

THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS

NO. 897

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

[Luk 23:34.](#)

OUR Lord was at that moment enduring the first pains of crucifixion. The executioners had just then driven the nails through His hands and feet. He must have been, moreover, greatly depressed and brought into a condition of extreme weakness by the agony of the night in Gethsemane and by the scourging and cruel mocking which He had endured all through the morning from Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod and the Praetorian guards. Yet neither the weakness of the past, nor the pain of the present could prevent Him from continuing in prayer. The lamb of God was silent to men, but He was not silent to God. Dumb as a sheep before her shearers, He had not a word to say in His own defense to man, but He continues in His heart crying unto His Father and no pain and no weakness can silence His holy supplications.

Beloved, what an example our Lord here presents to us! Let us continue in prayer so long as our heart beats! Let no excess of suffering drive us away from the Throne of Grace, but rather let it drive us closer to it— ***"Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live."***

To cease from prayer is to renounce the consolations which our case requires. Under all distractions of spirit and overwhelming of heart, great God, help us still to pray and never from the Mercy Seat may our footsteps be driven by despair. Our blessed Redeemer persevered in prayer even when the cruel iron tore His tender nerves and blow after blow of the hammer jarred His whole frame with anguish—and this perseverance may be accounted for by the fact that He was so in the habit of prayer that He could not cease from it—He had acquired a mighty velocity of intercession which forbade Him to pause. Those long nights upon the cold mountainside—those many days which had been spent in solitude, those perpetual

ejaculations which He would dart up to Heaven—all these had formed in Him a habit so powerful, that the severest torments could not slow its force.

Yet it was more than habit. Our Lord was baptized in the spirit of prayer. He lived in it, it lived in Him. It had come to be an element of His Nature. He was like that precious spice, which, being bruised, does not cease to give forth its perfume, but rather yields it all the more abundantly. Because of the blows to the pestle, its fragrance is no outward and superficial quality, but an inward virtue essential to its nature—which the pounding does but fetch from it—causing it to reveal its secret soul of sweetness. So Jesus prays, even as a bundle of myrrh gives forth its smell, or as birds sing because they cannot do otherwise. Prayer wrapped His very soul as with a garment and His heart went forth in much array. I repeat it, let this be our example—never, under any circumstances, however severe the trial, or depressing the difficulty—let us cease from prayer.

Observe, further, that our Lord, in the prayer before us, remains in the vigor of faith as to His Sonship. The extreme trial to which He now submitted Himself could not prevent His holding fast His Sonship. His prayer begins, “Father.” It was not without meaning that He taught us when we pray to say, “Our Father,” for our prevalence in prayer will much depend upon our confidence in our relationship to God. Under great losses and crosses one is apt to think that God is not dealing with us as a father with a child, but rather as a severe judge with a condemned criminal. But the cry of Christ, when He is brought to an extremity which we shall never reach, betrays no faltering in the spirit of Sonship. And in Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat fell fast upon the ground, His most bitter cry commenced with, “*My Father;*” asking that if it were possible the cup of gall might pass from Him. He pleaded with the Lord as His Father, even as He over and over again had called Him on that dark and doleful night.

Here, again, in this, the first of His seven expiring cries, it is “Father.” O that the Spirit that makes us cry, “Abba, Father,” may never cease His operations! May we never be brought into spiritual bondage by the suggestion, “If you are the Son of God.” Or if the Tempter should so assail us, may we triumph as Jesus did in the hungry wilderness. May the Spirit which cries, “Abba, Father,” repel each unbelieving fear. When we are chastened, as we must be (for what sort is there whom his father chastens not?) may we be in loving subjection to the Father of our spirits and live.

But never may we become captives to the spirit of bondage, so as to doubt the love of our gracious Father, or our share in His adoption.

More remarkable, however, is the fact that our Lord's prayer to His Father was not for Himself. He continued on the Cross to pray for Himself, it is true, and His lamentable cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" shows the personality of His prayer. But the first of the seven great cries on the Cross has scarcely even an indirect reference to Himself. It is, "Father, forgive *them*." The petition is altogether for others and though there is an allusion to the cruelties which they were exercising upon Him, yet it is remote.

And, you will observe He does not say, "I forgive them"—that is taken for granted—He seems to lose sight of the fact that they were doing any wrong to Him. It is the wrong which they were doing to the *Father* that is on His mind. The insult which they are paying to the Father, in the Person of the Son—He thinks not of Himself at all. The cry, "Father, forgive them," is altogether unselfish. He, Himself, is in the prayer, as though He were not. So complete is His selfannihilation that He loses sight of Himself and His woes. My Brethren, if there had ever been a time in the life of the Son of Man when He might have rigidly confined His prayer to Himself, without anyone complaining, surely it was when He was beginning His death throes.

We would not marvel, if any man here were fastened to the stake, or fixed to a cross, if his first and even his last and *all* his prayers were for support under so arduous a trial. But see, the Lord Jesus began His prayer by pleading for others! Can't you see what a great heart is revealed here? What a soul of compassion was in the Crucified! How Godlike, how Divine! Was there ever such a one before Him, who, even in the very pangs of death, offers as His first prayer an intercession for others? Let this unselfish spirit be in you, also, my Brothers and Sisters. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man, also, on the things of others. Love your neighbors as yourselves and as Christ has set before you this paragon of unselfishness, seek to follow Him, treading in His steps.

There is, however, a crowning jewel in this diadem of glorious love. The Sun of Righteousness sets upon Calvary in a wondrous splendor, but among the bright colors which glorify His departure, there is this one—the prayer was not alone for others, but it was for His cruelest enemies. His enemies,

did I say? There is more than that to be considered. It was not a prayer for enemies who had done Him an ill deed years before, but for those who were then and there murdering Him! Not in cold blood did the Savior pray, after He had forgotten the injury and could the more easily forgive it, but while the first red drops of blood were spurting on the hands which drove the nails! While yet the hammer was stained with crimson gore, His blessed mouth poured out the fresh warm prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

I say, not that that prayer was confined to His immediate executioners. I believe that it was a far-reaching prayer, which included Scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, Jews and Gentiles—yes, the whole human race, in a certain sense, since we were all concerned in that murder—but certainly the immediate persons upon whom that prayer was poured like precious nard were those who then and there were committing the brutal act of fastening Him to the accursed tree. How sublime is this prayer if viewed in such a light! It stands alone upon a mount of solitary glory! No other had been prayed like it before. It is true, Abraham and Moses and the Prophets had prayed for the wicked—but not for wicked men who had pierced their hands and feet!

It is true that Christians have since that day offered the same prayer, even as Stephen cried, “Lay not this sin to their charge,” and many a martyr has made his last words at the stake words of pitying intercession for his persecutors. But you know where they learned this. Let me ask you, where did He learn it? Was not Jesus the Divine original? He learned it nowhere—it leaped up from His own Godlike Nature. A compassion peculiar to Himself dictated this originality of prayer. The inward royalty of His love suggested to Him so memorable an intercession—which may serve us for a pattern—but of which no pattern had existed before.

I feel as though I could better kneel before my Lord’s Cross at this moment than stand in this pulpit to talk to you. I want to adore Him. I worship Him in heart for that prayer! If I knew nothing else of Him but this one prayer, I must adore Him—for that one matchless plea for mercy convinces me most overwhelmingly of the Deity of Him who offered it and fills my heart with reverent affection. Thus have I introduced to you our Lord’s first vocal prayer upon the Cross. I shall now, if we are helped by God’s Holy Spirit, make some use of it.

First, we shall view it as *illustrative of our Savior's intercession*. Secondly, we shall regard the text as *instructive of the Church's work*. Thirdly, we shall consider it as *suggestive to the unconverted*.

I. First, my dear Brethren, let us look at this very wonderful text as ILLUSTRATIVE OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION. He prayed for His enemies, then—He is praying for His enemies now. The past on the Cross was an earnest of the present on the Throne. He is in a higher place and in a nobler condition, but His occupation is the same— He continues, still, before the Eternal Throne, to present pleas on the behalf of guilty men, crying, "Father, O forgive them." All His intercession is, in a measure, like the intercession on Calvary and Calvary's cries may help us to guess the character of the whole of His intercession above.

The first point in which we may see the character of His intercession is this—it is *most gracious*. Those for whom our Lord prayed, according to the text, did not deserve His prayer. They had done nothing which could call forth from Him a benediction as a reward for their endeavors in His service. On the contrary, they were most undeserving persons who had conspired to put Him to death. They had crucified Him! Crucified Him wantonly and malignantly. They were even, then, taking away His innocent life. His clients were persons, who, so far from being meritorious, were utterly undeserving of a single good wish from the Savior's heart. They certainly never asked Him to pray for them—it was the last thought in their minds to say, "Intercede for us, You dying King! Offer petitions on our behalf, You Son of God!"

I will venture to believe the prayer itself, when they heard it, was either disregarded and passed over with contemptuous indifference, or perhaps it was caught at as a theme for jest. I admit that it seems to be too severe upon humanity to suppose it possible that such a prayer could have been the theme for laughter, and yet there were other things enacted around the Cross which were quite as brutal, and I can imagine that this, also, might have happened. Yet our Savior not only prayed for persons who did not deserve the prayer, but, on the contrary, merited a *curse*—persons who did not ask for the prayer and even scoffed at it when they heard it.

Even so in Heaven there stands the great High Priest, who pleads for guilty men—for *guilty* men, my Hearers! There are none on earth that deserve His intercession. He pleads for none on the supposition that they do deserve it. He stands there to plead as the Just One on the behalf of the unjust. Not if

any man is *righteous*, but, “if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.” Remember, too, that our great Intercessor pleads for such as never asked Him to plead for them. His elect, while yet dead in trespasses and sins, are the objects of His compassionate intercessions and while they even scoff at His Gospel, His heart of love is entreating the favor of Heaven on their behalf.

See, then, Beloved, if such is the Truth of God, how sure you are to find favor with God who earnestly asks the Lord Jesus Christ to plead for you. Some of you, with many tears and much earnestness, have been beseeching the Savior to be your Advocate. Will He refuse you? Stands it to reason that He can? He pleads for those that *reject* His pleadings, much more for you who prize them beyond gold! Remember, my dear Hearer, if there is nothing good in you and if there is everything conceivable that is malignant and bad, yet none of these things can be any barrier to prevent Christ’s exercising the office of Intercessor for you! Even for *you* He will plead. Come, put your case into His hands! For you He will find pleas which you cannot discover for yourselves and He will put the case to God for you as for His murderers, “Father, forgive them.”

A second quality of His intercession is this—*its careful spirit*. You notice in the prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Our Savior did, as it were, look His enemies through and through to find something in them that He could urge in their favor. But He could see nothing until His wisely affectionate eyes lit upon their ignorance—“they know not what they do.” How carefully He surveyed the circumstances, and the characters of those for whom He prayed! Just so it is with Him in Heaven. Christ is no careless Advocate for His people. He knows your precise condition at this moment and the exact state of your heart with regard to the temptation through which you are passing. More than that, He foresees the temptation which is awaiting you and in His intercession He takes note of the future event which His prescient eyes behold.

“Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.” Oh, the condescending tenderness of our great High Priest! He knows us better than we know ourselves! He understands every secret grief and groan. You need not trouble yourself about the wording of your prayer—He will put the wording right. And even the understanding as to the exact petition, if you should fail in it, He cannot—for as He knows what is the mind of God—so He knows what is your

mind, also. He can spy out some reason for mercy in you which you cannot detect in yourselves and when it is so dark and cloudy with your soul that you cannot discern a foothold for a plea that you may urge with Heaven, the Lord Jesus has the pleas ready-framed and petitions ready drawn up—and He can present them acceptable before the Mercy Seat. His intercession, then, you will observe, is very gracious and in the next place it is very thoughtful.

We must next note its *earnestness*. No one doubts who reads these words, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” that they were Heaven-piercing in their fervor. Brethren, you are certain, even without a thought, that Christ was terribly in earnest in that prayer. But there is an argument to prove that. Earnest people are usually witty and quick of understanding to discover anything which may serve their turn. If you are pleading for life and an argument for your being spared is asked of you, I will guarantee you that you will think of one when no one else might. Now, Jesus was so in earnest for the salvation of His enemies, that He struck upon an argument for mercy which a less anxious spirit would not have thought of—“They know not what they do.”

Why, Sirs, that was in strictest justice but a scant reason for mercy! And indeed, ignorance, if it is willful, does not extenuate sin and yet the ignorance of many who surrounded the Cross *was* a willful ignorance. They should have known that He was the Lord of Glory. Was not Moses plain enough? Had not Elijah been very bold in his speech? Were not the signs and tokens such that one might as well doubt which is the sun in the firmament as the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah? Yet, for all that, the Savior, with marvelous earnestness and consequent dexterity, turns what might not have been a plea, into a plea, and puts it thus—“Father, forgive them, *for* they know not what they do.” Oh, how mighty are His pleas in Heaven, then, in their earnestness!

Do not suppose that He is less quick of understanding there, or less intense in the vehemence of His entreaties. No, my Brethren, the heart of Christ still labors with the eternal God. He is no slumbering Intercessor, but, for Zion’s sake, He does not hold His peace—and for Jerusalem’s sake He does not cease—nor will He, till her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns. It is interesting to note, in the fourth place, that the prayer here offered helps us to judge of His intercession in Heaven as to its *continuance*, perseverance and perpetuity. As I remarked

before, if our Savior might have paused from intercessory prayer, it was surely when they fastened Him to the tree—when they were guilty of direct acts of deadly violence to His Divine Person, He might then have ceased to present petitions on their behalf. But sin cannot tie the tongue of our interceding Friend.

Oh, what comfort is here! You have sinned, Believer, you have grieved His Spirit, but you have not stopped that potent tongue which pleads for you! You have been unfruitful, perhaps, my Brother, and like the barren tree you deserve to be cut down—but your lack of fruitfulness has not withdrawn the Intercessor from His place. He interposes at this moment, crying, “Spare it yet another year.” Sinner, you have provoked God by long rejecting His mercy and going from bad to worse, but neither blasphemy nor unrighteousness, nor infidelity shall stop the Christ of God from urging the suit of the very chief of sinners! He lives and while He lives He pleads—and while there is a sinner upon earth to be saved, there shall be an Intercessor in Heaven to plead for him. These are but fragments of thought, but they will help you, I hope, to realize the intercession of your great High Priest.

Think yet again, this prayer of our Lord on earth is like His prayer in Heaven because of its *wisdom*. He seeks the best thing and that which His clients most need, “Father, *forgive* them.” That was the great point in hand—they needed most of all, then and there, *forgiveness* from God. He does not say, “Father, enlighten them, for they know not what they do,” for mere *enlightenment* would but have created torture of conscience and hastened on their Hell. No, He cries, “Father, forgive.” And while He used His voice, the precious drops of blood which were then distilling from the nail wounds were pleading, too, and God heard and doubtless did forgive.

The first mercy which is necessary to guilty sinners is forgiven sin. Christ wisely prays for the blessing most needed. It is so in Heaven—He pleads wisely and prudently. Let Him alone, He knows what to ask for at the Divine hand! Go to the Mercy Seat and pour out your desires as best you can, but when you have done, always put it thus, “O my Lord Jesus, answer no desire of mine if it is not according to Your judgment. And if in anything that I have asked I have failed to seek for what I need, amend my pleading, for You are infinitely wiser than I.” Oh, it is sweet to have a Friend at court to perfect our petitions for us before they come unto the great King! I believe that there is never presented to God anything but a perfect prayer

now. I mean that before the great Father of us all, no prayer of His people ever comes up imperfect. There is nothing left out and there is nothing to be erased, and this, not because their prayers were originally perfect in themselves, but because the Mediator makes them perfect through His infinite wisdom—and they come up before the Mercy Seat molded according to the mind of God Himself and He is sure to grant such prayers. Once more, this memorable prayer of our crucified Lord was like His universal intercession in the matter of its *prevalence*. Those for whom He prayed were, many of them, forgiven. Do you remember that He said to His disciples when He bade them preach, “beginning at Jerusalem.” And on that day when Peter stood up with the Eleven and charged the people that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Savior, 3,000 of these persons who were thus justly accused of His crucifixion became Believers in Him and were baptized in His name. That was an answer to Jesus’ prayer! The priests were at the bottom of our Lord’s murder—they were the most guilty—and it is said, “a great company, also, of the priests believed.” Here was another answer to the prayer!

Since all men had their share representatively, Gentiles as well as Jews, in the death of Jesus, the Gospel was soon preached to the Jews and within a short time it was preached to the Gentiles, also. Was not this prayer, “Father, forgive them,” like a stone cast into a lake, forming, at first, a narrow circle and then a wider ring and soon a larger sphere, until the whole lake is covered with circling waves? Such a prayer as this, cast into the whole world, first created a little ring of Jewish converts and of priests and then a wider circle of such as were beneath the Roman sway! And today its circumference is as wide as the globe itself, so that tens of thousands are saved through the prevalence of this one intercession, “Father, forgive them.”

It is certainly so with Him in Heaven—He never pleads in vain. With bleeding hands, He yet won the day. With feet fastened to the wood, He was yet victorious. Forsaken of God and despised of the people, He was yet triumphant in His pleas. How much more so now the tiara is about His brow? How much more so now His hand grasps the universal scepter and His feet are shod with silver sandals and He is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords? If tears and cries out of weakness were Omnipotent, even more mighty, if possible, must be that sacred authority which, as the risen Priest, He claims when He stands before the Father’s Throne to

mention the Covenant which the Father made with Him. O you trembling Believers, trust Him with your concerns!

Come here, you guilty, and ask him to plead for you! O you that cannot pray, come, ask Him to intercede for you. Broken hearts and weary heads and disconsolate bosoms, come to Him who into the golden censer will put *His* merits and then place *your prayers* with them so that they shall come up as the smoke of perfume, even as a fragrant cloud into the nostrils of the Lord God of Hosts, who will smell a sweet savor and accept you and your prayers in the Beloved! We have now opened up more than enough room for your meditations at home this afternoon and, therefore, we leave this first point. We have had an illustration in the prayer of Christ on the Cross of what His prayers always are in Heaven.

II. Secondly, the text is INSTRUCTIVE OF THE CHURCH'S WORK. As Christ was, so His Church is to be in this world. Christ came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister—not to be honored, but to save others. His Church, when she understands her work, will perceive that she is not here to gather to herself wealth or honor, or to seek any temporal aggrandizement and position. She is here *unselfishly* to live, and if need be, unselfishly to *die* for the deliverance of the lost sheep, the salvation of lost men. Brethren, Christ's prayer on the Cross, I told you, was altogether an unselfish one. He does not remember Himself in it.

Such ought to be the Church's life-prayer, the Church's active interposition on the behalf of sinners. She ought to live never for her ministers or for herself, but always for the lost sons of men. Do you imagine that Churches are formed to maintain ministers? Do you conceive that the Church exists in this land merely that so much salary may be given to bishops and deans, and prebends and curates and I know not what? My Brethren, it were well if the whole thing were abolished if that were its only aim! The aim of the Church is not to provide backdoor relief for the younger sons of the nobility when they have not brains enough to win their livelihood any other way!

Churches are not made so that men of ready speech may stand up on Sundays and talk and so win daily bread from their admirers!

No, there is another end and aim from this. These places of worship are not built that you may sit here comfortably and hear something that shall make you pass away your Sundays with pleasure. A Church in London which does not exist to do good in the slums and dens and kennels of the city is a Church that has no reason to justify its existence any longer! A Church that

does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight with evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood—a Church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness—is a Church that has no right to be! Not for yourself, O Church, do you exist, any more than Christ existed for Himself! His Glory was that He *laid aside* His Glory and the Glory of the Church is when she lays aside her respectability and her dignity and counts it to be her Glory to gather together the outcasts and her highest honor to seek amid the foulest mire the priceless jewels for which Jesus shed His blood!

To rescue souls from Hell and lead them to God, to hope, to Heaven—this is her heavenly occupation! O that the Church would always feel this! Let her have her bishops and her preachers and let them be supported and let everything be done for Christ's sake decently and in order, but let the end be looked to, namely, the *conversion* of the wandering, the *teaching* of the ignorant, the help of the *poor*, the maintenance of the *right*, the putting down of the wrong and the upholding at all hazards of the crown and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Now the prayer of Christ had a *great spirituality of aim*. You notice that nothing is sought for these people but that which concerns their souls, “Father *forgive* them.” And I believe the Church will do well when she remembers that she wrestles not with flesh and blood, nor with principalities and powers, but with *spiritual* wickedness and that what she has to dispense is not the Law and Order by which magistrates may be upheld, or tyrannies pulled down, but the *spiritual* government by which hearts are conquered to Christ and judgments are brought into subjection to His Truth. I believe that the more the Church of God strains after, before God, the forgiveness of sinners and the more she seeks in her life prayer to teach sinners what sin is and what the blood of Christ is and what the Hell that must follow if sin is not washed out and what the Heaven is which will be ensured to all those who are cleansed from sin—the more she keeps to this—the better.

Press forward as one man, my Brethren, to secure the root of the matter in the forgiveness of sinners. As to all the evils that afflict humanity, by all means take your share in battling with them! Let temperance be maintained, let education be supported! Let reforms, political and ecclesiastical, be pushed forward as far as you have the time and effort to spare! But the *first* business of every Christian man and woman is with the hearts and

consciences of men as they stand before the Everlasting God. O let nothing turn you aside from your Divine errand of mercy to undying souls! This is your one business. Tell sinners that sin will damn them—that Christ, alone, can take away sins—and make this the one passion of your souls, “Father, forgive them, forgive them! Let them know how to be forgiven. Let them be actually forgiven and let me never rest except as I am the means of bringing sinners to be forgiven, even the guiltiest of them.”

Our Savior’s prayer teaches the Church that while her spirit should be unselfish and her aim should be spiritual, *the range of her mission* is to be unlimited. Christ prayed for the wicked. What if I say the most wicked of the wicked, that ribald crew that had surrounded His Cross? He prayed for the ignorant. Does He not say, “They know not what they do”? He prayed for His persecutors—the very persons who were most at enmity with Him lay nearest to His heart! Church of God, your mission is not to the respectable few who will gather about your ministers to listen respectfully to their words! Your mission is not to the *elite* and the eclectic, the intelligent who will criticize your words and pass judgment upon every syllable of your teaching! Your mission is not to those who treat you kindly, generously, affectionately!

Not to these, I mean, alone, though certainly to these as among the rest. But your great errand is to the harlot, to the thief, to the swearer and the drunkard, to the most depraved and debauched! If no one else cares for these, the Church always must, and if there are any who are first in her prayers it should be these who, alas, are generally last in our thoughts. The ignorant we ought diligently to consider. It is not enough for the preacher that he preaches so that those instructed from their youth up can understand him. He must think of those to whom the most common phrases of theological truth are as meaningless as the jargon of an unknown tongue. He must preach so as to reach the meanest comprehension, and if the ignorant many come not to hear him, he must use such means as best he may to *induce* them, no, *compel* them to hear the Good News.

The Gospel is meant, also, for those who persecute religion—it aims its arrows of love against the hearts of its foes. If there are any whom we should first seek to bring to Jesus, it should be just these who are the farthest off and most opposed to the Gospel of Christ. “*Father, forgive them.* If You pardon none besides, yet be pleased to forgive *them.*” So, too, the Church should be *earnest* as Christ was. And if she is so, she will be

quick to notice any ground of hope in those she deals with. She will be quick to observe any plea that she may use with God for their salvation. She must be *hopeful*, too, and surely no Church ever had a more hopeful sphere than the Church of this present age! If ignorance is a plea with God, look on the heathens at this day—millions of them never heard Messiah's name! Forgive them, great God, indeed they know not what they do!

If ignorance is some ground for hope, there is hope enough in this great city of London, for have we not around us hundreds of thousands to whom the simplest Truths of the Gospel would be the greatest novelties? Brethren, it is sad to think that this country should still lie under such a pall of ignorance, but the sting of so dread a fact is blunted with hope when we read the Savior's prayer aright—it helps us to hope while we cry, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is the Church's business to seek after the most fallen and the most ignorant and to seek them perseveringly. She should never stop her hand from doing good. If the Lord is coming *tomorrow*, it is no reason why you Christian people should subside into mere talkers and readers, meeting together for mutual comfort and forgetting the myriads of perishing souls.

If it is true that this world is going to pieces in a fortnight and that Louis Napoleon is the Apocalyptic beast—or if it is not true—I care not a fig! It makes no difference to my duty and does not change my service. Let my Lord come when He will, while I labor for Him I am ready for His appearing! The business of the Church is still to watch for the salvation of souls. If she stood gazing, as modern prophets would have her do—if she gave up her mission to indulge in speculative interpretations—she might well be afraid of her Lord's coming. But if she goes about her work and with incessant toil searches out her Lord's precious jewels, she shall not be ashamed when her Bridegroom comes!

My time has been much too short for so vast a subject as I have undertaken, but I wish I could speak words that were as loud as thunder, with a sense and earnestness as mighty as the lightning! I would gladly excite every Christian here and kindle in him a right idea of what his work is as a part of Christ's Church. My Brethren, you must not live to yourselves! The accumulation of money, the bringing up of your children, the building of houses, the earning of your daily bread—all this you may do—but there must be a greater object than this if you are to be Christ-like, as you should be, since you are bought with Jesus' blood.

Begin to live for others! Make it apparent unto all men that you are not yourselves the end-all and be-all of your own existence, but that you are spending and being spent—that through the good you do to men God may be glorified and Christ may see in you His own image and be satisfied.

III. Time fails me, but the last point was to be a word SUGGESTIVE TO THE UNCOVETED. Listen attentively to these sentences. I will make them as terse and condensed as possible. Some of you here are not saved. Now, some of you have been very ignorant and when you sinned you did not know what you did. You knew you were sinners, you knew *that*, but you did not know the far-reaching *guilt* of sin. You have not been attending the House of Prayer long. You have not read your Bible. You have not Christian parents.

Now you are beginning to be anxious about your souls. Remember your ignorance does not excuse you, or else Christ would not say, “Forgive them.” They must be *forgiven*, even those that know not what they do, and therefore they are individually guilty. But still that ignorance of yours gives you just a little gleam of hope. The times of your ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance! The God whom you have ignorantly forgotten is willing to pardon and ready to forgive. The Gospel is just this—trust Jesus Christ who died for the *guilty* and you shall be saved! O may God help you to do so this very morning and you will become new men and new women—a change will take place in you equal to a new birth—you will be new creatures in Christ Jesus!

But ah, my Friends, there are some here for whom even Christ Himself could not pray this prayer, in the widest sense at any rate, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” for you *have* known what you did, and every sermon you hear and especially every impression that is made upon your understanding and conscience by the Gospel adds to your responsibility and takes away from you the excuse of not knowing what you do! Ah, Sirs, you know that there is the world and Christ and that you cannot have both! You know that there is sin and God and that you cannot *serve* both! You know that there are the pleasures of evil and the pleasures of Heaven and that you cannot have both! Oh, in the light which God has given you, may His Spirit also come and help you to choose that which true wisdom would make you choose.

Decide today for God, for Christ, for Heaven! The Lord decide You for His name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 23:1-34.

*Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software,
1.800.297.4307.*

■ THE BELIEVING THIEF

NO. 2078

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1889, BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.”

[Luk 23:42-43](#)

SOME time ago I preached upon the whole story of the dying thief. I do not propose to do the same today but only to look at it from one particular point of view. The story of the salvation of the dying thief is a standing instance of the power of Christ to save and of His abundant willingness to receive all that come to Him in whatever plight they may be. I cannot regard this act of Divine Grace as a solitary instance any more than the salvation of Zaccheus, the restoration of Peter, or the call of Saul, the persecutor. Every conversion is, in a sense, singular—no two are exactly alike and yet any one conversion is a type of others.

The case of the dying thief is much more similar to our conversion than it is dissimilar. In point of fact his case may be regarded as typical rather than as an extraordinary incident. So I shall use it at this time. May the Holy Spirit speak through it to the encouragement of those who are ready to despair!

Remember, beloved Friends, that our Lord Jesus at the time He saved this malefactor was at His lowest. His Glory had been ebbing out in Gethsemane and before Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate. But it had now reached the utmost low water mark. Stripped of His garments and nailed to the Cross, our Lord was mocked by a ribald crowd and was dying in agony—then was He “numbered with the transgressors,” and made as the

offscouring of all things. Yet while in that condition He achieved this marvelous deed of Divine Grace. Behold the wonder worked by the Savior when emptied of all His Glory and a spectacle of shame upon the brink of death!

How certain is it that He can do great wonders of mercy *now*—seeing that He has returned unto His Glory and sits upon the Throne of light! “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.” If a dying Savior saved the thief, my argument is that He can do even more, now that He lives and reigns. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—can anything at this present time surpass the power of His Grace?

It is not only the weakness of our Lord which makes the salvation of the penitent thief memorable. It is the fact that the dying malefactor saw it before his very eyes. Can you put yourself into his place and suppose yourself to be looking upon one who hangs in agony upon a cross? Could you readily believe Him to be the Lord of Glory who would soon come to His kingdom? That was no mean faith which, at such a moment, could believe in Jesus as Lord and King. If the Apostle Paul were here and wanted to add a New Testament chapter to the eleventh of Hebrews, he might certainly commence his instances of remarkable faith with this thief.

He believed in a crucified, derided, and dying Christ and cried to Him as to one whose kingdom would surely come. The thief’s faith was the more remarkable because he was, himself, in great pain and bound to die. It is not easy to exercise confidence when you are tortured with deadly anguish. Our own rest of mind has at times been greatly hindered by pain of body. When we are the subjects of acute suffering it is not easy to exhibit that faith which we fancy we possess at other times. This man, suffering as he did and seeing the Savior in so sad a state, nevertheless believed unto life eternal. Herein was such faith as is seldom seen.

Remember also, that he was surrounded by scoffers. It is easy to swim with the current and hard to go against the stream. This man heard the priests, in their pride, ridicule the Lord. The great multitude of the common people, with one consent, joined in the scorning—even his comrade caught the spirit of the hour and also mocked Jesus. And perhaps he did the same for a while. But through the Grace of God he was changed and believed in the

Lord Jesus in the teeth of all the scorn. His faith was not affected by his surroundings.

But he, dying thief as he was, proclaimed his confidence. Like a jutting rock standing out in the midst of a torrent, he declared the innocence of the Christ whom others blasphemed. His faith is worthy of our imitation in its fruits. He had no member that was free except his tongue, and he used that member wisely to rebuke his brother malefactor—and defend *his Lord*. His faith brought forth a brave testimony and a bold confession.

I am not going to praise the thief or his faith—I am going to extol the glory of that Divine Grace which gave the thief such faith and then freely saved him by its means. I am anxious to show how glorious is the Savior—that Savior to the uttermost, who at such a time could save such a man and give him so great a faith and so perfectly and speedily prepare him for eternal bliss. Behold the power of that Divine Spirit who could produce such faith on soil so unlikely and in a climate so unfavorable.

Let us enter at once into the center of our sermon. Note first the man who was our Lord's last companion on earth. Note secondly that this same man was our Lord's first companion at the gate of Paradise. And then, thirdly, let us note the sermon which our Lord preaches to us from this act of Divine Grace. Oh, for a blessing from the Holy Spirit all the sermon through!

I. Carefully NOTE THAT THE CRUCIFIED THIEF WAS OUR LORD'S LAST COMPANION ON EARTH. What sorry company our Lord selected when He was here. He did not consort with the religious Pharisees or the philosophic Sadducees—He was known as “the friend of publicans and sinners.” How I rejoice at this! It gives me assurance that He will not refuse to associate with me. When the Lord Jesus made a friend of me He certainly did not make a choice which brought Him credit. Do you think He gained any honor when He made a friend of you? Has He ever gained anything by befriending us?

No, my Brethren. If Jesus had not stooped very low He would not have come to me. And if He did not seek the most unworthy He might not have come to you. You feel it so and you are thankful that He came “not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” As the great Physician, our Lord was much with the sick—He went where there was room for Him to exercise His healing art. The whole have no need of a Physician—they cannot appreciate Him—and therefore He did not frequent their abodes. But

after all, our Lord did make a good choice when He saved you and me. For in us He has found abundant room for His mercy and Grace. There has been plenty of elbow room for His love to work within the awful emptiness of our necessities and sins. And therein He has done great things for us, and we are glad.

Lest any here should be despairing and say, “He will never look on me,” I want you to notice that the last companion of Christ on earth was a sinner and no ordinary sinner. He had broken even the laws of man, for he was a robber. One calls him “a brigand,” and I suppose it is likely to have been the case. The brigands of those days mixed murder with their robberies—he was probably a freebooter in arms against the Roman government—making this a pretext for plundering as he had opportunity. At last he was arrested and was condemned by a Roman tribunal, which, on the whole, was usually just, and in this case was certainly just.

He himself confessed the justice of his condemnation. The malefactor who believed upon the cross was a convict who had lain in the condemned cell and was then undergoing execution for his crimes. A convicted felon was the person with whom our Lord last consorted upon earth. What a lover of the souls of guilty men is Jesus! How He stoops to the very lowest of mankind! To this most unworthy of men the Lord of Glory, before He gave up His life, spoke with matchless grace! He spoke to him such wondrous words as never can be excelled if you search the Scriptures through —“Today shall you be with Me in Paradise”!

I do not suppose that anywhere in this Tabernacle there will be found a man who has been convicted before the Law or who is even chargeable with a crime against common honesty. But if there should be such a person among my hearers, I would invite him to find pardon and change of heart through our Lord Jesus Christ. You may come to Him whoever you may be. For this man did. Here is a specimen of one who had gone to the extremes of guilt and who acknowledged that he had done so. He made no excuse and sought no cloak for his sin. He was in the hands of justice, confronted with execution—and yet he believed in Jesus and breathed a humble prayer to Him—and he was saved upon the spot!

As is the sample, such is the bulk. Jesus saves others of like kind. Let me, therefore, put it very plainly here so that no one may misunderstand me—

none of you are excluded from the infinite mercy of Christ! However great your iniquity— if you believe in Jesus, He will save you.

This man was not only a sinner, he was a sinner newly awakened. I do not suppose that he had seriously thought of the Lord Jesus before. According to the other Evangelists he appears to have joined with his fellow thief in scoffing at Jesus. If he did not actually himself use opprobrious words he was so far consenting that the Evangelist did him no injustice when he said, “The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.” But, now, suddenly, he wakes up to the conviction that the Man who is dying at his side is something more than a man. He reads the title over His head and believes it to be true—“This is Jesus the King of the Jews.”

Thus believing, he makes his appeal to the Messiah, whom he had so newly found, and commits himself to His hands. My Hearer, do you see this Truth of God—that the *moment* a man knows Jesus to be the Christ of God he may at once put his trust in Him and be saved? A certain preacher, whose Gospel was very doubtful, said, “Do you, who have been living in sin for fifty years believe that you can in a moment be made clean through the blood of Jesus?” I answer, “Yes, we do believe that in one moment, through the precious blood of Jesus, the blackest soul can be made white. We believe that in a single instant the sins of sixty or seventy years can be absolutely forgiven and that the old nature which has gone on growing worse and worse can receive its death wound and eternal life may be implanted in the soul at once.”

It was so with this man. He had reached the end of his tether, but all of a sudden he woke up to the assured conviction that the Messiah was at his side—and believing—he looked to Him and lived. So now, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have never in your life before been the subject of any religious conviction—if you have lived up till now an utterly ungodly life—if now you will believe that God’s dear Son has come into the world to save men from sin and will sincerely confess your sin and trust in Him—you shall be immediately saved. Yes, while I speak the word, the deed of Divine Grace may be accomplished by that glorious One who has gone up into Heaven with omnipotent power to save.

I desire to put this case very plainly—this man who was the last companion of Christ upon earth was a sinner in misery. His sins had found him out—he was now enduring the reward of his deeds. I constantly meet with persons

in this condition—they have lived a life of wantonness, excess and carelessness and they begin to feel the fire-flakes of the tempest of wrath falling upon their flesh. They dwell in an earthly Hell—a prelude of eternal woe. Remorse, like an asp, has stung them and set their blood on fire—they cannot rest, they are troubled day and night. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” It has found them out and arrested them and they feel the strong grip of conviction.

This man was in that horrible condition—what is more, he was in the absolutely extreme. He could not live long—the crucifixion was sure to be fatal. In a short time his legs would be broken to end his wretched existence. He, poor soul, had but a short time to live—only the space between noon and sundown. But it was long enough for the Savior, who is mighty to save. Some are very much afraid that people will put off coming to Christ if we state this. I cannot help what wicked men do with the Truth of God but I shall state it all the same. If you are now within an hour of death, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. If you never reach your homes again but drop dead on the road, if you will *now* believe in the Lord Jesus you shall be saved—saved now—on the spot.

Looking and trusting to Jesus, He will give you a new heart and a right spirit and blot out your sins. This is the glory of Christ’s Grace. How I wish I could extol it in proper language! He was last seen on earth before His death in company with a convicted felon to whom He spoke most lovingly. Come, O you guilty and He will receive you graciously!

Once more, this thief whom Christ saved at last was a man who could do no good works. If salvation had been by good works he could not have been saved. For he was fastened hand and foot to the tree of doom. It was all over with him as to any act or deed of righteousness. He could say a good word or two but that was all. He could perform no acts. And if his salvation had depended on an active life of usefulness, certainly he never could have been saved. He was also a sinner who could not exhibit a long-enduring repentance for sin for he had so short a time to live. He could not have experienced bitter convictions lasting over months and years, for his time was measured by moments and he was on the borders of the grave.

