lie which first subjugated the world to Satan’s influences, so it is by lies that he secures his throne. Among the heathen his kingdom is quiet and secure, because the minds of the people are deluded with a false mythology. The domains of Mahomet and the Pope are equally the kingdom of Satan and his reign is undisturbed, for human merit, priestly efficacy, and a thousand other deceptions buttress his throne. The darkness of ignorance, the dungeons of falsehood and the chains of superstition are the main reliance of that monster who oppresses all the nations with his infernal tyranny.

Since by the lie Satan now holds the world and maintains his power, he everywhere encourages lies and aids their propagation. Look about you and see what a prolific family falsehood has! The children of the untrue are as many as the frogs of Egypt, and like those plagues, they intrude into every chamber. The slime of falsehood may be seen upon most things, both in secular and religious life. You have lying news and garbled reports in print. And as for the flying gossip of the tongue, if it touches the characters of good men, beware of believing a word it utters. If you would not have complicity with those who make the lie, be not hasty to entertain it.

From the high places of the earth falsehood is not excluded. The untruth glides right royally from the kingly tongue, but is as much a lie as if the ragged mendicant had blurted it forth with low-lived oaths and curses. What is diplomacy for the most part? Is it not “the art of lying”? Was not he thought to be the best politician who used language to conceal his thoughts? In how many a conference have the plenipotentiaries labored which could overreach, dissimulate and intrigue to the greatest degree?

In the commerce of courts who knows not that flatteries and lies are the most abundant commodities? The art of king-craft, as practiced by the most high and mighty Prince James, whose name dishonors our English Bible, was only and simply the science of lying in the neatest possible manner. In these modern times, the difference between the promises of the politicians and the performances in the House of Commons proves

that the lie is still commonly patronized. Falsehood is everywhere. It is entertained both by the lowest and the highest. It permeates all society. It has ruined the whole of our race and so defiled the entire world that upright men exclaim, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”

In the so-called religious world, which should be as the Holy of Holies, here, too, the lie has insinuated itself. Of old there were prophets who prophesied lies and dreamers of false dreams. And there were others who spoke the Word of God with such bated breath and after such a fashion that it was no longer the Truth as it came from God, but truth alloyed with human falsehood. It is so today. There are those wearing the vestments of God’s priests who do not hesitate to profess what they do not believe. Such men are the priests of Hell. To wear a bishop’s miter and teach infidelity—how shall I stigmatize it? It is nothing less than detestable hypocrisy and robbery.

And what shall I say of men of all creeds, all subscribing to the same articles and catechism when all the world knows they cannot all honestly believe the same thing and yet differ as much from one another as light from darkness? What shall I say but that shame covers my face that there should be so many ministers of God who are untrue to their convictions and continue to do and say what they feel to be unscriptural? In other quarters philosophy is believed and Christianity professed—the traditions of men are put in the place of God’s Truth. The prophets prophesy lies and the people love to have it so.

Brethren, we have everywhere to battle with falsehood and if we are to bless the world we must confront it with sturdy face and zealous spirit. God’s purpose is to drive the lie out of the world and let this be your purpose and mine. His Holy Spirit has undertaken to drive falsehood out of our hearts—be this our determination, in His strength—that it shall be cut up root and branch and utterly consumed. Then let us walk in the Truth of God. “Buy the Truth and sell it not,” hold fast the Truth, speak the Truth in love and act the Truth in all our deeds, for so shall we be known to be the children of that God of whom our text asserts that He is “God, that cannot lie.”

After wandering over the sandy desert of deceit, how pleasant is it to reach our text and feel that one spot, at least, is verdant with eternal Truth! Blessed be You, O God, for You cannot lie!

We will use our text in the following manner this morning—first, while we do not attempt to prove it, we will remind you of a few things which may confirm your confidence that God cannot lie so that our opening remarks shall be upon the truth of the text. Then secondly, we will speak upon the breadth of the text, endeavoring to show that we must give no narrow interpretation to the words before us, but must receive them with an extent of meaning not usual to the expression. And then, thirdly, we will try to use the text for our own improvement, arguing from it that if God cannot lie He ought to receive our loving confidence.

I. First, then, let us commune together awhile concerning THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT, not, as we have said, to prove it, because we all believe it, but to confirm our confidence of it. I think we shall feel assured that God cannot lie when we remember that He is not subject to those infirmities which lead us into falsehood. Lord Bacon has said, “There are three parts in truth—first, the enquiry, which is the wooing of it. Secondly, the knowledge of it, which is the presence of it. And thirdly, the belief, which is the enjoyment of it.”

In each of these three points, by reason of infirmity, men fail to be perfectly true. In the search after truth, our moral eye is not altogether clear and therefore we fail to see what we love not. We do not follow truth in a straight line, but are very liable to turn aside to the right hand or to the left, either to obey our prejudices or advance our profit. “Truth lies in a well,” said the old philosopher. Many go down into that well to find Truth, but looking into the water they see their own faces and become so desperately enamored of their own beauty that they forget poor Truth, or dream that she is the counterpart of themselves.

Now the great God cannot be liable to this error, because there is no discovery of truth with Him. He needs not to search anything out, for “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” When in Scripture that term is sometimes used—“Shall not God search this out?”—when we hear Him spoken of as “searching the heart and trying the reins of the children of men,” it is not because He is not perfectly acquainted with all things, but only to set forth the certainty and accuracy of Divine knowledge.

God has no need to search, or if He had, having nothing in Him which should lead Him to make a dishonest search, He does not lie. When we have searched out the Truth of God there is the knowing of it. And here the falsehood gets a footing in the form of a sin of omission, for we often refuse to know all that we might know. It would be inconvenient, perhaps, for us to be too well acquainted with certain arguments, for then our prejudices must be given up and therefore we close our eyes to them for fear of knowing the truth.

Do not many men leave passages of Scripture altogether unread because they have no wish to receive the doctrines which are taught in them? Every time you refuse to give a hearing to God’s Truth, you do in effect lie because you prefer not to know the Truth of God, which is really to prefer to hold error. Now nothing of this kind can ever happen with our only wise God. He knows all Truth, seeing it all at a glance and retaining it ever in His mind. In nothing is He ignorant, either willfully or otherwise.

He receives Truth as His own Beloved and when the world casts her out, she finds a happy shelter beneath His shield. We are quite clear that we frequently fall into the lie through a defect in our believing, for we sometimes know more than we care to believe. Truth is grasped by the understanding but thrust out by the affections. We know her as Peter knew his Lord and yet deny it after the same fashion as that disciple did his Master. Moreover, through weakness, we are led to doubt what we know to be God’s Truth and even to speak unadvisedly with our lips.

Now this can never occur with God, since God is One and is not to be divided into parts and passions and His tongue can never be diverse from His heart. God’s tongue is His heart and God’s heart is His hand. God is

One. You and I are such that we can know in the heart, and yet with the tongue deny. But God is One and indivisible. God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. With Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Then again, the Scriptural idea of God forbids that He should lie. Just review your thoughts about God, if you can. What idea have you formed of Him? If you have read Holy Scripture and have gotten the slightest shadow of an idea of God, I think you will see that it is utterly inconsistent with the thrice Holy One, whose kingdom is over all, that He should lie. Admit the very possibility of His speaking an untruth and to the Christian there would be no God at all. The depraved mind of the heathen may imagine a monster to be a god who can live in adultery and in theft and in lying, for such the gods of the Hindus are described as being. But the enlightened mind of the Christian can conceive no such thing. The very word “God” comprehends everything which is good and great. Admit the lie and to us at once there would be nothing but the black darkness of Atheism. I could neither love, worship, nor obey a lying God.

Again, we all know that God is too wise to lie. Falsehood is the expedient of a fool. It is only a short-sighted man who lies. For some present advantage the poor creature who cannot see the end as well as the beginning states that which is not. But no wise man who can look far into the future ever thinks a lie to be profitable. He knows that Truth may suffer loss at first but that in the long run she is always successful. He endorses that worldly-wise proverb, that, “Honesty is the best policy” after all. And the man, I say, who has anything like foresight, or judgment, or wisdom, prefers always the straight line to the curve and goes directly to the mark, believing that this is in the end the best.

Do you suppose that God, who must know this, with an intensity of knowledge infinitely greater than ours, will choose the policy of the witless knave? Shall God, only wise, who sees the end from the beginning, act as only brainless fools will choose to behave themselves? Oh, it cannot be, my Brethren! God, the All-Wise, must also be All-True. And the lie, again, is the method of the little and the mean. You know that a great man does not lie. A good man can never be false. Put goodness and greatness together and a lie is altogether incongruous to the character.

Now God is too great to need the lie and too good to wish to do such a thing! Both His greatness and His goodness repel the thought. My dear Friends, what motive could God have for lying? When a man lies it is that he may gain something, but “the cattle on a thousand hills” are God’s and all the beasts of the forest and all the flocks of the meadows. He says, “if I were hungry I would not tell you.” Mines of inexhaustible riches are His and treasures of infinite power and wisdom. He cannot gain anything by untruth, for “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.” Why, then, should He lie?

Men are false, oftentimes, to win applause. See how the sycophant cringes to the tyrant’s foot and spawns his villainy. But God needs no honor and no fame, especially from the wicked. To Him it were the greatest disgust of His righteous soul to be loved by unholy creatures. His Glory is great enough even if there were no creatures! His own selfcontained Glory is such that if there were no eyes to see it and no ears to hear it, He would be infinitely glorious. He asks nothing—no respect and no honor of man—and therefore has He no need to stoop to the lie to gain it. And of whom, again, could He be afraid? Men will sometimes, under the impulse of fear, keep back or even contradict the truth, but can fear ever enter into the heart of the eternal God?

He looks down upon all nations who are in rebellion against Him and He does not even care to rise to put them down. “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision!” Are not the chariots of the Lord twenty thousand, even thousands of angels? Even these are but as a drop in a bucket, when compared with the deep and infinite sea of His own power. Who, then, shall think that Jehovah needs to be afraid? “Fear,” and “Jehovah,” are two words which cannot meet together. Therefore, since there can be no motive whatever which should possibly lead God to lie, we feel well assured that the declaration of Paul is most certainly true—“God, that cannot lie.”

Moreover, dear Friends, we may add to all this the experience of men with regard to God. It has been evident enough in all ages that God cannot lie. He did not lie when Adam fell. It seemed a strange thing, that after all the skill and labor which had been spent in making such a world as this, so fair and beautiful, God should resign it to the dominion of Satan and drive the man whom He had made in His own image, out of his home, his Eden, to labor in sweat and toil and suffering until he came to his grave. But God did it and the fiery sword at the gate of Eden was proof that God could not and would not lie.

He might come to Adam and bemoan himself, crying, “Adam, where are you?” as if He pitied him and would, if it had been possible, have spared the stroke. But still it must be done and Eden is blasted and Adam becomes a wanderer upon the fruitless earth. Then afterwards, to quote a notable instance of God’s faithfulness, when the flood swept away the race of men and Noah came forth the heritor of a new Covenant, we have clear proof that God cannot lie. No flood has ever destroyed the earth since then. Partial floods there have been and parts of provinces have been inundated, but no flood has ever come upon the earth of such a character as that which Noah saw—therefore the rainbow, every time it is painted upon the cloud—is an assurance to us that God cannot lie.

Then He made an oath with Abraham that he should have a son and that his seed should become possessors of all the land in which the Patriarch had sojourned. Did not that come true? They waited in Egypt two hundred years. They smarted under the tyrant’s lash. They lay among the pots and yet, after all, with a high hand and with an outstretched arm He brought forth His people, led them through the wilderness and divided Canaan by lot to them, having driven out the inhabitants of the land before them. Since that time He made His Covenant with David and how fast has that stood! All the threats which He has uttered against the enemies of Israel—how surely have they been fulfilled!

Last of all and best of all, when the fullness of time was come, did not God send forth His own Son, born of a woman, made under the Law? Did He not, according to His ancient promise, lay upon Him the iniquity of us all? Were not the Incarnation and death of our Lord Jesus the grandest

proof of the truthfulness of God which could be afforded? His own Son must leave Heaven emptied of His Glory, must be given up to be despised and rejected of men, must be nailed to the accursed wood and be forsaken in the hour of His bitterest grief—herein is Truth, indeed! I say if this must be according to the promise and if this was according to the fact, then we have the clearest and the surest evidence that God cannot by any possibility be false to His own Word. Rightly has He earned the title which His Nature claims—“God, that cannot lie.”

May I not add as another argument that you have found Him true? You have been to Him, dear Friends, in many times of trial. You have taken His promise and laid it before His Mercy Seat. What do you say—has He ever broken His promise? You have been through the floods—did He leave you? You have passed through the fires—were you burned? You have cried to Him in trouble—did He fail to deliver you? O you poor and needy ones, you have been brought very low, but has He not been your Helper? You have passed hard by the gates of the grave and Hell has opened its horrid jaws to swallow you up, but are you not today the living monuments of the fidelity of God to His promise and the veracity of every Word of the Most High God? Let these things, then, refresh your memories that you may the more confidently know that He is “God, that cannot lie.”

II. Let us pass on to look at THE BREADTH OF MEANING IN THE TEXT. When we are told in Scripture that God cannot lie there is usually associated with the idea the thought of immutability. As for instance—“He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.” The word “lie,” here includes beyond its ordinary meaning the thought of change, so that when we read that God cannot lie, we understand by it not only that He cannot say what is untrue, but that having said something which is true, He never changes from it and does not by any possibility alter His purpose or retract His Word.

This is very consolatory to the Christian, that whatever God has said in the Divine purpose is never changed. The Decrees of God were not written upon sand, but upon the eternal brass of His unchangeable Nature. We may truly say of the sealed Book of the Decrees, “Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He purposed and shall it not come to pass?” We read in Scripture of several instances where God apparently changed, but I think the observation of the old Puritan explains all these, He says, “God may will a change, but He cannot change His will.” Those changes of operation which we sometimes read of in Scripture did not involve any change in the Divine purpose!

God, for instance, sent to warn Hezekiah that according to the common course of nature he must die, and yet afterwards fifteen years were added to his life—God’s purpose having been all along that Hezekiah should live till the end of the fifteen years. But still His purpose equally included that Hezekiah should be brought so near to the gates of death that in the ordinary course of nature he must die. And then that the miracle should come in was still part of the purpose, that Hezekiah might be cured in a supernatural manner and be made to live nearer to his God in consequence. God wills a change, but He never changes His will.  
And when the Last Great Day shall come, you and I shall see how everything happened according to that hidden roll wherein God had written with His own wise finger every thought which man should think, every word which he should utter and every deed which he should do. Just as it was in the Book of Decree, so shall it transpire in the roll of human history. God never changes, then, as to His purpose and here is our comfort. If He has determined to save us and we know He has, for all who believe in Him are His elect, then we shall be saved. Heaven shall never by any possibility be defeated by Hell. Hell and earth may combine together to destroy a soul which rests upon Christ, but while God’s Decree stands fast and firm, that chosen soul is safe! And since that Decree never can be removed, let us take confidence and rejoice.

No promise has ever been altered and no threat, either. Still is His promise sure. “I have not said unto the seed of Jacob, seek you My face in vain.” No new decrees have been passed repealing the past. We can never say of God’s Book, as we can of old law books, that such-and-such an act is obsolete. There is no obsolete Statute in God’s Book. There stand promises, as fresh, as new, as vigorous and as forceful today as when they first dropped from the mouth of God. The words, then, “God, that cannot lie,” include the very gracious and precious doctrine that He cannot by any possibility change.

But we must not, while talking in this manner, forget the primary meaning, that He cannot be false in His thoughts, Words, or actions. There is no shadow of a lie upon anything which God thinks, or speaks, or does. He cannot lie in His prophecies. How solemnly true have they been! Ask the wastes of Nineveh! Turn to the mounds of Babylon! Let the traveler speak concerning Idumea and Petra. Turn even to the rock of Sidon and to Your land, O Immanuel! We may boldly ask the traveler, “Has He said and has He not done it? Have His words fallen to the ground? Has God’s curse been an idle Word?” No, not in one single case.

All the words of the Lord are sure. The prophecies will be as true as they have been and the Book of Revelation, though we may not comprehend it today, will doubtless be fulfilled in every stroke and in every line and we shall marvel how it was that we did not know its meaning. But at present it is enough for us to know its Truth—its meaning shall only be learned as the events explain the prophesy. As God is true in His prophecies, so is He faithful to His promises. Have you and I, dear Friends, a confidence in these? If so, let us try them this morning.

Sinner, weeping and bemoaning yourself, God will forgive you your sin if you believe in Jesus! If you will confess that He is faithful and just to forgive you, He has promised to do so and He cannot lie. Christian, if you have a promise today laid upon your heart, if you have been pleading it, perhaps for months and it has not been fulfilled, I pray you gather fresh courage this morning and again renew your wrestling. Go and say, “Lord, I know You cannot lie, therefore fulfill Your Word unto Your servant.”

If the promises of God were not kept, God would lie. They must, therefore, be fulfilled. And let us believe that they will be and go to God, not with a wavering spirit which half hopes that the Words may be true, but with the full assurance that they cannot fail! As certainly as we know that day and night shall not cease and that summer will not fail, so surely let

us be convinced that every Word of the Lord shall stand!

His threats are true, also. Ah, Sinner, you may go on in your ways for many a day, but your sin shall find you out at last. Seventy years God’s long-suffering may wait over you, but when you shall come into another world you shall find every terrible Word of Scripture fulfilled. You shall then know that there is a place, “where their worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.” You shall then experience the “wailing and gnashing of teeth” unless you repent. If you will believe in Jesus you shall find the promise true! But if you will not, equally sure shall be the threat.

This is a dreadful part of the subject to those who are out of Christ, who have never been partakers of the Holy Spirit. It will be in vain for you to cry to Him, then, and ask Him, then, to change His mind. No, though you should weep oceans of tears, Hell’s flames cannot be quenched nor can your soul escape from the place to which it is finally doomed! Today, while mercy is preached to you, lay hold upon it! But remember, if you do not, as God cannot lie He cannot suffer you to escape—you must feel the weight and terror of His arm.

We might thus go through everything which concerns God, from prophesy to promises and threats and onwards and multiply observations but we choose to close this point by observing that every word of instruction from God is most certainly true. It is astounding how much sensation is caused in the Christian Church by the outbreak, every now and then, of fresh phases of infidelity. I do not think that these alarms are at all warranted. It is what we must expect to the very end of this dispensation.

If all carnal minds believed the Bible, I think the spiritual might almost begin to doubt it. But as there are always some who will attack it, I shall feel none the less confident in it. Really, the Book of God has stood so many attacks from such different quarters that to be at all alarmed about it shows a very childish fear. When a rock has been standing all our lifetime and has been known to stand firmly throughout all the ages of history, none but foolish people will think that the next wave will sweep it away.

Within our own short life—say some five-and-twenty years’ recollection—have we not remembered, I was about to say almost as many as five-and-twenty shapes of infidelity? You know it must change about every twenty years at least, for no system of infidelity can live longer than that! There was the witty system of objection which Voltaire introduced. And how short-lived was that! Then came the bullying, low-lived, blackguard system of Tom Paine. And how short-lived was its race! Then, in more modern times, unbelief took the shape of Secularism—what particular shapes it takes now we scarcely know—perhaps Colensoism is the most fashionable—but that is dying out and something else will follow it.

These creations of an hour just live their little day and they are gone. But look at belief in Scripture and at Scripture itself. The Bible is better understood, more prized, and I believe, on the whole, more practiced than ever it was since the day when its Author sent it abroad into the world. It is still onward. And after all which has been done against it, no visible effect has been produced upon the granite wall of Scriptural Truth by all the pickaxes and boring rods which have been broken upon it.

Walking through our Museums nowadays, we smile at those who think that Scripture is not true. Every block of stone from Nineveh, every relic which has been brought from the Holy Land speaks with a tongue which must be heard even by the deaf adder of Secularism and which says, “Yes, the Bible is true and the Word of God is no fiction.” Beloved, we may rest assured that we have not a Word in the Book of God which is untrue. There may be an interpolation or two of man’s which ought to be revised and taken away, but the Book, as it comes from God, is Truth and nothing but Truth—not only containing God’s Word, but being God’s Word— being not like a lump of gold inside a mass of quartz, but all gold and nothing but gold!

And being Inspired to the highest degree—I will not say verbally inspired, but more than that—having a fullness more than that which the letter can convey! Having in it a profundity of meaning such as words never had when used by any other being, God having the power to speak a multitude of Truths at once. And when He means to teach us one thing according to our capability of receiving it, He often teaches us twenty other things which, for the time, we do not comprehend but which, byand-by, as our senses are exercised, reveal themselves by the Holy Spirit. Every time I open my Bible I will read it as the Word of “God, that cannot lie.” And when I get a promise or a threat, I will either rejoice or tremble because I know that these stand fast.

Dear Friends, this leads us, in closing this point, to say that when we read that passage—“God, that cannot lie”—we understand that His very Nature cannot lie, for He hates lies! Wherever there is a lie God is its Enemy. It was to overcome the lie of sin that God sent His Son to bleed. And every day the thoughts of God are centered upon the extermination of evil and the extension of His own Truth. Nothing can set forth in words to us the hatred and detestation which God has in His heart of anything which is untrue. O that we knew and felt this and would glow with the same anger, seeking to exterminate the false, slaying it in our own hearts and giving it nothing to feed upon in our temper, our conversation, or our deeds!

III. But I shall now come to make a practical use of the text, in the third place, by observing HOW WE OUGHT TO ACT TOWARDS GOD IF IT IS TRUE THAT HE IS A “GOD THAT CANNOT LIE.” Brethren, if it is so that God cannot lie, then it must be the natural duty of all His creatures to believe Him. I cannot resist that conclusion. It seems to me to be as clear as noonday that it is every man’s duty to believe the Truth of God, and that if God must speak and act Truth and Truth only, it is the duty of all intelligent creatures to believe Him.

Here is “Duty-faith” again, which some are railing at, but how they can get away from it and yet believe that God cannot lie, I cannot understand. If it is not my duty to believe in God, then it is no sin for me to call God a liar. Will anyone subscribe to that—that God is a liar? I think not. And if to think God to be a liar would be a most atrocious piece of blasphemy, then it can only be so on the ground that it is the natural and incumbent duty of every creature understanding the truthfulness of God to believe in

God! If God has set forth the Lord Jesus Christ as the Propitiation for sin and has told me to trust Christ, it is my duty to trust Christ, because God cannot lie.

And though my sinful heart will never believe in Christ as a matter of duty but only through the work of the Holy Spirit, yet faith does not cease to be a duty. And whenever I am unbelieving and have doubts concerning God, however moral my outward life may be, I am living in daily sin! I am perpetrating a sin against the first principles of morality. If I doubt God, as far as I am able I rob Him of His honor and stab Him in the vital point of His Glory. I am, in fact, living an open traitor and a sworn rebel against God upon whom I heap the daily insult of daring to doubt Him.

O my Hearers, there are some of you who do not believe in Christ! I wish you would look at your character and position in this light. You are not trusting in Christ for your salvation. Remember, “He that believes not God, has made Him a liar.” Those are John’s own Inspired Words and you are, every day that you are not a Believer in Christ, virtually writing upon your doorpost and saying with your mouth, “God is a liar. Christ is not able to save me. I will not trust Him. I do not believe God’s promise. I do not think He is sincere in His invitation to me to come to Christ. I do not believe what God says.”

Remember that you are living in such a state as this and may God the Holy Spirit impress you with a sense of the sin of that state. And feeling this your sin and misery, I pray God to lead you to cry, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief!” This, then, is our first practical conclusion from the fact that God cannot lie. Other thoughts suggest themselves. If we were absolutely sure that there lived on earth a person who could not lie, how would you treat him? You know there cannot be such a man! There may be a man who will not lie, but there cannot be a man of whom it may be said that he cannot lie, for alas, we have all the power of evil in us and we can lie and to a certain degree it is quite true that “all men are liars.”

But if you could be certain that there was a man out of whose heart the black drop had been wrung and that he could not lie—how would you act towards him? Well, I think you would cultivate his acquaintance. If you are true yourselves, you would desire his friendship. You would say, “He is the friend for me! I have trusted in such-and-such a man and he has played the Judas. I asked counsel of another, and he was an Ahithophel. But if this man cannot lie, he shall be my bosom companion if he will accept me. And he shall be my counselor if he will but have the goodness to direct me.”

I should expect to see a levee of all the good in the world waiting at the man’s door! You know how the world, with all its sinfulness, does reverence the man who is true! We had an instance in our streets the other day of the good man and the true, who received homage of all and yet that man could lie. But inasmuch as we never have seen that he did, but his life has been straightforward, therefore have we paid him honor and deservedly so. Well now, if such is the case, should not all Christians seek more and more the friendship of God. “O Lord, be You my familiar Friend, my Counselor, my Guide. If You cannot lie I will lay bare my heart to You. I will tell You all my secrets. I will trust You with all the desires of my heart. I know You can never betray me, or be unfaithful. Let there be a union established between my soul and Yours, and let it never be broken.” Let communion with God be the desire of your hearts on the ground that He cannot lie.

If we knew a man who could not lie we should believe him, I think, without an oath. I cannot suppose that when he came into the court of justice they would pass him the Bible. No, his word would be better than the oath of ordinary men if he could not lie. You would not need any sign or evidence to prove what he said. You would take his word at once. So should it be with God. Ah, dear Friends, God has given us more than His Word, He has given us His Oath. And yet, strange is it that we who profess to be His children are vile enough to distrust our own Father. And sometimes, if He does not give us signs and evidences, we begin to distrust Him so that, after all, I am afraid we rather trust the signs than trust God and put more confidence in frames and evidences than we do in the naked promise, which is an atrocious sin, indeed!

Many Believers cannot be comfortable without signs and evidences. When they feel in a good frame of mind—ah, then God’s promise is true! When they can pray heartily, when they can feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, then they say, “How God has kept His promise.” Ah, but, my Brothers and Sisters, that is a seeing faith. “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.” Faith is to believe in God when my heart is as hard as the nether millstone! When my frames are bad, when I cannot pray, when I cannot sing, when I can do nothing good. To say, “He has promised and will perform. He has said that whoever believes in Christ is not condemned. I do believe in Christ and therefore I am not condemned”—this is genuine faith.

Again, if we knew a man who could not lie we should believe him in the teeth of fifty witnesses the other way. Why, we should say, “they may say what they will, but they can lie.” You might have good evidence that they were usually honest men, but you would say, “They can lie. They have the power of lying. But here is a man who stands alone and cannot lie. Then his word must be true!”

This shows us, Beloved, that we ought to believe God in the teeth of every contradiction. Even if outward Providence should come to you and say that God has forsaken you, that is only one. And even if another and another and another should come and fifty trials should all say that God has forsaken you, yet, as God says, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” which will you take—the one promise of God who cannot lie, or the fifty outward Providences which you cannot interpret? I know what the devil has been whispering in your ear—

*“The Lord has quite forsaken you,  
Your God will be gracious no more.”*

But then, remember who has said, “Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God.” Which will you believe—the devil’s insinuation, or God’s own testimony? My dear Sister, you have been praying for a certain thing for years? You pray, you pray, and you pray again, and now discouragement arises! Unbelief says, “God will not hear that prayer! That prayer of yours does not come up before the Throne of God and there will be no answer.” But the Lord has said, “Ask and it shall be given you.

Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you.” Which will you believe—your unbelief—the long months of weariness and the anxieties which prompted you to discouragement? Or will you believe in the naked promise?

Why, if God cannot lie, let us give Him what we would give to a man if he were of the same character—our full confidence even in the teeth of contradiction—for He is “God, that cannot lie.” If a man were introduced to us and we were certain that he could not lie, we should believe everything he said, however incredible it might appear to us. I shall have an appeal to every soul here present. It does seem very incredible at first sight that God should take a sinner, full of sin and forgive all his iniquities in one moment simply and only upon the ground of the sinner believing in Christ! I remember the time when it seemed to me utterly impossible that I could ever have my sins forgiven.

I had a clear sense of the value of pardon and this thought would be always ringing in my ears—“It is too good to be true that you should be pardoned. That you, an enemy, should be made into a child! That you who have gone on sinning against light and against knowledge, should yet rejoice in union to Christ. The thing is too good to be true!” But, beloved Friends, supposing it should seem too good to be true, yet, since you have it upon the testimony of One who “cannot lie,” I pray you believe it.

“But, Sir.” No! None of your “buts”! He cannot lie. “Ah, but.” Away with your “ahs” and your “buts,” for Jehovah cannot lie! He has said it, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” To believe is to trust Christ. If therefore you are trusting Christ, you must be saved. And whatever you may be, or whatever you may have done, if you will now trust Jesus Christ you have God’s Word for it—and He cannot lie—that you shall be saved! Come now, will you kick against the promise because of its greatness? Do not! Let your doubts and fears be hushed to sleep and now, with the promise of God as your pillow and God’s faithfulness as your support, lie down in peace and behold in faith’s open vision the ladder, the top of which leads to Heaven!

Trust the promise of God in Christ and depend upon it that He will be as good to you, even to you, as His own Word, and in Heaven you shall have to sing of the “God, that cannot lie.” I would that these weak words of mine, for I am very conscious of their feebleness this morning, may nevertheless have comfort in them for any who have been doubting and fearing—that they may trust my Lord. And sure I am that if they begin a life of faith, they will begin a life of happiness and of security! “The just shall live by faith,” and well may they do so, when they have trust in a “God, that cannot lie.”

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÷Tit 1.4

FIVE LINKS IN A GOLDEN CHAIN  
NO. 2439

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1895, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 6, 1887.

**“To Titus, my own [or, “true”] son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.”***Tit 1:4***.**

AMONG the friends of Paul, Titus was one of the most useful and one of the best beloved. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles and Titus was a Gentile. I should suppose that both his parents were Gentiles and, in this respect, he differed from Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess. Timothy would well serve as a preacher to the circumcision, but Titus would be a man after Paul’s heart as a preacher to the Gentiles. He seems to have been a man of great common sense, so that, when Paul had anything difficult to be done, he sent Titus. When the collection was to be made at Corinth on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem, Paul sent Titus to stir the members up and, with him, another brother to take charge of the contributions. Titus appears to have been a man of business capacity and strict honesty, as well as a man who could order the Church aright and preach the Gospel with power.

Paul was, on one occasion, comforted by the coming of Titus. At another time, he was sad because Titus was not where he had hoped to meet with him. Though we know little about him from the Acts of the Apostles, or anywhere else, he appears to have been in every way one of the ablest of the companions of Paul—and the Apostle takes care to mention him over and over again in his Epistles to the Galatians and to the Corinthians—rendering honor to whom honor is due. It is a great pity when eminent men forget those who help them and it is a sad sign when any of us do not gratefully feel how much we owe to our coworkers. What can any servant of God do unless he has kind friends to bear him up by their prayers and their help? Paul did not forget to mention his friend and helper, Titus.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, in this particular verse, which I have chosen for my text, it seems to me that Paul has brought together five points in which he was one with Titus. It is a great blessing when Christian men are in union with each other and when they are willing to talk about the bonds that unite them. The more we can promote true unity among Christian men, the better. “First pure, then peaceable,” must be our motto. First, the Truth of God—afterwards, unity in the Truth. We must not be content with merely contending for the faith—we must next fight the battles of life—and do all we can to note the points in which true Christians are agreed. I desire, at this time, to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance,” to refresh your memories in regard to all the love that we have borne to one another in the days and years that are now past—and to exhort you to a still closer union in heart unto the Glory of God.

There are five things in which Paul seems to me to bring out clearly his union with Titus. I might call them, “five links in a golden chain.” I shall only briefly speak of each of the five and try to apply them to ourselves.

I. First, Paul says of himself and Titus, that THERE WAS A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM—“Titus, my own son.”  
This was a very close relationship—not that Titus was Paul’s son after the flesh, for there was no natural relationship between them at all. Probably, in the early part of their lives, they had been total strangers to one another. But now, Paul views Titus as his son. We know, Beloved, many of us, that the Grace of God creates relationships of a very near and tender kind, relationships which will endure through life, relationships which will outlast death and be, perhaps, even more strong and vivid in eternity than they are here! Up yonder, where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, I should think that the relationships which come of the flesh will, to a large degree, be merged in their celestial condition, but there, the sonship of Titus towards Paul is even stronger than it was when they were here below.  
How comes that sonship? It comes, often, through God blessing a ministry to the conversion of a soul. Henceforth, he who has spoken the Word with power to the heart bears to him who has heard it the relationship of a father to a son. There are many in this place to whom I stand in this most hallowed relationship. You recognize it, I know, and I desire to express my intense and fervent love to the many of you who have been born unto God by the preaching of the Word here. I do not know of anything that has more greatly comforted me during the last week or two, in the time of sharp contention for the faith, than the reception of so many letters from persons of whom I have never heard before, saying, “You do not know me, but you are my spiritual father, and now, at such a time of trial as this is to you, I must write and send you a word of good cheer.” It is always a marvel to me that my feeble testimony should ever be blessed to the conversion of a seeking soul, but when I think of the hundreds and the thousands—yes, I am not exaggerating when I say thousands— whom I have met with here on earth, and the many more, at present unknown to me, whom I hope to meet with either here or in Heaven, I do rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice! And I cannot help expressing my great love to all those who have been brought to the Savior by the words which I have preached and published.  
The Apostle Paul not only said of Titus that he was his son, but he called him his “true” son. The Revised Version correctly translates it, “My true child.” We have, alas, some who have called us, “father,” in a spiritual sense, of whom we have cause to be ashamed. There are converts and converts. There are those who say they have received the Word and, perhaps, they have after the poor fashion in which the brain can receive it, but they have never received it in the heart—so, after running well, for a while, they grow weary and turn aside. And then the gainsayer says, “That is one of your converts!” They throw this in our teeth and we do not wonder that they should do so. These base-born ones, these who have no part nor lot in the matter, though they pretend to have it—these are a perpetual grief to us—a wound in our spirit which is hard to bear. But, oh, what a mercy it is when we know that many of our converts are our “true” spiritual children, in whom the work of repentance was deep, and whose profession of faith was sincere—who are not the products of free will, but the products of the Holy Spirit—and who bring forth fruit, not of themselves, but their fruit is found in Christ Jesus to whom they are eternally joined! Oh, those of you, between whom and myself there is this intimate relationship, let us feel some touch of this sacred kinship and rejoice before God that we feel it!  
But, Beloved, many of you are joined together by spiritual ties in other relationships. You, also, have been the means of bringing souls to Christ and there are those sitting by your side who, for that reason, look upon you with great love. Others of you are Brothers and Sisters in Christ— there is a brotherhood produced by the Christian life that will remain when other brotherhoods have all disappeared. An ungodly man may be the literal brother of a saint, but they will be separated in that day when there shall be weeping at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And they shall be eternally separated, for, though they seemed to be of one family, they were really of two families—the one an heir of wrath, the other receiving Grace to become a child of God.  
But Beloved, as many of you as believe in Jesus Christ are members of one family. You are related to one another in the highest possible way through the kinship of the spiritual life. Therefore let us now salute each other in the Lord. Standing or sitting in our places and without using any outward sign or symbol, let our hearts go out to one another in loving greeting. As one family we dwell in Christ, knit to one another by ties of sympathy, love and mutual delight, because knit to Christ Jesus the Lord! I want you to feel that blessed union. Let us make this service a sort of family gathering, as when the father stands up at the head of the table at Christmas time, or on New Year’s Day, and says that he is glad to see all the family at home once more. I seem to stand among you, thus, not as the oldest in years, but still the chief official member of this Church—and I salute you all, and bid you rejoice together because of ties of love which time cannot loose and death, itself, cannot dissolve!  
II. Then the Apostle, wishing to show how real was the union between himself and Titus, next mentioned that THEY WERE BRETHREN BY A COMMON FAITH—“Titus, my true son after the common faith.”  
Yes, Beloved, and our faith is also common. It is the same faith in two respects. First, because we believe the same truths and, secondly, because we believe them with “like precious faith.” We who are rightly members of this Tabernacle Church have believed the same Truths of God—there is no dispute or discussion among us about the fundamentals of our faith. To us, there is one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To us, there is one Mediator—Jesus Christ the Savior. We believe in the election of Grace by the Divine Father. We believe in the vicarious Sacrifice of the Eternal Son. We believe in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and in the need of it in the case of every living man, woman and child.  
We believe in “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.” I feel intensely grateful for this unity of faith. A Church divided in its doctrine—what can it do? If it has to spend its strength in continual debate! What force has it with which to conquer the world? But knowing, as we know, that the Scriptures are our unerring guide, that the Holy Spirit is the Infallible Explainer of the Scriptures, we come to one common fountain to learn what we are to receive, and we receive it with one common anointing, even the anointing of the Spirit of God!  
This unity of the faith is one of the things in which we ought continually to rejoice. I hope that I love all Christians, yet I cannot help saying that when I sit down and talk with a Brother who believes the Doctrines of Grace, I feel myself a great deal more at home than I do when I am with one who does not believe them. Where there is the unity of the faith, there seems to be a music which creates harmony—and that harmony is delightful to the renewed spirit. God grant, dear Friends, that none of us may err from the faith, but that we may be steadfast, immovable, firmly fixed in our belief of the great Doctrines of the Gospel, for this is the way in which we are made truly one!  
Then Paul says that he and Titus were one, “after the common faith,” that is, the one faith was believed by them in the same way. There is only one faith worth having. Paul calls it, in the first verse, “the faith of God’s elect.” It is real faith, cordial faith, childlike faith, God-given faith! It is not a faith that springs out of human nature unaided by the Holy Spirit, but it is precious faith—faith which is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit! Now, if we believe only intellectually, we do not enter into sympathy with one another as we do when we both believe spiritually, with heart and soul, from the very depths of our being.  
Beloved, I trust that I can say of myself and of you, also, that we have received faith as a gift from God. Here, then, is another sacred tie binding us together. You have that jewel of faith gleaming on your bosom and here are others who have the same precious gem—and by that very fact you are drawn to each other. Your faith and my faith, if they are both true faith, are, “the common faith.” I may have very little faith and you may have the full assurance of understanding, but your faith and mine are of the same sort. Your faith may be but as a grain of mustard seed and your friend’s faith may have grown into a tree, but it is the same faith—it clings to the same Christ and will produce the same eternal results in the salvation of the soul! Come, then, let us spiritually shake hands, again, over this second point. First, we are closely related to one another. Secondly, we possess a common faith, which is a wonderful bond of union between us.  
III. Carefully note the third link. It is this—WE HAVE A MUTUAL BENEDICTION, for Paul wishes for Titus, “Grace, mercy and peace.” This is just what Titus would have wished for Paul if he had been sending him a benediction! And I wish to you, Beloved, “Grace, mercy and peace,” and I think you are, in your hearts, wishing for me, also, “Grace, mercy, and peace.” We all alike need these three choice favors!  
First, we need “Grace” to help. I know how it is with the weak Believer—he sees some brave Christian doing mighty works for God and he says, “Oh, I wish that I were like he is! Oh, that I were as strong as he is!” And he gets the notion that this more prominent worker has no fainting fits or weaknesses such as he has. Oh, no—he supposes that his Brother’s head is bathed in everlasting sunshine and that his heart is continually flooded with rivers of delight! That shows, my Friend, that you are greatly mistaken, for the most eminent saint has no more Grace to give away than the least in the family of God has! I sometimes wish that I could rid the minds of our dear trembling friends, Miss MuchAfraid and Mr. Despondency, of the ideas they have concerning some of us to whom they look up with esteem. I am not going to let you into all our secrets, but, believe me, our heads ache as much as yours and our eyes are sometimes as wet with tears as ever yours are! Yes, and our hearts get quite as heavy as yours do.  
“Yes,” you say, “very likely, but then, somehow or other, you are stronger than we are.” Just so, but suppose you have to carry 50 pounds and you can carry that and no more? Well, you have strength enough for your task. If another man has to carry 100 pounds and he can just carry that, and no more, he is in exactly the same condition as you are! Here is a Brother who has a large measure full of manna which he is carrying for the supply of his family. Here is another who has quite a small measure and, as he carries it into his tent, he says to himself, “Oh, I wish that I had that great bushel of manna that my Brother took into his tent just now.” Yes, but listen—“he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.” Mark you, I do not discourage the attempt to gather much Grace, I would urge you to get all you can of it, for, however much you gather, you will have none too much, but I would discourage your despair if there should seem to be but little falling to your share, for you shall have no need! The fact is, all of us need Grace. You who preach the Gospel, you who are deacons, you who are elders, you who teach the infant class, you who can only give away a tract—you must do all these works with Grace or else you will not really do them at all! And our need of Grace is a common meeting place for us all. Only Grace can save you and only Grace can save me—and the Grace of God shall be given to us and all Believers as we have need of it.  
Our next need is, “mercy” to forgive. Titus, perhaps, thought to himself, “Well, Paul wishes mercy for me, but can hardly wish it for himself, for he is such an eminent servant of God, so holy, so consecrated, so zealous, so self-denying that he does not need mercy.” I reminded you, in our reading, that Paul, in writing to a Church, says, “Grace be to you, and peace,” but when he writes to a minister, he says, “Grace, mercy and peace.” It looks as though ministers needed more mercy than their people did! And it is my firm conviction that the more eminent is their office and the more remarkable is their usefulness in the service of God, the more mercy they require! Brothers, how can we meet our responsibilities unless we constantly cry, “Lord, have mercy upon us”? How can we deal faithfully with the souls committed to our charge and be clear of the blood of all men, unless the Lord shall have mercy upon us, and upon us beyond all others?  
All of us, then, need mercy. I do. Do not you? You are only a plain man with a family growing up around you, but you need mercy for your sins as the head of the household. Perhaps you are only a domestic servant, my Sister, but you need mercy even in that humble calling of yours. You, perhaps,