His end was very near, and yet the Savior could save him and did save him so perfectly that the sun went not down till he was in Paradise with Christ! This sinner, whom I have painted to you in colors none too black, was one

who believed in Jesus and confessed his faith. He did trust the Lord. Jesus was a man and he called Him so. But he knew that He was also Lord and he called Him so and said, “Lord, remember me.” He had such confidence in Jesus that he knew if He would but only think of him, if Jesus would only remember him when He came into His kingdom, that would be all that he would ask of Him.

Alas, my dear Hearers! The trouble with some of you is that you know all about my Lord and yet you do not trust Him. Trust is the saving act. Years ago you were on the verge of really trusting Jesus but you are just as far off from it now as you were then. This man did not hesitate—he grasped the one hope for himself. He did not keep his persuasion of our Lord’s Messiahship in his mind as a dry, dead belief. No, he turned it into trust and prayer, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” Oh, that in His infinite mercy many of you would trust my Lord this morning! You shall be saved, I am sure you shall—if you are not saved when you trust—I must myself also renounce all hope.

This is all that we have done—we looked and we lived and we continue to live because we look to the living Savior. Oh, that this morning, feeling your sin, you would look to Jesus, trust Him and confess that trust! Owning that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father, you must and shall be saved! In consequence of having this faith which saved him, this poor man breathed the humble, but fitting prayer, “Lord, remember me.” This does not seem too much to ask. But as he understood it, it meant all that an anxious heart could desire. As he thought of the kingdom he had such clear ideas of the glory of the Savior that he felt that if the Lord would *think* of him, his eternal state would be safe.

Joseph, in prison, asked the chief butler to remember him when he was restored to power. But he forgot him. Our Joseph never forgets a sinner who cried to Him in the low dungeon. In His kingdom He remembers the moans and groans of poor sinners who are burdened with a sense of sin. Can you not pray this morning and thus secure a place in the memory of the Lord Jesus?

Thus I have tried to describe the thief. And after having done my best I shall fail of my objective unless I make you see that whatever this thief was—he is a picture of what *you* are. Especially if you have been a great offender and if you have been living long without caring for eternal things! And yet

you, even you, may do as that thief did. You may believe that Jesus is the Christ and commit your souls into His hands and He will save you as surely as He saved the condemned brigand. Jesus graciously says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” This means that if you come and trust Him, whoever you may be, He will for no reason and on no ground and under no circumstances ever cast you out. Do you catch that thought? Do you feel that it belongs to you and that if you come to Him you shall find eternal life? I rejoice if you so far perceive the Truth.

Few persons have so much contact with desponding and despairing souls as I have. Poor, cast down ones, write to me continually. I scarcely know why. I have no especial gift of consolation but I gladly lay myself out to comfort the distressed and they seem to know it. What joy I have when I see a despairing one find peace! I have had this joy several times during the week just ended. How much I desire that any of you who are breaking your hearts because you cannot find forgiveness, would come to my Lord and trust Him and enter into rest! Has He not said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”? Come and try Him and that rest shall be yours.

II. In the second place, NOTE THAT THIS MAN WAS OUR LORD’S COMPANION AT THE GATE OF PARADISE. I am not going into any speculations as to where our Lord went when He quit the Body which hung on the Cross. It would seem from some Scriptures that He descended into the lower parts of the earth—that He might fulfill all things. But He very rapidly traversed the regions of the dead. Remember that He died perhaps an hour or two before the thief and during that time the eternal glory flamed through the underworld and was flashing through the gates of Paradise just when the pardoned thief was entering the eternal world.

Who is this that enters the pearly gate at the same moment as the King of Glory? Who is this favored companion of the Redeemer? Is it some honored martyr? Is it a faithful Apostle? Is it a Patriarch like Abraham? Or a prince like David? It is none of these. Behold and be amazed at Sovereign Grace! He that goes in at the gate of Paradise with the King of Glory is a *thief* who was saved in the article of death. He is saved in no inferior way and received into bliss in no secondary style. Verily there are last which shall be first!

Here I would have you notice the condescension of our Lord's choice. The comrade of the Lord of Glory for whom the cherub turns aside his sword of fire is no great one, but a newly-converted malefactor. And why? I think the Savior took him with Him as a specimen of what He meant to do. He seemed to say to all the heavenly powers, "I bring a sinner with Me. He is a sample of the rest." Have you ever heard of him who dreamed that he stood without the gate of Heaven and while there he heard sweet music from a band of venerable persons who were on their way to G

Enquiring "What are these?" he was told that they were the goodly fellowship of the Prophets. He sighed and said, "Alas, I am not one of those." He waited a while and another band of shining ones drew near, who also entered Heaven with hallelujahs and when he enquired, "Who are these and from where they came?" the answer was, "These are the glorious company of the Apostles." Again he sighed and said, "I cannot enter with them." Then came another body of men, white-robed and bearing palms in their hands who marched amid great acclamation into the golden city. These he learned were the noble army of martyrs. And again he wept and said, "I cannot enter with these."

In the end he heard the voices of much people and saw a greater multitude advancing among whom he perceived Rahab and Mary Magdalene, David and Peter, Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus and he espied especially the thief who died at the right hand of Jesus. These all entered in a strange company. Then he eagerly enquired, "Who are these?" and they answered, "This is the host of sinners saved by Divine Grace." Then was he exceeding glad and said, "I can go in with these." But he thought there would be no shouting at the approach of this company and that they would enter Heaven without song. Instead of which, there seemed to rise a seven-fold hallelujah of praise unto the Lord of Love. For there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners that repent.

I invite any poor soul here that can neither aspire to serve Christ, nor to suffer for Him as yet, nevertheless to come in with other believing sinners—in the company of Jesus who now sets before us an open door. While we are handling this text, note well the blessedness of the place to which the Lord called this penitent. Jesus said, "*Today* shall you be with Me in Paradise." Paradise means a garden—a garden filled with delights. The garden of Eden is the type of Heaven. We know that Paradise means

Heaven, for the Apostle speaks of such a man caught up into Paradise and he calls it the third Heaven. Our Savior took this dying thief into the Paradise of infinite delight, and this is where He will take all of us sinners who believe in Him. If we are trusting Him, we shall ultimately be with Him in Paradise.

The next word is better still. Note the glory of the society to which this sinner is introduced—"Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." If the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me," we should not need Him to add another word. Where He is, is Heaven to us. He added the word, "Paradise," because otherwise none could have guessed where He was going. Think of it, you uncomely soul. You are to dwell with the Altogether Lovely One forever! You poor and needy ones—you are to be with Him in His Glory, in His bliss, in His perfection. Where He is and as He is, you shall be. The Lord looks into those weeping eyes of yours this morning and He says, "Poor Sinner, you shall one day be with Me." I think I hear you say, "Lord, that is bliss too great for such a sinner as I am." But He replies—I have loved you with an everlasting love—therefore with loving kindness will I draw you, till you shall be with Me where I am.

The stress of the text lies in the speediness of all this. "Verily I say unto you, *today* shall you be with Me in Paradise." "Today." You shall not lie in purgatory for ages, nor sleep in limbo for so many years. But you shall be ready for bliss at once and at once, you shall enjoy it. The sinner was hard by the gates of Hell but almighty mercy lifted him up and the Lord said, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." What a change from the Cross to the crown, from the anguish of Calvary to the glory of the New Jerusalem!

In those few hours the beggar was lifted from the dunghill and set among princes. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Can you measure the change from that sinner—loathsome in his iniquity when the sun was at high noon—to that same sinner clothed in pure white and accepted in the Beloved, in the Paradise of God, when the sun went down? O glorious Savior, what marvels You can work! How rapidly can You work them!

Please notice, also, the majesty of the Lord's Grace in this text. The Savior said to him, "Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Our Lord gives His own will as the reason for saving this man. "*I* say." He says it, who claims the right thus to speak. It is He who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and will have compassion on whom

He will have compassion. He speaks royally, “Verily I say unto you.” Are they not imperial words? The Lord is a King in whose Word there is power. What He says none can deny. He that has the keys of Hell and of death says, “I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” Who shall prevent the fulfillment of His Word?

Notice the certainty of it. He says, “Verily.” Our blessed Lord on the Cross returned to His old majestic manner as He painfully turned His head and looked on His convert. He was likely to begin His preaching with, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” And now that He is dying He uses His favorite manner and says, “Verily.” Our Lord took no oath—His strongest asseveration was, “Verily, verily.” To give the penitent the most plain assurance, He says, “Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” In this the thief had an absolutely indisputable assurance that though he must die, yet he would live and find himself in Paradise with his Lord.

I have thus shown you that our Lord passed within the pearly gate in company with one to whom He had pledged Himself. Why should not you and I pass through that pearly gate in due time, clothed in His merit, washed in His blood and resting on His power? One of these days angels will say of you and of me, “Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?” The shining ones will be amazed to see some of us coming. If you have lived a life of sin until now, and yet shall repent and enter Heaven—what an amazement there will be in every golden street to think that you have come there! In the early Christian Church, Marcus Caius Victorinus was converted. But he had reached so great an age and had been so gross a sinner that the pastor and Church doubted him.

He gave, however, clear proof of having undergone the Divine change, and then there were great acclamations and many shouts of, “Victorinus has become a Christian!” Oh, that some of you big sinners might be saved! How gladly would we rejoice over you! Why not? Would it not glorify God? The salvation of this convicted highwayman has made our Lord illustrious for mercy even unto this day—would not your case do the same? Would not saints cry, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” if they heard that some of you had been turned from darkness to marvelous light? Why should it not be? Believe in Jesus and it is so.

III. Now I come to my third and most practical point—NOTE THE LORD’S SERMON TO US FROM ALL THIS. The devil wants to preach this morning a bit. Yes, Satan asks to come to the front and preach to you. But he cannot be allowed. Out of here, you deceiver! Yet I should not wonder if he gets at some of you when the sermon is over and whispers, “You see, you can be saved at the very last. Put off repentance and faith. You may be forgiven on your deathbed.” Sirs, you know who it is that would ruin you by this suggestion. Abhor his deceitful teaching! Do not be ungrateful because God is kind. Do not provoke the Lord because He is patient.

Such conduct would be unworthy and ungrateful. Do not run an awful risk because one escaped the tremendous peril. The Lord will accept all who repent. But how do you know that you will repent? It is true that one thief was saved—but the other thief was lost. One is saved and we may not despair. The other is lost and we may not presume. Dear Friends, I trust you are not made of such diabolical stuff as to fetch from the mercy of God an argument for continuing in sin. If you do, I can only say of you, that your damnation will be just. You will have brought it upon yourselves.

Consider now the teaching of our Lord—see the glory of Christ in salvation. He is ready to save at the last moment. He was just passing away—His foot was on the doorstep of the Father’s house. Up comes this poor sinner, the last thing at night—at the eleventh hour—and the Savior smiles and declares that He Himself will not enter except with this belated wanderer. At the very gate He declares that this seeking soul shall enter with Him. There was plenty of time for him to have come before—you know how apt we are to say, “You have waited to the last moment. I am just going off, and I cannot attend to you now.” Our Lord had His dying pangs upon Him and yet He attends to the perishing criminal and permits him to pass through the heavenly portal in His company.

Jesus easily saves the sinners for whom He painfully died. Jesus loves to rescue sinners from going down into the pit. You will be very happy if you are saved but you will not be one half so happy as He will be when He saves you. See how gentle He is—

***“His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes His brow;***

***No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”***

He comes to us full of tenderness with tears in His eyes, mercy in His hands and love in His heart. Believe Him to be a great Savior of great sinners. I have heard of one who had received great mercy who went about saying, “He is a great forgiver.” And I would have you say the same. You shall find your transgressions put away and your sins pardoned once and for all if you trust Him now.

The next doctrine Christ preaches from this wonderful story is faith in its permitted attachment. This man believed that Jesus was the Christ. The next thing he did was to appropriate that Christ. He said, “Lord, remember me.” Jesus might have said, “What have I to do with you and what have you to do with Me? What has a thief to do with the perfect One?” Many of you good people try to get as far away as you can from the erring and fallen. They might infect your innocence! Society claims that we should not be familiar with people who have offended against its laws. We must not be seen associating with them, for it might discredit us. Infamous bosh!

Can anything discredit sinners such as we are by nature and by practice? If we know ourselves before God, are we not degraded enough in and of ourselves? Is there anybody, after all, who is worse than we are when we see ourselves in the faithful glass of the Word? As soon as ever a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, let him hook himself on to Him. The moment you believe Jesus to be the Savior, seize upon Him as *your* Savior. If I remember rightly, Augustine called this man, “*Latro laudabilis et mirabilis*,” a thief to be praised and wondered at—who dared, as it were—to seize the Savior for his own.

In this he is to be imitated. Take the Lord to be yours and you have Him. Jesus is the common property of all sinners who are bold enough to take Him. Every sinner who has the will to do so may take the Lord home with Him. He came into the world to save the sinful. Take Him by force as robbers take their prey. The kingdom of Heaven suffers the violence of daring faith. Get Him and He will never get Himself away from you. If you trust Him, He must save you.

Next, notice the doctrine of faith in its immediate power—

***“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,***

***His pardon at once hereceives,
Redemption in full through His blood.”***

“Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” He has no sooner believed than Christ gives him the seal of his believing in the full assurance that he shall be with Him forever in His Glory. O dear Hearts, if you believe this morning, you shall be saved this morning! God grant that you, by His rich Grace, may be brought into salvation here on the spot and at once!

The next thing is the nearness of eternal things. Think of that a minute. Heaven and Hell are not places far away. You may be in Heaven before the clock ticks again. Could we but rend that veil which parts us from the unseen! It is all there and all near. “Today,” said the Lord. Within three or four hours at the longest, “shall you be with Me in Paradise.” It is so near! A statesman has given us the expression of being “within measurable distance.” We are all within measurable distance of Heaven or Hell. If there is any difficulty in measuring the distance, it lies in its brevity rather than in its length—

***One gentle sigh the fetter breaks,
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone,’
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne.”***

Oh, that we, instead of trifling about such things because they seem so far away, would solemnly realize them—since they are really so very near! This very day, before the sun goes down, some Hearer now sitting in this place may see in his own spirit the realities of Heaven or Hell. It has frequently happened in this large congregation—someone in our audience has died before the next Sabbath has come round—it may happen this week. Think of that, and let eternal things impress you all the more because they lie so near.

Furthermore, know that if you have believed in Jesus you are prepared for Heaven. It may be that you will have to live on earth twenty, or thirty, or forty years to glorify Christ. And if so, be thankful for the privilege. But if you do not live another hour, your instantaneous death would not alter the fact that he that believes in the Son of God is meet for Heaven. Surely, if anything beyond faith is needed to make us fit to enter Paradise, the thief would have been kept a little longer here. But no, he is in the morning in the

state of nature—at noon he enters the state of Divine Grace—and by sunset he is in the state of Glory!

The question never is, whether a deathbed repentance is accepted if it is sincere—the question is—is it sincere? If it is—if the man dies five minutes after his first act of faith—he is as safe as if he had served the Lord for fifty years. If your faith is true, if you die one moment after you have believed in Christ you will be admitted into Paradise—even if you shall have enjoyed no time in which to produce good works and other evidences of Divine Grace. He that reads the heart will read your faith written on its fleshy tablets and He will accept you through Jesus Christ—even though no act of Divine Grace has been visible to the eye of man.

I conclude by again saying that this is not an exceptional case. I began with that and I want to finish with it. So many demi-semi-gospelers are so terribly afraid of preaching Free Grace too fully. I read somewhere and I think it is true, that some ministers preach the Gospel in the same way as donkeys eat thistles—namely, very, very cautiously. On the contrary, I will preach it boldly. I have not the slightest alarm about the matter. If any of you misuse Free Grace teaching, I cannot help it. He that will be damned can as well ruin himself by perverting the Gospel as by anything else. I cannot help what base hearts may invent.

But mine it is to set forth the Gospel in all its fullness of grace and I will do it. If the thief was an exceptional case—and our Lord does not usually act in such a way—there would have been a hint given of so important a fact. A hedge would have been set about this exception to all rules. Would not the Savior have whispered quietly to the dying man, “You are the only one I am going to treat in this way”? Whenever I have to do an exceptional favor to a person I have to say, “Do not mention this, or I shall have so many besieging me.”

If the Savior had meant this to be a solitary case, He would have faintly said to him, “Do not let anybody know. But you shall today be in the kingdom with Me.” No! Our Lord spoke openly and those about Him heard what He said. Moreover, the inspired penman has recorded it. If it had been an exceptional case it would not have been written in the Word of God. Men will not publish their actions in the newspapers if they feel that the record might lead others to expect from them what they cannot give. The Savior

had this wonder of Divine Grace reported in the daily news of the Gospel because He means to repeat the marvel every day.

The bulk shall be equal to the sample, and therefore He sets the sample before you all. He is able to save to the uttermost—for He saved the dying thief. The case would not have been put there to encourage hopes which He cannot fulfill. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning and not for our disappointing. I pray you, therefore, if any of you have not yet trusted in my Lord Jesus come and trust in Him now. Trust Him wholly. Trust Him only. Trust Him at once. Then will you sing with me

*“The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.”*

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OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS

NO. 2311

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON
LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 9, 1889.**

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost.”

[Luk 23:46.](#)

THESE were the dying words of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” It may be instructive if I remind you that the Words of Christ upon the Cross were seven. Calling each of His cries, or utterances, by the title of a Word, we speak of the seven last Words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me rehearse them in your hearing. The first, when they nailed Him to the Cross, was, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Luke has preserved that Word. Later, when one of the two thieves said to Jesus, “Lord,

remember me when You come into Your Kingdom,” Jesus said to him, “Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” This, also, Luke has carefully preserved. Farther on, our Lord, in His great agony, saw His mother, with breaking heart, standing by the Cross and looking up to Him with unutterable love and grief, and He said to her, “Woman, behold. your son!” and to the beloved Apostle, “Behold your mother!” and thus He provided a home for her when He, Himself, should be gone away. This utterance has only been preserved by John.

The fourth and central Word of the seven was, “Eloi, Eloi, Lama, Sabachthani?” which is, being interpreted, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” This was the culmination of His grief, the central point of all His agony. That most awful word that ever fell from the lips of man, expressing the quintessence of exceeding agony, is well put fourth, as though it had need of three words before it, and three words after it, as its bodyguard. It tells of a good Man, a son of God, *the* Son of God, forsaken of His God! That central Word of the seven is found in Matthew and in Mark, but not in Luke or John.

But the fifth Word has been preserved by John, that is, “I thirst,” the shortest, but not quite the sharpest of all the Master’s Words, though under a bodily aspect, perhaps the sharpest of them all. John has also treasured up another very precious saying of Jesus Christ on the Cross, that is the wondrous Word, “It is finished.” This was the last word but one, “It is finished,” the gathering up of all His lifework, for He had left nothing undone, no thread was left unraveling, the whole fabric of Redemption had been woven, like His garment, from the top throughout, and it was finished to perfection! After He had said, “It is finished,” He uttered the last Word of all, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,” which I have taken for a text, tonight, but to which I will not come immediately.

There has been a great deal said about these seven cries from the Cross by many writers and though I have read what many of them have written, I cannot add anything to what they have said, since they have delighted to dwell upon these seven last cries, and here the most ancient writers, of what would be called the Romish school, are not to be excelled, even by Protestants, in their intense devotion to every letter of our Savior’s dying Words. And they sometimes strike out new

meanings, richer and more rare than any that have occurred to the far cooler minds of modern critics, who are, as a rule, greatly blessed with moles' eyes, able to see where there is nothing to be seen, but never able to see when there is anything worth seeing! Modern criticism, like modern theology, if it were put in the Garden of Eden, would not see a flower. It is like the sirocco that blasts and burns. It is without either dew or unction, in fact, it is the very opposite of these precious things, and proves itself to be unblessed of God and unblessed to men.

Now concerning these seven cries from the Cross, many authors have drawn from them, lessons concerning seven duties. Listen. When our Lord said, "Father, forgive them," in effect, He said to us, "Forgive your enemies." Even when they spitefully use you and put you to terrible pain, be ready to pardon them! Be like the sandalwood tree which perfumes the axe that fells it. Be all gentleness, kindness and love—and be this your prayer, "Father, forgive them."

The next duty is taken from the second cry, namely, that of penitence and faith in Christ, for He said to the dying thief, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Have you, like he, confessed your sin? Have you his faith and his prayerfulness? Then you shall be accepted even as he was! Learn, then, from the second cry, the duty of penitence and faith.

When our Lord, in the third cry, said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" He taught us the duty of filial love. No Christian must ever be short of love to his mother, his father, or to any of those who are endeared to him by relationships which God has appointed for us to observe. Oh, by the dying love of Christ to His mother, let no man here unman himself by forgetting his mother! She bore you—bear her in her old age and lovingly cherish her even to the last.

Jesus Christ's fourth cry teaches us the duty of clinging to God and trusting in God—"My God, my God." See how, with both hands, He takes hold of Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He cannot bear to be left of God. All else causes Him but little pain compared with the anguish of being forsaken of His God. So learn to cling to God, to grip Him with a double-handed faith, and if you do ever think that He has forsaken you, cry after Him, and say, "Show me why You contend with me, for I cannot bear to be without You."

The fifth cry, "I thirst," teaches us to set a high value upon the fulfillment of God's Word. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst." Take good heed, in all your grief and weakness, to still preserve the Word of your God, and to obey the precept. Learn the doctrine and delight in the promise. As your Lord, in His great anguish said, "I thirst," because it was written that so He would speak, have regard unto the Word of the Lord even in little things!

That sixth cry, "It is finished," teaches us perfect obedience. Go through with your keeping of God's Commandments. Leave out no Command, keep on obeying till you can say, "It is finished." Work your lifework, obey your Master, suffer or serve according to His will, but rest not till you can say with your Lord, "It is finished." "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

And that last Word, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," teaches us resignation. Yield all things. Yield up even your spirit to God at His bidding. Stand still and make a full surrender to the Lord, and let this be your watchword from the first even to the last, "Into Your hands, my Father, I commend my spirit." I think that this study of Christ's last Words should interest you, therefore let me linger a little longer upon it. Those seven cries from the Cross also teach us something about *the attributes and offices of our Master*. They are seven windows of agate and gates of carbuncle through which you may see Him and approach Him.

First, would you see Him as Intercessor? Then He cries, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Would you look at Him as King? Then hear His second Word, "Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Would you mark Him as a tender Guardian? Hear Him say to Mary, "Woman, behold your son!" And to John, "Behold your mother!" Would you peer into the dark abyss of the agonies of His soul? Hear Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Would you understand the reality and the intensity of His bodily sufferings? Then hear Him say, "I thirst," for there is something exquisite in the torture of thirst when brought on by the fever of bleeding wounds. Men on the battlefield who have lost much blood, are devoured with thirst, and tell you that it is the worst pang of

all. “I thirst,” says Jesus. See the Sufferer in the body and understand how He can sympathize with you who suffer, since He suffered so much on the Cross. Would you see Him as the Finisher of your salvation? Then hear His cry, “Consummatum est”—“It is finished.” Oh, glorious note! Here you see the blessed Finisher of your faith! And would you then take one more gaze and understand how voluntary was His suffering? Then hear Him say, not as one who is robbed of life, but as one who takes His soul and hands it over to the keeping of another, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

Is there not much to be learned from these cries from the Cross? Surely these seven notes make a wondrous scale of music if we do but know how to listen to them! Let me run up the scale, again. Here, first, you have Christ’s fellowship with men—“Father, forgive them.” He stands side by side with sinners and tries to make an apology for them—“They know not what they do.” Here is, next, His kingly power. He sets open Heaven’s gate to the dying thief and bids him enter. “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” Thirdly, behold His human relationship. How near of kin He is to us! “Woman, behold your son!” Remember how He says, “Whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.” He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He belongs to the Human family. He is more of a Man than any man! As surely as He is very God of very God, He is also very Man of very man, taking into Himself the Nature, not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile, too. Belonging to His own nationality, but rising above all, He is the Man of men, the Son of Man.

See, next, His taking our sin. You say, “Which note is that” Well, they are all to that effect, but this one, chiefly, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It was because He bore our sins in His own body on the tree that He was forsaken of God. “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” and hence the bitter cry, “Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?” Behold Him, in that fifth cry, “I thirst,” taking not only our sin, but also our infirmity—and all the suffering of our bodily nature. Then, if you would see His fullness as well as His weakness, if you would see His AllSufficiency as well as His sorrow, hear Him cry, “It is finished.” What a wonderful fullness there is in that note! Redemption is all accomplished! It is all complete! It is all perfect!

There is nothing left, not a drop of bitterness in the cup of gall—Jesus has drained it dry! There is not a farthing to be added to the ransom price—Jesus has paid it all! Behold His fullness in the cry, “It is finished.” And then, if you would see how He has reconciled us to Himself, behold Him, the Man who was made a curse for us, returning with a blessing to His Father and taking us with Him, as He draws us all up by that last dear word, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.”—

“Now both the Surety and sinner are free.”

Christ goes back to the Father, for, “It is finished,” and you and I come to the Father through His perfect work!

I have only practiced two or three tunes that can be played upon this harp, but it is a wonderful instrument. If it is not a harp of ten strings, it is, at any rate, an instrument of seven strings, and neither time nor eternity shall ever be able to fetch all the music out of them! Those seven dying words of the ever-living Christ will make melody for us in Glory through all the ages of eternity.

I shall now ask your attention for a little time to the text itself —“Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Do you see our Lord? He is dying and, as yet, His face is toward man. His last Word to man is the cry, “It is finished.” Hear, all you sons of men, He speaks to you, “It is finished.” Could you have a choicer Word with which He should say, “Adieu,” to you in the hour of death? He tells you not to fear that His work is imperfect, not to tremble lest it should prove insufficient. He speaks to you and declares with His dying utterance, “It is finished.” Now He has done with you and He turns His face the other way. His day’s work is done, His more than Herculean toil is accomplished, and the great Champion is going back to His Father’s Throne—and He speaks—but not to you. His last Word is addressed to His Father, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” These are His first Words in going Home to His Father, as, “It is finished,” is His last Word as, for a while, He quits our company. Think of these words and may they be your first words, too, when you return to your Father! May you speak thus to your Divine Father in the hour of death! The words were much hackneyed in Romish times, but they are not spoilt even for that. They used to be said in the Latin by dying men, “*In*

manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.” Every dying man used to try to say those words in Latin and if he did not, somebody tried to say them for him. They were made into a kind of spell of witchcraft—and so they lost that sweetness to our ears in the Latin—but in the English they shall always stand as the very essence of music for a dying saint, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” It is very noteworthy that the last Words that our Lord used were quoted from the Scriptures. This sentence is taken, as I daresay most of you know, from the 31st Psalm, and the fifth verse. Let me read it to you. What a proof it is of how full Christ was of the Bible! He was not one of those who think little of the Word of God. He was saturated with it. He was as full of Scripture as the fleece of Gideon was full of dew. He could not speak, even in His death, without uttering Scripture. This is how David put it, “Into your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth.” Now, Beloved, the Savior altered this passage, or else it would not quite have suited Him. Do you see, first, He was obliged, in order to fit it to His own case, to add something to it? What did He add to it? Why, that word, “Father”! David said, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit,” but Jesus said, “*Father*, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Blessed advance! He knew more than David did, for He was more the Son of God than David could be. He was the Son of God in a very high and special sense by *eternal* filiation and so He begins the prayer with, “Father.”

But then He takes something away from it. It was necessary that He should do so, for David said, “Into Your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me.” Our blessed Master was not redeemed, for *He was the Redeemer*, and He could have said, “Into Your hand I commit My spirit, for I have redeemed My people.” But that He did not choose to say. He simply took that part which suited Himself and used it as His own, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you will not do better, after all, than to quote Scripture, especially in prayer! There are no prayers so good as those that are full of the Word of God! May all our speech be flavored with texts! I wish that it were more so. They laughed at our Puritan forefathers because the very names of their children were fetched out of passages of Scripture, but I, for my part, had much rather be laughed at for talking much of Scripture than for talking much of trashy novels—novels with

which (I am ashamed to say it) many a sermon nowadays is larded, yes, larded with novels that are not fit for decent men to read and which are coated over till one hardly knows whether he is hearing about a historical event, or only a piece of fiction—from which abomination, good Lord, deliver us!

So, then, you see how well the Savior used Scripture, and how, from His first battle with the devil in the wilderness till His last struggle with death on the Cross, His weapon was always, “It is written.”

FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Now, I am coming to the text, itself, and I am going to preach from it for only a very short time. In doing so, firstly, *let us learn the doctrine of this last cry from the Cross*. Secondly, *let us practice the duty*. And thirdly, *let us enjoy the privilege*.

I. First, LET US LEARN THE DOCTRINE of our Lord’s last cry from the Cross.

What is the Doctrine of this last Word of our Lord Jesus Christ? *God is His Father and God is our Father*. He who, Himself, said, “Father,” did not say for Himself, “Our Father,” for the Father is Christ’s Father in a higher sense than He is ours. But yet He is not more truly the Father of Christ than He is our Father if we have believed in Jesus! “You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, “I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” Believe the Doctrine of the Fatherhood of God to His people! As I have warned you before, abhor the doctrine of the *universal fatherhood of God*, for it is a lie and a deep deception! It stabs at the heart, first, of the Doctrine of the Adoption which is taught in Scripture, for how can God adopt men if they are already all His children? In the second place, it stabs at the heart of the Doctrine of Regeneration, which is certainly taught in the Word of God. Now it is by regeneration and faith that we become the children of God, but how can that be if we are already the children of God? “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” How can God give to men the power to become His sons if they have it already? Believe not that lie of the devil, but believe this Truth of God, that Christ and all who are, by living faith in Christ, may rejoice in the Fatherhood of

God!

Next learn this Doctrine, that *in this fact lies our chief comfort*. In our hour of trouble, in our time of warfare, let us say, “Father.” You notice that the first cry from the Cross is like the last—the highest note is like the lowest. Jesus begins with, “Father, forgive them,” and He finishes with, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” To help you in a stern duty like forgiveness, cry, “Father.” To help you in sore suffering and death, cry, “Father.” Your main strength lies in your truly being a child of God!

Learn the next Doctrine, that dying is going Home to our Father. I said to an old friend, not long ago, “Old Mr. Soand-so has gone Home.” I meant that He was dead. He said, “Yes, where else would he go?” I thought that was a wise question. Where else would we go? When we grow gray, and our day’s work is done, where should we go but home? So, when Christ has said, “It is finished,” His next Word, of course, is, “Father.” He has finished His earthly course and now He will go Home to Heaven. Just as a child runs to its mother’s bosom when it is tired and wants to fall asleep, so Christ says, “Father,” before He falls asleep in death.

Learn another Doctrine, that if God is our Father, and we regard ourselves as going Home when we die, because we go to Him, *then He will receive us*. There is no hint that we can commit our spirit to God and yet that God will not have us. Remember how Stephen, beneath a shower of stones, cried, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit”? Let us, however we may die, make this our last emotion if not our last expression, “Father, receive my spirit.” Shall not our heavenly Father receive His children? If you, being evil, receive your children at nightfall, when they come home to sleep, shall not your Father, who is in Heaven, receive you when your day’s work is done? That is the doctrine we are to learn from this last cry from the Cross—the Fatherhood of God and all that comes of it to Believers.

II. Secondly, LET US PRACTICE THE DUTY.

That duty seems to me to be, first, *resignation*. Whenever anything distresses and alarms you, resign yourself to God. Say, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” Sing, with Faber—

*“I bow me to Your will, O God,
And all Your ways adore.*

*And every day I live I'll seek
To please You more and more."*

Learn, next, the duty of *prayer*. When you are in the very anguish of pain. When you are surrounded by bitter griefs of mind as well as of body, still pray. Drop not the, "Our Father." Let not your cries be addressed to the air. Let not your moans be to your physician, or your nurse, but cry, "Father." Does not a child so cry when it has lost its way? If it is in the dark at night, and it starts up in a lone room, does it not cry out, "Father!" And is not a father's heart touched by that cry? Is there anybody here who has never cried to God? Is there one here who has never said, "Father"? Then, my Father, put Your love into their hearts and make them say, tonight, "I will arise and go to my Father." You shall truly be known to be the sons of God if that cry is in your heart and on your lips.

The next duty is the *committal of ourselves to God by faith*. Give yourselves up to God. Trust yourselves with God. Every morning, when you get up, take yourself and put yourself into God's custody—lock yourself up, as it were, in the box of Divine Protection—and every night, when you have unlocked the box, before you fall asleep, lock it again and give the key into the hand of Him who is able to keep you when the image of death is on your face. Before you sleep, commit yourself to God. I mean, do that when there is nothing to frighten you, when everything is going smoothly, when the wind blows softly from the south and the boat is speeding towards its desired haven—still make not yourself quiet with your own quieting! He who carves for himself will cut his fingers and get an empty plate. He who leaves God to carve for him shall often have fat things full of marrow placed before him. If you can trust, God will reward your trusting in a way that you know not as yet.

And then practice one other duty, that of *the personal and continual realization of God's Presence*. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." "You are here; I know that You are. I realize that You are here in the time of sorrow, and of danger; and I put myself into Your hands. Just as I would give myself to the protection of a policeman, or a soldier, if anyone attacked me, so do I commit myself to You, You unseen Guardian of the night, You unwearied Keeper of the day! You shall cover my head in the day of battle. Beneath Your wings will I

trust, as a chick hides beneath the hen.”

See, then, your duty. It is to resign yourself to God, pray to God, commit yourself to God and rest in a sense of the Presence of God. May the Spirit of God help you in the practice of such priceless duties as these!

III. Now, lastly, LET US ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE.

First, let us enjoy the high privilege of *resting in God in all times of danger and pain*. The doctor has just told you that you will have to undergo an operation. Say, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” There is every probability that that weakness of yours, or that disease of yours, will increase upon you and that, by-and-by, you will have to take to your bed and lie there, perhaps, for many a day. Then say, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” Do not fret, for that will not help you. Do not fear the future, for that will not aid you. Give yourself up (it is your *privilege* to do so) to the keeping of those dear hands that were pierced for you, to the love of that dear heart which was set abroad with the spear to purchase your redemption! It is wonderful what rest of spirit God can give to a man or a woman in the very worst condition. Oh, how some of the martyrs have sung at the stake! How they have rejoiced when on the rack! Bonner’s coal-hole, across the water there, at Fulham, where he shut up the martyrs, was a wretched place to lie on a cold winter’s night, but they said, “They did rouse them in the straw, as they lay in the coal-hole, with the sweetest singing out of Heaven! And when Donner said, ‘Fie on them that they should make such a noise!’ they told him that he, too, would make such a noise if he was as happy as they were.” When you have commended your spirit to God, then you have sweet rest in time of danger and pain! The next privilege is that of a *brave confidence, in the time of death, or in the fear of death*. I was led to think over this text by using it a great many times last Thursday night. Perhaps none of you will ever forget last Thursday night. I do not think that I ever shall, if I live to be as old as Methuselah. From this place till I reached my home, it seemed one continued sheet of fire—and the further I went, the more vivid became the lightning flashes. But when I came, at last, to turn up Leigham Court Road, then the lightning seemed to come in very bars from the sky and, at last, as I reached the top of the hill, and a crash came of the most startling kind, down poured a torrent of hail—hailstones that I

will not attempt to describe, for you might think that I exaggerated! And then I felt, and my friend with me, that we could hardly expect to reach home alive. We were there at the very center and summit of the storm. All around us, on every side, and all within us, as it were, seemed nothing but the electric fluid—and God’s right arm seemed bared for war. I felt then, “Well, now, I am very likely going Home,” and I commended my spirit to God. And from that moment, though I cannot say that I took much pleasure in the peals of thunder, and the flashes of lightning, yet I felt quite as calm as I do here at this present moment—perhaps a little *more* calm than I do in the presence of so many people—happy at the thought that, within a single moment, I might understand more than all I could ever learn on earth and see in an instant more than I could hope to see if I lived here for a century! I could only say to my friend, “Let us commit ourselves to God. We know that we are doing our duty in going on as we are going, and all is well with us.”

So we could only rejoice together in the prospect of being soon with God. We were not taken Home in the chariot of fire—we are still spared a little longer to go on with life’s work—but I realize the sweetness of being able to have done with it all, to have no wish, no will, no word, scarcely a prayer, but just to take one’s heart up and hand it over to the great Keeper, saying, “Father, take care of me. So let me live, so let me die. I have, henceforth, no desire about anything! Let it be as You please. Into Your hands I commend my spirit.”

This privilege is not only that of having rest in danger, and confidence in the prospect of death—it is also full of consummate joy. Beloved, if we know how to commit ourselves into the hands of God, what a place it is for us to be in! What a place to be in—in the hands of God! There are the myriads of stars. There is the universe, itself! God’s hand upholds its everlasting pillars and they do not fall. If we got into the hands of God, we get where all things rest and we get home and happiness! We have got out of the nothingness of the creature into the All-Sufficiency of the Creator. Oh, get you there! Hasten to get there, beloved Friends, and live, henceforth, in the hands of God!

“It is finished.” You have not finished, but Christ has. It is all done. What you have to do will only be to work out what He has already finished for you, and show it to the sons of men in your lives. And

because it is all finished, therefore say, “Now, Father, I return to You. My life, henceforth, shall be to be in You. My joy shall be to shrink to nothing in the Presence of the All-in-All, to die into the eternal life, to sink my ego into Jehovah, to let my manhood, my creature hood live only for its Creator and manifest only the Creator’s Glory!

O Beloved, begin tomorrow morning and end tonight with, “Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.” The Lord be with you all! Oh, if you have never prayed, God help you to begin to pray now, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON. *LUKE 23:27-49, MATTHEW 27:50-54.*

Luke 23:27. *And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him.* Their best Friend, the Healer of their sick, the Lover of their children, was about to be put to death, so they might well bewail and lament.

28-30. *But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.* Our Savior spoke of the terrible siege of Jerusalem, the most tragic of all human transactions. I think I do not exaggerate when I say that history contains nothing equal to it. It stands alone in the unutterable agony of men, women and children in that dreadful time of suffering.

31. *For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* If the Christ of God is put to death even while the Jewish capital seems vigorous and flourishing, what shall be done when it is all dry and dead, and the Roman legions are round about the doomed city?

32. *And there were also two other malefactors, led with Him to be put to death.* Every item of scorn was added to our Savior’s death and yet the Scriptures were thus literally fulfilled, for, “He was numbered with the transgressors.”

33, 34. *And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know*

not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. Do you bear the hammer fall? “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Do you see the bleeding hands and feet of Jesus? This is all that is extracted by that fearful pressure— nothing but words of pardoning love, a prayer for those who are killing Him —“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the chosen of God. You know how mockery puts salt and vinegar into a wound. A man does not at any time like to be reviled, but when he is full of physical and mental anguish and his heart is heavy within him, then ridicule is peculiarly full of acid to him.

36, 37. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself. These rough soldiers knew how to put their jests in the most cruel shape and to press home their scoffs upon their suffering Victim.

38. And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew. These were the three languages that could be understood by all the people round about.

38. THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And so He is, and so He shall be. He has never quit the throne. The Son of David is still King of the Jews, though they continue to reject Him. But the day shall come when they shall recognize and receive the Messiah. “Then shall they look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for His only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for His first-born.”

*39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If you are Christ, save Yourself and us. Matthew and Mark speak of both the thieves as railing at Jesus. We must take their expressions as being literally correct and, if so, both the malefactors *at first* cast reproaches in Christ’s teeth.*

40, 41. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss. Not only has He done nothing worthy of death, but He has done nothing improper, nothing out of place. “This man has done nothing amiss.” The thief bears testimony to the perfect Character of this

wondrous Man, whom he, nevertheless, recognized to be Divine, as we shall see in the next verse.

42-47. And He said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, He glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man. He was set there at the head of the guard, to watch the execution, and he could not help saying, as he observed the wonderful signs in Heaven and earth, “Certainly this was a righteous Man.”

48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. What a change must have come over that ribald crowd! They had shouted, “Crucify Him!” They had stood there and mocked Him and now they are overcome with the sight, and they strike their breasts. Ah, dear Friends, their grief did not come to much! Men may strike their breasts, but unless *God* smites their *hearts*, all the outward signs of a gracious work will come to nothing at all.

49. And all His acquaintance, and the women that followed Him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things. Let “these things” be before your mind’s eye this evening and think much of your crucified Lord, all you who are of His acquaintance, and who are numbered among His followers.

(As the Exposition is shorter than usual, an appropriate extract is added from Mr. Spurgeon’s Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew).

Matthew 27:50. *Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.* Christ’s strength was not exhausted. His last Word was uttered with a loud voice, like the shout of a conquering warrior! And what a Word it was, “It is finished”! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence, but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, depth, length and height altogether immeasurable!

Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed, He yielded up the ghost, willingly dying, laying down His life as He said He would—"I lay down My life for My sheep. I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

51-53. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Christ's death was the end of Judaism! The veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the Temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime! The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning Sacrifice.

See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ! The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. Thus did the material world pay homage to Him whom man had rejected, while Nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth, only, but also Heaven! These first miracles worked in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued till He comes again—rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchers of lust and evil, are quickened and come out from among the dead, and go unto the holy city, the New Jerusalem!

54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution, before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious Prisoner whom they had put to death—"Truly this was the Son of God." It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders denied, yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged

Jesus as the Son of God while their religious rulers have denied His Divinity.

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THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

NO. 2644

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15, 1899.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN
TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 25,
1882.*

*“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice ,He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having saidthis, He gaveup the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.*

“Into Your hands I commit my spirit: Youhave redeemedme, O LORD God of Truth.” Psa 31:5.

“And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and asking, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Act 7:59.

THIS morning, dear Friends, I spoke upon the first recorded words of our Lord Jesus [Sermon #1666, Volume 28 —*The First Recorded Words of Jesus*—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] when He said to His mother and to Joseph, “How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Now, by the help of the blessed Spirit, we will consider the last words of our Lord Jesus before He gave up the ghost. And with them we will examine two other passages in which similar expressions are used.

The words, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,” if we judge them to be the last which our Savior uttered before His death, ought to be coupled with those other words, “It is finished,” which some have thought were actually the last He used. I think it was not so, but, anyway, these utterances must have followed each other very quickly and we may blend them together. And then we shall see how very similar they are to His first

words as we explained them this morning. There is the cry, “It is finished,” which you may read in connection with our Authorized Version—“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” That business was all finished—He had been about it all His life and now that He had come to the end of His days, there was nothing left undone—and He could say to His Father, “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.”

Then if you take the other utterance of our Lord on the Cross, “Father, into your hands I commend My spirit,” see how well it agrees with the other reading of our morning text, “Did you not know that I must be in My Father’s house?” Jesus is putting Himself into the Father’s hands because He had always desired to be there, in the Father’s house with the Father. And now He is committing His spirit, as a sacred trust, into the Father’s hands that He may depart to be with the Father, to abide in His house, and go no more out forever.

Christ’s life is all of a piece, just as the alpha and the omega are letters of the same alphabet. You do not find Him one thing at the first, another thing afterwards, and a third thing still later—He is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” There is a wondrous similarity about everything that Christ said and did. You never need write the name, “Jesus,” under any of His sayings as you have to put the names of human writers under their sayings, for there is no mistaking any sentence that He has uttered!

If there is anything recorded as having been done by Christ, a believing child can judge whether it is authentic or not. Those miserable false gospels that were brought out did very little, if any mischief, because nobody with any true spiritual discernment was ever duped into believing them to be genuine! It is possible to manufacture a spurious coin which will, for a time, pass for a good one, but it is not possible to make even a passable imitation of what Jesus Christ has said and done! Everything about Christ is like Himself—there is a Christ-likeness about it which cannot be mistaken! This morning, for instance, when I preached about the Holy Child Jesus, I am sure you must have felt that there was never another child as He was. And in His death He was as unique as in His birth, childhood and life. There was never another who died as He did and there was never another who lived altogether as He did. Our Lord Jesus Christ stands by Himself! Some of us

try to imitate Him, but how feebly do we follow in His steps! The Christ of God still stands by Himself and He has no rival!

I have already intimated to you that I am going to have three texts for my sermon, but when I have spoken upon all three of them, you will see that they are so much alike that I might have been content with one of them.

I. I invite you first to consider OUR SAVIOR'S WORDS JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

Here observe, first, *how Christ lives and passes away in the atmosphere of the Word of God*. Christ was a grand original thinker and He might always have given us words of His own. He never lacked suitable language, for, "never man spoke like this Man." Yet you must have noticed how continually He quoted Scripture—the great majority of His expressions may be traced to the Old Testament. Even where they are not exact quotations, His words drop into Scriptural shape and form! You can see that the Bible has been His one Book. He is evidently familiar with it from the first page to the last and not with its letter, only, but with the innermost soul of its most secret sense and, therefore, when dying, it seemed but natural for Him to use a passage from a Psalm of David as His expiring words. In His death, He was not driven beyond the power of quiet thought—He was not unconscious, He did not die of weakness—He was strong even while He was dying! It is true that He said, "I thirst," but, after He had been a little refreshed, He cried with a loud voice, as only a strong man could, "It is finished!" And now, before He bows His head in the silence of death, He utters His final words, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Our Lord might, I say again, have made an original speech as His dying declaration. His mind was clear, calm, and undisturbed—in fact, He was perfectly happy, for He had said, "It is finished!" So His sufferings were over and He was already beginning to enjoy a taste of the sweets of victory. Yet, with all that clearness of mind, freshness of intellect and fluency of words that might have been possible to Him, He did not invent a new sentence, but He went to the Book of Psalms and took from the Holy Spirit this expression, "Into Your hands I commend My spirit."

How instructive to us is this great Truth of God that the Incarnate Word lived on the Inspired Word! It was food to Him, as it is to us and, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? He, in some respects, did not need this Book as much as we do. The Spirit of God rested upon Him without measure, yet He loved the

Scripture and He went to it, studied it and used its expressions continually. Oh, that you and I might get into the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves! As I have seen the silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord—not crawl over its surface, but eat right into it till we have taken it into our inmost parts! It is idle to merely let the eyes glance over the Words, or to remember the poetical expressions, or the historic facts—but it is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language and your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models—and, what is still better, your spirit is flavored with the words of the Lord!

I would quote John Bunyan as an instance of what I mean. Read anything of his and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had studied our Authorized Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture and though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim's Progress*—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, “Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline—the very essence of the Bible flows from him! He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend His example to you, Beloved and, still more, the example of our Lord Jesus! If the Spirit of God is in you, He will make you love the Word of God and, if any of you imagine that the Spirit of God will lead you to dispense with the Bible, you are under the influence of another spirit which is not the Spirit of God at all! I trust that the Holy Spirit will endear to you every page of this Divine Record so that you will feed upon it and, afterwards, speak it out to others. I think it is well worthy of your constant remembrance that, even in death, our blessed Master showed the ruling passion of His spirit so that His last words were a quotation from Scripture.

Now notice, secondly, *that our Lord, in the moment of His death, recognized a personal God.* “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” God is to some men an unknown God. “There may be a God,” so they say, but they get no nearer the truth than that. “All things are God,” says another. “We cannot be sure that there is a God,” say others, “and, therefore, it is no use our pretending to believe in Him and so to be, possibly, influenced by a supposition.” Some people say, “Oh, certainly, there is a God, but He is very far off! He does not come near to us and we cannot imagine that He

will interfere in our affairs.” Ah, but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ believed in no such impersonal, pantheistic, dreamy, far-off God, but in One to whom He said, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” His language shows that He realized the Personality of God as much as I would recognize the personality of a banker if I said to him, “Sir, I commit that money into your hands.” I know that I should not say such a thing as that to a mere dummy, or to an abstract something or nothing—but I would say it to a living man and I would say it only to a living man.

So, Beloved, men do not commit their souls into the keeping of impalpable nothings! They do not, in death, smile as they resign themselves to the infinite unknown, the cloudy “Father of everything,” who may be nothing or everything. No, no, we only trust what we know! And so Jesus knew the Father, and knew Him to be a real Person having hands— and into those hands He commended His departing spirit. I am not now speaking materially, mark you, as though God had hands like ours, but He is an actual Being, who has powers of action, who is able to deal with men as He pleases and who is willing to take possession of their spirits and to protect them forever and ever. Jesus speaks like one who believed that and I pray that, both in life and in death, you and I may always deal with God in the same way. We have far too much fiction in religion—and a religion of fiction will bring only fictitious comfort in the dying hour. Come to solid facts! Is God as real to you as you are to yourself? Come now, do you speak with Him, “as a man speaks unto his friend”? Can you trust Him and rely upon Him as you trust and rely upon the partner of your bosom? If your God is unreal, your religion is unreal! If your God is a dream, your hope will be a dream and woe be unto you when you shall wake up out of it!

It was not so that Jesus trusted. “Father,” He said, “into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

But, thirdly, here is a still better point. Observe how *Jesus Christ here brings out the Fatherhood of God*. The Psalm from which He quoted did not say, “Father.” David did not get as far as that in words, though in *spirit* he often did. But Jesus had the right to alter the Psalmist’s words. He can improve on Scripture, though you and I cannot. He did not say, “O God, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” He said, “Father.” Oh, that sweet word! That was the gem of our thought, this morning, that Jesus said, “Did you not know that I must be at My Father’s—that I must be in My Father’s

house!” Oh, yes, the Holy Child knew that He was especially and, in a peculiar sense, the Son of the Highest, and therefore He said, “My Father.” And, in dying, His expiring heart was buoyed up and comforted with the thought that God was His Father. It was because He said that God was His Father that they put Him to death, yet He still stood to it even in His dying hour and said, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit”!

What a blessed thing it is for us, also, my Brothers and Sisters, to die conscious that we are children of God! Oh, how sweet, in life and in death, to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father”! In such a case as that—

“It is not death to die.”

Quoting the Savior’s words, “It is finished,” and relying upon His Father and our Father, we may go even into the jaws of death without the “quivering lips” of which we sang just now. Joyful, with all the strength we have, our lips may confidently sing, challenging death and the grave to silence our ever-rising and swelling music! O my Father, my Father, if I am in your hands, I may die without fear!

There is another thought, however, which is perhaps the best one of all. From this passage we learn that our *Divine Lord cheerfully rendered up His soul to His Father when the time had come for Him to die*. “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” None of us can, with strict propriety, use these words. When we come to die, we may perhaps utter them and God will accept them—these were the very death-words of Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, Melancthon, Jerome of Prague, John Huss and an almost endless list of saints—“Into Your hands I commend my spirit.” The Old Testament rendering of the passage, or else our Lord’s version of it, has been turned into a Latin prayer and commonly used among Romanists almost as a *charm*—they have repeated the Latin words when dying, or, if they were unable to do so, the priest repeated the words for them, attaching a sort of magical power to that particular formula! But, in the sense in which our Savior uttered these words, we cannot, any of us, fully use them. We can commit or commend our spirit to God, but yet, Brothers and Sisters, remember that unless the Lord comes first, we *must die*—and dying is *not* an *act* on our part. We have to be passive in the process because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. I suppose that if a man could have such control of his life, it might be questionable when he would surrender it because suicide is a crime and no man can be required to kill himself. God

does not demand such action as that at any man's hands and, in a certain sense, that is what would happen whenever a man yielded himself to death. But there was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which He had taken upon Himself in becoming the Substitute for His people! There was no necessity for His death even at the last moment upon the Cross, for, as I have reminded you, He cried with a loud voice when natural weakness would have compelled Him to whisper or to sigh. But His life was strong within Him—if He had willed to do so, He could have unloosed the nails and come down into the midst of the crowd that stood mocking Him! He died of His own free will, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” A man may righteously surrender his life for the good of his country and for the safety of others. There have frequently been opportunities for men to do this and there have been brave fellows who have worthily done it. But all those men would have had to die at some time or other. They were only slightly anticipating the payment of the debt of nature. But, in our Lord's case, He was rendering up to the Father the spirit which He might have kept if He had chosen to do so. “No man takes it from Me,” He said concerning His life. “I lay it down of Myself.”

And there is here a cheerful *willingness* to yield up His spirit into His Father's hands! It is rather remarkable that none of the Evangelists describe our Lord as *dying*. He did die, but they all speak of Him as giving up the ghost—surrendering to God His spirit. You and I passively die, but He actively yielded up His spirit to His Father. In His case, death *was an act* and He performed that act from the glorious motive of redeeming us from death and Hell! So, in this sense, Christ stands alone in His death. But, oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot render up our spirit as He did, yet, when our life is taken from us, let us be perfectly ready to give it up! May God bring us into such a state of mind and heart that there shall be no struggling to keep our life, but a sweet willingness to let it be just as God would have it—a yielding up of everything into His hands, feeling sure that, in the world of spirits, our soul shall be quite safe in the Father's hands and that, until the Resurrection Day, the life-germ of the body will be securely in His keeping, and certain that when the trumpet shall sound, spirit, soul and body—that trinity of our manhood—shall be reunited in the absolute perfection of our being to behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! When God calls us to die, it will be a sweet way of dying if we

can, like our Lord, pass away with a text of Scripture upon our lips, with a personal God ready to receive us, with that God recognized distinctly as our Father and so die joyously, resigning our will entirely to the sweet will of the ever-blessed One, and saying, "It is the Lord." "My Father." "Let Him do as seems good to Him."

II. My second text is in the 31st Psalm, at the 5th verse. And it is evidently the passage which our Savior had in His mind just then "Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." It seems to me that THESE ARE WORDS TO BE USED IN LIFE, for this Psalm is not so much concerning the Believer's death as concerning his life.

Is it not very amazing, dear Friends, that the words which Jesus uttered on the Cross you may still continue to use? You may catch up their echo and not only when you come to die, but tonight, tomorrow morning and as long as you are alive, you may still repeat the text the Master quoted, and say, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit."

That is to say, first, *let us cheerfully entrust our souls to God* and feel that they are quite safe in His hands. Our spirit is the noblest part of our being; our body is only the husk, our spirit is the living kernel, so let us put it into God's keeping. Some of you have never yet done that, so I invite you to do it now. It is the act of faith which saves the soul, that act which a man performs when he says, "I trust myself to God as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus. I cannot keep myself, but He can keep me and, by the precious blood of Christ He can cleanse me. So I just take my spirit and give it over into the great Father's hands." You never really live till you do that! All that comes before that act of full surrender is death! But when you have once trusted Christ, then you have truly begun to live. And every day, as long as you live, take care that you repeat this process and cheerfully leave yourselves in God's hands without any reserve. That is to say, give yourself up to God—your body, to be healthy or to be sick, to be long-lived or to be suddenly cut off. Your soul and spirit, give them, also, up to God, to be made happy or to be made sad, just as He pleases. Give Your whole self up to Him and say to Him, "My Father, make me rich or make me poor, give me sight or make me blind. Let me have all my senses or take them away. Make me famous or leave me to be obscure. I give myself up to You—into Your hands I commit my spirit. I will no longer exercise my own choice, but You shall choose My inheritance for me. My times are in Your hands." Now, dear children of God, are you always doing this? Have you *ever* done

it? I am afraid that there are some, even among Christ's professing followers, who kick against God's will and even when they say to God, "Your will be done," they spoil it by adding, in their own mind, "and my will, too." They pray, "Lord, make my will Your will," instead of saying, "Make Your will my will." Let us each one pray this prayer every day, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." I like, at family prayer, to put myself and all that I have into God's hands in the morning—and then, at night, to just look between His hands and see how safe I have been. And then to say to Him, "Lord, shut me up again tonight! Take care of me all through the night watches. 'Into Your hands I commit my spirit.'"

Notice, dear Friends, that our second text has these words at the end of it—"You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." Is not that a good reason for giving yourself up entirely to God? Christ has redeemed you and, therefore, you belong to Him. If I am a redeemed man and I ask God to take care of me, I am but asking the King to take care of one of His own jewels—a jewel that cost Him the blood of His heart!

And I may still more especially expect that He will do so, because of the title which is here given to Him—"You have redeemed me, *O Lord God of Truth*." Would He be the God of Truth if He began with redemption and ended with destruction—if He began by giving His Son to die for us and then kept back other mercies which we daily need to bring us to Heaven? No, the gift of His Son is the pledge that He will save His people from their sins and bring them home to Glory—and He will do it. So, every day, go to Him with this declaration, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." No, not only every day, but all through the day! Does a horse run away with you? Then you cannot do better than say, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." And if the horse does not run away with you, you cannot do better than say the same words! Have you to go into a house where there is fever? I mean, is it your *duty* to go there? Then go saying, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." I

would advise you to do this every time you walk down the street, or even while you sit in your own house.

Dr. Gill, my famous predecessor, spent very much time in his study and, one day, somebody said to him, "Well, at any rate, the studious man is safe from most of the accidents of life." It so happened that one morning, when the good man left his familiar armchair for a little while, there came a gale of wind that blew down a stack of chimneys which crashed through the roof

and fell right into the place where he would have been sitting if the Providence of God had not just then drawn him away! And he said, “I see that we need Divine Providence to care for us in our studies just as much as in the streets.” “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” I have often noticed that if any of our friends get into accidents and troubles, it is usually when they are away for a holiday. It is a curious thing, but I have often remarked about it. They go out for their health and come home sick! They leave us with all their limbs whole and return to us crippled! Therefore we must pray God to take special care of friends in the country or by the sea—and we must commit ourselves to His hands wherever we may be. If we had to go into a leper colony, we would certainly ask God to protect us from the deadly leprosy. But we ought to equally seek the Lord’s protection while dwelling in the healthiest place or in our own homes!

David said to the Lord, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit.” But let me beg you to add that word which our Lord inserted—“*Father*.” David is often a good guide for us, but David’s Lord is far better. And if we follow Him, we shall improve upon David. So, let us each say, “*Father, Father*, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” That is a sweet way of living every day—committing everything to our Heavenly Father’s hands, for those hands can do His child no unkindness. “Father, I might not be able to trust Your angels, but I can trust You.” The Psalmist does not say, “Into the hand of Providence I commit my spirit.” Do you notice how men try to get rid of God by saying, “Providence did this,” and, “Providence did that,” and, “Providence did the other”? If you ask them, “What is Providence?”—they will probably reply, “Well, Providence is Providence.” That is all they can say.

There is many a man who talks very confidently about reverencing nature, obeying the laws of nature, noting the powers of nature and so on. Step up to that eloquent lecturer and say to him, “Will you kindly explain to me what nature is?” He answers, “Why, nature—well, it is—nature.” Just so, Sir, but, what is nature? And he says, “Well—well—it is nature.” And that is all you will get out of him. Now, I believe in nature and I believe in Providence, but at the back of everything, I believe in God, and in the God who has hands—not in an idol that has no hands and can do nothing—but in the God to whom I can say, “‘Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.’ I rejoice that I am able to put myself there, for I feel absolutely safe in trusting myself to Your keeping.” So live, Beloved, and you shall live

safely, happily and you shall have hope in your life, and hope in your death!

III. My third text will not detain us many minutes. It is intended to explain to us THE USE OF OUR SAVIOR'S DYING WORDS FOR

OURSELVES. Turn to the account of the death of Stephen, in the 7th chapter of Acts, at the 59th verse, and you will see, there, how far a man of God may dare to go in his last moments in quoting from David and from the Lord Jesus Christ. "And they stoned Stephen, as he was calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." So here is a text for us to use when we come to die—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." I have explained to you that, strictly, we can hardly talk of yielding up our spirit, but we may speak of Christ *receiving* it and say with Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

What does this prayer mean? I must just hurriedly give you two or three thoughts concerning it and so close my discourse. I think this prayer means that, *if we can die as Stephen did, we shall die with a certainty of immortality*. Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He did not say, "I am afraid my poor spirit is going to die." No, the spirit is something which still exists after death, something which Christ can receive and, therefore, Stephen asks Him to receive it! You and I are not going upstairs to die as if we were only like cats and dogs—we go up there to die like immortal beings who fall asleep on earth and open our eyes in Heaven! Then, at the sound of the archangel's trumpet, our very body is to rise to dwell, again, with our spirit—we have not any question about this matter! I think I have told you what an infidel once said to a Christian man, "Some of you Christians have great fear in dying because you believe that there is another state to follow this one. I have not the slightest fear, for I believe that I shall be annihilated and, therefore, all fear of death is gone from me." "Yes," said the Christian, "and in that respect you seem to me to be on equal terms with that bull grazing over there, which, like yourself, is free from any fear of death. Pray, Sir, let me ask you a simple question. Have you any hope?" "Hope, Sir? Hope, Sir? No, I have no hope! Of course I have no hope, Sir." "Ah, then!" replied the other, "despite the fears that sometimes come over feeble Believers, they have a hope which they would not and could not give up." And that hope is that our spirit—even that spirit which we commit into Jesus Christ's hands—shall be "forever with the Lord." The next thought is that, *to a man who can die as Stephen did, there is a certainty that Christ is near*—so near that the man speaks to Him and says,

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” In Stephen’s case, the Lord Jesus was so near that the martyr could see Him, for he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Many dying saints have borne a similar testimony. It is no strange thing for us to hear them say, before they die, that they could see within the pearly gates and they have told us this with such evident truthfulness, and with such rapture, or sometimes so calmly—in such a businesslike tone of voice—we were sure that they were neither deceived nor speaking falsehood. They spoke what they knew to be true, for Jesus was there with them! Yes, Beloved, before you can call your children around your deathbed, Jesus will already be there! And into His hands you may commit your spirit.

Moreover, *there is a certainty that we are quite safe in His hands.* Wherever else we are insecure, if we ask Him to receive our spirit, and He receives it, who can hurt us? Who can pluck us out of His hands? Awaken, Death and hail! Come forth, all you powers of darkness! What can you do when once a spirit is in the hands of the Omnipotent Redeemer? We will be safe there!

Then there is the other certainty, *that He is quite willing to take us into His hands.* Let us put ourselves into His hands now—and then we need not be ashamed to repeat the operation every day and we may be sure that we shall not be rejected at the last. I have often told you of the good old woman who was dying and to whom someone said, “Are you not afraid to die?” “Oh, no,” she replied, “there is nothing at all to fear. I have dipped my foot in the river of death every morning before I have had my breakfast, and I am not afraid to die now.” You remember that dear saint who died in the night, and who had left written on a piece of paper by her bedside these lines which, before she fell asleep, she felt strong enough to pencil down?—

“Since Jesus is mine, I’ll not fear undressing, But gladly put off these garments of clay— To die in the Lord, is a Covenant blessing, Since Jesus to Glory thro’ death led the way.”

It was well that she could say it—and may we be able to say the same whenever the Master calls us to go up higher! I want, dear Friends, that we should, all of us, have as much willingness to depart as if it were a matter of will with us! Blessed be God it is not left to our choice—it is not left to our will when we shall die. God has appointed that day and ten thousand devils cannot consign us to the grave before our time! We shall not die till God decrees it— *“Plagues and deaths around me fly, Till He please I cannot die!*

*Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."*

But let us be just as willing to depart as if it were really a matter of choice, for, wisely, carefully, coolly consider that if it were left to us, we should none of us be wise if we did not choose to go! Apart from the coming of our Lord, the most miserable thing that I know of would be a suspicion that we might not die. Do you know what quaint old Rowland Hill used to say when he found himself getting very old? He said, "Surely they must be forgetting me up there." And every now and then, when some dear old saint was dying, he would say, "When you get to Heaven, give my love to John Berridge, and John Bunyan and ever so many more of the good Johns, and tell them I hope they will see poor old Rowley up there before long." Well, there was common sense in that wishing to get Home, longing to be with God. To be with Christ is far better than to be here!

Sobriety itself would make us choose to die! Well, then, do not let us run back and become utterly unwilling and struggle and strive and fret and fume over it. When I hear of Believers who do not like to talk about death, I am afraid concerning them. It is greatly wise to be familiar with our resting place. When I went, recently, to the cemetery at Norwood, to lay the body of our dear Brother Perkins there for a little while, I felt that it was a healthy thing for me to stand at the grave's brink and to walk amid that forest of memorials of the dead, for this is where I, too, must go. You living men, come and view the ground where you must shortly lie and, as it must be so, let us who are Believers welcome it!

But, what if you are not Believers? Ah, that is another matter altogether! If you have not believed in Christ, you may well be afraid even to rest on the seat where you are sitting! I wonder that the earth itself does not say, "O God, I will not hold this wretched sinner up any longer! Let me open my mouth and swallow him!" All nature must hate the man who hates God! Surely, all things must loathe to minister to the life of a man who does not live unto God. Oh that you would seek the Lord and trust Christ and find eternal life! If you have done so, do not be afraid to go forth to live, or to die, just as God pleases.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *JOHN 15:1-8.*

Verse 1. *I am the true vine.* Now we know where to find the true Church. It is to be found only in Christ and in those who are joined to Him in mystical

but real union. “I am the true vine.”

1. *And My Father is the vinedresser.* Now we know who is the true Guardian of the Church. Not the so-called “holy father” at Rome, but that Father above, who is the true Guardian, Ruler, Keeper, Preserver, Purifier, Vinedresser of the one Church, the vine!

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* There are many such branches, in Christ’s visible Church which are not fruit-bearing branches and, consequently, are not partakers of the sap of life and Grace which flows into the branches that are vitally joined to the central stem. These fruitless branches are to be taken away.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* There is some work, then, for the knife upon *all* the branches—cutting off for those that are fruitless—cutting for those that are bearing some fruit that they may bring forth yet more.

3. *Now you are clean [purged] through the word which I have spoken unto you.* The Word is often the knife with which the great Vinedresser prunes the vine. And, Brothers and Sisters, if we were more willing to feel the edge of the Word, and to let it cut away even something that may be very dear to us, we would not need so much pruning by affliction. It is because that first knife does not always produce the desired result that another sharp tool is used by which we are effectually pruned.

4. *Abide in Me, and I in you.* “Do not merely find a temporary shelter in Me, as a ship runs into harbor in stormy weather and then comes out again when the gale is over, but cast anchor in Me, as the vessel does when it reaches its desired haven. Be not as branches that are tied on and so can be taken off, but be livingly joined to Me. ‘Abide in Me.’”

4. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me.* You must bear fruit, or else be cast away, but you cannot bear any fruit except by real union and constant communion with Jesus Christ your Lord!

5. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.* Not merely will you do very little, but you can do nothing at all if you are severed from Christ! You are absolutely and entirely dependent upon Christ, both for your life and for your fruit-bearing. Do we not wish to have it so, Beloved? It is the incipient principle of apostasy when a man wishes to be independent of Christ in any degree—when he says, “Give me the portion

of goods that falls to me that I may have something in hand, some spending money of my own.” No, you must, from day to day, from hour to hour and even from moment to moment, derive life, light, love, everything that is good from Christ! What a blessing that it is so!

6. *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.* There is a sad future in store for tares, according to another parable, but, somehow, there is a much sadder lot reserved for those that were, in some sense, branches of the vine—those who made a profession of faith in Christ, though they were never vitally united to Him. Those who, for a while, did run well, yet were hindered. What was it that hindered them that they should not obey the Truth of God? Oh, it is sad, indeed, that any should have had any sort of connection with that Divine Stem and yet should be cast into the fire!

7. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.* Do not think that all men can pray alike effectually, for it is not so. There are some whom God will hear and some whom God will not hear. And there are some even of His own children whom He will hear in things absolutely vital and essential, to whom He never gave carte blanche after this fashion. “You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” No, if you will not hear God’s words, He will not hear yours! And if His words do not abide in you, your words shall not have power with Him. They may be directed to Heaven, but the Lord will not listen to them so as to have regard to them. Oh, it needs very tender walking for one who would be mighty in prayer! You shall find that those who have had their will at the Throne of Grace are men who have done God’s will in other places—it must be so. The greatest favorite at court will have a double portion of the jealousy of his monarch, and he must be especially careful that he orders his steps aright, or else the king will not continue to favor him as he was known to do. There is a sacred discipline in Christ’s house, a part of which consists in this, that, as our obedience to our God declines, so will our power in prayer decrease at the same time.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that he bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* If we are His true disciples, we also shall bring forth much fruit.

—Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software,
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EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

46; Joh 19:25-30.

We have often read the story of our Savior's sufferings, but we cannot read it too often. Let us, therefore, once again repair to "the place which is called Calvary." As we just now sang—

*"Come, let us stand beneath the Cross,
So may the blood from out His side
Fall gently on us, drop by drop.
Jesus, our Lord is crucified."*

We will read, first, Luke's account of our Lord's crucifixion and death. **Luke 23:33.** *And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.* They gave Jesus the place of dishonor. Reckoning Him to be the worst criminal of the three, they put Him between the other two. They heaped upon Him the utmost scorn which they could give to a malefactor—and in so doing they unconsciously honored Him. Jesus always deserves the chief place wherever He is. In all things He must have the pre-eminence. He is King of sufferers as well as King of saints.

34. *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* How startled they must have been to hear such words from One who was about to be put to death for a supposed crime! The men that drove the nails, the men that lifted up the tree must have been started back with amazement when they heard Jesus talk to God as His Father—and pray for them—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Did ever Roman legionary hear such words before? I should say not. They were so distinctly and diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of Rome. There it was, blow for blow—only in the case of Jesus, they gave blows where none had been received. The crushing cruelty of the Romans must have been startled, indeed, at such words as these, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

34, 35. *And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood*

beholding. The gambling soldiers little dreamed that they were fulfilling the 22nd Psalm, which so fully sets forth our Savior's sufferings and which He probably repeated while He hung on the tree. David wrote, "They parted My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture." "And the people stood beholding," gazing, looking on the cruel spectacle. You and I would not have done that—there is a public sentiment which has trained us to hate the sight of cruelty, especially of deadly cruelty to one of our own race—but these people thought that they did no harm when they "stood beholding." They also were thus fulfilling the Scriptures, for the 17th verse of the 22nd Psalm says, "They look and stare upon Me."

35. *And the rulers also with them derided Him.* Laughed at Him, made Him the object of course jests.

35, 36. *Saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is Christ, the Chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar.* In mockery, not giving it to Him, as they did later in mercy, but in mockery, pretending to present Him with weak wine, such as they drank.

37. *And saying, If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.* I fancy the scorn that they threw into their taunt—"If You are the King of the Jews"—that was a bit of their own. "Save yourself"—that they borrowed from the rulers. Sometimes a scoffer or a mocker cannot exhibit all the bitterness that is in his heart except by using borrowed terms, as these soldiers did.

38. *And a superscription also was written over Him in the letters of Greek, Latin and Hebrew—THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.* John tells us that Pilate wrote this title and that the chief priests tried in vain to get him to alter it. It was written in the three current languages of the time, so that the Greek, the Roman and the Jew might, alike, understand who He was who was thus put to death. Pilate did not know as much about Christ as we do, or He might have written, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS AND OF THE GENTILES, TOO.

39. *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed at Him, saying, If You are Christ, save Yourself and us.* He, too, borrows this speech from the rulers who derided Christ, only putting the words, "and us," as a bit of originality. "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

40-41. *But the other answering rebuked him saying, Do you not fear God,*

seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss. A fine testimony to Christ—“This Man has done nothing amiss”—nothing unbecoming, nothing out of order, nothing criminal, certainly—but nothing even, “amiss.” This testimony was well spoken by this dying thief.

42-46. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up His ghost. He yielded His life. He did not die, as we have to do, because our appointed time has come, but willingly the great Sacrifice parted with His life—“He gave up the ghost.” He was a willing Sacrifice for guilty men. Now let us see what John says concerning these hours of agony, these hours of triumph.

John 19:25. *Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. Last at the Cross, first at the sepulcher. No woman’s lips betrayed her Lord; no woman’s hands ever smote Him; their eyes wept for Him; they gazed upon Him with pitying awe and love. God bless the Marys! When we see so many of them about the Cross, we feel that we honor the very name of Mary.*

26. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the Disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said unto His mother, Woman, behold your son! Sad, sad spectacle! Now was fulfilled the word of Simeon, “Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” Did the Savior mean, as He gave a glance to John, “Woman, you are losing one Son, but yonder stands another who will be a son to you in My absence”? “Woman, behold your son!”

27. Then said He to the Disciple, Behold your mother! “Take her as your mother, stand in My place, care for her as I have cared for her.” Those who love Christ best shall have the honor of taking care of His Church and of His poor. Never say of any poor relative or friend, the widow or the fatherless, “They are a great burden to me.” Oh, no! Say, “They are

a great honor to me—my Lord has entrusted them to my care.” John thought so—let us think so! Jesus selected the Disciple He loved best to take His mother under his care. He selects those whom He loves best, today, and puts His poor people under their wings. Take them gladly and treat them well.

27. And from that hour that Disciple took her into his own home. You expected him to do it, did you not? He loved his Lord so well.

28. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. There was a prophecy to that effect in the Psalms, and He must fulfill it. Think of our dying Savior prayerfully going through the whole of the Scriptures and carefully fulfilling all that is there written concerning Him—“That the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, I thirst.”

29, 30. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, For He did receive it. It was a weak kind of wine, commonly drunk by the soldiers. This is not that mixed potion which He refused, wine mingled with myrrh, which was intended to stupefy the dying in their pains—“When He had tasted thereof, He would not drink”—for He would not be stupefied. He came to suffer to the bitter end the penalty of sin and He would not have His sorrow mitigated. But when this slight refreshment was offered to Him, He received it. Having just expressed His human weakness by saying, “I thirst,” He now manifests His all-sufficient strength by crying, *with a loud voice* as Matthew, Mark and Luke all testify.

30. He said, It is finished. What, “it,” was it that was finished? I will not attempt to expound it. It is the biggest, “it,” that ever was! Turn it over and you will see that it will grow, and grow, and grow, and grow till it fills the whole earth—“It is finished.”

30. And He lowered His head, and gave up the ghost. He did not give up the ghost and *then* bow His head because He was dead. But He bowed His head as though in the act of worship, or as leaning it down upon His Father’s bosom—and *then* gave up the ghost.

Thus have we had two Gospel pictures of our dying Lord. May we remember them and learn the lessons they are intended to teach.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—561, 279, 278.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software,

THE SHORTEST OF THE SEVEN CRIES

NO. 1409

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 14, 1878, BY C.
H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.” [Joh 19:28](#).

IT was most fitting that every word of our Lord upon the Cross should be gathered up and preserved. As not a bone of His shall be broken, so not a word shall be lost. The Holy Spirit took special care that each of the sacred utterances should be fittingly recorded. There were, as you know, seven of those last words and seven is the number of perfection and fullness, the number which blends the three of the infinite God with the four of complete creation. Our Lord, in His death-cries, as in all else, was perfection itself. There is a fullness of meaning in each utterance which no man shall be able fully to bring forth and, when combined, they make up a vast deep of thought which no human line can fathom.