dear Friend, are very rich—oh, you need much mercy! And you, on the other hand, are very poor—I am sure that you need mercy. Some of you are in good health. You need mercy lest you should pervert that strength to an evil purpose. Others of you are very sickly—you may well cry for mercy, that you may bear up under your many pains and depressions of spirit. We all need mercy. So that is another point in which we are one.  
The third word of the benediction is “peace” to comfort. I hope that many of us know what peace of conscience means, what peace with God means and what peace with man means. If God has given us His peace, it is a treasure of untold value, “the pearl of great price.” To be at peace with God is better than to be a millionaire, or Czar of all the Russias. Peace of mind, restfulness of heart, quiet of spirit, deliverance from care, from quarrelling, from complaining—I know that I need that kind of peace—and you need it, too, do you not? You need it in your family, in your business, in your own hearts! Well, then, here we meet, again, having this same need of peace and, when we get it, we meet once more in finding the same delicious enjoyment of it! I wish to you, Beloved, now and henceforth, Grace, mercy and peace! And I believe that you wish the same to me. And herein, again, we join our hands and bless God that we feel true union of heart.  
IV. Upon the next part of my subject, which is more weighty, still, I must say but little. It is this—“Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” That is, WE ARE ONE IN THE SOURCE OF EVERY BLESSING.  
All good comes to us from God the Father through the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. I love to think of this—that all the Grace, mercy and peace that come to you—and all the Grace, mercy and peace that come to me, come from the heart of God! How many wagons there are upon the road of Grace and all of them heavily laden! One stops at that Brother’s door and another waits at this Sister’s gate, but they all started from one spot. Look on the side of the wagons and you will see the name of the same Proprietor on every one of them! “The chariots of God are twenty thousand,” but they are all the Lord’s, so that whatever Grace, mercy and peace come to us at all, come from the same place! Get to the very foundation of this Truth of God and you will see that we who believe all eat bread baked in the same oven, our clothes come out of the same wardrobe, the water that we drink comes from the same Rock! Yes, and the shoes that we wear were made by the same mighty Worker who bade Moses say to Israel of old, “Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be.” You have not anything that is worth having but what your Father gave to you! And your Father is my Father—and the hand that passes the blessing to you passes the blessing to me and to the whole family of Believers!  
These blessings not only all come from the same source, but they all come by the same channel—“the Lord Jesus Christ.” There is the sacred blood mark on every Covenant blessing, whether you have it, or your Brother has it, or some Christian far away in India gets it. It all comes by the same Divinely-appointed Channel—the Man, the God, Christ Jesus our Lord! I do not know how you feel about this matter, but it seems to me as if this ought to bind us very closely together. I remember when I first left my grandfather, with whom I had been brought up as a little child, how grieved I was to part from him. It was the great sorrow of my little life. Grandfather seemed very sorry, too, and we had a cry together. He did not quite know what to say to me, but he said, “Now child, tonight, when the moon shines and you look at it, don’t forget that it is the same moon your grandfather will be looking at.” And for years, as a child, I used to love the moon because I thought that my grandfather’s eyes and my own somehow met there on the moon! How much better it is to think that you, dear Friend, going so far away to Australia, are looking to the Savior, while we are doing the same thing, here, and so our eyes meet! You go to God at the Mercy Seat in prayer and that is just where we go—so, after all, we pray at the same sacred spot and our petitions meet at the great Throne of Mercy! Thus we are made to feel our blessed union in Christ.  
Some people say that they try to remember other people, but if you really love them, you will not “try” to remember them—you will not be able to keep from remembering them! Their image will come up before your mind’s eye. You cannot avoid it and you will not wish to avoid it. So, dear Friends, we will not say that we will try to remember each other while we are parted a while—but every blessing that comes to us shall remind us that it comes from our Father, through Jesus Christ our Mediator—and so we shall feel that we are truly one.  
V. Then, to close, there is one more point of union and that lies in OUR COMMON RELATIONSHIP TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. See how Paul puts it, “The Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.”  
I must dwell briefly upon every word of this title. First, Jesus is Lord to all His people—and equally to be obeyed by them all, and adored by them all. It is important that, with bowed knee and reverent love, we call Him Lord and God. We put our finger into the print of the nails and the wound in His side, confessing that He is and must be real Man, but, at the same moment, we cry with Thomas, “My Lord and my God.” I cannot pretend to have any union with the man who cannot, from his heart, say that! If you do not count Christ to be God, well, go your way, my fellow man, and I will go mine—but your way and my way cannot be the same. We know that this is the Christ of God, and he who does not know it needs to be taught of God the very first principles of the Gospel. So, you see, we have a true unity in the Lordship of Christ—we desire, as one man, to be obedient to all His commands and to worship Him as “very God of very God.”  
Then comes the next word, “the Lord Jesus Christ.” That will come again when I speak of the word, “Savior,” so I pass on to the following word, “the Lord Jesus Christ.” He is, to all of us who believe, the Anointed One, so anointed that every Word that Jesus Christ has spoken is to us Infallibly Inspired. We believe in Jesus, not only as men say they do, today, but we really believe in Jesus, for we believe in His Doctrine, in that which He, Himself spoke, and in that which He spoke by His Inspired Apostles. We cannot separate between Christ and the Truth He came to preach, and the work He came to do—nor will we attempt to do so. He is to us the Anointed of God, as Prophet, Priest and King—and we accept Him in all the offices for which He bears that anointing, do we not, my Brothers and Sisters? I know that we do! As Brothers and Sisters in one common faith, we rejoice in the common Christ whose anointing has fallen upon us, too. Though we are but as the skirts of the garment of our Great High Priest, yet the holy oil upon His head has come down even to us, as it is written, “you have an unction from the Holy One.”  
The Apostle further writes, “The Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.” Sometimes, in the Bible, we find the Lord Jesus Christ called, “a Savior.” “Unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” That is good, but it is not good enough for what poor sinners need. Our Lord Jesus Christ is not a Savior among other saviors, though He does instrumentally make His people saviors, as it is written, “saviors shall come up on Mount Zion; and happy are they who, as instruments in His hands, save souls from death, and hide multitudes of sins.” But Jesus is also called “the Savior.” He is “the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe”—the Savior, par excellence.  
Then, next, He is my Savior, as Mary sang, “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.” Oh, that is sweet, indeed—to get a personal grip of Him and to know that He has saved me from despair, from sin, from the power of evil, from death, from Hell! But there is, in some respects, a superior sweetness in this plural pronoun, “our Savior.” Selfishness is gone when we come to feel an intense delight in this Truth of God—that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of many more beside ourselves. “Our Savior”—does not this bind us to one another? A common delight in one person is one of the strongest bands of sympathetic union that can bind men together—and a common obligation to some one superior Being becomes a great reason for our being knit together in love. My Savior, your Savior, our Savior—“The Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.” Whenever we feel any disposition to break off from this Brother and from that, whom we know to be, after all, saved in the Lord, let us come together with a fresh clasp of the hands as we say to one another, “We rejoice in our Savior and we are one in Him.”  
What I want to say—as a parting word, before I leave you once more for my season of rest—is just this. Let us keep close together, now, shoulder to shoulder, if ever we did so in all our lives. “Close your ranks!” must be the message to the faithful in these evil days. Let us feel heart touching heart in the deepest and truest Christian affection, for, in proportion as we are welded together in love, we shall be strong for all the practical purposes for which the Holy Spirit intends a Church to be used.  
These 34 years—is not that the number?—they are so many, I begin to forget the number—a third of a century have I served among you as a preacher of the Gospel! I am always fearing that I shall get “flat, stale and unprofitable,” and that my voice will cease to have any music for you, but there is one thing I know, from the first day I came among you until now, I have preached nothing but “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God!” ”Jesus Christ and Him Crucified!” And I am not afraid that that Gospel will ever get “flat, stale, or unprofitable.” And this is the golden chain which has bound us together in holy fellowship. This is the foundation on which we have built—“One Lord, one faith, one Baptism.” Yes, one Baptism—there are others who hold another baptism, but we know of no outward baptism but the immersion of the Believer into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! And upon this point we are all agreed, as we are upon the rest of the articles of our faith.  
So, being one, let us show to all the world what the power of Christian unity really is! Keep together in the Prayer Meetings. Never let those precious gatherings decay or drop. If you have come together in large numbers—and you have in my presence—do so much more in my absence. Let each one feel bound to meet with his Brothers and Sisters in prayer. I am longing for a genuine revival of religion—a revival of religion everywhere—and I think I can see signs that it is coming. I find that many of the Baptist ministers who love the Gospel are going over the groundwork, preaching the fundamental doctrines more than they ever did —that is a good thing. I find that the Churches are meeting together for prayer at this juncture more than they have done, seeking that God will help and guide them to be faithful—that also is a good thing.  
And people are talking about the plan of salvation—on the tops of omnibuses and in the railway carriages—everywhere it comes up as a subject of debate! In the daily papers the same theme is brought forward, for which I thank God. And though I have had to bear my share of reproach for the Truth’s sake, yet I joyfully accept it. Anything which can call public attention to the Gospel of Christ is a help to us and I believe that the attention called to this question is hopeful, that the discussion of it by so many is still more hopeful and that the firm adherence to the faith, which I see in so many, will be attended by an intense zeal for the conversion of souls—and then we shall see a revival. God has been hindered and hampered by the false doctrine and heresy that have been cherished in so many of the churches—and the Spirit of God has been grieved and driven away by the utter rottenness of worldliness that has been indulged in by so many professing Christians. By God’s Grace we have let a little light into this darkness. By God’s Grace we have opened a door, here and there, and a clear cold draft is blowing out some of the fog and the evil gases of the stagnant atmosphere that has been poisoning our people far too long.  
Now is our time, Brothers and Sisters! Let us, as one man, pray God to send this benediction from on high—“Grace, mercy and peace.” I charge you, while I am away, to be instant in and out of season about this matter and to let this be a special object of supplication with the members of this Church—that we should have a revival of religion here, at any rate, while the pastor is away. It is better for it to come while he is away, for nobody will then put the credit of it upon any instrument. Break out, heavenly fire! Descend! Descend! Descend! Let the sacrifice be consumed!  
As for you who do not know and love the Lord, we love you, we desire to bring you into the blessed circle of love by the door of faith in Christ. Look alone to Jesus Christ, who is the only way of salvation for you as for us. Oh, that you would look to Him and live! God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**Titus 1; Titus 2.**

While reading this chapter we must understand that Titus was sent to Crete to superintend the preaching of the Gospel throughout that island. Crete was, at that time, inhabited by a people who were only partially civilized, and sunk in the very worst of vices. Paul, therefore, tells Titus to speak to them about things which would hardly be mentioned to Christians nowadays.

**Tit 1:1-4**. Paul, a servant of God, and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but has in due times manifested His Word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, my own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. You have probably noticed that Paul’s benediction, when he is writing to a minister, is always. “Grace, mercy and peace.” Writing to Churches, his usual formula is, “Grace be to you and peace,” but God’s servants, called to the work of the ministry, need very special “mercy”—as if the higher the office, the greater the liability to sin and, therefore, in his Pastoral Epistles, whether he is addressing Titus or Timothy, Paul wishes for his sons in the faith, “Grace, mercy and peace.” Oh, what a mercy it will be for any of us ministers if, at the last, we are clear of the blood of all men! If, having been called to preach the Gospel, we shall do it so faithfully as to be acquitted and even rewarded by our Lord and Master, it will be mercy upon mercy! [This “charge” of the beloved Pastor has even more force and pathos now that he has gone “away” to Heaven.]

5, 6. For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you: if any are blameless, the husband of one wife. For there were many converts, there, who had two or three wives. Whatever position they might be permitted to occupy in the Church, they could not become officers—they must keep in the rear rank.

6-12. Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful Word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own. According to Jerome, this was Epimenides, a prophet-poet who lived in Crete in the sixth century before Christ.

12. Said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. They were a degraded people and, therefore, those who would teach them had a most difficult task and needed great Grace. Paul exhorts Titus that only specially fit men—men whose example would have influence and whose characters would have weight—should be allowed to be elders in such Churches.

13-16. This witness is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. This was bad soil, but it had to be plowed, sown and, with an Almighty God at the back of the Gospel plower and sower, a fruitful harvest came even in Crete! We need not be afraid of the adaptation of the Gospel to the lowest of the low. If there is any quarter of the town where the people are more sunken in vice than anywhere else, there the Gospel is to be carried with more prayer and more faith than anywhere else! Depend upon it, God can bless His Word anywhere—among Cretans or among any other sort of degraded people.

**Tit 2:1**. But speak you the things which become sound doctrine. There are certain things which are suitable to go with sound doctrine— they are meet and fit and appropriate thereto.

2. That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. Among the heathen, old men often gave themselves up to drunkenness and gluttony. So, now, this is the teaching that is to be given to aged Christian men. They need faith, love and patience, as well as the virtues of sobriety, gravity and temperance! The infirmities of old age often create petulance, so the Grace of God is to make the venerable Christian to be full of faith, love and patience.

3. The aged women, likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things. Old women also among the heathen were often addicted to the taking of much wine, so here they are cautioned against it by the Spirit of God. They are also tempted to spread slanderous reports against people— having little to do in their old age, they are apt to do that little by way of mischief—so they are warned that they are not to be “false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.” And how beautifully can an aged Christian woman, by her kindly example, be a teacher of good things! There is no more charming sight under Heaven, I think, than that of an elderly Christian lady whose words and whose whole life are such as becomes the Gospel of Christ.

4, 5. That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed. There were some women who supposed that the moment they became Christians, they were to run about everywhere. “No,” says the Apostle, “let them stay at home.” There is no gain to the Christian Church when the love, the industry and the zeal, which ought to make a happy home, are squandered upon something else. The young women of Crete appear to have been such that they needed to be taught “to love their husbands.” That expression does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. Christian women do not need to be told to love their husbands, but these Cretans, just brought out of the slough of sin, had to be taught even this lesson. Oh, what a blessing is love in the marriage relationship! And what a gracious influence love has upon children! How are they to be brought up aright except the whole house be perfumed with love?

6. Young men, likewise, exhort to be sober-minded. That exhortation is as necessary in London as it was in Crete! Young men often know a great deal, or think they do—and they are very apt to be intoxicated with the idea of knowing so much and being able to do so much—so that the exhortation to them is to “be sober-minded.”

7-9. In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing incorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants—Or, as it might and should be rendered, “bond-slaves.”

9, 10. To be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining. Not picking and stealing, which very naturally was the common habit of slaves—and who wonders at it in their wretched condition?

10. But showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Is not that a wonderful passage? Here is a slave, able to be an ornament to the Gospel of Christ! This blessed Gospel is not sent only to kings and princes! When Paul preached it, the great mass of the population were in cruel bondage, treated like dogs, or even worse. Yet the Gospel even had a message for them—it told them that they might, by a godly character, adorn the doctrine of God, their Savior!

11-15. For the Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you.

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÷Tit 1.15

A SEARCHING TEST  
NO. 3521

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 20, 1916.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1872.

**“Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled.”***Tit 1:15***.**

I SHALL not profess, this evening, to enter into a full exposition of this text, for there are many deep things in it, and many intricate questions are suggested by it. I shall only make some observations upon it intended to be of practical service.

This text has often been misused—made to mean what was never in the Apostle’s mind. He does not mean that a wrong thing becomes right to a pure-minded man—that is the very opposite of what he does mean! He means that when men’s minds are pure, other matters become pure to them, but when their minds are impure, then they use these things for impurity. We shall endeavor to pick out the meaning as we go along, but by no means does it mean that I may pretend that I am of a pure mind and that, therefore, will make impurity, itself, pure! That would be to prove, if I found any pleasure in impurity, that my mind was impure. The true solution of the conduct of a man who professes to be pure in mind and yet commits himself to an unholy course of life, is not that the man makes that unholy life, pure, but that his unholy living proves that his mind is not pure at all!

Our text has in it, tonight, two kinds of men—the pure and the defiled and unbelieving. And secondly, it has two kinds of effects produced upon these men by outward things—to the one, all things are pure—to the other, there is nothing pure. First, let us talk about these—

I. TWO KINDS OF MEN.  
First, the pure—where shall we find them? Where are they born? We answer, no men are born so! Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one! Not one! As our parents have sinned, we, their children, are born with tendencies to sin—we are impure even from birth! There are none pure but those who are made so by a second creation! The first time they are marred upon the wheel. They must go under the Creator’s hand a second time—they must feel the power of the purifying Spirit of God creating them anew before they can be called pure at all! And these are not absolutely pure. Even in those who are entitled to be called, “pure in heart,” there remains impurity. If any man shall question that, let him remember the First Epistle of John, the first Chapter, at the 8th verse—“If any man says he has no sin, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” There is sin in the best of men—and if they do not perceive it, it must be because they are blinded with a foolish self-conceit—for in the purest heart there still remains connected with it the old nature and the impurity inherited from the first Adam. This makes life a perpetual conflict until life’s close. Still, we name men by their predominant characteristics. The partial impurity of a good man does not entitle him to be called impure. If the master principle within him, the reigning principle, is purity, he is a pure man. A man may once in his life have spoken an untruth—he may have been surprised into saying a thing which is not— but if the general tenor of his life is stern integrity, we do not, therefore, condemn him and brand him as a liar! Otherwise where were the men living upon earth who would be worthy of a name implying praise? The godly are pure—have been made pure by regeneration, and they are pure, though not absolutely so.  
They are pure in their affections. They love not that which is unchaste, unhallowed, untruthful, unlawful before God. Their soul loves that which God approves. They seek after that which God, Himself, commands. If they do not always keep God’s statutes, yet they love them. And if they do not always walk in His ways without slipping, yet they love His ways and desire to walk in them without a single turning aside to the right hand or to the left! The set of the current of their soul is towards purity. They mourn over those currents and eddies into which they are turned by temptation. They are the last men to excuse them—the rush and current of their soul, their deepest and truest life—is that they may be cleansed from all false ways and from sin. And as they are pure in their affections, they become pure in their actions. They, if they are, indeed, the people of God, cannot run with the multitude to do evil. The swine may find its pleasure in the mire, but God’s sheep love clean pastures. The raven may feed upon its garbage and be at home, there, but not so the dove—it likes the clean garner and the clean roosting place. The child of God shuns not only the darker sins which defile so many, but even those which others think but a trifle. And what some would permit and rejoice in, the Christian mourns, abhors, laments and avoids. The actions of the Christian—I do not claim perfection for them, but I do claim that the true Christian strives after perfection in his actions, that he seeks after it, yes, and that, as a rule, he comes nearer to it than his enemies would allow, or than even his own reflections, when he is examining himself, would permit him to believe! God has a people who still walk uprightly in the world. There are still some that are as pillars in the House of God upon whom he has written the name of our God—some who have not defiled their garments—who shall walk with Him in white, for, by His Grace, they are made worthy.  
And these men being thus pure in their affections and in their actions are most of all pure in their desires. Their greatest desire is towards purity. I am sure I speak the language of every renewed heart when I say that if the Lord were to appear by night to you, and say to you, as He did to Solomon, “What shall I give you?” there is no renewed heart here that would say, “Lord, give me riches!” There is no one that would say, “Give me health!” We may desire both of these things in a secondary degree, but our main desire would be this, “Lord, give me that holy character which would please You and bring honor to the religion I profess.” Holiness, holiness, holiness—it is a thing which every renewed heart longs after beyond everything else! I would have perfect orthodoxy in my head if I could, but I know even if I had that, an unhallowed life would render it of little service to me. But could I have a clean heart, other things would come with it and from it, for the pure in heart shall see God! And if they see God, what else is there that they shall not see, for the eyes which have glanced on God, Himself, will be able to perceive the difference between truth and error, and will not be liable to be deceived! The Christian is pure in his desires. Now if it is so, that in his affections within, and his actions without, and in the desires of his entire nature, he would be pure, he is entitled to this name and God has given it to him!  
But there are some, on the other hand, who are defied and unbelieving. These two things appear to go together. Now it was denied some time since, that every unbeliever is unclean in his life, and I think there is some ground in the denial. I should not like to stand here and say that I believe every infidel, every rejecter of the religion of Christ is a man unfit for the social circle and a sinner against the laws of decency! I do not believe it. Honestly, I must say that there are some men who have rejected the Gospel—I grieve that they have—have denied God and yet somehow they have been a vast deal better than their creed, and they have managed to walk in a consistency of moral conduct towards man which has almost been worthy to be set up as an example to Christians! I believe such cases are not the rule, and that candor, when it has made the admission which I have made, is compelled to add that this is an extraordinary thing and cannot have been produced by the creed, for the creed, itself, of the godless is necessarily logically and properly the creed of the unbelieving, producing sin! Why should they obey a Law of God if they do not believe in a Law-Giver, or if they only believe in a law-giver who will not punish and who cannot reward? When men have denied God, they have surely given up the sanction which should lead them to anything like purity—and if they live as most of them do live—it cannot be said that they are inconsistent with their creed.  
Yet, indeed, as a rule, and as a rule without exception—having said what I have said (and I do not contradict myself)—as a rule without an exception, the unbelieving heart is a defiled heart for all that. For what did we admit? That the man who rejects his God is not, therefore, a thief? Has he not robbed God? What did we say? That the man who rejects Christ is not, therefore, licentious? Is that purity which rejects perfection? Is that heart pure that cannot see loveliness in the Character and the Person of the Redeemer? What did we admit? That the unbeliever is not seditious? Yet is he a loyal subject of God who denies the Godhead, who rails against God, and who lives from day to day as if there were no God at all? Men, if they were called sinners, would not shudder at the word—they admit it! But call them criminals and at once they are angry and defend themselves—the reason being, I suppose, that with the mass of mankind it seems a trifle to offend God, but a very serious thing to have offended man! And here is the whole stress of the matter—the defilement of the unbeliever lies always God-ward, even when it is not apparent man-ward. And when the unbeliever, somehow or other, keeps his garments clean as before his fellow men, yet as before his God what is he? He is one who has cast off all obligations to his Maker, who denies all responsibilities to his King, who receives bounties from Jehovah’s hands but is not grateful and will not even acknowledge that the mercies come from those hands at all! He lives in habitual contempt of the Adorable— destitute of all admiration for the infinitely Glorious—who does what angels must shudder to think of—lives without love to Christ, without trust in the promises of God! There is a defilement, there, which, I venture to say, is even greater if looked at in a right light, than any form of defilement which becomes perceptible by men as between themselves!  
But notice in this text that it seems to correct a good deal of the mental philosophy we have heard of. For instance, I have heard it asserted that conscience is God’s vice regent among men. I have often heard expressions from the pulpit and read them in books which led me to infer that every fallen man has got not only something good in him, but some strong principle almost akin to the Divine! I believe in the fall of man and I believe that to be total—and that conscience is a power which has fallen with all the rest, and that there does not exist in the world a pure conscience—except so far as God has purified it by the work of His Spirit. Conscience, itself, is a defiled thing! And so far from being a representative of God, I could not think for a moment of comparing it with that Ever-Blessed and Pure Being! The fact is that conscience, although it must be to man practically his guide, is not ever a safe one, for the true guide of every man is the Bible, the revealed will of God. That is true, pure and right, but my conscience may often be a dark conscience, an ignorant conscience, a perverted conscience—and so my business is not to follow my conscience as I find it, but to go to God and ask Him to enlighten my conscience and guide it! Neither is it an excuse for a man for doing wrong when he says he was conscientious in doing it. It is an excuse as far as men are concerned, but not before God! God’s Law is not of variable quantity or quality depending upon the quantity or quality of the conscience—it is fixed and definite! Just as if a man were to take prussic acid, believing that it would benefit him—he would die, despite his conscience—or as if a person were to walk northward, expecting to reach his home in the south! He would not do anything of the kind! Or as if a man were to go to sea in a leaky vessel and a storm came on—his conscience would not save him—so it is with you! If you are astray, you are astray. Your business was to have waited upon God to have had that conscience corrected! Your business was to have laid that conscience at the foot of the Cross and ask the Master to purify it—to have waited upon the Holy Spirit for His teaching and consulted the Infallible Oracles of God’s Book to know what was the will of the Most High! It is not, therefore, for every man to be crying up his conscience. I believe in the conscience, by all means, among men, but there is none perfect before God! Their conscience should be bowed to God’s Law, to God’s Gospel, to believe His teachings and to obey His precepts. Conscience, no more than any other power, is irresponsible! It is under law in Him. He created man and put the conscience within him, which conscience has been spoiled and injured by the Fall.  
Now there are men in the world with defiled understandings and defiled consciences. They cannot judge rightly. Their understanding is defiled. They put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. “A man cannot do that,” says one. He does do it. There are thousands in this world who deliberately judge amiss, and who, when they sit down, even to think of a question (which, alas, we cannot often bring them to do), naturally come to a wrong conclusion because the scales which they weigh are out of gear. The measure which they use is not the measure of the sanctuary! Their understanding is defiled. And even when they bring their moral sense to bear upon some question, they are inevitably mistaken because their conscience, itself, has become defiled also. A sad state for men to be in, but into this state each man, according to his degree, is brought until his will turns to God and is rectified by the great Spirit. We are all impure—impure in every part. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.” We are all fallen. In manhood’s vast temple there stands not a solitary pillar that is quite erect. Here and there, there are masses that seem as though they stood as once they were, to let us know how grand a thing human nature might have been—but there is enough upon the whole to let us see that it is all in ruin, and in such ruin that unless He who built it at the first shall put forth His Omnipotent Power and use again the old fiat which created the world, it will still be a ruin and desolation—a den of all manner of unclean things!  
Thus have I spoken upon the two sorts of men, the pure and the defiled. But now, secondly, here is the main point that we have to speak of—  
II. THE TWO AFFECTS PRODUCED ON THESE TWO KINDS OF MEN.  
To those who are pure, all things are pure. To those who are impure and unbelieving, everything becomes impure. Only a few things by way of specimen.  
First, let us think of the attributes of God. To the Believer in Christ, whose heart is pure, how glorious is God! And every time we think of Him, adore Him and have fellowship with Him, we grow purer for it. The true Believer cannot think of God and draw nearer to Him without becoming more like his God. But look at the unbeliever. Oft-times his very thoughts of God have been, themselves, defiled by the defilement of his understanding, irritating him, filling him with wrath and abhorrence. He does not delight in the holiness of God—he says it is severity. “How can a man be happy with such laws to bind him?” He does not delight in the wisdom of God in Providence—he thinks things are ordered very much amiss, seeing they do not all conduce to his pleasure in the ways of sin! And, especially, if you set before him God’s mercy, that most blessed of all attributes which, to the Believer, is purifying to the highest degree, you will find the unbeliever saying, “God is Merciful,” and making that an excuse for his continuing in sin! How sad it is that when we preach the Gospel and give the invitations of Infinite Mercy, there are many who will say, “Ah, then, I can turn to God just when I like, and He is very gracious, and He will forgive me! Therefore I will continue in my rebellion against Him.” And when we have been pathetic, and our soul has poured over from our eyes as we have spoken of those saved at the eleventh hour, while there have been some minds that have been led to Christ, thereby, there are some who have drawn the horrible inference that they, too, might wait until the eleventh hour and venture their eternal interests upon the mercy of God at the last! Brothers, I believe you cannot preach of God without some men making mischief of it, even of just so simple a Truth as His Mercy. But when you come to

is Sovereignty—a deep that can never be fathomed—how many have been drowned in it! I believe we ought to speak about it. I am not of those who say we should be silent upon it, but how many have been drowned in those deeps, willfully, because they have said, “Who has resisted His will? Why does He find fault? If it is to be, it is to be. If it will be, it will be.” They have even dared to make God the Author of their sin and drawn an apology for their unrighteousness from the thrice holy King of Kings! To the pure in heart, all things are so pure that we, ourselves, sink into nothing in humility and penitence before Him! But to the ungodly, even God, Himself, becomes an argument for continuance in sin!  
Now take another. It is so with God, but it is equally is so with the Gospel. The Doctrines of the Gospel are, to the Believer, very pure. There is not one of them but what has a practical effect upon his life. I take the Doctrine of Election. Then if He has chosen us, He has chosen us to be a peculiar people zealous of good works, and special love we feel binds us to special service. We often sing—  
*“Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn!  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
We choose Him in return!”*  
So with the Doctrine of Redemption that He has redeemed us by His precious blood. The inference from it is, “You are not your own, you are bought with a price—therefore, glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are His.” Take the sweet Doctrine of Final Perseverance, “The righteous shall hold on his way.” Now the godly man feels that he must so live as to prove that he is a godly man by persevering, and he looks for daily Grace to hold him on and to keep him to the end. He blesses that Infinite Affection that does not turn aside from him and he feels drawn to it by constant watchfulness. I might mention all the Doctrines, but every Christian will admit at once that he that has this hope in him purifies himself. But take the effect of these Truths of God upon the unbelieving and the impure. Why, you know how they will pervert Divine Election! How often men have made that a coverlet for the grossest licentiousness! As for the redeeming blood, alas, how many have made the Cross, which is the Tree of Life, to be the tree of death to them! It has become a savor of death unto death to them. We have known some whose damnation is just—who have said, “We are the children of God, and we will live as we like,” and they have, therefore, given themselves over to uncleanness. Surely of all blasphemers, they must bear the palm—they stand among the worst. But when men thus turn the Gospel into licentiousness, are we to say it is the Gospel’s fault? Are we to keep back some of these Doctrines? By no means, for, “unto the pure all things are pure.” Unto the unclean and unbelieving, these holy things will always be impure. You might as well forbid the sun to shine because when its beams fall upon a dunghill, it brings forth unwholesome odors! Yes, but that same sun, when it falls upon the flowers, makes them shed their aromatic perfume on every hand! It is doing incalculable good. It is not the sun, but the dunghill that must be blamed. And when the Truth of God is perverted, you must not blame the Truth, but blame the unclean, unbelieving heart that turns it into sin!  
Now the same thing is true of the ordinances of the Gospel, and dreadfully true, here, too! When you come to the ordinances of the Gospel, such, for instance, as the preaching of the Word—the true Believer, every time he hears the Word is purged by the Word. “Now you are clean, you are purged through the Word which I have spoken to you.” The Truth of God shows him his own sinfulness. He sees his face in a mirror and endeavors to remove the spots which the Word of God reveals to him. But an ungodly man hearing the Word of God, grows the worse, perhaps, not only openly, but in his heart! Oh, there are some that sit in this very place—have done so for years! I thank God they are getting to be very, very few, now. I hope there will be none such, soon. May Grace grant there may not be one! But you will notice that the very Truth of God which once made them tremble, does not now—and whereas some years ago the preaching of the Gospel often brought tears to their eyes and sent them on their knees, it does not now—and sins which they were gladly to give up at one time, and which pricked their conscience, are now indulged in without compunction, for the same Gospel which softens, hardens, as the sun, which shines on wax and melts it, shines on clay and hardens it! Even the blessed ordinance of preaching—the hearing of the Word—may make some men to become yet more and more unclean. Alas, that it should be so. But see how Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, both of them (for I cannot now stay long to discriminate), have been misused. Whereas these are, both of them, ordinances to lead men to remember precious Truths of God—the death and burial of the Lord in the one case, and the soul’s feeding in the other case, on the precious body and blood of Jesus, and rejoicing in Him as blessed spiritual meat, how is it that we have been told (and it is preached from thousands of pulpits in England) that Baptism washes away sin and absolutely regenerates the soul? And though I have been chided for putting too strong a sense upon the word, “regenerate,” I have lived to see a stronger sense put upon it by some than I put upon it until it has become with some, simply a superstitious ordinance, and nothing more, full of mischief. And as to the Lord’s Supper, they tell us that there is in it a power to forgive all sin, even the most heinous. And this is not spoken now and then, accidentally—a slip of tongue—but is printed and scattered all over England as a true Doctrine of God!  
Well, these men’s minds are impure and, therefore, even those two precious ordinances are turned into superstition and into impurity—and I suppose it always will be so. But if the mind becomes pure, and becomes believing in Christ, it will never exalt mere bread and wine into the place of Deity, and water into the place of the Divine Spirit, Himself. God save us from having our minds rendered so impure as to fall into superstition by simple ordinances which are full of instruction! I do not doubt that there are many who are now depending for eternal life upon having gone to the “Sacrament of the Mass,” and are expecting to enter Heaven because they have reposed their confidence in a man who was arrogant enough to call himself the exclusive priest of God! God save us from having our understanding defiled, for it must be before it can submit to the belief of such superstition as this!  
But I must pass on. I have often noticed how the Church of God, itself, becomes to pure minds one thing, and to impure minds another. You shall find a man a member of a Christian Church who will tell you that wherever he has gone in that Church he has met with Brothers and Sisters full of love, full of earnestness—and he has been delighted to associate with them. I have been at the bedside of a venerable Brother recently, whom nearly all of you know, and if you were to hear his opinion of the Church of which he is a member, he would speak of it in the most glowing terms. The reason is that he sees in his fellow Christians very much what there is in himself. The man who is loving comes to love the Brethren! The man who is chaste, pure and zealous, attributes to others a like spirit and believes they are pure, and they are to him so assuredly. But you shall meet with another, a carnal, worldly-minded professor, and he says, “Oh, there’s no love!” He has not any. “There’s no zeal” he says. There certainly would not be if all were like he! “Ah,” he says, “I don’t see any of the Apostolic living that I read of in the Scriptures.” There is no Apostolic living in his own case! He didn’t see it because he hasn’t got it! To use an old illustration—if you send a buzzard flying over a tract of country, what will it see? Why, it will be looking out for all the dead carcasses and it will be sure to be able to tell you how much carrion there is about! But if you send a dove over that same space, it won’t have an eye for it, for it has no taste for it—but it will tell you of everything that is fair and beautiful, like itself! So is it with the pure mind in the midst of God’s people—it sees purity! It cannot shut its eyes to impurity, but it rejoices in the Truth and speaks of it, and speaks it as well as it can at all times with a charity that thinks no evil. But with the impure and the unbelieving, every place is defiled—and the man tars everything with the filth that is in his own bucket!  
Now the events of Providence—I will not detain you much longer, but let me observe that all the events of Providence are, to some men, one thing, and to some men another! Is a man with a pure mind suddenly lifted up in the world in wealth? He uses that for the poor of the Church of Christ. If he is impure, then that wealth allows him to gratify his impure taste and he sinks deeper in impurity! Does a pure man come to poverty? Then his poverty drives him nearer to God and he seeks to make himself useful among the poorer Brethren where he dwells. But if he is impure, he assumes the most groveling tastes and becomes the more wicked! Is a man a Christian? Then health is a delight to him—to consecrate it all to his Lord. Has a sinner health—then that health shall enable him to go farther into sin, or, at any rate, to indulge himself the more, for he will not consecrate it to his God. Anything that happens may be used two ways—and the pure shall see in every event something which he can turn to God’s Glory! And the impure can see in everything a means by which he may indulge himself.  
Now it is so if you mingle with the sons of men and see their sins. We are grieved at them. But when the Christian sees sin, he thinks, “This is what I would be but for the Grace of God.” So he praises God for His Grace. “This is what I shall be,” he says, “if I am not watchful.” So he becomes the more watchful and out of the very sin of his fellow men, he extracts some reasons for greater holiness and grows more pure because he observes the loathsomeness of impurity and turns from it the more earnestly. But the ungodly man is carried away by the evil example—his conscience is more deadened by it—and he becomes bolder in sin in consequence of what he sees in others! I am sure you will have observed it so, that where the good man gathers grapes, another finds nothing but poisoned apples—and where the Christian turns over this man’s depravity and finds in it a reason for greater holiness in his own person, the ungodly man only sees more excuses for himself for the past—and the greater license for himself in the future! Take another list of things, namely, the treatment of men to us. Suppose men praise us? The Christian says, “I must be watchful, for the praise of man is often inconsistent with the favor or God.” The ungodly man says, “Everybody praises me! What a silly fellow I must be!” There is a foulness of pride which comes upon him. The man who lives near to God, if he is sneered at by the sons of men, says, “It comes upon me for God’s sake. By His Grace, I will bear it.”But the other says he will not have any more of that and turns aside from a path which becomes rough, even though he knows that path to be right! How often has unjust treatment driven the ungodly man to anger, and in some cases to malice and to resolutions of revenge! To the impure an injustice makes him more impure. But see the Christian who is like his Master. Every injustice makes him cry for Grace to forgive—and when yet more injustice is heaped upon him, he forgives the more and tries to heap yet more coals of fire upon the head of his enemy by doing him the greater kindness, if by any means he may win his soul! So out of the worst of things the Christian extracts the best, while from the very best of things an unhallowed mind may extract the worst!  
Let us close—though there are many, many illustrations that might be given of this. Here you have, tonight, means afforded for judging yourselves. Do you find in God’s Book that which makes you angry with God? Do you find in the Gospel that which makes you complaisant with yourself while you are unregenerate? Do you find in Providence that which irritates you, or which seems to excuse you in sin? Then your mind is impure, for these things are with you according to what you are. “It is dark,” you say. It is your eyes that are dark—the Light of God is light and bright. “It is bitter,” you say, when we bring you the honey of the Gospel. It is not the honey that is bitter—it is your mouth—it is your mouth that is out of order. How often ought people to recollect this when they hear a true Gospel sermon! George Herbert says, “Judge not the preacher—he is your judge.” And very often when a man has condemned the sermon, he had far better condemn himself! He has not agreed with it? No, if he had, it would not have been true! When sometimes we have heard some man of low life railing at us, we have said, “Thank God! Supposing that wretch had praised us, we would have known there was something amiss about us! There are public papers which, if they praised a man, you would know at once that the man deserved hanging, or something near approaching to it! Their censure is the only homage they can give to that which is right. So when any soul kicks against Christ—the precious blood of Christ, the Gospel of God, the purity of God—do we condemn God because this man condemns Him? No, but God is glorified by the unrighteous nature of this man rebelling against Him! If God were other than He is, an unrighteous man might love Him, but being hated and despised, and forgotten of ungodly men, it does but prove that God is not such as they are, but infinitely superior to them! Let us judge ourselves, then, by this.  
But provided we are obliged to come to the conclusion that our minds are not pure, we need not end there, for there are means by which they may be made so! Glory be to God, if my mind and conscience are defiled, they need not always be so. There is cleansing. I cannot effect it for myself, nor can any outward forms do it—  
*“No outward form can make me clean,  
The leprosy lies deep within”*  
But God has set forth Christ to be a Savior—and He shall save His people from their sins—from their sinfulness, too, and whoever believes in Christ Jesus, that is, trusts in Him, there is already in him the beginning of purity! God the Holy Spirit will give him more and more of the likeness of Christ, for he that believes shall be saved from sin, from indwelling sin, from all sin, from the power as well as from the guilt of it! Faith will cleanse him, applying to him the precious blood and the water which flows from the side of Christ! Faith will, by the Holy Spirit’s power, become a cleansing as well as a saving Grace! God grant it to us, and may we all be among the pure, unto whom all things shall be pure. We ask it for Christ’s sake! Amen.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2416 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Tit 2.10

ADORNING THE GOSPEL

NO. 2416

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JUNE 9, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”** *Tit 2:10***.**

I AM afraid that there are some Christians who would hardly like the best preaching that they could ever have. The best doctrine that could ever be delivered would be like that of our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself— eminently ethical, full of precepts and words of wisdom for daily life. I verily believe that if some stern doctrinalists had heard some of Christ’s sermons, they would have said that they had not the Gospel in them! He did not preach, every time He spoke, those grand doctrines which plainly show the way of salvation, but He frequently proclaimed those important precepts which show us the fruits of salvation and which help us to judgewhether we have been saved or not.