Here, as everywhere else, we are constrained to say of our Lord, “Never man spoke like this Man.” In all the anguish of His spirit, His last words prove Him to have remained fully self-possessed, true to His forgiving Nature, true to His kingly office, true to His filial relationship, true to His God, true to His love of the written Word, true to His glorious work and true to His faith in His Father. As these seven sayings were so faithfully recorded, we do not wonder that they have frequently been the subject of devout meditation. Fathers and confessors, preachers and Divines have delighted to dwell upon every syllable of these matchless cries. These solemn sentences have shone like the seven golden candlesticks or the seven stars of the Apocalypse and have lighted multitudes of men to Him who spoke them.

Thoughtful men have drawn a wealth of meaning from them and in so doing have arranged them into different groups and placed them under several heads. I cannot give you more than a mere taste of this rich subject, but I have been most struck with two ways of regarding our Lord's last

words. First, they teach and confirm many of the doctrines of our holy faith. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” is the first. Here is the forgiveness of sin—free forgiveness in answer to the Savior’s plea.

“Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” Here is the safety of the Believer in the hour of his departure and his instant admission into the Presence of his Lord. It is a blow at the fable of “purgatory” which strikes it to the heart.

“Woman, behold your son!” This very plainly sets forth the true and proper humanity of Christ, who, to the end, recognized His human relationship to Mary, of whom He was born. Yet His language teaches us not to worship her, for He calls her, “woman,” but to honor *Him*, who in His direst agony thought of her needs and griefs, as He also thinks of all His people, for these are His mother and sister and brother. “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” is the fourth cry, and it illustrates the penalty endured by our Substitute when He bore our sins and was forsaken of His God. The sharpness of that sentence no exposition can fully disclose to us—it is keen as the very edge and point of the sword which pierced His heart.

“I thirst,” is the fifth cry, and its utterance teaches us the truth of Scripture, for all things were accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled and, therefore, our Lord said, “I thirst.” Holy Scripture remains the basis of our faith, established by every Word and act of our Redeemer. The last word but one is, “It is finished.” There is the complete justification of the Believer, since the work by which he is accepted is fully accomplished. The last of His last words is also taken from the Scriptures and shows where His mind was feeding. He cried, before He bowed the head which He had held erect amid all His conflict, as one who never yielded, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” In that cry there is reconciliation to God. He who stood in our place has finished all His work and now His spirit comes back to the Father and He brings us with Him! Every word, therefore, teaches us some grand fundamental doctrine of our blessed faith. “He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”

A second mode of treating these seven cries is to view them as setting forth the Person and offices of our Lord who uttered them. “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”—here we see the Mediator interceding—Jesus standing before the Father pleading for the guilty. “Verily I say unto you, today shall you be with Me in Paradise”—this is the Lord Jesus in kingly power, opening, with the key of David, a door which none can shut,

admitting into the gates of Heaven the poor soul who had confessed Him on the tree. Hail, everlasting King in Heaven, You admit to Your Paradise whomever You will! Nor do You set a time for waiting, but instantly You set wide the gate of pearl! You have all power in Heaven as well as upon earth.

Then came, “Woman, behold your son!” Here we see the Son of Man in the gentleness of a son caring for His bereaved mother. In the former cry, as He opened Paradise, you saw the Son of God—now you see Him who was verily and truly born of a woman, made under the Law—and under the Law you see Him still, for He honors His mother and cares for her in the last article of death. Then comes the, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Here we behold His human soul in anguish, His inmost heart overwhelmed by the withdrawing of Jehovah’s face and made to cry out as if in perplexity and amazement.

“I thirst,” is His human body tormented by grievous pain. Here you see how the mortal flesh had to share in the agony of the inward spirit. “It is finished” is the last word but one and there you see the perfected Savior, the Captain of our salvation, who has completed the undertaking upon which He had entered—finished transgression, made an end of sin—and brought in everlasting righteousness. The last expiring word, in which He commended His spirit to His Father, is the note of acceptance for Himself and for us all. As He commends His spirit into the Father’s hand, so does He bring all Believers near to God and from then on we are in the hands of the Father, who is greater than all and none shall pluck us from His hands. Is not this a fertile field of thought? May the Holy Spirit often lead us to glean here!

There are many other ways in which these words might be read and they would be found to be all full of instruction. Like the steps of a ladder or the links of a golden chain, there is a mutual dependence and interlinking of each of the cries, so that one leads to another and that to a third. Separately or in connection, our Master’s words overflow with instruction to thoughtful minds. But of all, save one, I must say, “Of which we cannot now speak particularly.” Our text is the shortest of all the words of Calvary. It stands as two words in our language—“I thirst”—but in the Greek it is only one.

I cannot say that it is short and sweet, for, alas, it was bitterness, itself, to our Lord Jesus! And yet out of its bitterness I trust there will come great

sweetness to us. Though bitter to Him in the speaking, it will be sweet to us in the hearing—so sweet that all the bitterness of our trials shall be forgotten as we remember the vinegar and gall of which He drank. We shall, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, try to regard these words of our Savior in a five-fold light. First, we shall look upon them as THE ENSIGN OF HIS TRUE HUMANITY.

I. Jesus said, “I thirst,” and this is the complaint of a *man*. Our Lord is the Maker of the ocean and the waters that are above the firmament—it is His hand that stays or opens the bottles of Heaven and sends rain upon the evil and upon the good. “The sea is His and He made it,” and all fountains and springs are of His digging. He pours out the streams that run among the hills, the torrents which rush down the mountains and the flowing rivers which enrich the plains. One could have said, “If He were thirsty He would not tell *us*, for all the clouds and rains would be glad to refresh His brow and the brooks and streams would joyously flow at His feet.” And yet, though He was Lord of all, He had so fully taken upon Himself the form of a Servant and was so perfectly made in the likeness of sinful flesh that He cried with fainting voice, “I thirst.”

How truly Man He is! He is, indeed, “bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,” for He bears our infirmities. I invite you to meditate upon the true humanity of our Lord very reverently and very lovingly. Jesus was proven to be really Man because He suffered the pains which belong to manhood. Angels cannot suffer thirst. A phantom, as some have called Him, could not suffer in this fashion. Jesus really suffered, not only the more refined pains of delicate and sensitive minds, but the rougher and common pangs of flesh and blood. Thirst is a common-place misery, such as may happen to peasants or beggars. It is a real pain and not a thing of a fancy or a nightmare of dreamland. Thirst is no royal grief, but an evil of universal manhood—Jesus is Brother to the poorest and most humble of our race.

Our Lord, however, endured thirst to an extreme degree, for it was the thirst of death and more which was upon Him—it was the thirst of one whose death was not a common one, for, “He tasted death for every man.” That thirst was caused, perhaps, in part by the loss of blood and by the fever created by the irritation caused by His four grievous wounds. The nails were fastened in the most sensitive parts of the body and the wounds were widened as the weight of His body dragged the nails through His blessed

flesh and tore His tender nerves. The extreme tension produced a burning feverishness. It was pain that dried His mouth and made it like an oven—till He declared, in the language of the 22nd Psalm, “My tongue cleaves to My jaws.” It was a thirst such as none of us have ever known, for not yet has the death dew condensed upon our brows. We shall, perhaps, know it in our measure in our dying hour, but not yet, nor ever so terribly as He did.

Our Lord felt that grievous drought of dissolution by which all moisture seems dried up and the flesh returns to the dust of death. This those know who have commenced to tread the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus, being a Man, escaped none of the ills which are allotted to man in death. He is, indeed, “Immanuel, God With Us” everywhere. Believing this, let us tenderly feel how very near akin to us our Lord Jesus has become. You have been ill and you have been parched with fever as He was. And then you, too, have gasped out, “I thirst.” Your path runs hard by that of your Master. He said, “I thirst,” in order that someone might bring Him drink, even as you have wished to have a cooling draught handed to you when you could not help yourself.

Can you help feeling how very near Jesus is to us when His lips must be moistened with a sponge and He must be so dependent upon others as to ask for a drink from their hands? Next time your fevered lips murmur, “I am very thirsty,” you may say to yourself, “Those are sacred words, for my Lord spoke in that fashion.” The words, “I thirst,” are a common voice in death chambers. We can never forget the painful scenes of which we have been witness, when we have watched the dissolving of the human frame. Some of those whom we loved very dearly, we have seen quite unable to help themselves. The death sweat has been upon them and this has been one of the marks of their approaching dissolution, that they have been parched with thirst and could only mutter between their half-closed lips, “Give me a drink.”

Ah, beloved, our Lord was so truly Man that all our griefs remind us of Him! The next time we are thirsty we may gaze upon Him! And whenever we see a friend faint and thirsting while dying we may behold our Lord dimly, but truly, mirrored in his members. How near akin the thirsty Savior is to us! Let us love Him more and more! How great the love which led Him to such a condescension as this! Do not let us forget the infinite distance between the Lord of Glory on His Throne and the Crucified dried

up with thirst! A river of the Water of Life, pure as crystal, proceeds today out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb, and yet once He condescended to say, "I thirst."

He is Lord of fountains and all deeps, but not a cup of cold water was placed to His lips. Oh, if He had at any time said, "I thirst," before His angelic guards, they would surely have emulated the courage of the men of David when they cut their way to the well of Bethlehem that was within the gate and drew water in jeopardy of their lives! Who among us would not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to the Lord? And yet He placed Himself, for our sakes, into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon Him! And when He cried, "I thirst," they gave Him vinegar to drink! Glorious stoop of our exalted Head! O Lord Jesus, we love You and we worship You! We would gladly lift Your name on high in grateful remembrance of the depths to which You did descend!

While thus we admire His condescension, let our thoughts also turn with delight to His sure sympathy, for if Jesus said, "I thirst," then He knows all our frailties and woes! The next time we are in pain or are suffering depression of spirit we will remember that our Lord understands it all, for He has had practical, personal experience of it. Neither in torture of body nor in sadness of heart are we deserted by our Lord! His line is parallel with ours. The arrow which has lately pierced you, my Brother, was first stained with His blood! The cup of which you are made to drink, though it is very bitter, bears the marks of His lips about its brim! He has traversed the mournful way before you and every footprint you leave in the soil is stamped side by side with His footprints. Let the sympathy of Christ, then, be fully believed in and deeply appreciated, since He said, "I thirst."

From now on, also, let us cultivate the spirit of resignation, for we may well rejoice to carry a Cross which His shoulders have borne before us! Beloved, if our Master said, "I thirst," do we expect to drink every day of streams from Lebanon? He was innocent and yet He thirsted—shall we marvel if guilty ones are now and then chastened? If He were so poor that His garments were stripped from Him and He was hung up upon the tree, penniless and friendless, hungering and thirsting, will you groan and murmur because you bear the yoke of poverty and need? There is bread

upon your table, today, and there will be at least a cup of cold water to refresh you. You are not, therefore, so poor as He.

Complain not, then. Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord? Let patience have her perfect work. You suffer. Perhaps, dear Sister, you carry about with you a gnawing disease which eats at your heart, but Jesus took our sicknesses and His cup was more bitter than yours. In your chamber let the gasp of your Lord as He said, “I thirst,” go through your ears and as you hear it, let it touch your heart and cause you to gird up yourself and say, “Does He say, ‘I thirst’? Then I will thirst with Him and not complain! I will suffer with Him and not murmur.” The Redeemer’s cry of, “I thirst,” is a solemn lesson of patience to His afflicted.

Once again, as we think of this, “I thirst,” which proves our Lord’s humanity, let us resolve to shun no denials, but rather court them that we may be conformed to His image. May we not be half ashamed of our pleasures when He says, “I thirst”? May we not despise our loaded table while He is so neglected? Shall it ever be a hardship to be denied the satisfying draught when He said, “I thirst”? Shall carnal appetites be indulged and bodies pampered when Jesus cried, “I thirst”? What if the bread is dry? What if the medicine is nauseous? For His thirst there was no relief but gall and vinegar—dare we complain?

For His sake we may rejoice in self-denials and accept Him and a crust as all we desire between here and Heaven. A Christian living to indulge us would not willingly pour out his soul unto death if he might but give refreshment to us. And yet Jesus placed Himself, for our sakes, into a position of shame and suffering where none would wait upon Him— when He cried, “I thirst,” they gave Him vinegar to drink! A Christian living to indulge the base appetites of a brute beast, to eat and to drink almost to gluttony and drunkenness, is utterly unworthy of the name. The conquest of the appetites, the entire subjugation of the flesh must be achieved, for before our great Exemplar said, “It is finished,” wherein I think He reached the greatest height of all, He stood as only upon the next lower step to that elevation and said, “I thirst.” The power to suffer for another, the capacity to be self-denying even to an extreme to accomplish some great work for God—this is a thing to be sought after and must be gained before our work is done. And in this Jesus is before us as our example and our strength.

Thus have I tried to spy out a measure of teaching, by using that one glass for the soul's eyes through which we look upon, "I thirst," as the ensign of His true humanity.

II. Secondly, we shall regard these words, "I thirst," as THE TOKEN OF HIS SUFFERING SUBSTITUTION. The great Surety says, "I thirst," because He is placed in the sinner's place and He must, therefore, undergo the penalty of sin for the ungodly. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" points to the anguish of His soul. "I thirst" expresses, in part, the torture of His body—they were both necessary because it is written of the God of Justice that He is "able to destroy both soul and body in Hell." And the pangs that are due to Law are of both kinds, touching both heart and flesh.

See, Brothers and Sisters, where sin begins, and mark that there it ends. It began with the mouth of appetite, when it was sinfully gratified, and it ends when a kindred appetite is graciously denied. Our first parents plucked forbidden fruit and, by eating, slew the race. Appetite was the door of sin and, therefore, in that point our Lord was put to pain. With, "I thirst," the evil is destroyed and receives its expiation. I saw the other day the emblem of a serpent with its tail in its mouth and if I carry it a little beyond the artist's intention, the symbol may set forth appetite swallowing up itself. A carnal appetite of the body—the satisfaction of the desire for food—first brought us down under the first Adam. And now the pang of thirst—the denial of what the body craved—restores us to our place.

Nor is this all. We know from experience that the present effect of sin in every man who indulges in it, is thirst of soul. The mind of man is like the daughters of the horseleech, which cry forever, "Give, give."

Metaphorically understood, thirst is dissatisfaction—the craving of the mind for something which it has not, but which it pines for. Our Lord says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink"—that thirst being the result of sin in every ungodly man at this moment. Now Christ, standing in the place of the ungodly, suffers thirst as a type of His enduring the result of sin.

More solemn, still, is the reflection that according to our Lord's own teaching, thirst will also be the eternal result of sin, for He says concerning the rich glutton, "In Hell he lifts up his eyes, being in torment," and his prayer, which was denied him, was, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am

tormented in this flame.”

Now remember, if Jesus had not thirsted, every one of us would have thirsted forever afar off from God, with an impassable gulf between us and Heaven! Our sinful tongues, blistered by the fever of passion, must have burned forever had not His tongue been tormented with thirst in our place. I suppose that the, “I thirst,” was uttered softly, so that perhaps only one and another who stood near the Cross heard it at all, in contrast with the louder cry of, “Lama Sabachthani” and the triumphant shout of, “It is finished!” But that soft, expiring sigh, “I thirst,” has ended for us the thirst which otherwise, insatiably fierce, had preyed upon us throughout eternity.

Oh, wondrous substitution of the Just for the unjust, of God for man, of the perfect Christ for guilty us, Helldeserving rebels! Let us magnify and bless our Redeemer’s name! It seems to me very wonderful that this, “I thirst,” should be, as it were, the clearance of it all. He had no sooner said, “I thirst,” and sipped the vinegar, than He shouted, “It is finished!” And all was over—the battle was fought and the victory won forever—and our great Deliverer’s thirst was the sign of His having smitten the last foe! The flood of His grief had passed the high-water mark and began to be relieved. The, “I thirst,” was the bearing of the last pang—what if I say it was the expression of the fact that His pangs had, at last, begun to *cease* and their fury had spent themselves and left Him able to note His lesser pains?

The excitement of a great struggle makes men forget thirst and faintness. It is only when all is over that they come back to themselves and note the spending of their strength. The great agony of being forsaken by God was over and He felt faint when the strain was withdrawn. I like to think of our Lord’s saying, “It is finished,” directly after He had exclaimed, “I thirst” because these two voices come so naturally together. Our glorious Samson had been fighting our foes. Heaps upon heaps, He had slain His thousands, and now like Samson He was terribly thirsty. He sipped of the vinegar and He was refreshed—and no sooner has He thrown off the thirst than He shouted like a conqueror, “It is finished,” and quit the field, covered with renown!

Let us exult as we see our Substitute going through with His work even to the bitter end and then with a, “Consummatum est,” returning to His Father! O Souls, burdened with sin, rest here, and resting, live!

III. We will now take the text in a third way and may the Spirit of God instruct us once again. The utterance of, “I thirst,” brought out A TYPE OF

MAN'S TREATMENT OF HIS LORD. It was a confirmation of the Scripture testimony with regard to man's natural enmity to God. According to modern thought man is a very fine and noble creature, struggling to become better. He is greatly to be commended and admired, for his sin is said to be a seeking after God and his superstition is a struggling after light. Great and worshipful being that he is, the Truth of God is to be altered for him! The Gospel is to be modulated to suit the tone of his various generations and all the arrangements of the universe are to be rendered subservient to his interests.

Justice must fly the field lest it be severe to so deserving a being! As for *punishment*, it must not be whispered to his polite ears. In fact, the tendency is to exalt man *above* God and give him the highest place! But such is not the truthful estimate of man according to the Scriptures—there, man is a fallen creature with a carnal mind which cannot be reconciled to God! He is a worse than brutish creature, rendering evil for good and treating his God with vile ingratitude. Alas, man is the slave and the dupe of Satan and a black-hearted traitor to his God! Did not the prophecies say that man would give to his Incarnate God gall to eat and vinegar to drink? It is done! He came to save and man denied Him hospitality!

At first there was no room for Him at the inn and at the last there was not one cool cup of water for Him to drink—when He thirsted they gave Him vinegar to drink! This is man's treatment of His Savior! Universal manhood, left to itself, rejects, crucifies and mocks the Christ of God! This was the act, too, of man at his best, when he is moved to pity, for it seems clear that he who lifted up the wet sponge to the Redeemer's lips did it in compassion. I think that Roman soldier meant well, at least well for a rough warrior with his little light and knowledge. He ran and filled a sponge with vinegar—it was the best way he knew of putting a few drops of moisture to the lips of One who was suffering so much! But though he felt a degree of pity, it was such as one might show to a dog—he felt no reverence—but mocked as he relieved.

We read, "The soldiers also mocked Him, offering Him vinegar." When our Lord cried, "Eloi, Eloi," and afterwards said, "I thirst," the persons around the Cross said, "Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him," mocking Him and, according to Mark, he who gave the vinegar uttered much the same words. He pitied the Sufferer, but he thought so little of Him that he joined in the voices of scorn. Even when man pities the

sufferings of Christ—and man would have ceased to be human if he did not—still he scorns Him! The very cup which man gives to Jesus is at once scorn and pity, for, “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” See how man at his best mingles admiration of the Savior’s Person with scorn of His claims—writing books to hold Him up as an example and at the same moment rejecting His Deity! Admitting that He was a wonderful Man, but denying His most sacred mission! Extolling His ethical teaching and then trampling on His blood—thus giving Him drink, but that drink, vinegar! O my Hearers, beware of praising Jesus and denying His atoning Sacrifice! Beware of rendering Him homage and dishonoring His name at the same time! Alas, my Brothers and Sisters, I cannot say much on the score of man’s cruelty to our Lord without touching myself and you. Have we not often given Him vinegar to drink? Did we not do so years ago before we knew Him? We used to melt when we heard about His sufferings, but we did not turn from our sins. We gave Him our tears and then grieved Him with our sins! We thought, sometimes, that we loved Him, as we heard the story of His death, but we did not change our lives for His sake, nor put our trust in Him—and so we gave Him vinegar to drink.

Nor does the grief end here, for have not the best works we have ever done, the best feelings we have ever felt and the best prayers we have ever offered been tart and sour with sin? Can they be compared to generous wine? Are they not more like sharp vinegar? I wonder He has ever received them, as one marvels why He received this vinegar—and yet He has received them and smiled upon us for presenting them. He knew once how to turn water into wine and in matchless love He has often turned our sour drink offerings into something sweet to Himself, though in themselves, I think, they have been the juice of sour grapes, sharp enough to set His teeth on edge. We may, therefore, come before Him, with all the rest of our race, when God subdues them to repentance by His love and look on Him whom we have pierced and mourn for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

We may well remember our faults this day—

“We, whose proneness to forget

Your dear love, on Olivet

Bathed Your brow with bloody sweat.

We, whose sins, with awful power,

Like a cloud did over You lower,

In that God-excluding hour.

*We, who still, in thought and deed,
Often hold the bitter reed
To You, in Your time of need."*

I have touched this point very lightly because I want a little more time to dwell upon a fourth view of this scene. May the Holy Spirit help us to hear a fourth tuning of the dolorous music, "I thirst."

IV. I think, beloved Friends, that the cry of, "I thirst," was THE MYSTICAL EXPRESSION OF THE DESIRE OF HIS HEART—"I thirst." I cannot think that natural thirst was all He felt. He doubtless thirsted for water, but His soul was thirsty in a higher sense. Indeed, He seems only to have spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled as to the offering Him vinegar. Always was He in harmony with Himself and His body was always expressive of His soul's cravings as well as of its own longings. "I thirst" meant that His heart was thirsting to save men. This thirst had been on Him from the earliest of His earthly days. "Know you not," He said, while yet a boy, "that I must be about My Father's business?"

Did He not tell His disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished"? He thirsted to pluck us from between the jaws of Hell, to pay our redemption price and set us free from the eternal condemnation which hung over us. And when on the Cross the work was almost done, His thirst was not relieved and could not be till He could say, "It is finished."

It is almost done, Christ of God! You have almost saved Your people! There remains but one thing more, that You should actually die and, therefore, Your strong desire to come to the end and complete Your labor. You were still straitened till the last pang was felt and the last word spoken to complete the full redemption and, therefore, Your cry, "I thirst." Beloved, there is now upon our Master and there always has been, a thirst after the love of His people. Do you not remember how that thirst of His was strong in the old days of the Prophet? Call to mind His complaint in the 5th chapter of Isaiah, "Now will I sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved touching His vineyard. My Well-beloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein."

What was He looking for from His vineyard and its winepress? What but

for the juice of the vine that He might be refreshed? “And He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes”—vinegar, not wine—sourness not sweetness. So He was thirsting then. According to the sacred canticle of love, in the 5th chapter of the Song of Songs, we learn that when He drank in those olden times it was in the garden of His Church that He was refreshed. What does He say? “I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk; eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved.”

In the same song He speaks of His Church, and says, “The roof of your mouth is as the best wine for My Beloved, that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.” And yet again in the 8th chapter the bride says, “I would cause You to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.” Yes, He loves to be with His people! They are the garden where He walks for refreshment. And their love, their graces, are the milk and wine of which He delights to drink. Christ was always thirsty to save men and to be loved of men. And we see a type of His life-long desire when, being weary, He sat thus on the well and said to the woman of Samaria, “Give Me a drink.” There was a deeper meaning in His words than she dreamed of, as a verse further down fully proves, when He said to His disciples, “I have meat to eat that you know not of.” He derived *spiritual* refreshment from the winning of that woman’s heart to Himself.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, our blessed Lord has, at this time, a thirst for communion with each one of you who are His people, not because you can do Him good, but because He can do you good. He thirsts to bless you and to receive your grateful love in return. He thirsts to see you looking with believing eyes to His fullness and holding out your emptiness that He may supply it. He says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” For what does He? It is that He may eat and drink with you, for He promises that if we open to Him, He will enter in and sup with us and we with Him. He is still thirsty, you see, for our poor love, and surely we cannot deny it to Him. Come, let us pour out full flagons until His joy is fulfilled in us! And what makes Him love us so? Ah, that I cannot tell, except His own great love. He must love—it is His Nature. He must love His chosen whom He has once begun to love, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever. His great love makes Him thirst to have us much nearer than we are. He will never be satisfied till all His redeemed are beyond gunshot of the enemy. I will give

you one of His thirsty prayers—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory." He wants you, Brother, He wants you, dear Sister, He longs to have you wholly to Himself!

Come to Him in prayer! Come to Him in fellowship! Come to Him by perfect consecration! Come to Him by surrendering your whole being to the sweet mysterious influences of His Spirit! Sit at His feet with Mary. Lean on His breast with John. Yes, come with the spouse in the song and say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." He calls for that—will you not give it to Him? Is your heart so frozen that not a cup of cold water can be melted for Jesus? Are you lukewarm? O Brothers and Sisters, if He says, "I thirst," and you bring Him a lukewarm heart—that is *worse* than vinegar—for He has said, "I will spit you out of My mouth."

He can receive vinegar, but not lukewarm love! Come, bring Him your warm heart and let Him drink from that purified chalice as much as He wills. Let all your love be His. I know He loves to receive from you because He delights even in a cup of cold water that you give to one of His disciples! How much more will He delight in the giving of your whole self to Him? Therefore, while He thirsts give Him a drink this very day!

V. Lastly, the cry of, "I thirst," is to us THE PATTERN OF OUR DEATH WITH HIM. Know you not, Beloved—for I speak to those who know the Lord—that you are crucified together with Christ? Well, then, what does this cry mean, "I thirst," but this—that we should thirst, too? We do not thirst after the old manner wherein we were bitterly afflicted, for He has said, "He that drinks of this water shall never thirst." But now we covet a *new* thirst, a refined and heavenly appetite, a craving for our Lord! O blessed Master, if we are, indeed, nailed up to the tree with You, give us to thirst after You with a thirst which only the cup of "the new Covenant in Your blood" can ever satisfy!

Certain philosophers have said that they love the pursuit of truth even better than the knowledge of truth. I differ from them greatly, but I will say this, that next to the actual enjoyment of my Lord's Presence, I love to hunger and to thirst after Him. Rutherford used words somewhat to this effect, "I thirst for my Lord and this is joy—a joy which no man takes from me. Even if I may not come to Him, yet shall I be full of consolation, for it is Heaven to thirst after Him, and surely He will never deny a poor soul liberty to

admire Him, and adore Him, and thirst after Him.” As for myself, I would grow more and more greedy after my Divine Lord and when I have much of Him I would still cry for more—and then for more and still more! My heart shall not be content till He is All in All to me and I am altogether lost in Him. O to be enlarged in soul so as to take deeper draughts of His sweet love, for our heart cannot have enough!

One would wish to be as the spouse, who, when she had already been feasting in the banqueting house and had found His fruit sweet to her taste, so that she was overjoyed, yet cried out, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.” She craved full flagons of love though she was already overpowered by it! This is a kind of sweet whereof if a man has much he must have more—and when he has more he is under a still greater necessity to receive more! His appetite is forever growing by that which it feeds upon, till he is filled with all the fullness of God. “I thirst”—yes, this is my soul’s word with her Lord. Borrowed from His lips it well suits my mouth—

*“I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share.
Your wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.
Dear fountain of delight unknown!
No longer sink below the brim
But overflow, and pour me down
A living and life-giving stream.”*

Jesus thirsted, then let us thirst in this dry and thirsty land where there is no water. Even as the hart pants after the water brooks, our souls would thirst after You, O God.

Beloved, let us thirst for the souls of our fellow men! I have already told you that such was our Lord’s mystical desire. Let it be ours, also. Brother, thirst to have your children saved! Brother, thirst I pray, to have your workpeople saved. Sister, thirst for the salvation of your class, thirst for the redemption of your family, thirst for the conversion of your husband! We ought all to have a longing for conversions. Is it so with each one of you? If not, bestir yourselves at once. Fix your hearts upon some unsaved one and thirst until he is saved. It is the way whereby many shall be brought to Christ, when this blessed soul-thirst of true Christian charity shall be upon those who are, themselves, saved!

Remember how Paul said, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” He would have sacrificed himself to save his countrymen, so heartily did he desire their eternal welfare! Let this mind be in you, also.

As for yourselves, thirst after perfection! Hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled. Hate sin and heartily loathe it. Thirst to be holy as God is holy! Thirst to be like Christ! Thirst to bring glory to His sacred name by complete conformity to His will! May the Holy Spirit work in you the complete pattern of Christ Crucified and to Him shall be praise forever and ever. Amen.

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THE SAVIOR'S THIRST

NO. 3385

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.” Joh 19:28.

THE early Christians were known to think and talk far more of our Savior than we do. Some of them were, perhaps, not quite so clear upon justification by faith as they ought to have been, but they were very clear about the merits of the precious blood. And if they did not always speak very clearly about the Doctrines of Grace, they spoke with wonderful power and savor about the “five” wounds—about the nail marks and the spear wound. I could wish that our religion would go back somewhat more to that personal apprehension of Christ than it does. By all means let us have dogmatic teaching, setting forth those most precious Truths of God that are our consolation, but better than all is the Person of Christ Himself—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We should do well if we more often stood in meditation at the foot of the Cross and viewed His wounds, counted the

precious drops as they fall and sought fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Some of those early saints wrote long treatises on the solitary wounds of Jesus—many of them passed whole days in contemplation of some minute part of His passion. We cannot imitate them in this respect—we have not the leisure. I am afraid we have not the mental application they possessed. Nevertheless, let us explore the sacred mystery as best we can. At this time would we get away to Calvary and there stand and hear our Redeemer crying, “I thirst,” as He bears for us the guilt of sin.

Very briefly we shall regard the text, first, as our Savior’s cry, and as only such. Secondly, we shall consider its relationship to ourselves. And thirdly, and sorrowfully, its relation to ungodly man. First, then, we will—

I. CONSIDER THIS CRY OF OUR SAVIOR—“I thirst.”

Is it not clear proof that He was certainly Man? Certain heretics sprang up in the early Church who asserted that the body of our Lord was only a phantom—that as God, He was here, but as Man He only exhibited Himself to the outward sense and did not actually exist in flesh and blood. But He thirsted. Now, a spirit has not thirst! A spirit neither eats nor drinks—it is immaterial and knows not the needs that belong to this poor flesh and blood! We may, therefore, rest quite sure that, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth”

No better proof could we have of the substantiality of His Manhood than the cry, “I thirst.” Herein, at all events, we can sympathize with Him. From the moment when He rose from the Communion Supper, saying, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom”—from that moment He had had no further refreshment, either of meat or of drink. Yet well He needed drink, for all through that long night in Gethsemane He sweated—we know what kind of sweat—as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground! Such toil as His might well have needed refreshment. Then He was hurried away to Caiaphas and afterwards to Pilate. He had to encounter the accusations of His enemies and a strong bridle He had to put upon Himself, that, like a sheep before her shearers, He might be dumb. There was a strain upon His system such as none of us ever have had to endure, or ever shall have—a strain such as we can never imagine—and yet not one morsel of bread, nor one drop of water crossed those blessed and parched lips! Well might He cry, “I thirst,” when, after so many hours of wrestling with the powers of

darkness, He was now about to die!

You remember, also, the peculiar way in which our Lord was put to death. The piercing of the hands and the feet was sure to bring on fever. Those members, though far remote from the vital parts, are yet full of the most delicate and tender nerves—and pain soon travels along them till the whole frame becomes hot with burning fever! Our Lord's own words in the 22nd Psalm will occur to you—"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death." Those of you who have been afflicted with fever far less serious than this, will recollect how it parched you like a potsherd and dried up all the juices of your system and all the moisture of your body like the parched fields of summer! You had, then, a thirst, indeed! But your Savior had a double cause for thirst—long fasting without food or drink and then the bitter pangs of death! Sympathize with Him then, Beloved, and remember that all this was for you—and for you as His enemies—for you as if there were no others in the world! Though He suffered for all His elect, yet especially for each one of His people were the nails driven, for each one did He thirst and for each one did He take a draught of the vinegar and the gall. Come, then, and kiss those blessed lips and bow before your Savior in reverent praise!

Further, my Brothers and Sisters, we are quite certain that our Lord, in saying, "I thirst," must have felt the extreme bitterness of thirst. He was no complainer. You never heard a word come from His lips when it might have been withheld. He must have been driven to dire extremity, indeed, when He thus proclaimed to friends and foes that He was thirsting for a drop of water. Some have said that this cry, "I thirst," coming, as it does, after the far more bitter and awful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" was an evidence of a turn in the Savior's conflict—that during all the first part of our Savior's suffering He was taken up with such anxious thought and with such internal anguish that He could not think of the thirst, which, grievous as it was, was but a minor pain in comparison with what He felt when His Father in justice turned away His face from Him—and that now He begins to collect His thoughts for awhile and is able to fight with His own personal bodily pains. It may be so. Possibly that cry was an indication that the battle had turned and that victory was coming to the suffering Hero. But, ah, Brothers and Sisters, however there may have come a gleam of sunshine in this cry compared to the blacker darkness, you can

never dream what a thirst that was that parched the Savior's mouth and lips! You will never feel such a thirst as He felt to its direst extent. Cold, hunger, nakedness and thirst may fall to your lot, but there was more of grief in His thirst than you can ever know! There was a bitterness here which my language cannot possibly bring out!

Another thought rises up to my mind—I will not mislead you here. I feel thankful to our Lord for saying, "I thirst!" Ah, Brothers and Sisters, sometimes when we are sorely afflicted, or have some little infirmity, perhaps not anything vital or mortal, though it pains us much, we complain, or at least we say, "I thirst." Now, are we wrong in so doing? Ought we to play the stoic? Ought we to be like the Indian at the stake who sings while he is roasting? Ought we to be like St. Lawrence on the gridiron? Is stoicism a part of Christianity? Oh, no! Jesus said, "I thirst," and herein He gave permission to all of you who are bowed down with your griefs and your sorrows to whisper them into the ears of those who watch by the bed, and to say, "I thirst." I daresay you have often felt ashamed of yourselves for this. You have said, "Now, if I had some huge trouble, or if the pangs I suffered were absolutely mortal, I could lean upon the Beloved's arm. But as for this ache, or this pain, it darts through my body and causes me much anguish, though it does not kill me." Well, but just as Jesus wept that He might let you weep on account of your sorrows and your griefs, so He says, "I thirst," that you might have permission patiently, as He did, to express your little complaints—that you might not think He sneers at you, or looks down upon you as though you were an alien—that you might know He sympathizes with you in it all!

He does not use language like that of Cassius when he laughed at Caesar because he was sick and said— "And when the fit was on him I did mark How he did shake—'tis true this god did shake— His coward lips did from their color fly!

And that same eye whose head does awe the world Did lose its luster—I did hear him groan!

Yes, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans Mark him, and write his speeches in their books, Alas, it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius,' As a sick girl."

And why should it not? He was but a man. He was but "as a sick girl," and what is there in a sick girl to despise, after all? Jesus Christ said, "I thirst,"

and in this He says to every sick girl, and every sick child, and every sick one throughout the world, “The Master, who is now in Heaven, but who once suffered on earth, despises not the tears of the sufferers, but has pity on them on their beds of sickness.”

Jesus said, “I thirst.” As our Lord used these words, may I ask you for a minute to contemplate it with wonder? Who was this that said, “I thirst”? Know you not that it was He who balanced the clouds and who filled the channels of the mighty deep? He said, “I thirst,” and yet in Him was a well of water springing up unto everlasting life! Yes, He who guided every river in its course and watered all the fields with grateful showers—He it was, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, before whom Hell trembles and the earth is filled with dismay! He whom Heaven adores and all eternity worships—He it was who said, “I thirst!” Matchless condescension—from the Infinity of God to the weakness of a thirsting, dying Man! And this, again I must remind you, was for you. He that suffered for you was no common mortal, no ordinary man, such as you are, but the perfect and ever blessed God, high above all principalities and powers and every name that is named! He it was who, with this condescending lowness of estate, stooped and cried, as you have done, “I thirst!”

Once more, in this cry of our Lord, “I thirst,” I think I see a trace of the Atonement which He was then offering. The pangs of Christ upon the Cross are to be regarded as a substitution for the sins and sorrows of ungodly men — “He bore that we might never bear His Father’s righteous ire.”

Now, Brothers and Sisters, a part of the punishment of the wicked in Hell is the deprivation of every form of comfort. Man refused to obey His Creator—the time will come when the Creator will refuse to succor man! Man refused to minister to God—the time will come when God’s creatures will not minister to man! Remember those solemn words of the Master when He said that the rich man was without a drop of water to cool his tongue and was tormented in the flame? And yet the water was withheld from coming near the sinner who had died in willful rebellion against God! Oh, my dear Friends, if we had our due, we should have none of the comforts of life! The very air would refuse to yield us breath and bread, the staff of life, to yield us nourishment! Yes, we would find the whole Creation in arms against us because we are up in arms against God! The time shall come when those who stand up against the Most High shall find no comfort left them—and no

hope of comfort—everything that can make existence tolerable shall be withdrawn and everything that can make it intolerable shall be poured upon them! For upon the wicked, God shall rain fire and brimstone, and a horrid tempest—this shall be the portion of their cup!

Behold, then, when Emmanuel stood for us and suffered in our place, He, too, must thirst! He must be deprived of every comfort, stripped naked to the last rag and hung up on the Cross as though earth rejected Him and Heaven would not receive Him! Midway between the two worlds He dies in the most abject poverty! And because of our sin, He cries, “I thirst!”

Beloved, never seek for companionship with any who would ignore the miseries of the Lord, for, depend upon it, in that proportion they lessen the glory of the Atonement. If it is but a light thing for the sinner to rebel against God, it was not a light thing for Christ to redeem him! It covered Christ with the greatest luster, for, after all, it stands out as one of His most resplendent works that He has redeemed us from going down into the Pit, having found a ransom for us! By so much the greater the love, by so much the greater is the salvation. Think not lightly of sin and its punishment, lest you come to think lightly of Christ and what He suffered to redeem you from your guilt! The cry, “I thirst,” is part of the substitutionary work which Christ performed when He thirsted, because, otherwise, sinners would have thirsted forever and have been denied all the pleasure, joy and peace of Heaven.

The meditation upon this cry as proceeding from our Lord invites one more remark. Will it be straining the text too far if we say that underlying those words, “I thirst,” there is something more than mere thirst for drink?

Once, when He sat upon the well of Samaria, He said to the poor harlot who met Him there, “Give Me a drink,” and He got a drink from her—a drink that the world knew nothing about when she gave her heart to Him, obedient to His Gospel. Christ is always thirsting after the salvation of precious souls and that cry on the Cross that thrilled all who listened to it was the outburst of the great heart of Jesus Christ as He saw the multitude, and He cried unto His God, “I thirst.” He thirsted to redeem mankind! He thirsted to accomplish the work of our salvation! This very day He still thirsts in that respect, as He is still willing to receive those who come to Him, still resolved that such as come shall never be cast out and still desirous that they may come! Oh, poor Souls, you do not thirst for Christ, but you little know how He thirsts for you! There is love in His heart

towards those who have no love to Him! Christ would not have you die. Christ would not have you cast into Hell! Give yourselves up, then, to the gentle sway of Him who for your souls' good, said, "I thirst." Oh, I wish that all we who love Christ knew more of this hungering and thirsting after the redemption of our fellow men. The Lord teach us to sympathize with them! If He wept for sinners, may our cheeks never be dry! He was in anguish for their souls, and we will not restrain our anguish because they will not be saved, but ignorantly, carelessly, or resolutely despise the Gospel of Christ!

Thus much upon this point, so far as it concerns our Lord, Himself. Turn not away your eyes, but look and listen as He cries, "I thirst." Very briefly, now let us notice—

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP AND OUR BEARING TOWARDS THIS CRY.

I shall address myself on this head to the people of God. And the first remark is this—Brothers and Sisters, because Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," you and I are delivered from that terrible thirst which once devoured us. We were awakened by the Holy Spirit, some of us, years ago, to perceive our danger. We had not known before what sin was—what a destroying fever it was. We had cherished it in our bosom, but when we began to discover our desperate position, we were compelled to thirst and cry for mercy. With some of us, our thirst was very great—we could scarcely sleep—and as for our meals, we left them untouched often in the agony of our despair. I do remember how my soul chose strangling rather than life! It seemed so hard to live under the frown of God, awakened to a sense of sin, but unable to get rid of the sin! Now at this moment that thirst has gone, for we have received the adoption, the salvation, the forgiveness! You came to Jesus as you were with all your thirst and you stooped down and drank of the crystal stream. And now you rejoice with unspeakable joy because your thirst is gone! Oh, clap your hands for very joy at the remembrance of it! Be humble that you should need His thirst to save you from thirst, but oh, be glad to think that the work is done and that you shall never thirst again as you did then, for, "he that drinks," says Christ, "of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, for it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Your insatiable desires are stayed! The horseleech within you that cried, "Give, give," at last is satisfied! The cravings of conscience that had been awakened by the love of God are satisfied! Now, oh, joy, your sorrow is over! Your peace, like a river has come, and your righteousness is like the

waves of the sea! Live happily, live joyously! Tell others what Christ has done for you. Eat not your morsel alone, but publish to the world that through the thirst of a dying Savior you have ceased to thirst!

And as you have done with that first thirst of bitter agony, now seek to be filled with another thirst—a thirst after more of Christ! Oh, that sweet wine of His love is very thirst-creating—those who have once tasted it need more of it! Thirst after a closer walk with Him! Thirst to know more of Him! Thirst to be more like He! Thirst to understand more the mystery of His sufferings and to be more full of anticipation of His blessed Advent—“Nearer, my God, to Thee; nearer to Thee.”

Be this your cry. Open your mouth wide, for He will fill it. Enlarge your desires, for He will satisfy them all. Be eager after more of Christ! Hunger and thirst after more of righteousness. All your desires shall be supplied you. Do not, therefore, stint yourself by narrowing them. Oh, that you could ask more at His hands, for—

*“All your capacious powers can ask,
In Christ do richly meet.”*

Were your imagination to stretch her wings and soar ever so far beyond the narrow bounds of space, she would weary long before she reached the fullness of God which dwells bodily in our Lord Jesus Christ!

Let me also invite you to cultivate another thirst—a thirst like that which we read our Lord thirsted with—for the conversion of our souls. Give us but a score of men that hunger and thirst for the conversion of others and we shall see good work done! But oh, we are so cold, callous and sleeping, though men are perishing every day! Behold the mass of people gathered in this Tabernacle! We can never all meet again. Some of us will probably be in eternity before another Sabbath shall have dawned—and of those who shall have departed this life, some will, perhaps, have gone down to the Pit. And yet we have no tears for them! Oh, God, strike our hearts with a rod more powerful than that of Moses and fill our eyes with sympathetic tears! Think what it is that your own child could be lost, that your own relative could perish! Oh, wake yourselves up to passionate prayer, to longing desire and to constant effort—and never, from this moment on, cease to thirst with a passionate desire, which, like that of your Lord, shall fill you and compel you practically to say, in the industrious application of a spiritual life, “I thirst!”

My last point is a very heavy one. I could wish it has not to be delivered. It

is addressed—

III. TO UNGODLY MEN AND WOMEN.

If the Lord Jesus Christ thirsted when He only carried the sins of others, what thirst will be upon you when God shall punish you for your own sins? Either 'Christ must thirst for you, or you must thirst forever, and ever, and ever! There is but one alternative—Justice must be vindicated through a Substitute, or it must be glorified in your everlasting destruction! Think what it will be to have your sweet cup and your flowing bowl all put away from you, and not a drop of water to cool your tongue—to have your dainty meat and your gay festivals forever abolished—no light for your eyes, no joy for any one of the senses of your body and your souls made to suffer unutterable woe!

I shall not stay to picture, even in Christ's own words, the agony of lost spirits. But I bid you keep this on your minds. If Christ, who was God's Son, suffered so bitterly for sins that were not His own, how bitterly must you, who are not God's sons, but God's enemies, suffer for sins that are your own? And you must so suffer unless Christ, the Substitute, stands for you! He was no Substitute for all, but only for His own people. You say to me, "Did He stand for me?" I can tell you if you can answer this question, "Do you trust Jesus Christ? Will you now trust Him?" If so, a simple childlike faith in Jesus will bring you salvation! Now, remember, if you believe, all your sins are laid upon Christ and, therefore, they can never be laid upon you! If you believe, Christ was punished in your place and you can never be punished, because he was punished for you! Substitution—this is the groundwork of our confidence! Because He was accursed, we cannot be accursed, for, if we believe in Him, all that He suffered was for us—and we stand absolved before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Lord give you this simple faith in the Redeemer this very night! And then He will see in you of the travail of His soul and the thirst of His great heart will be satisfied! The Lord bless you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALMS 51; 32; MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23.

Let us read two Psalms of penitence. Repentance and faith go hand in hand all the way to Heaven. Repenting and believing make up a large measure of the Christian life. First, let us read the 51st Psalm, penned by David after his great sin with Bathsheba, when, by the instrumentality of Nathan, he

had been led to repentance. What if we have not fallen into any gross open sin? Yet, perhaps if we could see our hearts as God sees them, we should be as much ashamed as the Psalmist was when to the music of his sighs and groans, he poured out this Psalm.

Verse 1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness. According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions. What delicious words those are! "Your loving kindness." I have sometimes felt glad to be a Saxon, that I should speak a language that had such delightful words in it. "Loving kindness," "tender mercy." Now, the eye that is quickest to see the tenderness of God is the eye of repentance, for the sinner who feels condemnation in his own heart looks so keenly after everything that may make for his comfort, and his eyes light on the tender mercies and loving kindness of God. The prayer is for pardon—no, it is for purification, as well as pardon!

2. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Take out this plague spot. I cannot bear it any longer. Oh, cleanse me from every trace of it, my God, I beseech You!

3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me. I tell it to You because it haunts me. It is always present to my mind. It seems painted on my eyeballs. I cannot but see it, turn whichever way I may.

4. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. He had sinned against his people, setting them an evil example—sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah—but he sees the whole evil concentrating itself, as it were, upon his God. He felt that the virus of the whole thing was that he had done dishonor to the name of the Most High, whose servant he was.

5-7. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me. and I shall be whiter than snow. "Behold," he says, as if to go to the bottom of it, and to show that sin was not an accident with him, but that he, himself, was sinful. It was a grand faith—it was an Abrahamic faith—that when a man had such a sense of sin as David had, he at the same time could believe in the cleansing power of the blood! For you who do not know what sin is, and who have never groaned beneath the burden, to talk about the pardoning blood—oh, it is easy enough and there is nothing in it! But

for a soul that knows the guilt and feels it and is burdened by it, still to believe in the power of the atoning Sacrifice—this is faith indeed! David had seen the priest take the bunch of hyssop and dip it in the warm blood of the goat or the bullock, and then sprinkle it—and he says, “Lord, do the same with me—with that richer blood of Divine Atonement!” That blood which, in David’s day, was yet to be shed! “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8-10. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Lord, the mischief lies deep! Strike at the root of it. I would not have You to wash out only a spot, but go to my heart and renew that, that I may sin no more.

11-14. Cast me not away from Your Presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways: and sinners shall be converted unto You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. In that verse there is one of the surest marks of David’s sincere repentance, namely, that he calls his sin by its right name—“bloodguiltiness.” I have no doubt that he had said to himself that Uriah died by accident, and pleaded very much to excuse and extenuate his guilt. But now he owns it. That is the word —“blood-guiltiness.” It is no use trying to apologize and excuse yourselves before God. As long as that is done, no pardon will ever be applied to the conscience. But when the sin is seen in its true colors, then shall those colors be washed away and we shall be whiter than snow. “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.” He felt that if God would pardon him, he would be the man to tell of God’s way of mercy to others. And I trust, dear Friends, if we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, our witness will never be silent about the goodness and the mercy of the Lord. If you have never spoken to others, begin tonight! Teach others the ways of God to you!

15-19. O Lord open You my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice, otherwise would I give it. You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion: build the walls of Jerusalem. Then shall You be pleased with the

sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Your altar. Sure to be good times when men are under a sense of pardoned sin. None serve Him so well as those whose sins are washed away—who feel the same within.

Now, we will read the 32nd Psalm.

Verses 1-5. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. Soon over. Once poured into Jehovah's ear out of a contrite heart, and the transgression was gone forever! May it be so with you, dear Hearer. If Your sin has never been forgiven you till tonight, may you this night obtain pardon through confession of sin.

6, 7. For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the flood of great waters they shall not come near him. You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

MATTHEW 26:59-68; LUKE 23.

Verses 59-60. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none. Neither for love nor money.

60. Yes, though many false witnesses came, yet they found none. That is, none that agreed—the lie that one man spoke was refuted by the next!

*61. At last came two false witness, and said this—They did not say any other word, as if they did not know any word in any language vile enough for Him. “This”—our translators have very properly put in the word Fellow
61. Fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days. He never said anything of the kind! It was a most wicked misrepresentation of what He had said. If men wish to find an accusation against us, they can do it without any materials.*

62-64. And the high priest arose and said unto him, Do You not answer? What is it which these witness against You? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I command You by the living

God, that You tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said unto him, You have said it: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven. He binds

them over to make their appearance before Him when He becomes the Judge and they shall take the place of the criminal.

65, 66, Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy, What do you think? He looks round upon the seventy elders of the people who were sitting there in the great council and "They answered and said, He is guilty of death." Probably Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not there—they were the only two friends the Lord had in the Sanhedrim.

66, 67, 68. They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, Saying, prophesy unto us, You Christ, Who is he that smote You? This ended the regular ecclesiastical trial of Christ. A little time was spent before Pilate, the judicial ruler, was ready to see Christ, but soon as the dawn was come, they dragged Him before another tribunal. We shall now turn to Luke 23.

Verse 1, 2, And the whole multitude of them arose and led Him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this—Put in what word you like—villain—scoundrel—our translators could not find a better word than that inexpressive-expressive word, "fellow." "We found this Fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He, Himself is Christ, a King." They shift the charge, you see, now! Before, it was blasphemy, now it is sedition.

2, 3. Fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying that He, Himself, is Christ a King. And Pilate asked Him, saying, Are You the King of the Jews? And He answered him and said, You said it. Another of the Evangelists tells us that He first asked Pilate what he meant by the question, explaining that He only claimed the kingdom in a spiritual sense.

4, 5. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this Man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this

place. When Pilate heard them say Galilee, he caught at that—he did not wish to displease the multitude.

6, 7. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the Man was a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. So away the Master goes—He must be dragged through the streets again to a third tribunal! Oh, You blessed Lamb of God! Never were sheep driven to the shambles as You were driven to death!

8. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he was desirous to see Him for a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. But the Lord never worked miracles to gratify idle curiosity! He who would have worked a miracle to heal the poorest beggar in the street would not work a wonder to please the king in whose power He was!

9. Then he questioned Him in many words: but He answered him nothing. "No," says good Christopher Ness—

"John Baptist was Christ's voice and Herod had killed him—there Christ would not speak—as if He would say, 'No, no,' you did cut off John Baptist's head, who was My messenger, and since you have ill-treated My ambassador, I, the King of kings, will have nothing to say to you."

10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. The original word is "made nothing of Him"—made Him as nothing.

11, 12. And Herod with his men of war set Him at nothing, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves. Two dogs could well agree to hunt the same prey! And sinners who quarrel on other things will often be quite agreed to persecute the Gospel.

13-16. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverts the people, and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. Ah, that word, "chastise,"

slips so glibly over the tongue! But you know what it meant, when the

Roman lictors laid bare the back and used the terrific scourge! “I will scourge Him,” said Pilate. Perhaps he thought that if he scourged Him, His suffering would induce the Jews to spare His life.

17-20. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us, Barabbas! (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. He seems to have gone backward and forward many times, desiring to save the life of Christ, but not having the moral courage to do it.

21-26. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! And he said unto them the third time, Why? What evil has He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired. But he delivered Jesus to their will. And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the Cross, that he might bear it after Jesus

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*PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #3386
Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1*

 **“IT IS FINISHED!”**

NO. 421

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 1,
1861, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished:
and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.”***

[Joh 19:30.](#)

MY Brethren, I would have you attentively observe the singular clearness, power and quickness of the Savior's mind in the last agonies of death. When pains and groans attend the last hour they frequently have the effect of discomposing the mind so that it is not possible for the dying man to collect his thoughts, or having collected them, to utter them so that they can be understood by others. In no case could we expect a remarkable exercise of memory or a profound judgment upon deep subjects from an expiring man. But the Redeemer's last acts were full of wisdom and prudence although His sufferings were beyond all measure excruciating.

Remark how clearly He perceived the significance of every type! How plainly He could read with dying eye those Divine symbols which the eyes of angels could only desire to look into! He saw the secrets which have bewildered sages and astonished seers all fulfilled in His own body. Nor must we fail to observe the power and comprehensiveness by which He grasped the chain which binds the shadowy past with the sun-lit present. We must not forget the brilliance of that intelligence which threaded all the ceremonies and sacrifices on one string of thought, beheld all the prophecies as one great revelation and all the promises as the heralds of one Person and then said of the whole, "It is finished," "finished in Me."

What quickness of mind was that which enabled Him to traverse all the centuries of prophecy, to penetrate the eternity of the Covenant and then to anticipate the eternal glories! And all this when He is mocked by multitudes of enemies and when His hands and feet are nailed to the Cross. What force of mind must the Savior have possessed to soar above those Alps of Agony which touched the very clouds. In what a singular mental condition must He have been during the period of His crucifixion—to be able to review the whole roll of Inspiration! Now this remark may not seem to be of any great value but I think its value lies in certain inferences that may be drawn from it.

We have sometimes heard it said, "How could Christ, in so short a time, bear suffering which should be equivalent to the torments—the eternal torments of Hell?" Our reply is we are not capable of judging what the Son of God might do even in a moment, much less what He might do and what He might suffer in His life and in His death. It has been frequently affirmed by persons who have been rescued from drowning that the mind of a drowning man is singularly active. One who, after being some time in the

water was at last painfully restored, said that the whole of his history seemed to come before his mind while he was sinking and that if anyone had asked him how long he had been in the water, he should have said twenty years, whereas he had only been there for a moment or two.

The wild romance of Mahomet's journey upon Alborak is not an unfitting illustration. He affirmed that when the angel came in vision to take him on his celebrated journey to Jerusalem he went through all the seven heavens and saw all the wonders thereof. And yet he was gone so short a time that though the angel's wing had touched a basin of water when they started, they returned soon enough to prevent the water from being spilt. The long dream of this epileptic impostor may really have occupied but a second of time. The intellect of mortal man is such that if God wills it—when it is in certain states—it can think out centuries of thought at once. It can go through in one instant what we should have supposed would have taken years upon years of time for it to know or feel.

We think, therefore, that from the Savior's singular clearness and quickness of intellect upon the Cross it is very possible that He did in the space of two or three hours endure not only the agony which might have been contained in centuries, but even an equivalent for that which might be comprehended in everlasting punishment. At any rate, it is not for us to say that it could not be so. When the Deity is arrayed in manhood, then manhood becomes omnipotent to suffer. And just as the feet of Christ were once almighty to tread the seas, so now was His whole body become almighty to dive into the great waters, to endure an immersion in "unknown agonies."

Do not, I pray, let us attempt to measure Christ's sufferings by the finite one of our own ignorant reason, but let us know and believe that what He endured there was accepted by God as an equivalent for all our pains. And therefore it could not have been a trifle, but must have been all that Hart conceived it to be, when he says He bore—

***"All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."***

My discourse will, I have no doubt, more fully illustrate the remark with which I have commenced—let us proceed to it at once. First, let us hear the text and understand it. Then let us hear it and wonder at it. And then, thirdly, let us hear it and proclaim it.

I. LET US HEAR THE TEXT AND UNDERSTAND IT.

The Son of God has been made Man. He has had a life of perfect virtue and of total self-denial. He has been all that life-long despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. His enemies have been legion. His friends have been few and those few faithless. He is at last delivered over into the hands of them that hate Him. He is arrested while in the act of prayer. He is arraigned before both the spiritual and temporal courts. He is robed in mockery and then enrobed in shame. He is set upon His throne in scorn and then tied to the pillar in cruelty. He is declared innocent and yet He is delivered up by the judge who ought to have preserved Him from His persecutors.

He is dragged through the streets of that Jerusalem which had killed the Prophets and would now crimson itself with the blood of the Prophets' Master. He is brought to the Cross. He is nailed fast to the cruel wood. The sun burns Him. His cruel wounds increase the fever. God forsakes Him. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" contains the concentrated anguish of the world. While He hangs there in mortal conflict with sin and Satan, His heart is broken, His limbs are dislocated. Heaven fails Him, for the sun is veiled in darkness. Earth forsakes Him, for "His disciples forsook Him and fled." He looks everywhere and there is none to help. He casts His eye around and there is no man that can share His toil.

He treads the winepress alone. And of all the people there is none with Him. On, on, He goes, steadily determined to drink the last dreg of that cup which must not pass from Him if His Father's will is done. At last He cries—"It is finished" and He gives up the ghost. Hear it, Christians, hear this shout of triumph as it rings today with all the freshness and force which it had eighteen hundred years ago! Hear it from the Sacred Word and from the Savior's lips and may the Spirit of God open your ears that you may hear as the learned and understand what you hear!

1. What meant the Savior, then, by this—"It is finished"? He meant, first of all, *that all the types, promises and prophecies were now fully accomplished in Him*. Those who are acquainted with the original will find that the words—"It is finished," occur twice within three verses. In the 28th verse we have the word in the Greek. It is translated in our version "accomplished," but there it stands—"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now *finished*, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, says, 'I thirst.' " And then He afterwards said, "It is finished." This leads us to see His meaning very

clearly that all the Scripture was now fulfilled, that when He said, "It is finished," the whole Book, from the first to the last, in both the Law and the Prophets, was finished in Him.

There is not a single jewel of promise, from that first emerald which fell on the threshold of Eden, to that last sapphire-stone of Malachi which was not set in the breast-plate of the true High Priest. No, there is not a type, from the red heifer downward to the turtle-dove, from the hyssop upwards to Solomon's temple itself which was not fulfilled in Him. And not a prophecy, whether spoken on Chebar's bank, or on the shores of Jordan, not a dream of wise men, whether they had received it in Babylon, or in Samaria, or in Judea which was not now fully worked out in Christ Jesus. And, Brethren, what a wonderful thing it is, that a mass of promises and prophecies and types apparently so heterogeneous, should all be accomplished in one Person!

Take away Christ for one moment and I will give the Old Testament to any wise man living and say to him, "Take this. This is a problem, go home and construct in your imagination an ideal character who shall exactly fit all that which is herein foreshadowed. Remember, He must be a Prophet like unto Moses and yet a champion like Joshua. He must be an Aaron and a Melchisedek. He must be both David and Solomon, Noah and Jonah, Judah and Joseph. No, He must not only be the lamb that was slain and the scapegoat that was not slain, the turtle-dove that was dipped in blood and the priest who slew the bird, but He must be the altar, the tabernacle, the mercy seat and the showbread."

No, to puzzle this wise man further, we remind him of prophecies so apparently contradictory that one would think they never could meet in one man—such as these, "All kings shall fall down before Him and all nations shall serve Him." And yet, "He is despised and rejected of men." He must begin by showing a man born of a virgin mother—"A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." He must be a man without spot or blemish, but yet one upon whom the Lord does cause to meet the iniquities of us all. He must be a glorious one, a Son of David, but yet a root out of a dry ground. Now I say it boldly—if all the greatest intellects of all the ages could set themselves to work out this problem, to invent another key to the types and prophecies—they could not do it.

I see you, you wise men—you are poring over these hieroglyphs—one suggests one key and it opens two or three of the figures. But you cannot

proceed for the next one puts you at a nonplus. Another learned man suggests another clue— but that fails most where it is most needed—and another and another and thus these wondrous hieroglyphs traced of old by Moses in the wilderness must be left unexplained, till one comes forward and proclaims—“The Cross of Christ and the Son of God incarnate”—then the whole is clear, so that he that runs may read and a child may understand. Blessed Savior! In You we see everything fulfilled which God spoke of in old by the Prophets. In You we discover everything carried out in substance which God had set before us in the dim mist of sacrificial smoke. Glory be unto Your name! “It is finished”—everything is summed up in YOU!

2. But the words have richer meaning. Not only were all types and prophecies and promises thus finished in Christ, but *all the typical sacrifices of the old Jewish Law were now abolished as well as explained.* They were finished—finished in Him. Will you imagine for a minute the saints in Heaven looking down upon what was done on earth—Abel and his friends who had long ago before the flood been sitting in the glories above? They watch while God lights star after star in Heaven. Promise after promise flashes light upon the thick darkness of earth. They see Abraham come and they look down and wonder while they see God revealing Christ to Abraham in the person of Isaac. They gaze just as the angels do, desiring to look into the mystery. From the times of Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they see altars smoking, recognitions of the fact that man is guilty and the spirits before the Throne say, “Lord, when will sacrifices finish?—when will blood no more be shed?”

The offering of bloody sacrifices soon increases. It is now carried on by men ordained for the purpose. Aaron and the high priests and the Levites every morning and every evening offer a lamb, while great sacrifices are offered on special occasions. Bulls groan, rams bleed, the necks of doves are wrung and all the while the saints are crying, “O Lord, how long?—when shall the sacrifice cease?” Year after year the high priest goes within the veil and sprinkles the mercy seat with blood. The next year sees him do the like and the next and again and again and again.

David offers hecatombs—Solomon slaughters tens of thousands. Hezekiah offers rivers of oil, Josiah gives thousands of the fat of fed beasts and the spirits of the just say, “Will it never be complete?—will the sacrifice never be finished?— must there always be a remembrance of sin?—will not the last High Priest soon come?—will not the order and line of Aaron soon lay

aside its labor, because the whole is finished?” Not yet, not yet, you spirits of the just—for after the captivity the slaughter of victims still remains. But lo, He comes! Gaze more intently than before—He comes who is to close the line of priests! Lo, there He stands, clothed—not now with linen ephod, not with ringing bells, nor with sparkling jewels on His breastplate—but arrayed in human flesh He stands!

His Cross, His altar, His body and His soul—the victim Himself—the Priest and lo, before His God He offers up His own soul within the veil of thick darkness which has covered Him from the sight of men. Presenting His own blood He enters within the veil, sprinkles it there and coming forth from the midst of the darkness, He looks down on the astonished earth and upward to expectant Heaven and cries, “*It is finished!* It is finished!”—that for which you looked so long is fully achieved and perfected forever!

3. The Savior meant, we doubt not, that in this moment *His perfect obedience was finished*. It was necessary, in order that man might be saved, that the Law of God should be kept—for no man can see God’s face except he is perfect in righteousness. Christ undertook to keep God’s Law for His people, to obey its every mandate and preserve its every statute intact. Throughout the first years of His life He privately obeyed, honoring His father and His mother. During the next three years He publicly obeyed God, spending and being spent in His service, till if you would know what a man would be whose life was wholly conformed to the Law of God, you may see him in Christ—

*“My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in Your Word,
But in Your life the Law appears
Drawn out in living characters.”*

It needed nothing to complete the perfect virtue of life but the entire obedience of death. He who would serve God must be willing not only to give all his soul and his strength while he lives, but he must stand prepared to resign life when it shall be for God’s glory. Our perfect Substitute put the last stroke upon His work by dying and therefore He claims to be absolved from further debt, for “it is finished.” Yes, glorious Lamb of God, it is finished! You have been tempted in all points like as we are, yet have You sinned in none! It *was* finished, for the last arrow out of Satan’s quiver had been shot at You. The last blasphemous insinuation, the last wicked temptation had spent its fury on You.

The prince of this world had surveyed You from head to foot, within and without, but he had found nothing in You. Now your trial is over, You have finished the work which Your Father gave You to do and so finished it that Hell itself cannot accuse You of a flaw. And now, looking upon Your entire obedience you say, "It is finished," and we Your people believe most joyously that it is even so. Brothers and Sisters, this is more than you or I could have said if Adam had never fallen. If we had been in the garden of Eden today we could never have boasted a finished righteousness—since a creature can never finish its obedience.

As long as a creature lives it is bound to obey and as long as a free agent exists on earth it would be in danger of violating the vow of its obedience. If Adam had been in Paradise from the first day until now, he might fall tomorrow. Left to himself there would be no reason why that king of nature should not yet be uncrowned. But Christ the Creator, who finished creation, has perfected redemption. God can ask no more. The Law has received all its claims, the largest extent of justice cannot demand another hour's obedience. It is done, it is complete. The last throw of the shuttle is over and the robe is woven from the top throughout. Let us rejoice, then, in this that the Master meant by His dying cry that His perfect righteousness wherewith He covers us was finished.

4. But next, the Savior meant *that the satisfaction which He rendered to the justice of God was finished*. The debt was now, to the last farthing, all discharged. The atonement and propitiation were made once and for all and forever—by the one offering made in Jesus' body on the Tree. There was the cup, Hell was in it, the Savior drank it—not a sip and then a pause—not a draught and then a ceasing. He drained it till there is not a dreg left for any of His people. The great ten-thronged whip of the Law was worn out upon His back. There is no lash left with which to smite one for whom Jesus died. The great cannonade of God's justice has exhausted all its ammunition—there is nothing left to be hurled against a child of God. Sheathed is your sword, O Justice! Silenced is your thunder, O Law! There remains nothing now of all the griefs and pains and agonies which chosen sinners ought to have suffered for their sins, for Christ has endured all for His own Beloved and "it is finished." Brethren, *it is more than the damned in Hell can ever say*. If you and I had been constrained to make satisfaction to God's justice by being sent to Hell we never could have said, "It is finished." Christ has paid the debt which all the torments of eternity could

not have paid. Lost souls, you suffer today as you have suffered for ages past, but God's justice is not satisfied, His Law is not fully magnified. And when time shall fail and eternity shall have been flying on, still forever—the uttermost never having been paid, the chastisement for sin must fall upon unpardoned sinners. But Christ has done what all the flames of the pit could not do in all eternity. He has magnified the Law and made it honorable and now from the Cross he cries—"It is finished."

5. Once again—when He said, "It is finished," *Jesus had totally destroyed the power of Satan, of sin and of death.* The Champion had entered the lists to do battle for our soul's redemption against all our foes. He met Sin. Horrible, terrible, all-but omnipotent Sin nailed Him to the Cross. But in that deed, Christ nailed Sin also to the tree. There they both did hang together—Sin and Sin's Destroyer. Sin destroyed Christ and by that destruction Christ destroyed Sin. Next came the second enemy, Satan. He assaulted Christ with all his hosts. Calling up his Myrmidons from every corner and quarter of the universe, he said, "Awake, arise, or be forever fallen! Here is our great Enemy who has sworn to bruise my head. Now let us bruise His heel!"

They shot their hellish darts into His heart. They poured their boiling cauldrons on His brain, they emptied their venom into His veins. They spat their insinuations into His face. They hissed their devilish fears into His ear. He stood alone, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, hounded by all the dogs of Hell. Our champion quailed not, but used His holy weapons, striking right and left with all the power of God-supported manhood. On came the hosts, volley after volley was discharged against Him. No mimic thunders were these, but such as might shake the very gates of Hell. The Conqueror steadily advanced, overturning their ranks, dashing in pieces His enemies, breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder and burning the chariots in the fire, while he cried, "In the name of God will I destroy you!"

At last, foot to foot, He met the champion of Hell and now our David fought with Goliath. Not long was the struggle. Thick was the darkness which gathered round them both. But He who is the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary, knew how to smite the fiend and He did smite him with Divine fury, till, having despoiled him of his armor, having quenched his fiery darts and broken his head, He cried, "It is finished" and sent the fiend, bleeding and howling, down to bed. We can imagine him pursued by the eternal Savior, who exclaims—

“Traitor!

***My bolt shall find and pierce you through,
Though under Hell’s profoundest wave
You div’st, to seek a sheltering grave.”***

His thunderbolt overtook the fiend and grasping him with both His hands, the Savior drew around him the great chain. The angels brought the royal chariot from on high, to whose wheels the captive fiend was bound. Lash the coursers up the everlasting hills! Spirits made perfect come forth to meet Him. Sing to the conqueror who drags death and Hell behind Him and leads captivity captive! “Lift up your heads, O you gates and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in.” But stay—before He enters, let Him be rid of this His burden. Lo, He takes the fiend and hurls him down through illimitable night, broken, bruised, with his power destroyed, bereft of his crown, to lie forever howling in the pit of Hell.

Thus when the Savior cried, “It is finished,” He had defeated Sin and Satan—nor less had he vanquished Death. Death had come against Him, as Christmas Evans puts it, with his fiery dart which he struck right through the Savior, till the point fixed in the Cross. And when he tried to pull it out again, he left the sting behind. What could he do more? He was disarmed. Then Christ set some of his prisoners free. For many of the saints arose and were seen of many—then He said to him, “Death, I take from you your keys—you must live for a little while to be the warden of those beds in which My saints shall sleep but give Me your keys.”

And lo, the Savior stands today with the keys of death hanging at His girdle and He waits until the hour shall come of which no man knows, when the trumpet of the archangel shall ring like the silver trumpets of Jubilee and then He shall say, “Let My captives go free.” Then shall the tombs be opened in virtue of Christ’s death and the very bodies of the saints shall live again in an eternity of glory—

“It is finished!”

Hear the dying Savior cry.”

II. Secondly, LET US HEAR AND WONDER.

Let us perceive what mighty things were effected and secured by these words, “It is finished.” Thus He *ratified the Covenant*. That Covenant was signed and sealed before and in all things it was ordered well, but when Christ said, “It is finished,” then the Covenant was made doubly sure, when

the blood of Christ's heart bespattered the Divine roll. Then it could never be reversed, nor could one of its ordinances be broken, nor one of its stipulations fail. You know of the Everlasting Covenant—God covenants on His part that He would give Christ to see of the travail of His soul—that all who were given to Him should have new hearts and right spirits. They should be washed from sin and should enter into life through Him.

Christ's side of the Covenant was this—"Father, I will do Your will. I will pay the ransom to the last jot and tittle. I will give You perfect obedience and complete satisfaction." Now if this second part of the Covenant had never been fulfilled, the first part would have been invalid—but when Jesus said, "It is finished"—then there was nothing left to be performed on His part and now the Covenant is all on one side. It is God's, "I will," and "They shall." "A new heart will I give you and a right spirit will I put within you." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean." "From all your iniquities will I cleanse you." "I will lead you by a way that you know not." "I will surely bring them in."

The Covenant that day was ratified. When Christ said, "It is finished," *His Father was honored and Divine justice was fully displayed*. The Father always did love His people. Do not think that Christ died to make God the Father loving. He always had loved them from before the foundation of the world, but—"It is finished," took away the barriers which were in the Father's way. He would, as a God of love and now He could as a God of justice, bless poor sinners. From that day the Father is well-pleased to receive sinners to His bosom. When Christ said—"It is finished," *He Himself was glorified*. Then on His head descended the all-glorious crown. Then did the Father give to Him honors which He had not before. He had honor as God, but as Man He was despised and rejected—now as God and Man Christ was made to sit down forever on His Father's Throne crowned with honor and majesty.

Then, too, by "It is finished," *the Spirit was procured for us—*

"'Tis by the merit of His death

Who hung upon the tree,

The Spirit is sent down to breathe

On such dry bones as we."

Then the Spirit which Christ had aforetime promised perceived a new and living way by which He could come to dwell in the hearts of men and men might come up to dwell with Him above. That day, too, when Christ said

—“It is finished,” *the words had effect on Heaven*. Then the walls of chrysolite stood fast. Then the jasper-light of the pearly-gated city shone like the light of seven days. Before, the saints had been saved as it were on credit. They had entered Heaven, God having faith in His Son Jesus. Had not Christ finished His work, surely they must have left their shining spheres and suffered in their own persons for their own sins.

I might represent Heaven if my imagination might be allowed a moment as being ready to totter if Christ had not finished His work—its stones would have been unloosed—massive and stupendous though its bastions are. Yet they would have fallen as earthly cities reel under the throes of earthquake. But Christ said, “It is finished,” and oath and Covenant and blood set fast the dwelling place of the redeemed, made their mansions safely and eternally their own and bade their feet stand immovably upon the Rock. No, more. That word, “It is finished!” took effect in the gloomy caverns and depths of HELL. Then Satan bit his iron bands in a rage, howling, “I am defeated by the very Man whom I thought to overcome! My hopes are blasted. Never shall an elect one come into my prison, never a blood-bought one be found in my abode.”

Lost souls mourned that day, for they said—“It is finished! And if Christ Himself, the Substitute, could not be permitted to go free till He had finished all His punishment, then we shall never be free.” It was their double death-knell, for they said, “Alas for us! Justice, which would not suffer the Savior to escape, will never suffer us to be at liberty. It is finished with Him and therefore it shall *never* be finished for us.” That day, too, the earth had a gleam of sunlight cast over her which she had never known before. Then her hilltops began to glisten with the rising of the sun.

And though her valleys still are clothed with darkness and men wander here and there and grope in the noon-day as in the night, yet that sun is rising, climbing still its heavenly steeps, never to set and soon shall its rays penetrate through the thick mists and clouds and every eye shall see Him and every heart be made glad with His light. The words “It is finished!” consolidated Heaven, shook Hell, comforted earth, delighted the Father, glorified the Son, brought down the Spirit and confirmed the Everlasting Covenant to all the chosen seed.

III. And now I come to my last point, very briefly. “It is finished!” LET US PUBLISH IT.

Children of God, you who by faith received Christ as your All in All, tell it

every day of your lives that “it is finished.” Go and tell it to those who are torturing themselves thinking through obedience and mortification to offer satisfaction. Yonder Hindu is about to throw himself down upon the spikes. Stay, poor Man! Why would you bleed, for “it is finished”? Yonder Fakir is holding his hand erect till the nails grow through the flesh, torturing himself with fasting and with self-denials. Cease, cease, poor wretch, from all these pains, for “it is finished!”

In all parts of the earth there are those who think that the misery of the body and the soul may be an atonement for sin. Rush to them, stay them in their madness and say to them, “Why do you this? ‘It is finished.’ ” All the pains that God asks, Christ has suffered. All the satisfaction by way of agony in the flesh that the Law demands, Christ has already endured. “It is finished!” And when you have done this, go next to the benighted votaries of Rome when you see the priests with their backs to the people, offering every day the pretended sacrifice of the mass and lifting up the host on high—a sacrifice, they say—“an unbloody sacrifice for the quick and the dead.” Cry to them, “Cease, false priest, cease! For ‘it is finished!’ Cease, false worshipper, cease to bow, for ‘it is finished!’ ”

God neither asks nor accepts any other sacrifice than that which Christ offered once for all upon the Cross. Go next to the foolish among your own countrymen who call themselves Protestants but who are Papists after all—who think by their gifts and their gold, by their prayers and their vows, by their church-goings and their chapel-goings, by their baptisms and their confirmations to make themselves fit for God. And say to them, “Stop, ‘it is finished.’ God needs not this of you. He has received enough. Why will you pin your rags to the fine linen of Christ’s righteousness? Why will you add your counterfeit farthing to the costly ransom which Christ has paid into the treasure-house of God? Cease from your pains, your doings, your performances, for ‘it is finished!’ Christ has done it all.”