You will notice that it was often the same in the preaching of the Apostles. Although Paul, himself, is a master of doctrine and, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, gives us a whole system of theology in miniature—though he never shrinks from the most profound doctrine, going to the very depths of the Doctrine of Election and to the very heights with the Doctrines of Justification by Faith and the Final Preservation of the Saints— yet he is preeminently practical in his teaching and often deals with the details of ordinary life.

Exceedingly noticeable is this in his Epistle to Titus. As you know, Titus was a teacher of teachers. He had to set in order the things that were needing and to show other preachers how they were to preach. He was told to bid the aged men to “be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.” Further, he was to instruct “the aged women, likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.” This was very close dealing with most practical matters! These aged women, in their turn, were to be instructors, “that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed. Young men, likewise, exhort to be sober minded.” You see how much of the Epistle is taken up with the affairs of ordinary life and matters of holy practice. So let our preaching be and let Christian people learn to receive joyfully such instruction! God will assuredly bless it, not only to its own great end of promoting holiness, but also as the means of convincing men of sin wherein they deviate from these blessed precepts—and thus, by conviction of sin—leading them to feel their need of a Savior and thus, incidentally, driving them to the Cross where all hopes of salvation must alone be fixed!

I feel glad that my text is so practical and I am not ashamed to preach the practical precepts of our holy faith. Yet I want you to notice how continually and how wisely Paul interweaves his practical exhortations with the doctrines of religion. He would have the bondservants to be obedient, honest and faithful towards their masters for this reason, “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.” Ah, you who despise doctrines, who turn upon your heels if there is a doctrinal sermon, where are you, now, when the true motive for which holiness of life is to be carried out is to be found here, “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things”? It is the fashion, nowadays, to talk much about preaching Christ, but not His doctrines. I neither understand nor wish to understand what that expression can mean. Christ without His doctrine? The great Teacher without His teachings? The Lord without His commands? The Christ without His anointing? Jesus, the only Savior, without His precious blood of Atonement? This is Judas-like, to betray the Son of Man with a kiss, to set up a engraved image in the place of Christ, a stuffed idol from which everything is absent that is vital to the true Christ of God! Dear Friends, we love “the doctrine of God our Savior” with all our hearts! We have received it to the joy of our spirit and in it we find the mainspring of motive which leads us to love our God and to walk in obedience to His precepts.

There are two matters upon which I am going to speak as the Holy Spirit shall guide me. First, here is a name of adornment for the Gospel— “the doctrine of God our Savior.” And, secondly, here is a method of adornment for the Gospel. These poor slaves were bid to so act that they should adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things.

I. First, here is A NAME OF ADORNMENT FOR THE GOSPEL. Let us think it over for a few minutes—“the doctrine of God our Savior.”  
Dear Friends, our misery was great, otherwise we had never needed a Savior who should be called, “God our Savior.” For a little sin, or for a sin however great, which had but little of evil in its consequences, we might have been saved by some finite being! But if God, Himself, must leave His high abode and sojourn here to be our Savior, then was our ruin terrible in the extreme! It is part of the doctrine that we have learned from the Bible that man is lost and utterly undone by nature and by practice, too. And we could not fully preach “the doctrine of God our Savior” if we did not show, first, how awful is the gulf which is open before us—which none but God could fill. To proclaim aright the remedy for sin, we must declare how desperate was the disease, which none but God could heal, nor even He, except by shedding of His own blood! Surely this is a grand doctrine—that we need a Divine Savior, and that there is such a Savior provided—but that apart from Him there is no salvation!  
It is also a very precious thought to us that while our ruin is evidently great, yet it is most sure that the remedy is equally great, or even greater, for we have a Savior whose name is, “God our Savior.” He is the one door of hope for the most despairing and desponding of men, “God our Savior.” Further down in this chapter, Paul calls Him, “the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” He that has come from Heaven to save us is a Man and feels for us with all the sympathy of a man, but He is also God and, therefore “able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” It is the best news that was ever published among the sons of men, that He whom we have offended has, Himself, become our Savior!  
When no eye had pitied—when, even had it pitied, there was still no arm that could have sufficed for our rescue—His eye pitied and His arm was made bare for the salvation of the sons of men! This was the Doctrine that, in Paul’s days, was whispered about everywhere, from Nero’s palace, down to those horrible holes where the slaves had to sleep at night. Afterwards, in the catacombs and in the caves of the earth, this was the story that the poor people came together to hear—that God was a Savior, that the Most High had, Himself, interposed to save the fallen and ruined sons of men! When it could be preached in the streets, it was so preached. When it might be proclaimed in the public synagogue, or in a school where philosophers gathered, or on Mars Hill at Athens, it was so preached. But when it could not be spoken in public, it was whispered and told privately from one to another of those who believed. Even the slaves passed on the message of hope to their fellow slaves, so that this grand Doctrine—“the doctrine of God our Savior”—was scattered abroad as the light is spread when the sun rises in the East and hastens on his course till the whole round globe is lightened by his golden rays!  
“The doctrine of God our Savior.” Once more, my dear Friends, this Doctrine is, in itself, Divine, for there is an idiom here by which we are made to understand that it is not only a doctrine which speaks of God our Savior, but it is the Doctrine of God our Savior! It is His breath—the Doctrine is, itself, the very breath of God! This Divine teaching, this Revelation, this doctrine of salvation by a Divine Savior, has a divinity about itself! Let us, therefore, proclaim it wherever we have the opportunity and let us not attempt to conquer the world with any other weapon but “the doctrine of God our Savior!” Let us take it as David took Goliath’s sword from Ahimelech and say, “There is none like that; give it to me.”  
I do not believe in the science of comparative religions. No! There is but one true religion, all the rest are lies! There is but one faith of God’s elect. There is “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.” There is but one faith that comes from God! Paul once wrote the words, “another gospel,” but, directly, as if afraid somebody would catch at the expression and think there might be two gospels, he recalled the words, and said, “which is not another, but there are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ.” There is but one message of salvation and that concerns the one and only Savior—and—“there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” This will be thought by some people to be very narrow-minded talk, but we are not at all afraid of being thought narrow-minded! We are a great deal more afraid of running in the broad way with the multitude to do evil and excusing others in the doing of it! No, the Word of Christ, Himself, still stands—“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.”  
So, you see, this wonderful teaching of Paul’s reminds us of the greatness of our misery, of the Divine Nature of our Savior and implies that the Doctrine, itself, is of a Divine order. I think I ought, also, to say, dear Friends, that these things being so, our safety is great! Our salvation, because we have God for our Savior, is great, indeed! In his Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul asks the question which has never been answered—“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”  
You can never think too much of this great salvation! When you desire it, prize it as a beggar might prize gold. When you have it, grasp it as the pearl of great price! We have, indeed, a great salvation—it is salvation from spiritual death, salvation from the rule and government of Satan, as well as from the manners and customs of an ungodly world. And it is also salvation from the guilt of sin, salvation from the dread of Hell, salvation from the fear of death and, it shall ultimately be perfect salvation from the least spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Our salvation to the fullest will only be revealed in the day of Christ’s appearing, when the body, also, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and all the surroundings of this poor sin-smitten earth—and the creation, itself— through this great salvation, shall be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.  
“The doctrine of God our Savior”—the more I think of all that is meant by these words, the more it seems to be an ornament of the rarest kind for the neck of the Gospel! “The doctrine of God our Savior.” Turn the words over in your minds—see what a Gospel it is that you have received, see how great it is, see how Divine it is—prize it so as to rejoice in it day by day and so as to defend it, if necessary, with your lives! Rejoice in it so that when you come to die, it shall be the light that shall remove the darkness of the last dread hour!  
Let us make a little further enquiry into this Doctrine of God our Savior. Why is the Gospel called by this name? Well, first, because God, our Savior, is the Author of the Doctrine, and the Author of the salvation which it brings. It all comes from Him. It seems to be thought, nowadays, that the Gospel which we have received has been evolved from man’s inner consciousness and that there are to be further evolutions which will blot out the present as the human race keeps rising, from platform to platform, till, one of these days, it will get up—God, alone, knows where—but certainly far beyond any necessity for such a Gospel as the martyrs died for and the Apostles declared! With such views we have no sympathy, whatever, and we entertain towards such erroneous notions the most determined opposition! We believe in a Revelation from God and we believe that it is woe unto him who adds to or takes from that Revelation. We do not think the Church will have a particle of enthusiasm left in it—and it has none too much now—if ever people should get the idea that the Gospel is not a Divine Revelation, but only the product of human thought. Dear Friends, the doctrine that we believe and teach, and by which we have been saved, is, “the doctrine of God our Savior” because it came from Him—He is the Author of it.  
And next, it is “the doctrine of God our Savior” because He is the substance of it. If you take the whole Truth of the Gospel and compress it till you get the very essence of it, you will find that it is, “Jesus only.” The very substance of the Gospel is Jesus Christ, Himself—His Person, His work, His glorious offices. It is, indeed, “the doctrine of God our Savior.” Beware that you hear no doctrine but that which exalts Him! If there is any teaching which puts Him into a corner, you get into a corner as far as you can from it! If there is any teaching that does not lift Him up, how can it be blessed of the Holy Spirit, since it is the Holy Spirit’s work to reveal Christ to His people and to make Him great in their thoughts?

*“None but Jesus, none but Jesus,*

*Can do helpless sinners good”*  
and, therefore, to this Gospel we must adhere with all our hearts! It is the Doctrine of God our Savior, for He is the substance of it!

Yet again it is the Doctrine of God our Savior because He is the object of it—it all points to Him. If you hear a real Gospel sermon, it directs you to look to Jesus Christ. That teaching which leads you to think of the priest and to think of the church, whatever there may be about them that is good, is not “the doctrine of God our Savior.” “To Him give all the Prophets witness,” to Him the Gospel continually points and this is the preacher’s one cry, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”

This “doctrine of God our Savior” is simplicity, itself, and yet no man ever understood it except by the Holy Spirit’s teaching, for no man can rightly say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit. Simple as it is, it seems to me that it is the most wonderful thing that was ever revealed, if I think of the effect it has upon the hearts of men! When Paul began to preach it and when he wrote these words to Titus, this simple teaching was being carried all over the known world by enthusiastic spirits, some of them able to speak in strange tongues and with words of eloquence, but the great mass of them, poor people, servants, slaves! Yet, wherever they went, they that were scattered abroad, spread this doctrine everywhere and it burned away until the great Roman Empire simmered like a pot on the fire and, after a while, boiling over and scalding many with its scum.

The great ones of the earth, of course, ridiculed this “doctrine of God our Savior”—it was “foolishness” to them—and he that received it was thought to be an idiot—he had forsaken the gods of his fathers, so he must be a fool. Yet the doctrine still went on spreading and then they tried to put out the fire and to quench it with blood, but men bravely died for it rather than deny it! They pressed to the judgment seats, so determined to avow their faith in Christ that Roman governors had to write home to know what they were to do. The more they put the Christians to death, the more Christians there were! Further cruelties were committed—unspeakable tortures of all kinds were invented—but, for Christ’s sake, His followers endured all! They seemed to come on with an almost Omnipotent force to make a huge hecatomb of victims! They appeared to press onward through martyrdoms of a most horrible kind and all the while, this “doctrine of God our Savior” had a wonderful power among men!

And, dear Friends, you who are conversant with Church history know how often this Doctrine has broken all the bands that wicked men tried to fasten around it. I often wondered, until I understood the supernatural reason for it, what made the French Protestants, for instance, meet together in the desert, towards the South of France, while they were being dragooned by the king’s soldiers and while multitudes of them were being hunted to death. How was it that, in the dead of night, in lonely places, they came together to hear the Gospel? What is there about this Gospel that seems to touch the soul of man and makes him quite another creature—makes him joyous instead of sad, and makes him so mighty that he dares to defy death and Hell in defense of it? The reason is because this Doctrine cures the woe and misery of the soul—and brings light, comfort, happiness and hope to it! It is made by God, on purpose, to touch the heart of man and stir it to its very depths!

As for the new doctrine that many are teaching—it has not enough in it to make even a mouse enthusiastic! It has not enough in it for them to bait a mousetrap of their own—and the only way in which they can make any progress at all is by sneaking into our churches, obtaining a hearing and winning attention, and then, traitors as they are, speaking against the very Truths of God that has built our houses of prayer! They cannot build their own places of worship—there is nothing in their teaching that can make anybody generous and there is nothing in it that can make anybody glad. No, it is “the doctrine of God our Savior” that Paul insists upon, and he says to Titus, “having adorned it as well as I can with my preaching, now you take care that you and your people adorn it with your lives.”

II. That is to be the second part of my subject, A METHOD OF ADORNMENT FOR THE GOSPEL.  
Let us enquire, first, who were the persons who were to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things”? They were, according to our translation, “servants,” but the correct word would be serfs, or slaves. These Christian slaves were to adorn the Doctrine of God their Savior. Some of these slaves—the women slaves especially—spent much of their time in adorning their mistresses. I will not attempt to repeat the terrible stories that are told of Roman women and their cruelty to their handmaids. Certainly the poor slaves had to spend hours upon hours in the adornment of their mistresses and some of the male “swells” of the Roman Empire wasted a great deal of the time of their slaves—the men, I mean—in the adornment of themselves. So that these slaves would have a pretty good idea of what was meant by the ornamenting or adorning of the Gospel and it must have struck them as a very wonderful thing that they should be selected to adorn the Gospel!  
The word is not applied to the masters, to the princes, or to any of the great ones of the earth—but to those, who, in addition to being poor, were not even owners of themselves! Slaves in Paul’s days were simply goods and chattels, but they were regarded as goods and chattels of the very lowest kind—they were as often and as freely sold as the sheep in the market. Think of how they used to be treated, when, for instance, for making a slight mistake in waiting at table, a slave was thrown into the fishpond to be eaten alive by the fish—the thing was frequently done. The most fearful punishments were executed on them and you might have seen in Pompeii the wretched places by the doorway where the slave, who was the porter, had an iron collar and a weight about his neck, and where he slept under the stairs, as a dog might do in a kennel and, perhaps, for years never left his miserable den. Yet these were the kind of people who were to adorn the Gospel! Paul did not think badly of them. Everybody else did, but he set the task of adorning the Gospel by making it lovely and beautiful in the eyes of men—to even the very poorest and worst-off as to their position! Is it not wonderful to think of, and yet, such is the literal fact?  
Paul also told them how they were to adorn the Gospel. I do not think, for a moment, Paul believed that the practice of slavery ought to exist. He believed to the fullest extent that the great principles of Christianity would overthrow slavery anywhere and the sooner they did so, the better pleased would he be, but, for the time being, as it was the custom to have slaves, they must adorn the Doctrine of God their Savior in the position in which they were.  
Slaves in those days were constantly rebelling. At one time they rose up and, for a while, they kept all Rome in fear and alarm, for the masters thought they would all be killed by their rebellious slaves. So Paul exhorts them, first, “to be obedient unto their own masters.” Then the man’s master, however wicked he might be, would say, “Whatever has come over my slave? My orders are exactly carried out—all I could wish to have done is done, and done well. He is not an eye-servant or a mere man-pleaser, but he does his work heartily and I have heard him say that he does it out of love to one, Jesus, who is his God and Savior.” The slave was to put aside all his selfishness and, finding himself a slave, to determine that he would so serve his master that he might recommend his religion to his master!  
The slaves were also to be “well pleasing” to their masters—“to please them well in all things.” They were not to be always quarrelling, grumbling and complaining about this, and that, and the other, but to wear a contented spirit. Then the master would be sure to ask, “What can have come over my slave?” And, by the way in which he acted, the slave would be a practical missionary to his master!  
Paul added, “not answering again.” Of course, the slaves were usually sharp in their retorts to their masters. They did not care whether they lived or died and they said hard things. Paul says let the quiet patience of the Christian slaves make their masters and mistresses wonder what it is that has made such a difference in them. He also added, “not purloining.” Slaves and servants in Paul’s time were all thieves. In the writings of secular authors of that period, you constantly meet with the declaration that, “to multiply servants is to multiply thieves.” Of course the poor creatures helped themselves whenever they could—if you treat a man like a dog, should you be surprised if he acts like one? But the Christian slave might be trusted with untold gold! And obedience to this precept, “not purloining,” was the way in which he adorned the Doctrine of God, his Savior.  
He was also to be faithful to his master—“showing all good fidelity.” There were Christian slaves who had bad masters, who, nevertheless, were faithful to them in guarding their interests, and it was such a marvel that the rich heathen who despised the name of Christ, yet coveted to buy Christian slaves, for they found them to be the most faithful of mankind and wondered what it was that made them so! This is what Paul meant when he said that they should adorn the Doctrine of God, their Savior, in their sad and low estate, by not being degraded by it, but standing up in the grandeur of their Christian liberty, determining that they would not be the slaves of sin—and this was a wonderful adornment for the Gospel!  
You and I are not slaves! We have been saved from that degradation by this Gospel of God our Savior, for our fathers were as much slaves as these poor people were, but we are free. What can we do to adorn the Gospel of God our Savior? Well, first, remember that the adornment of the Gospel of God our Savior is not to be esthetic. We cannot adorn the Gospel with music, with painting and with architecture. When you stand beneath the blue sky and see how God has decked His world with many flowers beneath your feet, and all around you hear the birds singing. And when, in the still and silent night, you gaze upon the silver stars, you feel that there is nothing we can build and nothing we can make that is in the least worthy of the great God. You remember how Stephen said of the Temple at Jerusalem, “Solomon built Him an house,” and then added, “Howbeit the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands. As says the Prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?” As much as to say there was nothing in all that material grandeur, for, from the very day in which Solomon built the Temple with all its splendor, religion declined and decayed throughout all Israel! You cannot “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” with anything tangible and material—it is to be adorned in quite another way.  
Neither can you adorn the Doctrine by anything peculiar in your garb or your mode of speech, as some have tried to do. The Gospel is not any the better for a broad brim to your hat. It will not be any the worse for the color of your coat. Neither can it be adorned by any ecclesiastical addition whatever! Neither can it be adorned by the flowers of rhetoric. What grand speeches are sometimes made about the Gospel! Yet, somehow, they do not seem to fit it. The Gospel is best adorned when most unadorned! In her native beauty she is altogether unrivalled, she is then a queen—but when you deck her out, as they do who come from Rome, with meretricious garments—her true splendor is marred and hidden.  
How, then, can we ornament the Gospel? An ornament should always be suitable. Nothing is really ornamental that is not suitable to the person upon whom it is placed. Then, what is appropriate to the Gospel? Well, holiness suits the Gospel. Adorn it with a holy life! How pure, how clean, how sweet, how heavenly the Gospel is! Hang, then, the jewels of holiness about its neck and place them as rings on its hands. The Gospel is also to be adorned with mercifulness. It is all mercy, it is all love, there is no love like it—“God so loved the world.” Well, then, adorn the Gospel with the suitable jewels of mercifulness and kindness! Be full of lovingkindness to others, for you have tasted of the lovingkindness of the Lord! The Gospel is also the Gospel of happiness. It is called, “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.” A more correct translation would be, “the happy God.” Well, then, adorn the Gospel by being happy!— *“Why does your face, you humble souls,  
Those mournful colors wear?”*  
Adorn the Gospel by a cheerful countenance and a happy life!  
Men of business, adorn the Gospel by the strictness of your integrity. Ours is a just Gospel, for God is Just, and yet the Justifier of everyone that believes in Jesus. The Gospel makes abundant provision for justice to all men, so I pray that you may be so exact, so particular about everything, that when men speak of you, they will not be able to say that you make a profession of religion, but it has not much effect upon your life. Never let it be so said truthfully—be so strictly just that people will not need to count money after you, for in that way they will see what is the meaning of the expression, “adorning the doctrine.” A person asked me, one day, “Is not such-and-such a person Baptist?” I replied, “I do not know him.” He said, “He is a fellow who says a very long grace before his dinner and he goes to such-and-such a Chapel.” “Well,” I answered, “if he goes there, he certainly attends a Baptist Chapel.” Then he said, “He is as big a thief as there is out of prison anywhere.” I said, “I hope he is not a Baptist. At any rate, he is not a Christian if he is what you say, for a Christian is an honest man.” Unless we are strictly so, we do not adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior.  
Adorn the Gospel, next, by your unselfishness. If you are always looking to your own interests. If you have no thought but for your own personal comfort. If your religion can live and die within your own heart, you have not any that is worth having! If you would adorn the Gospel, you must love others, love them intensely and make it one objective of your lives to make other people happy, for so you will then be acting according to the spirit and genius of the Gospel, and you will be adorning the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things!  
Again, let a spirit of quick forgiveness be upon you. Resent no injury. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.” Thus you will have a fine set of jewels to adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior!  
Next, have patience under trouble. Be not afraid of sudden fear. Be not carried away into grumbling or murmuring in the time of your poverty or pain. A patient woman, one who can bear up and bear on under all kinds of adversity, is one of the greatest ornaments of the Gospel!  
A placid and steady calm is also a great adornment for the Gospel. One has seen such gentleness of spirit in some Christian matrons that we have felt that they have been an ornament to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. May we learn that holy calm and may the Spirit of God so dwell in us that in all we say, and all we do, and all we are, we may adorn the Doctrine of God our Savior in all things! May the Lord add His blessing upon this discourse, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
*Tit 2:6-15***; Titus 3.**

**Tit 2:6**. Young men, likewise, exhort to be sober minded. They are full of spirits, they are very sanguine, they are apt to be carried away with novelties—exhort them to have that which is thought to be a virtue of age, namely, sobriety. Let them be old when they are young that they may be young when they are old.

7. In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works. Titus was, himself, a young man. He must, therefore, be a pattern to young men and, as a pastor or Evangelist, he must be a pattern to all sorts of men.

7, 8. In doctrine showing incorruptibility, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. It is a pity when the Truth of God suffers at the hand of its own advocate and, perhaps, the very worst wounds that Truth has received have been in the house of its friends. You must be careful, therefore, “that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.”

9. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters. They were mostly slaves in those days. A sad condition of society was that in which service meant slavery, yet even slaves were “to be obedient unto their own masters.”

9, 10. And to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining. Not practicing petty thefts, as, alas, some servants do even now—

10. But showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. The life of the Christian, even if he is a servant, is to be an ornament of Christianity. Christ does not look for the ornament of His religion to the riches or the talents of His followers, but to their holy lives, “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

11, 12. For the Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Christians are not to run out of the world, as monks and hermits sought to do, but to live “in this present world.” Yet, while in the world, we are to be godly— that is, full of God! That kind of life which is without God is not for Christians! Those worldly desires, the pride and ambition which are common to worldly men are not to have power over us. We are to deny them and to live soberly. This word relates not only to eating and drinking, but to the general sobriety of a man’s mind—“Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”

13, 14. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. See what Christ died for? See what Christ lives for? See what we are to live for—that we should not only be a people purified, but purified unto Himself! We are not only to have good works, but we are to be zealous of them—we are to burn with zeal for them, for zeal is a kind of fire—it is to burn and blaze in us until we warm and enlighten others!

15. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise you. As I have already reminded you, Titus was a young man, and people are apt to despise the pastoral office when it is held by a young man. Yet they ought always to respect it, whether it is held by a young man or an old man. God knows best who is most fitted for the work of the ministry—and those of us who are getting old must never look with any kind of scorn or contempt upon those who are commencing their service, for we, too, were once young. You cannot measure a man’s Grace by the length of his beard, nor by the number of his years.

**Tit 3:1-2**. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be not brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. Gentleness was not reckoned a virtue among the Greeks. I do not suppose that the people in Crete had ever heard of it before Paul wrote this Epistle to Titus. Among the Romans and the Greeks, it seemed to be a virtue to stand up for your own, to be like a gamecock who is always ready to fight and will never miss a chance of fighting. But this Christian virtue of gentleness is a most amiable one and greatly adorns the Doctrine of Christ. The world has run away with this word, gentle, and now calls many a person a gentleman who has no right to the name. I wish that every gentleman were, indeed, a gentleman! It is very significant that Moses, the type of the Lord Jesus under the Law, was the meekest of men—should not Christians, therefore, excel in gentleness under this milder dispensation?

3, 4. For we ourselves, also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God, our Savior, toward man appeared. “The philanthropy of God” would be a good translation, or rather, a sort of borrowing from the Greek itself. “After we had seen the philanthropy of God”—

5-8. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying. It would be worthwhile for you to turn to the other places in which this expression, “This is a faithful saying,” occurs.

8. And these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. They are saved by faith—let them be careful to maintain good works. “These things are good and profitable unto men,” that is, to those who practice and observe them.

9. But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the Law; for they are unprofitable and vain. There are hundreds of questions which are thought, by some people, to be very important, but which have no practical bearing, whatever, either upon the Glory of God, or upon the holiness of man. We are not to go into these matters—let those who have time to waste take up these questions—as for us, we have not time enough for things that are unprofitable and vain.

10, 11. A man who is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself. When it comes to unbelief of fundamental and vital doctrines, we who are like Titus, set in office over a Church, must deal with such deadly evils with a strong hand.

12, 13. When I shall send Artemas unto you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter. Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. Paul had already told Titus to bid the saints in Crete to abound in good works. Now he is commanded to take care of certain traveling Christians and to speed them on their way. It was the custom in olden times, when traveling was very different from what it is now, when the Christians passed from one town to another, to find the Church and to be entertained and speeded on their journey by their fellow Believers. Thus they kept up a practical fellowship of love to all the saints.

14, 15. And let our people, also, learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute you. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen. May that final benediction drop like the dew upon this whole company! “Grace be with you all. Amen.”

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÷Tit 2.11

THE TWO APPEARINGS AND THE DISCIPLINE OF GRACE

NO. 1894

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 4, 1886, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For the Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people,  
zealous of good works.”***Tit 2:11-14***.**

UPON reading this text, one sees at a glance that Paul believed in a Divine Savior. He did not preach a Savior who was a mere man. He believed the Lord Jesus Christ to be truly Man, but he also believed Him to be God over all and he, therefore, uses the striking words, “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” There is no appearing of God the Father—there is no such expression in Scripture! The appearing is the appearing of that second Person of the blessed Trinity in unity who has already once appeared and who will appear a second time without a sin offering unto salvation in the latter days. Paul believed in Jesus as “the great God and our Savior.” It was his high delight to extol the Lord who once was crucified in weakness. He calls Him, here, “the great God,” thus specially dwelling upon His power, dominion and Glory. And this is the more remarkable because he immediately goes on to say, “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” He that gave Himself. He that surrendered life, itself, upon the accursed tree. He that was stripped of all honor and Glory and entered into the utmost depths of humiliation was, assuredly, the great God notwithstanding all! O Brothers, if you take away the Deity of Christ, what in the Gospel is left that is worth preaching? None but the great God is equal to the work of being our Savior!

We learn, also, at first sight, that Paul believed in a great redemption. “Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” That word, “redemption,” sounds in my ears like a silver bell! We are ransomed, purchased back from slavery and this at an immeasurable price—not merely by the obedience of Christ, nor the suffering of Christ, nor even the death of Christ, but by Christ’s giving Himself for us. All that there is in the great God and Savior was paid down that He might “redeem us from all iniquity.” The splendor of the Gospel lies in the redeeming Sacrifice of the Son of God and we shall never fail to put this to the front in our preaching! It is the gem of all the Gospel gems! As the moon is among the stars, so is this great doctrine among all the lesser lights which God has kindled to make glad the night of fallen man! Paul never hesitates—he has a Divine Savior and a Divine redemption—and he preaches these with unwavering confidence. Oh that all preachers were like Paul!

It is also clear that Paul looked upon the appearing of the Savior as a Redeemer from all iniquity as a display of the Grace of God. He says, “The Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” In the Person of Christ, the Grace of God is revealed, as when the sun rises and makes glad all lands. It is not a private vision of God to a favored Prophet on the lone mountain’s brow, but it is an open declaration of the Grace of God to every creature under Heaven—a display of the Grace of God to all eyes that are open to behold it! When the Lord Jesus Christ came to Bethlehem and when He closed a perfect life by death upon Calvary, He manifested the Grace of God more gloriously than has been done by creation or Providence. This is the clearest Revelation of the everlasting mercy of the living God! In the Redeemer we behold the unveiling of the Father’s face. What if I say the laying bare of the Divine heart? To repeat the figure of the text, this is the dayspring from on high which has visited us. This is the Sun which has risen with healing in His wings. The Grace of God has conspicuously shone forth and made itself visible to men of every rank in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. This was not given us because of anything deserved on our part—it is a manifestation of free, rich, undeserved Grace and of that Grace in its fullness! The Grace of God has been made manifest to the entire universe in the appearing of Jesus Christ our Lord!

The grand objective of the manifestation of Divine Grace in Christ Jesus is to deliver men from the dominion of evil. The world in Paul’s day was sunk in immorality, debauchery, ungodliness, bloodshed and cruelty of every kind. I have not time, this morning, to give you, even, an outline of the Roman world when Paul wrote this letter to Titus. We are bad enough, now, but the outward manners and customs of that period were simply horrible! The spread of the Gospel has worked a change for the better. In the Apostle’s days the favorite spectacles for holiday entertainment were the slaughter of men—and such was the general depravity, that vices which we hardly dare to mention were defended and gloried in. In the midnight of the world’s history, our Lord appeared to put away sin. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of the Divine Grace to men, came into the world to put an end to the unutterable tyranny of evil. His work and teaching are meant to lift up mankind at large, but also to redeem His people from all iniquity and to sanctify them to Himself as His peculiar heritage.

Paul looks upon recovery from sin as being a wonderful proof of Divine Grace. He does not talk about a kind of Grace that would leave men in sin and yet save them from its punishment. No, his salvation is salvation from sin. He does not talk about a Free Grace which winks at iniquity and makes nothing of transgression, but of a greater Grace by far—a Grace which denounces the iniquity and condemns the transgression—and then delivers the victim of it from the habit which has brought him into bondage. He declares that the Grace of God has shone upon the world, in the work of Jesus, in order that the darkness of its sin and ignorance may disappear and the brightness of holiness, righteousness and peace may rule the day. God send us to see these blessed results in every part of the world! God make us to see them in ourselves! May we feel that the Grace of God has appeared to us individually! Our Apostle would have Titus know that this Grace was intended for all ranks of men—for the Cretans who were “always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons”—and even for the most despised bond slaves who, under the Roman empire were treated worse than dogs. To each one of us, whether rich or poor, prominent or obscure, the Gospel has come and its design is that we may be delivered, by it, from all ungodliness and worldly lusts.

This being the run of the text, I ask you to come closer to it, while I try to show how the Apostle stimulates us to holiness and urges us to overcome all evil. Firstly he describes our position. Secondly, he describes our instruction. And, thirdly, he mentions our encouragements. May the good Spirit bless our meditations at this hour!

I. First of all, the Apostle in this text describes OUR POSITION. The people of God stand between two appearances. In the 11th verse he tells us, “The Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” And then he says, in the 13th verse, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” We live in an age which is an interval between two appearings of the Lord from Heaven. Believers in Jesus are shut off from the old economy by the first coming of our Lord. The times of man’s ignorance God, winked at, but now He commands all men, everywhere, to repent. We are divided from the past by a wall of light upon whose forefront we read the words, Bethlehem, Gethsemane and Calvary. We date from the birth of the Virgin’s Son—we begin with Anno Domini. All the rest of time is before Christ and is marked off from the Christian era. Bethlehem’s manger is our beginning. The chief landmark in all time to us is the wondrous life of Him who is the Light of the world! We look to the appearing of the Grace of God in the form of the lowly One of Nazareth, for our trust is there. We confide in Him who was made flesh and dwelt among us, so that men beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. The dense darkness of the heathen ages begins to be broken when we reach the first appearing—and the dawn of a glorious day begins!

Brothers and Sisters, we look forward to a second appearing! Our outlook for the close of this present era is another appearing—an appearing of Glory rather than of Grace. After our Master rose from the brow of Olivet, His disciples remained for a while in mute astonishment. But soon an angelic messenger reminded them of prophecy and promise by saying, “You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven.” We believe that our Lord, in the fullness of time, will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God—

*“The Lord shall come! The earth shall quake! The mountains to their center shake  
And, withering from the vault of night,  
The stars shall pale their feeble light.”*

This is the terminus of the present age. We look from Anno Domini, in which He came the first time, to that greater Anno Domini, or year of our Lord, in which He shall come a second time, in all the splendor of His power, to reign in righteousness and break the evil powers as with a rod of iron!

See, then, where we are—we are compassed about, behind and before— with the appearings of our Lord. Behind us is our trust. Before us is our hope. Behind us is the Son of God in humiliation. Before us is the great God, our Savior, in His Glory. To use an ecclesiastical term, we stand between two Epiphanies—the first is the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh in dishonor and weakness. The second is the manifestation of the same Son of God in all His power and Glory! In what a position, then, do the saints stand! They have an era all to themselves which begins and ends with the Lord’s appearing!

Our position is further described in the text, if you look at it, as being in this present world, or age. We are living in the age which lies between the two blazing beacons of the Divine appearings and we are called to hasten from one to the other. The sacramental host of God’s elect is marching on from the one appearing to the other with hasty feet. We have everything to hope for in the last appearing, as we have everything to trust to in the first appearing—and we have now to wait with patient hope throughout that weary interval which intervenes! Paul calls it, “this present world.” This marks its fleeting nature. It is present, but it is scarcely future, for the Lord may come so soon and thus end it all. It is present, now, but it will not be present long. It is but a little time and He who will come shall come and will not tarry. Now it is this “present world.” Oh, how present it is! How sadly it surrounds us!

Yet, by faith, we count these present things to be unsubstantial as a dream and we look to the things which are not seen and not present, as being real and eternal! We pass through this world as men on pilgrimage. We traverse an enemy’s country. Going from one manifestation to another, we are as birds migrating on the wing from one region to another—there is no rest for us by the way. We are to keep ourselves as loose as we can from this country through which we make our pilgrimage, for we are strangers and foreigners and here we have no continuing city. We hurry through this Vanity Fair—before us lies the Celestial City and the coming of the Lord who is the King thereof! As voyagers cross the Atlantic and so pass from shore to shore, so do we speed over the waves of this everchanging world to the Glory Land of the bright appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Already I have given to you, in this description of our position, the very best argument for a holy life. If it is so, my Brothers and Sisters, that you are not of the world, even as Jesus is not of the world. If this is so, that before you blazes the supernatural splendor of the Second Advent and behind you burns the everlasting light of the Redeemer’s first appearing, what manner of people ought you to be? If, indeed, you are but journeying through this present world, suffer not your hearts to be defiled with its sins! Learn not the manner of speech of these aliens through whose country you are passing! Is it not written, “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations”? “Come you out from among them and be you separate, touch not the unclean thing,” for the Lord has said, “I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters.”

They that lived before the coming of Christ had responsibilities, but not such as those which rest upon you who have seen the face of God in Jesus Christ and who expect to see that face again! You live in light which renders their brightest knowledge a comparative darkness! Walk as children of Light. You stand between two mornings between which there is no evening. The Glory of the Lord has risen upon you, once, in the Incarnation and Atonement of your Lord—that Light is shining more and more— and soon there will come the perfect day which shall be ushered in by the Second Advent. The sun shall no more go down, but it shall unveil itself and shed an indescribable splendor upon all hearts that look for it!

“Put on, therefore, the armor of light.” What a grand expression! Helmet of light, breastplate of light, shoes of light—everything of light! What a knight must he be who is clad, not in steel, but in light! Light which shall flash confusion on his foes! There ought to be a holy light about you, O Believer in Jesus, for there is the appearing of Grace behind you and the appearing of Glory before you! Two manifestations of God shine upon you. Like a wall of fire, the Lord’s appearings are round about you—there ought to be a special Glory of holiness in the midst. “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” That is the position of the righteous according to my text—and it furnishes a loud call to holiness.

II. Secondly, I have to call your attention to THE INSTRUCTION which is given to us by the Grace of God which has appeared unto all men. Our translation runs thus—“The Grace of God has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.” A better translation would be, “The Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, disciplining us in order that we may deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.” Those of you who know a little Greek will note that the word which, in our version, is rendered, “teaching,” is a scholastic term and has to do with the education of children—not merely the teaching, but the training and bringing of them up. The Grace of God has come to be a schoolmaster to us, to teach us, to train us, to prepare us for a more developed state. Christ has manifested in His own Person that wonderful Grace of God which is to deal with us as with sons, to educate us unto holiness and so to the full possession of our heavenly heritage. We are the many sons who are to be brought to Glory by the discipline of Grace.

So then, first of all, Grace has a discipline. We generally think of law when we talk about schoolmasters and discipline, but Grace, itself, has a discipline and a wonderful training power, too. The manifestation of Grace is preparing us for the manifestation of Glory. What the Law could not do, Grace is doing. The free favor of God instills new principles, suggests new thoughts and, by inspiring us with gratitude, creates in us love to God and hatred of that which is opposed to God. Happy are they who go to the school of the Grace of God! This Grace of God entering into us shows us what was evil even more clearly than the Commandments do. We receive a vital, testing principle within whereby we discern between good and evil. The Grace of God provides us with instruction, but also with chastisement, as it is written, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” As soon as we come under the conscious enjoyment of the Free Grace of God, we find it to be a holy rule, a fatherly government, a heavenly training. We find not self-indulgence, much less licentiousness, but, on the contrary, the Grace of God both restrains and constrains us—it makes us free to holiness and delivers us from the law of sin and death by “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

Grace has its discipline and Grace has its chosen disciples, for you cannot help noticing that while the 11th verse says that, “the Grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,” yet it is clear that this Grace of God has not exercised its holy discipline upon all men and, therefore, the text changes its, “all men,” into, “us.” Usually in Scripture, when you get a generality, you soon find a particularity near it. The text has it, “teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world.” Thus you see that Grace has its own disciples. Are you a disciple of the Grace of God? Did you ever come and submit yourself to it? Have you learned to spell that word, “faith”? Have you childlike trust in Jesus? Have you learned to wash in the laver of Atonement? Have you learned those holy exercises which are taught by the Grace of God? Can you say that your salvation is of Grace? Do you know the meaning of that text, “By Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”? If so, then you are His disciples and the Grace of God which has appeared so conspicuously has come to discipline you!

As the disciples of Grace, endeavor to adorn its doctrine. According to the previous verses, even a slave might do this. He might be an ornament to the Grace of God. Let Grace have such an effect upon your life and character that all may exclaim, “Look what Grace can do! Look how the Grace of God produces holiness in Believers!” All along I wish to be driving at the point which the Apostle is aiming at—that we are to be holy—holy because Grace exercises a purifying discipline and because we are the disciples of that Grace.

The discipline of Grace, according to the Apostle, has three results— denying, living, looking. You see the three words before you. The first is, “denying.” When a young man comes to our College, he usually has much to unlearn. If his education has been neglected, a sort of instinctive ignorance covers his mind with briars and brambles. If he has gone to some faulty school where the teaching is flimsy, his tutor has, first of all, to fetch out of him what he has been badly taught. The most difficult part of the training of young men is not to put the right thing into them, but to get the wrong thing out of them! A man proposes to teach a language in six months and in the end, a great thing is done if one of his pupils is able to forget all his nonsense in six years! When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, He finds that we know so much, already, of what it were well to leave unknown—we are self-conceited, we are puffed up. We have learned lessons of worldly wisdom and carnal policy—and these we need to unlearn and deny. The Holy Spirit works this denying in us by the discipline of Grace.