This one text is enough to blow the Vatican to the four winds. Lay but this beneath Popery and like a train of gunpowder beneath a rock, it shall blast it into the air. This is a thunderclap against all human righteousness. Only let this come like a two-edged sword and your good works and your fine performances are soon cast away. “It is finished.” Why improve on what is finished? Why add to that which is complete? The Bible is finished—he that adds to it never had his name in the Book of Life and will never see the Holy City. Christ’s atonement is finished and he that adds to that must

expect the selfsame doom.

And when you shall have told it thus to the ears of men of every nation and of every tribe, tell it to all poor despairing souls. You find them on their knees, crying, “O God, what can I do to make recompense for my offenses?” Tell them, “It is finished,” the recompense is made already. “O God!” they say, “how can I ever get a righteousness in which You can accept such a worm as I am.” Tell them, “It is finished,” their righteousness is worked out already. They have no need to trouble themselves about adding to it, for “it is finished.”

Go to the poor despairing wretch who has given himself up, not for death merely, but for damnation—he who says, “I cannot escape from sin and I cannot be saved from its punishment.” Say to him, “Sinner, the way of salvation is finished once and for all.” And if you meet some professed Christians in doubts and fears, tell them, “It is finished.” Why, we have hundreds and thousands that are converted who do not know that “it is finished.” They never know that they are safe. They do not know that “it is finished.” They think they have faith today but perhaps they may become unbelieving tomorrow. They do not know that “it is finished.”

They hope God will accept them if they do some things, forgetting that the way of acceptance is finished. God as much accepts a sinner who only believed in Christ five minutes ago as He will a saint who has known and loved Him eighty years for He does not accept men because of anything *they do* or feel, but simply and only for what *Christ did* and *that is finished*. Oh, poor Hearts! Some of you do love the Savior in a measure, but blindly. You are thinking that you must be this and attain to that and then you may be assured that you are saved.

Oh, you may be assured of it today—if you believe in Christ you are saved. “But I feel imperfections.” Yes, but what of that? God does not regard your imperfections—He covers them with Christ’s righteousness. He sees them to remove them, but not to lay them to your charge. “Yes, but I cannot be what I would be.” But what if you can not? God does not look at *you*, as what you are in *yourself*, but as what you are in *Christ*.

Come with me, poor Soul and you and I will stand together this morning, while the tempest gathers, for we are not afraid. How sharp that lightning flash! But yet we tremble not. How terrible that peal of thunder! And yet we are not alarmed and why? Is there anything in us why we should escape? No, but we are standing beneath the Cross—that precious Cross—which

like some noble lightning rod in the storm takes to itself all the death from the lightning and all the fury from the storm. We are safe. Loud may you roar, O thundering Law and terribly may you flash, O avenging Justice! We can look up with calm delight to all the tumult of the elements, for we are safe beneath the Cross.

Come with me again. There is a royal banquet spread. The King Himself sits at the table and angels are the servitors. Let us enter. And we do enter and we sit down and eat and drink, but how dare we do this? Our righteousness are as filthy rags—how could we venture to come here? Oh, because the filthy rags are not ours any longer. We have renounced our own righteousness and therefore we have renounced the filthy rags. And now, today we wear the royal garments of the Savior and are from head to foot arrayed in white, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. We stand in the clear sunlight—black, but comely—loathsome in ourselves, but glorious in Him! Condemned in Adam, but accepted in the Beloved. We are neither afraid nor ashamed to be with the angels of God, to talk with the glorified, no, nor even alarmed to speak with God Himself and call Him our Friend. And now last of all, I publish this to *sinners*. I know not where you are this morning, but may God find you out. You who have been a drunkard, swearer, thief. You who have been a blackguard of the blackest kind. You who have dived into the very kennel and rolled yourself in the mire—if today you feel that sin is hateful to you, believe in Him who has said, “It is finished.” Let me link your hand in mine, let us come together, both of us and say, “Here are two poor naked souls, good Lord, we cannot clothe ourselves.” And He will give us a robe, for “it is finished.” “But, Lord, is it long enough for such sinners and broad enough for such offenders?” “Yes,” says He, “it is finished.”

“But we need washing, Lord! Is there anything that can take away black spots so hideous as ours?” “Yes,” says He, “here is the bath of blood.” “But must we not add our tears to it?” “No,” says He, “no, it is finished. That is enough.” “And now, Lord, You have washed us and You have clothed us, but we desire to be completely clean *within*, so that we may never sin any more. Lord, is there a way by which this can be done?” “Yes” says He, “there is the bath of water which flows from the wounded side of Christ.” “And, Lord, is there enough there to wash away my guiltiness as well as my guilt?” “Yes,” says He, “it is finished.” “Jesus Christ is made unto you sanctification as well as redemption.”

Child of God, will you have Christ's finished righteousness this morning and will you rejoice in it more than you have ever done before? And oh, poor Sinner, will you have Christ or nothing? "Ah," says one, "I am willing enough, but I am not worthy." He does not want any worthiness. All He asks is *willingness*, for you know how He puts it, "Whoever will, let him come." If He has given you willingness, you may believe in Christ's finished work this morning. "Ah," you say, "but you cannot mean *me*." But I do, for it says, "Ho, *everyone* that thirsts."

Do you thirst for Christ? Do you wish to be saved by Him? "*Everyone* that thirsts"—not only that young woman yonder, not simply that gray-headed old rebel yonder who has long despised the Savior—but this mass below and you in these double tiers of gallery—"Everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters and he that has no money come." O that I could "compel" you to come! Great God, won't You make the sinner willing to be saved? He wills to be damned—and will not come unless You change his will! Eternal Spirit, source of light and life and grace, come down and bring the strangers home!

"It is finished." Sinner, there is nothing for God to do. "It is finished." There is nothing for you to do. "It is finished," "Christ need not bleed." It is finished. "You need not weep." "It is finished." God the Holy Spirit need not tarry because of your unworthiness, nor need you tarry because of your helplessness. "It is finished." Every stumbling block is rolled out of the road, every gate is opened, the bars of brass are broken, the gates of iron are burst asunder.

"It is finished!" Come and welcome, come and welcome! The table is laid, the fatlings are killed. The oxen are ready. Lo, here stands the messenger! Come from the highways and from the hedges! Come from the dens and from the kens of London. Come, you vilest of the vile. You who hate yourselves today, come! Jesus bids you! Oh, will you tarry? Oh, Spirit of God, won't You repeat the invitation and make it an effectual call to many a heart, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH.

NO. 2344

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
JANUARY 21ST, 1894,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3RD, 1889.

“It is finished.” — [Joh 19:30](#).

IN the original Greek of John's Gospel, there is only one word for this utterance of our Lord. To translate it into English, we have to use three words; but when it was spoken, it was only one, — an ocean of meaning in a drop of language, a mere drop, for that is all that we can call one word. “It is finished.” Yet it would need all the other words that ever were spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain this one word. It is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it. It is deep; I cannot fathom it. “Finished.” I can half imagine the tone in which our Lord uttered this word, with a holy glorying, a sense of relief, the bursting out of a heart that had long been shut up within walls of anguish. “Finished.” It was a Conqueror's cry; it was uttered with a loud voice. There is nothing of anguish about it, there is no wailing in it. It is the cry of One who has completed a tremendous labor, and is about to die; and ere he utters his death-prayer, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” he shouts his life's last hymn in that one word, “Finished.”

May God the Holy Spirit help me to handle aright this text that is at once so small and yet so great! There are four ways in which I wish to look at it with you. First, I will speak of this dying saying of our Lord *to his glory*; secondly, I will use the text *to the Church's comfort*; thirdly, I will try to handle the subject *to every believer's joy*; and fourthly, I will seek to show how our Lord's words ought to lead *to our own arousal*.

I. First, then, I will endeavor to speak of this dying saying of Christ TO HIS

GLORY. Let us begin with that.

Jesus said, “It is finished.” Let us glory in him that it is finished. You and I may well do this when we recollect how very few things we have finished. We begin many things; and, sometimes, we begin well. We commence running like champions who must win the race; but soon we slacken our pace, and we fall exhausted on the course. The race commenced is never completed. In fact, I am afraid that we have never finished anything perfectly. You know what we say of some pieces of work, “Well, the man

has done it; but there is no ‘finish’ about it.” No, and you must begin with “finish”, and go on with “finish”, if you are at last able to say broadly as the Savior said without any qualification, “It is finished.”

What was it that was finished? His life-work and his atoning sacrifice on our behalf. He had interposed between our souls and divine justice, and he had stood in our stead, to obey and suffer on our behalf. He began this work early in life, even while he was a child. He persevered in holy obedience three and thirty years. That obedience cost him many a pang and groan. Now it is about to cost him his life; and as he gives away his life to finish the work of obedience to the Father, and of redemption for us, he says, “It is finished.” It was a wonderful work even to contemplate; only infinite love would have thought of devising such a plan. It was a wonderful work to carry on for so long; only boundless patience would have continued at it; and now that it requires the offering of himself, and the yielding up of his earthly life, only a Divine Savior, very God of very God, would or could have consummated it by the surrender of his breath. What a work it was! Yet it was finished; while you and I have lots of little things lying about that we have never finished. We have begun to do something for Jesus that would bring him a little honor and glory; but we have never finished it. We did mean to glorify Christ; have not some of you intended, oh! so much? Yet it has never come to anything; but Christ’s work, which cost him heart and soul, body and spirit, cost him everything, even to his death on the cross, he pushed through all that till it was accomplished, and he could say, “It is finished.”

To whom did our Savior say, “It is finished”? He said it to all whom it might concern; but it seems to me that he chiefly said it to his Father, for, immediately after, apparently in a lower tone of voice, he said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Beloved, it is one thing for me to say to you, “I have finished my work,” — possibly, if I were dying, you might say that I had finished my work; but for the Savior to say that to God, to hang in the presence of him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, the great Reader and Searcher of all hearts, for Jesus to look the dread Father in the face, and say, as he bowed his head, “Father, it is finished; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” — oh, who but he could venture to make such a declaration as that? We can find a thousand Haws in our best works; and when we lie dying, we shall still have to lament our shortcomings and

excesses; but there is nothing of imperfection about him who stood as Substitute for us; and unto the Father himself he can say, concerning all his work, "It is finished." Wherefore, glorify him to-night. Oh, glorify him in your hearts to-night that, even in the presence of the Great Judge of all, your Surety and your Substitute is able to claim perfection for all his service!

Just think also, for a minute or two, now that you have remembered what Jesus finished, and to whom he said that he had finished it, *how truly he had finished it*. From the beginning to the end of Christ's life there is nothing omitted, no single act of service ever left undone; neither is there any action of his slurred over, or performed in a careless manner. "It is finished," refers as much to his childhood as to his death. The whole of the service that he was to render to God, when he came here in human form, was finished in every single part and portion of it. I take up a piece of a cabinet-maker's work; and it bears a good appearance. I open the lid, and am satisfied with the workmanship; but there is something about the hinge that is not properly finished. Or, perhaps, if I turn it over, and look at the bottom of the box, I shall see that there is a piece that has been scamped, or that one part has not been well planed or properly polished. But if you examine the Master's work right through, if you begin at Bethlehem and go on to Golgotha, and look minutely at every portion of it, the private as well as the public, the silent as well as the spoken part, you will find that it is finished, completed, perfected. We may say of it that, among all works, there is none like it; a multitude of perfections joined together to make up one absolute perfection. Wherefore, let us glorify the name of our blessed Lord. Crown him; crown him; for he hath done his work well. Come, ye saints, speak much to his honor, and in your hearts keep on singing to the praise of him who did so thoroughly, so perfectly, all the work which his Father gave him to do.

In the first place, then, we use our Lord's words to his glory. Much might be said upon such a theme; but time will not permit it now.

II. Secondly, we will use the text TO THE CHURCH'S COMFORT.

I am persuaded that it was so intended to be used, for none of the words of our Lord on the cross are addressed to his Church but this one. I cannot believe that, when he was dying, he left his people, for whom he died, without a word. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," is

for sinners, not for saints. “I thirst,” is for himself; and so is that bitter cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” “Woman, behold thy son!” is for Mary. “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise,” is for the penitent thief. “Into thy hands I commend my spirit,” is for the Father. Jesus must have had something to say, in the hour of death, for his Church; and, surely, this is his dying word for her. He tells her, shouting it in her ear that has become dull and heavy with despair, “It is finished.” “It is finished, O my redeemed one, my bride, my well-beloved, for whom I came to lay down my life; it is finished, the work is done!”

***“Love’s redeeming work is done;
Fought the fight, the battle won.”***

“Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.” John, in the Revelation, speaks of the Redeemer’s work-as already accomplished, and therefore he sings, “Unto him that loved us, and wished us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” This truth is full of comfort to the people of God.

And, first, as it concerns Christ, do you not feel greatly comforted to think that he is to be humiliated no longer? *His suffering and shame are finished.* I often sing, with saved exultation and pleasure, those lines of Dr. Watts, —

***“No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more,
For hell itself shakes at his name,
And all the heavens adore.
“There his full glories shine
With uncreated rays,
And bless his saints’ and angels’ eyes
To everlasting days.”***

I like also that expression in another of our hymns, —

“Now both the Surety and sinner are free.”

Not only are they free for whom Christ became a Surety, but he himself is for ever free from all the obligations and consequences of his suretyship. Men will never spit in his face again; the Roman soldiers will never scourge him again. Judas, where art thou? Behold the Christ sitting upon his great white throne, the glorious King who was once the Man of sorrows! Now,

Judas, come, and betray him with a kiss! What, man, dare you not do it? Come Pilate, and wash your hands in pretended innocence, and say now that you are guiltless of his blood! Come, ye Scribes and Pharisees, and accuse him; and oh, ye Jewish mob and Gentile rabble, newly risen from the grave, shout now, “Away with him! Crucify him!” But see! they flee from him; they cry to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne!” Yet that is the face that was more marred than any man’s, the face of him whom they once despised and rejected. Are you not glad to think that they cannot despise him now, that they cannot intreat him now?

*“Tis past, — that agonizing hour
Of torture and of shame;”*

and Jesus says of it, “It is finished.”

We derive further comfort and joy as we think that, not only are Christ’s pangs and sufferings finished, *but his father’s will and sword have had a perfect completion*. Certain things were written that were to be done; and these are done. Whatsoever the Father required has been rendered. “It is finished.” My Father will never say to me, “I cannot save thee by the death of my Son, for I am dissatisfied with his work.” Oh, no, beloved; God is well pleased with Christ, and with us in him! There is nothing which was arranged in the eternal mind to be done, yea, not a jot or little, but what Christ has done it all. As his eye, that eye that often wept for us, reads down the ancient writing, Christ is able to say, “I have finished the work which my Father gave me to do. Wherefore, be comforted, O my people, for my Father is well pleased with me, and well pleased with you in me!” I like, when I am in prayer, sometimes to say to the great Father, “Father; look on thy Son. Is he not all loveliness? Are there not in him unutterable beauties? Dost thou not delight in him? If thou hast looked on me, and grown sick of me, as well thou mayest, now refresh thyself by looking on thy Well-beloved, delight thyself in him; —

*“ Him, and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus’ wounds on me.”*

The perfect satisfaction of the Father with Christ’s work for his people, so that Christ could say, “It is finished,” is a ground of solid comfort to his Church evermore.

Dear friends, once more, take comfort from this “It is finished,” for *the redemption of Christ’s Church is perfected!* There is not another penny to be paid for her full release. There is no mortgage upon Christ’s inheritance. Those whom he bought with blood are for ever clear of all charges, paid for to the utmost. There was a handwriting of ordinances against us; but Christ hath taken it away, he hath nailed it to his cross. “It is finished,” finished for ever. All those overwhelming debts, which would have sunk us to the lowest hell, have been discharged; and they who believe in Christ may appear with boldness even before the throne of God itself. “It is finished.” What comfort there is in this glorious truth!

***“Lamb of God! thy death hath given
Pardon, peace, and hope of heaven:
‘It is finished,’ let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!”***

And I think that we may say to the Church of God that, when Jesus said, “It is finished,” *her ultimate triumph was secured.* “Finished!” By that one word he declared that he had broken the head of the old dragon. By his death, Jesus has routed the hosts of darkness, and crushed the rising hopes of hell. We have a stern battle yet to fight; nobody can tell what may await the Church of God in years to come, it would be idle for us to attempt to prophesy; but it looks as if there were to be sterner times and darker days than we have ever yet known; but what of that? Our Lord has defeated the foe; and we have to fight with one who is already vanquished. The old serpent has been crushed, his head is bruised, and we have now to trample on him. We have this sure word of promise to encourage us, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Surely, “It is finished,” sounds like the trumpet of victory; let us have faith to claim that victory through the blood of the Lamb, and let every Christian here, let the whole Church of God, as one mighty army, take comfort from this dying word of the now risen and ever-living Savior, “It is finished.” His Church may rest perfectly satisfied that his work for her is fully accomplished.

III. Now, thirdly, I want to use this expression, “It is finished,” TO EVERY

BELIEVER’S JOY.

When our Lord said, “It is finished,” there was something to make every believer in him glad. What did that utterance mean? You and I have

believed in Jesus of Nazareth; we believe him to be the Messiah, sent of God. Now, if you will turn to the Old Testament, you will find that the marks of the Messiah are very many, and very complicated; and if you will then turn to the life and death of Christ, you will see in him *every mark of the Messiah plainly exhibited*. Until he had said, "It is finished," and until he had actually died, there was some doubt that there might be some one prophecy unfulfilled; but now that he hangs upon the cross, every mark, and every sign, and every token of his Messiahship have been fulfilled, and he says, "It is finished." The life and death of Christ and the types of the Old Testament fit each other like hand and glove. It would be quite impossible for any person to write the life of a man, by way of fiction, and then in another book to write out a series of types, personal and sacrificial, and to make the character of the man fit all the types; even if he had permission to make both books, he could not do it. If he were allowed to make both the lock and the key, he could not do it; but here we have the lock made beforehand. In all the Books of the Old Testament, from the prophecy in the Garden of Eden right away down to Malachi, the last of the prophets, there were certain marks and tokens of the Christ. All these were so very singular that it did not appear as if they could all meet in one person; but they did all meet in One, every one of them, whether it concerned some minute point or some prominent characteristic. When the Lord Jesus Christ had ended his life, he could say, "It is finished; my life has tallied with all that was said of it from the first word of prophecy even to the last." Now, that ought greatly to encourage your faith. You are not following cunningly-devised fables; but you are following One who must be the Messiah of God, since he so exactly fits all the prophecies and all the types that were given before concerning him.

"It is finished." Let every believer be comforted in another respect, that *every honor which the law of God could require has been rendered to it*. You and I have broken that law, and all the race of mankind has broken it, too. We have tried to thrust God from his throne; we have dishonored his law; we have broken his commandments wilfully and wickedly; but there has come One who is himself God, the Law-giver; and he has taken human nature, and in that nature he has kept the law perfectly; and inasmuch as the law had been broken by man, he has in the nature of man borne the sentence due for all man's transgressions. The Godhead, being linked with the manhood, gave supreme virtue to all that the manhood suffered; and

Christ, in life and in death, has magnified the law, and made it honorable; and God's law at this day is raised to even greater honor than it had before man broke it. The death of the Son of God, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, has vindicated the great moral principle of God's government, and made his throne to stand out gloriously before the eyes of men and angels for ever and ever. If hell were filled with men, it would not be such a vindication of divine justice as when God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and made him to die, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Now let every believer rejoice in the great fact that, by the death of Christ, the law of God is abundantly honored. You can be saved without impugning the holiness of God; you are saved without putting any stain upon the divine statute-book. The law is kept, and mercy triumphs, too.

And, beloved, here is included, of necessity, another comforting truth. Christ might well say, "It is finished," *for every solace conscience can need is now given*. When your conscience is disturbed and troubled, if it knows that God is perfectly honored, and his law vindicated, then it becomes easy. Men are always starting some new theory of the atonement; and one has said lately that the atonement was simply meant as an easement to the conscience of men. It is not so, my brethren; there would be no easing of the conscience by anything that was meant for that alone. Conscience can only be satisfied if God is satisfied. Until I see how the law is vindicated, my troubled conscience can never find rest. Dear heart, are thine eyes red with weeping? Yet look thou to him who hangs upon the tree. Is thy heart heavy even to despair? Look to him who hangs upon the tree, and believe in him. Take him to be thy soul's atoning Lamb, suffering in thy stead. Accept of him as thy Representative, dying thy death that thou mayest live his life, bearing thy sin that thou mayest be made the righteousness of God in him. This is the best *quietus* in the world for every fear that conscience can raise; let every believer know that it is so.

Once more, there is joy to every believer when he remembers that, as Christ said, "It is finished," *every guarantee was given of the eternal salvation of all the redeemed*. It appears to me that, if Christ finished the work for us, he will finish the work in us. If he has undertaken so supreme a labor as the redemption of our souls by blood, and that is finished, then the great but yet minor labor of renewing our natures, and transforming us even unto

perfection, shall be finished, too. If, when we were sinners, Christ loved us so as to die for us, now that he has redeemed us, and has already reconciled us to himself, and made us his friends and his disciples, will he not finish the work that is necessary to make us fit to stand among the golden lamps of heaven, and to sing his praises in the country where nothing that defileth can ever enter?

*“The work which his goodness began,
The arm of his strength will complete;
His promise is yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet:
Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make him his purpose forgo,
Or sever my soul from his love.”*

I believe it, my brethren. He who has said, “It is finished,” will never leave anything undone. It shall never be said of him, “This Man began, but was not able to finish.” If he has bought me with his blood, and called me by his grace, and I am resting on his promise and power, I shall be with him where he is, and I shall behold his glory, as surely as he is Christ the Lord, and I am a believer in him. What comfort this truth brings to every child of God!

Are there any of you here who are trying to do something to make a righteousness of your own? How dare you attempt such a work when Jesus says, “It is finished”? Are you trying to put a few of your own merits together, a few odds and ends, fig-leaves and filthy rags of your own righteousness? Jesus says, “It is finished.” Why do you want to add anything of your own to what he has completed? Do you say that you are not fit to be saved? What! have you to bring some of your fitness to eke out Christ’s work? “Oh!” say you, “I hope to come to Christ one of these days when I get better.” What! What! What! What! Are you to make yourself better, and then is Christ to do the rest of the work? You remind me of the railways to our country towns; you know that, often, the station is half-a-mile or a mile out of the town, so that you cannot get to the station without having an omnibus to take you there. But my Lord Jesus Christ comes right to the town of Mansoul. His railway runs close to your feet, and there is the carriage-door wide open; step in. You have not even to go over a bridge, or under a subway; there stands the carriage just before you. This royal

railroad carries souls all the way from hell's dark door, where they lie in sin, up to heaven's great gate of pearl, where they dwell in perfect righteousness for ever. Cast yourself on Christ; take him to be everything you need, for he says of the whole work of salvation, "It is finished."

I recollect the saying of a Scotchwoman, who had applied to be admitted to the communion of the kirk. Being thought to be very ignorant, and little instructed in the things of God, she was put back by the elders. The minister also had seen her, and thought that, at least for a while, she should wait. I wish I could speak Scotch, so as to give you her answer, but I am afraid that I should make a mistake if I tried it. It is a fine language, doubtless, for those who can speak it. She said something like this, "Aweel, sir; aweel, sir, but I ken ae thing. As the lintbell opens to the sun, so my heart opens to the name of Jesus." You have, perhaps, seen the flaxdower shut itself up when the sun has gone; and, if so, you know that, whenever the sun has come back, the flower opens itself at once. "So," said the poor woman, "I ken one thing, that as the flower opens to the sun, so my heart opens to the name of Jesus." Do you know that, friends? Do you ken that one thing? Then I do not care if you do not ken much else; if that one thing is known by you, and if it be really so, you may be far from perfect in your own estimation, but you are a saved soul.

One said to me, when she came to join the church, and I asked her whether she was perfect, "Perfect? Oh, dear no, sir! I wish that I could be." "Ah, yes!" I replied, "that would just please you, would it not?" "Yes; it would indeed," she answered. "Well, then," I said, "that shows that your heart is perfect, and that you love perfect things; you are pining after perfection; there is a something in you, an 'I' in you, that sinneth not, but that seeketh after that which is holy; and yet you do that which you would not, and you groan because you do, and the apostle is like you when he says, 'It is no more I, the real I, that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.'" May the Lord put that "I" into many of you to-night, that "I" which will hate sin, that "I" which will find its heaven in being perfectly free from sin, that "I" which will delight itself in the Almighty, that "I" which will sun itself in the smile of Christ, that "I" which will strike down every evil within as soon as ever it shows its head! So will you sing that familiar prayer of Toplady's that we have often sung, —

*“Let the water and the blood
From thy riven side which flow’d,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power,”!*

IV. I close by saying, in the fourth place, that we shall use this text, “It is

finished, TO OUR OWN AROUSEMENT.

Somebody once wickedly said, “Well, if Christ has finished it, there is nothing for me to do now but to fold my hands, and go to sleep.” That is the speech of a devil, not of a Christian! There is no grace in the heart when the mouth can talk like that. On the contrary, the true child of God says, “Has Christ finished his work for me? Then tell me what work I can do for him.” You remember the two questions of Saul of Tarsus. The first enquiry, after he had been struck down, was, “Who art thou, Lord?” And the next was, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” If Christ has finished the work for you which you could not do, now go and finish the work for him which you are privileged and permitted to do. Seek to —

*“Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o’er the Erring one, Lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the Mighty to save.”*

My inference from this saying of Christ, “It is finished,” is this, — Has he finished his work for me? Then I must get to work for him, and *I must persevere until I finish my work, too*; not to save myself, for that is all done, but because I am saved. Now I must work for him with all my might; and if there come discouragements, if there come sufferings, if there comes a sense of weakness and exhaustion, yet let me not give way to it; but, inasmuch as he pressed on till he could say, “It is finished,” let me press on till I, too, shall be able to say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” You know how men who go fishing look out for the fish. I have heard of a man going to Keston Ponds on Saturday fishing, and stopping all day Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. There was another man fishing there, and the other man had only been there two days. He said, “I have been here two days, and I have only had one bite.” “Why!” replied the other, “I have been here ever since last Saturday, and I have not had a bite

yet; but I mean to keep on.” “Well,” answered the other, “I cannot keep on without catching anything.” “Oh!” said number one, “but I have such a longing to catch some fish that I shall stop here till I do.” I believe that fellow would catch some fish ultimately, if there were any to be caught; he is the kind of fisherman to do it, and we want to have men who feel that they must win souls for Christ, and that they will persevere till they do. It must be so with us, brethren and sisters; we cannot let men go down to hell if there is any way of saving them.

The next inference is, that *we can finish our work, for Christ finished his*. You can put a lot of “finish” into your work, and you can hold on to the end, and complete the work by divine grace; and that grace is waiting for you, that grace is promised to you. Seek it, find it, get it. Do not act as some do, ah, even some who are before me now! They served God once, and then they ran away from him. They have come back again; God bless them, and help them to be more useful! But future earnest service will never make up for that sad gap in their earlier career. It is best to keep on, and on, and on, from the commencement to the close; the Lord help us to persevere to the end, till we can truly say of our life-work, “It is finished”!

One word of caution I must give you. *Let us not think that our work is finished till we die*. “Well,” says one, “I was just going to say of my work, ‘It is finished.’” Were you? Were you? I remember that, when John Newton wrote a book about grace in the blade, and grace in the ear, and grace in the full corn in the ear, a very talkative body said to him, “I have been reading your valuable book, Mr. Newton; it is a splendid work; and when I came to that part, ‘The full corn in the ear,’ I thought how wonderfully you had described me.” “Oh!” replied Mr. Newton, “but you could not have read the book rightly, for it is one of the marks of the full corn in the ear that it hangs its head very low.” So it is; and when a man, in a careless, boastful spirit, says of his work, “It is finished,” I am inclined to ask, “Brother, was it ever begun? If your work for Christ is finished, I should think that you never realized what it ought to be.” As long as there is breath in our bodies, let us serve Christ; as long as we can think, as long as we can speak, as long as we can work, let us serve him, let us even serve him with our last gasp; and, if it be possible, let us try to set some work going that will glorify him when we are dead and gone. Let us scatter some seed that may spring up when we are sleeping beneath the hillock in the cemetery. Ah, beloved, we shall

never have finished our work for Christ until we bow our heads, and give up the ghost! The oldest friend here has a little something to do for the Master. Someone said to me, the other day, "I cannot think why old Mrs. So-and-so is spared; she is quite a burden to her friends." "Ah!" I replied, "she has something yet to do for her Lord, she has another word to speak for him." Sister, look up your work, and get it done; and you, brother, see what remains of your lifework yet incomplete. Wind off the ends, get all the little cowers finished. Who knows how long it may be before you and I may have to give in our account? Some are called away very suddenly; they are apparently in good health one day, and they are gone the next. I should not like to leave a halffinished life behind me. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "It is finished," and your heart should say, "Lord, and I will finish, too; not to mix my work with thine, but because thou hast finished thine, I will finish mine."

Now may the Lord give us the joy of his presence at his table! May the bread and wine speak to you much better than I can! May every heir of heaven see Christ to-night, and rejoice in his finished work, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON.

PSALM 121. AND 122. Psalm 121:1. *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*

No help comes from anywhere else but from the eternal hills. Let us lift up our eyes, therefore, hopefully expecting help from the hills; it is on the road, it "cometh." The psalmist with the eye of faith could see it coming, so he watched its approach.

2. *My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.*

He would sooner unmake them than desert his people. He that made heaven and earth could certainly find shelter for us either in heaven or in earth. He cannot, he will not leave us, he will make room for us in heaven when there is no room for us here. What a blessed thing it is to look right away from the creature to the Creator! The creature may fail you; but the Creator is an ever-springing well of all-sufficient grace.

3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:*

He will not endure it, he will not suffer it. Many would like to trip thee up;

but he will not allow it, he loves thee too well.

3. *He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

Thou mayest slumber, for thou art frail, but he is a Watchman to whose eyes sleep never comes. You are always safe. Alexander went to sleep, he said, because Parmenio watched; and you may take the sleep of the beloved because Jehovah watches over you.

4. *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*

Behold it, that is, mark it; put a *nota bene* at the side of it, take cognizance of this as a great and sure truth. Jacob went to sleep with a stone for his pillow, but he that kept him did not sleep; he came to him in the nightwatches, and revealed to him his covenant.

5. *The Lord is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.*

Oh, what a keeper we have! Can you not trust him? Will you not be at peace in your mind if it be indeed true that Jehovah keeps you, and is your guard in the hour of danger?

6. *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*

Then, when canst thou get hurt? If thou art protected both day and night, these make up all the time. God does not make a new sun for his people, the sun would smite us as well as others, but he takes the sting out of the sun's excessive brightness: and we have the same sickly moon as others have, with the same influences over us, but God takes care that the moonbeams do not harm his people. Neither the sun of prosperity nor the night of adversity, neither the light of truth nor even the dimness of mystery, shall injure one of the chosen seed.

7. *The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.*

That is the soul of our preservation; if the life, the soul, be kept, then are we kept altogether.

8. *The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in —*

Thine early days of youth, when thou art going out into life; and thy coming in, when the older days creep over thee, and thou art coming in to God and heaven; thy going out into business, and thy coming in to private devotion.

8. *From this time forth, and even for evermore.*

Let us, therefore, feel restful at this time, and even for evermore, having the Lord for our Keeper and Preserver.

Psalm 122:1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*

I was glad for their sake, glad to think they were so willing to go. I was glad also for my own sake, for I was glad to go, too.

2. *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.*

Happy men who were citizens of such a city! Happy worshippers coming together to the place whose very name signifies the vision of peace, the metropolis of God, type of the New Jerusalem which is from above!

3. *Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:*

Not a conglomeration of huts, but builded as a city with substantial structures; and not a straggling city, like some we read of, that have been called “cities of magnificent distances”, but it was “compact together.” Happy is the church that is at peace; blessed are the people who are joined together by a gracious brotherly love.

4. *Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.*

The Church is the point of meeting: “Whither the tribes go up.” The Church is the place of “testimony”, and saints go to hear testimony, and they go to bear it. I wish there was more of this bearing testimony among Christian people, and that they looked upon it as a sacred duty to tell to others what God has told to them. “To give thanks unto the name of the Lord” — that is another part of true worship, — praise, joyful thanksgiving, should be one of the saints’ continual avocations; let us not forget it at this time. Some are here who have been sick; let them give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Some are here who are still weak, yet able to come up with God’s people; let us give thanks unto the name of the Lord. We have all some special mercy, some choice favor, for which to praise his name; then let us all give thanks unto the name of the Lord.

6. *For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.*

If any of the people had been wronged by the petty magistrates, they went up to Jerusalem, and made their appeal to the king. Here may we bring our suit before God, and order our case before him, for he is true and just, and nothing shall go amiss that is left with him.

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:*

Pray for it now, breathe a silent prayer to God.

6. *They shall prosper that love thee.*

God loves those who love his Church, and love his cause, and he rewards them with prosperity, as much of earthly prosperity as they can bear, and prosperity to their souls beyond measure.

7. *Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palace.* The psalmist bade us pray, and now he himself prays. He who bids others do a thing should be prepared to set the example.

8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now pray, Peace be within Thee.*

Let us say it, for the sake of beloved ones in heaven, and dear ones on earth who are on the way thither, "Peace be within thee."

9. *Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.*

Not only pray for it, but work for it, give for it, live for it: "I will seek thy good! God bless to us these two Psalms and put us all in a right state of heart to-night! Amen.

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Sermons based on Jesus' seven sayings on the cross, compiled by wlue777

Scripture

[Luk 23:34](#)

[Luk 23:42-43](#)

[Joh 19:25-26](#)

[Mat 27:46](#)

[Joh 19:28](#)

[Joh 19:30](#)

[Luk 23:46](#)

THE THREE HOURS' DARKNESS

NO. 3471

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1866.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.” [Mat 27:45](#).

THIS darkness was not occasioned by any of the natural causes which generally produce darkness. It was in the middle of the day, precisely at noon, that the darkness came. It could not have been caused by an eclipse, for, it being the time of the Passover, we know that the moon was just then at its fullest—at which period no such thing as an eclipse of the sun could possibly occur. It could not, then, have been produced from that cause. And from the way in which Luke describes it, it does not seem to have been occasioned by the sun being eclipsed by any other body, for if you look to his narrative you will find he seems to say that the darkness came first, and that afterwards the sun became dark. Whether this was through some dense vapor coming over the face of the earth, an intensification of some of these fogs to which we are so accustomed, or whether it was through a miraculous action upon the atmosphere, so that while the sun shone its light was no longer able to reach the eye, we cannot tell, but in some way or other darkness prevailed over all the land from twelve o’clock till three in the afternoon. We suppose that this darkness came on suddenly and, if so, it must have been most striking. Just in the midst of their ribald mirth, while they were staring at the naked body of their Victim and insulting Him with their jests and jeers, wagging their heads, and thrusting out their tongues—just at that very moment total darkness came on! We suppose it to have been total, or, at any rate, such a gloom as to be a “darkness” which “was over all the land.” We suppose, too, that just as suddenly this darkness was withdrawn. As soon as the Savior expired, just at the moment when He gave His last triumphant shout, “It is finished,” the sun gleamed forth again and the earth laughed once more in the sunlight—for the great trial of Christ, the great struggle for man’s salvation—was then all over! Such a phenomenon must have been most striking. The sudden darkening and the sudden lighting up of the world must have been a thing to be remembered and to be talked of by all who saw it!

As for ourselves at this time, we have not so much to do with the physical causes or with the appearance, itself, as with the *spiritual* meaning of this darkness. There is light in this darkness, if not to the natural, yet to the spiritual eye, if we have Grace to discern it.

There is something to be learned, even from the darkness—something to be learned from the light, and something to be learned from both the darkness and the light together. In the first place, there is, we believe—

I. SOMETHING TO BE LEARNED IN THIS REMARKABLE

DARKNESS which covered all the land during the sharpest and severest part of our Savior's agony.

We learn, first, *the sympathy of Creation with her Lord*. There is a singular sympathy in Creation between God's vicegerent on earth, namely, man, and the world. When man was in his integrity, then the earth was fruitful, but when man fell, the curse fell upon the ground as well as upon man. "Cursed is the ground for your sake." Then the thorn and the thistle sprang up, being sent by God as a token of His displeasure with man. We believe, Brothers and Sisters, that "the creature was made subject to vanity not willingly," and that in due time, when sin has been cleansed away, this earth of ours will be redeemed from the curse. We are looking for the happy and halcyon time when the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God, and then this poor darkened planet shall be washed from her night garments of mist, and shall shine out like her sister stars, the unfallen worlds, praising and magnifying the God who created her! Now if there is this sympathy, as we are sure there is, between the earth and man, much more is there a sympathy between the earth and God—and still more between the earth and that Man who was God as well as Man! Observe that when He was born, midnight turned to midday, and when He died midday turned to midnight. When He was born, Heaven was lit up with splendor and from angelic choirs the Bethlehem song was heard, while men also rejoiced, because unto them a Child was born, unto them a Son was given. But when he died, Heaven put out her brightest light! "You sun, of this great world, both eye and soul," you did— "*Acknowledge Him your greater,*" and, perceiving it in midday—midnight, with your face all wrapped as in a mantle for very shame, you did lament Him whom men scoffed and mocked, for you were the chief mourner at the death of the King of Kings. The earth, then, thus showed her sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ by her darkness. Remember, too, that she also trembled through her ribs of stone, for there was an earthquake and the veil of the Temple was split in two—and even Death acknowledged its defeat, for many of the saints that slept, arose. There is a wondrous sympathy, then, between the world and He

who made and redeemed the world—and this was manifested by the darkening of the world at the time of His death!

But, secondly, there was in great deal more in the darkness than this. *It was surely a rebuke and a check to the insulting cruelty of man!* What louder rebuke, though without a sound! What stronger check, though without a voice, could have been offered to that assembled throng? The Roman in his pride, the Jew in his bigotry and the Gentile in his hatred of all that was sacred, were all there—and all did their utmost to pour contempt on Christ! And just in the midst of it they were like the men who sought after a light in Sodom—as if they were all smitten with blindness—they could not find their way! It was all dark round about Him. Now they could no longer scoff at Him. They dared not now say, “Let Him come down from the Cross!” I suppose that during those three hours there must have been an intense silence, or if men ventured to use their lips, they whispered to one another, “What is this that has come upon us? Is this the judgment, and is that Man, after all, the King of the Jews, and is this darkness, this darkness which may be felt, the taking away of the light of mercy from our eyes that we may perish in everlasting darkness?” I think I can hear them muttering thus, as some of them found their way to their homes, stumbling and falling to the ground, and others of them coming together for the sake of company to keep up their courage—but all of them sitting astonished in the thick darkness and wondering what it could mean—when a tremor went through all the earth and the veil of the Temple was split and even the heathen centurion, astonished by all these surprising concomitants of the death of this crucified Man, said, “Surely this must be the Son of God!” It was an amazing rebuke, then, to the wickedness of man which then came to its climax round about the Cross.

Was it not also, in the third place, *the furnishing of our Savior with a retiring room*, not that He might get a shelter, but that He might now be able to do His great work—bear the full weight of our sins and endure the extremities of the Divine Wrath? I must not say it, but I do think it would have been impossible for human eyes to have looked upon the Savior when He was in the full vortex of the storm of wrath which fell upon Him—and that God, even in mercy to man, shut the door that man’s eyes might not see the Savior in that fearful extremity of misery! It was not meet, when He trod the winepress, that He should be gazed upon. He must tread the winepress alone in all the fullest meaning of that word, with not even an eye to gaze

upon Him! It must be in the thick that He must press those grapes of wrath and stain His garments with His blood. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you can have no thought—it is impossible you should—of the depth of the Savior’s sufferings! The Greek liturgy, when it speaks of Christ’s sufferings as “Your unknown sufferings,” has just hit the mark. They were unknown—unknown to us and unknown, also, perhaps, to lost souls in Hell, so dire and so extreme were they! He was shut up in the darkness that He might there alone bear the whole of it.

And was not this darkness, too, *intended to be to us a sort of emblem of His state?* It is as much as if God had said to us, “You want to know what Christ had to suffer? You cannot know, but that black darkness is the emblem of it.” The darkness seems to say to us, “Oh, mortal, you cannot understand me—those poor optics of yours are meant for another element, namely, for light—you lose yourself in me! You cannot find a pathway in the thick black darkness.” So Christ on the Cross seems to say to us, “My people, you can follow Me to some extent. In some of My paths you *must* follow Me, but here, as your atoning Surety and as the vicarious Sacrifice for your sins— *here you cannot follow Me*. This is not your element—you will lose yourselves here. You cannot comprehend it! It is only I, only I who have endured the Wrath of God, and know what it means, who can travel on this road.” Christian, when you are most oppressed in soul with fellowship with Christ, and when you feel that when asked the question, with James and John, “Are you able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?” you could answer, “Yes, we are able”—mind, there is a point where you are *notable*—there is something in that cup which you cannot drink. There is a depth in that Baptism which you cannot know. Thank God that you cannot know it! Bless the Master that those paths of horrid gloom, where Hell’s blackest nights thicken into the most intense infinitude of darkness, you can never know! “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” was not a cry for you, but for the Savior! To be cast out of God’s Presence and to bear the weight of sin, is not for you, but for Christ. He has done it for you, and so the darkness becomes a fit emblem to you because you cannot understand it, neither can you fathom nor understand the depths of the Savior’s sufferings.

Once more. Does not the darkness, inasmuch as it is an emblem of Christ’s sufferings, also set forth to us our own condition? I suppose the Savior was, by force of His Suretyship, compelled to take the very place which the

sinner should have occupied. The plan of salvation is just this, that Christ shall take the sinner's place and suffer in the sinner's stead, what the sinner ought to have suffered. The very pith and marrow of the Gospel lies in that word—"Substitution." Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We take Christ's place because Christ took our place! He stood in the place of lost sinners. Well now, the place of a lost sinner is the place of darkness. Outer darkness will be his eternal place, and darkness is his present state—his natural condition—as the Apostle said, "We were sometimes darkness." So the Savior is made to be in darkness and as man would have had to abide forever in darkness, misery, despair, and hopelessness, so the Savior is, for three hours, denied the light of the sun! He is denied all comfort, denied all mercies—He is left without a glimpse of His Father, or a ray from the light of the sun because He then stood in the place of His people! Ah, Christian, ought not this to make you hate sin, to think that sin thus put you in the dark and would have kept you there, and continued you in the bleakness of darkness forever? Ought it not, too, to make you hate it when you remember that it put your Lord in the dark, and made Him hang bleeding from His wounds without a light to cheer Him or a glimpse to comfort Him? If, Christian, you do not hate sin when you think of this darkness, surely you must be still in the dark! We gather, then, these few lessons from the darkness, though we are persuaded that there are many more in it. But now we come to—

II. GATHER SOME LESSONS FROM THE LIGHT.

It is fair to say that the darkness continued till just about the time when the Savior died, and that the light came as the Savior expired. The light broke upon Him a few minutes, or perhaps less, after He had cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani," and after He had received the vinegar, and with a loud voice had given up the ghost. It is fair to say, then, that the darkness lasted till the Savior died. *A dying Savior lights up the world.* His expiring groan bids the sun come back. He raises His triumphant shout and, "It is finished" kindles, like a torch, the lamp of day once more, and earth is glad, for salvation's work is accomplished!

What do we learn, then, from the fact of the light returning as soon as the Savior died? Why, in the first place, we learn *that the darkness was gone forever from Himself—that the wrath of God no longer continues to bind or threaten Him!* Sometimes, when speaking of our justification, we have

compared ourselves to a woman in debt. Now this woman, though immersed in debt and unable to pay, becomes the object of affection and is married. No sooner is the nuptial knot tied and the ring placed upon her finger than she is free from debt. No sheriff's officer can arrest her—whatever her debts may have been, she is not in debt any longer, because her debts are all transferred to her husband and are no longer hers! Now this may be some sort of comfort to her, but if she is of a loving and tender heart, she still feels that she is in bondage because he whom she loves is in bondage. “My husband,” she says, “has the debt and I feel that as heavily as if I had it myself.” But as soon as ever he has discharged the debt, she then has this as a double ground for confidence and joy—she is free twice—free, first, by the debt being laid on her husband. Free, secondly, by his discharging the debt. Now look here, Christian—you are clear, for your sin was laid on Christ! It is a law that a thing cannot be in two places at one time—if my sin was on Christ, it cannot be on me! If it was laid on Him according to God's Word, “He has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”—then it cannot lie on me and on Christ, too, and, therefore, I am clear!

But supposing it still laid on Him? There would still be cause for grief and sorrow of heart. But it does not, for Christ has discharged the debt and, in token thereof, the black darkness which brooded over Him during the three hours of His passion suddenly turned to the bright light of day! Now He no more stands before God as an outcast, but He, Himself, is justified and has risen again for our justification! This clearing of the sky was, as it were, a declaration on the part of Heaven that the debt which Christ had taken had been paid! The Surety had smarted and now those for whom He had been Surety might go free. In this returning light, my cheerful eyes see the fact that Christ is free as well as those for whom He stood!

Again, we see something else, namely, *that the curse has also gone from the world*. The darkness was on Christ and the darkness was also over all the land. Now when the darkness went away from Christ, it also went away from the land. I have already said that there is a sympathy between Nature and its Maker. When the curse fell upon Him, “without whom was not anything made that was made,” it was on Nature, too. Now Christ has put that away. I do not know whether you ever indulge in the sweet thought, but one likes, sometimes, to revel in it. “The creature itself also shall be delivered from bondage.” There is a day coming in which this world shall not bring forth thorns and thistles, in which it shall not be a wilderness—a

howling and a barren place—but it shall be literally true that, “the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” And though the prophecy bears a spiritual meaning, yet it shall also bear a literal one, that “instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle, and instead of the briar shall come up the fir tree and the box tree together,” for the Lord God, who cleared His Son from the curse, will also clear the world from the curse and revoke the sentence, “Cursed shall the ground be for your sake,” for earth shall yet again be blessed! Is it not written that Christ was revealed to destroy the works of the devil? And as it was one of the works of the devil to pollute and defile this world, so shall it be one of the works of Christ to cleanse and purify it! This world has been the theater of sin, but it will be cleansed and purged, and made the theater of holiness! “I looked,” says John, “and I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” Perhaps there will be purifying fires, according to the word of Peter, “The elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the earth, also, and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up.” And then afterwards, once again refitted, freed from the last relic of man’s evil doings, there shall be heard the shout, “The Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell among them! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” May such happy days soon come! We expect them because the darkness was rolled away when Jesus died! This, however, is but speculative. We will, therefore, turn to something that is more solid.

It seems to me that the moving off of this darkness when the Master died *was a picture of the lifting of the veil of despair from the face of the whole human family*. Brothers and Sisters, did you ever feel yourselves forced to read a description of heathenism in India? I remember to have listened with extreme pain to a description given of the idolatries of India by one who knew them thoroughly and had seen them.

ne could hardly bear a recapitulation of the sacred rites of the Hindus without feeling that one’s mind was polluted, quite polluted by knowing what their religion was! It was so debasing and degrading to the mind that one felt it was a dangerous experiment even to know about it. Now those Christian people who have lived in such a country as India, and have marked how the people are set upon their idols, though, even according to their own description of them, those idols are monsters of filth—those who have lived there, I say, might well say, “It is of no use! The Light of God

will never come here.” But the Christian is forbidden to say this, for Christ has taken the darkness from off all the face of the land! So, as far as this is concerned, we must never despair of any cases! Christ’s death took the veil away and there is no reason now why India’s teeming millions should not stretch out their hands to Christ!

Cast your eye to China. A million souls a month die unsaved in China, never having heard of Christ! It is an awful thought, and one that might break one’s heart if one indulged in it. Now what is there to be done for such teeming multitudes? The whole world still lies in the Wicked One, what with Mohammedanism, idolatry, Romanism and all the other forms of self-worship. What is to be done? Christian, do what you can and then leave it with Christ! He took away the darkness by His dying, and rest assured that the proclamation of His death will take away all the darkness of despair from the face of the world! Now the next time you look upon some person who has been a very gross sinner, if there is a temptation in your mind to say, “It is no use trying after *him*—he must be given up—that man cannot be saved,” check that thought! Even if the man is a drunk, or swearer, or thief, or all these things in one, remember that Christ took away the darkness of despair from off all the land and so He has taken away despair even from that soul! You have no right to say that that soul cannot be saved—your business is to pray for it and labor for it, if haply it may find the Light of God! If this darkness had not all been removed. If there had been but one spot left, I might have said, “There is no hope for me,” but if the dying Christ lights the whole world over, then why, oh why should I lie down in despair? Why not say, “Who can tell, perhaps He will have mercy upon me? Who can tell, perhaps even my sin may be forgiven? Who, knows, the black darkness may yet be swept away from me and even I may rejoice in the light of His Countenance?” Christ, in taking away the darkness, then, removed the despair which was the black Egyptian night that covered the world!

Yet, farther, there was another darkness which covered the earth in Christ’s day, namely, *the darkness of soul-ignorance*. This darkness, also, Christ, by dying, took away. Up till the death of Christ, if man had desired salvation, he could not have found the way. He was in total darkness. No man could ever, by his own scheming, have found out the plan of Substitution.

Socrates and Plato were two men of masterminds—if any of woman born could have found out the way of salvation, they would have done it—but

their discoveries were of very little worth to mankind. It was only when Christ bowed His head in the agonies of death that man knew there was a gate to Paradise! I mean not that the saints did not know it, but they only knew that this was the gate, that it was the dying Savior who was the road to Heaven. It was the fact of Christ coming in human flesh and suffering for man which was the answer to the world's great riddle. The world's riddle was, "How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" Man tried to spell it out, but never could. But when Jesus died, the darkness was taken away, and man then understood the way to God. Now, beloved Friends, the business we have to do is to tell to those who are still in the dark the story of Christ. If you know any people in the world who are ignorant about soul-matters, do not begin to talk to them about the existence of a God. Do not commence with the Doctrine of Election—begin with the story of a dying Savior—that is the way to teach! When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland there were many who tried to teach the Greenlanders about God. They thought they were not in a prepared state to know about Christ till, by accident, one of them happened to read the Chapter containing the words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "Oh," said the Greenlanders, "why did you not tell us this before? This is the one thing we need to know." So it is. It is not merely that there is a God, for Nature teaches that, but that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. This, this is the great lesson! And if you want to take away darkness from the soul, you must teach this!

A great deal is said about the usefulness of education and I suppose that no intelligent person would say a word against it. The more education the better, but it is outrageous to suppose that education, even carried to the highest degree, will necessarily better a man! A man may be all the worse for education unless the spiritual part of his nature is educated. He may be a profound philosopher and yet he may justify the butchery of innocent men and women! He may be one of the finest art critics in the world, and yet he may back up a monster who could allow men to whip pregnant women and to shoot down poor creatures who were fugitives in cold-blood! The highest education does not keep a man from justifying inhumanity! A man needs to have his *heart*right, or everything else will go wrong, let him learn whatever he may. But when a man has the story of Christ in his heart and

sees that Jesus died, then soul-ignorance flies away. He sees true light in seeing Christ as the Substitute for human guilt. His soul clings to God, understands Him, lays hold upon Him, rejoices in Him—and this is the point where education must begin. It must begin at the Cross. Teach men all else you please, but if you leave out the *scientia scientiarum*—the science of sciences, the knowledge of knowledge—you have done but little. You have only helped the man to a greater responsibility and to a direr ruin.

Again, the moving away of the darkness when the Savior died was not merely the taking away of soul-ignorance, but also of *moral guilt*. There was the darkness of sin over the world—a thick darkness covered all mankind, even as it does now. The only place of light in the world is where the Cross beams. All other systems have tried, but they have only increased the darkness. Mohammedanism was, for a time, a great improvement on anything that went before it, but what is it now? What is its teaching and what is its influence upon man now? It is “evil, only evil, and that continually.” But the Doctrine that Christ was crucified for man, that God has punished sin in Christ and that God is ready to forgive the sinner—the Doctrine that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned—this makes men holy! They hate sin in the light of this! They love God in the light of the Cross! They seek after virtue and holiness when they come to know the Savior, but they never come to any perfection until they first know Him. It seems to me, then, that the chief business of every Christian should be the telling out of the death of Christ, for this is the lamp that is needed!

Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, when I think about the mischief that is being done in England by Popery, and by all sorts of darkness, I am inclined to say, “Let us give up preaching anything except the Cross of Christ!” It does seem as if we might merge some other matters. We dare not neglect any Truth of God, but it does sometimes seem a strong temptation to forget everything else and keep on teaching, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” and to make it—

*“All our business here below,
To cry ‘Behold the Lamb.’”*

The one thing that England needs is Christ preached and Christ believed in! The great thing that the whole earth needs is the Crucified Savior. It would be in vain for Aaron to bring out the smoking incense when men are dying, being bitten of the serpent—the smoke of incense is of no use, then. It

would be in vain for Moses to bring down the Ten Commandments when men are dying, being bitten—the Ten Commandments cannot heal them. Oh, for the uplifting of the bronze serpent! That is the one thing that Israel's camp needs and that is the one need of London now—Christ on the Cross uplifted before the sinner's gaze and the continual cry, "Look, look, look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth!" If any Christian minister here present has been backward in preaching Christ. If he has been for the last few Sundays preaching mere Doctrine, preaching only experience, preaching metaphysics, but not preaching Christ, let him repent of the sin and never commit it again! And if any one of us in our conversation shall have been all this week talking about politics, or matters of taste and so on, without talking about Christ, let us ask for mercy in this respect! Oh, come back to Jesus that you may kindle your torches! You may kindle your beams of light by your camp fires and hope to remove the darkness in your own poor way, but you will do nothing! But if you bring out a dying Savior, He will take away the midday—midnight of the world at once—and light shall come streaming even through the darkness! God grant us to live more to Christ, to think more of Christ, to speak more about Him and to breathe more of His Spirit.

I would ask Brothers and Sisters who are present to join with us in earnest prayer that there may be a thorough revival throughout England of the preaching of the Doctrine of the Cross, and that God would put power into the ministry in order to the conversion of many. I told you last Sunday [September 23, 1866] that some of us would meet on Tuesday for prayer all day long. We have never had such a day as that before! I have thought since that I shall never see such another day, when some hundred or more of us met together to fast and pray during the day. We continued in prayer from about ten till six o'clock, unwearied, unexhausted. If any soul ever went to the gates of Heaven, I did last Tuesday! I feel now like a reed that is broken, the strength gone out of me through the excessive excitement, the sort of sacred delirium, of wrestling with God in prayer, in company with the Brothers present, for the conversion of sinners. There were times during last Tuesday when we could not, any of us, pray, and strong men as we were, we were but just able to cry aloud as if our hearts would break because we could not let the Lord go till He had looked down on His poor Church and returned again in mercy to visit His ministers! We feel as if we need a revival of religion now—not such revivals as there were a few years ago—

some of us think but little of them. We believe there were many gathered in, but where are many of them now? Scattered, to a very great extent, to the winds of Heaven! We need the true revival work of the Holy Spirit, without fanaticism and without excitement, but the genuine stirring of the soul of the people, the turning of them to God as on the Day of Pentecost! And we shall have it, Brothers! We shall have it, for we have sought it in believing prayer! We shall have it, for it must come through every Christian resolving that the Cross of Christ, the blood of the Savior, shall be the theme of his life and the objective of his desires—telling of it wherever he goes and so taking the darkness from off the face of the land. And now, putting the two together—

III. THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT ARE EMBLEMATIC OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Christ had hours of darkness and then there came the Light. The Church has her hours of darkness, too. She has struggled by her martyrs. She has even died in the persons of her confessors. Then comes her Light. She has her “Dark Ages” and she has her “Reformation.” She must struggle on through the darkness, expecting the Light to come. Perhaps the Light will come in a way in which we have not expected it. Perhaps the Master, Himself, will come before long—the Light of Lights, the Beginner of Days. May it be so! Meanwhile, we must, like He, struggle through the darkness.

Then, again, is not this *the experience of every Christian*? It is darkness, first, and the Light of God afterwards—yes, hours of darkness, weeks of darkness, months of darkness—with some of us *years of darkness*. Well, feel your nothingness to be a preparation for laying hold of Christ! To be broken is the way to be bound up! To be killed is the way to be made alive! And we must have this darkness to a greater or less extent. Child of God, if you happen to be in the dark just now, do not think that some strange thing has happened to you! Your Master went through the darkness. He fought upon the Cross and triumphed, but remember that the Savior’s triumph was *on the Cross*, and yours will be there too! You will suffer, and your triumph will be in suffering. You must expect to earn the victory in death. It shall be when you bow the head and give up the ghost that you shall have your, “It is finished!” on your lips, and enter into Glory won! Expect the darkness if you have it, wonder not at it, but cheerfully wait until the Light of God shall come!

Now, are there some hearts in the Tabernacle, tonight, who need to find the

Light? I am glad to see so many of you come on week-nights to listen to the simple preaching of the Gospel. Surely you must have some desires after Christ! Are there none of you in the dark who are unhappy and miserable? Do you want to get at the Light? You will never get it by looking into your own hearts. You will never find it by any outward performance, by any outward rites and ceremonies. The only Light for a poor miserable sinner is that which Christ struck on the Cross. You must look to Him, trust Him, and then you shall have the Light of God and shall turn your misery into joy, take away your sackcloth and gird you with scarlet and make you dance for joy of heart! Oh, seeking Sinner, look nowhere but to the Cross! Let not Satan deceive you by saying that you must *feel* such-and-such, or *do* such-and-such. Your feelings and doings are nothing! Only what Christ felt and what Christ did can save you! Look out of self to the Savior! Shake your hands clear of everything of your own and look to what Christ did when He hung upon the Cross, and when in the gloom of His death He worked with the shuttle of His pangs and His sorrows a garment to cover poor naked souls with! Your light, poor weary Sinner, is not the candle of Popish error, nor yet the candle of your own dark heart, but the sunlight of the Cross! Look there, and you shall be of good comfort, for to him who looks to Christ, the Light of God shall arise out of the darkness! May the Master give every one of you a blessing through this plain but truly earnest attempt to lead you to Himself and so secure your eternal salvation! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *ISAIAH 55:1-4*.

It is the language of Infinite Mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, and poor, and miserable through sin—but God, instead of driving us from His Presence, comes loaded with mercy—and thus He speaks to us.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* See the freeness of Divine Love! See how God who knows the needs of souls, provides all things necessary for them—water—the Water of Life. And as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction—and He offers these freely. But, mark you, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for us, for He says, “He that has no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” All that you need, dear Friend, God

is ready to give you. Do you need these good things? Then come and welcome! It is God who bids you come. 2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not?* Why do you

seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below that can satisfy you! Why spend your money, then, for these things, and your labor for nothing?

2. *Listen diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* God has real food for your soul—something that will make you truly happy! He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it, if you will but come and have it. You shall have fullness—you shall have delight—if you are but willing to come and receive it!

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live.* Then who would not hear—who would not give the attention—if by that attention immortal life may be received?

3. *And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* Will God enter into covenant with sinful men—with thirsty men—with hungry men—with needy men—with guilty men? Ah, that He will. “I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

4. *Behold, I have given Him.* That is the Son of David—Jesus the Christ—“I have given Him.” 4. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.* If you want anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the Witness to the Character of God. Do you need a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness—a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? God has all in Jesus Christ that I can need for time and eternity, and this can all be mine for the asking and receiving. Shall we not ask and receive?

—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
#3472 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

NO. 2133

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 2,
1890, C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, crying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” [Mat 27:46](#).

“THERE was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour”—this cry came out of that darkness! Expect not to see through its every word, as though it came from on high as a beam from the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. There is light in it—bright, flashing light—but there is a center of impenetrable gloom where the soul is ready to faint because of the terrible darkness. Our Lord was then in the darkest part of His way. He had trodden the winepress now for hours and the work was almost finished. He had reached the culminating point of His anguish. This is His dolorous lament from the lowest pit of misery—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

I do not think that the records of time, or even of eternity, contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood, the gall and all the other bitterness are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss—and though you strain your eyes and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom—it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. This anguish of the Savior on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which endured it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend.

I have chosen this subject that it may help the children of God to understand a little of their infinite obligations to their redeeming Lord. You shall measure the height of His love, if it can be measured, by the depth of His grief, if that can ever be known. See with what a price He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law! As you see this, say to yourselves—What manner of people ought we to be? What measure of love ought we to return

to One who bore the utmost penalty that we might be delivered from the wrath to come? I do not profess that I can dive *into* this deep—I will only venture to the edge of the precipice and bid you look down and pray the Spirit of God to concentrate your mind upon this lamentation of our dying Lord as it rises up through the thick darkness—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Our first subject of thought will be *the fact*, or what He suffered—God had forsaken Him. Secondly, we will note *the enquiry*, or why He suffered—this word, “why,” is the edge of the text. “Why have You forsaken Me?” Then, thirdly, we will consider *the answer*, or what came of His suffering. The answer flowed softly into the soul of the Lord Jesus without the need of words, for He ceased from His anguish with the triumphant shout of, “It is finished.” His work was finished and His bearing of desertion was a chief part of the work He had undertaken for our sake.

I. By the help of the Holy Spirit let us first dwell upon THE FACT, or what our Lord suffered. God had forsaken Him. Grief of mind is harder to bear than pain of body. You can pluck up courage and endure the pang of sickness and pain so long as the spirit is hale and brave. But if the soul itself is touched and the mind becomes diseased with anguish, then every pain is increased in severity and there is nothing with which to sustain it. Spiritual sorrows are the worst of mental miseries.

A man may bear great depression of spirit about worldly matters if he feels that he has his God to go to. He is cast down, but not in despair. Like David he dialogues with himself and he enquires, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him.” But if the Lord is once withdrawn—if the comfortable light of His Presence is shadowed even for an *hour*—there is a torment within the breast which I can only liken to the prelude of Hell. This is the greatest of all weights that can press upon the heart. This made the Psalmist plead, “Hide not Your face from me! Put not Your servant away in anger.”

We can bear a bleeding body and even a wounded spirit—but a soul conscious of desertion by God is beyond conception unendurable! When He holds back the face of His Throne and spreads His cloud upon it, who can endure the darkness? This voice out of “the belly of Hell” marks the lowest depth of the Savior’s grief. *The desertion was real.* Though under some aspects our Lord could say, “The Father is with Me,” yet was it solemnly

true that God did forsake Him. It was not a failure of faith on His part which led Him to imagine what was not actual fact. Our faith fails us and then we think that God has forsaken us—but our Lord’s faith did not, for a moment, falter, for He says twice, “*My God, My God.*”

Oh, the mighty double grip of His unhesitating faith! He seems to say, “Even if You have forsaken Me, I have not forsaken You.” Faith triumphs and there is no sign of any faintness of heart towards the living God. Yet, strong as is His faith, He feels that God has withdrawn His comfortable fellowship and He shivers under the terrible deprivation. It was no fancy or delirium of mind caused by His weakness of body, the heat of the fever, the depression of His spirit or the near approach of death. He was clear of mind even to this last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst and desolation—making no complaint of the Cross, the nails or the scoffing.

We read not in the Gospels of anything more than the natural cry of weakness, “I thirst.” All the tortures of His body He endured in silence. But when it came to being forsaken of God, *then* His great heart burst out into its “Lama Sabachthani?” His one moan is concerning His God! It is not, “Why has Peter forsaken Me? Why has Judas betrayed Me?” These were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut Him to the quick —“My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken Me?”

It was no phantom of the gloom—it was a real absence which He mourned. This was *a very remarkable desertion*. It is not the way of God to leave either His sons or His servants. His saints, when they come to die in their great weakness and pain, find Him near. They are made to sing because of the Presence of God—“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me.” Dying saints have clear visions of the living God! Our observation has taught us that if the Lord is away at other times, He is *never* absent from His people in the article of death or in the furnace of affliction.

Concerning the three holy children we do not read that the Lord was ever visibly with them till they walked the fires of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace—but then and there the Lord met with them. Yes, Beloved, it is God’s way and habit to keep company with His afflicted people. And yet He forsook His Son in the hour of His tribulation! How usual it is to see the Lord with His faithful witnesses when resisting even unto blood! Read the Book of Martyrs and I care not whether you study the former or the later

persecutions, you will find them all lit up with the evident Presence of the Lord with His witnesses.

Did the Lord ever fail to support a martyr at the stake? Did He ever forsake one of His testifiers upon the scaffold? The testimony of the Church has always been that while the Lord has permitted His saints to suffer in body He has so divinely sustained their spirits that they have been more than conquerors and have treated their sufferings as light afflictions! The fire has not been a “bed of roses,” but it has been a chariot of victory! The sword is sharp and death is bitter—but the love of Christ is sweet and to die for Him has been turned into glory! No, it is not God’s way to forsake His champions nor to leave even the least of His children in their hour of trial.

As to our Lord, this forsaking was *singular*. Did His Father ever leave Him before? Will you read the four Evangelists through and find any previous instance in which He complains of His Father for having forsaken Him? No. He said, “I know that you hear Me always.” He lived in constant touch with God. His fellowship with the Father was always near and dear and clear. But now, for the first time, He cries, “Why have You forsaken Me?” It was very remarkable! It was a riddle only to be solved by the fact that He loved us and gave Himself for us and in the execution of His loving purpose came even unto this sorrow of mourning the absence of His God.

This forsaking was *very terrible*. Who can fully tell what it is to be forsaken of God? We can only form a guess by what we have ourselves felt under temporary and partial desertion. God has never left us altogether, for He has expressly said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Yet we have sometimes felt as if He had cast us off. We have cried, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” The clear shining rays of His love have been withdrawn. Thus we are able to form some little idea of how the Savior felt when His God had forsaken Him.

The mind of Jesus was left to dwell upon one dark subject and no cheering theme consoled Him. It was the hour in which He was made to stand before God as consciously the Sin-Bearer according to that ancient prophecy, “He shall bear their iniquities.” Then was it true, “He has made Him to be sin for us.” Peter puts it, “He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Sin, sin—sin was everywhere around and about Christ. He had no sin of His own but the Lord had “laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” He had no strength given Him from on high, no secret oil and wine poured into His

wounds—He was made to appear in the lone Character of the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world—and therefore He must feel the weight of sin and the turning away of that sacred face which cannot look thereon.

His Father, at that time, gave Him no open acknowledgment. On certain other occasions a voice had been heard, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” But now, when such a testimony seemed most of all required, the oracle was not there! He was hung up as an accursed Thing upon the Cross, for He was “made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.”

And the Lord His God did not own Him before men. If it had pleased the Father He might have sent Him 12 legions of angels—but not an angel came after Christ had left Gethsemane. His despisers might spit in His face but no swift seraph came to avenge the indignity. They might bind Him and scourge Him, but none of all the heavenly host would interpose to screen His shoulders from the lash. They might fasten him to the tree with nails and lift Him up and scoff at Him—but no cohort of ministering spirits hastened to drive back the rabble and release the Prince of Life. No, He appeared to be forsaken, “smitten of God and afflicted,” delivered into the hands of cruel men whose wicked hands worked Him misery without stint. Well might He ask, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

But this was not all. His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed, up to now, throughout His whole earthly life. He said, Himself, as you remember, “You shall be scattered, every man to His own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” Here was His constant comfort—but all comfort from this Source was to be withdrawn. The Divine Spirit did not minister to His human spirit. No communications with His Father’s love poured into His heart. It was not possible that the Judge should smile upon One who represented the prisoner at the bar.

Our Lord’s *faith* did not fail Him, as I have already shown you, for He said, “My God, My God,” yet no sensible supports were given to His heart and no comforts were poured into His mind. One writer declares that Jesus did not taste of Divine wrath but only suffered a withdrawal of Divine fellowship. What is the difference? Whether God withdraws heat or creates cold is all the same! He was not smiled upon, nor allowed to feel that He

was near to God—and this, to His tender spirit, was grief of the keenest order!

A certain saint once said that in his sorrow he had from God, “that which was meet, but not that which was sweet.” Our Lord suffered to the extreme point of deprivation. He had not the light which makes existence to be life and life to be a blessing. You who know, in your degree, what it is to lose the conscious Presence and love of God—you can faintly guess what the sorrow of the Savior was now that He felt He had been forsaken of His God. “If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?” To our Lord, the Father’s love was the foundation of *everything*—and when that was gone, all was gone. Nothing remained, within, without, above, when His own God, the God of His entire confidence, turned from Him.

Yes, God in very deed forsook our Savior. To be forsaken of God was *much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us*. “Oh,” you say, “how is that?” I answer because He was perfectly holy. A rupture between a perfectly holy Being and the thrice holy God must be in the highest degree strange, abnormal, perplexing and painful. If any man here who is not at peace with God could only know His true condition, he would swoon with fright! If you unforgiven ones only knew where you are and what you are at this moment, in the sight of God, you would never smile again till you were reconciled to Him. Alas, we are insensible—hardened by the deceitfulness of sin—and therefore we do not feel our true condition!

His perfect holiness made it to our Lord a dreadful calamity to be forsaken of the thrice holy God. I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God and to be forsaken was a new grief to Him. He had never known what the dark was till then—His life had been lived in the light of God. Think, dear child of God, if you had always dwelt in full communion with God, your days would have been as the days of Heaven upon earth! And how cold it would strike your heart to find yourself in the darkness of desertion. If you can conceive such a thing as happening to a *perfect* man, you can see why, to our Well-Beloved, it was a special trial.

Remember, He had enjoyed fellowship with God more richly, as well as more constantly, than any of us. His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order—and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship, and yet the loss is killing! But to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up

—I mean His sea of fellowship with the Infinite God. Do not forget that He was such a One that to Him to be without God must have been an overwhelming calamity. In every part He was perfect and in every part fitted for communion with God to a supreme degree.

A sinful man has an awful need of God but he does not know it and therefore he does not feel that hunger and thirst after God which would come upon a perfect man could he be deprived of God. The very perfection of his nature renders it inevitable that the holy man must either be in communion with God or be desolate. Imagine a stray angel—a seraph who has lost His God! Conceive him to be perfect in holiness and yet to have fallen into a condition in which he cannot find His God! I cannot picture him! Perhaps Milton might have done so. He is sinless and trustful and yet he has an overpowering feeling that God is absent from him.

He has drifted into the nowhere—the unimaginable region behind the back of God. I think I hear the wailing of the cherub, “My God, my God, my God, where are You?” What a sorrow for one of the sons of the morning! But here we have the lament of a Being far more capable of fellowship with the Godhead! In proportion as He is more fitted to receive the love of the great Father, in that proportion is His pining after it the more intense. As a Son, He is more able to commune with God than ever a servant angel could be—and now that He is forsaken of God, the void within is greater and the anguish more bitter.

Our Lord’s heart and all His Nature were, morally and spiritually, so delicately formed, so sensitive, so tender, that to be without God was to Him a grief which could not be weighed. I see Him in the text bearing desertion and yet I perceive that He cannot bear it. I know not how to express my meaning except by such a paradox. He cannot endure to be without God. He had surrendered Himself to be left of God, as the representative of sinners must be, but His pure and holy Nature, after three hours of silence, finds the position unendurable to love and purity! And breaking forth from it, now that the hour was over, He exclaims, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

He quarrels not with the suffering, but He cannot abide in the position which caused it. He seems as if He must end the ordeal—not because of the pain—but because of the moral shock! We have here the repetition after His passion of that loathing which He felt before it, when He cried, “If it is

possible let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” is the holiness of Christ amazed at the position of Substitute for guilty men!

There, Friends. I have done my best, but I seem to myself to have been prattling like a little child talking about something infinitely above me. So I leave the solemn fact that our Lord Jesus was on the Cross forsaken of His God.

II. This brings us to consider THE ENQUIRY, or *why* He suffered. Note carefully this cry—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It is pure anguish, undiluted agony, which cries like this—but it is the agony of a godly soul—for only a man of that order would have used such an expression.

Let us learn from it useful lessons. This cry is taken from “the Book.” Does it not show our Lord’s love of the sacred volume, that when He felt His sharpest grief, He turned to the Scripture to find a fit utterance for it? Here we have the opening sentence of the 22nd Psalm. Oh that we may so love the inspired Word that we may not only sing to its score but even weep to its music! Note, again, that our Lord’s lament is an address to *God*. The godly, in their anguish, turn to the hand which smites them.

The Savior’s outcry is not *against* God, but *to* God. “My God, My God”—He makes a double effort to draw near. True Sonship is here! The child in the dark is crying after His Father—“My God, My God.” Both the Bible and prayer were dear to Jesus in His agony. Still, observe it is a faith-cry, for though it asks, “Why have You forsaken Me?” it first says, twice, “My God, My God.” The grip of appropriation is in the word “My.” But the reverence of humility is in the word, “God.” It is, “My *God*, My *God*, You are ever God to Me, and I a poor creature. I do not quarrel with You. Your rights are unquestioned, for You are My God. You can do as You will and I yield to Your sacred sovereignty. I kiss the hand that smites Me, and with all My heart I cry, ‘My God, My God.’”

When you are delirious with pain, think of your Bible—when your mind wonders, let it roam towards the Mercy Seat—and when your heart and your flesh fail, still live by faith and still cry, “My God, my God.” Let us come close to the enquiry. It looked to me, at first sight, like a question as of one distraught, driven from the balance of His mind—not unreasonable, but too much reasoning and therefore tossed about. “Why have You forsaken Me?” Did not Jesus know? Did He not know why He was

forsaken? He knew it most distinctly and yet His *Manhood*, while it was being crushed, pounded and dissolved, seemed as though it could not understand the reason for so great a grief.

He must be forsaken—but could there be a sufficient cause for so sickening a sorrow? The cup must be bitter—but why this most nauseous of ingredients? I tremble lest I say what I ought not to say. I have said it and I think there is truth—the Man of Sorrows was overborne with horror! At that moment the finite soul of the Man Christ Jesus came into awful contact with the infinite Justice of God! The one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, beheld the holiness of God in arms against the sin of man whose nature He had espoused.