What have we to deny? First, we have to deny ungodliness. That is a lesson which many of you have great need to learn. Listen to working men. “Oh,” they say, “we have to work hard. We cannot think about God or religion.” This is ungodliness! The Grace of God teaches us to deny this—we come to loathe such atheism. Others are prospering in the world and they cry, “If you had as much business to look after as I have, you would have no time to think about your soul or another world. Trying to battle with the competition of the times leaves me no opportunity for prayer or Bible reading! I have enough to do with my day-book and ledger.” This also is ungodliness! The Grace of God leads us to deny this— we abhor such forgetfulness of God! A great work of the Holy Spirit is to make a man godly, to make him think of God, to make him feel that this present life is not all, but that there is a judgment to come wherein he must give an account before God. God cannot be forgotten with impunity. If we treat Him as if He were nothing and leave Him out of our calculations for life, we shall make a fatal mistake. O my Hearer, there is a God and, as surely as you live, you are accountable to Him! When the Spirit of God comes with the Grace of the Gospel, He removes our inveterate ungodliness and causes us to deny it with joyful earnestness.

We next deny “worldly lusts,” that is, the lusts of the present world or age which I described to you, just now, as coming in between the two appearings. This present age is as full of evil lusts as that in which Paul wrote concerning the Cretins. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life are yet with us. Wherever the Grace of God comes effectually, it makes the loose liver deny the desires of the flesh. It causes the man who lusted after gold to conquer his greediness. It brings the proud man away from his ambitions. It trains the idler to diligence and it sobers the wanton mind which cared only for the frivolities of life. Not only do we leave these lusts, but we deny them. We have an abhorrence of those things wherein we formerly placed our delight. Our cry is, “What have I to do any more with idols?” To the worldling, we say, “These things may belong to you, but as for us, we cannot own them. Sin shall no more have dominion over us. We are not of the world and, therefore, its ways and fashions are none of ours.” The period in which we live shall have no paramount influence over us, for our truest life is with Christ in eternity and our conversation is in Heaven. The Grace of God has made us deny the prevailing philosophies, glories, maxims and fashions of this present world. In the best sense we are nonconformists. We desire to be crucified to the world and the world to us. This was a great thing for Grace to do among the degraded sensualists of Paul’s day—and it is not a less glorious achievement in these times.

But then, Brothers and Sisters, you cannot be complete with a merely negative religion—you must have something positive. And so the next word is living—that “we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world.” Observe, Brethren, that the Holy Spirit expects us to live in this present world and, therefore, we are not to exclude ourselves from it. This age is the battlefield in which the soldier of Christ is to fight. Society is the place in which Christianity is to exhibit the Graces of Christ. If it were possible for these good Sisters to retire into a large house and live secluded from the world, they would be shirking their duty rather than fulfilling it! If all the good men and true were to form a select colony and do nothing else but pray and hear sermons, they would simply be refusing to serve God in His own appointed way. No, you have to live soberly, godly, righteously in this world, such as it is, at present! It is of no use for you to scheme to escape from it! You are bound to breast this torrent and buffet all its waves. If the Grace of God is in you, that Grace is meant to be displayed—not in a select and secluded retreat—but in this present world. You are to shine in the darkness like a light.

This life is described in a three-fold way. You are, first, to live “ soberly”—that is, for yourself. “Soberly” in all your eating and your drinking and in the indulgence of all bodily appetites—that goes without saying. Drunks and gluttons, fornicators and adulterers cannot inherit the Kingdom of God! You are to live soberly in all your thinking, all your speaking, all your acting. There is to be sobriety in all your worldly pursuits. You are to have yourself well in hand. You are to be self-restrained. I know some Brothers who are not often sober. I do not accuse them of being drunk with wine, but they are mentally intoxicated—they have no reason, no moderation, no judgment. They are all spur and no rein. Right or wrong, they must have that which they have set their hearts upon. They never look round to take the full bearing of a matter. They never estimate calmly—but with closed eyes they rush on like bulls. Alas for these unsober people! They are not to be depended on—they are everything by turns and nothing long. The man who is disciplined by the Grace of God becomes thoughtful, considerate, self-contained and he is no longer tossed about by passion, or swayed by prejudice. There is only one insobriety into which I pray we may fall and, truth to say, that is the truest sobriety. Of this the Scripture says, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” When the Spirit of God takes full possession of us, then we are borne along by His sacred energy and are filled with a Divine enthusiasm which needs no restraint. Under all other influences we must guard ourselves against yielding too completely, that thus we may live “soberly.”

As to his fellow men, the Believer lives “ righteously.” I cannot understand that Christian who can do a dirty thing in business. Craft, cunning, over-reaching, misrepresentation and deceit are no instruments for the hand of godly men! I am told that my principles are too angelic for business life—that a man cannot be a match for his fellow men in trade if he is too Puritan. Others are up to tricks and he will be ruined if he cannot trick them in return! O my dear Hearers, do not talk in this way! If you mean to go the way of the devil, say so—and accept the consequences. But if you profess to be servants of God, deny all partnership with unrighteousness! Dishonesty and falsehood are the opposites of godliness! A Christian man may be poor, but he must live righteously—he may lack sharpness, but he must not lack integrity! A Christian profession without uprightness is a lie! Grace must discipline us to righteous living.

Towards God we are told in the text that we are to be godly. Every man who has the Grace of God in him, indeed, and of a truth, will think much of God and will seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. God will enter into all his calculations. God’s Presence will be his joy; God’s strength will be his confidence; God’s Providence will be his inheritance; God’s Glory will be the chief end of his being; God’s Law the guide of his conversation! Now, if the Grace of God, which has appeared so plainly to all men, has really come with its sacred discipline upon us, it is teaching us to live in this three-fold manner.

Once more, there is looking, as well as living. One work of the Grace of God is to cause us to be “looking for that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” What is that “blessed hope”? Why, first, that when He comes we shall rise from the dead, if we have fallen asleep, and that if we are alive and remain, we shall be changed at His appearing! Our hope is that we shall be approved of Him and shall hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” This hope is not of debt, but of Grace! Though our Lord will give us a reward, it will not be according to the Law of Works. We expect to be like Jesus when we shall see Him as He is. When Jesus shines forth as the sun, “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of our Father.” Our gain by godliness cannot be counted down into the palm of our hand. It lies in the glorious future and yet, to faith, it is so near that at this moment I almost hear the chariot of the Coming One! The Lord comes and in the coming of the Lord lies the great hope of the Believer—his great stimulus to overcome evil—his incentive to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord! Oh to be found blameless in the day of the manifestation of our Lord! God grant us this! Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, how the discipline of the Doctrine of Grace runs towards the separating of us from sin and the making us to live unto God?

III. Lastly, and briefly, the text sets forth certain of OUR ENCOURAGEMENTS. I will only briefly hint at them.  
In this great battle for right, truth and holiness, what could we do, my Brothers and Sisters, if we were left alone? But our first encouragement is that Grace has come to our rescue, for in the day when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared among men, He brought for us the Grace of God to help us to overcome all iniquity. He that struggles, now, against inbred sin has the Holy Spirit within him to help him. He that goes forth to fight against evil in other men by preaching the Gospel has that same Holy Spirit going with the Truth of God to make it like a fire and like a hammer. I would ground my weapons and retreat from a fight so hopeless were it not that the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge! The Grace of God that brings salvation from sin has flashed forth conspicuously like the lightning which is seen from one part of the Heaven to the other—and our victory over darkness is insured. However hard the conflict with evil, it is not desperate. We may hope on and hope always!  
A certain warrior was found in prayer and when his king sneered, he answered that he was pleading with his majesty’s august ally. I question whether God is the ally of anybody when he goes forth with gun and sword, but in using those weapons which are “not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds,” we may truly reckon upon our august Ally! Speak the Truth of God, man, for God speaks with you! Work for God, woman, for God works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure! The appearance of the Grace of God in the Person of Christ is encouragement enough to those who are under the most difficult circumstances and have to contend for righteousness against the deadliest odds. Grace has appeared—therefore let us be of good courage!  
A second encouragement is that another appearing is coming. He who bowed His head in weakness and died in the moment of victory, is coming in all the Glory of His endless life! Do not question it, the world is not going to darken into an eternal night—the morning comes as well as the night and though sin and corruption abound, and the love of many waxes cold—these are but the tokens of His near advent who said that it would be so before His appearing! The right with the might and the might with the right shall be! As surely as God lives, it shall be so. We are not fighting a losing battle. The Lord must triumph. Oh, if His suffering life and cruel death had been the only appearing, we might have feared. But it is not—it is but the first—and the prefatory part of His manifestation. He comes! He comes! None can hinder His coming! Every moment brings Him nearer! Nothing can delay His Glory! When the hour shall strike, He shall appear in the majesty of God to put an end to the dominion of sin and bring in endless peace! Satan shall shortly be bruised under our feet—therefore comfort one another with these words and then prepare for further battle! Sharpen your swords and be ready for close fighting! Trust in God and keep your powder dry! This must always be our war cry, “He must reign.” We are looking for the appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ!  
Another encouragement is that we are serving a glorious Master. The Christ whom we follow is not a dead Prophet like Mohamed. Truly, we preach Christ Crucified, but we also believe in Christ risen from the dead, in Christ gone up on high, in Christ soon to come a second time! He lives and He lives as the great God and our Savior. If, indeed, you are soldiers of such a Captain, throw fear to the winds! Can you be cowards when the Lord of Hosts leads you? Dare you tremble when at your head is The Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace? The trumpet is already at the lip of the archangel—who will not play the man? The great drum which makes the universe to throb, summons you to action—  
*“Stand up, stand up for Jesus,  
You soldiers of the Cross!  
Lift high His royal banner,  
It must not suffer loss.”*  
His Cross is the old Cross, still, and none can overthrow it. Hallelujah, hallelujah to the name of Jesus!  
Then come the tender thoughts with which I finish, the memories of what the Lord has done for us to make us holy—“Who gave Himself for us.” Special redemption, redemption with a wondrous price—“who gave Himself for us.” Put away that trumpet and that drum! Take down the harp and gently touch its sweetest strings! Tell how the Lord Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us. O Sirs, if nothing else can touch our hearts, this must—“You are not your own, you are bought with a price.”  
And He gave Himself for us with these two objectives—first, redemption, that He might redeem us from all iniquity. That He might break the bonds of sin asunder and cast the cords of depravity far from us. He died—forget not that—died that your sins might die! He died that every lust might be dragged into captivity at His chariot wheels. He gave Himself for you that you might give yourselves for Him!  
Again, He died that He might purify us—purify us unto Himself. How clean we must be if we are to be clean unto Him. The Holy Jesus will only commune with those whom He has purified after the manner of His own Nature—purified unto Himself. He has purified us to be wholly His. No human hand may use the golden cup, no human incense may burn in the consecrated censer. We are purified unto Himself, as the Hebrew would put it, to be His segullah—His peculiar possession. The translation, “peculiar people,” is unfortunate, because, “peculiar,” has come to mean odd, strange, singular. The passage really means that Believers are Christ’s own people, His choice and select portion. Saints are Christ’s crown jewels, His box of diamonds—His very, very, very own! He carries His people as lambs in His bosom. He engraves their names on His heart.  
They are the inheritance to which He is the heir and He values them more than all the universe! He would lose everything sooner than lose one of them! He desires that you who are being disciplined by His Grace should know that you are altogether His. You are Christ’s men. You are each one to feel, “I do not belong to the world. I do not belong to myself. I belong only to Christ. I am set aside by Him, for Himself, only, and His I will be.” The silver and the gold are His and the cattle upon a thousand hills are His—but He makes small account of them—“the Lord’s portion is His people.”  
The Apostle finishes up by saying that we are to be a people “zealous of good works.” Would to God that all Christian men and women were disciplined by Divine Grace till they became zealous for good works! In holiness, zeal is sobriety. We are not only to approve of good works and speak for good works, but we are to be red-hot for them! We are to be on fire for everything that is right and true. We may not be content to be quiet and inoffensive, but we are to be zealous of good works. Oh that my Lord’s Grace would set us on fire in this way! There is plenty of fuel in the Church—what is needed is fire! A great many very respectable people are, in their sleepy way, doing as little as they can for any good cause. This will never do. We must wake up! Oh the quantity of ambulance work that Christ’s soldiers have to do! One half of Christ’s army has to carry the other half. Oh that our Brothers and Sisters could get off the sick-list!  
Oh that all of us were ardent, fervent, vigorous, zealous! Come, Holy Spirit, and quicken us! We may not go about to get this by our own efforts and energies, but God will work it by His Grace. Grace given us in Christ is the fountainhead of all holy impulse. O heavenly Grace, come like a flood at this time and bear us right away! Oh that those of you who have never felt the Grace of God may be enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as to His first appearing! Then, trusting in His death upon the Cross, you will learn to look for His second coming upon the Throne of God and you will rejoice in it! Unto His great name be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

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÷Tit 2.14

CHRIST’S MARVELOUS GIVING  
NO. 3513

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 25, 1916.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 25, 1866.

**“Who gave Himself for us.”***Tit 2:14***.**

WE have once more, you see, the old subject. We still have to tell the story of the love of God towards man in the Person of His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. When you come to your table, you find a variety there. Sometimes there is one dish upon it and sometimes another, but you are never at all surprised to find the bread there every time and, perhaps, we might add that there would be a deficiency if there were not salt there every time, too. So there are certain Truths of God which cannot be repeated too often, and especially is this true of this master Truth, that, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Why, this is the Bread of Life—“God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” This is the salt upon the table and must never be forgotten! This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, “that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.”

Now we shall take the text and use it thus—first of all we shall ask it some questions. Then we shall surround it with a setting of facts. Ad when we have done that, we will endeavor to press out of it its very soul as we draw certain inferences from it. First then—

I. WE WILL PUT THE TEXT INTO THE WITNESS BOX AND ASK IT A FEW QUESTIONS.  
There are only five words in the text and we will be content to let it go with four questions. “Who gave Himself for us.” The first question we ask the text is, Who is this that is spoken of? And the text gives the answer. It is “the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us.” We had offended God. The dignity of Divine Justice demanded that offenses against so good and just a Law as that which God had promulgated should not be allowed to go unpunished. But the attribute of Justice is not the only one in the heart of God. God is Love, and is, therefore, full of mercy. Yet, nevertheless, He never permits one quality of His Godhead to triumph over another. He could not be too merciful, and so become unjust—He would not permit Mercy to put Justice to an eclipse. The difficulty was solved thus—God Himself stooped from His loftiness and veiled His Glory in a garb of our inferior clay. The Word—that same Word without whom was not anything made that was made—became flesh and dwelt among us! And His Apostles, His friends and His enemies beheld him—the Seed of the woman, but yet the Son of God, very God of very God, in all the majesty of Deity—and yet Man of the substance of His mother in all the weakness of our humanity, sin being the only thing which separated us from Him, He being without sin and we being full of it! It is, then, God, who “gave Himself for us.” It is, then, Man, who gave Himself for us! It is Jesus Christ, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God—who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and, being found in fashion as a Man, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross! It is Christ Jesus, the Man, the God, “who gave Himself for us.” Now I hope we shall not make any mistakes here, for mistakes here will be fatal! We may be thought uncharitable for saying it, but we should be dishonest if we did not say it, that it is essential to be right here— *“You cannot be right in the rest  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”*  
You dishonor Christ if you do not believe in His Deity! He will have nothing to do with you unless you accept Him as being God as well as Man. You must receive Him as being, without any diminution, completely and wholly Divine, and you must accept Him as being your Brother, as being a Man just as you are. This, this is the Person and, relying upon Him, we shall find salvation! But rejecting His Deity, He will say to us, “You know Me not, and I never knew you!”  
The text has answered the question, “Who?” And now, putting it in the witness box again, we ask it another question—“What? What did He do?” The answer is, “He gave Himself for us.” It was a gift. Christ’s offering of Himself for us was voluntary. He did it of His own will. He did not die because we merited that He should love us to the death—on the contrary, we merited that He should hate us! We deserved that He should cast us from His Presence as obnoxious things, for we were full of sin! We were the wicked keepers of the vineyard who devoured, for our own profit, the fruit which belonged to the King’s Son, and He is that King’s Son, whom we slew with wicked hands casting Him out of the vineyard! And He died for us who were His enemies. Remember the words of Scripture, “Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; perhaps for a good, a generous man, one might even dare to die; but God commends His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly.” He gave Himself! We cannot purchase the love of God! This highest expression of Divine Love, the gift of His own Son, was, in the nature of things, not for sale. What could we have offered that God should come into this world and be found in fashion as a Man and should die? Why, the works of all the angels in Heaven put together could not have deserved one pang from Christ! If forever the angels had continued their ceaseless songs and if all men had remained faithful, and could have heaped up their pile of merit to add to that of the angels—and if all the creatures that ever were, or ever shall be, could each bring in their golden heap of merit—yet could they ever deserve yon Cross? Could they deserve that the Son of God should hang, bleeding and dying, there? Impossible! It must by a gift, for it was utterly not for sale! Though all worlds were coined and minted, yet could they not have purchased a tear from the Redeemer—they were not worth it. It must be Grace! It cannot be merit! He gave Himself!  
And the gift is so thoroughly a gift that no prep of any kind was brought to bear upon the Savior. There was no necessity that He should die, except the necessity of His loving us. Ah, Friends, we might have been blotted out of existence and I do not know that there would have been any lack in God’s universe if the whole race of man had disappeared! That universe is too wide and great to miss such chirping grasshoppers as we are! When one star is blotted out, it may make a little difference to our midnight sky, but to an eye that sees immensity it can make no change. Know you not that this little solar system, which we think so vast, and those distant fixed stars and yon mighty masses of interstellar dust and ash, if such they are, and yonder streaming comet, with its stupendous walk of grandeur—all these are only like a little corner in the field of God’s great works? He takes them all up as nothing and considers them, mighty as they are and beyond all human conception great—to be but the small dust of the balance which does not turn the scale! And if they were all gone tomorrow, there would be no more loss than as if a few grains of dust were thrown to the summer’s wind!  
But God Himself must stoop, rather than we should die! Oh, what magnificence of love! And the more so because there was no need for it. In the course of Nature, God would have been as holy and as heavenly without us as He is with us—and the pomp of yonder skies would have been as illustrious had we been dashed into the flames of Hell as it will be now! God has gained nothing, except the manifestation of a love beyond an angel’s dream, a Grace, the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of which surpass all knowledge of all creatures! God only knows the love of God which is manifested in Jesus Christ. He gave Himself! We will leave this point, now, when it is fully understood that Christ’s dying to save sinners and giving Himself for the ungodly was a pure act of gratuitous mercy! There was nothing to compel God to give His Son and nothing to lead the Son to die, except the simple might of His love to men. He would not see us die. He had a Father’s love for us! He seemed to stand over our fallen race, as David stood over Absalom, and we were as bad as Absalom—and there David stood and said, “My son, my son! Would God I had died for you, my son, my son!” But He did more than this, for He did die for us! And all for love of us who were His enemies!— *“So strange, so boundless was the love,  
Which pitied dying man—  
The Father sent His equal Son  
To give them life again.”*  
‘Twas all of love and of Grace!  
The third question is, “What did He give?” “Who gave Himself for us.” And here lies the glory of the text, that He gave not merely the crowns and royalties of Heaven, though it was much to leave these, to come and don the humble garb of a carpenter’s Son! He gave up not only the songs of seraphs, the shouts of cherubim—‘twas something to leave them to come and dwell among the groans and tears of this poor fallen world! He gave up not only the grandeur of His Father’s court—though it was much to leave that to come and live with wild beasts and men more wild than they, to fast His forty days and then to die in ignominy and shame upon the tree! No, there is little said about all this. He gave all this, it is true, but He gave Himself! Mark, Brothers and Sisters, what a richness there is here! It is not that He gave His righteousness, though that has become our dress. It is not even that He gave His blood, though that is the fount in which we wash. It is that He gave Himself—His Godhead and Manhood both combined. All that that word, “Christ,” means He gave to us and for us. He gave Himself! Oh, that we could dive and plunge into this unfathomed sea—Himself! Omnipotence, Omniscience, Infinity—Himself. He gave Himself—Purity, Love, Kindness, Meekness, Gentleness—that wonderful compound of all perfections, to make up one perfection— HIMSELF! You do not come to Christ’s House and say, “He gives me this House, His Church, to dwell in.” You do not come to His Table and merely say, “He gives me this Table to feast at,” but you go farther, and you take Him by faith into your arms and you say, “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Oh, that you could get hold of that sweet word—Himself! It is the love of a husband to his wife, who not only gives her all that she can wish, daily food and raiment, and all the comforts that can nourish and cherish her, and make her life glad, but who gives himself to her! So does Jesus. The body and soul of Jesus, the Deity of Jesus, and all that that means, He has been pleased to give to and for His people! “Who gave Himself for us.”  
There is another question which we shall ask the text, and that is, “For whom did Christ give Himself?” Well, the text says, “For us.” There are those who say that Christ has thus given Himself for every man now living, or that ever did or shall live. We are not able to subscribe to the statement, though there is a Truth in it, that in a certain sense He is “the Savior of all men,” but then it is added, “Specially of them who believe.” At any rate, dear Hearer, let me tell you one thing that is certain. Whether Atonement may be said to be particular or general, there are none who partake in its real efficacy but certain characters—and those characters are known by certain Infallible signs. You must not say that He gave Himself for you unless these signs are manifest in you! And the first sign is that of simple faith in the Lord Jesus. If you believe in Him, that is a proof to you that He gave Himself for you! See, if He gave Himself for all men alike, then He did equally for Judas and for Peter. Care you for such love as that? He died equally for those who were then in Hell as for those who were then in Heaven? Care you for such a Doctrine as that? For my part, I desire to have a personal, peculiar, and special interest in the precious blood of Jesus—such an interest in it as shall lead me to His right hand and enable me to say, “He has washed me from my sins, in His blood.” Now I think we have no right to conclude that we shall have any benefit from the death of Christ unless we trust Him—and if we do trust Him, that trust will produce the following things—“Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” We shall hate sin. We shall fight against it. We shall be delivered from it—“and purify unto Himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” I have no right, therefore, to conclude that I shall be a partaker of the precious blood of Jesus unless I become in my life, “zealous of good works,” My good works cannot save me, cannot even help to save me—but they are evidences of my being saved—and if I am not zealous for good works, I lack the evidence of salvation and I have no right whatever to conclude that I shall receive

one jot of benefit from Christ’s sufferings upon the Cross!  
Oh, my dear Hearer, I would to God that you could trust the Man, the God who died on Calvary! I would that you could trust Him so that you could say, “He will save me. He has saved me.” The gratitude which you would feel towards Him would inspire you with an invincible hatred against sin! You would begin to fight against every evil way! You would conform yourselves, by His Grace, to His Law and His Word, and you would become a new creature in Him! May God grant that you may yet be able to say, “Who gave Himself for me”! I have asked the text enough questions, and there I leave them. For a few minutes only I am now going to use the text another way, namely—  
II. PUT THE TEXT INTO A SETTING OF FACTS.  
There was a day before all days when there was no day but the Ancient of Days! A time when there was no time, but when Eternity was all! Then God, in the Eterna1 Purpose, decreed to save His people. If we may speak so of things too mysterious for us to know them, and which we can only set forth after the manner of men, God had determined that His people should be saved, but He foresaw that they would sin! It was necessary, therefore, that the penalty due to their sins should be borne by someone. They could not be saved unless a substitute were found who would bear the penalty of sin in their place. Where was such a substitute to be found? No angel offered. There was no angel, for God dwelt alone, and even if there had then been angels, they could never have dared to offer to sustain the fearful weight of human guilt! But in that solemn council chamber, when it was deliberated who should enter into bonds of suretyship to pay all the debts of the people of God, Christ came and gave Himself a Bondsman and a Surety for all that was due from them, or would be due from them, to the Judgment Seat of God! In that day, then, He “gave Himself for us.”  
But Time began, and this round world had made, in the mind of God, a few revolutions. Men said the world was getting old, but to God it was but an infant. But the fullness of time was come and suddenly, amidst the darkness of the night, there was heard sweeter singing than before had come from mortal lips, “Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; good will to men!” What lit up the sky with unknown splendor and what had filled the air with chorales at the dead of night? Look, the Babe upon its mother’s breast, there in Bethlehem’s manger! “He gave Himself for us.” That same One who had given Himself a Surety has come down to earth to be a Man, and to give Himself for us. See Him! For 30 years He toiled on, amidst the drudgery of the carpenters shop! What is He doing? The Law of God needed to be fulfilled, and He “gave Himself for us,” and fulfilled the Law! But now the time comes when He is 32 or 33 years of age and the Law demands that the penalty shall be paid. Do you see Him going to meet Judas in the garden, with confident, but solemn steps? He “gave Himself for us.” He could, with a word, have driven those soldiers into Hell, but they bind Him—He “gave Himself for us.” They take Him before Pilate, Herod and Caiaphas, and they mock Him, and jeer Him, and pluck His cheeks, and whip His shoulders! How is it that He will smart at this rate? How is it that He bears so passively all the insults and indignities which they heap upon Him? He gave Himself for us! Our sins demanded smart—He bared His back and took the smart. He gave Himself for us! But do you see that dreadful procession going through the streets of Jerusalem, along the rough pavement of the Via Dolorosa? Do you see the weeping women as they mourn because of Him? How is it that He is willing to be led a captive up to the hill of Calvary? Alas, they throw Him on the ground! They drive accursed iron through His hands and feet! They hoist Him into the air! They dash the Cross into its appointed place and there He hangs—a naked spectacle of scorn and shame, derided of men, and mourned by angels! How is it that the Lord of Glory, who made all worlds, and hung out the stars like lamps, should now be bleeding and dying there? He gave Himself for us! Can you see the streaming fountains of the four wounds in His hands and feet? Can you trace His agony as it carves lines upon His brow and all down His emaciated frame? No, you cannot see the griefs of His soul. No spirit can behold them. They were too terrible for you to know them. It seemed as though all Hell were emptied into the bosom of the Son of God, and as though all the miseries of all the ages were made to meet upon Him, till He bore—  
*“All that Incarnate God, could bear,  
With strength enough, but none to spare.”*Now why is all this, but that He gave Himself for us till His head hung down in death? And His arms, in chill, cold death, hung down by His side—and they buried the lifeless Victor in the tomb of Joseph of Arimethea? He gave Himself for us!  
What more now remains? He lives again! On the third day He comes from the tomb and even then He still gave Himself for us! Oh, yes, Beloved, He has gone up on high but He still gives Himself for us, for up there He is constantly engaged in pleading the sinner’s cause! Up yonder, amidst the glories of Heaven, He has not forgotten us poor sinners who are here below, but He spreads His hands and pleads before His Father’s Throne and wins for us unnumbered blessings, for He gave Himself for us!  
And I have been thinking whether I might not use the text in another way. Christ’s servants needed a subject upon which to preach, and so He “gave Himself for us,” to be the constant topic of our ministry! Christ’s servants needed a sweet Companion to be with them in their troubles, and He gave Himself for us. Christ’s people need comfort—they need spiritual food and drink, and so He gave Himself for us—His flesh to be our spiritual meat, and His blood to be our spiritual drink. And we expect, soon, to go Home to the land of the hereafter, to the realms of the blessed, and what is to be our Heaven? Why, our Heaven will be Christ, Himself, for He gave Himself for us! Oh, He is all that we need, all that we wish for! We cannot desire anything greater and better than to be with Christ and to have Christ, to feed upon Christ, to lie in Christ’s bosom, to know the kisses of His mouth, to look at the gleaming of His loving eyes, to hear His loving words, to feel Him press us to His heart, and tell us that He has loved us from before the foundation of the world—and given Himself for us.  
I think we have put the text now into a setting of certain facts. Do not forget them, but let them be your joy! And now the last thing we have to do is to—  
III. TURN THE TEXT TO PRACTICAL ACCOUNT BY DRAWING FROM IT A FEW INFERENCES.  
The first inference I draw is this—that He who gave Himself for His people will not deny them anything. This is a sweet encouragement to you who practice the art of prayer. You know how Paul puts it, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?” Christ is All. If Christ gives Himself to you, He will give you your bread and your water, and He will give you a house to dwell in. If He gives you Himself, He will not let you starve on the road to Heaven. Jesus Christ does not Give us Himself and then deny us common things. Oh, child of God, go boldly to the Throne of Grace ! You have got the major—you shall certainly have the minor! You have the greater, you cannot be denied the less!  
Now I draw another inference, namely, that if Christ has already given Himself in so painful a way as I have described, since there is no need that He should suffer anymore, we must believe that He is willing to give Himself now unto the hearts of poor sinners. Beloved, for Christ to come to Bethlehem is a greater stoop than for Him to come into your heart! Had Christ to die upon Calvary? That is all done and He need not die again! Do you think that He who is willing to die is unwilling to apply the results of His passion? If a man leaps into the water to bring out a drowning child, after he has brought the child alive on shore, if he happens to have a piece of bread in his pocket, and the child needs it, do you think that he who rescued the child’s life will deny that child so small a thing as a piece of bread? And come, do you think that Christ died on Calvary, and yet will not come into your heart if you seek Him? Do you believe that He who died for sinners will ever reject the prayer of a sinner? If you believe that, you think harshly of Him, for His heart is very tender. He feels even a cry. You know how it is with your children—if they cry through pain, why, you would give anything for someone to come and heal them! And if you cry because your sin is painful, the Great Physician will come and heal you! Ah, Jesus Christ is much more easily moved by our cries and tears than we are by the cries of our fellow creatures. Come, poor Sinner, come and put your trust in my Master! You cannot think Him hard-hearted. If He were, why did He die? Do you think Him unkind? Then why did He bleed? You are inclined to think so harshly of Him! You are making great cuts at His heart when you think Him to be rough and ungenerous. “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but rather that he would turn unto Me and live.”  
This is the voice of the God whom you look upon as so sternly just! Did Jesus Christ, the Tender One, speak in even more plaintive tones, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”? You working men, you laboring men, Christ bids you come to Him! “All you that labor.” And you who are unhappy, you who know you have done wrong and cannot sleep at nights because of it! You who are troubled about sin and would gladly go and hide your heads, and get— *“Anywhere, anywhere out of the world”  
—*your Father says to you, one and all, “Run not from Me, but come to Me, My child!” Jesus, who died, says, “Flee not from Me, but come to Me, for I will accept you. I will receive you. I cast out none that come unto Me. “Sinner, Jesus never did reject a coming soul, yet, and He never will! Oh, try Him! Try Him! Now come, with your sins about you just as you are, to the bleeding, dying Savior and He will say to you, “I have blotted out your sins; go and sin no more; I have forgiven you.” May God grant you Grace to put your trust in Him “who gave Himself for us”!  
There are many other inferences which I might draw if I had time, but in this last one, we have drawn to be so applied to your hearts as to be carried out—and it will be enough. Now do not go and try to do good worlds in order to merit Heaven. Do not go and try to pray yourselves into Heaven by the efficacy of praying. Remember, He, “gave Himself for us.” The old proverb is that “there is nothing freer than a gift,” and surely this Gift of God, this Eternal Life must be free, and we must have it freely, or not at all. I sometimes see put up at some of our doctors that they receive “gratis patients.” That is the sort of patients my Master receives! He receives none but those who come gratis. He never did receive anything, yet, and He never will—except your love and your thanks after He has saved you! But you must come to Him empty-handed. Come just as you are and He will receive you, now, and you shall live to sing to the praise and the glory of His Grace who has accepted you in the Beloved and, “who gave Himself for us.” God help you to do it. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *Psa 45:1-14***.**

It is a Psalm of instruction, and yet it is a song of love, for the science of love to Christ is the most excellent of all the sciences. To know Christ is to love Him, and we are best instructed who love Him most. The Psalm is most of all a Maschil, a Psalm of instruction, when we are taught to love. Hence the Psalm is a song of love.

1. My heart is overflowing with a good theme. A good instrument—the heart refined and sanctified—a good subject, for, he says—  
1. I speak of the things which I have made touching the King. Oh, it is a loyal subject concerning King Jesus! The original has it, “My heart boils up with a good matter”—bubbles up—as if each verse of this Psalm were, so to speak, the bubbling up of a boiling heart that is heated with the love of Christ! And all is concerning Him—concerning Him, the King. “I speak of the things which I have made.” That is experience—things I made on my own—and there is no matter like that. Theoretical theology is of little value. We must have it in the heart—and have it in our own.  
1. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. As though it were moved by another hand, as a pen might be. So the Psalmist feels as if his tongue were under Divine Influence and he were about to utter things his own, yet not his own—things which he has made, yet which the Spirit speaks.  
2. You are fairer than the children of men. And then he sees Him. He sees Him by faith—and he speaks, not so much about him, as to Him. “You are fairer than the children of men.” Oh, it is sweet meditating upon Christ, when Christ Himself is present! It is blessed work to speak about Christ when you can speak to Christ at the same time! You are fairer than the children of men—the very fairest of them. Whatever beauty, excellence and worth there may be about mankind, You have all, and more than all that they possess!  
2. Grace is poured into Your lips. It comes, therefore, pouring from them. It comes welling up from Your mouth. Every word that You speak is full of Grace and the Truth of God!  
2. Therefore God has blessed You forever. The Mediator, the God-Man, Christ Jesus, is blessed of God! The blessing of the Most High rests upon Him because He is so infinitely lovely. His words are unspeakably gracious and if God blesses Him, shall not we bless Him? If God, Himself, praises Him, shall not we praise Him? Oh, let us not be silent, but where God leads the way, let us joyfully follow!  
3. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most Mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty. He loves the fighting Christ—Christ with the sword on His thigh. Oh, but it is sweet to see the Prince of Peace—to know that He comes to our heart bearing unspeakably precious blessings! But yet the terrible side of Christ is precious to His saints. They ask Him to gird His sword upon His thigh. An armed Christ can only be armed for the defense of His people and for the deliverance of them from captivity. Therefore, O you loveliest of the lovely, be the mightiest of the mighty too!  
4. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. There are three things that are much put to it in this world, and have a hard time of it—the Truth of God, which is beset with error, like the hunted hind pursued by dogs. O God, defend Your Truth! O Christ of God, lay upon Your sword to smite down error! The next thing is meekness. A gentle spirit has a hard time of it among the hard-hearted sons of men. They do not understand meekness. They call the meek man a milksop. They make mirth out of his gentleness. O sword of the Lord, defend the meek ones of the earth! And there is a third thing that has a hard time of it, and that is righteousness among a godless generation, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—darkness for light and light for darkness! Righteousness has to run the gauntlet. But, O You who are Truth, and Meekness, and Righteousness embodied, come forth with Your sharp sword and fight on the behalf of these things! We do not ask the Lord to come into the world for the sake of pomp, pride and power. We only want His battles to be battles of love! We only ask Him to extend the Kingdom of His Truth and meekness, and righteousness.  
5. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies: whereby the people fall under You. Christ has far-reaching power. He not only can smite with the sword, but He has skill with the bow, and He can dart an arrow to those that are far off, that they may feel His power. Oh, that He would do so now, that those who are leagues away from Him may, to their own surprise, find a shaft come right into their heart, that they may fall under the power of Christ and cry out to Him to come and heal the wound that His own arrow has made! He will do it, for it is written, “I wound, and I heal”—and wherever Christ wounds in mercy, He heals in mercy, too!  
6. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter. Notice that the more you look at Christ, the more there is to see. Here the songster first said, “You are fairer than the children of men.” And now he cries, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” That man has not seen much of Christ who has not perceived Him to be God— God on the Throne, God on an everlasting Throne! Oh, if any of you have not yet believed in Christ as God, I pray you may do so, for you do not know the Christ of the Scriptures at all, however much you may value His moral Character as supreme in wisdom, unless you can say, “My Lord and My God,” as Thomas did when he saw His wounds. “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter.” There is the joy of it! Christ has absolute sovereignty, but that absolute sovereignty never goes beyond the realm of right! “The scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter.”  
7. You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. Christ is no neutral. He loves righteousness and hates wickedness. He is like fire in all that He does. There is about Him a certain strength of heart, both to love and to hate—and it is for this reason that God loves Him, for God hates lukewarmness. “So then, because you are neither cold nor hot,” He says, “I will spew you out of My mouth.” But Christ is never neutral about those matters. He loves righteousness. He hates wickedness. “Therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.” And if you want to have the oil of gladness, dear Friends, you must not be neutral! You who live betwixt and between—who are neither very good nor very bad—who are not decided worldlings, nor yet decided Christians, you never have any joy at all! You see, you do not go enough into the world to get its joy, bad and base as it is, and you do not go enough into Christ’s Kingdom to get its joy. So you get no comfort either way. Oh, to be cast into the Kingdom altogether— thrown into it as a man into the deep sea and swallowed up in it! In its lowest depths are the sweetest waters!  
8. All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. The very clothes of Christ are precious to Believers. “Unto you that believe, He is preciousness.” But even His very garments are savored with it, whether He puts on His priestly robes, or His royal robes, or His prophetic mantle. Each one of these has in it a sweet savor of all manner of choice perfumes, myrrh, aloes and cassia. Bitter sweets all of them! Oh, in Christ there is a wonderful bitter sweetness—the pangs of death that breed our life—the pangs of sorrow that bring us joy! His down casting for our uplifting.  
9. Kings’ daughters were among Your honorable women: upon Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir. No one is so honored as the one who waits upon the Savior. They are honorable women that minister to Him of their substance, that are often found in His Temple, like Anna of old. These are kings’ daughters, every one of them. And as for His Church as a whole, she is a queen! She takes no low mean rank, and her apparel is like her dignity. She is clothed in the gold of Ophir—the best of metals and the best kind of that metal—the gold of Ophir. And “strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed by the great Sacred Three.” All manner of royal apparel is put upon the Church of God and upon every member of it!  
10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father’s house. We cannot know Christ thoroughly unless we leave off knowing the world. There must be a forgetting as well as a remembering. We are to forget our father’s house—come right out from it. If Christ is to love His Church, it must be a nonconforming Church in the deepest sense of that word. I mean not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of its mind! Not only are we not to love the world, but we are not to think of it. “Forget also your own people, and your father’s house.”  
11. So shall the king greatly desire your beauty. We were thinking of His beauty. But see, when once we see the beauty of Christ, Christ puts a beauty upon us! And when we learn the beauties of Christ, we soon see beauties in His Church. I find that those who rail at the Church of God have not a very high esteem of the Church’s Head. But when He is beloved, His people are beloved for His sake. Why, there is an old proverb that says, “Love me, love my dog.” Much more may we say, “Love Christ, love His Church.”

11. Because He is your Lord, worship Him. This is the great business of the Church—to carry on the worship of her Lord! And I believe that, met together as we are tonight, we are met for the noblest purpose under Heaven. When the people of God come together for worship, they are doing that which angels do before the Throne of God—an occupation from which they never cease day or night!

12. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift. Well, but she is a heathen. She is a trafficker. What does she know about the King of Israel? Ah, but when Israel acknowledges her King—when the Church of Christ delights in Christ and dotes upon Him, she shall have plenty of converts—from the least likely places!

12. Even the rich among the people shall entreat Your favor. They are generally taken up with other things, but then they shall know, when once the Church is right with her King!

13. The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of worked gold. Who has worked it but her King, whose own right hand has hammered out the precious fabric, and then has taken every golden thread and, with His own bleeding hands, has worked it into a sacred vesture that shall outlast the stars! “Her clothing is of worked gold.”

14. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You. Happy are those pure virgin spirits that hardly dare think themselves fit to be called a part of the bride, but yet follow her and keep close to her! They are really a part of her, and they “shall be brought unto You.”

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #70 New Park Street Pulpit 1

GOOD WORKS  
NO. 70

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

**“Zealous of good works.”***Tit 2:14***.**

We shall not be afraid of leading any of you into a legal spirit this morning through what we shall say. After our frequent exhortations to avoid anything like trusting in your works, attended as they have been, we trust, by the Holy Spirit, we are not afraid that you will so misunderstand us as to suppose that when we speak of good works, today, we shall in any way whatever wish you to imagine that they can promote your eternal salvation! We labored when here the Sabbath morning before last, to let you know the difference between the two Covenants, the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Works. [See Sermon #69, Volume 2—THE AL

LEGORIES OF SARAH AND HAGAR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

www.spurgeongems.org.] We shall beg you to remember what we then said, and if by any slips of the tongue we should say anything that should look like legality, we beg you will put the two together and wherein we shall err from the great Truth of Justification by Faith, to reject our testimony!

“Zealous of good works.” There are some who hear us preach High Doctrine and constantly declare that we are saved by Grace through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, who, therefore, suppose that we cannot preach good works. These also suppose that we could not preach a good sermon of exhortation to Christians to live in holiness. Well, we will not say that we can preach a good sermon at all! But we will say that we will try and preach one as to that matter that shall be as good as theirs and as much lead the children of God to live in holiness as any of their exhortations can do! For their sermons are grounded on trusting in the flesh and based on threats, regulations and promises— which they hope will induce God’s children, but which are well enough for slaves—though of little use in operating on the true-born Believer! The children of God are a holy people—for this very purpose were they born and brought into the world—that they should be holy! For this they were redeemed with blood and made a peculiar people. God’s end in Election, the end of all His purposes, is not answered until they become a people zealous of good works!

Now, this morning, we shall first of all tell you the nature of good works, for there are many things called “good works” that are not so at all. Secondly, we shall trace good works to their origin—and where good works came from. Thirdly, we shall attempt to show you the use of good works. And we shall close up by endeavoring to prove that our Doctrines, those of free, distinguishing, discriminating Grace, have a tendency to make us who believe them, “zealous of good works.”

I. First, then, we are about to answer the question, WHAT ARE GOOD WORKS? Now, I dare say we shall offend many here when we tell them what good works are. For in our opinion, good works are the rarest things in the world! And we believe we might walk for many a mile before we should see a good work at all. We use the word, good, in its proper sense. There are many works which are good enough between man and man, but we shall use the word, good, in a higher sense today as regards God. We think we shall be able to show you that there are very few good works anywhere and that there are none out of the pale of Christ’s Church! We think, if we read Scripture rightly, that no work can be good unless it is commanded of God. How this cuts off a large portion of what men will do in order to win salvation! The Pharisee said he tithed mint, anise and cummin—could he prove that God commanded him to tithe his mint, his anise and his cummin? Perhaps not. He said he fasted so many times a week—could he prove that God told him to fast? If not, his fasting was not obedience. If I do a thing that I am not commanded to do, I do not obey in doing it. Vain, then, are all the pretences of men, that by mortifying their bodies, by denying their flesh, by doing this, that, or the other, they shall, therefore, win the favor of God! No work is good unless God has commanded it. A man may build a long row of almshouses—but if he builds without reference to the commandment—he has performed no good work.

Again— nothing is a good work unless it is done with a good motive. And there is no motive which can be said to be good but to the Glory of God. He who performs good works with a view to save himself, does not do them from a good motive because his motive is selfish. He who does them, also, to gain the esteem of his fellows and for the good of society has a laudable motive, so far as man is concerned, but it is, after all, an inferior motive! What end had we in view? If for the benefit of our fellow creatures, then let our fellow creatures pay us. But that has nothing to do with God! Work is not good unless a man does it with a view to God’s Glory—and no man can do it with a view to that until God has taught him what His Glory is and he has been brought into subjection to God’s Divine will! If any work is to be a good work, it has to have an eye unto the Most High and has to promote His Glory and honor in the world. And even, Beloved, when our works are done from the best motives, nothing is a good work unless it is done with faith, for, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Like Cain, we may build the altar and lay the first fruits of the earth upon it—and it may appear an acceptable sacrifice in itself—but if destitute of the salt of faith, there it will lie—it will not be accepted by God, for without faith it is impossible to please Him! Bring me a man who all his life long has been spending his health and strength for his fellow creatures. Fetch me some public officer who has fully discharged his trust—one who has labored night and day, even to the wearing down of his constitution because he believed that England expected every man to do his duty and he wished to do it. Bring me that man, let me see all his charitable works. Let me witness the most lavish benevolence, the most profuse bounty—tell me that he has always, with a consistent motive, labored for his country. And then, if he cannot answer this question, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” I shall be bound in all honesty to tell him that he has not done a solitary good work in all his life as far as God is concerned!

Furthermore, when we have faith in God and perform all our works with the best of motives, even then we have not so much as a solitary good work until the blood of Christ is sprinkled thereon. Looking on all that we have ever done in our lives, can we find a solitary thing which we dare call good until Christ’s blood is put upon it? Granted there is something good about it, for the Spirit worked it in our souls. There is also much that is evil about it, for even our best exercises are so terribly spoiled, marred and ruined by the sins and imperfections that are in them, that we dare not call them good until Jesus Christ has sprinkled them with His blood and taken the stain away! Oh, how often have I thought to myself, “Now, I have labored to preach God’s Word. I have not spared, at all times, before friends or foes, and I hope I have not shunned to declare the whole Counsel of God!” And yet, Beloved, how many of those sermons have not been good works at all, because I had not an eye out to my Master’s honor at the time, or because there was not faith mixed with them but I preached in a desponding, low, miserable frame? Or, perhaps, I had some natural aim—even in the winning of souls? I have often feared, even when we rejoice to see souls converted, that we may have some evil motive, such as honoring ourselves, that the world may say, “See how many souls are brought to God by him!” And even when the Church associates in doing holy works, have you not noticed that something selfish creeps in? A wish to exalt our own Church, to glorify our own people and to make ourselves mighty? I am sure, Beloved, if you sit down and pull your good works to pieces, you will find so many bad stitches in them that they need to be all unstitched and done over again! There are so many spots and blurs about them, that you need to have them washed in the blood of Christ to make them good for anything!

And now, Beloved, do you think you have any good works? “Oh!” you say “I am afraid I have not many—no, I know I have not. But thanks be unto His love, He who accepted my person in Christ, accepts my works through Christ and He who blessed me in Him, that I should be a chosen vessel, has been pleased to accept that which He Himself poured into the vessel, ‘to the praise of the Glory of His Grace, wherein He has made me accepted in the Beloved.’”

And now, you moralists, you who have trusted in yourselves that you are righteous. If what I have said is true, what has become of all your holiness? You are saying, “I am a charitable man.” Granted that you are! I tell you to go and appeal to your fellow creatures and let them pay you for your charity. You say, “Yes, but I am a consistent and moral man, I am a great credit to the country. If all men would act as I do, what a good thing for this world and generation!” Of course you have served your generation—then send in your bill and let your generation pay you. I tell you, you have toiled for nothing! You have only sown the wind. And likely enough you will reap the whirlwind. God owes you nothing. You have not lived to His honor. You must honestly confess that you have not performed a single action with a desire to please Him! You have labored to please yourself—that has been the highest motive you have had. You felt that if you were good, you would go to Heaven and that if you were evil, you would be sure to go to Hell. You have been thoroughly selfish, from first to last. Reckon up your accounts and settle with yourself! God owes you nothing. You have done nothing for Him. And if you have, then consider within yourself, you have so much violated God’s commands and so frequently done all you could to injure your Maker, if it were possible, that all your accounts are easily struck off. And as for your good works, where are they? Where are they? Ah, it is a figment and a fiction, a laugh and a dream. Good works in sinners? There are no such things! Augustine well said, “Good works, as they are called, in sinners, are nothing but splendid sins.” This is true of the best worlds of the best man who is out of Christ—they are nothing but splendid sins—varnished sins! God forgive you, dear Friends, for your good works! If you are out of Christ, you have as great need to be forgiven for your good works as you have for your bad ones!

II. And now, secondly, WHERE DO GOOD WORKS COME FROM? It is an old maxim that nature can never rise above itself. Water, coming from the top of a hill, will rise as high as its source. But unless there is some extraordinary pressure put upon it, it will never rise higher. So of human nature. Scripture says it is exceedingly vile. We cannot expect good works out of an evil nature! Can a bitter well send forth sweet water? As poison grows not on healthful trees, with healthful fruit, so healthy fruit cannot grow on poisonous trees. We must not look for good works in an evil nature any more than we should look for the grapes of Sorek on the vines of Gomorrah! We cannot expect to find good works coming from Nature. Truly it is vain and idle to think that good works can arise from the natural man. “Where, then,” you ask, “do they come from?” We answer, good works come from a real conversion, brought about by the Spirit of God. Until our conversion, there is not the shadow of goodness about us. In the eyes of the world, we may be reputable and respectable—but in the eyes of God we are nothing of the sort! Could we look into our hearts, as we sometimes look into other people’s faces, we would see very much there which would drive out of our souls the very imagination of good works before our heart is changed! How many things there are in the world which we have upon our tables and which we even eat, that if we were to put beneath our microscope, we would be afraid to touch, for we would see all kinds of loathsome creatures creeping and crawling about in them—such things as we never conceived! And so it is with human nature—when once the human heart is put under the microscope of Scripture and we see it with a spiritual eye—we see it to be vile and filthy. We then realize that we are quite sure that until we have a new heart and a right spirit, it would be just as impossible to expect to find good works in an unrighteous, unconverted man, as to hope to see fire burning in the midst of the ocean! The two things would be incongruous.

Our good works, if we have any, spring from a real conversion. Yet more, they also spring from a constant spiritual influence exercised upon us, from the time of conversion even until the hour of death. Ah, Christian, you would have no good works if you had no fresh influence, day by day. You would not find the Grace given you at your first hour sufficient to produce fruit today. It is not like the planting of a tree in our hearts, which naturally of itself brings forth fruit. The sap has to come up from the root, Jesus Christ! We are not trees by ourselves, but we are branches fixed on the living Vine. Good works, I know from where you come! You come floating down on the stream of Grace and if I did not have that stream of Grace always flowing, I would never find good works coming from me. Good works from the creature? Impossible! Good works are the gifts of God, His choice pearls, which He sends down with His Grace!

And again—we think that good works spring from union with Christ. We believe that the more a man knows and feels himself to be one with Jesus, the more holy he will be. The very fact that Christ and the Christian become one makes the Christian Christ-like. Why is a Christian’s character like Christ’s Character? Only for this reason—that he is joined and united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Why does that branch bring forth grapes? Simply because it has been engrafted into the Vine and therefore it partakes of the nature of the stem. So, Christian, the only way whereby you can bring forth fruit to God is by being grafted into Christ and united with Him! You Christians who think you can walk in holiness without keeping up perpetual fellowship with Christ have made a great mistake! If you would be holy, you must live close to Jesus. Good works spring only from there. Here we draw the most powerful reasons against anything like trusting in works. For as works are only the gift of God, how utterly impossible does it become for an unrighteous, unconverted, ungodly man to produce any such good works in himself? And if they are God’s gifts, how little merit can there be in them!

III. We have thus tried to trace good works to their origin and foundation. And now we come to the third point, which is, WHAT IS THE USE OF GOOD WORKS?

I am rather fond of being called an Antinomian, for this reason—the term is generally applied to those who hold the Truth of God very firmly and will not let it go. But I should not be fond of being an Antinomian. We are not against the Law of God! We believe it is no longer binding on us as the Covenant of salvation. But we have nothing to say against the Law of God. “The Law is holy—we are carnal, sold under sin.” None shall charge us truthfully with being Antinomians. We quarrel with Antinomians. But as for some poor souls who are so inconsistent as to say the Law is not binding and yet try to keep it with all their might, we do not quarrel with them! They will never do much mischief. But we think they might learn to distinguish between the Law as a Covenant of life and a direction after we have obtained life.

Well, we do love good works. Do you ask, of what use are they? I reply, first—Good works are useful as evidences of Grace. The Antinomian says, “But I do not require evidences, I can live without them.” This is unreasonable. Do you see yonder clock? That is the evidence of the time of day. The hour would be precisely the same if we had not that evidence. Still, we find the clock of great use. So we say, good works are the best evidence of spiritual life in the soul. Is it not written, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren?” Loving the Brethren is a good work! Again, “If any man abide in Me, he shall bring forth fruit.” Fruits of righteousness are good works and they are evidences that we abide in Christ! If I am living day by day in sin, what right have I to conclude I am a child of God? A man comes to this Chapel and while he hears the Gospel, he exclaims, “What delicious Truth! What heavenly Doctrine!” Yet when he leaves the place, you may see him enter one public-house after another and get intoxicated! Has this man any right to think himself an heir of Heaven? The man who comes to God’s House and drinks “wine on the lees, well refined,” and then goes away and drinks the cup and enjoys the company of the ungodly, gives no evidence that he is a partaker of Divine Grace! He says, “I do not like good works.” Of course he does not! “I know I shall not be saved by good works.” Of this we are certain, for he has none to be saved by! Many are ready enough to say—

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,*

*Simply to Your Cross I cling,”*  
who believe they are children of God, because, though they have no good works as evidence, they think they have faith. Ah, Sir, you have faith and there is another gentleman quite as respectable as you are, who has faith. I shall not tell you his name, this morning, but he is better than you are, for it is said, “he believes and trembles,” while you sit unmoved by the most powerful appeals! Yes, you who think you are children of God while you live in sin, you are in the most dreadful error. There is no delusion, if you except the delusion of the Pharisee, which is more dreadful than the delusion of a man who thinks that sin and Grace can reign together! The Christian has sins of heart, over which he groans and laments. But as regards his outward life, he is kept—so that the Evil One touches him not—the Lord keeps him under the shadow of His wing. He does not, except in some falls, allow him to turn out of the way. Works are the evidences of our faith—by faith our souls are justified before God—by works our faith is justified before ourselves and fellow men.

Secondly, we think good works are the witnesses or testimony to other people of the truth of what we believe. Every Christian was sent into the world to be a preacher. And just like every other creature that God has made, he will always be preaching about his Lord. Does not the whole world preach God? Do not the stars, while they shine, look down from Heaven and say there is a God? Do not the winds haunt God’s name in their mighty howling? Do not the waves murmur it upon the shore or thunder it in the storms? Do not the floods and the fields, the skies and the plains, the mountains and the valleys, the streamlets and the rivers, all speak of God? Assuredly they do and a new-born creature—the man created in Christ—must preach Jesus Christ wherever he goes! This is the use of good works. He will preach, not always with his mouth, but with his life! The use of good works is that they are a Christian’s sermon. A sermon is not what a man says but what he does. You who practice, are preaching. It is not preaching and practicing, but practicing is preaching! The sermon that is preached by the mouth is soon forgotten, but what we preach by our lives is never forgotten. There is nothing like faithful practice and holy living if we would preach to the world! The reason why Christianity does not advance with a mightier stride is simply this—that professors are, in a large measure, a disgrace to religion and many of those who are joined to the Church have no more godliness than those who are out of it. If I preached such a contradictory sermon on a Sunday as some of you have preached the most part of your lives, you would go out and say, “We will not go again till he can be a little more consistent with himself.” There is a difference in the very tone of the voice of some people when they are in the Chapel engaged in prayer and when they are in the workshop! You would hardly think them the same persons. Away with your inconsistency! Professors, take heed lest your inconsistencies should blot your evidences and some of you should be found manifesting, not inconsistency, but a most fearful consistency— living in sin and iniquity—and therefore being consistent with yourselves in hypocrisy!

In the third place, good works are of use to a Christian as an adornment. You will all remember that passage in the Scriptures which tells us how a woman should adorn herself. “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” The adornment of good works, the adornment in which we hope to enter Heaven, is the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ—but the adornment of a Christian here below is his holiness, his piety, his consistency. If some people had a little more piety, they would not require such a showy dress. If they had a little more godliness to set them off, they would have no need whatever to be always decorating themselves. The best earrings that a woman can wear are the earrings of hearing the Word with attention. The very best ring that we can have upon our finger is the ring which the Father puts upon the finger of the prodigal son, when he is brought back. And the very best dress we can ever wear is a garment worked by the Holy Spirit—the garment of a consistent conduct. But it is marvelous, while many are taking all the trouble they can to array this poor body, they have very few ornaments for their soul. They forgot to dress the soul! Oh, no. They are too late at Chapel, all because of that other pin, which they might have left out. They come here just when the service is beginning, because, in truth, they have so much to put on, they could not be expected to be here on time! And there are Christian men and Christian women who forget what God has written in His Word, which is as true, now, as it ever was, that Christian women should array themselves with modesty. It would be a good thing, perhaps, if we went back to Wesley’s rule, to come out from the world in our apparel and to dress as plainly and neatly as the Quakers, though alas, they have sadly gone from their primitive simplicity!

I am obliged to depart a little, sometimes, from what we call the high things of the Gospel. For, really, the children of God cannot now be identified by outward appearance from the children of the devil and they really ought to be! There should be some distinction between the one and the other. And although religion allows distinction of rank and dress, yet everything in the Bible cries out against our arraying ourselves and making ourselves proud by reason of the goodliness of our apparel! Some will say, “I wish you would leave that alone!” Of course you do, because it applies to yourself! But we let nothing alone which we believe to be in the Scriptures. And while I would not spare any man’s soul, honesty to every man’s conscience and honesty to myself demands that I should always speak of that which I see to be an evil breaking out in the Church! We should always take care that in everything, we keep as near as possible to the written Word. If you want ornaments, here they are—here are jewels, rings, dresses and all kinds of ornaments—men and women, you may dress yourselves up till you shine like angels. How can you do it? By dressing yourselves out in benevolence, in love to the saints, in honesty and integrity, in uprightness, in godliness, in brotherly kindness, in charity. These are the ornaments which angels admire and which even the world will admire! For men must give admiration to the man or the woman who is arrayed in the jewels of a holy life and godly conversation. I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, “adorn the Doctrine of God, our Savior, in all things.”

IV. Thus have I told you the use of good works. Now just a moment or two to tell you that the religion which we profess in this place and which we preach IS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE GOOD WORKS IN THE CHILD OF GOD.

Some say that that which is called Calvinism, which is an alias for the true Gospel, is calculated to lead men into sin. Now we will refute that, just by reminding them that the holiest people in the world have been those who professed the Doctrines which we hold. If you ask who in the dark ages were the great moral lights of the world, the answer will be such as Athanasius, Ambrose, Chrysostom. And then coming still lower, such men as Wickliffe, Jerome of Prague and Calvin. And every one of these held the Doctrines which we love to proclaim. And just let me remind you, there never were better men in the world than the Puritans— and every one of them held fast the Truths of God we love! I happened to find in a book, the other day, a statement which pleased me so much that I thought I would read it to you. The writer says, “The Puritans were the most resolved Protestants in the nation. Zealous Calvinists, warm and affectionate preachers. They were the most pious and devout people in the land—men of prayer in secret and in public—as well as in their families. Their manner of devotion was fervent and solemn, depending on the assistance of the Divine Spirit. They had a profound reverence for the holy name of God and were great enemies, not only to profane swearing, but to foolish talking and jesting. They were strict observers of the Lord’s-Day, spending the whole of it in public and private devotion and charity. It was the distinguishing mark of a Puritan, in those times, to see him going to Church twice a day, with his Bible under his arm. And while others were at plays and interludes, at revels, or walking in the fields, or at the diversions of bowling, fencing, etc.—on the eve of the Sabbath, these Puritans, with their families, were employed in reading the Scriptures, singing Psalms, repeating sermons, catechizing their children and prayer. Nor was this the work only of the Lord’s-Day, but they had their hours of family devotion on the week days. They were circumspect as to all excess in eating and drinking, apparel and lawful diversions—being frugal, industrious, exact in their dealings and solicitous to give everyone his own.” That is a noble testimony to Puritan Truth and the power of the Gospel. But I have one, which I think will please you, in another part of the book. A learned infidel says of the modern Calvinists and Jansenists, that, “When compared with their antagonists, they have excelled, in no small degree, in the most rigid and respectable virtues. That they have been an honor to their own age and the best model for imitation to every age succeeding.” Only think of an infidel speaking like that! I think it was an infidel who said, “Go to the Arminians to hear about good works. But go to the Calvinists to see them exhibited.” And even Dr. Priestly, who was a Unitarian, admits that, “They who hold the Doctrines of Grace, have less apparent conformity to the world and more of a principle of real religion, than his own followers—and that they who, from a principle of religion, ascribe more to God and less to man than others, have the greatest elevation of piety.”

And just now, as the Unitarians are bringing up all their great men— so great that we never heard their names to this day—and endeavoring to do all they can in London to bring people to Unitarianism, we would just tell them this fact. Dr. Priestly ascribes the coolness of Unitarianism to their becoming more indifferent to religious Doctrine—and accounts for the fact of their chapels not being well attended, by saying that Unitarians have a very slight attachment to their religious Doctrines. What a mercy! For if they continued to hold them, they would inevitably be lost. A man who denies the Divinity of Christ is sure to be lost. It is idle for them to talk of their being Christians! They might as well talk of being holy angels. The best proof I can give you of the holy tendency of our Doctrines is this great fact—in every age those who have held the Doctrines of Grace have exhibited in their lives a holy walk and conversation!

But once more—in just hastily running over the Doctrines, we ask— what could more tend to make men holy than the Truths of God we preach? Do we not teach you that God has chosen to Himself a people who must be holy? Is that an unholy Doctrine? Do we not tell you that God has chosen to Himself a people who in this world shall show forth His praise by holy living? Is that an unholy Doctrine? And we have told you that the Holy Spirit gives a new heart and a right spirit and that there is something more required than you can do yourselves—that you are unable to perform such good things as God expects from you— therefore God the Spirit must renovate you! Do you call that an unholy Doctrine? Is the Doctrine, that men by nature are vile and need renewing Grace, unholy? And the Doctrine that the true saints will certainly hold onto the end, is that unholy? I think the contrary to these Doctrines are the most unholy in the world! Is the Doctrine that only those who believe, have an interest in the blood of Christ, an unholy thing? Is the Doctrine that I preach, that Christ has redeemed only such as live in holiness, having been brought thereto by the Holy Spirit, an unholy thing? I think not! We challenge all those who love to speak against our Doctrines to prove that there is a single one of them which has an unholy tendency! Charge us with not holding good works? Come and try to get into our Church and you will soon have a proof that you are wrong—why, we would not have you, Sir, if you would give us a thousand pounds—unless we considered you were a holy man! If you have not good works, it will be a long time before we will receive you. And if you were to steal into our Church, you would be turned out in a week if you lived in sin and unrighteousness. For it would soon be reported to the pastor and deacons and you would see whether we did not hold the necessity of good works! If you did not exhibit them every day, we would cast you out from among us and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them! Our church order is the best refutation of the calumny.

What more can we say, then? We hope we have proved our points to all honest and consistent men. We only send you away, you hypocrites, with this ringing in your ears, “Except you have the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His.” Except you live like Christ, you shall not be with Christ at the last! If your spirit is not sanctified in this world, you will not find that God will sanctify you when you come before His Throne!

But you, poor Sinners, who have no holiness of your own and no good works at all. I know you have not any, because you are not a child of God. Do you feel that you have not? Come, then, and Christ will give you some—He will give you Himself! If you believe on the Lord Jesus, He will wash you from all your sins, give you a new heart and henceforth your life shall be holy, your conduct shall be consistent. He shall keep you to the end and you shall most assuredly be saved! God bless this testimony to any such as are living in sin, that they may be reclaimed from it, for Christ’s sake and by His Grace! Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2042 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Tit 3.3

THE MAINTENANCE OF GOOD WORKS  
NO. 2042

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving many lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have**

**done but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. That being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”***Tit 3:3-8***.**

LAST Thursday evening my sermon was based upon the contrast in the second chapter of Ephesians, between the expressions “not of works” and “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” I tried to show the true place of good works in connection with salvation. Many of you were not present then and I felt that the subject was of such extreme importance that I must return to the same line of thought in this greater congregation. I shall endeavor by another text which contains the same contrast, to set before you the usefulness, the benefit, yes, and the absolute necessity for our abounding in good works if indeed we are saved by faith in Christ Jesus.

Let us come at once to our text. Our Apostle tells us that we are to speak evil of no man but to show meekness unto all men. And he adds this as an all-sufficient reason—we ourselves also were sometimes like the very worst of them. When we look upon the world today, it pains us by its folly, disobedience and delusion. He that knows most of this modern Babylon, whether he observes the richer or the poorer classes of society, will find the deepest cause for grief. But we cannot condemn with bitterness—for such were some of us. Not only can we not condemn with bitterness but we must look upon our sinful fellow creatures with great compassion—for such were some of us.

Yes more—we feel encouraged to hope for ungodly men, even for the foolish and disobedient—for we ourselves also were, not long ago, like they. We feel that we must give the thought of our heart and the energy of our lives to the great work of saving men out of gratitude to the Lord our God, who, in His kindness and love, has saved us. “I am a man,” said one, “and everything that has to do with men concerns me”—but the child of God adds to this, “I am also a sinful man and owe my cleansing to the loving favor of the Lord. I was in the same mire of sin as these are in—and if I am now washed in the laver of regeneration and renewed by the Holy

Spirit, I owe it all to Sovereign Grace and am bound by love to man and love to God to seek the cleansing and renewal of my fellow men.”

Eyes that have wept over our own sin will always be most ready to weep over the sins of others. If you have judged yourselves with candor, you will not judge others with severity. You will be more ready to pity than to condemn, more anxious to hide a multitude of sins than to punish a single sinner. I will give little for your supposed regeneration if there is not created in you a tender heart which can truly say—

*“My God, I feel the mournful scene;  
My heart yearns over dying men;  
And gladly my pity would reclaim,  
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.”*

With this feeling towards mankind at large, we are led to consider the Divine remedy for sinfulness and to look with pleasure upon what God has devised for the creation of holiness in a fallen race. He at first created man a pure and spotless being. When He placed Adam in the garden He made a friend of him. And though Adam has fallen and all his race are depraved, God is still aiming at the same thing, namely, to create holy beings, purified unto Himself, to be a peculiar people zealous for good works. What has the Lord done? What is He still doing to this end? How far have we participated in those processes of Divine Grace which work towards this glorious design?

I ask your attention this morning while I speak, first, of what we were. And here let the tears stand in your eyes. Secondly, of what has been done for us—and here let Divine Grace move in your hearts. And, thirdly, of what we wish to do—and here let care be seen in your lives.

I. First, Beloved, let us think for a few minutes only OF WHAT WE ONCE WERE. Think, I say, with tears of repentance in our eyes. “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving many lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” The Apostle does not say, “You yourselves,” as if he spoke to Titus and the believing Cretans but we ourselves, thus including himself. Beloved Apostle, you do humbly present to us this bitter cup of confession, drinking of it yourself with us and putting yourself on a level with us—“We ourselves also.” Come, then, pastor, elders, deacons, and members of the Church—you that have served your Lord for many years— hesitate not to join in this humiliating confession.

A threefold set of evils is here described. The first set consists of the evils of the mind—“We were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived.” We were foolish. We thought we knew and therefore we did not learn. We said, “We see,” and therefore we were blind and would not come to Jesus for sight. We thought we knew better than God. For our foolish heart was darkened and we imagined ourselves to be better judges of what was good for us than the Lord our God. We refused heavenly warnings because we dreamed that sin was pleasant and profitable. We rejected Divine Truth because we did not care to be taught and disdained the lowly position of a disciple sitting at Jesus’ feet.

Our pride proved our folly. What lying things we tried to believe! We put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—darkness for light and light for darkness. In thought, desire, language and action “we were sometimes foolish.” Some of us were manifestly foolish for we rushed headlong into sins which injured us and have left that in our bones which years have not been sufficient to remove. Every lover of vice is a fool at large. O my Brothers and Sisters, I suppose you have no photograph of yourself as you used to be. But if you have, take it down and study it and bless God that He has made you to differ so greatly from your former self!

In addition to being foolish we are said to have been disobedient. And so we were, for we forsook the commands of God. We wanted our own will and way. We said, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice?” There is a touch of Pharaoh about every one of us. Obedience is distasteful to the obstinate. And we were such. “I knew,” said God, “that you were very obstinate and had an iron sinew.” Our necks by nature refused to bow to the yoke of our Creator. We would, if we could, be the lords of Providence for we were not content with the Divine allotment. We wished that we were the legislators of the universe, that we might give license to our own lusts and no longer be hampered with restrictions.

To the holy Law of God we were disobedient. Ah, how long some of us were disobedient to the Gospel! We heard it as though we heard it not. Or when it did touch the heart we did not allow its influence to remain. Like water, which retains no mark of a blow, so did we obliterate the effect of the Truth of God. We were determined not to be obedient to the faith of the Lord Jesus. We were unwilling to yield God His due place either in Providence, Law, or Gospel. Paul adds that we were deceived, or led astray. As sheep follow one another and go away from the pasture, so did we follow some chosen companion and would not follow the Good Shepherd. We were deceived.

Perhaps we were deceived in our thoughts and made to believe a lie— certainly we were deceived in our idea of happiness. We hoped to find it where it did not exist—we searched for the living among the dead. We were the dupes of custom and of company. We were here, there, and everywhere in our actions—no more to be relied upon than lost sheep. Children of God, remember these errors of your minds. Lay them upon your consciences and let your souls plead guilty to them. For I feel assured that we have all, in some measure, been in this triple condition—foolish, disobedient, deceived.

The next bundle of mischief is found in the evil of our pursuits. The Apostle says we were “serving many lusts and pleasures.” The word for “serving” means being under servitude. We were once the slaves of many lusts and pleasures. By lusts we understand desires, longings, ambitions, passions. Many are these masters and they are all tyrants. Some are ruled by greed for money. Others crave for fame. Some are enslaved by lust for power—others by the lust of the eye. And many by the lusts of the flesh. We were born slaves and we live slaves until the great Liberator emancipates us. No man can be in worse bondage than to be enslaved by his own evil desires.

We were also the bond slaves of pleasure. Alas, alas, that we were so far infatuated as to call it pleasure! Looking back at our former lives we may well be amazed that we could once take pleasure in things we are now ashamed. The Lord has taken the very name of our former idols out of our mouths. Some who are now saints were once the slaves of drunkenness or of “chambering and wantonness.” Some were given up to evil company and rioting or to pride and self-seeking. Many are the evils which array themselves in the silken robes of pleasure that they may tempt the hungry heart of man.

Once we took pleasure in those sins which are now our misery as we look back on them. O my Brethren, we dare not deny our base original! Today we drink from the well of holiness and not of undefiled pleasures which delight our souls. But we blush as we remember that not too long ago foul and putrid pools seemed sweet to our vitiated taste. Like Nebuchadnezzar in the failure of his mind we fed among beasts in the madness of our sin. Unlike the Egyptians, who loathed to drink of the river when God had smitten it with His curse, we took all the more delight in draughts of unhallowed pleasure because it yielded a fearful intoxication to know that we were daring to defy a Law.

Do not let me talk about these things this morning while you listen to me without feeling. I want you to be turning over the pages of your old life and joining with Paul and the rest of us in our sad confession of former pleasure in evil. A holy man was likely to carry with him a book which had three leaves in it but never a word. The first leaf was black and this showed his sin. The second was red and this reminded him of the way of cleansing by blood—while the third was white—to show how clean the Lord can make us. I beg you just now to study that first black page. It is all black. And as you look at it, it seems blacker and blacker. What seemed at one time to be a little white, darkens down as it is gazed upon, till it wears the deepest shade of all. You were sometimes erring in your minds and in your pursuits. Is not this enough to bring the water into your eyes, O you that now follow the Lamb wherever He goes?

The Apostle then mentions the evils of our hearts. Here you must discriminate and judge, each one for himself, how far the accusation lies. He speaks of “living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” That is to say first, we harbored anger against those who had done us evil. And secondly, we lived in envy of those who appeared to have more good than we had ourselves. The first sin is very common—many abide year after year in the poisonous atmosphere of an angry spirit. All are not alike in this, for some are naturally easy and agreeable. But in all of us there is that proud spirit which resents injuries and would revenge them. Men may sin against God and we are not indignant. But if they sin against us—we are very angry.

To the spirit of Christ it is natural and even delightful to forgive—but such is not the spirit of the world. I have heard of men who would not forgive their own children and of brothers who were implacable towards each other. This is the spirit of the devil. Revenge is the delight of the wicked but to do kindness in return for injury is the luxury of a Christian. One main distinction between the heirs of God and the heirs of wrath is this— the unregenerate are in the power of self and so of hate—but the regenerate are under the dominion of Christ and so of love. You may judge yourself by this—whether your prevailing spirit is that of wrath or of love—if you are given to anger, you are a child of wrath. And if you are full of love, you are a child of God whose name is Love.

God help us to stamp out the last spark of personal animosity! Let us remove the memories of injury, as the incoming tide washes out the marks on the sand. If any of you have disputes in your family, end them at once, cost what it may. How can you love God whom you have not seen if you do not love your brother whom you have seen? Divine Grace makes a great change in this respect in those who by nature are malicious.

The other form of evil is envy of those who seem to have more of good than we have. Frequently envy attacks men because of their wealth. How dare they have luxuries when we are poor? At other times envy spits its venom against a man’s good repute when he happens to be more praised than we are. How can any man venture to be better thought of than we are? Truly this is the spirit of Satan—the spirit which now works in the children of disobedience. The child of God is delivered from envy by the Grace of God. And if it ever does arise, he hates himself for admitting it. He would wish to see others happy even if he were unhappy himself.

If he is in the depths of poverty he is glad that everybody is not so pinched as he is. If he has received unjust censure he is willing to hope that there was some mistake. And he is glad that everybody is not quite so unfairly dealt with. He rejoices in the praise of others and triumphs in their success. What? Do you wince at this and feel that you have not reached it so far? May Divine Grace enable you to get into this spirit for it is the spirit of Jesus! Beloved, sin takes different shapes in different people but it is in us all. This darkness once beclouded those who today shine like stars among the godly. Sin is often restrained by circumstances and yet it is in the heart.

We ought not to take credit to ourselves because of our freedom from evils into which we had no chance of falling. We have not been so bad as others because we could not be. A certain boy has run away from home. Another boy remained at home. Is he, therefore, a better child? Listen—he had broken his leg and could not get out of bed. That takes away all the credit of his staying at home. Some men cannot sin in a certain direction and then they say to themselves, “What excellent fellows we are to abstain from this wickedness!” Sirs, you would have done it if you could, and therefore your self-praise is mere flattery. Had you been placed in the same position as others, you would have acted as others have done—for your heart goes after the same idols.

Sin in the heart of every man defiles everything that he does. Even if an ungodly man should do what in itself might be a good action there is a defilement in his motive which taints it all. You cannot draw pure water from a foul well. As is the heart, such is the life. Listen to this, you that have never passed under the processes of Divine Grace. See what you are and where you are if left to yourselves and cry to the Lord to save you. II. Now for a more cheerful topic. We are now to think OF WHAT HAS

BEEN DONE FOR US. And here let us feel the movements of Divine Grace in our hearts. What has been done for us?

First, there was a Divine interposition. “The kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared.” Man was in the dark—plunging onward to blacker midnight every step he took. I do not find, as I read history, any excuse for the modern notion that men are longing for God and laboring to find Him. No, the sheep were never seeking the Shepherd but all were going astray. Men everywhere turn their backs to the light and try to forget what has been handed down by their forefathers—they are everywhere feeling after a great lie which they may raise to the Throne of God. We do not, by nature, long after God nor sigh for His holiness. The gracious Lord came in uncalled for and unsought and in the bounty of His heart and in the great love of His nature He determined to save man.

Methinks I hear Him say, “How shall I give you up?” He sees mankind resolved to perish unless an almighty arm shall intervene. And He interposes in fullness of pity and power. You know how, in many ways, the Lord has intervened on our behalf. But, especially you remember how He came down from Heaven, took our nature, lived among us, mourned our sin and bore it in His own body on the tree. You know how the Son of God interposed in that grand Avatar, that marvelous incarnation in which the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Then He broke what would otherwise have been an everlasting darkness.

Then He snapped the chains which would have fettered our humanity throughout all the ages. The love and kindness of God our Savior which had always existed, at length “appeared,” when God, in the Person of His Son, came here, met our iniquities hand to hand and overcame their terrible power—that we also might overcome. Note well that there was a Divine salvation. In consequence of the interposition of Jesus, Believers are described as being saved—“not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy He saved us.”

Hearken to this. There are men in the world who are saved—they are spoken of not as “to be saved,” not as to be saved when they come to die but saved even now—saved from the dominion of the evils which we described under our first head—saved from folly, disobedience, delusion and the like. Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin is saved from the guilt and power of sin. He shall no longer be the slave of his lusts and pleasures. He is saved from that dread bondage. He is saved from hate—for he has tasted love and learned to love. He shall not be condemned for all that he has ever done, for his great Substitute and Savior has borne away the guilt, the curse, the punishment of sin—yes, the sin itself.

O my Hearers, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ this morning you are saved! As surely as once you were lost, being led astray—so surely are you now saved, if you are a Believer, being found by the great Shepherd and brought back again upon His shoulders. I beg you to get hold of this Truth of God that according to His mercy the Lord has saved us who believe in Jesus. Will you tell me, or rather tell yourselves, whether you are saved or not? If you are not saved you are lost. If you are not already forgiven you are already condemned. You are in the ruin of fallen nature unless you are renewed by the Holy Spirit. You are a slave to sin unless your liberty has been procured by the great ransom. Examine yourselves on these points and follow me in the next thought.

There was a motive for this salvation. Positively, “According to His mercy He saved us.” And negatively, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done.” Brethren, we could not have been saved at the first by our works of righteousness. For we had not done any. “No,” says the Apostle, “we were foolish, disobedient, deceived,” and therefore we had no works of righteousness and yet the Lord interposed and saved us. Behold and admire the splendor of His love, that “He loved us even when we were dead in sins.” He loved us and therefore quickened us. God does not come to men to help them when they are saving themselves—He comes to the rescue when they are damning themselves.

When the heart is full of folly and disobedience the good God visits it with His favor. He comes, not according to the hopefulness of our character, but according to His mercy. And mercy has no eye except for guilt and misery. The Grace of God is not given according to any good thing that we have done since our conversion—the expression before us shuts out all real works of righteousness which we have done since regeneration—as all supposed ones before it. The Lord assuredly foreknew these works but He also foreknew our sins. He did not save us according to the foreknowledge of our good works—these works are a part of the salvation which He gave us.

As well say that a physician healed a sick man because he foreknew that he would be better. Or that you give a beggar an alms because you foresee that he would have the alms. Works of righteousness are the fruit of salvation and the root must come before the fruit. The Lord saves His people out of clear, unmixed, undiluted mercy and Grace and for no other reason. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs but of God that shows mercy.”

Oh how splendidly is the Grace of God seen in the whole plan of salvation! How clearly is it seen in our cases, for “we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived,” yet He saved us, “not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to His mercy”! Will not some self-convicted sinner find comfort here? O despairing one, does not a little hope come in by this window? Do you not see that God can save you on the ground of mercy? He can wash you and renew you according to the sovereignty of His Grace? On the footing of merit you are hopelessly lost— but on the ground of mercy there is hope.

Observe, next that there was a power by which we were saved. “He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” The way in which we are delivered from the dominion of sin is by the work of the Holy Spirit. This adorable Person is very God of very God. This Divine Being comes to us and causes us to be born again. By His eternal power and Godhead He gives us a totally new nature, a life which could not

grow out of our former life, nor be developed from our nature—a life which is a new creation of God. We are saved not by evolution but by creation. The Spirit of God creates us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

We experience regeneration which means being generated over again, or born again. Remember the result of this as set forth in Covenant terms—“A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you—and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh.” This great process is carried out by the Holy Spirit. After we are regenerated He continues to renew us. Our thoughts, feelings, desires and acts are constantly renewed. Regeneration as the commencement of the new creation can never come twice to any man but renewal of the Holy Spirit is constantly and perpetually repeated.

The life once given is revived—the light once kindled is fed with holy oil which is poured upon it continually. The newborn life is deepened and increased in force by that same Holy Spirit who first of all created it. See then, dear Hearers, that the only way to holiness is to be made anew and to be kept anew. The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit are both essential. The name of Jesus has been engraved in us—even on our hearts—but it needs to be cut deeper and deeper lest the letters be covered up by the moss of routine, or filled up by the bespattering of sin. We are saved “by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”—one process in different stages. This is what our God has done for us—blessed be His name! Being washed and renewed we are saved.

There is also mentioned a blessed privilege which comes to us by Jesus Christ. The Spirit is shed on us abundantly by Jesus Christ and we are “justified by His Grace.” Both justification and sanctification come to us through the medium of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is shed on us abundantly “through Jesus Christ our Savior.” Beloved, never forget that regeneration is worked in us by the Holy Spirit but comes to us by Jesus Christ. We do not receive any blessing apart from our Lord Jesus. In all works of the Spirit, whether regeneration or renewal, it is the Lord Jesus who is putting forth His power, for He says, “Behold, I make all things new.”