God was for Him and with Him in a certain unquestionable sense—but for the time, so far as His feelings went— God was against Him and necessarily withdrawn from Him. It is not surprising that the holy Soul of Christ should shudder at finding itself brought into painful contact with the infinite Justice of God, even though its design was only to vindicate that Justice and glorify the Law-Giver. Our Lord could now say, “All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me,” and therefore He uses language which is all too hot with anguish to be dissected by the cold hand of a logical criticism.

Grief has small regard for the laws of the grammarian. Even the holiest, when in extreme agony, though they cannot speak otherwise than according to purity and truth, yet use a language of their own which only the ear of sympathy can fully receive. I see not all that is here, but what I can see I am not able to put in words for you. *I think I see in the expression, submission and resolve.* Our Lord does not draw back. There is a forward movement in the question—they who quit a business ask no more questions about it. He does not ask that the forsaking may end prematurely—He would only understand anew its meaning. He does not shrink, but dedicates Himself anew to God by the words, “My God, My God,” and by seeking to review the ground and reason of that anguish which He is resolute to bear even to the bitter end.

He would gladly feel anew the motive which has sustained Him and must sustain Him to the end. The cry sounds to me like deep submission and strong resolve, pleading with God. Do you not think that *the amazement of our Lord, when He was “made sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21)*, led Him thus to cry out? For such a sacred and pure Being to be made a SinOffering was an

amazing experience! Sin was laid on Him and He was treated as if He had been guilty, though He had personally *never sinned*.

And now the infinite horror of rebellion against the most holy God fills His holy Soul, the unrighteousness of sin breaks His heart and He starts back from it, crying, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken *Me*?” Why must I bear the dread result of conduct I so much abhor? Do you not see, moreover, *there was here a glance at His eternal purpose and at His secret Source of joy*? That “why” is the silver lining of the dark cloud and our Lord looked wishfully at it. He knew that the desertion was necessary in order that He might save the guilty and He had an eye to that salvation as His comfort.

He is not forsaken needlessly, nor without a worthy design. The design is in itself so dear to His heart that He yields to the passing evil, even though that evil is like death to Him. He looks at that “why,” and through that narrow window the light of Heaven comes streaming into His darkened life! “My God, My God, why have You forsaken *Me*?” Surely our Lord dwelt on that, “why,” *that we might also turn our eyes that way*. He would have us see the why and the why of His grief. He would have us mark the gracious motive for its endurance. Think much of all your Lord suffered, but do not overlook the *reason* for it. If you cannot always understand how this or that grief worked toward the great end of the whole passion, yet believe that it has its share in the grand, “why.” Make a life-study of that bitter but blessed question, “Why have You forsaken *Me*?”

Thus the Savior raises an inquiry not so much for Himself as for *us*—and not so much because of any despair within *His* heart as because of a hope and a joy set before Him which were wells of comfort to Him in His wilderness of woe. Think, for a moment, that the Lord God, in the broadest and most unreserved sense, could never, in very deed, have forsaken His most obedient Son. He was ever with Him in the grand design of salvation. Towards the Lord Jesus, personally, God Himself, personally, must ever have stood on terms of infinite love. Truly the Only Begotten was never more lovely to the Father than when He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross!

But we must look upon God here as the Judge of all the earth and we must look upon the Lord Jesus in His official capacity as the Surety of the Covenant and the Sacrifice for sin. The great Judge of all cannot smile upon Him who has become the Substitute for the guilty. Sin is loathed of God and

if, in order to its removal, His own Son is made to bear it, yet, as sin, it is still loathsome and He who bears it cannot be in happy communion with God! This was the dread necessity of expiation—but in the *essence* of things the love of the great Father to His Son never ceased, nor ever knew a diminution. Restrained in its flow it must be, but lessened at its fountainhead it could not be. Therefore, wonder not at the question, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

III. Hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am coming to THE ANSWER concerning which I can only use the few minutes which remain to me. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” What is the outcome of this suffering? What was the reason for it? Our Savior could answer His own question. If for a moment His Manhood was perplexed, yet His mind soon came to clear apprehension for He said, “It is finished.” And as I have already said, He then referred to the work which in His lonely agony He had been performing.

Why, then, did God forsake His Son? I cannot conceive any other answer than this—*He stood in our place*. There was no reason in Christ why the Father should forsake Him—He was *perfect* and His life was without spot. God never acts without reason and since there were no reasons in the Character and Person of the Lord Jesus why His Father should forsake Him, we must look elsewhere. I do not know how others answer the question. I can only answer it in this one way—

*“All the griefs He felt were ours,
Ours werethe woes He bore.
Pang not His own,
His spotless soul
With bitter anguish bore.
We held Him ascondemned of Heaven
An outcast fromHis God
While for our sins He groaned, He bled,
Beneath His Father’s rod.”*

He bore the sinner’s sin and He had to be treated, therefore, as though He were a sinner, though sinner He could never be! With His own full consent He suffered as though He had committed the transgressions which were laid on Him. Our sin and His taking it upon Himself is the answer to the question, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

In this case we now see that *His obedience was perfect*. He came into the

world to obey the Father and He rendered that obedience to the very uttermost. The spirit of obedience could go no farther than for one who feels forsaken of God still to cling to Him in solemn, avowed allegiance—still declaring before a mocking multitude His confidence in the afflicting God! It is noble to cry, “My God, My God,” when One is asking, “Why have You forsaken He?” How much farther can obedience go? I see nothing beyond it. The soldier at the gate of Pompeii, remaining at his post as sentry when the shower of burning ashes was falling, was not more true to his trust than He who adheres to a forsaking God with loyalty of hope.

Our Lord's suffering in this particular form was appropriate and necessary. It would not have sufficed for our Lord merely to have been pained in body, nor even to have been grieved in mind in other ways—He must suffer in this particular way. He must feel forsaken of God because *this* is the necessary consequence of sin. For a man to be forsaken of God is the penalty which naturally and inevitably follows upon his breaking his relationship with God. What is death? What was the death that was threatened to Adam? “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” Is death annihilation? Was Adam annihilated that day?

Assuredly not! He lived many a year afterwards. But in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit he died by being *separated* from God. The separation of the soul from God is *spiritual* death, just as the separation of the soul from the body is *natural* death. The sacrifice for sin must be put in the place of separation and must bow to the penalty of death. By this placing of the Great Sacrifice under forsaking and death, it would be seen by all creatures throughout the universe that God cannot have fellowship with sin. If even the Holy One, who stood the Just for the unjust, found God forsaking Him—what must the doom of the actual sinner be? Sin is evidently always, in every case, a dividing influence, putting even the Christ Himself, as a Sin-Bearer, in the place of distance.

This was necessary for another reason—there could have been no laying on of suffering for sin without the forsaking of the vicarious Sacrifice by the Lord God. So long as the smile of God rests on the man, the Law is not afflicting him. The approving look of the great Judge cannot fall upon a man who is viewed as standing in the place of the guilty. Christ not only suffered *from* sin, but *for* sin. If God will cheer and sustain Him, He is not suffering for sin. The Judge is not inflicting suffering for sin if He is manifestly encouraging the smitten One. There could have been no

vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt if He had continued, consciously, to enjoy the full sunshine of the Father's Presence. It was essential to being a Victim in our place that He should cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Beloved, see how marvelously, in the Person of Christ, the Lord our God has vindicated His Law? If to make His Law glorious He had said, "These multitudes of men have broken My Law and therefore they shall perish," the Law would have been terribly magnified. But, instead, He says, "Here is My Only Begotten Son, My other Self—He takes on Himself the Nature of these rebellious creatures and He consents that I should lay on Him the load of their iniquity and visit in His Person the offenses which might have been punished in the persons of all these multitudes of men—and I will have it so."

When Jesus bows His head to the stroke of the Law—when He submissively consents that His Father shall turn away His face from Him—then myriads of worlds are astonished at the perfect holiness and stern justice of the Lawgiver! There are, probably, worlds innumerable throughout the boundless creation of God and all these will see, in the death of God's dear Son, a declaration of His determination never to allow sin to be trifled with! If His own Son is brought before Him, bearing the sin of others upon Him, He will hide His face from Him as well as from the actually guilty. In God infinite Love shines over all—but it does not eclipse His absolute Justice any more than His Justice is permitted to destroy His Love. God has all perfections in Perfection and in Christ Jesus we see the reflection of them.

Beloved, this is a wonderful theme! Oh, that I had a tongue worthy of this subject! But who could ever reach the height of this great argument? Once more, when enquiring, "Why did Jesus suffer to be forsaken of the Father?" we see the fact that *the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect through suffering*. Every part of the road has been traversed by our Lord's own feet. Suppose, Beloved, the Lord Jesus had never been thus forsaken? Then one of His disciples might have been called to that sharp endurance and the Lord Jesus could not have sympathized with him in it.

He would turn to His Leader and Captain and say to Him, "Did You, my Lord, ever feel this darkness?" Then the Lord Jesus would answer, "No. This is a descent such as I never made." What a dreadful lack would the tried one have felt! For the servant to bear a grief his Master never knew

would be sad, indeed. There would have been a wound for which there was no ointment—a pain for which there was no balm. But it is not so now. “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Whereas we greatly rejoice at this time and as often as we are cast down, underneath us is the deep experience of our forsaken Lord.

I have done when I have said three things. The first is, you and I that are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and are resting in Him alone for salvation, *let us lean hard*. Let us bear all our weight on our Lord. He will bear the full weight of all our sin and care. As to my sin, I hear its harsh accusations no more when I hear Jesus cry, “Why have You forsaken Me?” I know that I deserve the deepest Hell at the hand of God’s vengeance but I am not afraid! He will never forsake *me*, for He *forsook His Son on my behalf*. I shall not suffer for my sin, for Jesus has suffered to the full in my place—yes, suffered so far as to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Behind this brazen wall of Substitution a sinner is safe! These “munitions of rock” guard all Believers and they may rest secure. The rock is cleft for me—I hide in its rifts and no harm can reach me. You have a full Atonement, a great Sacrifice, a glorious vindication of the Law—you can rest at peace, all you that put your trust in Jesus.

Next, if ever, from now on, in our lives we should think that God has deserted us, *let us learn from our Lord’s example how to behave ourselves*. If God has left you, do not shut up your Bible—no, open it as your Lord did—and find a text that will suit you. If God has left you, or you think so, do not give up prayer! No, pray as your Lord did and be more earnest than ever. If you think God has forsaken you, do not give up your faith in Him, but, like your Lord, cry, “My God, my God,” again and again! If you have had one anchor before, cast out two anchors now and double the hold of your faith. If you cannot call Jehovah, “Father,” as was Christ’s habit, yet call Him your “God.”

Let the personal pronouns take their hold—“My God, my God.” Let nothing drive you from your faith. Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim. As for me, if ever I am lost it shall be at the foot of the Cross! To this pass have I come, that if I never see the face of God with acceptance, yet I will believe that He will be faithful to His Son and true to the Covenant sealed by oaths and blood. He that believes in Jesus has everlasting life—there I cling, like the limpet to the rock. There is but one gate of Heaven and even if I may

not enter it, I will cling to the posts of its door! What am I saying? I shall enter in for that gate was never shut against a soul that accepted Jesus! And Jesus says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

The last of the three points is this, *let us abhor the sin which brought such agony upon our Beloved Lord*. What an accursed thing is sin which crucified the Lord Jesus! Do you laugh at it? Will you go and spend an evening to see a mimic performance of it? Do you roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel and then come to God’s house on the Lord’s-Day morning and think to worship Him? Worship Him? Worship Him with sin indulged in your breast? Worship Him with sin loved and pampered in your life? O Sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood—if I made a friend of the murderer and daily consorted with the assassin who drove the dagger into my brother’s heart?

Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ—will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God—can you love it? Oh that there was an abyss as deep as Christ’s misery, that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths—where it might never be brought to light again! Begone, O Sin! You are banished from the heart where Jesus reigns! Begone, for you have crucified my Lord and made Him cry, “Why have You forsaken Me?”!

O my Hearers, if you did but know yourselves and know the love of Christ, you would each one vow that you would harbor sin no longer! You would be indignant at sin and cry—

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is, Lord,
I will tear it from its throne,
And worship only You.”*

May that be the issue of my morning’s discourse and then I shall be well content. The Lord bless you! May the Christ who suffered for you bless you, and out of His darkness may your light arise! Amen

 **THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS.**

NO. 2803

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 2ND,
1902,**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me — [Mat 27:46](#).”

DURING the time that “Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law,” he “came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb,” and there he saw a strange sight, — a bush that burned with fire, and yet was not consumed. Then Moses, apparently constrained by curiosity, was drawing near, in order to examine this phenomenon, when he heard God’s voice say to him, “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” We also may well feel, as we think of our Lord Jesus in his agony, that the voice of God speaks to us from the cross, and says, “Curiosity, — bold, daring, prying intellect, — draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is the very Holy of Holies, unto which no man may come except as the Spirit of God shall conduct him thither.”

I think I can understand the words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” as they are written by David in the 22nd Psalm; but the same words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” when uttered by Jesus on the cross, I cannot comprehend, so I shall not pretend to be able to explain them. There is no plummet that can fathom this deep; there is no eagle’s eye that can penetrate the mystery that surrounds this strange question. I have read that, once upon a time, Martin Luther sat him down in his study to consider this text. Hour after hour, that mighty man of God sat still; and those who waited on him came into the room, again and again, and he was so absorbed in his meditation that they almost thought he was a corpse. He moved neither hand nor foot, and neither ate nor drank; but sat with his eyes wide open, like one in a trance, thinking over these wondrous words, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And when, after many long hours, in which he seemed to be utterly lost to everything that went on around him, he rose from his chair, someone heard him say, “God forsaking God! No man can understand that;” and so he went his way. Though that is hardly the correct expression to use, — I should hesitate to endorse it, — yet I do not marvel that our text presented itself to the mind

of Luther in that light. It is said that he looked like a man who had been down a deep mine, and who had come up again to the light. I feel more like one who has not been down the mine, but who has looked into it — or like one who has been part of the way down, and shuddered as he passed through the murky darkness but who would not dare to go much lower, for this cry, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” “is a tremendous deep; no man will ever be able to fathom it.”

So I am not going to try to explain it; but, first, to utter some thoughts about it and then, secondly, to draw some lessons from it. We may find many practical uses for things which are beyond the grasp of our minds, and this saying of our Lord may be of great service to us even though we cannot comprehend it.

I. First, then, let me utter SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS STRANGE

QUESTION: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Jesus was accustomed to address God as his Father. If you turn to his many prayers, you will find him almost invariably — if not invariably — speaking to God as his Father. And, truly, he stands in that relationship both as God and as man. Yet, in this instance, he does not say, “Father;” but “My God, my God.” Was it that he had any doubt about his Sonship? Assuredly not; Satan had assailed him in the wilderness with the insinuation, “If thou be the Son of God,” but Christ had put him to the rout; and I feel persuaded that Satan had not gained any advantage over him, even on the cross, which could have made him doubt whether he was the Son of God or not.

I think that our Savior was speaking then as man, and that this is the reason why he cried, “My God, my God,” rather than “My Father.” I think he must have been speaking as man; as I can scarcely bring my mind to the point of conceiving that God the Son could say to God the Father, “My God, my God.” There is such a wonderful blending of the human and the Divine in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that, though it may not be absolutely accurate to ascribe to the Deity some things in the life of Christ, yet is he so completely God and man that, often, Scripture does speak of things that must belong to the humanity only as if they belonged to the Godhead. For instance, in his charge to the Ephesian elders, the apostle Paul said, “Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood;” — an incorrect expression, if judged according to the rule of the logician; but

accurate enough according to the Scriptural method of using words in their proper sense. Yet I do think that we must draw a distinction between the Divinity and the humanity here. As the Lord Jesus said, “My God, my God,” it was because it was his humanity that was mainly to be considered just then. And O my brethren, does it not show us what a real man, the Christ of God was, that he could be forsaken of his God? We might have supposed that, Christ being Emmanuel, — God with us, — the Godhead and the manhood being indissolubly united in one person, it would have been impossible for him. to be forsaken of God. We might also have inferred, for the same reason, that it would have been impossible for him to have been scourged, and spit upon, and especially that it would not have been possible for him to die. Yet all these things were made, not only possible, but also sacredly certain. In order to complete the redemption of his chosen people, it was necessary for him to be both God’s well-beloved Son, and to be forsaken of his Father; he could truly say, as his saints also have sometimes had to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” Persecuted and forsaken believer, behold your Brother in adversity! Behold the One who has gone wherever you may have to go, who has suffered more than you can ever suffer, and who has taken his part in the direst calamity that ever happened to human nature, so that he had to cry out, in the agony of his soul, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

What was this forsaking? We are trying to come a little closer to this burning yet unconsumed bush, — with our shoes off our feet, I hope, all the while; — and in this spirit we ask, “What was this forsaking?” A devout writer says that it was horror at the sight of human misery. He affirms, what is quite true, that our Lord Jesus Christ saw all that man had to suffer because of sin; that he perceived the total sum of the miseries brought by sin upon all the past, present, and future generations of the human race; — and that he must have had a holy horror as he thought of all the woes of man, caused by sin, in this life, and in that which is to come; — and being completely one with man, he spoke in the name of man, and said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That is all true, yet that explanation will not suffice, my brethren; because our Savior did not say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken man?” but, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” This forsaking was something personal to himself.

Others have said that it was a dreadful shrinking in his soul on account of human sin. I have read of a child, who had done wrong, and whose father had faithfully rebuked and punished him; but the boy remained callous and sullen. He sat in the same room with his father, yet he refused to confess that he had done wrong. At last, the father, under a sense of his child's great wickedness, burst into tears, and sobbed and sighed. Then the boy came to his father, and asked him why he sorrowed so, and he answered, "Because of my child's hardness of heart." It is true that our Lord Jesus Christ did feel as that father felt; only far more acutely; but our text cannot be fully explained by any such illustration as that; that would be only explaining it away, for Christ did not say, "My God, my God, why has man forsaken thee, and why hast thou so completely left men in their sin?" No; his cry was, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" It was not so much the God of man to whom he appealed, but "My God, my God." It was a personal grief that wrung from him the personal cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "for this forsaking, by his Father in whom he trusted, related peculiarly to himself.

What was this forsaking? Was it physical weakness? Some of you may know that, when the body is in a low condition, the soul also sinks. Quite involuntarily, unhappiness of mind, depression of spirit, and sorrow of heart will come upon you. You may be without any real reason for grief, and yet may be among the most unhappy of men because, for the time, your body has Conquered your soul. But, my brethren and sisters, this explanation is not supposable in the case of Christ, for it was not many moments after this that he shouted, "with a loud voice," his conquering cry, "It is finished," and so passed from the conflict to his coronation. His brave spirit overcame his physical weakness; and though he was brought into the dust of death," and plunged into the deepest depths of depression of spirit, yet, still, the cry, "My God, my God," which also was uttered "with a loud voice," proves that there was still a considerable amount of mental strength, notwithstanding his physical weakness, so that mere depression of spirit, caused by physical reasons, would not account for this agonizing cry.

And, certainly, my brethren, this cry was not occasioned by unbelief. You know that, sometimes, a child of God, in sore trial, and with many inward struggles, cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" when, all the while, the Lord has been remembering the tried soul, and dealing

graciously with it. As long ago as Isaiah's day, "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But the Lord's reply was, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my band."

Unbelief often makes us talk about God forgetting us when he does nothing of the kind, but our Lord Jesus Christ was a stranger to unbelief. It was impossible for him to cherish any doubt about the faithfulness and lovingkindness of his Father; so his cry did not arise from that cause.

And, another thing, it did not arise from a mistake. I have known believers, in sore trouble, make great blunders concerning what God was doing with them. They have thought that he had forsaken them, for they misinterpreted certain signs, and dealings of God, and they said, "All these things are against us; the hand of God has gone out against us to destroy us." But Christ made no mistake about this matter, for God had forsaken him. It was really so. When he said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" he spoke infallible truth, and his mind was under no cloud whatsoever. He knew what he was saying, and he was right in what he said, for his Father had forsaken him for the time.

What, then, can this expression mean? Does it mean that God did not love his Son? O beloved, let us, with the utmost detestation, fling away any suspicion of the kind that we may have harboured! God did forsake his Sons but he loved him as much when he forsook him as at any other period. I even venture to say that, if it had been possible for God's love towards his Son to be increased, he would have delighted in him more when he was standing as the suffering Representative of his chosen people than ever he had delighted in him before. We do not indulge, for a single moment, the thought that God was angry with him personally, or looked upon him as unworthy of his love, or regarded him as one upon whom he could not smile, because of anything displeasing in himself; yet the fact remains that God had forsaken him, for Christ was under no mistake about that matter. He rightly felt that his Father had withdrawn the comfortable light of his countenance, that he had, for the time being, lost the sense of his Father's favor, — not the favor itself, but the consciousness of that divine aid and succor which he had formerly enjoyed; — so he felt himself like a man left

all alone; and he was not only left all alone by his friends, but also by his God.

Can we at all imagine the state of mind in which our Lord was when he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” No; that is not possible, yet I will try to help you to understand it. Can you imagine the misery of a lost soul in hell, — one who is forsaken of God, and who cries, in bitterest agony, “God will never look upon me in mercy, or delight, or favor,” — can you picture that sad state? Well, if you can, you will not, even then, have got anywhere near the position of Christ, because that soul in hell does not want God’s favor, and does not seek it, or ask for it. That lost soul is so hardened in sin that it never troubles about whether God would receive it if it repented; the truth is, that it does not want to repent. The misery, that men will suffer in the world to come, will be self-created misery arising out of the fact that they loved sin so much that they brought eternal sorrow upon themselves. It must be an awful thing for a soul, in the next world, to be without God; but, as far as its own consciousness is concerned, it will be so hardened that it will abide without God, yet not realizing all that it has lost because it is itself incapable of knowing the beauty of holiness, and the perfection of the God from whom it is separated for ever. Yet how different was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ when upon the cross! He knew, as no mere man could ever know, what separation from God meant.

Think of a case of another kind. King Saul, when the witch of Endor brought up the spirit of Samuel, said to him, “God is departed from me, and answereth me no more.” You recollect the state of mind that he was in when the evil spirit was upon him, and he needed David’s harp to charm it away; but at last, even that failed, and I know of no more unhappy character than Saul when God had departed from him. But, somehow, there was not the anguish in the soul of Saul that there would have been if he had ever really known the Lord. I do not think that he ever did really, in his inmost soul, know the Lord. After Samuel anointed him, he was “turned into another man,” but he never became a new man; and the sense of God’s presence that he had was not, for a moment, comparable to that presence of God which a true saint enjoys, and which Christ ever enjoyed, except when he was on the cross. So, when Saul lost the consciousness of that presence, he

did not suffer so great a loss, and, consequently, so great an anguish, as afterwards happened to our Lord.

Coming nearer to our own circumstances, I remind you that there are some of God's people, who do really love him, and who have walked in the light of his countenance, yet, for some reason or other, they have lost the comfortable enjoyment of God's love. If any of you, dear friends, know what that sad experience is, you are getting a faint impression of the meaning of this cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Oh, what an anguish it is, — what heart-break — even to think that one is forsaken of God I have heard of people dying of broken hearts; but I do believe that the man, who has been made to utter this cry, has gone as near to dying of a broken heart as anyone might well do without actually dying. To be without God, is to be without life; and we, who love him, can say, with Dr. Watts, —

***"My God, my life, my love,
To thee, to thee I call:
I cannot live, if thou remove,
For thou art All-in-all."***

But, my dear brethren, you have not got the whole truth yet, for no saint knows the presence of God as Christ knew it. No saint has, to the full, enjoyed the love of God as Christ enjoyed it; and, consequently, if he does lose it, he only seems to lose the moonlight whereas Christ lost the sunlight when, for a time, the face of his Father was withdrawn from him. Only think what must have been the anguish of the Savior, especially as contrasted with his former enjoyment. Never did any mere human being know so much and enjoy so much of the love of God as Christ had done. He had lived in it, basked in it; there had never been any interruption to it. "I do always those things that please him," said he, concerning his Father; and his Father twice said, concerning him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Now, as our Lord Jesus Christ had enjoyed the love of God to the very full, think what it must have been for him to lose the conscious enjoyment of it. You know that you may go into, a room, and blow out the candle, but the blind people will not miss it. They miss the light most who have enjoyed it most; and Christ missed the light of God's countenance most because he had enjoyed it most. Then, reflect upon his intense love to God. Jesus Christ — the man Christ Jesus — loved God with all his heart,

and mind, and soul and strength, as you and I have never yet been able to do. The love of Christ towards his Father was boundless. Well, then, for a frown to be upon his Father's face, or for the light of that Father's face to be taken away from him, must have made it correspondingly dark and terrible to him.

Remember, too, the absolute purity of Christ's nature. In him there was no taint of sin, nor anything approaching to it. Now, holiness delights in God. God is the yea y sea in which holiness swims, — the air which holiness breathes. Only think, then, of the perfectly Holy One, fully agreed with his Father in everything finding out that the Father had, for good and sufficient reasons, turned away his face from him. O brother, in proportion as you are holy, the absence of the light of God's countenance will be grief to you; and as Jesus was perfectly holy, it was the utmost anguish to him to have to cry to his Father.

“Why hast thou forsaken me!”

After all, beloved, the only solution of the mystery is this, Jesus Christ was forsaken of God because we deserved to be forsaken of God. He was there, on the cross, in our room, and place, and stead; and as the sinner, by reason of his sin deserves not to enjoy the favor of God, so Jesus Christ, standing in the place of the sinner, and enduring that which would vindicate the justice of God, had to come under the cloud, s the sinner must have come, if Christ had not taken his place. But, then, since he ha come under it, let us recollect that he was thus left of God that you and I, who believe in him, might never be heft of God. Since he, for a little while, was separated from his Father, we may boldly cry, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” and, with the apostle Paul, we may confidently affirm that nothing in the whole universe shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Before I leave this point, let me say that the doctrine of substitution is the key to all the sufferings of Christ. I do not know how many theories have been invented to explain away the death of Christ. The modern doctrine of the apostles of “culture” that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, was, in some degree or other, connected with our salvation but it is my firm belief that every theory, concerning the death of Christ, which can only be understood by the highly-cultured, must be false. “That is strong language,” says someone. Perhaps it is, but it is true. I am

quite sure that the religion of Jesus Christ was never intended for the highly-cultured only, or even for them in particular. Christ's testimony concerning his own ministry was, "The poor have the gospel preached to them;" so if you bring me a gospel which can only be understood by gentlemen who have passed through Oxford or Cambridge University, I know that it cannot be the gospel of Christ. He meant the good news of salvation to be proclaimed to the poorest of the poor; in fact, the gospel is intended for humanity in general; so, if you cannot make me understand it, or if, when I do understand it, it does not tell me how to deliver its message in such plain language that the poorest man can comprehend it, I tell you, sirs, that your newfangled gospel is a lie, and I will stick to the old one, which a man, only a little above an idiot in intellect, can understand. I cling to the old gospel for this, among many other reasons, that all the modern gospels, that leave out the great central truth of substitution, prevent the message from being of any use to the great mass of mankind. If those other gospels, which are not really gospels, please your taste and fancy, and suit the readers of Quarterly Reviews, and eloquent orators and lecturers, there are the poor people in our streets, and the millions of working-men, the vast multitudes who cannot comprehend anything that is highly metaphysical; and you cannot convince me that our Lord Jesus Christ sent, as his message to the whole world, a metaphysical mystery that would need volume upon volume before it could even be stated. I am persuaded that he gave us a rough and ready gospel like this, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" "or this," "With his stripes we are healed;" "or this," "The chastisement of our peace was upon him;" or this, "He died for the unjust to bring us to God." Do not try to go beyond this gospel, brethren; you will get into the mud if you do. But it is safe standing here; and standing here, I can comprehend how our Lord Jesus took the sinner's place, and passing under the sentence which the sinner deserved, or under a sentence which was tantamount thereto, could cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

II. Now, in closing, I am going to draw A FEW LESSONS FROM THIS UTTERANCE OF CHRIST.

The first lesson is, Behold how he loved us! When Christ stood and wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews said, "Behold how he loved him!" "But on the cross he did not weep, he bled; and he not merely bled, he died; and, before

he died, his spirit sank within him, for he was forsaken of his God. Was there ever any other love like this — that the Prince of life and glory should con descend to this shame and death?

Then, next, brothers and sisters, as he suffered so much for us, let us be ready to suffer anything for his sake. Let us be willing even to lose all the joy of religion, if that would glorify God. I do not know that it would; but I think the spirit of Christ ought to carry us even as far as Moses went, when he pleaded for the guilty nation of Israel, and was willing to have his own name blotted out of the book of life rather than that God's name should be dishonored. We have never had to go so far as that, and we never shall; yet let us be willing to part with our last penny, for Christ's name's sake, if he requires it. Let us be willing to lose our reputation. And, it is a difficult timing to give that up! Some of us, when we first came into public notice, and found our words picked to pieces, and our character slandered, felt it rather hard. We have got used to it now; but it was very trying at first. But, oh! if one had to be called a devil, — if one had to go through this world, and to be spat upon by every passer-by, — still, if it were endured for Christ's sake, remembering how he was forsaken of God for us, we ought to take up even that cross with thankfulness that we were permitted to bear it.

Another lesson is that, if ever you and I should feel that we are forsaken of God, — if we should get into this state in any way, remember that we are only where Christ has been before us. If ever, in our direst extremity, we should be compelled to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we shall have gone down no deeper than Christ himself went. He knows that feeling, and that state of heart, for he has felt the same. This fact should tend greatly to cheer you. Your deep depression is not a proof of reprobation; that is evident, for Christ himself endured even more. A man may say, "I cannot be a child of God, or else I should not feel as I do." All! you do not know what true children of God may feel; strange thoughts pass through their minds in times of storm and doubt. A Puritan preacher was standing by the deathbed of one of his members who had been for thirty years in gloom of soul. The good old minister expected that the man would get peace at last, for he had been an eminent Christian and had greatly rejoiced in his Savior; but, for thirty years or more, he had fallen into deep gloom. The minister was trying to speak a word of comfort to him, but the man said, "Ah, sir! but what can you say to a man who is dying, and yet

who feels that God has forsaken him?" The pastor replied, "But what became of that Man who died, whom God did really forsake? Where is HE now?" The dying man caught at that, and said, "He is in glory, and I shall be with him; I shall be with him where he is." And so the light came to the dying man who had been so long in the dark; he saw that Christ had been just where he was, and that he should be where Christ was, even at the right hand of the Father. I hope, brothers and sisters, that you will never get down so low as that; but I beseech you, if you ever meet with any others who are there, do not be rough with them. Some strongminded people are very apt to be hard upon nervous folk, and to say, "They should not get into that state." And we are liable to speak harshly to people who are very depressed in spirit, and to say to them, "Really, you ought to rouse yourself out of such a state." I hope none of you will ever have such an experience of this depression of spirit as I have had; yet I have learnt from it to be very tender with all fellow-sufferers. The Lord have mercy on them, and help them out of the Slough of Despond; for, if he does not, they will sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.

I pray God specially to bless this inference from our text. There is hope for you, brother, or sister, if you are in this condition. Christ came through it, and he will be with you in it; and, after all, you are not forsaken as he was, be you sure of that. With you, the forsaking is only in the apprehension; that is bad enough, but it is not a matter of fact, for "the Lord will not forsake his people," nor cast away even one of those whom he has chosen.

I will tell you what is a much more awful thing even than crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If you are afraid that God has left you, and the sweat stands on your brow in very terror, and if your soul seems to long for death rather than life, in such a state as that, you are not in the worst possible condition. "Why!" you ask, "is there anything worse than that?" Yes, I will tell you what is much worse than that; that is, to be without God, and not to care about it; — to be living, like some whom I am now addressing, without God, and without hope, yet that never concerns them at all. I can pity the agony of the man who cannot bear to be without his God; but, at the same time, I can bless the Lord that he feels such agony as that, for that proves to me that his soul will never perish. But those, whom I look upon with fear and trembling are the men who make a profession of religion, yet who never have any communion with God, and,

all the while are quite happy about it; or backsliders, who have gone away from God, and yet seem perfectly at ease. You, worldlings, who ate quite satisfied with the things of this world, and have no longings for the world that is to come I wish you had got as fat as to be unhappy; I wish you had got as far as to be in an agony for that is the road to heavenly joy. It was thus that Christ won it for us and it is by such a path as this, that many a soul is first led into the experience of his saving power. Brethren, weep not for those of us who sometimes have to cry out in anguish of soul mourn not for us who are cast down because we cannot live without Christ. You see that our Lord has made us covet the highest blessings out heads have been so often on his bosom that, if they are not always there, we keep on crying till we get back to that blessed position again. This is a sweet sorrow; may we have more and more of it! But, oh! I pray you, pity those who never ate the bread of heaven, — never drank of the water of life, — never knew the sweetness of the kisses of Christ's mouth, — and never knew what it was to have a heaven begun below in the enjoyment of fellowship with him. In such cases, your pity is indeed required.

I have finished when I have just said this, — as you come to the table of your Lord, come, brothers and sisters, with this cry of Christ ringing in your ears, to make you love him more than ever; and, as you eat the bread, and drink the wine, do it all out of fervent love to him; and the Lord bless you, for his name a sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.

MATTHEW 27:27-54.

Verses 27-30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him, saying, Hail King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.*

These soldiers were men to whom the taking of human life was mere amusement, or, at best, a duty to be performed. If the ordinary Roman citizen found his greatest delight in the amphitheater, where men fiercely fought with each other, and shed each other's blood, or were devoured by wild beasts, you may imagine what Roman soldiery — the roughest part of the whole population — would be like; and now that One was given up into

their hands, charged with making himself a king, you can conceive what a subject for jest it was to them, and how they determined to make all the mockery they could of this pretended king. They were not touched by the gentleness of his demeanor, nor by his sorrowful countenance; but they proceeded to pour all possible scorn and insult upon his devoted head. Surely, the world never saw a more marvelous scene than this, — the King of kings derided, and made nothing of, — treated as a mimic monarch by the very vilest and most brutal of men.

31. *And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

Their action, in restoring to him his own seamless robe, was overruled by God, — whatever their motive may have been, — so that nobody might say that some other person had been substituted for the Savior. He went forth wearing that well-known garment, which was woven from the top throughout, which he had always worn; and all who looked upon him said, It is he, — the Nazarene. We know his face, his dress, his person.” There was no possibility of mistaking him for anybody else.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

It was too heavy for him to carry alone, so they bade Simon help him; and, truly, I think that Simon was thereby highly honored. If this was Simon, who is called Niger, then there may be some truth in the common belief that he was a black man; and, assuredly, the coloured race has long had to carry a very heavy cross, yet there may be a great destiny before it. All Christ’s followers are called to be cross-bearers.

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

If we belong to Christ, we must be as willing to take up his cross as he was to carry ours, and die upon it.

33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

It was not because of its bitterness that our Lord refused it, for he did not decline to endure anything that would add to his grief; but this was a stupefying draught, a death potion, which was given to those who were executed, in order somewhat to mitigate their pains; but the Savior did not intend that his senses should be beclouded by any such draught as that, so, “when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.”

35. *And they crucified him, —*

A short sentence, but what an awful depth of meaning there is in it! “They crucified him,” — driving their iron bolts through his hand’s and feet, and lifting him up to hang there upon the gibbet which was reserved for felons and for slaves: “They crucified him,” —

35. *And parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did thy cast lots.*

It was the executioners perquisite to have the garments of the man they put to death; so, in order that no single portion of the shame of the cross might be spared to the Savior, these soldiers divided his garments amongst them, and raffled for his seamless robe. It must have taken a hard heart to gamble at the foot of the cross; but I suppose that, of all sins under heaven, there is none that does so harden the heart as gambling. Beware of it!

36. *And sitting down they watched him there;*

Some to gloat, in their fiendish malice, over his sufferings; others, to make sure that he did really die; and, possibly, some few to pity him in his agony: “Sitting down they watched him there.”

37-44. *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priest’s mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down front the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.*

So that, as he looked all around, he met with nothing but ribaldry, and jest, and scorn. His disciples had all forsaken him. One or two of them afterwards rallied a little, and came and stood by the cross; but, just then, he looked, and there was none to pity, and none to help him, even as it had been foretold.

45. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

From twelve o'clock at noon, according to the Roman and Jewish time, till three in the afternoon, there was a thick darkness, — whether over all the world, or only over the land of Palestine, we cannot very well say. It was not an eclipse of the sun, it was a miracle specially wrought by God. Some have supposed that dense clouds came rolling up obscuring everything; but, whatever it was, deep darkness came over all the land. Dore has, in his wonderful imagination, given us a sketch of Jerusalem during that darkness. The inhabitants are all trembling at what they had done; and as Judas goes down the street, they point at him as the man who sold his Master, and brought all this evil upon the city. I should think that such darkness at mid-day must have made them fear that the last day had come, or that some great judgment would overtake them for their wicked slaughter of the innocent Jesus of Nazareth. Even the sun could no longer look upon its Maker surrounded by those who mocked him, so it traveled on in tenfold night, as if in very shame that the great Sun of righteousness should himself be in such awful darkness.

46-48. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

For he had also said, "I thirst," which John records, specially mentioning that he said this, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

49-51. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;

That rending of the great veil of the temple was intended to symbolize the end of Judaism; the horror of the sanctuary that its Lord was put to death; the opening of the mysteries of heaven; the clearing of the way of access between man and God.

51. *And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; Well says our poet, — “Of feeling, all things show some sign
But this unfeeling heart of mine.”*

52-54. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*