The Mediator is the conduit through which Divine Grace supplies us daily with the water of life. Everything is by Jesus Christ. Without Him was not anything made that was made either in Grace or in nature. We must not think it possible for us to receive anything from God apart from the appointed Mediator. But, oh, think of it!—in Jesus Christ we are today abundantly anointed by the Holy Spirit. The sacred oil is shed upon us abundantly from Him who is our Head. We are sweet to God through the Divine perfume of the Holy Spirit who comes to us by Jesus Christ. This day we are just in the sight of God in Christ’s righteousness, through which we are “justified by Grace.”

Jehovah sees no sin for which He must punish us. He has said, “Take away his filthy garments from him and set a fair miter upon his head.” And this is done. We are accepted in the Beloved. Since Jesus has washed our feet, we are “clean every part”—clean in the double sense of being washed with water and with blood and so cleansed from the power and guilt of sin. What a high privilege is this! Can we ever sufficiently praise God for it?

Once more—there comes out of this a Divine result. We become today joint-heirs with Christ Jesus and so heirs of a heavenly estate. And then out of this heirship there grows a hope which reaches forward to the eternal future with exceeding joy. We are “made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Think of that! What a space there is between “foolish, disobedient, deceived”—right up to “heirs according to the hope of eternal life”! Who thought of bridging this great gulf? Who but God? With what power did He bridge it? How but by the Divine power and Godhead of the Holy Spirit? Where was the bridge found by which the chasm could be crossed? The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us, has made a way over the once impassable deep.

I have thus very briefly set before you an outline of the work of Divine Grace within the human heart. Do you understand it? Have you ever felt it? Do you feel the life of regeneration pulsing within you this morning? Will you not bless God for it?—

*“We raise our Father’s name on high,  
Who His own Spirit sends  
To bring rebellious strangers near,  
And turn His foes to friends.”*

III. We will now speak on WHAT WE WISH TO DO. And here let us show care in our lives. Mark well these words, “This is a faithful saying and these things I will that you affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”

“Be careful to maintain good works.” This precept is full in its meaning. In another Scripture you are told to be careful for nothing but here you are bid to be careful to maintain good works. We read, “casting all your care upon Him. For He cares for you”—but do not cast off your care to maintain good works. You have a number of cares about you—slip a bridle over their heads and train them to plow in the field of good works. Do not let care be wasted over food and raiment and such temporary matters—these may be left with God. But take sacred cares upon you—the cares of holy and gracious living. Yoke your best thoughts to the care of holiness—“be careful to maintain good works.”

What are good works? The term is greatly inclusive. Of course we number in the list works of charity, works of kindness and benevolence, works of piety, reverence and holiness. Such works as comply with the two tables of command are good works. Works of obedience are good works. What you do because God bids you do it, is a good work. Works of love to Jesus done out of a desire for His Glory—these are good works. The common actions of everyday life, when they are well done, with a view not to merit but out of gratitude—these are good works. “Be careful to maintain good works” of every sort and kind.

You are sure to be working in some way—mind you that your works are good works. If you have commenced well, be careful to maintain good works. And if you have maintained them, go on to increase them. I preached last Thursday night as now—salvation by Divine Grace and by Grace alone. And if I know how to speak plainly, I certainly did speak plainly then and I hope I do so now. Remember, you are saved by grace and not by works of righteousness. But after you are saved there comes in this precept, “Be careful to maintain good works.”

This precept is special in its direction. To the sinner—that he may be saved we say not a word concerning good works, except to remind him that he has none. To the Believer who is saved, we say ten thousand words concerning good works—beseeching him to bring forth much fruit, that so he may be Christ’s disciple. There is all the difference between the living and the dead—the living we arouse to work—the dead must first receive life. Exhortations which may most fittingly be addressed to the regenerate may be quite out of place when spoken to those who are under the power of unbelief and are strangers to the family of Divine Grace.

The voice of our text is to them that have believed in God—faith is presupposed as the absolutely indispensable foundation of good works. You cannot work that which will please God if you are without faith in Him. As there is no coming to God in prayer without believing that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, so there is no bringing any other sacrifice to Him without a faith suitable to the business in hand. For living works you must have a living faith and for loving works you must have a loving faith.

When we know and trust God with holy intelligence and sacred confidence we work His pleasure. Good works must be done freely—God wants not slaves to grace His Throne. He seeks not from us the forced works of men in bondage. He desires the spontaneous zeal of consecrated souls who rejoice to do His will because they are not their own but bought with the precious blood of Jesus. It is the heartiness of our work which is the heart of it. To those who have renewed hearts, this exhortation is addressed—“Be careful to maintain good works.”

This precept is weighty in importance, for it is prefaced thus—“This is a faithful saying.” This is one among four great matters thus described. It is not trivial. It is not a temporary precept which belongs to an extinct race and a past age. “This is a faithful saying”—a true Christian Proverb—“that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.” Let the ungodly never say that we who believe in Free Grace think lightly of a holy life. O you who are the people of my care, I charge you before God and the holy angels that in proportion as you hold the Truth of doctrine, you follow out the purity of precept! You hold the Truth of God and you know that salvation is not of man, nor of man’s work—it is not of merit—but of mercy, not of ourselves but of God alone.

I beseech you to be as right in practice as in doctrine, and therefore be careful to maintain good works. Dogs will open their mouths but do not find bones for them—the enemies of the faith will laugh at it but do not give them ground of accusation. May God the Holy Spirit help you so to live that they may be ashamed—having no evil thing to say of you!

I am afraid that this precept of being careful to maintain good works is neglected in practice, or else the Apostle would not have said to Titus, “These things I will that you affirm constantly.” Titus must repeat perpetually the precept which commands the careful maintenance of good works. Beloved, I fear that preachers often think too well of their congregations and talk to them as if they were all perfect, or nearly so. I cannot thus flatter you. I have been astounded when I have seen what professing Christians can do. How some dare call themselves followers of Jesus I cannot tell! It is horrible. We condemn Judas but he is to be found in many.

Our Lord is still sold for gain. He still has at His heels sons of perdition who kiss Him and betray Him. There are still persons in our Churches who need to have the Ten Commandments read to them every Sabbath Day. It is not a bad plan of the Church of England—to put up the Ten Commandments near the communion table where they can be clearly seen. Some people need to see them, though I am afraid when they come in their way, they wink hard at some of the Commands and go away and forget that they have seen them. Common morality is neglected by some who call themselves Christians.

My Brethren, such things ought not to be but as long as they are, so we must hear Paul saying—“I will that you affirm constantly that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.” Certain people turn on their heel and say, “That is legal talk. The preacher is preaching up works instead of Divine Grace.” What? Do you dare to say that? I will meet you face to face at God’s right hand at the Last Day if you dare to insinuate so gross a libel. Dare you say that I do not preach continually salvation by the Divine Grace of God and by the Divine Grace of God only? Having preached salvation by Grace without a moment’s hesitation, I shall also continually affirm that they which have believed in God must be “careful to maintain good works.”

This, mark you, is supported by argument. The Apostle presses home his precept by saying—“These things are good and profitable unto men.” He instances other things which are neither good nor profitable, namely, “Foolish questions and genealogies and contentions and strivings about the Law.” In these days some are occupied with questions about the future state instead of accepting the plain testimony of Scripture and some give more prominence to speculations drawn from prophecy than to the maintaining of good works. I reverence the prophecies. But I have small patience with those whose one business is guessing at their meaning.

One whose family was utterly unruly and immoral met with a Christian friend and said to him—“Do you quite see the meaning of the Seven Trumpets?” “No,” answered his friend, “I do not. And if you looked more to your seven children the seven trumpets would suffer no harm.” To train up your children and instruct your servants and order your household aright are “things which are good and profitable unto men.” A life of godliness is better than the understanding of mysteries. The eternal Truth of

God is to be defended at all hazards but questions which do not signify the turn of a hair to either God or man may be left to settle themselves.

“Be careful to maintain good works” whether you are a babe in Grace or a strong man in Christ Jesus. A holy household is as a pillar to the Church of God. Children brought up in the fear of God are as cornerstones polished after the similitude of a palace. You, husbands and wives that live together in holy love and see your children serving God, you adorn the doctrine of God our Savior! Tradesmen who are esteemed for integrity, merchants who bargain to their own hurt but change not, dealers who can be trusted in the market with uncounted gold—your acts are good and profitable both to the Church and to the world! Men are won to Christ when they see Christianity embodied in the good and the true.

But when religion is a thin veneer or a mere touch of tinsel they call it “humbug.” And rough as the word is, it is worthy of the contemptible thing which it describes. If our religion comes from the very soul, if our life is the life of Christ in us and we prove that we have new hearts and right spirits by acting the honorable, the kindly, the truly Christian part—these things are good and profitable unto those who watch us—for they may induce them to seek for better things.

I pray you, my Beloved, be careful to maintain good works. I thus stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance—if your minds were not pure I would not stir them up—for it would be of no use to raise the mud which now lies quiet. I stir you up because I am not afraid to do so but am sure that it will do you good. You will take home this exhortation and you will say, each one to himself, “What can I do more for Jesus? How can I walk more worthy in my profession? How can I be careful to maintain good works?” So may God bless you!

You who do not believe in God. You who have not come to trust in His dear Son—I am not talking to you. To you I must say, first, that you must be made new creatures. I do not talk to a crab-tree and say, “Bear apples.” It cannot. The tree must first become good before the fruit can be good. “You must be born again.” You will never be better till you are made new creatures. You must be spiritually slain and then made alive again. There must be an end of you and there must be a beginning of Christ in you. God grant that this may happen at once and may you immediately believe in the Lord Jesus! Amen.

A PASTORAL VISIT

NO. 3103

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1908.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “The Church in your house.”  
***Phm 1:2***.

SOME interpreters have supposed that a small congregation met for worship in a room in Philemon’s house and there is a tradition that such was the case for some considerable time. The Churches established by Paul were, at their commencement, for the most part small. Obliged—for the sake of peace and to avoid persecution—to meet in out of-the-way places where they were not likely to be seen by foes, the retired house of some well-known friend, perhaps that of the minister, if it had a room conveniently large, would be the natural place for Believers to gather together in those early Churches. Philemon, therefore, might literally have had a Church in his house and a congregation might have gathered there. It strikes me that there would be a great deal of good done if persons who have large rooms in their houses would endeavor to get together little congregations. There are many, even of our poorer friends, who live in neighborhoods of London destitute of the means of Grace, who might promote a great blessing if they occasionally opened their houses for a Prayer Meeting or religious assembly. We need no consecrated places for the worship of God—

*“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground.”*

Certainly our text does not give any countenance to the calling of certain buildings “Churches.” Buildings for worship, whether erected by Episcopalians or Dissenters, are frequently called “Churches.” If I ask for “the church” in any town, I am forthwith directed to an edifice, probably with a spire or a steeple, which the inhabitants call “the church.” Why, they might as well point me to a signpost when I asked for a man—a building cannot be a Church! A Church is an assembly of faithful men and it cannot be anything else. I cannot see how such a piece of architecture as we now call “a church” could very well have been in Philemon’s house—it must have been a large house if it had such a thing in it for an ornament. The fact is, it is a misnomer, a misuse of language, and we must mind that we do not get into it. For my own part, I like the good old-fashioned name of “Meeting House” as well as any. It is a place where the people of God meet and although “Meeting House” does not sound very smart, nor fine, nor fashionable—and that is everything, nowadays, with many people—yet it is far better than misusing language as it is misused when bricks, stones and mortar receive a tittle belonging exclusively to godly men and women!

However, it appears that Philemon had a Church in his house—a Church largely, if not exclusively, composed of his own family. He was privileged to possess a godly wife—the beloved Apphia—their sons and daughters walked in their parents’ footsteps. And their servants and even their visitor, Archippus, were members of this Church which was in the house of Philemon.

I. Now let me attempt to describe A CHURCH IN A HOUSE, meaning, all the while, to be asking you WHETHER YOU HAVE A CHURCH IN YOUR HOUSE.

A Church, according to the New Testament, consists of converted persons, or persons who profess to be converted. No visible Church is absolutely pure. A Church must be taken upon its own profession, consisting as it does of persons who avow themselves to be followers of and Believers in Christ, having been converted from darkness to light by the Spirit of God. Well, then, I see, in a family where there is a Church, a godly father and a godly mother rejoicing over converted sons and daughters—and glad and able to entrust their household affairs to Christian servants. It cannot be a Church, whatever profession may be made, unless there is the Grace of God there. It may be nominally such, but it cannot be really so. A family is not born a Church and the little ones born into the family are not born into the Church. They must be born-again before they can be members of the Church—there must have been the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the members of the family before they can form a Church in the house.

But it strikes me that a number of converted people are not necessarily a Church. In order to form a Church, they must worship together. Happy is the household which meets every morning for prayer! Happy are they who let not the evening depart without uniting in supplication! Brothers and Sisters, I wish it were more common—I wish it were universal, with all professors of religion—to have family prayer! We sometimes hear of the children of Christian parents who do not grow up in the fear of God and we are asked how it is that they turn out so badly. In many, very many cases, I fear there is such a neglect of family worship that it is not probable that the children are at all impressed by any piety supposed to be possessed by their parents! Family prayer in our old Puritan households was a matter of very great importance. Let me tell you what Philip Henry used to do. He was a minister and of course had more time to give to it than many of you in business have. But he went through the whole Bible in course, expounding it, chapter by chapter, and accompanying it by prayer and singing. One reason he gave for singing was that it was like Rahab’s tying the crimson line in the window—everyone who went by would know what she had done—and he said that the sound of singing at family prayers was a distinct confession that that family loved and worshipped God! He called his children together on Thursdays and catechized them upon the General Assembly’s Catechism and upon the lessons through which they had gone during the week.

Perhaps you will think that this was very dreary work, but what will you say when I tell you that that good man’s son, Mr. Matthew Henry, wrote his famous Commentary from the notes which he took of his father’s expositions at morning and evening prayers? Young lads do not take notes of dreary things, you may depend upon it! Catch them at that, if you can. We do not find our boys taking down heavy sermons, but they have no objection to putting down anything which strikes and interests them. That family of Mr. Henry, to which I have referred, was so well ordered that very often visitors to the house who were unconverted when they went there, were converted during their visit! Now I do not suppose that you could, all of you, expound the Scriptures like that! And you could not all, perhaps, sing. But I do think we might, all of us, manage to come together once a day at least—twice, if possible—for the worship of God in the household. Remember what Matthew Henry says—“They who pray in the family, do well. They who read and pray, do better. But they who sing, and read, and pray, do best of all.” If we want to bring up a godly family who shall be a seed to serve God when our heads are under the clods of the valley, let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship. I do not see how there can be a Church without worship—and I do not see how there can be a Church in a house unless there is constant worship in the family.

But there must be something more than this before there can be a Church. A Church is not merely a company of people meeting for worship—there must be some bond of unity. A load of bricks is not a house—the bricks must be fitly framed and cemented together—and then they grow into a house. So a Church is fitly framed together and grows into a holy temple for the Lord. Now, dear Friends, there must be a knitting of hearts among Christians in families. Of course, they will love each other from the ties of the flesh, but they should also love each other from the higher ties of the Spirit. There is no reason why, without breaking through any of the gradations that must necessarily exist in society, there should not be a bond of unity taking in the whole family— master, mistress, children and servants. In the olden times, in the days of such men as Abraham, the servants were a part of the family. Nowadays, people change their servants once a month and there are some servants who stay too long even then! But it strikes me that good masters and good mistresses make good servants—and where love and kindness are shown, it will not always, nor often, be the case that the servants will be a social evil. Instead of that, they will be a great benefit. And a wise, prudent, Christian servant becomes as much a part of the household as even a child. To make a Church, there must be a feeling of union. I should like to see the clan-feeling in our families in which every servant would stand up for the master’s honor, and everyone would seek the good of the entire family—and even when the children were grown up and scattered, it would be well to see them still duly respecting the ties of Christian kindred and seeking to promote the good and the unity of the whole.

And to make a Church, there must be oversight. A Church is not a complete Church without a pastor, its elders and its deacons. A Church in the house will have its elders. There need not be any election of these because they are already elected. The parents will naturally take the oversight of the little Church that is in the house. If you want a pastor, the father should be the priest in his own house. He is the most fitting teacher, expounder and example. Then who are to be your deacons? Why, those who have to go out to the factory, when the bell rings in the morning, and who help to provide food for the household! And there is another we must not forget—that gentle one who goes so noiselessly about the house to see after her husband and children, and who produces a thousand happy thoughts by that kind way of hers. Sometimes the oversight of the household will fall to the lot of the eldest son, or daughter, but sometimes some long-abiding servant, some old housekeeper virtually becomes the presiding genius. There must be oversight and God sometimes graciously sends to families those who are more advanced in spiritual things who become, as it were, the officers of the Church in the house.

A Church in the house must, of course, be furnished with instruction. One of the first reasons why there is a Church at all is to teach the members. We are formed into Churches for mutual edification. Ah, dear Friends, how much youthful piety receives edification in those households where the parents set a godly example! Wonderful is the influence of the mother upon her son. You recollect the case of the mighty Byron, who seems to have been a sort of fallen angel who flew across the sky like a thunderbolt from a Satanic hand. What was his mother? Why, a very passionate woman who frequently threw the tongs at her own son in her passion! Of course she had a wild and passionate son. Look, on the other hand, at the meek and gentle bard of Olney, pouring forth notes that were almost fit for Heaven. What sort of mother had Cowper? You know her character well, as her son has described it in

the lines beginning— *“Oh, that those lips had language!”*  
Let Christian parents, forming a Church in their house, look to the formation of the character of their children, especially their converted children—and let them not overlook their converted servants! With an ardent and a longing desire, strive to build them up in the faith and help them to grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. You Christian fathers ought to take care, as far as your means allow, to provide your children with instructive books. I do not mean dull books, but good, interesting books, at once instructive and attractive, that may teach them the way of God more perfectly. Whenever you have the opportunity, let drop a word which will strike the child’s attention and remain in its heart. Just as I, as a preacher, would never miss an opportunity of saying anything here which I met with in the week, and which I thought you ought to hear, so let the Christian father be studying each day how he may instruct the Church in his house in the fear of the Lord more perfectly!

I think I have now described the Church so far as its organization is concerned, but I cannot very well describe it all. You must go and live in the midst of such a Church to understand thoroughly what it is like. Mr. Talkative, in “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” was a very fine fellow abroad and had a great deal to say about religion. But what was he at home? Ah, nothing could be said of him there worth the hearing! Where there is a Church in the house, every member strives to increase the other’s comfort, all seek to promote each other’s holiness, each one endeavors to discharge his duty according to the position in which he is placed in that Church. And when they meet together, their prayers are earnest and fervent, and all their actions are not the actions of a worldly family, but of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious!

One thing more. A Church is really worth nothing at all if it does not try to extend itself. And a Church in a house is no true Church if it is satisfied without endeavoring to bring in every member of the family. If you have half a dozen converted, but there are seven of you, never leave off praying till you have the seventh! And if, in God’s mercy, He has given you ten out of eleven, there are ten reasons why you should be in earnest for the conversion of the eleventh. Plead with the Master till your little Church shall have swallowed up the whole of your congregation! A happy day will it be for us when the Church in the Tabernacle fills every pew, but you may come at your results sooner than we can come at ours. May the day soon come when the Church in your house shall include every person in the family, not one being left out! What a happy world it would be if there were such a Church in every house! It would be Heaven begun below! The angels might then mistake earth for Heaven and linger so long that they would need to be recalled to Paradise, making the mistake that they were already in Paradise! Oh, may we live to see the day when walking down a street in London, we shall hear, at the appointed hour in every house, the song of praise and know that no door will be locked for the night till first the Lord has been asked to keep watch and ward over the slumbering household!

II. Having thus described a Church in a house, I propose what I cannot often accomplish among you, though I wish I could, and that is TO PAY YOU A PASTORAL VISIT.

I am going to knock at your door, take a chair and sit down, and ask you a few simple questions. The first is, Have you a Church in your house? “No,” says one, “I am the only converted one in the house.” Ah, dear Friend, I can understand the difficulty of your position, but I can also rejoice in the hopefulness of your being there, trusting that it is a token for good to the house! Now that the Lord has sent one spark of fire there, may there soon be a flame! “Well,” says another, “we have several Christians in our house, but I cannot say that there is a Church here.” I like your honesty, my Friend, but may I tell you what I suspect is the reason why there are so many houses that have Christians in them, but no Churches? It often is because those Christians are inconsistent. Why, if some of you were not professors of religion, you would be very decent sort of people—but being professors, the way in which you act and speak is detestable! You may think this strong language, but I know it is true. There are some families where the father, instead of exhibiting the gentleness and kindness of a Christian, well-near scares the children from the very thought of godliness! There are some households where the wife is a gadding busybody, whose slovenliness and dirt might well disgust her husband at the very thought of going to the House of Prayer. There are some children professing godliness who have not yet learned the Commandment which tells them to obey their parents! And there are some professedly Christian servants who are eye-servers, not remembering what Paul has said to such. One of the worst evils we have to deal with, as Christians, is the evil of inconsistency at home! Whenever I see a professed Christian walking among his household as though he were a tyrant, letting no one come near him, without affection or kindness and simply a domineering master, I ask—Where is the Grace of God in that man? And I ask the same question with respect to other faults. O Beloved, do make your households happy! You cannot make them holy if you do not shine with genial cheerfulness. And you Christian people in households, do seek to act so that you may not be a disgrace to your profession, but may form a true Church in the house where you dwell together.

While I thus speak, perhaps you will say that I am exposing too much of that domestic economy over which you judge it convenient to drop a veil. It is my duty to tell you the truth plainly, so listen to it attentively. “Well,” someone says, “I thank God that I have a Church in my house.” Then I thank God, too, and we will together praise and bless Him for His great mercy. But I must now ask you, Who are the members? “Well, there is Father.” Oh, I am so glad, because your father has so much to do with the management and if he who holds the reins cannot drive, there will be some mistakes. I am glad your father is converted. “Ah!” says one, “but my father is not converted.” Then, I am sorry. O Father, I beseech you, let your child’s prayer come into your ears as well as into God’s ears! You will be a curse to your family if you are not a blessing! And I know you do not want to be a bane to your offspring. But with some of you, the father is converted and the mother is converted, too. I am glad of that, because parents—and mothers in particular—have a sweet influence on the family and the little ones. Well, then, let us see. Is John converted? Is the eldest son yet made a partaker of Divine Grace? “Yes.” Oh, then that is a mercy, because elder brothers have so much to do, by their example, in inclining younger brothers rightly or wrongly. And Emily—is she converted? That is a happy thing, if it is so, for she, also, will have a great influence for good upon the younger ones. Now where does it stop? I hope it does not stop at the servants—are they converted? Happy is the master who has Christian servants! And I speak experimentally when I say this. It is a great comfort to you to have those about you who really do fear God.

Yes, but we must not forget any who are in the household. I must ask you, Who are they who are not converted? The very little ones, of course, are too young to understand, so we will leave them in the hands of a Covenant God and plead with Him for them. But are there not some who can understand, but who are not yet converted? “Ah,” says the mother, “do not ask me about that,” and she brushes away a tear. And the father says, “It is a painful subject.” Yes, it is a painful subject, but we must mention it, because some of them are here tonight. You would not willfully give your parents pain, young man, would you? I know your desire is to comfort them and there can be no greater joy to them than to know that their children are walking in the Truth of God. And among the servants, there is the nursemaid—is she brought in? And there is the kitchen-boy—do not leave him out! A Church in a house is not complete till it comprises everybody in the house, from the dishwasher up to the master. Yes, and if there is a friend staying there, the Church is not complete till the friend is also converted. Now, I cannot expect you all to answer me, but I still hope that you will do it quietly to yourselves. How many members are there in the Church in your house? Who are members and who are not?

Then, by your leave, I shall ask you another question, and that is, As you have a Church consisting of so many members, what are you doing for Christ? It is no use having a Church that is not doing anything. As a family, are you seeking to extend the bounds of Messiah’s Kingdom within your own sphere? Dr. Guthrie advocates Territorial Missions and a very admirable scheme it is to advocate. And I give him all honor for it, but I will tonight take the liberty of advocating Home Missions. I do not mean missions that have to do with anything outside, but missions to the kitchen, the parlor, the drawing-room and every room up to the attic—missions in which every single one in the family shall be concerned. I hope that, as a Church in the house, you will not have a neglected district in the house. Some of you go out tract-distributing— begin at home! Some of you preach—begin to preach at home. Hard work that, because those to whom you preach know how you practice! If you cannot preach at home because your practice runs counter to your preaching, do not preach at all—for a man has no right to talk and instruct others it he cannot, at least in some measure, live out what he teaches!

III. Before leaving, however, I venture to GIVE A LITTLE ADVICE AS TO THE WAY OF HAVING A CHURCH IN A HOUSE.  
It must be brought about, of course, by Divine Grace. The Holy Spirit is the great Agent, but still He uses means. You young woman—yes, you—you are thinking about being engaged to that young man. You are a professed Christian, but he is a worldling. Now, do you ever expect to have a Church in your house at that rate? And may I ask you—do you know what you are doing? I see some of you are smiling. Well, you may smile as much as you can now, for you will never have much smiling after, I can tell you that! If you want to wither your happiness forever, you have only to go and be yoked with an unbeliever. I have known some Christian women who have forgotten the Divine precept and have been married to ungodly men. And I have seen godly men married to ungodly women. And mark this—my experience has not been very long, but it has been very wide—I never knew any good come of it. I have always seen misery as the result and in nine cases out of ten, backsliding has followed—often final, too—proving that the person committing that sin had no Grace at all! We do not often talk about these things when we are preaching, but we ought to talk about them a great deal more than we do. I do beseech you, young Christian people, if you hope to have God’s blessing, take care that you do not get “unequally yoked with unbelievers.”  
Then, supposing the house is already started, I have this advice to give. If you want to bring in others of the family who are not converted, make them happy. There are a great many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there are a great many more persons brought to God by love than there are by pitiless declamations. “The love of Christ constrains,” not only after we are saved, but it is often the constraining means of bringing us to be saved. Let us imitate Puritan theology in its soundness and Puritan living in its holiness, but not in its gloom—if, indeed, it was gloomy, which I very much question. Let the Christian family be the most cheerful household anywhere! And if I might venture on the advice, let me say, never make Sunday doleful and sad. Some people do. Why, I think Sunday should be to the household the bright day of the week—the day when the father is at home—the day when the mother is not at work—the day when John comes home to spend a few hours—the day when they all go to the House of God and sing— *“I have been there, and still would go  
‘Tis like a little Heaven below.”*  
Oh, make your households to be like flower gardens—plant no thorns and root out all ill weeds of discontent! Depend upon it, household happiness is a great means of promoting household holiness!  
And let me entreat you, dear Friends, to be much in prayer for those who are not converted. “Yes,” says the mother, “my unconverted boy is gone away from home.” Well, but your prayers can follow him! See the

case of Philemon and Onesimus. [See Sermon #1268, Volume 21—THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Onesimus had run away with some of his master’s money, but his master sent his prayers after him and, by-andby, there came a sheriff’s officer to arrest him—not one of Caesar’s officers, but one of God’s. It was the Apostle Paul who, in the preaching of the Word of God, arrested the runaway servant and he went back to his master saved! How do you know but that your son will come home converted? How do you know, Mother, but that you will yet see your daughter rejoicing in Christ? Never cease praying for them till the breath is out of their bodies, but continue in supplication till they are brought into the Church in your house!

But O you Christians who wish to make a Church in your house, do not let your own inconsistencies mar any good work in others! Above all, do not have any disagreements among yourselves. Talk not in such a way that good impressions, once happily made, become wretchedly marred. I have heard of a wife walking home with her husband from a place of worship. He was an ungodly man. She had often prayed for him and he went with her to hear the sermon. She had been praying that he might be blessed and yet, in walking home, she was foolish enough to begin criticizing the sermon. She asked him how he liked it and he made no answer. She began pulling it to pieces, till at last he stopped her and said, “My dear wife, you have often prayed to God that I might be blessed. God has blessed that sermon to me this morning and I cannot bear to hear you speak of it as you have been speaking.” I know this is a fault with many Christians—not that we ministers care at all what you say about us, except for the evil you often do in spoiling to others that which does not happen to suit your fastidious taste, for you may in that way be doing the devil’s work.

IV. The last thing I want to say to you is this. LOOK ONWARDS A MINUTE.  
When Halyburton lay a-dying, he said, among other joyous expressions, “I bless God that I have a father in Heaven! I bless God that I have a mother in Heaven! I bless God that I have ten brothers and sisters in Heaven! I am the last of the family and I shall be in Heaven within an hour!” This was a glorious thought! What a happy meeting theirs would be! Spirits “are neither married nor given in marriage,” nor are social ties respected there, but still, I cannot conceive of Halyburton’s family but as making up a constellation like the Pleiades, all meekly and gently shining together to the praise of God!  
I saw in a house, the other day, a very singular picture of the Resurrection. It was supposed to represent the resurrection of a Christian family. The artist was not very imaginative, but still he had done it pretty well. The big stone that covered the tomb was just broken in halves and you saw coming up at the top some of the little ones, those latest buried. There were three or four of them stretching their wings upwards. Of course, this represented as much the resurrection of the soul as of the body in the artist’s mind, it was rather a complicated metaphor. Then there were the father and mother, and a number of grandchildren—and I was glad to see that there were the grandfather and grandmother, both coming up from one tomb, and going up together to the Throne of God. I only hope that, though some of us may be buried in distant lands and—  
*“Our graves are scattered far and wide,  
By fount, and stream, and sea”—*  
yet, practically, we may rise together when the last trumpet sounds, an unbroken family!  
I may be excused, perhaps, for referring to God’s singular mercy to my own household. What a blessing it is to my father and mother now that they can rejoice in six of their children walking in the Truth of God who have given themselves up to the Lord Jesus! The Lord has been graciously pleased to bring them in, one by one, and all who have now reached years of discretion, so as to be able to understand the Gospel, have believed in Jesus Christ! And in generations that have gone by, my grandfather could say the same, and his father could say the same of his house! We have been a race of those whom God has blessed. May it be your privilege, also, beloved members of this Church! I cannot wish you a greater blessing. If I knew how to bestow the greatest blessing upon you, I think my knowledge would not amount to more than this, that, being yourselves saved, you might have all your families walking in the Truth of God and, speaking after the manner of men, why should it not be the case with you? Prayer, earnest and mighty prayer, gets no denial from the Throne of God!—  
*“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,”*  
and claims its fulfillment, “for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” God’s eternal purpose stands fast and fixed, we know, but when He moves His people’s hearts to pray, He intends to bless. We will be more earnest in praying for one another than we have been. We will be more earnest in praying about our children than we have been. And may God grant us Grace so that we may, all of us, be able to say that we have a Church in our house! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”—this is the foundation of the Church and they who have believed are members of Christ’s Church and so see His face in the midst of the one family in Heaven and earth, which is named by Him as “the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.” God grant that, of this Church, both we and ours may all be members!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PHILEMON.**

Verse 1. Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. This is one of Paul’s private letters, though it has the stamp of Inspiration upon it. It was not written concerning Church business, nor to teach some great doctrinal Truth of God, but there was a runaway slave who had come to Rome and who had been converted under Paul’s ministry. Paul was sending him back to his master—and this was the letter which he was to take with him, to make some sort of apology for him and to ask his master to receive him with kindness and to forgive his fault. Every word of this Epistle is very wisely put. Paul begins by calling himself “a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Who would not grant him his desire when he was wearing a chain for Christ’s sake? If a letter were to come to you from some beloved minister whom you knew to be lying in a dungeon and likely soon to die, you would be greatly touched if you noticed the traces of the rust of his chains on the letter. “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ.”

1, 2. And Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the Church in your house. He joins Timothy with himself to give double weight to the message. Probably Timothy was well known to Philemon and much respected by him, so he puts Timothy’s name that there might be two to plead with him. Then, notice the loving titles with which Paul addresses Philemon—“our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer.” Probably the person whom Paul called, “beloved Apphia” was Philemon’s wife, so he writes to her, also, for perhaps the wife was the more tenderhearted of the two, so she might put in a good word for Onesimus—and her husband would all the more readily grant Paul’s request. He also mentions Archippus, who was either the pastor of the Church at Colosse, or an Evangelist who stayed occasionally at the house of Philemon. So he mentions him with all the rest of the household who met there for worship and so made up the Church in the house.

3-7. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of your faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love because the hearts of the saints are refreshed by you, Brother. Paul recalls how much Philemon had done in the comforting of persecuted and poor saints. And when you are about to ask a favor of anyone, it is well to show your gratitude for what you or others have already received from him.

8, 9. Therefore though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin you that which is convenient, yet for love’s sake I rather beseech you, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now, also, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He says in effect, “I am an Apostle and I am your spiritual father, so I might have spoken with authority to you and have said, ‘It is your duty to do this.’ But I am not going to do anything of the kind. I am going to plead with you and beseech it of you as a kindness and a favor. Pay a loving tribute to my old age and, besides that, I am a prisoner shut up in the dungeon for Christ’s sake—hear the clanking of my chains, and grant my request for love’s sake.’”

10. I beseech you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. “He came to hear me preach in the prison. He has been listening to me while I am still a captive and he has been given to me, as another son in the Gospel, to be a comfort to me in my bonds. I beseech you for him.”

11, 12. Which in time past was to you unprofitable, but now profitable to you and to me: whom I have sent again. “He was your slave, and therefore I have sent him back to you.”

12. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart. “Look upon him as though he were my very heart and receive him as you would receive me if I could go to you.”

13, 14. Whom I would have retained with me, that in your place he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the Gospel: but without your permission would I do nothing; that your benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. “I would have kept him,” says Paul, “for I need someone to be my companion, to comfort me in my distress. But I would not do it without asking your permission, lest I should seem to take advantage of you. Though I know that you would willingly consent to it, yet, nevertheless, that it might be perfectly voluntary on your part, I have sent him back to you, that you may do as you will with him.”

15-17. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that you should receive him forever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a beloved Brother, especially to me, but how much more unto you, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If you count me therefore a partner. “If you have true fellowship and communion with me”—

17. Receive him as myself. How beautifully this is put all through! It very much reminds me of our Lord Jesus Christ, who seems to say to the Divine Father, “This poor child is in fellowship with Me. Receive him, therefore, as Myself.” And this is just what God does in the case of repenting and believing sinners—He receives them just as if He could see Christ in them.

18. If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on my account. How generously this is put by this poor prisoner at Rome and how gloriously, in this, he is like our Master who stands as Surety for us!

19. I, Paul, have written it with my own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to you how you owe unto me even your own self besides. Paul had been the means of Philemon’s conversion, so he was immeasurably in debt to the Apostle. But Paul only gently reminds him of the fact as a reason why he should deal kindly with Onesimus for his sake.

20. Yes, Brother, let me have joy of you in the Lord: refresh my heart in the Lord. “You have refreshed others, then, surely, you will not now let me be without refreshment! You have been very kind to all sorts of saints, then you cannot be unkind to the man who is your own spiritual father.”

21. Having confidence in your obedience I wrote unto you, knowing that you will do more than I say. This is delicately yet forcibly put, and we feel certain that Philemon must have done as Paul wished, even though we have no record of the fact.

22-25. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. There salute you Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1268 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE

NO. 1268

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

**“Perhaps he therefore departed for a season,  
that you should receive him forever.”***Phm 1:15***.**

NATURE is selfish but Grace is loving. He who boasts that he cares for nobody and nobody cares for him, is the reverse of a Christian, for Jesus Christ enlarges the heart when He cleanses it. None so tender and sympathetic as our Master and if we are truly His disciples, the same mind will be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul was eminently large-hearted and sympathetic. Surely he had enough to do at Rome to bear his own troubles and to preach the Gospel. If, like the priest in the parable of the good Samaritan, he had, “passed by on the other side,” he might have been excused, for he was on the urgent business of that Master who once said to His 70 messengers, “Salute no man by the way.”

We might not have wondered if Paul had said, “I cannot find time to attend to the needs of a runaway slave.” But Paul was not of that mind. He had been preaching and Onesimus had been converted—and from now on he regarded him as his own son. I do not know why Onesimus came to Paul. Perhaps he went to him as a great many scapegraces have come to me—because their fathers knew me. And so, as Onesimus’ master had known Paul, the servant applied to his master’s friend, perhaps to beg some little help in his extremity. Anyway, Paul seized the opportunity and preached Jesus to him and the runaway slave became a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul watched him, admired the character of his convert and was glad to be served by him. And when Paul thought it right that he should return to his master, Philemon, he took a deal of trouble to compose a letter of apology for him, a letter which shows long thinking, since every word is well selected. Although the Holy Spirit dictated it, Inspiration does not prevent a man’s exercising thought and care on what he writes. Every word is chosen for a purpose. If he had been pleading for himself, he could not have pleaded more earnestly or wisely. Paul, as you know, was not accustomed to write letters with his own hand, but dictated to a secretary.

It is supposed that he had an affection of the eyes and, therefore, when he did write, he used large capital letters, as he says in one of the Epistles, “You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand.” The Epistle was not a large one, but he probably alluded to the largeness of the characters which he was obliged to use whenever he, himself, wrote. This letter to Philemon, at least part of it, was not dictated, but was written by his own hand. See the 19th verse. “I, Paul, have written it with my own hand. I will repay it.” It is the only note of hand which I recall in Scripture, but there it is—an I O U for whatever amount Onesimus

may have stolen!  
Let us cultivate a large-hearted spirit and sympathize with the people of  
God, especially with new converts, if we find them in trouble through past  
wrongdoing. If anything needs setting right, do not let us condemn them  
off-hand and say, “You have been stealing from your master, have you?  
You profess to be converted, but we do not believe it.” Such suspicious  
and severe treatment may be deserved, but it is not such as the love of  
Christ would suggest. Try and set the fallen ones right and give them  
again, as we say, “a fair start in the world.” If God has forgiven them,  
surely we may, and if Jesus Christ has received them, they cannot be too  
bad for us to receive! Let us do for them what Jesus would have done had  
He been here—so shall we truly be the disciples of Jesus.  
Thus I introduce to you the text, and I notice concerning it, first, that it  
contains a singular instance of Divine Grace. Secondly, it brings before us  
a case of sin overruled. And, thirdly, it may be regarded as an example of  
relationship improved by Grace, for now he that was a servant for a season  
will abide with Philemon all his lifetime and be no more a servant, but a  
beloved Brother in Christ.  
I. But, first, let us look at Onesimus as AN INSTANCE OF DIVINE  
GRACE. We see the Grace of God in his election. He was a slave. In those  
days slaves were very ignorant, untaught and degraded. Being barbarously used, they were for the most part, themselves sunk in the lowest  
barbarism. Neither did their masters attempt to raise them out of it. It is  
possible that Philemon’s attempt to do good to Onesimus may have been  
irksome to the man and he may, therefore, have fled from his house. His  
master’s prayers, warnings and Christian regulations may have been disagreeable to him and therefore he ran away.  
He wronged his master, which he would scarcely have done if he had  
not been treated as a confidential servant to some extent. Possibly the  
unusual kindness of Philemon and the trust reposed in him may have  
been too much for his untrained nature. We know not what he stole, but  
evidently he had taken something, for the Apostle says, “If he has wronged  
you, or owes you anything, put that on my account.” He ran away from  
Colosse, therefore, and thinking that he would be less likely to be discovered by the ministers of justice, he sought the city of Rome which was,  
then, as large as the city of London is now, and perhaps larger. There, in those back slums, such as the Jews’ quarter in Rome now is,  
Onesimus would go and hide. Or among those gangs of thieves which infested the imperial city, he would not be known or heard of any more, so  
he thought—and he could live the free and easy life of a thief. Yet, mark  
you, the Lord looked out of Heaven with an eye of love and set that eye on  
Onesimus! Were there no free men, that God must elect a slave? Were  
there no faithful servants, that He must choose one who had embezzled  
his master’s money? Were there none of the educated and polite, that He  
must look upon a barbarian? Were there none among the moral and the  
excellent that Infinite Love should fix itself upon this degraded being who  
was now mixed up with the very scum of society?  
And what the scum of society was in old Rome I should not like to  
think, for the upper classes were about as brutalized in their general habits as we can very well conceive! What the lowest scum of all must have  
been, none of us can tell. Onesimus was part and parcel of the dregs of a  
sink of sin. Read Paul’s first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, if you  
can, and you will see in what a horrible state the heathen world was, at  
that time. And Onesimus was among the worst of the worst! And yet Eternal Love, which passed by kings and princes and left Pharisees and Sadducees, philosophers and magi to stumble in the dark as they chose, fixed  
its eyes upon this poor benighted creature that he might be made a vessel  
to honor, fit for the Master’s use!—  
*“When the Eternal bows the skies  
To visit earthly things,  
With scorn Divine He turns His eyes  
From towers of haughty kings.  
He bids His awful chariot roll  
Far downward from the skies,  
To visit every humble soul,  
With pleasure in His eyes.  
Why should the Lord that reigns above  
Disdain so lofty kings?  
Say, Lord, and why such looks of love  
Upon such worthless things?  
Mortals are dumb; what creature dares  
Dispute His awful will?  
Ask no account of His affairs,  
But tremble and be still.  
Just like His nature is His Grace,  
All sovereign, and all free  
Great God, how searchless are Your ways  
How deep your judgments be!”*  
“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion  
on whom I will have compassion,” rolls like thunder from the Cross of  
Calvary and from the Mount of Sinai. The Lord is Sovereign and does as  
He pleases. Let us admire that marvelous electing love which selected  
such a one as Onesimus!  
Grace, also, is to be observed, in the next place, in the conversion of  
this runaway slave. Look at him! How unlikely he appears to become a  
convert. He is an Asiatic slave of about the same grade as an ordinary  
Lascar, or heathen Chinese. He was, however, worse than the ordinary  
Lascar who is certainly free and probably an honest man, if he is nothing  
else. This man had been dishonest and he was daring, for after taking his  
master’s property he was bold enough to make a long journey from Colosse to reach Rome. But Everlasting Love means to convert the man—and  
converted he shall be!  
He may have heard Paul preach at Colosse and Athens, but yet he had  
not been impressed. In Rome, Paul was not preaching in St. Peter’s—it  
was in no such noble building! Paul was not preaching in a place like the  
Tabernacle, where Onesimus could have a comfortable seat—no such  
place as that—but it was probably down there at the back of the Palatine  
Hill, where the praetorian guard have their lodgings and where there was  
a prison called the Praetorian. In a bare room in the barrack prison Paul sat with a soldier chained to his hand, preaching to all who were admitted to hear him—and there it was that the Grace of God reached the heart of this wild young man, and, oh, what an immediate change it made in  
him!  
Now you see him repenting of his sin, grieved to think he has wronged  
a good man, vexed to see the depravity of his heart as well as the error of  
his life. He weeps. Paul preaches to him Christ crucified and the glance of  
joy is in his eye—and from that heavy heart a load is taken! New thoughts  
light up that dark mind! The very face is changed and the entire man renewed, for the Grace of God can turn a lion into a lamb, the raven into a  
dove! Some of us, I have no doubt, are quite as wonderful instances of Divine election and effectual calling as Onesimus was. Let us, therefore, record the lovingkindness of the Lord and let us say to ourselves, “Christ  
shall have the glory of it. The Lord has done it and unto the Lord be  
honor, world without end.”  
The Grace of God was conspicuous in the character which it worked in  
Onesimus upon his conversion, for he appears to have been helpful, useful and profitable. So Paul says. Paul was willing to have had him as an  
associate and it is not every man that is converted that we should altogether choose as a companion. There are odd people to be met with who  
will go to Heaven, we have no doubt, for they are pilgrims on the right  
way. But we would like to keep on the other side of the road, for they are  
cross-grained and there is a something about them that one’s nature can  
no more delight in than the palate can take pleasure in nauseous medicine. They are a sort of spiritual hedgehogs—they are alive and useful  
and, no doubt, they illustrate the wisdom and patience of God—but they  
are not good companions. One would not like to carry them in his bosom. But Onesimus was evidently of a kind, tender, loving spirit. Paul at  
once called him Brother and would have liked to retain him. When he sent  
him back, was it not a clear proof of a change of heart in Onesimus that  
he would go back? Away as he was in Rome, he might have passed on  
from one town to another and have remained perfectly free. But feeling  
that he was under some kind of bond to his master—especially since he  
had injured him—he takes Paul’s advice to return to his old position. He  
will go back and take a letter of apology or introduction to his master, for  
he knows that it is his duty to make reparation for the wrong that he has  
done.  
I always like to see a resolve to make restitution of former wrongs in  
people who profess to be converted. If they have taken any money wrongfully, they ought to repay it. It were well if they returned sevenfold. If we  
have, in any way, robbed or wronged another, I think the first instincts of  
Grace in the heart will suggest compensation in all ways within our  
power. Do not think it is to be got over by saying, “God has forgiven me  
and, therefore, I may leave it.” No, dear Friend, but inasmuch as God has  
forgiven you, try to undo all the wrong and prove the sincerity of your repentance by so doing.  
So Onesimus will go back to Philemon and work out his term of years  
with him, or otherwise do Philemon’s wishes, for though he might have  
preferred to wait upon Paul, his first duty was due to the man whom he had injured. That showed a gentle, humble, honest, upright spirit and let Onesimus be commended for it—no, let the Grace of God be extolled for it! Look at the difference between the man who robbed and the man who now comes back to be profitable to his master. What wonders the Grace of God has done! Brethren, let me add—what wonders the Grace of God can do! Many plans are employed in the world for the reformation of the wicked and the reclaiming of the fallen—and to every one of these, as far as they are rightly bottomed, we wish good success—for whatever things are lovely  
and pure, and of good report, we wish them God speed.  
But mark this word—the true reforming of the drunk lies in giving him  
a new heart! The true reclaiming of the harlot is to be found in a renewed  
nature! Purity will never come to fallen women by those hideous Contagious Diseases Acts, which, to my mind, wear, like Cain, a curse upon  
their forehead! Womanhood will but sink lower under such laws. The harlot must be washed in the Savior’s blood or she will never be clean! The  
lowest strata of society will never be brought into the light of virtue, sobriety and purity except by Jesus Christ and His Gospel—and we must stick  
to that. Let all others do what they like, but God forbid that I should glory  
save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
I see certain of my Brethren fiddling away at the branches of the tree of  
vice with their wooden saws, but, as for the Gospel, it lays the axe at the  
roots of the whole forest of evil! And if it is fairly received into the heart it  
fells all the upas trees at once—and instead of them, there spring up the  
fir tree, the pine tree and the box tree together—to beautify the house of  
our Master’s Glory! Let us, when we see what the Spirit of God can do for  
men, publish the Grace of God and extol it with all our might! II. And now, secondly, we have in our text and its connections, a very  
interesting INSTANCE OF SIN OVERRULED. Onesimus had no right to  
rob his master and run away. But God was pleased to make use of that  
crime for his conversion. It brought him to Rome and so brought him  
where Paul was preaching—and thus it brought him to Christ and to his  
right mind. Now, when we speak of this, we must be cautious. When Paul  
says, “Perhaps he departed for a season, that you should receive him forever,” he does not excuse his departure. He does not make it out that  
Onesimus did right—not for a moment! Sin is sin, and, whatever sin may  
be overruled to do, yet sin is still sin!  
The crucifixion of our Savior has brought the greatest conceivable  
blessings upon mankind, yet, none the less, it was “with wicked hands”  
that they took Jesus and crucified Him. The selling of Joseph into Egypt  
was the means in the hand of God for the preservation of Jacob and his  
sons in the time of famine. But his brothers had nothing to do with that  
and they were, none the less, guilty for having sold their brother for a  
slave. Let it always be remembered that the faultiness or virtue of an act  
is not contingent upon the result of that act.  
If, for instance, a man who has been set on a railway to turn the switch  
forgets to do it, you call it a very great crime if the train comes to mischief  
and a dozen people are killed. Yes, but the crime is the same if nobody is  
killed. It is not the result of the carelessness, but the carelessness, itself,  
which deserves punishment. If it were the man’s duty to turn the switch in such-and-such a way, and his not doing so should even by some strange accident turn to the saving of life, the man would be equally blameworthy. There would be no credit due to him, for if his duty lies in a certain line his fault also lies in a certain line, namely, the neglecting of  
that duty.  
So if God overrules sin for good, as He sometimes does, it is none the  
less sin. It is sin just as much as ever, only there is so much the more  
glory to the wonderful wisdom and Grace of God who, out of evil, brings  
forth good and so does what only Omnipotent Wisdom can perform. Onesimus is not excused, then, for having embezzled his master’s goods nor  
for having left him without permission—he still is a transgressor—but  
God’s Grace is glorified. Remember, too, that this must be noticed—that  
when Onesimus left his master, he was performing an action, the results  
of which, in all probability, would have been ruinous to him. He was living as a trusted dependent beneath the roof of a kind master  
who had a Church in his house. If I read the Epistle rightly, he had a  
godly mistress and a godly master and he had an opportunity of learning  
the Gospel continually. But this reckless young blade, very likely, could  
not bear it and could have lived more contentedly with a heathen master,  
who would have beaten him one day and made him drunk another! The  
Christian master he could not bear, so away he went. He threw away the  
opportunities of salvation and he went to Rome. And he must have gone  
into the lowest part of the city and associated, as I have already told you,  
with the very grossest company.  
Now, had it come to pass that he had joined in the insurrections of the  
slaves which took place frequently about that time, as he in all probability  
would have done had not Grace prevented, he would have been put to  
death as others had been. He would have had a short stay in Rome. I half  
suspect a month and off with his head as was the rule towards slaves and  
vagabonds. Onesimus was just the very man that would have been likely  
to be hurried to death and to eternal destruction. He had put his head, as  
it were, between the lion’s jaws by what he had done. When a young man  
suddenly leaves home and goes to London, we know what it means. When  
his friends do not know where he is, and he does not want them to know,  
we are aware, within a little while, where he is and what he is up to. What Onesimus was doing, I do not know, but he was certainly doing  
his best to ruin himself. His course, therefore, is to be judged, as far as he  
is concerned, by what it was likely to bring him to—and though it did not  
bring him to it, that was no credit to him—all the honor of it is due to the  
overruling power of God! See, dear Brothers and Sisters, how God overruled all. Thus had the Lord purposed. Nobody shall be able to touch the  
heart of Onesimus but Paul. Onesimus is living at Colosse. Paul cannot  
come there, he is in prison. It is necessary, then, that Onesimus should  
go to Paul. Suppose the kindness of Philemon’s heart had prompted him  
to say to Onesimus, “I want you to go to Rome and find Paul out and hear  
him”?  
This evil servant would have said, “I am not going to risk my life to hear  
a sermon. If I go with the money you are sending to Paul, or with the letter, I shall deliver it, but I want none of his preaching.” Sometimes, you know, when people are brought to hear a preacher with the view of their being converted, if they have any idea of it, it is about the very last thing likely to happen, because they go there resolved to be fireproof. And so the preaching does not come home to them—and it would probably have been just so with Onesimus. No, no, he was not to be won in that way! He must  
go to Rome another way. How shall it be done?  
Well, the devil shall do it, not knowing that he will be losing a willing  
servant thereby! The devil tempts Onesimus to steal. Onesimus does it  
and when he has stolen he is afraid of being discovered and so he makes  
tracks for Rome as quickly as he can! And he gets down among the back  
slums and there he feels what the prodigal felt—a hungry belly—and that  
is one of the best preachers in the world to some people! Their conscience  
is reached in that way. Being very hungry, not knowing what to do and no  
man giving anything to him, he thinks whether there is anybody in Rome  
that would take pity on him.  
He does not know anybody in Rome at all and is likely to starve. Perhaps one morning there was a Christian woman—I should not wonder—  
who was going to hear Paul and she saw this poor man sitting crouched  
up on the steps of a temple. Perhaps she went to him and spoke about his  
soul. “Soul?” said he, “I care

nothing about that, but my body would  
thank you for something to eat. I am starving.” She replied, “Come with  
me, then,” and she gave him bread and then she said, “I do this for Jesus  
Christ’s sake.” “Jesus Christ!” he said, “I have heard of Him. I used to  
hear of Him over at Colosse.” “Whom did you hear speak about Him?” the  
woman would ask. “Why, a short man with weak eyes. A great preacher  
named Paul, who used to come to my master’s house.” “Why, I am going  
to hear him preach,” the woman would say, “will you come and hear him  
with me?” “Well, I think I should like to hear him again. He always had a  
kind word to say to the poor.” So he goes in and pushes his way among  
the soldiers. And Paul’s Master incites Paul to speak the right words. It may have been so, or it may have been the other way—that not  
knowing anybody else at all, he thought, “Well, there is Paul, I know. He is  
here a prisoner and I will go down and see what prison he is in.” He goes  
down to the Praetorian and finds him there, tells him of his extreme poverty and Paul talks to him. And then he confesses the wrong he has done  
and Paul, after teaching him a little while, says, “Now, you must go back  
and make amends to your master for the wrong you have done.” It may  
have been either of these ways, but, at any rate, the Lord must have Onesimus in Rome to hear Paul. And the sin of Onesimus, though perfectly  
voluntary on his part, so that God had no hand in it, is yet overruled by a  
mysterious Providence to bring him where the Gospel shall be blessed to  
his soul.  
Now, I want to speak to some of you Christian people about this matter.  
Have you a son who has left home? Is he a willful, wayward young man  
who has gone away because he could not bear the restraints of a Christian family? It is a sad thing it should be so—a very sad thing—but do not  
despond or even have a thought of despair about him! You do not know  
where he is, but God does! And you cannot follow him, but the Spirit of  
God can! He is going on a voyage to Shanghai. Ah, there may be a Paul at Shanghai who is to be the means of his salvation! And as that Paul is not in England, your son must go there. Is it to Australia that he is going? There may be a word spoken there, by the blessing of God, to your son  
which is the only word which ever will reach him!  
I cannot speak it. Nobody in London can speak it. But the man there,  
will, and God, therefore, is letting him go away in all his willfulness and  
folly that he may be brought under the means of Grace which will prove  
effectual to his salvation. Many a sailor boy has been wild, reckless, godless, Christless and at last has got into a foreign hospital. Ah, if his  
mother knew that he was down with the yellow fever, how sad her mind  
would be, for she would conclude that her dear son will die away at Havana or somewhere, and never come home again. But it is just in that  
hospital that God means to meet with him!  
A sailor writes to me something like that. He says, “My mother asked  
me to read a chapter every day, but I never did. I got into the hospital at  
Havana, and, when I lay there, there was a man near to me who was dying. And he died one night, but before he died, he said to me, ‘Mate, could  
you come here? I want to speak to you. I have got something that is very  
precious to me here. I was a wild fellow, but reading this packet of sermons has brought me to the Savior, and I am dying with a good hope  
through Grace. Now, when I am dead and gone, will you take these sermons and read them? And may God bless them to you. And will you write  
a letter to the man that preached and printed those sermons, to tell him  
that God blessed them to my conversion and that I hope he will bless  
them to yourself’?”  
It was a packet of my sermons, and God did bless them to that young  
man who, I have no doubt whatever, went to that hospital because there a  
man who had been brought to Christ would hand to him the words which  
God had blessed to himself and would bless to his friend! You do not  
know, dear Mother, you do not know. The worst thing that can happen to  
a young man is sometimes the best thing that can happen to him! I have  
sometimes thought, when I have seen young men of position and wealth  
taking to racing and all sorts of dissipation, “Well, it is a dreadfully bad  
thing, but they may as well get through their money as quickly as ever  
they can, and then when they have got down to begging they will be like  
the young gentleman in the parable who left his father.”  
When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and  
he began to be in need, and he said, “I will arise and go to my father.”  
Perhaps the disease that follows vice—perhaps the poverty that comes like  
an armed man after extravagance and debauchery—is but love in another  
form, sent to compel the sinner to come to himself and consider his ways  
and seek an ever merciful God! You Christian people often see the little  
gutter children—the poor little Arabs in the street—and you feel much pity  
for them, as well you may. There is a dear Sister here, Miss Annie  
MacPherson, who lives only for them. God bless her and her work! When  
you see them you cannot be glad to see them as they are, but I have often  
thought that the poverty and hunger of one of these poor little children  
has a louder voice to most hearts than their vice and ignorance! And God knew that we were not ready and able to hear the cry of the child’s sin, so  
He added the child’s hunger to that cry, that it might pierce our hearts. People could live in sin and yet be happy, if they were well-to-do and  
rich. And if sin did not make parents poor and wretched, and their children miserable, we should not see it and, therefore, we should not awaken  
ourselves to grapple with it. It is a blessing, you know, in some diseases,  
when the patient can throw the complaint out upon the skin. It is a horrible thing to see it on the skin, but still it is better than its being hidden  
inside. Oftentimes the outward sin and the outward misery are a sort of  
throwing out of the disease so that the eyes of those who know where the  
healing medicine is to be had is thereby drawn to the disease—and so the  
soul’s secret malady is dealt with.  
Onesimus might have stayed at home and he might never have been a  
thief! But he might have been lost through self-righteousness. But now  
his sin is visible. The scapegrace has displayed the depravity of his heart  
and now it is that he comes under Paul’s eyes and Paul’s prayers and becomes converted! Do not, I pray you, ever despair of man or woman or  
child because you see their sin upon the surface of their character. On the  
contrary, say to yourself, “This is placed where I can see it, that I may  
pray about it. It is thrown out under my eyes that I may now concern myself to bring this poor soul to Jesus Christ, the mighty Savior who can  
save the most forlorn sinner.”  
Look at it in the light of earnest, active benevolence and awaken yourselves to conquer it! Our duty is to hope on and to pray on. It may be,  
perhaps, that, “he therefore departed for a season, that you should receive  
him forever.” Perhaps the boy has been so wayward that his sin may come  
to a crisis and a new heart may be given him. Perhaps your daughter’s  
evil has been developed that now the Lord may convince her of sin and  
bring her to the Savior’s feet. At any rate, if the case is ever so bad, hope  
in God and pray on!  
III. Once more. Our text may be viewed as AN EXAMPLE OF RELATIONS IMPROVED. “He therefore departed for a season, that you should  
receive him forever.” “Not now as a servant, but a Brother beloved, specially to one, but how much more unto you?” You know we are a long while  
learning great truths. Perhaps Philemon had not quite found out that it  
was wrong for him to have a slave. Some men who were very good in their  
time did not know it. John Newton did not know that he was flying wrong  
in the slave trade and George Whitfield, when he left slaves to the orphanage at Savannah, which had been willed to him, did not think, for a moment, that he was doing anything more than if he had been dealing with  
horses, or gold and silver.  
Public sentiment was not enlightened, although the Gospel has always  
struck at the very root of slavery. The essence of the Gospel is that we are  
to do to others as we would that others should do to us—and nobody  
would wish to be another man’s slave—and therefore he has no right to  
have another man as his slave. Perhaps, when Onesimus ran away and  
came back again, this letter of Paul may have opened Philemon’s eyes a  
little as to his own position. Maybe he began to doubt that he was a good  
master. He had trusted his servant and not treated him as a slave at all, but perhaps he had not regarded him as a brother. And now Onesimus has come back. He will be a better servant, but Philemon will be a better master and a slave-holder no longer. He will regard his former servant as  
a Brother in Christ.  
Now, this is what the Grace of God does when it comes into a family. It  
does not alter the relations. It does not give the child a right to be pert and  
forget that he is to be obedient to his parents. It does not give the father a  
right to lord it over his children without wisdom and love, for it tells him  
that he is not to provoke his children to anger, lest they be discouraged. It  
does not give the servant the right to be a master, neither does it take  
away from the master his position, or allow him to exaggerate his authority—but all round it softens and sweetens.  
Rowland Hill used to say that he would not give a halfpenny for a man’s  
piety if his dog and his cat were not better off after he was converted.  
There was much weight in that remark. Everything in the house goes better when Grace oils the wheels. The mistress is, perhaps, rather sharp,  
quick, tart—well, she gets a little sugar into her constitution when she receives the Grace of God! The servant may be apt to loiter, be late up in the  
morning, very slovenly, fond of a gossip at the door. But if she is truly  
converted, all that kind of thing ends. She is conscientious and attends to  
her duty as she ought. The master, perhaps—well, he is the master and  
you know it. But when he is a truly Christian man—he has a gentleness,  
a suavity, a considerateness about him.  
The husband is the head of the wife, but when renewed by Grace he is  
not at all the head of the wife as some husbands are. The wife also keeps  
her place and seeks, by all gentleness and wisdom to make the house as  
happy as she can. I do not believe in your religion, dear Friend, if it belongs to the Tabernacle and the Prayer Meeting, but not to your home.  
The best religion in the world is that which smiles at the table, works at  
the sewing machine, and is amiable in the drawing-room. Give me the religion which blacks boots and does them well, cooks the food and cooks it  
so that it can be eaten! Measures out yards of calico and does not make  
them half-an-inch short! Sells a hundred yards of an article and does not  
label 90 a hundred, as many trades people do!  
That is the true Christianity which affects the whole of life! If we are  
truly Christians we shall be changed in all our relationships to our fellow  
men and, therefore, we shall regard those whom we call our inferiors with  
quite a different eye. It is wrong in Christian people when they are so  
sharp upon little faults that they see in servants, especially if they are  
Christian servants. That is not the way to correct them. They see a little  
something wrong and, oh, they are down upon the poor girls as if they  
had murdered somebody! If your Master, and mine, were to treat us in  
that style I wonder how we would get on? How quick some are in discharging their maids for small faults! No excuse, no trying the persons  
again—they must go.  
Many a young man has been turned out of a situation for the littlest trifle, by a Christian employer, when he must have known that he would be  
exposed to all sorts of risks. And many a servant has been sent adrift as if  
she were a dog, with no sort of thought whether another position could be found, and without anything being done to prevent her going astray. Do let us think of others, especially of those whom Christ loves even as He does us. Philemon might have said, “No, no, I won’t take you back, Mr. Onesimus, not I. Once bitten, twice shy, Sir. I never ride a horse with broken knees. You stole my money! I am not going to have you back again.” I have heard that style of talk, have not you? Did you ever feel like it? If you have, go home and pray to God to get such a feeling out of you, for it is  
bad stuff to have in your soul! You cannot take it to Heaven. When the Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven you so freely, are you to take  
your servant by the throat and say, “Pay me what you owe?” God forbid  
that we should continue in such a temper! Be pitiful, easily entreated,  
ready to forgive. It is a deal better that you should suffer a wrong than do  
a wrong—much better that you should overlook a fault which you might  
have noticed, than notice a fault which you ought to have overlooked— *“Let love through all your actions run,  
And all your words be kind,”*  
is said in the little hymn which we used to learn when we were children.  
We should practice it now, and—  
*“Live like the blessed virgin’s Son  
That meek and lowly Child.”*  
God grant we may, of His infinite Grace! I want to say this, and then I  
have done. If the mysterious Providence of God was to be seen in Onesimus getting to Rome, I wonder whether there is any Providence of God  
in some of you being here tonight? It is possible. Such things do happen.  
People come here that never meant to come. The last thing in the world  
they would have believed, if anybody had said it, is that they would be  
here, yet here they are.  
With all manner of lyrists and turns they have gone about, but they  
have got here somehow. Did you miss a train, and so stepped in to wait?  
Did not your ship sail quite so soon as you expected, and so are you here  
tonight? Say, is that it? I do pray you, then, consider this question with  
your heart. “Does not God mean to bless me? Has He not brought me  
here, on purpose, that this night I may yield my heart to Jesus as Onesimus did?” My dear Friend, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you  
shall have immediate pardon for all sin and shall be saved! The Lord has  
brought you here in His infinite wisdom to hear that, and I hope that He  
has also brought you here that you may accept it and so go your way altogether changed.  
Some three years ago I was talking with an aged minister, and he began  
fumbling about in his waistcoat pocket, but he was a long while before he  
found what he wanted. At last he brought out a letter that was well near  
worn to pieces, and he said, “God Almighty bless you! God Almighty bless  
you!” And I said, “Friend, what is it?” He said, “I had a son. I thought he  
would be the stay of my old age, but he disgraced himself and he went  
away from me, and I could not tell where he went, only he said he was going to America. He took a ticket to sail for America from the London  
Docks, but he did not go on the particular day that he expected.” This aged minister bade me read the letter, and I read it, and it was like  
this—“Father, I am here in America. I have found a situation and God has prospered me. I write to ask your forgiveness for the thousand wrongs that I have done you and the grief I have caused you, for blessed be God, I have found the Savior! I have joined the Church of God here, and hope to spend my life in God’s service. It happened thus: I did not sail for America the day I expected. I went down to the Tabernacle to see what it was like, and God met with me. Mr. Spurgeon said, ‘Perhaps there is a runaway son here. The Lord call him by His Grace.’ And he did. “Now,” said he, as he folded up the letter and put it in his pocket, “that son of mine is dead and he is in Heaven, and I love you, and I shall do so as long as I live, be  
cause you were the means of bringing him to Christ.”  
Is there a similar character here tonight? I feel persuaded there is—  
somebody of the same sort—and in the name of God I charge him to take  
the warning that I give him from this pulpit! I dare you to go out of this  
place as you came in! Oh, young man, the Lord in mercy gives you another opportunity of turning from the error of your ways, and I pray you  
now, here—as you now are—lift your eyes to Heaven, and say, “God be  
merciful to me a sinner,” and He will be so. Then go home to your father  
and tell him what the Grace or God has done for you—and wonder at the  
love which brought you here to bring you to Christ!  
Dear Friend, if there is nothing mysterious about it, yet here we are. We  
are where the Gospel is preached and that brings responsibility upon us.  
If a man is lost, it is better for him to be lost without hearing the Gospel  
than to be lost as some of you will be if you perish under the sound of a  
clear, earnest enunciation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! How long have  
some of you been between two opinions? “Have I been so long time with  
you,” says Christ, “and yet have you not known Me?” All this teaching and  
preaching and invitations—and yet do you not turn?—  
*“O God, You the sinner turn,  
Convince him of his lost estate.  
Let him linger no longer,  
Lest he linger till he rue his  
Fatal choice too late.”*  
God bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Philemon.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—231, 248. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.

÷Phm 1.2

A PASTORAL VISIT

NO. 3103

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1908.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “The Church in your house.”  
***Phm 1:2***.

SOME interpreters have supposed that a small congregation met for worship in a room in Philemon’s house and there is a tradition that such was the case for some considerable time. The Churches established by Paul were, at their commencement, for the most part small. Obliged—for the sake of peace and to avoid persecution—to meet in out of-the-way places where they were not likely to be seen by foes, the retired house of some well-known friend, perhaps that of the minister, if it had a room conveniently large, would be the natural place for Believers to gather together in those early Churches. Philemon, therefore, might literally have had a Church in his house and a congregation might have gathered there. It strikes me that there would be a great deal of good done if persons who have large rooms in their houses would endeavor to get together little congregations. There are many, even of our poorer friends, who live in neighborhoods of London destitute of the means of Grace, who might promote a great blessing if they occasionally opened their houses for a Prayer Meeting or religious assembly. We need no consecrated places for the worship of God—

*“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,  
And every place is hallowed ground.”*

Certainly our text does not give any countenance to the calling of certain buildings “Churches.” Buildings for worship, whether erected by Episcopalians or Dissenters, are frequently called “Churches.” If I ask for “the church” in any town, I am forthwith directed to an edifice, probably with a spire or a steeple, which the inhabitants call “the church.” Why, they might as well point me to a signpost when I asked for a man—a building cannot be a Church! A Church is an assembly of faithful men and it cannot be anything else. I cannot see how such a piece of architecture as we now call “a church” could very well have been in Philemon’s house—it must have been a large house if it had such a thing in it for an ornament. The fact is, it is a misnomer, a misuse of language, and we must mind that we do not get into it. For my own part, I like the good old-fashioned name of “Meeting House” as well as any. It is a place where the people of God meet and although “Meeting House” does not sound very smart, nor fine, nor fashionable—and that is everything, nowadays, with many people—yet it is far better than misusing language as it is misused when bricks, stones and mortar receive a tittle belonging exclusively to godly men and women!

However, it appears that Philemon had a Church in his house—a Church largely, if not exclusively, composed of his own family. He was privileged to possess a godly wife—the beloved Apphia—their sons and daughters walked in their parents’ footsteps. And their servants and even their visitor, Archippus, were members of this Church which was in the house of Philemon.

I. Now let me attempt to describe A CHURCH IN A HOUSE, meaning, all the while, to be asking you WHETHER YOU HAVE A CHURCH IN YOUR HOUSE.

A Church, according to the New Testament, consists of converted persons, or persons who profess to be converted. No visible Church is absolutely pure. A Church must be taken upon its own profession, consisting as it does of persons who avow themselves to be followers of and Believers in Christ, having been converted from darkness to light by the Spirit of God. Well, then, I see, in a family where there is a Church, a godly father and a godly mother rejoicing over converted sons and daughters—and glad and able to entrust their household affairs to Christian servants. It cannot be a Church, whatever profession may be made, unless there is the Grace of God there. It may be nominally such, but it cannot be really so. A family is not born a Church and the little ones born into the family are not born into the Church. They must be born-again before they can be members of the Church—there must have been the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the members of the family before they can form a Church in the house.

But it strikes me that a number of converted people are not necessarily a Church. In order to form a Church, they must worship together. Happy is the household which meets every morning for prayer! Happy are they who let not the evening depart without uniting in supplication! Brothers and Sisters, I wish it were more common—I wish it were universal, with all professors of religion—to have family prayer! We sometimes hear of the children of Christian parents who do not grow up in the fear of God and we are asked how it is that they turn out so badly. In many, very many cases, I fear there is such a neglect of family worship that it is not probable that the children are at all impressed by any piety supposed to be possessed by their parents! Family prayer in our old Puritan households was a matter of very great importance. Let me tell you what Philip Henry used to do. He was a minister and of course had more time to give to it than many of you in business have. But he went through the whole Bible in course, expounding it, chapter by chapter, and accompanying it by prayer and singing. One reason he gave for singing was that it was like Rahab’s tying the crimson line in the window—everyone who went by would know what she had done—and he said that the sound of singing at family prayers was a distinct confession that that family loved and worshipped God! He called his children together on Thursdays and catechized them upon the General Assembly’s Catechism and upon the lessons through which they had gone during the week.

Perhaps you will think that this was very dreary work, but what will you say when I tell you that that good man’s son, Mr. Matthew Henry, wrote his famous Commentary from the notes which he took of his father’s expositions at morning and evening prayers? Young lads do not take notes of dreary things, you may depend upon it! Catch them at that, if you can. We do not find our boys taking down heavy sermons, but they have no objection to putting down anything which strikes and interests them. That family of Mr. Henry, to which I have referred, was so well ordered that very often visitors to the house who were unconverted when they went there, were converted during their visit! Now I do not suppose that you could, all of you, expound the Scriptures like that! And you could not all, perhaps, sing. But I do think we might, all of us, manage to come together once a day at least—twice, if possible—for the worship of God in the household. Remember what Matthew Henry says—“They who pray in the family, do well. They who read and pray, do better. But they who sing, and read, and pray, do best of all.” If we want to bring up a godly family who shall be a seed to serve God when our heads are under the clods of the valley, let us seek to train them up in the fear of God by meeting together as a family for worship. I do not see how there can be a Church without worship—and I do not see how there can be a Church in a house unless there is constant worship in the family.

But there must be something more than this before there can be a Church. A Church is not merely a company of people meeting for worship—there must be some bond of unity. A load of bricks is not a house—the bricks must be fitly framed and cemented together—and then they grow into a house. So a Church is fitly framed together and grows into a holy temple for the Lord. Now, dear Friends, there must be a knitting of hearts among Christians in families. Of course, they will love each other from the ties of the flesh, but they should also love each other from the higher ties of the Spirit. There is no reason why, without breaking through any of the gradations that must necessarily exist in society, there should not be a bond of unity taking in the whole family— master, mistress, children and servants. In the olden times, in the days of such men as Abraham, the servants were a part of the family. Nowadays, people change their servants once a month and there are some servants who stay too long even then! But it strikes me that good masters and good mistresses make good servants—and where love and kindness are shown, it will not always, nor often, be the case that the servants will be a social evil. Instead of that, they will be a great benefit. And a wise, prudent, Christian servant becomes as much a part of the household as even a child. To make a Church, there must be a feeling of union. I should like to see the clan-feeling in our families in which every servant would stand up for the master’s honor, and everyone would seek the good of the entire family—and even when the children were grown up and scattered, it would be well to see them still duly respecting the ties of Christian kindred and seeking to promote the good and the unity of the whole.

And to make a Church, there must be oversight. A Church is not a complete Church without a pastor, its elders and its deacons. A Church in the house will have its elders. There need not be any election of these because they are already elected. The parents will naturally take the oversight of the little Church that is in the house. If you want a pastor, the father should be the priest in his own house. He is the most fitting teacher, expounder and example. Then who are to be your deacons? Why, those who have to go out to the factory, when the bell rings in the morning, and who help to provide food for the household! And there is another we must not forget—that gentle one who goes so noiselessly about the house to see after her husband and children, and who produces a thousand happy thoughts by that kind way of hers. Sometimes the oversight of the household will fall to the lot of the eldest son, or daughter, but sometimes some long-abiding servant, some old housekeeper virtually becomes the presiding genius. There must be oversight and God sometimes graciously sends to families those who are more advanced in spiritual things who become, as it were, the officers of the Church in the house.

A Church in the house must, of course, be furnished with instruction. One of the first reasons why there is a Church at all is to teach the members. We are formed into Churches for mutual edification. Ah, dear Friends, how much youthful piety receives edification in those households where the parents set a godly example! Wonderful is the influence of the mother upon her son. You recollect the case of the mighty Byron, who seems to have been a sort of fallen angel who flew across the sky like a thunderbolt from a Satanic hand. What was his mother? Why, a very passionate woman who frequently threw the tongs at her own son in her passion! Of course she had a wild and passionate son. Look, on the other hand, at the meek and gentle bard of Olney, pouring forth notes that were almost fit for Heaven. What sort of mother had Cowper? You know her character well, as her son has described it in

the lines beginning— *“Oh, that those lips had language!”*  
Let Christian parents, forming a Church in their house, look to the formation of the character of their children, especially their converted children—and let them not overlook their converted servants! With an ardent and a longing desire, strive to build them up in the faith and help them to grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. You Christian fathers ought to take care, as far as your means allow, to provide your children with instructive books. I do not mean dull books, but good, interesting books, at once instructive and attractive, that may teach them the way of God more perfectly. Whenever you have the opportunity, let drop a word which will strike the child’s attention and remain in its heart. Just as I, as a preacher, would never miss an opportunity of saying anything here which I met with in the week, and which I thought you ought to hear, so let the Christian father be studying each day how he may instruct the Church in his house in the fear of the Lord more perfectly!

I think I have now described the Church so far as its organization is concerned, but I cannot very well describe it all. You must go and live in the midst of such a Church to understand thoroughly what it is like. Mr. Talkative, in “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” was a very fine fellow abroad and had a great deal to say about religion. But what was he at home? Ah, nothing could be said of him there worth the hearing! Where there is a Church in the house, every member strives to increase the other’s comfort, all seek to promote each other’s holiness, each one endeavors to discharge his duty according to the position in which he is placed in that Church. And when they meet together, their prayers are earnest and fervent, and all their actions are not the actions of a worldly family, but of those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious!

One thing more. A Church is really worth nothing at all if it does not try to extend itself. And a Church in a house is no true Church if it is satisfied without endeavoring to bring in every member of the family. If you have half a dozen converted, but there are seven of you, never leave off praying till you have the seventh! And if, in God’s mercy, He has given you ten out of eleven, there are ten reasons why you should be in earnest for the conversion of the eleventh. Plead with the Master till your little Church shall have swallowed up the whole of your congregation! A happy day will it be for us when the Church in the Tabernacle fills every pew, but you may come at your results sooner than we can come at ours. May the day soon come when the Church in your house shall include every person in the family, not one being left out! What a happy world it would be if there were such a Church in every house! It would be Heaven begun below! The angels might then mistake earth for Heaven and linger so long that they would need to be recalled to Paradise, making the mistake that they were already in Paradise! Oh, may we live to see the day when walking down a street in London, we shall hear, at the appointed hour in every house, the song of praise and know that no door will be locked for the night till first the Lord has been asked to keep watch and ward over the slumbering household!

II. Having thus described a Church in a house, I propose what I cannot often accomplish among you, though I wish I could, and that is TO PAY YOU A PASTORAL VISIT.

I am going to knock at your door, take a chair and sit down, and ask you a few simple questions. The first is, Have you a Church in your house? “No,” says one, “I am the only converted one in the house.” Ah, dear Friend, I can understand the difficulty of your position, but I can also rejoice in the hopefulness of your being there, trusting that it is a token for good to the house! Now that the Lord has sent one spark of fire there, may there soon be a flame! “Well,” says another, “we have several Christians in our house, but I cannot say that there is a Church here.” I like your honesty, my Friend, but may I tell you what I suspect is the reason why there are so many houses that have Christians in them, but no Churches? It often is because those Christians are inconsistent. Why, if some of you were not professors of religion, you would be very decent sort of people—but being professors, the way in which you act and speak is detestable! You may think this strong language, but I know it is true. There are some families where the father, instead of exhibiting the gentleness and kindness of a Christian, well-near scares the children from the very thought of godliness! There are some households where the wife is a gadding busybody, whose slovenliness and dirt might well disgust her husband at the very thought of going to the House of Prayer. There are some children professing godliness who have not yet learned the Commandment which tells them to obey their parents! And there are some professedly Christian servants who are eye-servers, not remembering what Paul has said to such. One of the worst evils we have to deal with, as Christians, is the evil of inconsistency at home! Whenever I see a professed Christian walking among his household as though he were a tyrant, letting no one come near him, without affection or kindness and simply a domineering master, I ask—Where is the Grace of God in that man? And I ask the same question with respect to other faults. O Beloved, do make your households happy! You cannot make them holy if you do not shine with genial cheerfulness. And you Christian people in households, do seek to act so that you may not be a disgrace to your profession, but may form a true Church in the house where you dwell together.

While I thus speak, perhaps you will say that I am exposing too much of that domestic economy over which you judge it convenient to drop a veil. It is my duty to tell you the truth plainly, so listen to it attentively. “Well,” someone says, “I thank God that I have a Church in my house.” Then I thank God, too, and we will together praise and bless Him for His great mercy. But I must now ask you, Who are the members? “Well, there is Father.” Oh, I am so glad, because your father has so much to do with the management and if he who holds the reins cannot drive, there will be some mistakes. I am glad your father is converted. “Ah!” says one, “but my father is not converted.” Then, I am sorry. O Father, I beseech you, let your child’s prayer come into your ears as well as into God’s ears! You will be a curse to your family if you are not a blessing! And I know you do not want to be a bane to your offspring. But with some of you, the father is converted and the mother is converted, too. I am glad of that, because parents—and mothers in particular—have a sweet influence on the family and the little ones. Well, then, let us see. Is John converted? Is the eldest son yet made a partaker of Divine Grace? “Yes.” Oh, then that is a mercy, because elder brothers have so much to do, by their example, in inclining younger brothers rightly or wrongly. And Emily—is she converted? That is a happy thing, if it is so, for she, also, will have a great influence for good upon the younger ones. Now where does it stop? I hope it does not stop at the servants—are they converted? Happy is the master who has Christian servants! And I speak experimentally when I say this. It is a great comfort to you to have those about you who really do fear God.

Yes, but we must not forget any who are in the household. I must ask you, Who are they who are not converted? The very little ones, of course, are too young to understand, so we will leave them in the hands of a Covenant God and plead with Him for them. But are there not some who can understand, but who are not yet converted? “Ah,” says the mother, “do not ask me about that,” and she brushes away a tear. And the father says, “It is a painful subject.” Yes, it is a painful subject, but we must mention it, because some of them are here tonight. You would not willfully give your parents pain, young man, would you? I know your desire is to comfort them and there can be no greater joy to them than to know that their children are walking in the Truth of God. And among the servants, there is the nursemaid—is she brought in? And there is the kitchen-boy—do not leave him out! A Church in a house is not complete till it comprises everybody in the house, from the dishwasher up to the master. Yes, and if there is a friend staying there, the Church is not complete till the friend is also converted. Now, I cannot expect you all to answer me, but I still hope that you will do it quietly to yourselves. How many members are there in the Church in your house? Who are members and who are not?

Then, by your leave, I shall ask you another question, and that is, As you have a Church consisting of so many members, what are you doing for Christ? It is no use having a Church that is not doing anything. As a family, are you seeking to extend the bounds of Messiah’s Kingdom within your own sphere? Dr. Guthrie advocates Territorial Missions and a very admirable scheme it is to advocate. And I give him all honor for it, but I will tonight take the liberty of advocating Home Missions. I do not mean missions that have to do with anything outside, but missions to the kitchen, the parlor, the drawing-room and every room up to the attic—missions in which every single one in the family shall be concerned. I hope that, as a Church in the house, you will not have a neglected district in the house. Some of you go out tract-distributing— begin at home! Some of you preach—begin to preach at home. Hard work that, because those to whom you preach know how you practice! If you cannot preach at home because your practice runs counter to your preaching, do not preach at all—for a man has no right to talk and instruct others it he cannot, at least in some measure, live out what he teaches!

III. Before leaving, however, I venture to GIVE A LITTLE ADVICE AS TO THE WAY OF HAVING A CHURCH IN A HOUSE.  
It must be brought about, of course, by Divine Grace. The Holy Spirit is the great Agent, but still He uses means. You young woman—yes, you—you are thinking about being engaged to that young man. You are a professed Christian, but he is a worldling. Now, do you ever expect to have a Church in your house at that rate? And may I ask you—do you know what you are doing? I see some of you are smiling. Well, you may smile as much as you can now, for you will never have much smiling after, I can tell you that! If you want to wither your happiness forever, you have only to go and be yoked with an unbeliever. I have known some Christian women who have forgotten the Divine precept and have been married to ungodly men. And I have seen godly men married to ungodly women. And mark this—my experience has not been very long, but it has been very wide—I never knew any good come of it. I have always seen misery as the result and in nine cases out of ten, backsliding has followed—often final, too—proving that the person committing that sin had no Grace at all! We do not often talk about these things when we are preaching, but we ought to talk about them a great deal more than we do. I do beseech you, young Christian people, if you hope to have God’s blessing, take care that you do not get “unequally yoked with unbelievers.”  
Then, supposing the house is already started, I have this advice to give. If you want to bring in others of the family who are not converted, make them happy. There are a great many more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there are a great many more persons brought to God by love than there are by pitiless declamations. “The love of Christ constrains,” not only after we are saved, but it is often the constraining means of bringing us to be saved. Let us imitate Puritan theology in its soundness and Puritan living in its holiness, but not in its gloom—if, indeed, it was gloomy, which I very much question. Let the Christian family be the most cheerful household anywhere! And if I might venture on the advice, let me say, never make Sunday doleful and sad. Some people do. Why, I think Sunday should be to the household the bright day of the week—the day when the father is at home—the day when the mother is not at work—the day when John comes home to spend a few hours—the day when they all go to the House of God and sing— *“I have been there, and still would go  
‘Tis like a little Heaven below.”*  
Oh, make your households to be like flower gardens—plant no thorns and root out all ill weeds of discontent! Depend upon it, household happiness is a great means of promoting household holiness!  
And let me entreat you, dear Friends, to be much in prayer for those who are not converted. “Yes,” says the mother, “my unconverted boy is gone away from home.” Well, but your prayers can follow him! See the

case of Philemon and Onesimus. [See Sermon #1268, Volume 21—THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Onesimus had run away with some of his master’s money, but his master sent his prayers after him and, by-andby, there came a sheriff’s officer to arrest him—not one of Caesar’s officers, but one of God’s. It was the Apostle Paul who, in the preaching of the Word of God, arrested the runaway servant and he went back to his master saved! How do you know but that your son will come home converted? How do you know, Mother, but that you will yet see your daughter rejoicing in Christ? Never cease praying for them till the breath is out of their bodies, but continue in supplication till they are brought into the Church in your house!

But O you Christians who wish to make a Church in your house, do not let your own inconsistencies mar any good work in others! Above all, do not have any disagreements among yourselves. Talk not in such a way that good impressions, once happily made, become wretchedly marred. I have heard of a wife walking home with her husband from a place of worship. He was an ungodly man. She had often prayed for him and he went with her to hear the sermon. She had been praying that he might be blessed and yet, in walking home, she was foolish enough to begin criticizing the sermon. She asked him how he liked it and he made no answer. She began pulling it to pieces, till at last he stopped her and said, “My dear wife, you have often prayed to God that I might be blessed. God has blessed that sermon to me this morning and I cannot bear to hear you speak of it as you have been speaking.” I know this is a fault with many Christians—not that we ministers care at all what you say about us, except for the evil you often do in spoiling to others that which does not happen to suit your fastidious taste, for you may in that way be doing the devil’s work.

IV. The last thing I want to say to you is this. LOOK ONWARDS A MINUTE.  
When Halyburton lay a-dying, he said, among other joyous expressions, “I bless God that I have a father in Heaven! I bless God that I have a mother in Heaven! I bless God that I have ten brothers and sisters in Heaven! I am the last of the family and I shall be in Heaven within an hour!” This was a glorious thought! What a happy meeting theirs would be! Spirits “are neither married nor given in marriage,” nor are social ties respected there, but still, I cannot conceive of Halyburton’s family but as making up a constellation like the Pleiades, all meekly and gently shining together to the praise of God!  
I saw in a house, the other day, a very singular picture of the Resurrection. It was supposed to represent the resurrection of a Christian family. The artist was not very imaginative, but still he had done it pretty well. The big stone that covered the tomb was just broken in halves and you saw coming up at the top some of the little ones, those latest buried. There were three or four of them stretching their wings upwards. Of course, this represented as much the resurrection of the soul as of the body in the artist’s mind, it was rather a complicated metaphor. Then there were the father and mother, and a number of grandchildren—and I was glad to see that there were the grandfather and grandmother, both coming up from one tomb, and going up together to the Throne of God. I only hope that, though some of us may be buried in distant lands and—  
*“Our graves are scattered far and wide,  
By fount, and stream, and sea”—*  
yet, practically, we may rise together when the last trumpet sounds, an unbroken family!  
I may be excused, perhaps, for referring to God’s singular mercy to my own household. What a blessing it is to my father and mother now that they can rejoice in six of their children walking in the Truth of God who have given themselves up to the Lord Jesus! The Lord has been graciously pleased to bring them in, one by one, and all who have now reached years of discretion, so as to be able to understand the Gospel, have believed in Jesus Christ! And in generations that have gone by, my grandfather could say the same, and his father could say the same of his house! We have been a race of those whom God has blessed. May it be your privilege, also, beloved members of this Church! I cannot wish you a greater blessing. If I knew how to bestow the greatest blessing upon you, I think my knowledge would not amount to more than this, that, being yourselves saved, you might have all your families walking in the Truth of God and, speaking after the manner of men, why should it not be the case with you? Prayer, earnest and mighty prayer, gets no denial from the Throne of God!—  
*“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,”*  
and claims its fulfillment, “for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” God’s eternal purpose stands fast and fixed, we know, but when He moves His people’s hearts to pray, He intends to bless. We will be more earnest in praying for one another than we have been. We will be more earnest in praying about our children than we have been. And may God grant us Grace so that we may, all of us, be able to say that we have a Church in our house! “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”—this is the foundation of the Church and they who have believed are members of Christ’s Church and so see His face in the midst of the one family in Heaven and earth, which is named by Him as “the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.” God grant that, of this Church, both we and ours may all be members!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PHILEMON.**

Verse 1. Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. This is one of Paul’s private letters, though it has the stamp of Inspiration upon it. It was not written concerning Church business, nor to teach some great doctrinal Truth of God, but there was a runaway slave who had come to Rome and who had been converted under Paul’s ministry. Paul was sending him back to his master—and this was the letter which he was to take with him, to make some sort of apology for him and to ask his master to receive him with kindness and to forgive his fault. Every word of this Epistle is very wisely put. Paul begins by calling himself “a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” Who would not grant him his desire when he was wearing a chain for Christ’s sake? If a letter were to come to you from some beloved minister whom you knew to be lying in a dungeon and likely soon to die, you would be greatly touched if you noticed the traces of the rust of his chains on the letter. “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ.”

1, 2. And Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the Church in your house. He joins Timothy with himself to give double weight to the message. Probably Timothy was well known to Philemon and much respected by him, so he puts Timothy’s name that there might be two to plead with him. Then, notice the loving titles with which Paul addresses Philemon—“our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer.” Probably the person whom Paul called, “beloved Apphia” was Philemon’s wife, so he writes to her, also, for perhaps the wife was the more tenderhearted of the two, so she might put in a good word for Onesimus—and her husband would all the more readily grant Paul’s request. He also mentions Archippus, who was either the pastor of the Church at Colosse, or an Evangelist who stayed occasionally at the house of Philemon. So he mentions him with all the rest of the household who met there for worship and so made up the Church in the house.

3-7. Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of your faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love because the hearts of the saints are refreshed by you, Brother. Paul recalls how much Philemon had done in the comforting of persecuted and poor saints. And when you are about to ask a favor of anyone, it is well to show your gratitude for what you or others have already received from him.

8, 9. Therefore though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin you that which is convenient, yet for love’s sake I rather beseech you, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now, also, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He says in effect, “I am an Apostle and I am your spiritual father, so I might have spoken with authority to you and have said, ‘It is your duty to do this.’ But I am not going to do anything of the kind. I am going to plead with you and beseech it of you as a kindness and a favor. Pay a loving tribute to my old age and, besides that, I am a prisoner shut up in the dungeon for Christ’s sake—hear the clanking of my chains, and grant my request for love’s sake.’”

10. I beseech you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. “He came to hear me preach in the prison. He has been listening to me while I am still a captive and he has been given to me, as another son in the Gospel, to be a comfort to me in my bonds. I beseech you for him.”

11, 12. Which in time past was to you unprofitable, but now profitable to you and to me: whom I have sent again. “He was your slave, and therefore I have sent him back to you.”

12. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart. “Look upon him as though he were my very heart and receive him as you would receive me if I could go to you.”

13, 14. Whom I would have retained with me, that in your place he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the Gospel: but without your permission would I do nothing; that your benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. “I would have kept him,” says Paul, “for I need someone to be my companion, to comfort me in my distress. But I would not do it without asking your permission, lest I should seem to take advantage of you. Though I know that you would willingly consent to it, yet, nevertheless, that it might be perfectly voluntary on your part, I have sent him back to you, that you may do as you will with him.”

15-17. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that you should receive him forever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a beloved Brother, especially to me, but how much more unto you, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If you count me therefore a partner. “If you have true fellowship and communion with me”—

17. Receive him as myself. How beautifully this is put all through! It very much reminds me of our Lord Jesus Christ, who seems to say to the Divine Father, “This poor child is in fellowship with Me. Receive him, therefore, as Myself.” And this is just what God does in the case of repenting and believing sinners—He receives them just as if He could see Christ in them.

18. If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on my account. How generously this is put by this poor prisoner at Rome and how gloriously, in this, he is like our Master who stands as Surety for us!

19. I, Paul, have written it with my own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to you how you owe unto me even your own self besides. Paul had been the means of Philemon’s conversion, so he was immeasurably in debt to the Apostle. But Paul only gently reminds him of the fact as a reason why he should deal kindly with Onesimus for his sake.

20. Yes, Brother, let me have joy of you in the Lord: refresh my heart in the Lord. “You have refreshed others, then, surely, you will not now let me be without refreshment! You have been very kind to all sorts of saints, then you cannot be unkind to the man who is your own spiritual father.”

21. Having confidence in your obedience I wrote unto you, knowing that you will do more than I say. This is delicately yet forcibly put, and we feel certain that Philemon must have done as Paul wished, even though we have no record of the fact.

22-25. But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you. There salute you Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1268 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

÷Phm 1.15

THE STORY OF A RUNAWAY SLAVE

NO. 1268

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,*

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Perhaps he therefore departed for a season,*

*that you should receive him forever."*

**Phm 1:15***.*

NATURE **is selfish but Grace is loving. He who boasts that he cares for nobody and nobody cares for him, is the reverse of a Christian, for Jesus Christ enlarges the heart when He cleanses it. None so tender and sympathetic as our Master and if we are truly His disciples, the same mind will be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul was eminently large-hearted and sympathetic. Surely he had enough to do at Rome to bear his own troubles and to preach the Gospel. If, like the priest in the parable of the good Samaritan, he had, "passed by on the other side," he might have been excused, for he was on the urgent business of that Master who once said to His 70 messengers, "Salute no man by the way."**

**We might not have wondered if Paul had said, "I cannot find time to attend to the needs of a runaway slave." But Paul was not of that mind. He had been preaching and Onesimus had been converted—and from now on he regarded him as his own son. I do not know why Onesimus came to Paul. Perhaps he went to him as a great many scapegraces have come to me—because their fathers knew me. And so, as Onesimus' master had known Paul, the servant applied to his master's friend, perhaps to beg some little help in his extremity. Anyway, Paul seized the opportunity and preached Jesus to him and the runaway slave became a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!**

**Paul watched him, admired the character of his convert and was glad to be served by him. And when Paul thought it right that he should return to his master, Philemon, he took a deal of trouble to compose a letter of apology for him, a letter which shows long thinking, since every word is well selected. Although the Holy Spirit dictated it, Inspiration does not prevent a man's exercising thought and care on what he writes. Every word is chosen for a purpose. If he had been pleading for himself, he could not have pleaded more earnestly or wisely. Paul, as you know, was not accustomed to write letters with his own hand, but dictated to a secretary.**

It is supposed that he had an affection of the eyes and, therefore, when he did write, he used large capital letters, as he says in one of the Epistles, "You see how large a letter I have written unto you with my own hand." The Epistle was not a large one, but he probably alluded to the largeness of the characters which he was obliged to use whenever he, himself, wrote. This letter to Philemon, at least part of it, was not dictated, but was written by his own hand. See the 19**th verse. "I, Paul, have written it with my own hand. I will repay it." It is the only note of hand which I recall in Scripture, but there it is—an I O U for whatever amount Onesimus may have stolen!**

Let us cultivate a large-hearted spirit and sympathize with the people of God, especially with new converts, if we find them in trouble through past wrongdoing. If anything needs setting right, do not let us condemn them off-hand and say, "You have been stealing from your master, have you? You profess to be converted, but we do not believe it." Such suspicious and severe treatment may be deserved, but it is not such as the love of Christ would suggest. Try and set the fallen ones right and give them again, as we say, "a fair start in the world." If God has forgiven them, surely ***we* may, and if Jesus Christ has received them, they cannot be too bad for us to receive! Let us do for them what Jesus would have done had He been here—so shall we truly be the disciples of Jesus.**

**Thus I introduce to you the text, and I notice concerning it, first, that it contains *a singular instance of Divine Grace*. Secondly, it brings before us *a case of sin overruled*. And, thirdly, it may be regarded as *an example of relationship improved by Grace*, for now he that was a servant for a season will abide with Philemon all his lifetime and be no more a servant, but a beloved Brother in Christ.**

I. **But, first, let us look at Onesimus as** ANINSTANCEOFDIVINEGRACE**. We see the Grace of God in his *election*. He was a slave. In those days slaves were very ignorant, untaught and degraded. Being barbarously used, they were for the most part, themselves sunk in the lowest barbarism. Neither did their masters attempt to raise them out of it. It is possible that Philemon's attempt to do good to Onesimus may have been irksome to the man and he may, therefore, have fled from his house. His master's prayers, warnings and Christian regulations may have been disagreeable to him and therefore he ran away.**

**He wronged his master, which he would scarcely have done if he had not been treated as a confidential servant to some extent. Possibly the unusual kindness of Philemon and the trust reposed in him may have been too much for his untrained nature. We know not what he stole, but evidently he had taken *something*, for the Apostle says, "If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on my account." He ran away from Colosse, therefore, and thinking that he would be less likely to be discovered by the ministers of justice, he sought the city of Rome which was, then, as large as the city of London is now, and perhaps larger.**

**There, in those back slums, such as the Jews' quarter in Rome now is, Onesimus would go and hide. Or among those gangs of thieves which infested the imperial city, he would not be known or heard of any more, so he thought—and he could live the free and easy life of a thief. Yet, mark you, the Lord looked out of Heaven with an eye of love and set that eye on Onesimus! Were there no *free men*, that God must elect a *slave*? Were there no faithful servants, that He must choose one who had embezzled his master's money? Were there none of the educated and polite, that He must look upon a barbarian? Were there none among the moral and the excellent that Infinite Love should fix itself upon this degraded being who was now mixed up with the very scum of society? And what the scum of society was in old Rome I should not like to think, for the upper classes were about as brutalized in their general habits as we can very well conceive! What the lowest scum of all must have been, none of us can tell. Onesimus was part and parcel of the dregs of a sink of sin. Read Paul's first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, if you can, and you will see in what a horrible state the heathen world was, at that time. And Onesimus was among the worst of the worst! And yet Eternal Love, which passed by kings and princes and left Pharisees and Sadducees, philosophers and magi to stumble in the dark as they chose, fixed its eyes upon this poor benighted creature that he might be made a vessel to honor, fit for the Master's use!—**

*"When the Eternal bows the skies To visit earthly things, With scorn Divine He turns His eyes From towers of haughty kings. He bids His awful chariot roll Far downward from the skies, To visit every humble soul, With pleasure in His eyes. Why should the Lord that reigns above Disdain so lofty kings? Say, Lord, and why such looks of love Upon such worthless things? Mortals are dumb; what creature dares Dispute His awful will? Ask no account of His affairs, But tremble and be still. Just like His nature is His Grace, All sovereign, and all free Great God, how searchless are Your ways How deep your judgments be!"*

**"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," rolls like thunder from the Cross of Calvary and from the Mount of Sinai. The Lord is Sovereign and does as He pleases. Let us admire that marvelous electing love which selected such a one as Onesimus!**

Grace, also, is to be observed, in the next place, in the ***conversion* of this runaway slave. Look at him! How unlikely he appears to become a convert. He is an Asiatic slave of about the same grade as an ordinary Lascar, or heathen Chinese. He was, however, worse than the ordinary Lascar who is certainly free and probably an honest man, if he is nothing else. This man had been dishonest and he was daring, for after taking his master's property he was bold enough to make a long journey from Colosse to reach Rome. But Everlasting Love means to convert the man—and converted he shall be!**

He may have heard Paul preach at Colosse and Athens, but yet he had not been impressed. In Rome, Paul was not preaching in St. Peter's—it was in no such noble building! Paul was not preaching in a place like the Tabernacle, where Onesimus could have a comfortable seat—no such place as that—but it was probably down there at the back of the Palatine Hill, where the praetorian guard have their lodgings and where there was sat with a soldier chained to his hand, preaching to all who were admitted to hear him—and ***there* it was that the Grace of God reached the heart of this wild young man, and, oh, what an immediate change it made in him!**

Now you see him repenting of his sin, grieved to think he has wronged a good man, vexed to see the depravity of his heart as well as the error of his life. He weeps. Paul preaches to him Christ crucified and the glance of joy is in his eye—and from that heavy heart a load is taken! New thoughts light up that dark mind! The very face is changed and the entire man renewed, for the Grace of God can turn a lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove! Some of us, I have no doubt, are quite as wonderful instances of Divine election and effectual calling as Onesimus was. Let us, therefore, record the lovingkindness of the Lord and let us say to ourselves, "Christ shall have the glory of it. The Lord has done it and unto the Lord be honor, world without end."

The Grace of God was conspicuous in ***the character which it worked in Onesimus* upon his conversion, for he appears to have been helpful, useful and profitable. So Paul says. Paul was willing to have had him as an associate and it is not every man that is converted that we should altogether choose as a companion. There are odd people to be met with who will go to Heaven, we have no doubt, for they are pilgrims on the right way. But we would like to keep on the other side of the road, for they are cross-grained and there is a something about them that one's nature can no more delight in than the palate can take pleasure in nauseous medicine. They are a sort of spiritual hedgehogs—they are alive and useful and, no doubt, they illustrate the wisdom and patience of God—but they are not good companions. One would not like to carry them in his bosom.**

**But Onesimus was evidently of a kind, tender, loving spirit. Paul at once called him Brother and would have liked to retain him. When he sent him back, was it not a clear proof of a change of heart in Onesimus that he would go back? Away as he was in Rome, he might have passed on from one town to another and have remained perfectly free. But feeling that he was under some kind of bond to his master—especially since he had injured him—he takes Paul's advice to return to his old position. He will go back and take a letter of apology or introduction to his master, for he knows that it is his duty to make reparation for the wrong that he has done.**

**I always like to see a resolve to make restitution of former wrongs in people who profess to be converted. If they have taken any money wrongfully, they ought to repay it. It were well if they returned sevenfold. If we have, in any way, robbed or wronged another, I think the first instincts of Grace in the heart will suggest compensation in all ways within our power. Do not think it is to be got over by saying, "God has forgiven me and, therefore, I may leave it." No, dear Friend, but inasmuch as God has forgiven you, try to undo all the wrong and prove the sincerity of your repentance by so doing.**

So Onesimus will go back to Philemon and work out his term of years with him, or otherwise do Philemon's wishes, for though he might have had injured. That showed a gentle, humble, honest, upright spirit and let Onesimus be commended for it—no, let the Grace of God be extolled for it! Look at the difference between the man who robbed and the man who now comes back to be profitable to his master. What wonders the Grace of God has done! Brethren, let me add—what wonders the Grace of God can do! Many plans are employed in the world for the reformation of the wicked and the reclaiming of the fallen—and to every one of these, as far as they are rightly bottomed, we wish good success—for whatever things are lovely and pure, and of good report, we wish them God speed.

But mark this word—the true reforming of the drunk lies in giving him a new ***heart*! The true reclaiming of the harlot is to be found in a renewed *nature*! Purity will never come to fallen women by those hideous Contagious Diseases Acts, which, to my mind, wear, like Cain, a curse upon their forehead! Womanhood will but sink lower under such laws. The harlot must be washed in the Savior's blood or she will never be clean! The lowest strata of society will never be brought into the light of virtue, sobriety and purity except by Jesus Christ and His Gospel—and we must stick to that. Let all others do what they like, but God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**I see certain of my Brethren fiddling away at the branches of the tree of vice with their wooden saws, but, as for the Gospel, it lays the axe at the roots of the whole forest of evil! And if it is fairly received into the heart it fells all the upas trees at once—and instead of them, there spring up the fir tree, the pine tree and the box tree together—to beautify the house of our Master's Glory! Let us, when we see what the Spirit of God can do for men, publish the Grace of God and extol it with all our might!**

II. **And now, secondly, we have in our text and its connections, a very interesting** INSTANCEOFSINOVERRULED**. Onesimus had no right to rob his master and run away. But God was pleased to make use of that crime for his conversion. It brought him to Rome and so brought him where Paul was preaching—and thus it brought him to Christ and to his right mind. Now, when we speak of this, we must be cautious. When Paul says, "Perhaps he departed for a season, that you should receive him forever," he does not excuse his departure. He does not make it out that Onesimus did right—not for a moment! Sin is sin, and, whatever sin may be overruled to do, yet sin is *still* sin!**

**The crucifixion of our Savior has brought the greatest conceivable blessings upon mankind, yet, none the less, it was "with wicked hands" that they took Jesus and crucified Him. The selling of Joseph into Egypt was the means in the hand of God for the preservation of Jacob and his sons in the time of famine. But his brothers had nothing to do with that and they were, none the less, guilty for having sold their brother for a slave. Let it always be remembered that the faultiness or virtue of an act is not contingent upon the result of that act.**

If, for instance, a man who has been set on a railway to turn the switch forgets to do it, you call it a very great crime if the train comes to mischief and a dozen people are killed. Yes, but the crime is the same if ***nobody* is killed. It is not the *result* of the carelessness, but the carelessness, itself, in such-and-such a way, and his not doing so should even by some strange accident turn to the saving of life, the man would be equally blameworthy. There would be no credit due to him, for if his duty lies in a certain line his fault also lies in a certain line, namely, the neglecting of that duty.**

So if God overrules sin for good, as He sometimes does, it is none the less sin. It is sin just as much as ever, only there is so much the more glory to the wonderful wisdom and Grace of God who, out of evil, brings forth good and so does what only Omnipotent Wisdom can perform. Onesimus is not excused, then, for having embezzled his master's goods nor for having left him without permission—he still is a transgressor—but God's Grace is glorified. Remember, too, that this must be noticed—that when Onesimus left his master, he was performing an action, the results of which, in all probability, would have been ruinous to him.

He was living as a trusted dependent beneath the roof of a kind master who had a Church in his house. If I read the Epistle rightly, he had a godly mistress and a godly master and he had an opportunity of learning the Gospel continually. But this reckless young blade, very likely, could not bear it and could have lived more contentedly with a heathen master, who would have beaten him one day and made him drunk another! The Christian master he could not bear, so away he went. He threw away the opportunities of salvation and he went to Rome. And he must have gone into the lowest part of the city and associated, as I have already told you, with the very grossest company.

Now, had it come to pass that he had joined in the insurrections of the slaves which took place frequently about that time, as he in all probability would have done had not Grace prevented, he would have been put to death as others had been. He would have had a short stay in Rome. I half suspect a month and off with his head as was the rule towards slaves and vagabonds. Onesimus was just the very man that would have been likely to be hurried to death and to eternal destruction. He had put his head, as it were, between the lion's jaws by what he had done. When a young man suddenly leaves home and goes to London, we know what it means. When his friends do not know where he is, and he does not want them to know, we are aware, within a little while, where he is and what he is up to.

What Onesimus was doing, I do not know, but he was certainly doing his best to ruin himself. His course, therefore, is to be judged, as far as he is concerned, by what it was ***likely* to bring him to—and though it did not bring him to it, that was no credit to him—all the honor of it is due to the overruling power of God! See, dear Brothers and Sisters, how God overruled all. Thus had the Lord purposed. Nobody shall be able to touch the heart of Onesimus but Paul. Onesimus is living at Colosse. Paul cannot come there, he is in prison. It is necessary, then, that Onesimus should go to Paul. Suppose the kindness of Philemon's heart had prompted him to say to Onesimus, "I want you to go to Rome and find Paul out and hear him"?**

This evil servant would have said, "I am not going to risk my life to hear a sermon. If I go with the money you are sending to Paul, or with the letknow, when people are brought to hear a preacher with the view of their being converted, if they have any idea of it, it is about the very ***last* thing likely to happen, because they go there resolved to be fireproof. And so the preaching does not come home to them—and it would probably have been just so with Onesimus. No, no, he was not to be won in that way! He must go to Rome another way. How shall it be done?**

Well, the ***devil*** shall do it, not knowing that he will be losing a willing servant thereby! The devil tempts Onesimus to steal. Onesimus does it and when he has stolen he is afraid of being discovered and so he makes tracks for Rome as quickly as he can! And he gets down among the back slums and there he feels what the prodigal felt—a hungry belly—and that is one of the best preachers in the world to some people! Their conscience is reached in that way. Being very hungry, not knowing what to do and no man giving anything to him, he thinks whether there is anybody in Rome that would take pity on him.

He does not know anybody in Rome at all and is likely to starve. Perhaps one morning there was a Christian woman—I should not wonder— who was going to hear Paul and she saw this poor man sitting crouched up on the steps of a temple. Perhaps she went to him and spoke about his soul. "Soul?" said he, "I care nothing about that, but my body would thank you for something to eat. I am starving." She replied, "Come with me, then," and she gave him bread and then she said, "I do this for Jesus Christ's sake." "Jesus Christ!" he said, "I have heard of Him. I used to hear of Him over at Colosse." "Whom did you hear speak about Him?" the woman would ask. "Why, a short man with weak eyes. A great preacher named Paul, who used to come to my master's house." "Why, I am going to hear him preach," the woman would say, "will you come and hear him with me?" "Well, I think I should like to hear him again. He always had a kind word to say to the poor." So he goes in and pushes his way among the soldiers. And Paul's Master incites Paul to speak the right words.

It may have been so, or it may have been the other way—that not knowing anybody else at all, he thought, "Well, there is Paul, I know. He is here a prisoner and I will go down and see what prison he is in." He goes down to the Praetorian and finds him there, tells him of his extreme poverty and Paul talks to him. And then he confesses the wrong he has done and Paul, after teaching him a little while, says, "Now, you must go back and make amends to your master for the wrong you have done." It may have been either of these ways, but, at any rate, the Lord must have Onesimus in Rome to hear Paul. And the sin of Onesimus, though perfectly voluntary on his part, so that God had no hand in it, is yet overruled by a mysterious Providence to bring him where the Gospel shall be blessed to his soul.

Now, I want to speak to some of you Christian people about this matter. Have you a son who has left home? Is he a willful, wayward young man who has gone away because he could not bear the restraints of a Christian family? It is a sad thing it should be so—a very sad thing—but do not despond or even have a thought of despair about him! You do not know where he is, but God does! And you cannot follow him, but the Spirit of Shanghai who is to be the means of his salvation! And as that Paul is not in England, your son must go there. Is it to Australia that he is going? There may be a word spoken there, by the blessing of God, to your son which is the only word which ever will reach him!

I cannot speak it. Nobody in London can speak it. But the man there, will, and God, therefore, is letting him go away in all his willfulness and folly that he may be brought under the means of Grace which will prove effectual to his salvation. Many a sailor boy has been wild, reckless, godless, Christless and at last has got into a foreign hospital. Ah, if his mother knew that he was down with the yellow fever, how sad her mind would be, for she would conclude that her dear son will die away at Havana or somewhere, and never come home again. But it is just in that hospital that God means to meet with him!

A sailor writes to me something like that. He says, "My mother asked me to read a chapter every day, but I never did. I got into the hospital at Havana, and, when I lay there, there was a man near to me who was dying. And he died one night, but before he died, he said to me, 'Mate, could you come here? I want to speak to you. I have got something that is very precious to me here. I was a wild fellow, but reading this packet of sermons has brought me to the Savior, and I am dying with a good hope through Grace. Now, when I am dead and gone, will you take these sermons and read them? And may God bless them to you. And will you write a letter to the man that preached and printed those sermons, to tell him that God blessed them to my conversion and that I hope he will bless them to yourself'?"

It was a packet of my sermons, and God *did* bless them to that young man who, I have no doubt whatever, went to that hospital because there a man who had been brought to Christ would hand to him the words which God had blessed to himself and would bless to his friend! You do not know, dear Mother, you do not know. The worst thing that can happen to a young man is sometimes the best thing that can happen to him! I have sometimes thought, when I have seen young men of position and wealth taking to racing and all sorts of dissipation, "Well, it is a dreadfully bad thing, but they may as well get through their money as quickly as ever they can, and then when they have got down to begging they will be like the young gentleman in the parable who left his father."

When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in need, and he said, "I will arise and go to my father." Perhaps the disease that follows vice—perhaps the poverty that comes like an armed man after extravagance and debauchery—is but love in another form, sent to compel the sinner to come to himself and consider his ways and seek an ever merciful God! You Christian people often see the little gutter children—the poor little Arabs in the street—and you feel much pity for them, as well you may. There is a dear Sister here, Miss Annie MacPherson, who lives only for them. God bless her and her work! When you see them you cannot be glad to see them as they are, but I have often thought that the poverty and hunger of one of these poor little children has a louder voice to most hearts than their vice and ignorance! And God knew that we were not ready and able to hear the cry of the child's sin, so He added the child's hunger to that cry, that it might pierce our hearts.

People could live in sin and yet be happy, if they were well-to-do and rich. And if sin did not make parents poor and wretched, and their children miserable, we should not see it and, therefore, we should not awaken ourselves to grapple with it. It is a blessing, you know, in some diseases, when the patient can throw the complaint out upon the skin. It is a horrible thing to see it on the skin, but still it is better than its being hidden inside. Oftentimes the outward sin and the outward misery are a sort of throwing out of the disease so that the eyes of those who know where the healing medicine is to be had is thereby drawn to the disease—and so the soul's secret malady is dealt with.

Onesimus might have stayed at home and he might never have been a thief! But he might have been lost through self-righteousness. But now his sin is visible. The scapegrace has displayed the depravity of his heart and now it is that he comes under Paul's eyes and Paul's prayers and becomes converted! Do not, I pray you, ever despair of man or woman or child because you see their sin upon the surface of their character. On the contrary, say to yourself, "This is placed where I can see it, that I may pray about it. It is thrown out under my eyes that I may now concern myself to bring this poor soul to Jesus Christ, the mighty Savior who can save the most forlorn sinner."

Look at it in the light of earnest, active benevolence and awaken yourselves to conquer it! Our duty is to hope on and to pray on. It may be, perhaps, that, "he therefore departed for a season, that you should receive him forever." Perhaps the boy has been so wayward that his sin may come to a crisis and a new heart may be given him. Perhaps your daughter's evil has been developed that now the Lord may convince her of sin and bring her to the Savior's feet. At any rate, if the case is ever so bad, hope in God and pray on!

**III.** Once more. Our text may be viewed as **AN** **EXAMPLE** **OF** **RELATIONS** **IMPROVED**. "He therefore departed for a season, that you should receive him forever." "*Not now as a servant, but a Brother beloved, specially to one, but how much more unto you*?" You know we are a long while learning great truths. Perhaps Philemon had not quite found out that it was wrong for him to have a slave. Some men who were very good in their time did not know it. John Newton did not know that he was flying wrong in the slave trade and George Whitfield, when he left slaves to the orphanage at Savannah, which had been willed to him, did not think, for a moment, that he was doing anything more than if he had been dealing with horses, or gold and silver.

Public sentiment was not enlightened, although the Gospel has always struck at the very root of slavery. The essence of the Gospel is that we are to do to others as we would that others should do to us—and *nobody* would wish to be another man's slave—and therefore he has no right to have another man as his slave. Perhaps, when Onesimus ran away and came back again, this letter of Paul may have opened Philemon's eyes a little as to his own position. Maybe he began to doubt that he was a good but perhaps he had not regarded him as a brother. And now Onesimus has come back. He will be a better servant, but Philemon will be a better master and a slave-holder no longer. He will regard his former servant as a Brother in Christ.

Now, this is what the Grace of God does when it comes into a family. It does not alter the relations. It does not give the child a right to be pert and forget that he is to be obedient to his parents. It does not give the father a right to lord it over his children without wisdom and love, for it tells him that he is not to provoke his children to anger, lest they be discouraged. It does not give the servant the right to be a master, neither does it take away from the master his position, or allow him to exaggerate his authority—but all round it softens and sweetens.

Rowland Hill used to say that he would not give a halfpenny for a man's piety if his dog and his cat were not better off after he was converted. There was much weight in that remark. Everything in the house goes better when Grace oils the wheels. The mistress is, perhaps, rather sharp, quick, tart—well, she gets a little sugar into her constitution when she receives the Grace of God! The servant may be apt to loiter, be late up in the morning, very slovenly, fond of a gossip at the door. But if she is truly converted, all that kind of thing ends. She is conscientious and attends to her duty as she ought. The master, perhaps—well, he is the master and you know it. But when he is a truly Christian man—he has a gentleness, a suavity, a considerateness about him.

The husband is the head of the wife, but when renewed by Grace he is not at all the head of the wife as some husbands are. The wife also keeps her place and seeks, by all gentleness and wisdom to make the house as happy as she can. I do not believe in your religion, dear Friend, if it belongs to the Tabernacle and the Prayer Meeting, but not to your home. The best religion in the world is that which smiles at the table, works at the sewing machine, and is amiable in the drawing-room. Give me the religion which blacks boots and does them well, cooks the food and cooks it so that it can be eaten! Measures out yards of calico and does not make them half-an-inch short! Sells a hundred yards of an article and does not label 90 a hundred, as many trades people do!

That is the true Christianity which affects the whole of life! If we are truly Christians we shall be changed in all our relationships to our fellow men and, therefore, we shall regard those whom we call our inferiors with quite a different eye. It is wrong in Christian people when they are so sharp upon little faults that they see in servants, especially if they are Christian servants. That is not the way to correct them. They see a little something wrong and, oh, they are down upon the poor girls as if they had murdered somebody! If your Master, and mine, were to treat us in that style I wonder how we would get on? How quick some are in discharging their maids for small faults! No excuse, no trying the persons again—they must go.

Many a young man has been turned out of a situation for the littlest trifle, by a Christian employer, when he must have known that he would be exposed to all sorts of risks. And many a servant has been sent adrift as if found, and without anything being done to prevent her going astray. Do let us think of others, especially of those whom Christ loves even as He does us. Philemon might have said, "No, no, I won't take you back, Mr. Onesimus, not I. Once bitten, twice shy, Sir. I never ride a horse with broken knees. You stole my money! I am not going to have you back again." I have heard that style of talk, have not you? Did you ever feel like it? If you have, go home and pray to God to get such a feeling out of you, for it is bad stuff to have in your soul! You cannot take it to Heaven.

When the Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven you so freely, are you to take your servant by the throat and say, "Pay me what you owe?" God forbid that we should continue in such a temper! Be pitiful, easily entreated, ready to forgive. It is a deal better that you should suffer a wrong than *do* a wrong—much better that you should overlook a fault which you might have noticed, than notice a fault which you ought to have overlooked—

***"Let love through all your actions run, And all your words be kind,"***

is said in the little hymn which we used to learn when we were children. We should practice it now, and—

***"Live like the blessed virgin's Son That meek and lowly Child."***

God grant we may, of His infinite Grace! I want to say this, and then I have done. If the mysterious Providence of God was to be seen in Onesimus getting to Rome, I wonder whether there is any Providence of God in some of you being here tonight? It is possible. Such things do happen. People come here that never meant to come. The last thing in the world they would have believed, if anybody had said it, is that they would be here, yet here they are.

With all manner of lyrists and turns they have gone about, but they have got here somehow. Did you miss a train, and so stepped in to wait? Did not your ship sail quite so soon as you expected, and so are you here tonight? Say, is that it? I do pray you, then, consider this question with your heart. "Does not God mean to bless me? Has He not brought me here, on purpose, that this night I may yield my heart to Jesus as Onesimus did?" My dear Friend, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall have immediate pardon for all sin and shall be saved! The Lord has brought you here in His infinite wisdom to hear that, and I hope that He has also brought you here that you may accept it and so go your way altogether changed.

Some three years ago I was talking with an aged minister, and he began fumbling about in his waistcoat pocket, but he was a long while before he found what he wanted. At last he brought out a letter that was well near worn to pieces, and he said, "God Almighty bless you! God Almighty bless you!" And I said, "Friend, what is it?" He said, "I had a son. I thought he would be the stay of my old age, but he disgraced himself and he went away from me, and I could not tell where he went, only he said he was going to America. He took a ticket to sail for America from the London Docks, but he did not go on the particular day that he expected."

This aged minister bade me read the letter, and I read it, and it was like this—"Father, I am here in America. I have found a situation and God has prospered me. I write to ask your forgiveness for the thousand wrongs that I have done you and the grief I have caused you, for blessed be God, I have found the Savior! I have joined the Church of God here, and hope to spend my life in God's service. It happened thus: I did not sail for America the day I expected. I went down to the Tabernacle to see what it was like, and God met with me. Mr. Spurgeon said, 'Perhaps there is a runaway son here. The Lord call him by His Grace.' And he did. "Now," said he, as he folded up the letter and put it in his pocket, "that son of mine is dead and he is in Heaven, and I love you, and I shall do so as long as I live, because you were the means of bringing him to Christ."

Is there a similar character here tonight? I feel persuaded there is— somebody of the same sort—and in the name of God I charge him to take the warning that I give him from this pulpit! I dare you to go out of this place as you came in! Oh, young man, the Lord in mercy gives you another opportunity of turning from the error of your ways, and I pray you now, here—as you now are—lift your eyes to Heaven, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and He will be so. Then go home to your father and tell him what the Grace or God has done for you—and wonder at the love which brought you here to bring you to Christ!

Dear Friend, if there is nothing mysterious about it, yet here we are. We are where the Gospel is preached and that brings responsibility upon us. If a man is lost, it is better for him to be lost *without* hearing the Gospel than to be lost as some of you will be if you perish under the sound of a clear, earnest enunciation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! How long have some of you been between two opinions? "Have I been so long time with you," says Christ, "and yet have you not known Me?" All this teaching and preaching and invitations—and yet do you not turn?—

***"O God, You the sinner turn, Convince him of his lost estate.***

***Let him linger no longer, Lest he linger till he rue his Fatal choice too late."***

God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Philemon.***

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—231, 248.**